COMM2079

How to critique a website

Slide 1: Introduction

For Assessment 3 in this course, you are required to critique a non-profit organization’s website in order to review their current online presence so that you can make suggestions on how it could be improved. This presentation attempts to help you do that by identifying particular information that you need to focus on when you are evaluating a website. You are provided with questions that you could ask when you are analyzing the website. Do remember though, these are only suggestions. You may want to focus on other aspects of the website so that you are able to write a comprehensive report about improving the website’s online presence.

Slide 2: Audience and purpose

One good place to start when evaluating a website is to identify the audience and purpose of the website. Try to gauge who the website is for? Are the targeted audience both internal and external to the organisation? Is the content design on the website appropriate to the context of the audience? The audience and the purpose of the website play a major role in determining the nature of all elements of the website.

Try to examine what the purpose of the website is. Is the purpose clearly specified? Is the purpose distinct and easily recognisable? Is it reinforced throughout the site? Does the content match the purpose of the site? Does it appear as if the purpose meets the needs of the target audience?

Slide 3: Navigation

Another element that you would need to examine is the navigation of the site. Examine if the site has a consistent feel and appearance. Is the information clearly organised and easy to read? Is it easy to navigate the site? This simply means how user-friendly the site is with regards to finding and accessing information. Are there too many clicks before the required information is found? Are the navigation methods consistent and in similar locations? Is it easy to leave and return to the site? This is important because sometimes viewers get lost once they leave the page and often have to go through a cumbersome process to get back to the main page. Do also examine if the viewers become lost when accessing newly opened browser windows from the site. Are the symbols, icons, photos or graphics used for navigation obvious in terms of what they represent?

Slide 4: Currency

The currency or regularity of updating information is vital for some types of information more than others. Websites that contain historical information do not need to be updated as regularly as those that contain every day, current information. Try to identify when the website was last revised, modified or updated? Is the site well-maintained? Are the links current and working or do they lead to outdated pages and/or error messages. Viewers can get frustrated when they click on a link that does not exist anymore. Issues such as this may impact on the impression they have of the organisation.

Slide 5: Design, organization and ease of use.

Design, organisation and ease of use are important considerations. Websites can provide useful sources of information but if they are slow to load and/or difficult to navigate, search or read, then their contribution or usefulness will be diminished. Do assess if the website is clearly organised and easy to read, use and navigate. Are there ‘Help” or ‘Search Tips’ tabs available where appropriate on the site? If the website is large, is a search capability provided? If so, is it easy to use?

Slide 6: Content

The most important aspect of a website is its content. It is the content that drives the traffic. Content that meets needs will draw visitors to the site. Review the website for its content. Does the site have a substantial amount of significant, interesting text and visual content for its target audience? Does it have better content than its competitors? Is the content frequently updated? Are the old items archived? Is there a ‘Print’ button available for documents that need to be printed? Does the site provide balanced, objective or factual information? Does the site provide subjective, editorial or opinion statements? Is the site a forum for a personal, political or ideological bias? Is the point of view presented in a direct manner or is it presented in an unbalanced and unreasonable way?

All the questions highlighted in this presentation will help you review a website in a more comprehensive manner and will possibly assist you towards coming up with recommendations to improve on the site’s online presence. Do not forget however to make an overall assessment of the website. Although you may have looked at the individual elements of the site, it is equally important to provide and overall assessment with regards to the big picture.

Slide 7: References

The information shared with you in this presentation was accessed from the sources identified on this slide. For more information on how to critique websites, do refer to the sources.