

Assessing Electronic Products under Web for Karate in Iranian and Japanese Leagues

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Abstract This paper assesses role of e-products under web and its effect on marketing. The usability, ease of use, visual appeal, and empathy of e-products under web are investigated as well as other components including training, researching, informative, ethnic, and technical products. This research also evaluates the perceived quality of e-products via research-made questionnaire and WebQual scale in Iran as a Middle East country, and Japan as mother karate leagues. Findings were analyzed through one-way variance analysis, Bonferroni method and independent T by SPSS. The paper reports Iran poses the lower status in the comparison with Japan in the educational, research, information and technical components. The results show that Iranian e-products has no significant differences with Japanese e-products but in the terms of quality of websites based on WebQual scale has a low quality and only in the terms of ease of use indicates desirable quality is higher.

Keywords Electronic Products, WebQual, Quality, Marketing, Karate

1. Introduction

Marketing is a key practical field for all of today's businesses, should be viewed as a process rather than as a theoretical concept and should be a common concept for each personnel. Marketing should not only be seen in the area of responsibility of an individual, but this is the duty of every person who is employed in a professional sport. Often wrongly assumed that marketing is most poor practices of some sports. This misconception is due to the fact that this term is not understood correctly and it is not practiced as it should implemented by any person (Watts, 2002). Today, different definitions have been proposed for marketing, each of these definitions indicates a part of marketing activities. According to Kotler (2006) who is one of the most prominent experts in marketing: "Marketing is *satisfying needs and wants through an exchange process*" i.e. marketing is a sort of social-managerial activity that through it, people and groups can satisfy their needs and wants by producing, creating and exchanging products and values (Kotler and Armstrong, 2006).

Sports marketing begins when a person decides to satisfy his-her needs and demands through a particular method which is called exchange. Creating change in the exchanges of sport market should be considered in order to increase the

satisfaction of sports' needs and demands. Marketing includes an ongoing process. Marketing environment is dynamic; i.e. the market is changing. Market size depends on the number of people: 1 - interested in sport or sports products. 2. People willing to exchange the necessary resources to achieve their sport products. However, each one of athletes, purchaser a sport product, and spectators of a sport competition are considered as a sport market (Hasanzadeh, 2005). One of the marketing communication channels is web sites that Internet users around the world utilize for their own information needs and consequently the use of this information carrier for gaining information of clubs and sports news in general is growing. Accessing updated information with the minimum possible time can be considered as the most striking feature of this information environment. Internet has changed the information seeking behavior and information needs approach of the users (Ybarra, 2008). This is largely emerged especially in the field of sports. Internet with its unique features has provided a new kind of interaction between clubs and athletes as well as public till that extent that in recent years the relationship between clubs and athletes transformed from its traditional model (Winker, 2000). Advancing the long-term relationships with customers is the key to stability in an increasingly dynamic environment; this means that traditional communication approach can no longer meet the needs of the Internet age (Wu Hung, 2009). Successful and effective website design and maintain this position has become a very complex issue in the world of e-commerce. And success in this competition, i.e. gaining power in the

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Internet as a marketing tool, becomes more necessary each day (Kaspid web Design Company, 2012). Most of the sports organizations utilize their website as a marketing tool to achieve their goals (Hur, 2007). World Wide Web gives an opportunity to sports organizations to communicate with the beneficiaries which led to lower cost of advertising (Loakimidis, 2010). Clubs take advantages of the Internet as a marketing tool through which can communicate with fans and sell their products and services (Kriemadis, 2010).

Electronics products in this research refer the products and items which are runnable and accessible on the Web. In present study, the place and status of pioneering countries in Karate is determined. This paper also provides some methods to improve and enhance the quality of sports websites.

Internet not only provides information, but also provides a mechanism for communication, an environment for transactions, and likely a channel to present goods or services to the consumers. Some of the various aspects of marketing opportunities that the internet offers to clubs are includes creating: a) a distribution channel, b) communication tools, c) transaction tool, d) marketing research tool, e) market segmentation and target market selecting tool. Internet is a proper tool for segmenting and identifying the target market. Creating marketing information database is easy for manager, because the fans are eager to show their priorities. Clubs can develop a mix of marketing methods of those parts and match them with the goal so the fans can achieve their priorities (Kiang et al., 2000). The content of a website is composed of elements and information with different formats. For example, a website containing information in different forms such as text, image, multimedia, etc. (Azad, 2009).

The importance of the web as a medium of communication and a huge collection of resources, articles, magazines and promotional announcements and spend leisure time is obvious. On the other hand, the production of standard and user-friendly web pages to display information is one of the necessities that should be considered by designers of websites. This is more important considering sport websites. In general, centers or websites such as, universities, information centers, sports centers and clubs that are considered as a communication medium today, play a more distinctive and important role. Therefore, it can be stated that the design of such websites considering the importance of their role, can be studied from different aspects.

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate and compare web based electronic products of Karate clubs in the league of Iran and Japan.

In this study, hypothesis of presence a relation between web based electronic products of Karate clubs in the league of Iran and Japan is investigated.

Karate martial art entered Iran in 1963. Master Varasteh was the first Iranian who honored 10th Dan in Karate (Karate Federation, Iran, 2014). Iran's Karate team won 2 gold and 2 bronze medals in Guangzhou Asian Games in China in

2010, and won 3 gold and 2 bronze medals in Karate Asian Games, Incheon South Korea in 2014. National Karate Team of Iran has gained great successes in 2014 including the World Cup title in men's team kumite in Germany for the first time. Iran stood in sixth place in final ranking of the twenty-second World Championship in Germany winning a gold medal, 2 silver and 2 bronze medals (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2014).

1.1. Karate Status in Iran

Karate martial art entered Iran in 1963. Master Varasteh was the first Iranian who honored 10th Dan in Karate (Karate Federation, Iran, 2014). Iran's Karate team won 2 gold and 2 bronze medals in Guangzhou Asian Games in China in 2010, and won 3 gold and 2 bronze medals in Karate Asian Games, Incheon South Korea in 2014. National Karate Team of Iran has gained great successes in 2014 including the World Cup title in men's team kumite in Germany for the first time. Iran stood in sixth place in final ranking of the twenty-second World Championship in Germany winning a gold medal, 2 silver and 2 bronze medals (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2014).

This research evaluates quality of electronic products under web among Karate clubs. This study was conducted in Iran and Japan in 2015 with using Barnes and Vidgen Model (Web Qual) WebQual is a measure of Website Quality and this instrument evaluates website quality in 12 dimensions. A comparative study was carried out on effective characteristics and successful factors in Karate clubs' website in Iran and Japan. In present study, electronic products possess a variety of indexes such as educational, informative, research, ethnic, and technical ones. This paper examines whether a significant correlation exists among the mentioned indexes of these electronic products under web in Karate clubs.

Users around the world uses Internet for their information needs and thus use this information source for getting information about clubs and in general sports is on the rise. Gaining updated information in the least possible time can be considered as the most obvious feature of this information environment. The Internet has changed the approach to information seeking behavior and information needs of the users (Ybarra, 2008). This matter has more emergences especially in the realm of sports. The Internet with unique features has provided a new type of interaction between clubs and athletes, as well as the public, a way that in recent years the relationship between clubs and athletes has changed from its traditional form (Winker, 2000). In such this way, many people and organizations took advantage of it to offer their products and services. Cronin and McKim (1996) suggested that web has become an important media in the scientific environment. The growth of the Internet is faster than all other forms of electronic technology and communicative media (Burton, 2006). The number of Internet users is great that it can be safely called the media of mass communication (Schneider, 1997). Currently, the Internet has become the most extensive and complex

communication medium in the world. This huge collection of documents and web pages provided access to a wide range of documents and information, products and services (Dioton, 2005). In January 2010, Royal Pingdom reported that the Internet is including 234 million Web sites and has 1.8 billion users. Also a number of sports researchers have predicted that the use of the World Wide Web as a medium for commerce would become a new revenue-generating avenue for sports organizations (e.g. Evans & Smith, 2004; Mahony & Howard, 2001; Zhang et al, 2006).

World Wide Web domain gives an opportunity to sports organizations to communicate with the beneficiaries and therefore it leads to lesser expenses on advertising (Lukimides, 2010). Clubs uses the Internet as a marketing tool through which they can communicate with fans and sell their products and services (Kerimidos, 2010). Internet not only provides information, but also it is a mechanism for communication, environment for trading, and possibly provides a channel to offer products or services to consumers. Some opportunities are offered by the Internet in various aspects of the marketing for clubs as follows: a) creating a distribution channel b) communication tools c) exchange tools d) marketing research tools e) Market Segmentation and Target Market tool: Internet is an important tool for segmenting and identifying the target market. To create a database with marketing information is easy for football managers; because the fans are eager to show their preference. Clubs can develop marketing mix on the sectors and match themselves in order to reach the fans to their priorities purposefully (Kiang, 2000). The importance of the Web itself as a medium of communication and a huge collection of various resources, articles, and magazines to announcements and promotional and time pass is obvious. On the other hand, the production of user-friendly and standard web pages to display, information is one of the requirements which must be the considered by designers of Web sites. This matter receives more importance while talking about sports websites. In general, centers or websites such as universities, information centers, sports centers and also clubs that today play a role as telecommunications spots have a more important and distinct role. Therefore, it can be stated that the design of such websites considering the importance of their role can be studied from various aspects.

Content of a web site consists of elements and information in various forms. For example, a web site can include information in forms of simple text, images, multimedia and etc. (Azad, 2001). Different users are also entered website with various intentions and derive their needed information. For example, the user of an academic website can be a student that uses website to inform about ones' educational status or it can be a professor who uses the website for entering students' marks (Kargar, 2011).

2. Methods

The study was conducted among Iranian and Japanese

Karate clubs' websites in 2014-2015. Data were collected through website surveys and browsing to complete a research-made and WebQual questionnaires. In research-made, the items are identified from the literature review helped in the construction of the survey instrument.

2.1. Sample

In the light of the objectives of the study, the survey population was identified as Karate clubs' website in 2 countries i.e. Iran as a noticeable developing power in various aspects (e.g. exporting coaches, players and referees) and Japan as pioneer in karate. A convenience sample of 20 karate Clubs' websites was drawn using systematic sampling. Confirmatory factor analysis including 23 variables requires a minimum sample size of 230. The researchers collected the data through questionnaires.

Regarding the nature of the subject, methodology is a survey analysis and applied type in the terms of aims and objectives. Population sample of this research is websites of clubs in Iranian and Japanese karate leagues. Official websites of 10 karate clubs are selected from Iranian karate league and then these selected websites are compared with ten selected websites from Japan.

Avay-e-Razm, Karate committee of Tehran province, karate committee of Fars province, karate committee of Semnan province, Persian Gulf, Martyrs of Bostanabad, Azerbaijan, Azar Khodro Novin of Ghom, Shirzhal of Qom, Tabriz municipality and Sepahan Mobarakeh Steel are selected as population sample and Japanese karate clubs (Nakahara, Ambition Karate school, Mita, Nakakoma, Osawano, Shotojuku, Nagatsuta, Funabashi, Jump karate club, and Sagamihara).

2.2. Survey Instrument

Present study contained two questionnaires: research-made and WebQual. The 5 sections identified for research-made questionnaire from the literature review were used to compare web status as well as using WebQual. WebQual was used as an instrument for assessing the usability, information, and service interaction quality of Internet web-sites, particularly those offering e-commerce facilities. This instrument is being developed by the Management Schools at the University of Bath and the University of East Anglia by Stuart Barnes and Richard Vidgen. In May 2005 they combined comment analysis with the traditional quantitative analysis of WebQual to give data triangulation and a deeper insight into the dimensions of Web site quality. The findings of this study are gathered in two forms of characteristics of successful Web site based on Koval web index (Barnes and Wigan, 2001) and electronic products of Karate Clubs that were collected by questionnaire. By visiting the Web sites of karate clubs in January 2014, these websites were analyzed in terms of electronic products and this information are compared with the information available on the official websites of Karate clubs in Japan. Electronic products had the following

features:

1-Textual products 2- Visual products 3- Audial Products 4-Photo products, which carry the educational, research, informative, moral and technical elements.

2.3. Analysis Procedures

Firstly, the researchers attempted to browse official website of Karate Federations then select 10 teams from each country randomly. Next, providing and applying questionnaires were done by the researchers. The quality of websites was evaluated by reach-made questionnaire. On other side, the features of a successful website on the basis of WebQual were identified and determined. In this study, electronic text, image, and audio products which have educational, research, informational, moral, and technical factors are examined.

3. Results

The sample size used was within the acceptable limits for

data analysis, for three countries (see Table 1). The ratio of respondent to the observed major variables (2) for 20 karate clubs in 2 countries with 5 indexes for e-products. E-products survey shows that in the educational component with the mean and standard deviation ($\bar{X} = 2/54 \pm 0/42$), the research component ($\bar{X} = 2/33 \pm 0/59$), information component ($\bar{X} = 2/87 \pm 0/32$) and technical component ($\bar{X} = 2/20 \pm 0/30$), Iran poses the lower status in the comparison with Japan (see Table 1).

Quality karate club website shows that the beneficial components of the mean and standard deviation ($\bar{X} = 0/48 \pm 0/10$) Ease of use ($\bar{X} = 0/51 \pm 0/11$) attractiveness ($\bar{X} = 0/32 \pm 0/17$) and friendly relations ($\bar{X} = 0/31 \pm 0/13$), which shows Iran than Japan, the status of is lower quality websites (Table 2).

Comparison of electronic products in the components of education, research, information and technical clubs Iran, and Japan showed that the mentioned countries in terms of addressing the elements, there is no significant difference between these components (Table 3).

Table 1. Findings of the evaluation of the products karate Club Website

Variables	Factors	Country	N	Mean	Std.deviation	Std.error	Maximum	Minimum	Upper bound	Lower bound
Electronic products	Educational	IRAN	6	2/54	0/42	0/17	3/16	2/20	2/99	2/09
		JAPAN	10	2/73	0/40	0/12	3/28	2/20	3/02	2/45
	Research	IRAN	5	2/33	0/59	0/26	3/16	1/90	3/07	1/58
		JAPAN	2	2/35	0/21	0/15	2/51	2/20	4/26	0/44
	Information	IRAN	10	2/87	0/32	0/10	3/20	2/20	3/11	2/64
		JAPAN	10	2/99	0/18	0/56	3/23	2/71	3/12	2/86
	Ethical	IRAN	6	2/01	0/36	0/14	2/51	1/51	2/40	1/63
		JAPAN	4	2/35	0/38	0/19	2/81	1/90	2/97	1/73
	Technical	IRAN	5	2/20	0/30	0/13	2/51	1/90	2/57	1/83
		JAPAN	7	2/34	0/31	0/11	2/68	1/90	2/62	2/05

Table 2. Findings of the evaluation of the quality of websites karate Club

Name variable	Factors	Country	N	Mean	Std.deviation	Std.error	Maximum	Minimum	Upper bound	Lower bound
Website Quality	Utility	IRAN	10	0/48	0/10	0/03	0/64	0/34	0/56	0/41
		JAPAN	10	0/61	0/07	0/02	0/70	0/48	0/67	0/56
	Ease of use	IRAN	10	0/51	0/11	0/03	0/65	0/30	0/59	0/44
		JAPAN	10	0/57	0/07	0/02	0/70	0/48	0/62	0/51
	Attractiveness	IRAN	10	0/32	0/17	0/05	0/67	0/12	0/45	0/20
		JAPAN	10	0/66	0/05	0/01	0/70	0/56	0/70	0/62
	Friendly relations	IRAN	10	0/31	0/13	0/04	0/48	0/12	0/41	0/22
		JAPAN	10	0/61	0/05	0/01	0/64	0/48	0/64	0/57

Table 3. Findings of the evaluation of electronic products using ANOVA

Name variable	Factors	Sig	F		Mean Squares	Df	Sum of Squares
Electronic products	Educational	0/45	0/81	Between Groups	0/09	2	0/19
				Within Groups	0/12	23	2/81
	Research	0/62	0/49	Between Groups	0/09	2	0/19
				Within Groups	0/19	8	1/53
	Information	0/40	0/94	Between Groups	0/06	2	0/12
				Within Groups	0/06	26	1/71
	Technical	0/64	0/45	Between Groups	0/03	2	0/07
				Within Groups	0/08	14	1/14

Table 4. Findings of the evaluation of the quality of websites using ANOVA

Name variable	Factors	Sig	F		Mean Squares	Df	Sum of Squares
Website Quality	Utility	0/002	8/19	Between Groups	0/055	2	0/11
				Within Groups	0/007	27	0/18
	Ease of use	0/210	1/56	Between Groups	0/014	2	0/027
				Within Groups	0/008	27	0/222
	Attractiveness	0/001	31/24	Between Groups	0/36	2	0/72
				Within Groups	0/01	27	0/31
	Friendly relations	0/001	35/82	Between Groups	0/27	2	0/552
				Within Groups	0/008	27	0/208

Table 5. Ethical Factor

Name variable	Mean difference	Df	T	Sig	F	Factors	Country	N	Mean	Std. Error Mean	Std. deviation
Electronic products	-0/33	6/28	-1/37	0/89	0/02	Ethical	IRAN	6	2/01	0/14	0/36
							JAPAN	4	2/35	0/19	0/38

Quality comparison website components utility, attractiveness and friendly relations are not statistically significant. Ease of use is a significant relationship in the component (Table 4).

Comparison of electronic products in moral element using Tukey test shows that Iran is lower than Japan's status (Table 5).

Kriemadis (2010) stated that the club directors should have deliberate consideration to the concepts and opportunities which the Internet has provided. These directors should plan each step before entering the world of Internet and analyse all concepts and opportunities that the Internet offers and provides an acceptable respond to the following questions: How internet can be used to obtain more benefits? How the internet can be considered as value added for the present activities of the club? How the club can achieve a competitive advantage among the competitors? How can we increase the website traffic? How can the consent of the fans be achieved? And how can be increased interactions within club's website and its attractiveness? The

main challenge for managers is to understand the concepts of Internet marketing in order to obtain its benefits (Keriemadis, 2010). In the present study, the researchers evaluate competition advantages, website traffic and attraction of subject among all these mentioned concepts and opportunities as evaluation criteria.

As shown in figure.3, Yo and Jin (2004) introduced twelve characteristics of an ideal website design.

Janatian et al. (2013) evaluated the quality of Persian language websites with a focus on depression based on WebQual scale; they concluded that these websites in the terms of depression field have low quality. In the present study, two effective factors on the quality of websites i.e. attractiveness and friendly relations were introduced and assessed. The results show that the Iranian websites are placed in the lowest rank compared to Japanese websites. Utilizing WebQUAL scale, Fathifar et al. (2007) e quality of information provided in health and medical websites in Persian as undesirable which has also mentioned in the present study that the quality of Iranian karate clubs'

websites is not desirable status. Rahimzadeh *et al.* (2012) compared Online Marketing and Interaction with Fans through Official Website of Football Clubs in Iran, Asia and Europe. They concluded providing media contents through club website was a prelude to marketing merchandises and services of club and obtaining financial benefits.

Ghyamirad (2006) in an international research study conducted in cooperation with Karate Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran and Karate Federation of Japan present a comparative study of marketing methods of karate sport in Iran and Japan. Results of this study stressed on the necessity of establishing a marketing section in Karate Federation of Iran and evaluated operation of this section with functions such as advertisement, financial supporters, private sector investors, utilizing sport tourism, and public media in developing and promoting karate as very important (Ghyamirad, 2006). The results of Ghyamirad (2006) show the findings are insufficient and there is a necessity of more emphasis on the role of internet marketing regarding advancement of technology and globalization. Hence, present study considered the effectiveness and impact of factors affecting the quality of sports websites important.

Loakimidis (2010) in a study about presented media contents in websites of English Premier League clubs, National Football League of America (NFL), National Hockey League of America (NHL), and Rugby Super League of America selected 12 websites randomly among professional clubs of in four high level leagues (hockey, football, soccer, and rugby) in North America and Europe and investigate them. Results showed that the sports clubs of United States in fields of media and interactions with fans opportunities utilizing internet in sport marketing have surpassed the others Loakimidis (2010); thus, it is notable in this present study also and it has been mentioned that clubs which have more interactions with fans through internet are more successful than the others. Ghyamirad (2006) investigated on modern methods of Marketing Karate Sport filed in Iran" meanwhile surveying marketing approaches for promoting and developing karate in Iran, has introduced utilizing of advertisement, financial supporters, public media especially television, and sport tourism as sport marketing factors in order to increase Revenue of Karate Federation of Iran. Ghyamirad (2006) while introduced modern Karate sport marketing in Iran has missed internet marketing and the role of sport websites; whereas, this kind of marketing and websites can be considered very effective in increasing interactions and income of clubs. Chatrooms and e-tour presented in high quality websites can be revenue making channels for club. Also regarding online marketing, a study conducted by Yousefi *et al.* (2007) for surveying sport marketing through internet in Iran with emphasizing on 4P factors which its results showed that from scholars and marketers' viewpoint internet can have an enormous effect on sport marketing trends, but currently portion of this effect in Iran is very insignificant and intangible. Present study is also confirmed these results

hence, results obtained from study of karate club's websites of Iran, UK, and Japan showed that Iran rank is the lowest compared to the other two countries.

Role of electronic products in marketing

In recent years, using Internet in trade and commerce has increased significantly. In fact, many commentators stated that Internet has already led to a new era in marketing (Mahdavi, 2008). Internet and electronic products have become a method for revenue making, interact with customers, providing services and electronic sell of products for companies and many organizations (Safaei, 2010). Successful and effective website design and maintenance of this position have become a very complex issue in the world of e-commerce; and success in this competition, i.e. taking power on Internet as a marketing tool becomes a necessity today (Kaspid Company, 2010). Certainly, website is a function arena to contact customers and a place to interact and deal with clients on Internet (Attarfar, 2008).

4. Conclusions

The results of this research indicate that Iranian e-products poses no significant differences with Japanese e-products but in terms of quality of websites according to WebQual scale poses low quality and only in the terms of ease of use indicates desirable quality. Findings of present study confirm that Iranian Karate clubs' websites have no significant differences with Japanese karate clubs' websites in the terms of electronic products but in terms of quality of websites based on WebQual scale have very low quality and only in the terms of ease of use have acceptable and desirable quality. Therefore, it can be deduced that from infrastructures website quality viewpoint, karate clubs of Iran have some weaknesses. Comparing findings of this study with other studies of Persian language websites showed that most cases derived from results are consistent.

Users tend to obtain their required information in the lower possible time so that the designers of information systems should notice this issue more. Digitalizing information and virtualizing communication in the current era made world wide web an appropriate place for interaction and transferring information and knowledge. On the other hand, the emergence of various governmental and private sector companies for controlling the artery of information transmission on internet has increase competition on the quality and quantity of information carriers. While, websites as main carriers of information and doing processes of interaction with customers are important; hence, websites can play an important role in introducing karate clubs and other sport places and can be considered as an effective path to attract athletes and karate fans.

In designing a sport website, in the background page light colours along with primary colours such as red, orange, green, purple, blue and pink with shine and glamour should

be used as much as possible. Studies showed that background colour is effective on remembering website dramatically; but template and menu colours in most of the world's known brands such as McDonalds are chosen darker colours. Findings of this study might help the administrators of studied websites to facilitate quality improvement of their websites regarding obtained points and determining weakness points of their websites.

Considering findings of this study, researchers provide the following suggestions to improve the quality of karate clubs' websites: determining global quality standards for efficient global federations to increase the quality of federations' websites globally and equally; ranking karate federations and clubs' websites by international Karate Federation; using professional designers of sport websites; creating a section for suggestions and critics in sports websites; and conducting similar studies in other sport fields.

5. Limitations and Future Study Directions

The choice of this study is limited to only two countries. I would guess that Russia, for example, is much bigger in terms of the martial arts (karate etc) than Iran. But it was not in the scope of the survey because of the language issue. Lack of Iranian and Japanese karate clubs' websites to interact with international audiences and being not up to date of some of the Iranian websites can be considered as some of the limitations of this study.

The future research directions are provided as follows:

1. Examining the status of clubs' websites in the countries which are successful in Karate, 2. Investigating the use of experienced and expert web designers, 3. Familiarizing Web designers, particularly sport website designers with web design analysis software. The researchers suggested Karate (as well as other sports) clubs' authorities should pay special attention to enrich contents of club's website and utilize this attractive platform to attract and support fans and monetization, and should dedicate a special unit in their clubs to this matter. Conducting deeper and extensive studies are essential to update practical and theoretical knowledge of website designing for various clubs, especially Karate clubs. Administrators of studied websites of this research can provide bases to improve their websites considering gained points in each section and rectifying weakness points of their websites.

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