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A Usability Evaluation Framework
For Saudi E-Government Websites

Dalal Ibrahem Zahran

ABSTRACT

Usability engineering is a user-centric evidence-based methodology that is
driven by end users satisfaction and improved performance through their
involvement in the design, testing, and evaluation of software and websites to
produce systems that are measurably easier to use, learn, and remember. E-
government is a new face of government that reaches citizens through electronic
citizen-centered Websites. In 2005, the Saudi e-government program “Yesser” was
created as a best practice guideline for designing public Websites. But organizations
conducting global e-government evaluations, such as the UN and Brown University,
gave Saudi e-government low ranking even though their emphasis on the usability of
the Websites' design was limited or lacking.

It has been the purpose of this research to assess the current state of the
usability of Saudi e-government through a formal evaluation of its ministries’
websites. An Interactive Service E-government Framework was developed for this
research to select e-ministries based on the adherence to e-government standards
and guidelines. From 22 Saudi ministries, only six qualified as been on the average in
the 1st e-government stage. This research developed an e-government usability
framework containing 30 design criteria based on common criteria from four
usability frameworks available within the literature to investigate the six ministries
for usability evaluation using multi-usability methods; researcher's assessment,
heuristic evaluation and formal usability testing with target users. Comparing
"Yesser" with the proposed usability framework revealed its limitation and
deficiency with only 13 out of 30 guidelines covered, of which only a few were
followed by the evaluated Websites. Consequently, results revealed that in addition
to Saudi e-ministries having numerous errors such as network or server errors,
broken links, under construction pages, and non active links, they had sever usability
problems many of which prevented completion of typical tasks such as lack of
security, data validation, search facility, site map, and appropriate navigation.
Overall the evaluated websites were not citizen-centered leading to users’
dissatisfaction and frustration.