

Implementing a Website to Achieve the Communicative Goals of the Business Administration College

A Qualitative Study Applied to the College of Business Administration at Taibah University, Saudi Arabia

Ahmad Abdelqader Abuseeni
Department of MIS, Taibah University, Medina, Saudi Arabi

Abstract

In the world today, in which the Internet and websites have become an essential part of the management of the work of institutions and universities because it provides fast communication and business achievement, which has become a measure of the efficiency of any institution in today's world, therefore, there is a growing need for a website that is compatible with this development and represents the institutions to keep up with the increasing pace of communication. In this study, an applied qualitative approach was adopted to highlight the significance of the College of business administration website and its role in achieving the communicative goals of the college. Here, an evaluation tool was proposed by the researcher to assess the communication requirements in the college of business administration website, these requirements were categorized in rank order of importance and assigned a numerical point weighting. The main findings, we get as a result of this research are puts forward an evaluation tool to assess the current college website, that would assist the institutions for better understanding the requirements of a compatible website for their communication strategies and goals, this will open the door to improve an electronic system for evaluating websites, Which may be varied according to the objectives and mission of the institution.

Keywords: College of business administration website, communicative goals, Communication strategies.

1. Introduction

Due to the tremendous developments in the field of communication and information technology in recent years, compounded by the effects of the direct digital revolution on human life in all economic, social and cultural levels, positive developments should be established in the institution to keep in pace with the growth of information communication technologies and to exploit available and renewable resources, it is therefore necessary for each institution to build a website that reflects its mission and objectives in which all means and potentials are available to help achieve those objectives, Samia, Z.K. (2008). In the case of universities and colleges the website used to address, the educational requirements of users by facilitating the process of obtaining information and clarifying user queries, anywhere and at any time, while building a communicative relationship with other colleges and training partners, both in a local and global context, so this website need to be integrated with the college communicative strategies, hence the urgent need to provide a means to determine the standards that must be available at the university college site, This is what we hope will be highlighted through this research.

The organization of the research was divided into eight sections, introduction was in the first which will also contain the problem of the study and a reviews of previous related research, research objectives, research significance, and the scope of the research, next in the second section we discuss the research methodology with subsections, site selection and the role of the researcher, data collection strategies, data collection time period, credibility and validity, data analysis strategy, then next in the third section communication strategies at the college of business administration and website evaluation criteria were discussed in details, then in section four the proposed evaluation tool is presented, the results and conclusions and recommendations and future work were discussed in section five and six and seven respectively the final section was the references.

1.1 The problem of the study:

The study problem was addressed by the following research questions:

1. What factors must be provided by the site College to achieve its communication objectives and develop a communicative link with other business administration colleges in the regional and international levels?
2. How is the effectiveness of the College's website measured against achieving?

1.2 Reviews of previous related research

A series of studies have been conducted into the theme in which this study investigates, including a study by insberg, S. (2007), identified the role of the internet in achieving the strategic goals in communication within an organization, manifested through public and private universities in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

In another study Ginsberg, S. (2007), confirmed the results of a study conducted by Hanan, J. (2015) on the importance of communication moving beyond the role of sole teacher-led communication within the classroom. She argues academic communication should prevail in college websites to deepen the human relationship between the teacher and students.

In comparison, research by Li, L, Finley, J., Pitts, J & Guo, R. (2010), showed that students who use e-mail to communicate with faculty members presented a higher level of satisfaction in obtaining academic assistance outside the classroom than students who do not use e-mail, and when presented with the choice of communicating with faculty staff either through direct contact during a teacher's office hours or via email, students highlighted a preference to communicate with teaching faculty through email. In similar respects, Kuh, G. (1995) found that student participation in college activities and students and faculty communication via university websites have a positive impact on student learning and personal development. Moreover, Kuh, G. & Hu, S. (2001) argued that a positive relationship existed between teachers and students outside of the formal classroom environment.

In another case, Mahmoud, B. (1995) highlighted the role universities needed to play in creating an effective research environment which includes the provision of up-to-date periodicals, membership of online resource networks, implementing educational, scientific and technological knowledge programs to improve teaching as well as participating in local and international conferences and scientific symposiums.

However, in terms of website evaluation many studies have shown that one of the first proposed principles was by Katz, W. (1997) who set scientifically comprehensive evaluation standards. Later, research conducted by Vaigh, H. (2002), which is considered the first Arab study discussing the significance of effectively evaluating electronic sources of information online and on CD format highlighted eight principles in effectively evaluating electronic resources. These included responsibility, context, and strength of user feedback, support, information, financial requirements, formalities and costs. Nonetheless, among the most important studies in this field was a study implemented by Singh, S. (2003), this researcher proposed a list of criteria to help information professionals to evaluate sources of information and the Internet websites in general through four main categories, 'Technical', 'Content Analysis', 'Multimedia', 'User'.

It can be argued that the role of websites in achieving the communicative goals of any organization is not only crucial, but highlights the urgent need to develop a tool to measure how effective websites are in achieving any communicative goal.

1.3 Research objectives

Research objectives can be summarized with two main points:

1. Investigate the significance of the College of business administration's website in achieving its communication.
2. Definitely a tool to evaluate the factors to which the Business Administration, College requires in its site to achieve its communicative goals.

1.4 Research significance

The importance of the study is highlighted by the five following points:

1. This study contributes to the development of the services offered by the College of Business of Administration to students and faculty.
2. This study provides a strategic vision for policy makers that could be implemented by the administrators of the college website, which would contribute to the improvement and development of communicative performance.
3. This study adds to the development and dissemination of scientific research on college and university websites, complimenting earlier researchers in this field and also adds interest for researchers new to the subject area.

1.5 The scope of the research

Research context: College of business administration Taibah University in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

Research period: The Islamic year 1435/1436 (2014-2015) and the first semester of the academic year 1436/1437 (2015-2016).

Research participants: A sample of website users of the College of business administration at Taibah University, including: faculty, students and administrators at the College of business administration from the academic year 1435/1436 (2014-2015) and the first semester of the academic year 1436/1437 (2015-2016).

2. Research Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative approach to the study and required extensive time for allowing observations, in-depth interviews and recording processes within the college environment. The study was implemented in

accordance with the following procedures:

2.1 Site selection

The research participants were chosen from the immediate users of the Taibah University, College of business administration website, which included faculty, administrators, students and conducted during the academic year 1435/1436 (2014-2015) and the first semester of the academic year 1436/1437 (2015-2016).

2.2 The role of the researcher

The researcher applied a participative role in the study, observing through his work as the College of business administration Website Supervisor as well as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Management Information Systems. As users of the website, the researcher conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with students, faculty and administrative staff to convey their opinions required for the data collection stage of the research.

2.3 Data collection strategies

- Observations: Monitoring and recording the messages posted to the college website.
- Abstracts and reports: After each visit to the site the researcher compiled a summary report of each comment posted to the website.
- Interviews: The researcher conducted interviews with a sample population comprising of students, faculty staff and administrative employees.

2.4 Data collection time period

The researcher conduct 30 face-to-face interviews during his role as the college website supervisor over the academic year 1435/1436 (2014-2015), and the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 1436/1437 (2015-2016). The data were subsequently collected and analyzed during the first quarter of 1436 / 1437 (2015-2016).

2.5 Credibility and Validity

In ensuring credibility and validity of the study, the researcher adopted the Wilcot Strategies throughout the data collection process. Here, the researcher adopted the concepts of:

- Talk little and listen a lot
- Accurate documentation.
- Developing questions prior to conducting interviews.
- Feedback from collecting data.
- Authenticity in the measurement tool.

2.6 Data analysis strategy

Data analysis followed an order which first included steps to organize or sequence the data. Organizing the data obtained was structured by the following categories:

General data belong to the sample of the study without personal reference includes faculty members, administrative staff and students.

General data were also analyzed under academic qualification, academic department and finally, years of experience. Data analysis, therefore included:

- Specific data on the college website to provide specific information.
- Specific data related to the content on the college website.
- Specific data related to information required on the college website.
- Specific data related to the level of ease of use for users of the college website.
- Specific data related to how up-to-date the college website was.
- Specific data related to the design, layout and style of the college website.

Secondly, the study of all the data collected is entirely for the purpose of establishing their relevance for the study.

Thirdly, in relation to data classification, the researcher compiled data that were obtained under the following four categories:

- Data, specifically related to specialist faculty members.
- Data, specifically related to non-specialist faculty members.
- Data on administrative staff.
- Data, specifically related to students.

Fourthly, with reference to data coding, the researcher coded the data while conducting the data analysis, so the symbols A, B, C, D, were allocated to each responsive in every classification of data category.

3. Communication strategies at the College of business administration and website evaluation criteria

The website is a set of electronic pages that contain text, images and web elements belonging to an organization, the website of the college of business administration is a collection of web pages within the university's main website, and contains information relevant to the college of business administration, in this case, the website means the website of College of business administration at Taibah University.

The communication goals of any organization in general, are to create awareness, knowledge transfer, present an idea, facilitate dialogue, form attitudes and to stimulate thought provoking concepts in order to achieve and facilitate internal communication strategies (between management and staff), outgoing messages (sharing information with the community users) as well as incoming messages (feedback) Al-saeed, Ramadan (2000).

In discussing previous studies and collecting data during the research period, the researcher found that the College of business administration website is an electronic educational resource designed to provide an improved flow of communication between all students, teaching faculty, administrative staff, other departments and colleges within the university and the local community. The College of business administration website also worked to break down barriers in communication between the university and training partners in the business sector in facilitating the delivery of the college's vision in developing its internal communications (between management and staff), facilitate outgoing communication (sharing information with the local community), facilitate the flow of incoming communication (from user feedback). For reader convenience, Figure 1 below depicts the college of business administration communication strategy.

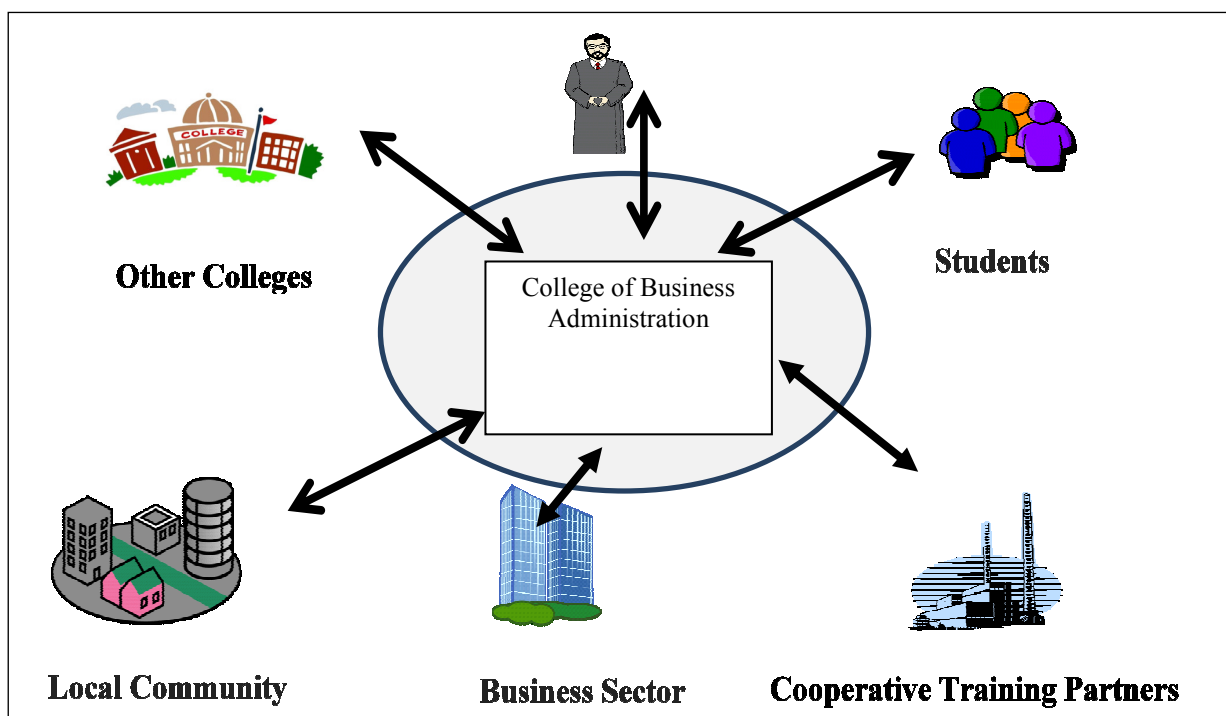


Figure 1: Communication strategies at the College of business administration

3.1 communication strategies levels:

Accordingly, the communication strategies of the business college can be divided up into four levels, Kaku, M. (2001).

Fundamental goals level: These goals comprise of information about the college's mission statement and core values, to ensure that the communication strategy remains compatible with the goals and values of the college.

The objectives of the communications strategy level: This point can be highlighted in the rhetorical question by asking "what is the purpose of the communication strategy?", the important point here is to identify the targets that can be achieved in light of the possibilities available.

Communicative goal level: The communicative goals of the college should be measurable, realistic and achievable. If the success of these goals cannot be measured, then success cannot be determined and therefore the college has no means to build on its factors of success and any evaluative feedback would be ineffective.

The tactical objectives: Every tactical action within the communications strategy of the business college works

towards meeting its communication goals. Usually targets are included in the description of the tactic to be employed to enable decision makers to address any gaps.

3.2 website evaluation criteria:

Based on the analysis of the communication strategies of the college of business administration, the significance of the college website becomes apparent in achieving those strategies at various levels which therefore address the first research question set in this study. Yet, to reaffirm the response to the first research question and address the second and third research questions, the researcher examined the possibility of implementing these standards on the reality of the college of business administration website and proposed special criteria for that website to identify the elements that must be provided in it, to achieve communication objectives and enable the process of linking with business colleges in regional and international universities, this will answer the second question the study.

In order to measure the business administration college's communicative goals, the researcher suggests a measuring tool to evaluate the college website and subsequently organize a criteria for evaluating the college website based on previous studies, the website evaluation criteria were presented to faculty members in the management information systems department at the college of business administration, subsequently, faculty feedback, suggestions and proposals highlighted the significance of two main criteria, first is the thematic criteria, second is the technical and graphical criteria.

3.2.1 The thematic criteria

Basic information and responsibility: Here, it was highlighted that the website should clearly illustrate the full and official name of the organization to which the website represents in order to identify the party responsible for the presentation and dissemination of information that is displayed. The website must also include details on the organization's vision and mission statements and a message from the site owner, in this case, the College Dean, stating the goals the college seeks to achieve. In relation to the first category of the College of business administration's fundamental communicative goals, a comment box or a question and answer link should also be made available on the home page to address any concerns or clarifications required by users of the website. These fundamental communicative goals can relate to the following five points:

- General information on the College of business administration.
- The vision, mission and values of the College.
- The goals of the College.
- The job roles and contact information of faculty members.
- The College departments and their contact information.

Appropriate content:

The web site content is perhaps one of the most important categories within which to assess the college website. The type of information and the volume of services provided by the website are essential to the public. Providing relevant information must come at the forefront of priorities and have to be taken into account when assessing the website. The services provided by the website should satisfy the needs of browsing users, take into account cultural norms, values, and knowledge development and the content of intellectual property rights.

Up-to-date: Websites should show a recording of the last update on their web pages, It should be updated regularly to display the date of publishing the website online and the number of times it has updated since its inception and the date of the last website update.

Accuracy: The website should be clear, concise and provide accurate information. This point can be illustrated further in the following points:

User-friendly: There are a number of factors that indicate how user friendly a website is, these factors are as follows:

Ease of use: each web page should be easy to understand and clear to navigate around.

A site map: A site map enables the user to easily browse and navigate around the website.

Navigation: There should be a link or navigation button on every.

Loading time: The time it takes for a user to download pages from the website.

The simplicity of the URL: Uniform Resource Locators or the web address should be simple..

Relevant to the user's needs: In order to attract greater website users, the website should target the needs of the website users and provide enough relevant information in an attractive fashion.

3.2.2 The technical and graphical criteria.

Addressing these points can help in reducing the number of problems expected to occur when running a website. This is consistent with the first and second and third level of the business administration college's communication strategy. These points are summarized below:

- Web browser compatible with the College website.
- Website compatibility with the website user's hardware, whether personal computers, smart phones or tablet computers are fundamental.

- The appropriate application of multimedia features on the website, including graphics, audio files, character movement, video and so forth.
- The website user interface is designed in a way that the website user experiences site simplicity, clarity and is drawn into its attractive web page layout.
- Line formatting: The inclusion of standardization in font size and line spacing.
- Appropriate use of colors: Colors that are too bright, florescent or detract the user away from the website content in any way should not be applied. This applies to both text and background color use. Colors should not be used if the tone and texture vary dramatically from other colors used in the web page Soft colors that do not hinder the user's ability to read website content should be applied.
- Web page layout: The layout of web pages is important to improve user navigation around the website. In clarifying the above points, the researcher illustrates the relationship between the communicative goals of the college of business administration and the college website as shown in Figure 2.

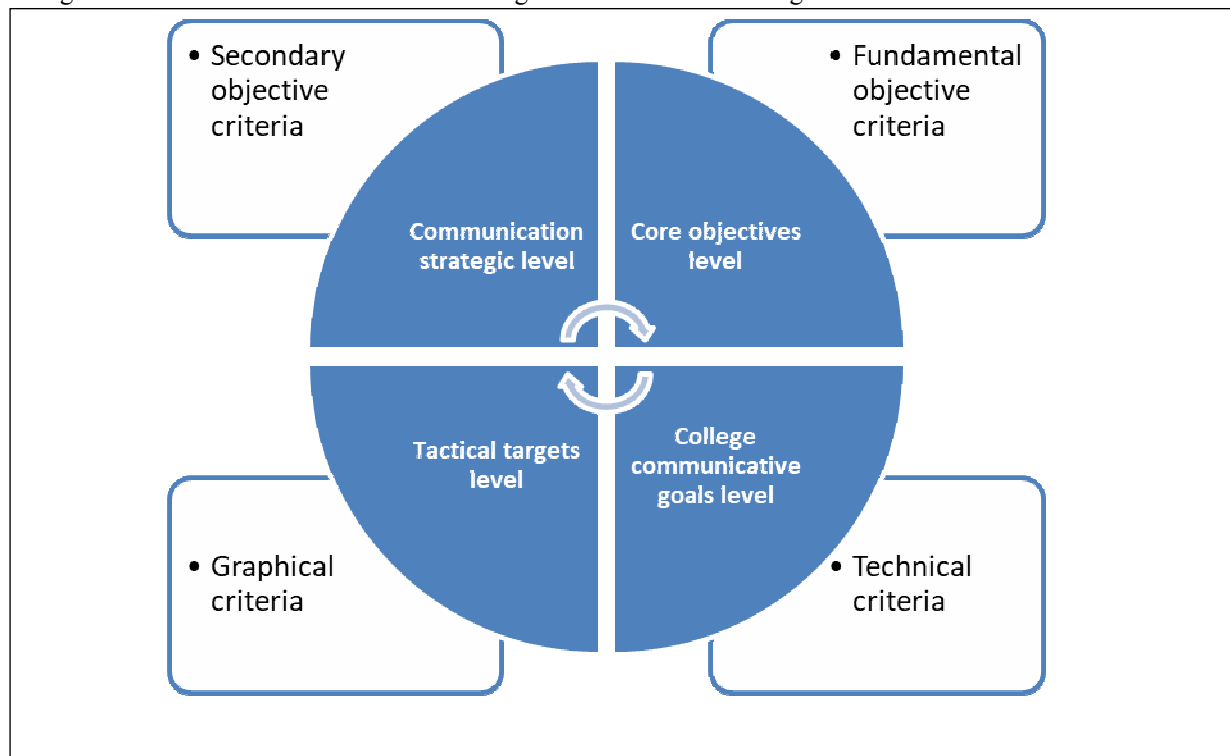


Figure 2: The relationship between the communicative goals of the College of business administration and the College website.

4. Proposed evaluation tool:

In order to clearly measure and evaluate the goals of the college of business administration website, an evaluation/measuring tool should be built to clearly highlight the requirements the College. Here, an evaluation tool was proposed by the researcher to assess the communication requirements in the business administration college. Based on previous studies in section 2 and analysis in section 3, these requirements were categorized in rank order of importance and assigned a numerical point weighting. The results from the research were obtained from observations and interviews and were categorized under the following sections: website fundamental objective criteria (with a total 72 point weighting) and technical and graphical criteria (with a total 28 point weighting), totaling 100 %.

Table 1: A proposed evaluation tool to assess the website communication requirements for the College of business administration .

First: Website Fundamental Objective Criteria					
	Items	Available and Adequate	Available but not Adequate	Not Available	total
Basic Information & Responsibility 20 points	Information on the College.	4	2	0	4
	Vision, mission and values.	4	2	0	4
	College Objectives.	4	2	0	4
	Faculty member names and their contact details.	4	2	0	4
	Teaching departments within the college and their administrative contact details.	4	2	0	4
Accuracy 16 points	Unified font and color.	4	2	0	4
	Documented references and sources.	4	2	0	4
	Absence of typographical, grammatical and spelling errors.	4	2	0	4
	Clarity of figures and tables.	4	2	0	4
Contents (Information required by the web user) 14 points	Offers the possibility of contact between students and teaching faculty.	2	1	0	2
	Course specification icons, study plan, books and references.	2	1	0	2
	Ability to initiate online requests and tracking / follow-up of requests.	2	1	0	2
	Online study guide, student adviser contact information, university rules and regulations, a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ's).	2	1	0	2
	Visitors comments box	3	2	0	2
	University news and announcements	1	0.5	0	1
	List of student partnership programs, training and employment companies.	1	0.5	0	1
Update 12 points	The existence of active internal and external web links.	1	0.5	0	1
	Frequency of web page updates since inception of website.	5	3	0	5
Ease of Use 10 points	Date of last web page update.	5	3	0	5
	Availability of a site map.	2	1	0	2
	Able to navigate back to the home page.	2	1	0	2
	Ease of loading.	4	2	0	2
	Ease in comprehending the URL.	4	2	0	2
Sub-total					72

Second: Technical and Graphical Criteria					
	Items	Available and Adequate	Available but not Adequate	Not Available	total
Compatibility 10 points	Compatibility with common web browsers.	5	3	0	5
	Compatibility with common electronic and mobile devices.	5	3	0	5
Technical Support 9 points	Multimedia features.	3	2	0	3
	Timely technical support.	3	2	0	3
	Connection speed, uploading and downloading time.	3	2	0	3
Attractiveness 9 points	User Interface.	2	1	0	2
	Attractiveness of colors.	2	1	0	2
	Layout (columns, line spacing ...)	2	1	0	2
	Appropriate colors	2	1	0	2
	Appropriate location of content	1	0.5	0	1
Subtotal					28
Total					100

5. Discussion

Based on previous evaluation/measuring tool, website fundamental objective criteria (with a total 72 point weighting) and technical and graphical criteria (with a total 28 point weighting), totaling 100, if the website total weight is 100 that indicates that the site meets all the criteria of the standard, that is, it is available on the site and enough, if the website total weight is 54 that indicates the site achieves the minimum standard items, available on site but insufficiently.

6. Results and conclusions

The value of the research in highlighting how a website can achieve the communicative goals of the college of business administration is significant. It develops a vision that the college of business administration should strive to achieve its communicative goals. This study presented the definition of the business administration's communicative goals and related those goals with a practical application through the development and assessment of the college website. Furthermore, this research puts forward an evaluation tool to assess the current and required elements required for the College website. The results of this research therefore would assist future researchers and website designers to better understand and assist business schools to design unique websites tailored to their communication strategies and goals.

7. Recommendations:

The recommendations of the study are as follows:

- The need to prioritize the location and order of specific content, beginning with information on the College, thereby easily allowing all faculty, staff and students under the umbrella of the College to communicate with each other.
- Consideration should be taken regarding the design, accuracy and the ability to easily browse through the website.
- The need to distinguish the work of the College of business administration from other colleges in the university through the creation and building of links with the business sector in the local community and improve and develop partnerships with cooperative training colleges.
- The need to provide website links that contribute to and facilitate communication with other business colleges in various regional and international universities. For example, creating links with the general secretariat of the colleges of business administration universities in the gulf cooperation Council (GCC).
- The need to provide website links to scientific journals as well as local and international research centers specializing in business management.
- The importance of providing alumni website links to college graduates.
- Attention should be paid to technical and layout standards of the website. A standardized layout of the website would attract a greater number of browsers, thus helping to achieve the communicative goals set by the College.
- The need to regularly review and update the website in terms of color use, illustrations, content or video material.
- Attention to offer recreational activities to assist in attracting students to access and exploit the benefits posed by the College website.
- The need to provide a variety of on-site web content.

8. Future Work

Based on the result of this research, work should be continued in future research is to create a computer program in which this evaluation tool will be used to measure the compatibility of a website in an electronic manner, and then an experimental survey will be carried out to compare the outcomes of this evaluation tool-based program with the results of a traditional questionnaire to assess the effectiveness of this evaluation tool.

References

- Al-saeed, Ramadan (2000), Computer and Information Systems, Alexandria, Orchard Knowledge Publishing,
- insberg, S. (2007). Shared Characteristics of College Faculty Who Are Effective Communicators, The Journal of Effective Teaching, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2007, 3-20.
- Hanan, J. (2015). The Role of the Web in Achieving Communication Objectives of the Organization, the Forum for the third Friday the Saudi Public Relations and the Media, April 8 to 9.
- Ginsberg, S. (2007). Shared Characteristics of College Faculty Who Are Effective Communicators, The Journal Of Effecting Teaching, Vol.7, No 2, 3-20.
- Kaku, M. (2001). The Futuristic Visions of How Science will Change our Lives in the Twenty-First Century. Translation Saad Eddin Manatee. First Edition, Kuwait, Knowledge of the World Series, number 270, (June 2001), p. 17.
- Katz, W. (1997). Introduction To Reference Work : Reference Services and Reference Processes. New York : McGraw Hill.
- Kuh, G. (1995). Student Learning Outside the Classroom: Transcending Artificial Boundaries, Jossey-Bass, Inc., San Francisco, California.
- Kuh, G. & Hu, S. (2001). The Effects of Student-Faculty Interaction in the 1990s. The Review of Higher Education, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 309-332.
- Li, L, Finley, J., Pitts, J & Guo, R. (2010). Which is a better choice for student-faculty interaction: Synchronous or asynchronous communication? Journal of Technology Research

- Mahmoud, B. (1995). Computer Education for the Young, Banha Library, pp 170-172.
- Massad, M. (2007). The Role of the Internet and the Press in Providing Adolescents with Information. Unpublished Master Thesis, Institute of Family Studies, Childhood, Ain Shams University, Department of Information.
- Samia, Z.K. (2008). The Internet and its implications for Egyptian youth: A Sociological Study, Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University, Department of Sociology.
- Singh, S. (2003). An Evaluation of Electronic Reference Sources. Bulletin of Information Technology, Vol.23, No. 2.
- Vaigh, H. (2002). Evaluating Sources of Reference to Electronic Information Available on the Internet and CD-ROM Files, Recent Trends in Libraries and Information, vol. 9, p. 18 (July 2002).