Web Development in the GCC from an HCI and a Globalization/Customization Perspective

Dimitrios Xanthidis¹*, Ali Saad Alali² and Ourania Koutzampasopoulou³

¹Management Information Systems, Dhofar University, Oman; dxanthidis@du.edu.om
²Information Studies, IMSIU University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; asaalali@gmail.com
³Information Systems, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; xarania@gmail.com

Abstract

Objectives: This research aims to evaluate the Websites of companies in the (Gulf Council Cooperation Countries).

Methods: A total of 129 websites from companies in these countries (except Oman) were evaluated against guidelines related to HCI and informational features and to globalization and personalization issues.

Findings: The results are not positive when assessing the interest to implement the features related to the aforementioned issues/characteristics.

Applications/Improvements: A lot more training and awareness is necessary to ensure website quality and to be successful in following their companies’ strategies and offer their potential digital customers a convenient and productive navigation experience.

Keywords: Customization, Evaluation, Globalization, GCC, Human-Computer Interaction, Websites, Web Site Evaluation Index

1. Introduction

Having an online presence of some sort is a “must”, in this mature information era, to such an extent that companies’ executives realize that not having one would most definitely cause damage both to their finances and their whatever “brand”. This means the markets worldwide have passed the “hype” of developing web sites just “for the record” and have returned to the basic principles of aiming to address the simple questions of what is the purpose of this effort and the role it will serve overall in their mission and strategic plan. Web Site Evaluation Index (WSEI) was introduced as a comprehensive template that included the most important characteristics of a quality web solution divided in 4 different categories called “dimensions” namely, “stickiness”, “globalization and customization”, “security and privacy” and “accessibility and availability”. These characteristics were gathered and properly organized from the international relevant literature as necessary guidelines for every company to align with and follow.

The needs are not different in the GCC (Gulf Council Countries, i.e. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, U.A.E., Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman) but only a little particular. In the region, smartphones and tablets are widely used and offer the potential of a dynamic market should the local companies manage to attract these individuals to their online stores. However, the companies and especially the small and medium ones (SMEs) have not made enough progress towards eCommerce. Despite their expressed intentions only about 15% of the businesses in the region have an online presence and in Saudi Arabia, in particular, a study revealed that only 8% of the businesses have online purchase channels available for the potential digital consumer and 54% of the companies developed a web site just to present their products online. At the same time it is a fact that GCC residents do not show, yet, a strong intention to engage in online shopping. They seem to prefer more traditional ways for their shopping experience. From a consumers’ perspective, though, GCC statistics clearly indicate an increase in online shopping. Saudi Arabia and U.A.E. are leaders in the region with the most people (as a percentage) engaging in online purchases and they expect this trend to cause numbers to double by 2016. This trend leads local companies’ executives, not surprisingly, to invest in more attractive web sites, improving their online presence.

Two of the four categories/dimensions of the characteristics/issues that must be addressed for a successful outcome of such efforts as detailed in the WSEI
are the “stickiness” and “globalization and customization” (appendix). Despite the fact there is no standard procedure and criteria for website evaluation (even W3C just offers clues and guidelines), however, a number of academic, professional or other institutes have suggested some elements included in this template.

1.1 “Stickiness”
Pressman agrees that navigation links, whether internal or external, site maps, and internal search engines are amongst those interface concepts that should be addressed by the web developers. University California and Cornell University Library in 2014 provided a list of guidelines concerning issues, e.g. whether a site is updated, signed and credible, with proper links, etc. identified 3 major aspects of websites, i.e. usefulness, service quality and physical accessibility. This is of critical importance since, as believe good quality websites attract more visitors to eCommerce platforms and can present high percentages of digital consumers' retention helping to increase sales.

Another very important aspect of a modern quality web site is interactivity. As state interactivity is a usability characteristic of web sites that has been examined thoroughly in the recent years, as the most needed one in a web site's domain. New visual and communication apps provide the web sites with the ability to interact vividly with users and create significant effects on users' performance with a profound impact on their satisfaction and loyalty level introduced a mathematical model to assess this usability level of the eCommerce web sites that would attempt to analyze the impact of a web site into twelve most important factors of significance in an effort to provide an evaluation report of them in support of decision making.

These features, amongst others constitute what is often called “stickiness” i.e. those elements that make a web site attractive enough for the digital consumer to repeatedly visit it (Listed in Appendix: Dimension I).

1.2 Globalization and Customization
The second dimension of the Web Site Evaluation Index (appendix), is associated with a company's online strategy to address customization/ personalization but also globalization issues that are, among others, at the core of every web solution in the developed countries.

The extent to which customization is important is apparent from the press release of Oracle in which it points to a survey that suggests 81% of the companies' customers are willing to pay more in order to have an improved personalized experience online. Also another study suggests the need to develop eCommerce intelligent systems that will not only seek to satisfy the digital consumers' needs but go as far as even identifying and exploiting, perhaps, their emotions during the online experience. At first glance this might be considered as a trivial task. This was part of the marketing strategy of many international online giants like Amazon.com. The problem now is that the company IT experts will face new and more serious challenges when implementing such an advanced feature given that there are three (3) factors that they will have to manage in parallel:

- A customer base the loyalty of which is a challenge difficult for any company to achieve,
- The customers’ needs are different to the extend there cannot be one online marketing strategy for all,
- The reality of big data makes all this effort even more challenging than it already was.

In principal, the WSEI provides a list of features that could/should be followed in order to implement a marketing strategy addressing the basic issues associated with customization/ personalization that in principal agrees with other similar efforts. This is, also, aligned with the need to protect whatever personal information is kept in various forms in the individual's personal computer while s/he engages in online activities and, perhaps, online purchases.

The second issue is the globalization of the web site. Without a proper strategy to attract people from around the world it is doubtful that the goal of global outreach is achievable. This is one of the main reasons, and probably not a mere coincidence, that the top 25 online companies in the world from different sectors (Google, Facebook, Booking.com, Cisco Systems, Samsung, Starbucks, Microsoft, Wikipedia, LG, Adobe, Intel, HP, IKEA, etc.) are, also, among the top companies worldwide in general according to Byte Level in 2014. Additionally it should be noted that, although English is the dominant international language, but now it is only one of the several used online according to Internet World Stats (English 800.6m, Chinese 649.4m, Spanish 222.4m, Arabic 135.6m, Portuguese 121.8m, Japanese 109.6m, Russian 87.5m, German 81.1m, French 78.9m, Malaysian 75.5m, total online population of 2,802.4m users on
December 31, 2013).

2. Objectives and Methods

The aim of this study is to evaluate the web sites of 129 companies in the GCC against the international human computer interaction guidelines broadly accepted as necessary to follow when designing quality online solutions as well as those that are admittedly a “must” from a business and marketing viewpoint in order to address possible customization and globalization strategies. More specifically its objectives are to:

• Examine whether HCI guidelines are followed in order to ensure the sites’ “stickiness” attribute, i.e. succeeding in attracting digital consumers over and over again,
• Evaluate the informative character of the sites,
• Examine whether customization/personalization issues are addressed and,
• Investigate if the companies evaluated are promoting their online presence on a global scale.

The focal point of the study was the evaluation of the web sites of 129 companies in the GCC and in particular 7 from Bahrain, 12 from Kuwait, 78 from Saudi Arabia, 4 from Qatar and 28 from the U.A.E. (List of the actual web sites at the appendix). The companies were conveniently selected to reflect the population size of the countries, as much as that was possible. These web sites were examined against two groups of questions/issues, namely those on “stickiness” (i.e. human-computer interaction and information related questions) and those related to customization/ globalization. The WSEI template was used for the evaluation and in particular the dimensions I and II.

More specifically, dimension I issues, i.e. those related to “stickiness” (HCI and information characteristics) were addressed as follows:

• Is there a tendency to have scrolling mechanisms in the site, i.e. having pages of large size to trigger them?
• Are the hyperlinks easily accessible, at a glance, and distinguishable from the rest of the text, perhaps through the use of icons/pictures?
• Are there dead hyperlinks or links to irrelevant pages?
• Is there a site map or a site-tree available in the web site?
• Is the general interface appropriate and appealing?
• Is additional information provided to the visitors and, in general, is the info signed, credible and updated?
• Is there any type of “search engine” available?
• Are there email links, online surveys, feedback forms, or similar available for the site users?
• Is there any online help available?
• Does the site suffer from annoying and/or disturbing elements?

Additionally, dimension II issues, i.e. those related to “customization and globalization” were, also, addressed as follows:

• Which languages are supported, i.e. English, Spanish, Chinese, French, German, other (Greek, Turkish, Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese, etc.)?
• Does the color of the web site match with the cultural background (Western, Asian, etc.) of the targeted population?
• Is there any briefing/ information provided concerning import/ export and taxation issues?
• Is there information available on possible restrictions applicable for a commodity to be exported/ imported to/ from certain countries?
• Is there a list of countries to which import/ export restrictions apply?
• Are the available shipping/ delivery options listed and explained?
• What is the level of customization of the web site:
  • Level 0: no customization,
  • Level 1: content,
  • Level 2: suggestive,
  • Level 3: informative,
  • Level 4: design,
  • Level 5: language and culture
• What are the payment and shipping/ billing options available? In particular:
  • Is there a list of different payment options?
  • Are there details of each payment option?
  • Is a currency converter available?
  • Does the web site use the universal “postal code” instead of the regional “zip code”?

In all the above questions/issues a negative answer would result in a 0 whereas a positive one would be valued with 1.

3. Findings
3.1 HCI Elements

Table 1 details the results of the evaluation based on human-computer interaction standards followed when developing web sites.

Making sure there are no dead hyperlinks in the web site and that they all link to relevant pages in the company are, one can easily claim, two of the most important requirements for any web solution. They are so essential because, among other things, they show respect for their digital customers and affect, ultimately, a company’s brand overall. Not adhering to these requirements probably will lead the visitors of the web site to have negative first impressions for the company behind. Given the weight of such a fundamental rule, it is a negative surprise to observe that a very significant number of web designers in the GCC do not follow it with 16% of the cases evaluated having hyperlinks to irrelevant pages and 22% with even dead hyperlinks.

Additionally, another element very easy to implement is to avoid the use of scrolling mechanism that in most cases are automatically generated by the system. This can be done by organizing the information in such a way as to use only that which is indeed essential for the visitor to be correctly informed. However, again and despite the easiness of ensuring such a characteristic this basic guideline was not followed almost at all (average 98%). Since the local developers did not follow the aforementioned basic requirements, it was no surprise to find that in only 28% of the sites the evaluation could find a site-tree available (things are worse in U.A.E.) and only in 53% of them there was some type of a site-map.

As to the elements of hyperlinks easily accessible at a glance, font properties of hyperlinks that make them distinct from the rest of the text, and images used as hyperlinks, they were quite adequately addressed (87%, 91% and 81% of the cases respectively). Finally, the sites artistic design was evaluated as appropriate and appealing in 65% of the cases.

3.2 Informative Character

Table 2 presents the evaluation of the web sites addressing issues related to the amount and quality of information provided to their visitors. It is important to note that, during the current Web 2.0 era of Internet and web applications, there are at least two important things the developers must consider when implementing the web solutions. First, they should provide as much credible information as possible assisting in clarifying issues that the digital consumers perhaps are not aware of. Second and following up, they should implement a communication channel that would facilitate an effective interaction between the visitors and the company executives. At the same time it must be ensured that no annoying and/or disturbing elements upset the users’ experience.

There are features that are only needed to be implemented once such as “read more hyperlinks” and “a ‘search’ engine of some sort” which are mostly addressed (82% and 75% of the cases respectively). This is especially so in U.A.E and Kuwait web sites and considerably less in Saudi Arabia (73% and 69% respectively). However,

Table 1. “Stickiness” (i.e. HCI) features implemented*

| Feature                                      | Bahrain (7) | Saudi Arabia (78) | Kuwait (12) | Qatar (4) | U.A.E. (28) | GCC/ Overall (129) |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|
| Use of scrolling mechanisms                  | 0%          | 3%                | 0%          | 0%        | 0%          | 2%                |
| Hyperlinks easily accessible at a glance      | 71%         | 85%               | 92%         | 100%      | 93%         | 87%               |
| Font properties of hyperlinks easy to distinguish | 86%         | 94%               | 92%         | 75%       | 89%         | 91%               |
| Floating hyperlinks embedded in bars         | 14%         | 26%               | 8%          | 50%       | 18%         | 22%               |
| Pictures used as hyperlinks                  | 71%         | 87%               | 42%         | 50%       | 89%         | 81%               |
| Dead hyperlinks                              | 71%         | 83%               | 83%         | 100%      | 57%         | 78%               |
| Hyperlinks to relevant pages                 | 100%        | 83%               | 92%         | 25%       | 86%         | 84%               |
| Site map available                           | 86%         | 47%               | 50%         | 50%       | 61%         | 53%               |
| Site tree available                          | 71%         | 27%               | 50%         | 0%        | 14%         | 28%               |
| Appropriate and appealing                    | 71%         | 58%               | 83%         | 75%       | 75%         | 65%               |

* 100% = Positive evaluation
this might have a second reading which is that there is a conscious effort to satisfy the fundamentals of a quality website without any interest for much more. Also on the positive side, the vast majority of companies made a "feedback form available" to their visitors (86%) and made an effort to avoid "annoying and disturbing elements" that cause stress during the site navigation experience.

On the negative side, it was found that no more than in a third of the web sites the "info in the site was signed and/or credible" in any way (average just 31%) and just in 26% of the cases the "info was updated". This points to a certain lack of strategy to keep the web sites updated and maintained. Again, it seems as if the focus is in launching any type of an appropriate website with no particular business strategy behind it.

Similarly, the results are quite the same when looking into the communication channel from the visitor’s point of view. Even a feature as easy to implement (in a few seconds indeed), i.e. an “email link available for visitors to contact the admins”, was addressed on average in just 47% of the cases and even lower in companies in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, despite the obvious need for that. Likewise in the case of “online help available” which was implemented only in 33% of the web sites with Kuwaiti developers simply ignoring it (8%) and Saudi (26%) following from a serious distance. Finally, everyone seems to completely ignore or be indifferent about offering “online survey available” (average 2%). It could be reasonably claimed that these elements are not adding particular value to the real functionality of a website and overlap, in part, with other similar features. However, there is no doubt that lack of their implementation suggests relative lack of interest on behalf of the companies’ executives to be particularly informative and open to communications with their digital customers.

3.3 Globalization Strategies
Table 3 presents the results from a globalization point of view. Clearly, there are no particular strategies followed to make the websites global.

Indeed, given that English is the international language it is not very positive to observe that less than half (47%) of the Saudi websites support it. This is in contrast with the expressed intentions locally, by public and private authorities, to open up to the international business and commercial community. In the other GCC countries things are much better but there is, still, room for improvements. The other important languages, i.e. Spanish, Chinese, French and German are simply ignored.

Concerning the need for briefing on import/export and taxation issues, information considered essential in today’s global business and commercial environment, it is generally addressed in a limited number of cases (Kuwait: 17%, Saudi Arabia: 18%, Bahrain: 0%) except in UAE (39%) and Qatar (50%). Information about countries that are restricted from any business or commercial activities is not available in the vast majority of local websites (Bahrain 0%, Saudi Arabia 6%, U.A.E. 11%, and Kuwait (25%) except in the case of Qatar (50%) where things are improved. Also, there is no interest in using colors relevant to the target audience. A serious effort is made to provide info on shipping/delivery options available to the visitors (on average 57% of the companies in the area).

3.4 Customization Issues
Table 4 clearly suggests that customization issues are simply
ignored and not addressed at all by the local developers. Websites with no customization are the norm (69%) and only in some cases (22%) content customization appears to be present (even in a limited way).

Websites are much better prepared as to provide a list of payment options (64%) but not as much when addressing, describing rather, these options (24%). Another relevant feature rather easy to implement, that of a currency converter, is also absent. Finally, only in about a third of the websites the universal “postal code” is used instead of the “zip code” which is only used in a limited number of countries.

4. Discussions - Conclusions

The basic reason for a company to deploy an online presence is to inform about its products and/or services possibly offering the opportunity to engage in an online transaction. With this goal in mind the website has to be organized in such a way as to offer to its visitors a comfortable, productive and friendly online experience.

The potential customer needs to feel both familiar with the online environment offered and, at the same time, informed about the products and as safe about the transaction procedures as possible. It is an absolutely false assumption that transaction related information and options are known to the customers by default as it
is also completely wrong to believe that the information provided is what is only valued even if the interface is either basic or poor. Remember, in the information era of the present time the digital consumers have many choices online and most are of rather high quality. There are 3 characteristics that the 129 local websites share:

- The implementation quality, focusing in those elements relevant to the basic information for the visitors and the simple navigation and communication principles, for all of them is such that even novice developers are suffice to address. No advanced technologies are required to realize the features.

- Despite expressed intentions of the opposite, the local developers don’t seem to care a lot about ensuring the globalized character of their online solutions. It is quite apparent that the local web sites are targeting only the local residents and in particular the Arab speakers. Likewise,

- It looks that the concepts/issues of personalization/customization and related ones are completely ignored.

The main conclusions of the study can be describe as follows:

- There is a clear trend, at the time of the evaluation, towards lack of quality and maintenance with a lot of the websites looking abandoned. In some cases it looks that they had no maintenance for years, probably since their original deployment.

- The terms “marketing strategy” and “branding” are largely ignored and there seems to be only the interest to prepare and launch any type of solution with the very basic features that will satisfy their only primitive, for the information era, need for online presence.

- The maturity and effectiveness of the web design strategies is, at best, questionable. It seems there is no particular plan of the goals and expectations from the websites with everything done on an “ad hoc” basis answering to particular needs of the companies as they come up and not addressing in a dynamic way the prospects of a promising online endeavour.

- It looks that, in most cases, stakeholders have not yet realized that their web site is neither a luxury nor an instrument that once created and deployed there is no need to be dealt with again. Such an investment needs constant care, continuous update with new and fresh material, change of topics and themes reflecting the current trends.

In short, given the rapid developments and growth of Internet penetration, eCommerce and digitization in the region and extensive effort by the local governments to train their residents in the new technologies, it is only a matter of a few years before web site development locally moves away from the era of its infancy to the maturity of the information era the rest of the developed countries are experiencing.

5. References

1. Xanthidis D, Nicholas D, Argyrides P. A Proposed Template for the Evaluation of Web Design Strategies. in Emerging Markets and E-Commerce in Developing Economies, IGI Global. 2008; 293–17.

2. Go-Gulf.com. Ecommerce in the Middle East: Statistics and Trends. Available from: www.go-gulf.com/blog/e-commerce-middle-east/. Date accessed: 29/05/2013.

3. Bahaddad AA, Houghton L, Drew S. The Modern Retail Habitats in the Gulf Region: The Experience of the Bahraini Shopper. International Journal of Business and Management. 2013; 8(13):161–74.

4. Brosdahl DJC, Almousa M. Risk Perception and Internet Shopping: Comparing United States and Saudi Arabian Consumers. Journal of Management and Marketing Research. 2013; 13:1–17.

5. Somasundaram A. Ecommerce in Middle East: Statistics and Trends. Slideshare.net, Available from: www.slideshare.net/ajeshks1/e-commerce-in-middle-east-statistics-and-trends-e-commerce-in-middle-east. Date accessed: 31/07/2013.

6. Rory J. Online Sales Forecast to Reach $2bn in Region. Available from: www.thenational.ae/business/industry-insights/retail/online-sales-forecast-to-reach-2bn-in-region. Date accessed: 08/01/2012.

7. Tang J. The Considerations of Web Page Design. WSEAS Transactions on Information Science and Applications. 2009; 6(4):637–46.

8. Pressman RS. Software Engineering: A Practitioner’s Approach, 7th International Edition, McGraw-Hill: New York, 2010.

9. UC Berkeley. Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply and Questions to Ask. UC Berkeley: Teaching Library Internet Workshops. Available from: www.lib.berkeley.edu/teachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html. Date accessed: 08/05/2012.

10. Cornel University Library. Evaluating Web Sites: Criteria and Tools. Available from: olinuris.library/cornell.edu/ref/research/webeval.html#eval. Date accessed: 13/02/2014.

11. Xanthidis D, Argyrides P, Nicholas D. Web Site Evaluation Index: Pilot Test and Evaluation. Proceedings of the 8th WSEAS International Conference of E-Activities and Information Security and Privacy, USA, 2009. p. 241–47.

12. Qi S, Ip C, Leung R, Law R. A New Framework on Web Site
Evaluation. 2010 International Conference on E-Business and E-Government (ICEE), Guangzhou. 2010. p. 78–81.

13. Kuan HH, Bock GW, Vathanophas V. Comparing the Effects of Website Quality on Customer Initial Purchase and Continued Purchase at e-commerce Websites. Behavior and Information Technology, 2008; 27 (1):3–16.

14. Bilkova R, Kopachova H. Enhancing e-commerce by Website Quality. Proceedings of the 2013 International Conference on Business Administration, Marketing and Economics, WSEAS. 2013. p. 41–7.

15. Lee Y, Kozar K. Understanding of Website Usability: Specifying and Measuring Constructs and their Relationships. Decision Support Systems. 2012; 52(2):450–63.

16. Li W, Wei Y. Evaluation of E-Commerce Website based on Grey Multipurpose Decision System. International Conference on Intelligent Computing and Cognitive Informatics (ICICCI), IEEE, Kuala Lumpur. 2010. p. 345–48.

17. Oracle Commerce. B2C Best Practices. Personalize Commerce Experiences. Connect Interactions. Drive Results. Oracle Commerce, Available from: www.oracle.com/us/products/applications/atg/b2c-best-practices-1952111.pdf.

18. Leon S, Nikov A. Emotion-Oriented eCommerce Systems. WSEAS Transactions on Systems. 2010; 9(6):594–606.

19. Jonny R. Marketing Automation in a B2C World. Available from: www.idioplatform.com/personalized-content-marketing-automation-b2cworld/.

20. Goy A, Ardissono L, Petrone G. Personalization in E-Commerce Applications. in Adaptive Web, Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2007; 485–20.

21. Ghani NA, Zidek ZM. Personal Information Privacy Protection in e-commerce. WSEAS Transactions on Information Sciences and Applications. 2009; 6(3):407–16.

22. Byte Level. The 2014 World Globalization Report Card [Online]. Available from: bytelevel.com/reportcard2014/#top25.

23. Internet World Stats. Internet World Users by Languages. Available from: www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm, Date accessed: 30/04/2016.

Appendix A: Evaluation Template

| Dimension I: Stickiness |
|------------------------|
| 1. Lack of tendency to use scrolling mechanisms. |
| 2. Hyperlink placement/style |
| i. Hyperlinks easily accessible? |
| ii. Presence of floating hyperlinks? |
| iii. Font properties (name, size, colour) of the text hyperlinks distinguishing them from the rest of the text? |
| iv. Icons used in graphical type hyperlinks intuitively identifiable, i.e. represent the target object or are they misleading? |
| 3. Hyperlink target/content |
| i. Tendency NOT to have dead hyperlinks in the site (use home page)? |
| ii. Hyperlinks lead to relevant pages? |
| 4. Site maps |
| i. Presence of any type of site map, i.e. site tree diagram, drop-down menus, etc.? |
| ii. Mapping mechanisms informative as to the actual depth the user navigates? |
| 5. Web site user interface attractiveness |
| i. Appropriate and appealing? |
| ii. Lack of distracting/annoying elements? |
| 6. Information quality and completeness |
| i. Any “read more” hyperlinks available clarifying possibly broad, unclear or unknown topics to the reader? |
| ii. Is the information provided in the Web site signed and, thus, credible? |
| iii. Is the information provided updated on a reasonably expected timeliness? |
| iv. Any internal search engine available? |
| 7. Visitor’s feedback enabled and online help available |
| i. Email links available to the visitors? |
| ii. Online surveys available? |
| iii. Feedback forms available? |
| iv. On line help available (e.g. FAQs, etc.)? |
Dimension II: Customization & Globalization

1. Languages supported
   i. English
   ii. Spanish
   iii. Chinese
   iv. French
   v. German
   vi. Other (Turkish, Arabic, Japanese, etc.)

2. Colors used: Is the website color related with the cultural background (Western, Asian, etc.) of the targeted population?

3. Issues related to globalization
   i. Information provided concerning import/ export and taxation issues?
   ii. Any restrictions applicable for a commodity to be exported/ imported to/ from certain countries?
   iii. Any list of countries to which import/ export restrictions apply?
   iv. Any information provided about available shipping/ delivery options?

4. Level of customization the web site achieves
   i. Level 0: No customization
   ii. Level 1: Content, i.e. information based on previous user interaction and preferences stored in log files
   iii. Level 2: Suggestive, i.e. information on relevant/ competitive products
   iv. Level 3: Informative, i.e. further clarifications on issues not in the sphere of the user’s knowledge
   v. Level 4: Design format, i.e. offer user the opportunity to decide the layout of the web site as it appears at the client
   vi. Language and culture, i.e. identifies the user’s language and culture preferences based on the IP address of the user’s system or on the user’s selection of a region/ country from a map/ list available

5. Payment – Shipping/ billing options
   i. List of different payment options
   ii. Detailed description of each payment option available
   iii. Currency converter available
   iv. Use of the universal “postal code’ instead of the regional “zip code”

Appendix B: Websites evaluated

| URL              | Country | URL              | Country |
|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|
| e-stylebh.com    | Bahrain | martarabia.com   | UAE     |
| bahherbalife.com | Bahrain | jadopado.com     | UAE     |
| aswaqtime.com    | Bahrain | sukar.com        | UAE     |
| eshopbahrain.com | Bahrain | aura-b.com       | UAE     |
| alwasat4pc.com   | Bahrain | aido.com         | UAE     |
| dbanksouq.com    | Qatar   | markavip.com     | KSA     |
| dubaitoffers.com | UAE     | alshop.com       | UAE     |
| taiba.ae         | UAE     | sheikha-shopping.com | UAE     |
| jacks.com        | UAE     | steamarah.com    | KSA     |
| flowersdubai.com | UAE     | osool.sa         | KSA     |
| dreamdays.ae     | UAE     | citrusstv.com    | UAE     |
| www.ic4uae.com   | UAE     | http://www.flowers-uae.com | UAE |
| sharafdg.com     | UAE     | izone-stores.com | KSA     |
| cobone.com       | UAE     | ehaveall.com     | Kuwait  |
| mygsm.me         | UAE     | gardeniaflorist.qa | Qatar |
| tejuri.com       | UAE     | www.shoppingshrine.com | Qatar |
| izood.com        | UAE     | http://rainbowsa.com | KSA     |
| advantionline.com| Bahrain | http://www.sokkat-alteeb.com | KSA |
| qbay.com         | Qatar   | https://alwaneshop.com/ | KSA     |
| Website                  | Country | URL                              | Country |
|-------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|
| taqmei.com              | KSA     | http://raqi-store.com/           | KSA     |
| http://www.toyotamunifalnahdi.com | KSA     | http://zubayr.com/               | KSA     |
| http://estilo.ae/       | UAE     | http://www.miss-fash.com/        | KSA     |
| http://www.saudiskins.com | KSA     | Souq.com                         | KSA     |
| http://www.sehha.com/shop | KSA     | homy.com.sa                      | KSA     |
| http://www.netmall.com.sa | KSA     | sqoareej.com                     | KSA     |
| http://iterji.com       | KSA     | saletab.com                      | KSA     |
| http://nadae-shop.com   | KSA     | princessmool.com                 | KSA     |
| arabicatalog.com        | KSA     | 20store.net                      | KSA     |
| desado.com              | UAE     | www.stayli.com                   | KSA     |
| makhsoom.com            | UAE     | albluetooth.com                  | KSA     |
| http://www.pattz.com    | KSA     | shop-zone.co                     | KSA     |
| http://shop.qurtsyah.com.sa | KSA     | shophina.com                     | KSA     |
| http://www.stcsms.com   | KSA     | ddinar.com                       | KSA     |
| http://warqat.com       | KSA     | laylootak.com                    | KSA     |
| http://www.harfone.com  | KSA     | bast6ah.com                      | KSA     |
| http://www.ribbonitta.com | KSA   | cashu.com                        | UAE     |
| http://store.istyle.sa  | KSA     | perfumes-world.com               | KSA     |
| http://mrinksystem.com  | KSA     | 21-shop.com                      | KSA     |
| http://www.massdeals.com.sa | KSA | shoppingtreat.com                | Bahrain |
| http://www.dleeeel.com  | KSA     | extrastores.com                  | KSA     |
| http://otooor.com       | KSA     | vanillashop.com                  | KSA     |
| http://terfih.com/      | KSA     | saudi-trade.com                  | KSA     |
| http://www.imedia.com.sa| KSA     | handy-b.com                      | KSA     |
| http://estore.dng.sa    | KSA     | camstore.doc.sa                  | KSA     |
| http://cd-k.com         | KSA     | abu-nar.com                      | KSA     |
| http://imix-sa.com      | KSA     | online.axiomtelecom.com/ksa      | KSA     |
| http://www.7-line.net   | KSA     | othaimmarkets.com                | KSA     |
| http://www.t-lbs.com    | KSA     | ashjanfashion.com                | KSA     |
| http://www.hungerstation.com | KSA | lemuda.com                       | UAE     |
| http://www.ataab.com    | KSA     | eshopgate.net                    | KSA     |
| http://entagiah.com     | KSA     | sh4sa.com                        | KSA     |
| witty-shop.com          | KSA     | eshtrakat.com                    | KSA     |
| http://pink-touch.com/  | KSA     | dokkanaly.com                    | Kuwait  |
| http://e-nogta.com      | KSA     | hdty.com                         | KSA     |
| http://maroonshop.com   | KSA     | u-mark.net                       | KSA     |
| http://www.ebuyksa.com  | KSA     | lamercato.com                    | Kuwait  |
| http://jmaal.com        | KSA     | polkalicious.com                 | Kuwait  |
| http://cellcamshop.com  | UAE     | http://gojiboutique.com          | Kuwait  |
| http://arabianbazaar.com | UAE     | http://temple.com.kw             | Kuwait  |
| http://mumzworld.com    | KSA     | http://maachla.com               | Kuwait  |
| http://kentessa.com     | UAE     | http://ubuy.com.kw               | Kuwait  |
| http://namshi.com       | KSA     | http://law9eel.com               | Kuwait  |
| http://mydamas.com      | KSA     | http://q8egifts.com              | Kuwait  |
| http://www.fursaty.com/ | KSA     | http://nizaka.com                | Kuwait  |
| http://oleanaboutique.com | Kuwait |                                  | Kuwait  |