



Chapter IX

Challenges in Building a Culture-Centric Web Site

Tom S. Chan

Southern New Hampshire University, USA

Abstract

This chapter discusses the challenges in constructing a culture-centric Web site. The Internet has expanded business opportunities into global marketplaces that were virtually unreachable in the past. With business Web sites reaching international audiences, cultural differences are an important issue in interface design. Global Web sites must be culture-centric, taking into account the attitude, technology, language, communication, sensibility, symbolism, and interface usability of targeted communities. Site design and development also should follow the Unicode standard for multilingual support with implementation done on UTF-8-enabled operating systems and applications. Globalization has led many people to become more sensitive to cultural diversity. The author hopes that understanding and awareness of international user needs, limitations, and expectations will lead to global Web sites with improved usability and sensitivity.

Introduction

The Internet has revolutionized international business and global marketing. Roughly speaking, the Internet is a network of computers interconnected throughout the world and operating on a standard protocol that allows data to be transmitted. Until the early 1990s, the Internet was primarily the domain of the military and academia. The development of new software and technologies turned the Internet (Net) into a commercial medium that has transformed businesses worldwide. There is a strong international market, and businesses are taking note. From 106.4 million online buyers worldwide in 2000, the number is expected to hit 464.1 million by 2006 (Campanelli, 2004). Along with incorporating user-centric design, a business Web site must be culture-centric. A U.S. Web site designer must understand that international users' needs and expectations may be different than U.S. users. Differences in cultural attitudes, technological limitations, linguistics, communication, aesthetic sensibility, symbolism, and interface usability all must be well thought out. Furthermore, the computer platforms also must have multilingual supports.

Background

Constructing successful global Web sites involves three knowledge domains: business operation, technical standard, and interface design. Business issues facing global e-commerce operations are abundant. Chun, Honda, and Schwane (2005) show that these issues include logistics and distribution, financial and technological infrastructures, legal frameworks, and strategic business alliances. The technical standard domain deals with issues such as HTML, Unicode, character set, operating system, application, and browser supports; these are prerequisites for proper multilingual content implementation. This article focuses on both technical standard and interface design issues for global Web sites.

Research in user interface design has been centered on layout, navigation, and performance issues (Lynch & Horton, 1999, Spool, Scanlon, Schroeder, Snyder, & DeAngelo, 1999). While the research provides good guidance for page design, it does not address global site design issues. Scheiderman (1998) proposed a universal accessibility concept that addresses user diversity. Marcus and Gould (2000) studied interface design in terms of cultural perception of information content, images, icons, and symbolism. Huang and Tilley (2001) examined content and structure challenges associated with multilingual Web sites. These research efforts provided a glimpse at both the complexity and opportunity associated with Web usability design in a global economy. The research is still in its early stages, and more investigations are needed on usability, cultural, and linguistic issues.

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/challenges-building-culture-centric-web/23042

Related Content

Computer Service Support at Glenview Hospital

Martha Garcia-Murillo, Paula Maxwell, Simon Boyce, Raymond St. Denis and William Bistline (2003). *Annals of Cases on Information Technology: Volume 5* (pp. 387-400). www.irma-international.org/article/computer-service-support-glenview-hospital/44554

Library Services to Patrons With Disabilities

Abiola Bukola Elaturoti (2021). *Handbook of Research on Information and Records Management in the Fourth Industrial Revolution* (pp. 141-158). www.irma-international.org/chapter/library-services-to-patrons-with-disabilities/284723

Leader-Facilitated Relationship Building in Virtual Teams

David J. Pauleen (2009). *Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology, Second Edition* (pp. 2390-2395). www.irma-international.org/chapter/leader-facilitated-relationship-building-virtual/13917

E*Trade Securities, Inc., Pioneer On-Line Trader, Struggles to Stay on Top

Adam T. Elegant and Ramiro Montealegre (2001). *Annals of Cases on Information Technology: Applications and Management in Organizations* (pp. 89-114). www.irma-international.org/chapter/trade-securities-inc-pioneer-line/44609

An Ontology-Driven Knowledge-Based System for Modeling Cybersecurity Architectures in Smart Cities and Open Data Environments

Vladimir Sobeslav, Pavel Cech, Josef Horalek, Daniela Ponce and Patrik Urbanik (2026). *Journal of Cases on Information Technology* (pp. 1-53). www.irma-international.org/article/an-ontology-driven-knowledge-based-system-for-modeling-cybersecurity-architectures-in-smart-cities-and-open-data-environments/399500