WEBSITE USABILITY ON THE MOBILITY
WITHIN THE EUROPEAN HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Introduction

The Bologne Declaration (1999) has broaden the European High School Area (EHSA) and brought a potent change to the academic and professional mobility of the 33 signatory European countries citizens thus, promoting the sharing of knowledge and cultures.

ERASMUS+ program 2014-2020 will contribute for an “Europe of Knowledge, […] enabling its citizens with the right abilities to meet the challenges of the new millennium also providing them with a consciousness of sharing and belonging to a common social and cultural space” (Bologne Declaration, 1999).

Portugal takes part of this high education net of universities, schools and institutions participating in an annual basis at the Incoming and Outcoming of a significant number of students under the umbrella of ERASMUS+ and also other Bilateral Agreements.

The experience of studying abroad in internationally renowned universities and schools is strength and a value-added aspect at the personal and professional curricula of the European citizens integration in the employment market. Due to that and to the need of a more global distance communication the High Education Institutions’ websites turn out to be important communicating platforms and a crucial tool to the diffusion of formative offers (Mentes & Turan 2012; Jabar, Usman & Awal, 2013).

Practice innovation

Following so, an usability test was made to the websites of five European High Education Design Institutions (DE, ES, IT, PT and UK) with a similar formative offer by observing how these institutions promote and communicate their training offers to attract new students to theirs degrees.

The analysis focused mainly in the identification of the schools’ institutional pages strengths. The most relevant usability criteria (Nielsen & Loranger, 2006) were analyzed: browsing – homepage, menu, redundancy, scrolling, links, searching fields, contents – text, feeds and social networks.

Sources of information

Usability is a fundamental principle to the effectiveness, efficiency and degree of comfort of the users in the interaction with the interfaces. The flowering of usability in the 90’s with the assessment heuristic methods and the tests with users, developed by the pioneers Nielsen and Molich, become the major guidelines to the definition of the user experience quality together with the human interactive systems, ending up with the establishment of the ISO 9241-11.
Petrie and Bevan (2009) introduced the concepts of accessibility, usability and user experience. They focus mainly in the identification and clarification of the available methods for the assessment of the interactive products, services and environments (eSystems).

Nevertheless, recent research on the usability evaluation and analysis' methods that are based on the user experience (UX) came up with an huge variety of search methods, that according to Rohrer (2014) allows us to answer a wide range of questions, such as: what and when use, what does the user do, what people say, etc.

Findings

The study grounded in the UX permitted to observe that the EHEI web pages present: mostly 2 versions – official national language and English and information request forms that is sent afterwards to the user by e-mail. Throughout the analyzed website pages there is a common lack of information concerning the requisites for the application and the costing.

The visibility of the institutions dynamics and events is facilitated by the presence in social networks, and feeds. The communication through a chat platform enhances the interactivity with the user and the possibility of subscription in the websites is a way of keeping the loyalty of users.

The redundancy level of the browsing menus and the font used (type and size) allows the user to distinguish the different schools web pages.

Discussion

Digital communication appears to be determinant to attract mobility students although this subject is not dealt equally in all the analyzed schools. Above all, this website analysis permitted the identification of a set of clues to consider by the EHEI in order to facilitate a much more complete experience of these websites use.

References


