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Assessing the Quality of Selangor Islamic Religion Council (MAIS) Website: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

MAIS is the main authority of religious affairs in Selangor. Its website has served an important platform for the state government to communicate with the public matters related to Islam. However, little research was done on the quality of this website. This study used quantitative approach method. Three experienced ICT lecturers were purposively selected to rate the website using Chua, Goh and Ang's web quality indices. Out of 15, the overall quality of the MAIS website is in the range of 9.75 to 12.75. The three dimensions of web quality indices were viewed favourably. However, there is a need to improve on the aesthetic aspect of the website.

Keyword: WebQual, Website Evaluation, State Religious Websites, MAIS, Online Information Seeking

Penilaian Kualiti Laman Sesawang Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS): Satu Kajian Deskriptif

ABSTRAK

MAIS merupakan badan tertinggi dalam hal ehwal Islam di Selangor. Laman sesawangnya menjadi satu wadah bagi kerjaan negeri untuk berinteraksi dengan rakyat Selangor hal berkaitan agama Islam. Namun sedikit kajian dilakukan untuk menilai tahap kualiti laman sesawang ini. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif. Tiga pensyarah ICT yang berpengalaman dipilih untuk menilai kualiti laman sesawang MAIS menggunakan indeks kualiti oleh Chua, Goh dan Ang. Dari 15 jumlah keseluruhan, laman sesawang MAIS dinilai antara 9.75 hingga 12.75. Ketiga – tiga pensyarah positif terhadap tiga dimensi indeks kualiti. Namun, aspek estetika laman sesawang MAIS perlu ditambah baik.

Kata kunci: WebQual, penilaian laman sesawang, laman agama negeri, MAIS, pencarian maklumat atas talian

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INTRODUCTION

Around 4.1 billion people across the globe were using the Internet in 2019, an increase of 5.3% compared to the previous year (International Telecommunication Union, 2019). Echoing the global trend, the Malaysian Communications & Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (2018) reported that the number of Internet users in Malaysia increased from 24.47 millions in 2016 to 28.7 million in 2018. It was further elucidated in the report that Malaysians spent on average 6.6 hours a day online for various reasons; social engagement, entertainment, job seeking, online banking, academic and business activities.

ONLINE INFORMATION SEEKING: RELIGIOUS WEBSITES

According to a 2017 report by the MCMC, 86.9% of 2,402 Internet users surveyed stated that they surfed the Internet to look for information and the majority searched for health information. For the following year, the agency reported that 85.5% of Internet users relied on the Internet as a source of information, but the types of information searched were not provided. However, the agency affirmed that it is common for the Internet to become a preferred source of knowledge due to its "various forms of media presentation" (MCMC, 2018, p. 13).

It is a fact that religions are inseparable from civilised societies. The advent of the Internet allows them to explore and learn more about their beliefs. According to the Pew Research Centre (2004), about 82 million Americans went online for religious and spiritual purposes. Hasan and Haron (2013) interviewed 10 Malay Muslims from two different generations, X and Y, to explore their religious seeking information behaviour on the Internet. They found that the respondents' seeking behaviour had "drifted away from its traditional sources" (p. 1082).

On the other hand, Bakar (2011) discovered that rural women in Malaysia considered the Internet as an important source of religious information after food, child education, health and finance. When interviewing a group of Muslim and non-Muslim participants, Wan-Chik, Clough, and Ford (2011) found that they used the Internet to search for and learn about Qur'an, *hadīth* and other Islamic topics because of its speed, easy access and retrieval. They further added that these participants used the retrieved information to help with their academic activities, satisfy their spiritual and intellectual endeavours and exchange information.

QUALITY OF STATE GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

Websites on the Internet can be of tremendous advantage to all walks of life. However, not all are usable despite their attractiveness, interactivity and outstanding design technology (Beirekdar, Vanderdonckt, & Noirhomme-Fraiture, 2002). According to Witten (2018), web usability is important because it concerns about how the website can help meet customers' expectations. Henry (2006), on the other hand, emphasised the pivotal role played by content developers in ensuring web accessibility for users with and without disabilities.

The MCMC (2018) reported that 44.5% of Internet users visited e-government websites in 2018. Considering its stagnant trend since 2014, the agency, thus, proposed to improve e-government services rendered to the public. State governments are usually autonomous in

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exercising their policies. Their policies and activities are usually prevalent in their official websites. Oni and colleagues (2016) studied all the state-government websites in Nigeria in order to know how these states implemented the National IT policy. They found that all the websites were unsatisfactory. When studying all the 13 state-based Islamic institutional websites in Malaysia, Yusof (2016) discovered that they were credible but suggested to improve on their accuracy, currency and coverage features.

WEBSITE EVALUATION AND WEB QUALITY INDICES

Poorly designed websites can drive potential customers away (Shorr, 2016; Brinker, 2020). When customers are not impressed or frustrated by the websites they are viewing, they may stop exploring the other pages. This can result in higher bounce rate. (Google.com., 2015). In addition, Flavián, Guinalíu, and Gurrea (2006) found that greater website usability had a positive impact on user satisfaction which could lead to greater website loyalty. To evaluate a website, Kapoun (1998) suggested considering these five aspects of website evaluation; authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency and coverage.

Since websites are intended for customers or general viewers, having their feedback can provide valuable input. In order to capture 'the voice of the web-site user', Barnes and Vidgen (2000) focused on usability, information and service interaction. Loiacono, Watson, and Goodhue (2007)'s version of WebQual, on the other hand, is grounded in five constructs; usefulness, ease of use, entertainment, complementary relationship and intent to use the web site. However, these indices are applicable to e-commerce or for-profit websites. To specifically assess government websites, Chua, Goh and Ang (2010) developed their version of WebQual based on three broad aspects; system quality, information quality and service quality. The framework consists of 12 items as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Chua, Goh and Ang (2010)'s WebQual Framework

	Dimensions	Description
System quality	Usability	Ease with which users can use the web site easily and quickly
	Responsiveness	Speed of accessing and downloading information from the web site
	Ease of access	Ease with which the web site can be located using search engines
	Privacy	Protection against personal information leakage and the prevention of identity fraud
Information quality	Accuracy	Extent to which information is error free, complete and consistently represented on the web site
	Dependability	Extent to which information on the web site is current, reliable, and given appropriately
	Coverage	Breadth of the information presented on the web site
	Ease of use	Accessibility and ease of manipulation of information on the web site
Service quality	Empathy	Extent to which individualised information and attention have been given to users
	Interactivity	Extent to which users can exercise control and exchange information on the web site
	Playfulness	The degree of cognitive spontaneity in online interactions
	Aesthetic appeal	The use of fonts, colours, layout, and graphics on the web site

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MAIS AND ITS WEBSITE

MAIS is the main authority of religious affairs in Selangor and is responsible for developing the socioeconomics of Selangor Muslims (MAIS, 2019). Steered by its well-planned state policies and the Islamic Religious Administration Enactment (State of Selangor) 2003, Ibrahim, Ab Rahman, and Zakaria (2019) were convinced that the council plays a pivotal role in looking after affairs of Muslims in Selangor. The council has been proactive in social engagement activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic outbreaks in 2020, MAIS managed to collect a fund of RM77, 371 to help those affected including health workers and enforcement officers (Muzammil, 2020).

Along with its agency, Yayasan Islam Darul Ehsan (YIDE), they managed to distribute RM742, 000 to orphans across the state for the 'Eid festive (MAIS, 2020). When asked about MAIS, Daud and colleagues (2018) found that Selangor people had an excellent understanding about the council and its functions. Alias, Wahid and Al-Hadi (2017), however, revealed that MAIS was least efficient in the aspect of *zakāt* management compared to the other religious institutions studied. The main website of MAIS serves an important platform to reach out to the public. Recently, the council had launched e-wasiat to allow Muslims in Selangor to write their wills online (Manan, 2020).

Yusof (2016) claimed that previous studies of religious websites did not take into account the credibility of these websites. She thus interviewed relevant scholars to express their opinions on the credibility of 13 Islamic Religious Institutional (IRI) websites including MAIS based on the five dimensions of web credibility framework; accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and coverage. The websites were found to be credible but needed improvements on the aspects of accuracy, currency and coverage. Although some of the dimensions used by Yusof (2016) may be applicable to web evaluation studies, the framework did not consider other aspects of web quality such as web design and consumer perception. In addition, she used qualitative approach methodology to study the IRI websites. So, this study was to fill this gap.

METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative approach methodology. Chua, Goh and Ang's version of WebQual (See Table 1) was employed to evaluate the perceived quality of the MAIS website. In their original study, three graduate assistants with information system background were recruited to help analyse 200 government websites in order to find the correlation between the prevalence and use of Web 2.0 application and the perceived quality. To determine the presence of Web 2.0 and the perceived quality of the websites, a content analysis was used for the former and a five-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) for the latter. Since the aim of this study was to evaluate the quality of the MAIS website, only the quality framework was used.

Similar to Chua and his colleagues' approach, three experienced Information and Communication Technology lecturers (ICT) (henceforth known simply as coders) from the International Islamic University (IIUM) with computer sciences background were conveniently selected to evaluate the website. They were required to be familiar with the website first and later independently rate the websites using a five-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) to indicate their agreement on the quality dimensions

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observed. An Internet questionnaire was used because it was more convenient compared to paper-based (Barnes & Vidgen, 2000). The scoring sheet is given in the Appendix.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the individual scores for all the items, the averages and overall quality of MAIS website as rated by the coders. To calculate the scores for system quality, information quality, and service quality, the average of the scores from their constituent dimensions was taken, yielding a minimum value of 1 and maximum value of 5. Finally, the overall quality was computed by adding the scores of the three aspects of quality, yielding a minimum value of 3 and a maximum value of 15.

Table 2: Individual Scores, Averages and Overall Quality

Dimension	Item	Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 3
	Usability	2	5	4
System	Responsiveness	4	5	4
Quality	Ease of Access	4	4	4
	Privacy	4	4	3
	Average	**3.5**	**4.5**	**3.75**
	Accuracy	2	4	4
Information	Dependability	4	4	4
Quality	Coverage	4	4	4
	Ease of use	2	4	4
	Average	**3**	**4**	**4**
	Empathy	4	4	4
Service	Interactivity	4	4	4
Quality	Playfulness	4	4	4
	Aesthetic Appeal	1	5	4
	Average	**3.25**	**4.25**	**4**
Overall Quality		**9.75**	**12.75**	**11.75**

System quality refers to "a measure of a web site's functionality" (Chua, Goh & Ang, 2010, p. 179). It comprises usability, responsiveness, ease of access and privacy. The system quality as rated by the coders is in the range of 3.5 to 4.5 suggesting that the coders viewed the system favourably. All the coders believed that the website could be located easily when typed in search engines. Palmer (2002) discovered that responsiveness and download delays are significantly correlated with web success (user satisfaction, frequency of use and intent to return). The findings suggest that those who visit the MAIS website may plan to visit it again and have positive experience when navigating through it.

Unlike the other two coders, Coder 1 disagreed with the usability statement. Usability of websites refers to "an attribute that describes how easily and quickly a web site can be used" (Chua, Goh & Ang, 2010, p. 179). The past studies (Nathan, Yeow, & Murugesan, 2008; Bringula & Basa, 2011) revealed that websites' aesthetics is the leading factor to web usability. Based on the findings, Coder 1 rated aesthetic the lowest (strongly disagree). One possible explanation is that the website was not visually appealing to her. Because of that, it could impact her experience when using the website as supported in the literature.

The second dimension of this quality framework is information quality. It is "a measure of the value which the information provides to the user of that information" (Halaris, Magoutas, Papadomichelaki, & Mentzas, 2007, p. 385). In this study, this dimension concerns with the accuracy, dependability, coverage and ease of use of the information provided. A meta-

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analysis by Petter, DeLone, and McLean (2008) found that information quality is strongly associated with user satisfaction. All the coders agreed that the information provided by MAIS in its official websites was current, reliable and comprehensive. This conflicts with Yusof's 2016 studies when she studied all the state-based Islamic religious websites including MAIS. Based one the five dimensions of web credibility, she opined that the websites needed improvements on their accuracy and coverage. As for the accuracy and ease of use, Coder 1 disagreed with these two items. This is in harmony with Yusof's findings where she received mixed responses from the experts interviewed on the accuracy of the state-based religious websites. As for the ease of use aspect, the following paragraph will elucidate this.

Finally, the service quality "focuses on the gap between customer expectations and the service delivered" (Mitra & Gupta, 2008, p. 282). All the coders agreed with the empathy, interactivity and playfulness of the website. The functions of the website are manifold. It does not only serve as a learning resource for visitors, Muslims in particular, but it is also equipped with many functions of this websites such as news and online transactions. These features could retain the visitors to keep visiting the website which will eventually result in lower bounce rate. (Google.com., 2015). Moreover, its individualized infomation such as e-wasiat (Manan, 2020) and contributions to the needy (MAIS, 2020) could enhance the empathy aspect of the website.

As for the aesthetic aspect of the website, Coder 1 rated it the lowest (strongly disagreed). Van der Heijden (2003) asserted that web sites that are visually attractive tend to influence users' perceptions of their usefulness, enjoyment and ease of use. The findings of this study echo this assertion. Coder 1's rating on the usability and ease of use of the website was found to be low. The trend seems true for the other two coders. When they were positive about the visual presentation of the website, they were also positive about its usability and ease of use. Since the aesthetic aspect can be very subjective, content developers should always consider web visitors with and without disabilities as recommended by Henry (2006).

CONCLUSION

In general, the MAIS website was perceived positive by the three experienced ICT lecturers. Although the sample size of this study was small, the responses gained from them should provide important insights into website quality studies.

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APPENDIX: ONLINE SCORING SHEET

QUALITY OF MAIS WEBSITE

This study seeks to evaluate the quality of the Selangor Islamic Religion Council (MAIS) website based on Chua and Goh (2010)'s web quality indices. The framework consists of three aspects (system quality, information quality and service quality) with twelve web quality indices.

As an expert, it would be great if you could familiarise yourself with the website first and rate accordingly based on a five-point Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

MAIS website: https://www.mais.gov.my

Your email address (**rauyani@iium.edu.my**) will be recorded when you submit this form. Not you? Switch account

* Required

SYSTEM QUALITY *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Ease with which users can use the web site easily and quickly	○	○	○	○	○
Speed of accessing and downloading information from the web site	○	○	○	○	○
Ease with which the web site can be located using search engines	○	○	○	○	○
Protection against personal information leakage and the prevention of identity fraud	○	○	○	○	○

INFORMATION QUALITY *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Extent to which information is error free, complete and consistently represented on the web site	○	○	○	○	○
Extent to which information on the web site is current, reliable, and given appropriately	○	○	○	○	○
Breadth of the information presented on the web site	○	○	○	○	○
Accessibility and ease of manipulation of information on the web site	○	○	○	○	○

SERVICE QUALITY *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Extent to which individualised information and attention have been given to users	○	○	○	○	○
Extent to which users can exercise control and exchange information on the web site	○	○	○	○	○
The degree of cognitive spontaneity in online interactions	○	○	○	○	○
The use of fonts, colours, layout, and graphics on the web site	○	○	○	○	○