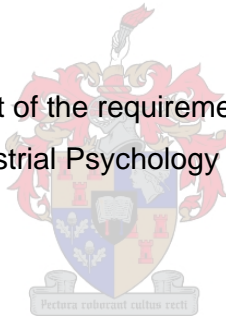


**AN AUDIT OF ONLINE RECRUITMENT:
A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts
in the Department of Industrial Psychology at Stellenbosch University.



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MARCH 2008

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

L. Swart
Stellenbosch
March 2008

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ABSTRACT

The survival of an organisation in a global competitive business environment depends on its survival skills (e.g. adaptability, flexibility and innovativeness), which is situated within its human resources. Hence, the recruitment function's role is critical, since it is responsible for the procurement of key intellectual capital that could equip the organisation with a competitive advantage. However, against the accelerated growth of the Internet combined with global competition, traditional recruitment methods are increasingly failing to rise to the challenge of securing key intellectual capital, due to being too time consuming and expensive. Consequently, organisations are progressively turning to online recruitment (which does not refer to one specific technique, but rather several different Internet tools that can be employed as a recruitment method, such as organisational websites, specialised job sites, media websites or newsgroups). However, the presence of an organisational website that advertises vacancies is not sufficient to guarantee its success as a recruitment method. Hence, it is vital to gain an understanding of website recruitment, as well as how to maximise the website's effectiveness and ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour (SOAB), in order to harness its full potential as a recruitment method, able to secure key intellectual capital. For the purpose of this study, SOAB refers to potential applicants (i.e. job seekers entering an organisational website in search of employment opportunities) being able to browse the website without any difficulty and obtain relevant and sufficient information concerning the organisation and its listed vacancies. In addition to enabling potential applicants to assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation (i.e. decide whether he/she would like to work for the organisation), a website that facilitates SOAB, should also enable potential applicants to contact the organisation to address additional information needs.

In essence, this study comprises of three phases and centres on the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks that should contribute to a website's ability to facilitate SOAB. By means of a comprehensive literature review, it is argued that the content- and usability design are vital contributing factors to a website's ability to facilitate SOAB. It is also proposed that the effectiveness of the website as a recruitment method is, to a certain degree, linked to the effectiveness of the alignment of an organisation's online recruitment strategy with the five stages of potential applicants' job decision-making process (i.e. the recognition of an employment need, search for career related information, evaluation of career alternatives, identification and acceptance of employment and post-choice evaluation).

Phase one, entails the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks and culminates with the development of the Website Benchmarks Checklist. Phase two, which constitutes the overall purpose of this study, entails an audit of the sample of the 'best' SA employers' (drawn from a survey conducted by the Corporate Research Foundation, 2005) websites. The primary aim is to determine the extent to which the sample's website design incorporates the identified benchmarks. However, the quality of potential applicants' interaction with a website (i.e. informative content being communicated in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner), greatly influences their perception of the organisation's image, its attractiveness as an employer, as well as their intention to pursue employment within the organisation. Hence, the third phase of the study entails the subjective evaluation of three websites (selected from the audited sample), by a sample of potential applicants.

Throughout the study, the empirical tests conducted were descriptive in nature and utilised survey research methods to acquire the required data, related to the specified goals and objectives that encapsulate the aim and purpose of this study. The results obtained provided valuable insight into website design benchmarks that should assist potential applicants in their job decision-making process, increase a website's ability to facilitate SOAB and maximise its effectiveness as a recruitment method responsible for securing key intellectual capital. In addition to revealing that the majority of the sample employs its website as a recruitment method, the audit results also indicated that although a high level of adherence existed concerning the sample's incorporation of the usability design benchmarks. However, a notable difference that ranged from very little to relatively high existed with regards to the extent to which the sample's website design adhered to the content design benchmarks. The subjective evaluation of the three websites by potential applicants revealed that in addition to being critical contributors to the quality of their interaction with a website, the content- and usability design also had a profound impact on their assessment of the websites. Finally, the results also showed that a similarity existed between potential applicants' subjective evaluation and the extent to which the design of the three websites adhered to the recommended benchmarks (audit results).

OPSOMMING

Die oorlewing van 'n organisasie in 'n globaal kompeterende besigheidsomgewing hang af van sy oorlewingsvaardighede (soos aanpasbaarheid, buigbaarheid en innoverendheid), wat grootliks vervat is in sy menslike hulpbronne. Gevolglik vervul die werwingsfunksie dus 'n kritieke rol, aangesien dit verantwoordelik is vir die verkryging en verskaffing van sleutel intellektuele kapitaal, wat moontlik die organisasie van 'n mededingende voorsprong kan besorg. Weens die toenemende groei van die Internet gekombineerd met globale kompetisie, blyk dit toenemend dat tradisionele werwingsmetodes nie opgewasse is vir die taak (d.w.s. die werwing van sleutel intellektuele kapitaal), omdat dit te duur en tydrowend is. Gevolglik wend toenemend meer organisasies hul na Internet werwing. Internet werwing verwys nie na net een spesifieke tegniek nie, dit omsluit verskeie Internet verwante metodes/toepassings wat as 'n werwingsmetode gebruik kan word (bv. organisatoriese webtuistes, gespesialiseerde werkverwante webtuistes, media webtuistes of nuusgroepe). Hoe dit ook al sy, die gebruik van 'n organisatoriese webtuiste wat werksgeleenthede adverteer, is ongelukkig nie voldoende om die sukses van 'n webtuiste as a werwingsmetode te verseker nie. Ten einde die vrugte te pluk wat werwing via 'n webtuiste kan bied (i.t.v. die lewering van die beste en mees gepaste intellektuele kapitaal), is dit van uiterste belang dat die nodige insig verkry word rakend webtuiste werwing, ontwerp faktore, sowel as hoe om die webtuiste se effektiwiteit en vermoë om suksesvolle aanlyn applikant gedrag (SAAG) te fasiliteer, te verbeter. Vir die doel van hierdie studie, verwys SAAG na 'n potensiële applikant (d.w.s. enige werksoeker, wat 'n organisatoriese webtuiste besoek in sy/haar soektog na moontlike werksgeleenthede) se vermoë om sonder moeite 'n organisatoriese webtuiste te besoek en die webbladsye te besigtig ten einde die relevante en nodige inligting te bekom rakende die organisasie en beskikbare werksgeleenthede. Bykomende tot die potensiële applikant in staat stel om te bepaal of hy/sy daartoe in staat sal wees om in te pas, te presteer en te vorder in die klimaat en heersende kultuur van die organisasie, moet 'n webtuiste wat SAAG fasiliteer potensiële applikante ook in staat stel om die organisasie te kontak en sodoende enige addisionele inligtingbehoefte aan te spreek.

Die kern van die studie bestaan uit drie fases en sentreer rondom die identifisering van ontwerpstandaarde vir die inhoud en bruikbaarheid van 'n webtuiste, wat moontlik sal bydra tot 'n webtuiste se vermoë om SAAG te fasiliteer. Deur middel van 'n breedvoerige oorsig van die relevante literatuur word dit geargumenteer dat die inhoud- en bruikbaarheidsontwerp kritieke faktore is, wat bydra tot 'n webtuiste se vermoë om SAAG te fasiliteer. Dit word ook voorgestel dat die effektiwiteit van 'n webtuiste as 'n werwingsmetode, tot 'n sekere mate, gekoppel is aan 'n doeltreffende ooreenkomstige opstelling (parallele positionering) van 'n organisasie se aanlyn werwingstrategie met die vyf vlakke van potensiële applikante se werk verwante besluitnemingsproses (d.w.s. die bespeuring van 'n werk verwante behoefte, die soeke na loopbaan verwante inligting, die evaluering van loopbaan alternatiewe, die identifisering en aanvaarding van 'n pos en post-keuse evaluasie).

Fase een behels die identifisering van webtuiste inhoud- and bruikbaarheidsontwerp standaarde met die doel om 'n kontrolelys van standaarde vir die ontwerp van 'n webtuiste te ontwikkel. Fase twee, wat ook die algehele doel/oogmerk van die studie vervat, behels die oudit van die steekproef, bestaande uit 'beste' SA werkgewers (soos geïdentifiseer deur die Corporate Research Foundation, 2005), se webtuistes. Die primêre doelwit van die oudit is om te bepaal tot watter mate die steekproef se webtuiste ontwerp, die

geïdentifiseerde webtuiste standaard inkorporeer. Die kwaliteit van potensiële applikante se interaksie met 'n webtuiste (d.w.s. die kommunisering van informatiewe inhoud in 'n effektiewe, doeltreffende en bevredigende wyse), affekteer hul persepsie van die organisasie se beeld, aantreklikheid as 'n werkgewer, sowel as hul intensie om indiensname binne die organisasie na te streef. Gevolglik behels die volgende vlak van toetsing (derde fase van die studie) die subjektiewe evaluering van drie webtuistes (geselekteer uit die webtuistes wat geaudit is) deur 'n steekproef van potensiële applikante.

Die empiriese toetse toegepas gedurende die studie was beskrywend van aard en het opname navorsing metodes gebruik vir die verkryging van die relevante data, relevant tot die gespesifiseerde doelwitte en mikpunte van hierdie studie. Die resultate het waardevolle insigte opgelewer m.b.t. standaard vir die ontwerp van webtuistes wat potensiële applikante sal help in hul besluitnemingsproses, sowel as die bevordering van 'n webtuiste se vermoë om SAAG te fasiliteer en die maksimering van 'n webtuiste se effektiwiteit as a werwingsmetode. Die auditresultate het aangedui dat die meerderheid van die steekproef van SA organisasies wel hul webtuistes as a werwingsmetode gebruik. Alhoewel die audit resultate getoon dat die mate waartoe die webtuistes die bruikbaarheidsontwerp standaard inkorporeer hoog is, het die resultate aansienlik meer gevarieer tussen baie laag tot relatief hoog m.b.t. die mate waartoe die webtuistes die inhoud standaard geïnkorporeer het. Die resultate rakende die subjektiewe evaluering van die drie webtuistes deur potensiële applikante het nie net getoon dat die inhoud- en bruikbaarheidsontwerp kritieke bydraende faktore is tot die kwaliteit van hul interaksie met die webtuistes nie, maar ook dat dit sterk geïmpakkeer het op die evaluasies, wat die webtuistes ontvang het. Ten slotte is daar ook gevind, dat daar wel 'n ooreenkoms bestaan het tussen potensiële applikante se subjektiewe evaluering en die mate waartoe die ontwerp van die drie webtuistes die aanbevole webtuiste standaard geïnkorporeer het.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In an ever-expanding global competitive environment the growth and survival of organisations is becoming increasingly difficult. An organisation's survival within this rapid changing and turbulent business environment depends, to a certain extent, on its flexibility and ability to adapt swiftly to changes (Singh & Finn, 2003). It is widely known that the human resources of an organisation are its most important asset, since it represent the building blocks of an organisation and it is their skills, abilities and knowledge that enable an organisation to be flexible, competitive and successful (Bakker, 2001a; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Therefore, the recruitment function of an organisation fulfils a critical role in its survival and success, because it serves as the point of entry for new employees (Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober & Keeping, 2003).

Maximising the intellectual capital base of an organisation is the responsibility of the recruitment function, since it is in charge of attracting, convincing and capturing new employees with the right attributes, qualifications and skills. The ability to attract, hire and retain key intellectual capital may be the single most important determinant of an organisation's effectiveness, due to the fact that amongst all the resources available, an organisation's human resources may offer the only competitive advantage that no other organisation can imitate (Cober et al., 2003; Singh & Finn, 2003; Story, 2002).

The challenge South African organisations face in attracting and retaining capable employees has become increasingly difficult due to a number of labour force problems. These include a shrinking pool of older experienced and young educated workers due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic; the migration of intellectual capital to foreign countries; and a severe mismatch between the technological skills increasingly in demand in the labour market and those that are available (Baxter, 2002; Oberholzer, 2001; Perry, 2002). It is against the backdrop of these labour force problems and an ever-increasing competitive and turbulent business environment that the competition for talented and skilled employees is greater than ever. Managers are therefore faced with the challenge of exploring new ways of recruiting (attracting, convincing and capturing) the most sought after and scarce key talent that will provide the organisation with a competitive advantage, whilst simultaneously minimising the time and recruitment cost involved. Hence, online recruitment has recently emerged as a viable option, since it has the potential to assist organisations in achieving these objectives (Chapman & Webster, 2003).

Online recruitment implies the formal sourcing of job information online; however, it does not refer to one specific technique (Galanaki, 2002). It encompasses several different Internet tools and various uses thereof. Major online recruiting techniques include organisational websites, specialised job sites, media sites, chat rooms and newsgroups (Couzins & Beagrie, 2003; Galanaki, 2002; Smith & Rupp, 2004; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Using an organisation's own website as a recruitment tool could potentially be the most effective online recruitment technique. In addition to the low cost associated with the development of a recruitment section on the organisational website, the organisation also has direct control over the content of their website (Cappelli, 2001; Galanaki, 2002; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Irrespective of the size of an organisation, its website is also the only online recruitment tool with the potential to provide the organisation with a

competitive advantage (in terms of the time and cost involved in attracting, convincing and hiring of key intellectual capital) (HR Focus, 2003). However, the success of an organisational website depends, to a large extent on the organisation's ability to (a) attract job seekers to the website; (b) convince potential applicants of its status and suitability as an employer; (c) capture them via the submission of an application; and (d) manage the online recruitment process (Cappelli, 2001; Cober et al., 2003; Taleo Research, 1999; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

The use of technology, such as the Internet for recruitment purposes, is a relative new practice in South Africa (De Klerk, 2007; Fontyn, 2001; Management Today, 2002). Throughout Europe and the USA, the Internet (especially the use of organisational websites) features as one of the main methods used by organisations to recruit new employees (Cober et al., 2003; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Smith & Rupp, 2004). However, South Africa is still in the early stages of adopting online recruitment and limited research has been conducted in this domain.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The world is being transformed into a global village where the survival of an organisation depends on its flexibility, as well as the ability to navigate through the information highway and adapt swiftly to changes. Hence, it is required that all organisational functions, including the recruitment function, accelerate to operate effectively and efficiently on a global competitive level (Chapman & Webster, 2003; Perry, 2002). Due to certain labour force problems within South Africa the intellectual capital available in the labour market is limited. Therefore, minimising the time it requires to locate and hire the most sought after and scarce talent is of the utmost importance in securing an organisation's future survival. The incorporation of the Internet as part of an organisation's recruitment strategy has the potential to minimise the time and recruitment costs involved in locating the required key talent and intellectual capital.

Although the cost involved in advertising vacancies via an organisational website is low, designing an organisational website for recruitment purposes, or just adding a recruitment section to an already existing website, in the long-term, is a considerable investment (Cober, Brown, Blumental, Doverspike, Levy, 2000; Galanaki, 2002). Maximising the potential of an organisational website as a recruitment method requires placing the right mechanisms, software and personnel in place to manage, support and process applications, which is costly in terms of time, effort, personnel and capital invested. However, despite advertising vacancies on an organisational website and having the necessary support systems in place (e.g. to sort, screen and contact applicants), it is still not guaranteed that a website will generate applications (Cober et al., 2000). Attracting job seekers to the website, convincing potential applicants of the organisations' suitability as a potential employer and capturing potential applicants via the submission of an application is still required.

Failure to attract and hire quality employees, will not only affect future growth potential and limit the organisation's innovativeness, flexibility and adaptability, but ultimately also affect its bottom line, sustained competitiveness and the organisation's survival (Smith & Rupp, 2004; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Hence, in order to increase a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour and convince potential applicants of its suitability as an employer, the communication of crucial employment information (content

design), in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner (usability design), is of the utmost importance (Cappelli, 2001; Cober et al., 2003; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Williamson, Lepak & King, 2003). For the purpose of this study, 'successful online applicant behaviour' refers to potential applicants (i.e. any job seeker, whether active, passive, experienced or novice, entering an organisational website in search of potential employment opportunities) being able to:

- browse the organisational website without any difficulty;
- obtain relevant and sufficient information concerning the organisation and listed vacancies;
- assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation; and
- contact the organisation to address additional information needs or questions.

The amount of information that potential applicants are exposed to, greatly influences their perception of the organisation's attractiveness as a potential employer and their initial decision to apply for an advertised position (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993). This implies that the quality of the information potential applicants are presented with, could result in an enhancement of the organisation's image, its attractiveness as a potential employer, as well as potential applicants' intention of pursuing employment within the organisation. It is therefore crucial that the content of the website should be adequate, complete and relevant with respect to the needs of potential applicants, in order to enhance the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour and therein assist them in their job decision-making process.

Even though the content of a website is considered a critical aspect of an effective online recruitment strategy, single-handedly it is not sufficient to increase a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour (Cober et al., 2000; Maurer & Liu, 2007). The facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour depends on both the content- and the usability design of a website (Cober et al., 2003). These two aspects of website design are considered equally important, since the usability of a website is responsible for the effective and efficient communication of the informative content in a satisfactory manner to potential applicants. For example, according to Williamson et al. (2003), the development of positive attributions concerning an organisation depends to a certain degree on the extent to which a website visitor is satisfied with the usability of the website. Organisations are therefore in the position to increase the attractiveness of their organisation to potential applicants through the presentation of a website with a high level of usability (Cober et al., 2000, 2003).

Gaining insight into website content- and usability design criteria that may be conducive to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour is therefore imperative to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of an organisational website as a recruitment method. Therefore, as a prerequisite for this study, an investigation was conducted to identify website content- and usability design benchmarks that could contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. Hence enabling the researcher to address the overall purpose of the study, which entailed an audit of a sample of the 'best' SA employers' websites [drawn from a survey conducted by the Corporate Research Foundation (2005) to identify the 'best' South African employers], in order to determine the extent to which the sample's website design, adhere to/incorporates the identified benchmarks. Insight into website design benchmarks that could

contribute to a website's ability to maximise its effectiveness as a recruitment method, as well as determining the extent to which the sample of SA organisations adhere to it, is vital. Not only may it assist SA organisations in the process of designing recruitment websites that could contribute to the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour, it may also enable the sample to identify and address its website's shortcomings. This should contribute to the enhancement of the website's attractiveness, as well as its ability to convince potential applicants of the organisations suitability as an employer. Hence, enabling organisations to harness the full potential of its website as a recruitment method, responsible for securing and supplying the organisation with key intellectual capital (i.e. competitive advantage), that is a vital contributor to its sustained competitiveness and future survival.

1.3 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The essence of this study, which provide the linkage between the three phases of this research, centres on the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks that would contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour (see figure 1.1).

Through conducting descriptive research, the primary aim of this study was to describe the extent to which the website design of a sample of SA organisations contributes to the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. To this end, as well as encapsulating the overall purpose of this study, the content and usability design of the websites of the sample of SA organisations, were subjected to a website audit (see phase 2 in figure 1.1). The purpose of the audit was twofold. Firstly, to determine the extent to which the websites are being used as a recruitment method to advertise employment opportunities. Secondly, to evaluate compliance with the website content- and usability design benchmarks, in order to determine the extent to which the selected organisations' website design is conducive to the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour.

Encapsulated and addressed within these three phases of the study, are the following research questions:

- which content and usability design benchmarks that may aid in the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour can be identified from a literature review?
- to what extent does the sample of SA organisations, surveyed in this study, incorporate the identified benchmarks into the design of their website, when used for online recruitment purposes?
- how does potential applicants' subjective assessment of an online recruitment website's content- and usability design, reflect the extent to which the identified benchmarks are incorporated (i.e. compliance with the benchmarks)?

The purpose and primary aim of this study creates a frame of reference, within which the following research goals and objectives are specified for each of the three phases of this study:

Phase 1: Identification of benchmarks and development of the checklist

Goal 1: The identification of organisational website content design benchmarks that would contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour

Goal 2: The identification of organisational website usability design benchmarks that would contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.

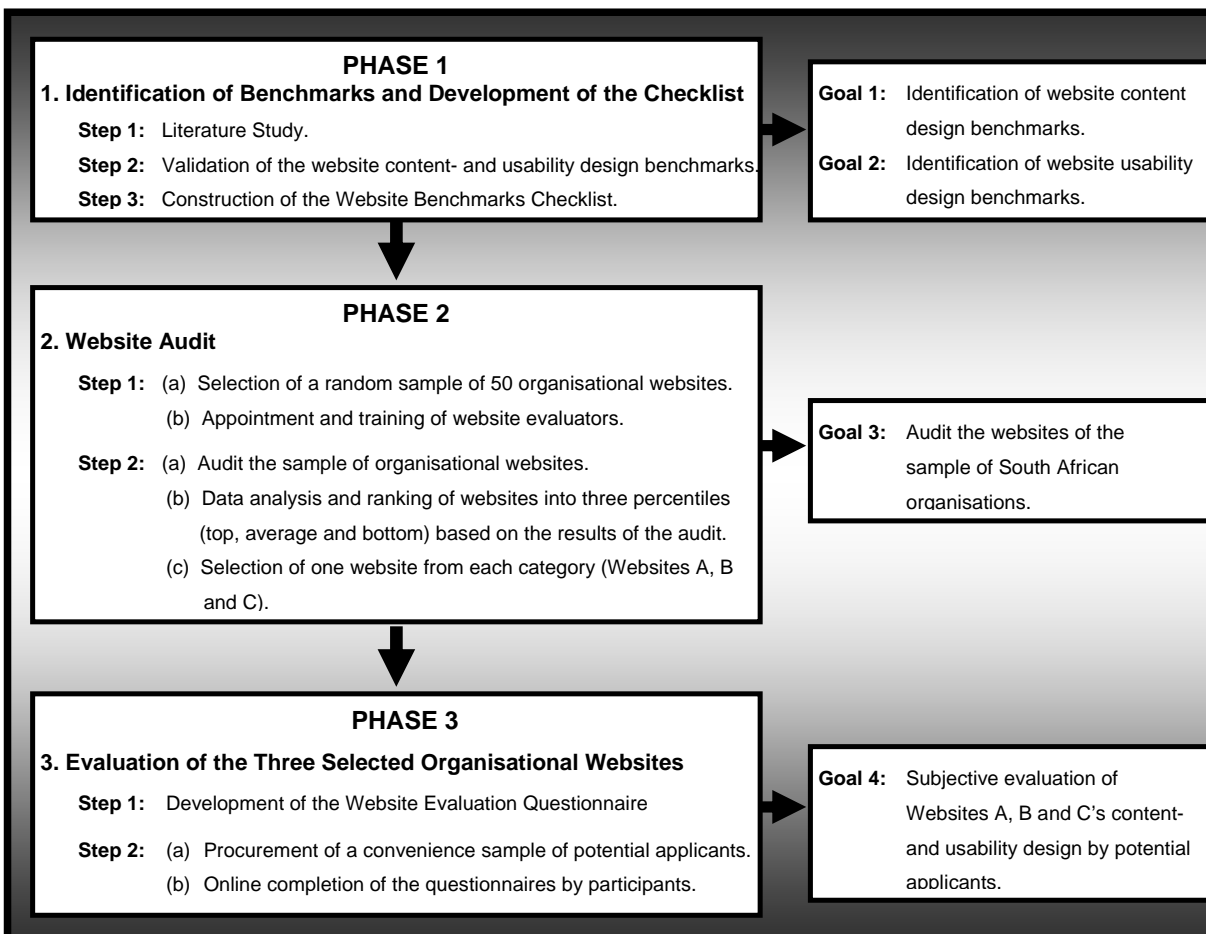


Figure 1.1: **The research process**

The usability design of a recruitment website should allow for the presentation and communication of the informative content (e.g. job description, organisational culture, career development, application details, etc.) in an efficient, effective and satisfactory manner to potential applicants. Hence, the following three objectives concerning goals one and two are specified within phase one of this study:

- **Objective 1:** Determine potential applicants' information needs and identify related website content design benchmarks.
- **Objective 2:** Identification of website usability design benchmarks.
- **Objective 3:** Development of a checklist consisting of website content- and usability benchmarks.

The identified benchmarks were consolidated into the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire and submitted to Lawshe's (1975) content validation technique. Based on the results obtained (from the usability- and recruitment experts'), only those benchmark items that illustrated sufficient content validity, were retained and incorporated into the measurement instrument (i.e. Website Benchmarks Checklist) to be used in the website audit.

Phase 2: Website audit

Goal 3: Audit the websites of the sample of South African organisations.

The following three objectives are specified for the website audit:

- **Objective 1:** Determine the extent to which the sample of SA organisations uses their websites as a recruitment method to advertise employment opportunities.
- **Objective 2:** Determine the extent to which the sample of SA organisations that uses their websites as a recruitment method, and at the time of the investigation had vacancies advertised, incorporate the identified content- and usability design benchmarks.
- **Objective 3:** Select three websites (for further evaluation), one from each of the three percentiles (top, average and bottom) that the sample was divided into, based on the combined audit findings (i.e. the result of the extent to which the website content-and usability benchmarks was adhered to).

Phase 3: Evaluation of three selected websites

Goal 4: Subjective evaluation of Websites A, B and C's content- and usability design by potential applicants.

The presence of an organisational website with a recruitment section, does not necessarily guarantee its success as a recruitment method able to deliver qualified applicants and highly skilled employees (Cober et al., 2000). The quality of potential applicants' interaction with a website (i.e. informative content provided and presented in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner) is a vital contributor to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. Not only does the quality of interaction influence potential applicants' perception of the corporate image and the attractiveness of an organisation as an employer, but also their intention to pursue employment within the organisation (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993).

Subsequently, the next level of testing the organisational websites' potential to be an effective recruitment method is, therefore, potential applicants' subjective appraisal of the website's ability to satisfy their information needs in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner. Hence, the following three objectives are outlined for the evaluation of the three websites:

- **Objective 1:** Determine potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions (subjective measurements) of the content design of Websites A, B and C.
- **Objective 2:** Determine potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions (subjective measurements) of the general usability of Websites A, B and C.
- **Objective 3:** Explore whether a similarity exists between potential applicants' subjective evaluation of each of the three selected websites and their percentile placement (top, average and bottom) based on the results of the audit.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 2 of the thesis presents a review of the relevant literature and strives to place the present study in the context of related theory and research in the field of recruitment and website design. Special emphasis is placed on the alignment of an organisation's online recruitment strategy and potential applicants' job decision-making process. This chapter is also the foundation of the study, as it explores and presents literature recommended best practices, constituting the benchmarks for website content- and usability design that may enhance a recruitment website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology of this study. It mainly includes a description of the sampling procedure and the development of the measurement instruments for each of the three phases of this study. In this chapter, the results of the validation of the content- and usability design benchmarks [Lawshe's (1975) content validation technique] is also discussed, since it is the basis upon which the Website Benchmarks Checklist was constructed.

The analysis and interpretation of the research results are presented in Chapter 4. The layout of the chapter follows the sequential order in which the various questionnaires were introduced in the research process and is structured to provide a logical exposition of the research goals and the attainment thereof.

In Chapter 5, the conclusions and main findings of the study, as well as the problems and limitations are discussed. Finally, recommendations for further research are proposed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The survival of organisations in the current global competitive business environment is a challenge that largely depends on its flexibility and capacity to adapt quickly to environmental changes (Thomas & Ray, 2000). The origin of an organisation's adaptability and flexibility skills is located within its human resources, which represent the building blocks of an organisation (Singh & Finn, 2003; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Smith and Rupp (2004) state that technology is not the core asset of an organisation; its value is derived and greatly depends on the workforce's ability to effectively and efficiently utilise, exploit and extract its true potential. Hence, securing the best intellectual capital will not only equip the organisation with a solid foundation (work force), but also a competitive advantage that cannot be imitated by its competitors (Smith & Rupp, 2004; Story, 2002; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

The recruitment strategy of an organisation is responsible for the acquisition of key intellectual capital and the construction of a workforce that is best suited to facilitate the attainment of the organisation's goals (Cober et al., 2003). Maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of an organisation's recruitment strategy (with specific reference to organisational websites as a recruitment method), is therefore vital, to secure its future survival and sustained competitiveness. Knowledge pertaining to website recruitment, for example, website content- and usability design factors, is essential in order to maximise the potential of utilising organisational websites as an online recruitment method.

The survey of literature presented within this chapter aims to provide an overview of the usage of the Internet for recruitment purposes, the advantages and disadvantages involved in this, as well as how to maximise the usage of an organisational website as a recruitment method. In addition, the organisational recruitment strategy, recruitment process and the usage of an organisational website as a recruitment method, is also discussed. In essence, a recruitment strategy of any organisation consists of three consequential phases, namely attract, convince and capture (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cappelli, 2001; Cober et al., 2000; Rynes & Barber, 1990; Taleo Research, 1998; Thomas & Ray, 2000). The main focus of this chapter is to explicate the alignment of the organisational online recruitment strategy with potential applicants' job decision-making process (Cross, 1999; Murphy & Tam, 2004; Summey & Anderson, 1992). The focal point of the discussion is the 'convince' phase, where great care is taken to provide insight into those website design factors (pertaining to content and usability) that could maximise the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour and hence provide key intellectual capital that is vital to the future survival and sustained competitiveness of the organisation.

For the purpose of this study, 'successful online applicant behaviour' refers to potential applicants (i.e. jobseekers entering an organisational website in search of employment opportunities) being able to:

- browse the organisational website without any difficulty;
- obtain relevant and sufficient information concerning the organisation and listed vacancies;
- assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation; and

- contact the organisation to address additional information needs or questions.

2.2 EVOLUTION OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The field of human resource management (HRM) originated in the latter part of the 18th century, with the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, which laid the foundation for a new and complex industrial society. Working conditions, social patterns and the division of labour was significantly altered, resulting in an ever-widening gap between workers and employers. Labour was considered a commodity to be bought and sold, and the prevailing political philosophy of laissez-faire resulted in little action by governments to protect the interest of workers (Cascio, 2001).

Drastic changes in technology, the growth of organisations, the rise of unions and government's concern and intervention concerning working people resulted in the development of personnel departments. Until the 1960s, the function of personnel departments was that of screening applicants, orientation of new employees, the collection and storing of employees' personal data and planning the annual company picnic (Cascio, 2001). For years, the HRM function had not been linked to the organisation's profit margin or what is referred to as the bottom line. HRM was thus considered a 'cost centre' for the better part of its existence (Ivancevich, 1992).

With the increase of competition (brought on by globalisation and innovative information technology) and organisations fighting for their survival, organisations realised that their true competitive advantage lies within their employees (Ivancevich, 1992). It is their skills, abilities and knowledge that enables the organisation to change, adapt and be flexible, and therein ensures the survival of the organisation (Singh & Finn, 2003; Smith & Rupp, 2004; Thomas & Ray, 2000). This realisation secured the role of a strategic partner for human resource (HR) departments, resulting in HR no longer being considered a cost centre, but rather viewed as a profit centre. Top management now looks to the HR department, as it does to line managers, to control costs, to attract and retain top talent, to enhance competitiveness, and to add value to the organisation in everything it does.

Modern HRM, as currently practiced world wide, includes five broad activities that constitute the HRM system (Cascio, 2001). These five broad functions of HRM focuses on activities aimed at *staffing*, *retention*, the *development* of employee competencies, *adjustment* to maintain compliance with the organisation's HR policies and business strategies and finally, the *management of changes* within the external and internal environment. The recruitment function is one of the most important areas of HRM. The general purpose of recruitment is to identify and provide, in a cost effective manner, a pool of qualified applicants that are able to perform a specific job (Pieters, 1996). Locating, attracting and appointing qualified employees are of critical importance for the sustained competitiveness and future survival of any organisation, since the effectiveness of an organisation depends on the effectiveness of its employees. It is the skills, abilities and knowledge of its employees that enable organisations to be effective and competitive (Singh & Finn, 2003; Smith & Rupp, 2004).

Employees are therefore an organisation's most valuable asset, because collectively they constitute an organisation's competitive advantage, which cannot be imitated by its competitors (Singh & Finn, 2003; Smith & Rupp, 2004). Hence, the importance of the recruitment function is critical, since it is the first step in securing a high-quality labour force for the organisation. Without a high-quality labour force an organisation is destined to have mediocre performance, which might not be sufficient to secure its survival in a global competitive environment.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERNET

In 1977, the use of online services was limited to people directly involved in academia, defence, government research agencies and computer system development (Arnold & Arnold, 1997). The potential that electronic information had to offer was realised early on, but enthusiasm was dampened because it was expensive and difficult to learn. In 1994, the Internet emerged as a communication revolution. Entrepreneurial software companies appeared, resulting in dramatic changes and rapid growth in Internet usage. The adoption rate of traditional media versus the Internet illustrates its remarkable growth, since it took:

- radio 38 years to reach 50 million listeners;
- television 13 years to reach 50 million viewers; whereas
- the Internet only four years to reach 50 million users (Management Today, 2002).

Central to the rapid adoption rate and growth of the Internet is the generation within which the Internet came of age. This generation, which is generally referred to as the Net-generation, comprises of individuals born between 1977 and 1997 (Leung, 2003). Unlike their parents (i.e. baby boomers) or even the x-generation, this generation is comfortable with computers. Not only is the Internet their medium of choice, but it is also a fundamental aspect of their every day lives in terms of how they work, learn, play, communicate, socialise and even shop (Leung, 2003).

The Internet is a 'network of networks'. No one owns it, yet the networks (individual, national, regional, commercial and institutional) it consists of, maintain it collectively (Haughey & Anderson, 1998). Despite each of these networks having their own design and unique structure, they all follow the same basic rules, which enable them to interconnect. This interconnectivity transformed the world into a global village and divided the human race into those who have access to information over the Internet and those who do not.

As a result of information technology (IT) infiltrating the world of work, traditional employment patterns has also changed. The concept of 'jobs for life' has been relegated to the history books (Computing SA, 2001). Employees are now viewed as 'rolling stones', moving from one organisation to another with portable skills that will guarantee them their next employment contract (Robertson, 1997). Unlike any other generation, the Net-generation is aware and accept the fact within their lifetime, they will go through numerous job changes and career changes (Leung, 2003). Key employees know more about their opportunities and are better informed about their long-term value in the marketplace (Cappelli, 2001; Smith & Rupp, 2004). Work teams are able to better coordinate their work geographically (across remote locations) and asynchronously (across time zones) (Singh & Finn, 2003). Consequently work is no longer done according to a geological time scale,

it has been replaced by the Internet time scale, where one year represents seven years of regular time (Arnold & Arnold, 1997).

2.4 MOVEMENT FROM TRADITIONAL RECRUITMENT TO ONLINE RECRUITMENT

Escalating global competition, coupled with progressively more sophisticated customer expectations denote that the growth or even mere survival of an organisation is becoming increasingly difficult. Rigid organisational structures need to become flexible in order to respond swiftly to a rapid changing global environment (Smith & Rupp, 2004; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

Employees are the building blocks of an organisation (Singh & Finn, 2003; Thomas & Ray, 2000). It is their skills, abilities and combined knowledge that enables an organisation to be flexible, competitive and successful. Intellectual capital is therefore an organisation's most valuable resource and it is also one of the key differentiators between organisations, because it affects the future growth and wealth potential of an organisation (Bakker, 2001a; Smith & Rupp, 2004). Hence, the continued success of an organisation depends (to a certain degree) on its ability to attract, retain and mobilise its intellectual skills base with high quality individuals who can respond effectively to this dynamic ever-changing global business environment. However, the ability of SA organisations to build a strong and capable intellectual skills base is becoming increasingly difficult due to labour force problems. Amongst the most prominent labour force problems are:

- a shrinking pool of young educated workers due to the brain drain to foreign countries (Oberholzer, 2001; Story, 2002);
- the HIV/AIDS pandemic having a severe impact on South Africa's economic active population – accounting for 47% of all deaths in 2006 and for 71% of all deaths between the ages of 15 – 49 years (Dorrington, Johnson, Bradshaw & Daniel, 2006); and
- a severe mismatch between the technological skills increasingly in demand in the labour market and the skills currently available within the South African labour force (Baxter, 2002; Perry, 2002).

As implied in the changes mentioned above, organisations and the way business is conducted have, still are and always will be subjected to change. Traditionally, organisations depended on very time consuming and expensive methods to locate and attract qualified candidates, such as advertising in local newspapers or magazines (Newell & Shackleton, 2000; Rynes & Barber, 1990; Singh & Finn, 2003; Thomas & Ray, 2000). These technological challenged (low-tech) methods are no longer sufficient. The world is being transformed into an information highway, through the automation of virtually all existing business processes (Chapman & Webster, 2003; Cober et al., 2003). Consequently, in order for an organisation to become flexible (i.e. to adapt quickly to changes in the outside environment), its internal structures, processes and procedures need to accelerate in order to minimise the time required to realign the organisation in a strategic position with regards to the changes and challenges emanating from within and outside the organisation. This implies that traditional methods are no longer sufficient (in terms of speed) and that IT needs to be incorporated in a strategic manner to facilitate the survival and sustained competitiveness of an organisation (Galanaki, 2002; Greengard, 1998).

Clearly, the Internet has and will continue to change the recruitment industry. In the following section the influence of the Internet in terms of the development of online recruitment (and the associated methods and media sources) is discussed.

2.5 THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND THE INTERNET

Every organisation, regardless of its size, product or service, must recruit applicants at some stage of its existence. Recruitment can be described as those activities in HRM, which are undertaken, to attract a sufficient pool of job candidates who have the necessary potential, competencies and traits to fill job needs and to assist the organisation in achieving its objectives (Erasmus, Schenk, Swanepoel & van Wyk, 1998; Pieters, 1996).

As shown in figure 2.1, the recruitment function is affected by numerous factors originating from the external environment and the internal organisational environment (Bakker, 2001b; Brice & Waung, 2002; Erasmus et al., 1998; Pieters, 1996). Human resource planning (HRP) of organisations are continuously subjected and affected by these environments. Price (2000) defines HRP as the process that anticipates and maps out the consequences of business strategy on an organisation's human resource requirements. The process of HRP therefore forecast or predict areas within the organisation with future labour shortages or supply, how the present human resources relates to the organisation's future needs, as well as a strategic plan to reach these goals (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2000).

Once a vacancy (due to a promotion, resignation or HRP) is identified, it is crucial that authorisation, to fill the position, be obtained from senior management (Erasmus et al., 1998). The rationale behind first obtaining authorisation, is that the process of employing a person is a major expenditure to an organisation in terms of both hard and soft costs (Bakker, 2001b). Hard cost typically take the form of recruiting fees, advertising, payment of temporary staff, training cost of new employees, interview cost and possibly also relocation fees. Soft cost includes interview time, employee morale, loss of productivity and intellectual property, and the interruption of normal services or production.

Upon obtaining approval to recruit, it is imperative that a job analysis be conducted to compile or update a job specification and job description (which is a statement of the tasks, duties, objective and standards required by a job) (Carrell, Elbert, Hatfield, Grobler, Marx & van der Schyf, 1998). The job specifications can be viewed as the minimum qualifications applicants must possess to be considered for the job and it will assist the recruiter to profile the required job-holder in terms of skills, knowledge and abilities required (Carrell et al., 1998).

Once the job analysis is completed and the job specification or behavioural competencies are identified, the next stage is to consider how to attract job seekers who meet the requirements (figure 2.1). The key decision is whether the organisation will recruit internally or externally. Both these sources have their advantages (Carrell et al., 1998; Pieters, 1996). Internal recruits will have an understanding of how the organisation operates, which will result in a significant reduction in learning and socialisation. Internal recruiting also serves as motivation for existing employees, since it shows that hard work and successful performance are rewarded; which consequently should increase the morale of all employees (Brox, 2007). In addition to the

abovementioned benefits, internal recruiting is usually less time consuming and less expensive. However, external recruiting also has its advantages. Not only will it reduce internal fighting; minimise the 'Peter Principle'; and prevent stagnation within the organisation, but new employees from outside will also bring to the organisation new ideas, work techniques and production methods which will result in an increase in employee productivity.

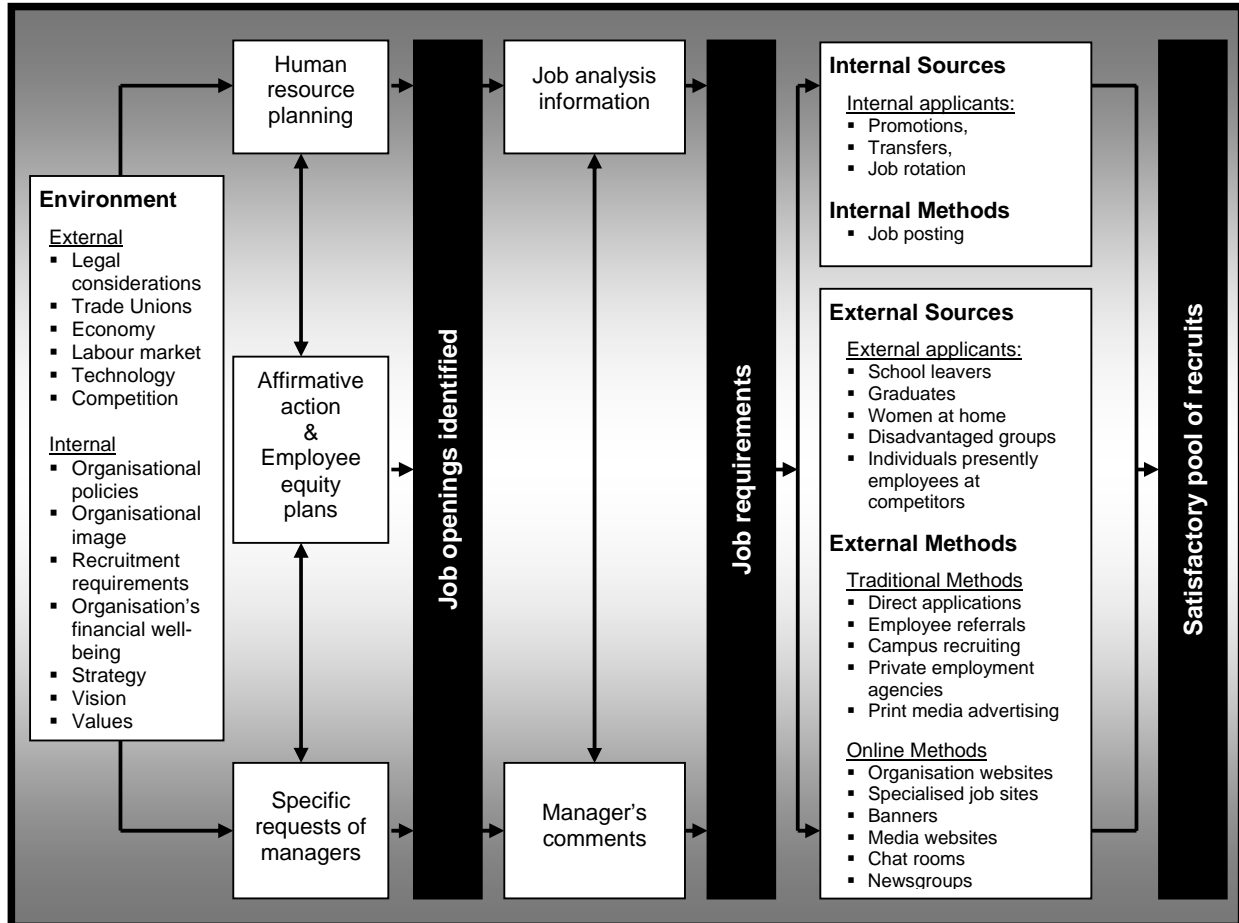


Figure 0.2: The recruitment process (Adapted from Carrell et al., 1998, p.139)

Deciding on the recruitment method once the recruitment source (external or internal) is identified, is the next step (figure 2.1). Traditional external recruiting methods (e.g. employee referrals, print media advertisements, employment agencies, graduate recruiting, etc.) are expensive and time consuming (Newell & Shackleton, 2000; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Recently, many organisations have come to realise the potential the Internet offers as a recruitment method in complementing traditional media sources (HR Focus, 2003; Singh & Finn, 2003; Smith & Rupp, 2004). The Internet can be used in conjunction with more traditional sources, allowing the organisation to reach both online and offline job seekers (De Klerk, 2007; HR Focus, 2003).

According to Devitt (2005), in order to maximise the effectiveness of a recruitment method, it is important that organisations carefully consider whom (what skills, abilities, qualifications, etc.) it is that they seek, as well as to understand 'how' job seekers (such as career professionals or graduates) search at different stages of their careers. The goal is to match, the recruitment method employed (online, offline or both), with the search

strategy and media preference of the job seeker. For the purpose of this study, an individual browsing the Internet in search of employment opportunities has been termed a 'job seeker'. The moment the 'job seeker' enters an organisational website, searching for available employment opportunities, he/she is considered to be a 'potential applicant'.

2.6 ONLINE RECRUITMENT

The terms online recruitment, e-recruiting, cyber-recruiting, or Internet recruiting, imply the formal sourcing of job information online (Galanaki, 2002). Online recruitment is not one specific technique; it includes several different tools and a wide variety of ways to use them. The manner in which the Internet is most frequently used for recruitment purposes include organisational websites, specialised job sites, media websites, chat rooms and newsgroups (Couzins & Beagrie, 2003; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Each of these online recruitment techniques will be briefly discussed, but for the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus on organisational websites as an online recruitment method, since it is considered the best online recruitment technique available (Thomas & Ray, 2000). Not only is the cost involved low, but the organisation also controls the content of the website. Irrespective of the size of an organisation, its website is also the only online recruitment tool with the potential to provide the organisation with a competitive advantage (in terms of the time and cost involved in attracting, convincing and hiring of key intellectual capital) (HR Focus, 2003). However, the success of an organisational website depends on the organisation's ability to attract job seekers to the website, convince them of its status as an employer of choice and on the manner in which the online recruitment process is managed (Thomas & Ray, 2000).

Organisational websites

Recruitment via an organisational website, which is implemented by adding recruitment pages to the existing website, is presently a widely used and steadily growing practice (Galanaki, 2002; Maurer & Liu, 2007). In essence, online recruitment does not consist of sending an e-mail with a CV attached in response to an advertisement. A true online recruiting solution requires that an applicant complete and submit an application or CV online, through the organisation's website (Du Toit, 2003).

Specialised job sites

Specialised job sites (generally also referred to as 'online recruiters', 'job portals', or 'online job boards') are independent websites that specialise in recruiting employees (Galanaki, 2002). They are viewed as the 'middle man' between job seekers and employers, or the third party responsible for distributing job advertisements (Braddy, Meade, Kroustalis, 2006). Hence, the purpose of specialised websites is to connect organisations with job seekers. They offer organisations that are not well-known the opportunity to enhance its visibility on the Internet and to direct job seekers to its organisational website (Braddy et al., 2006). In addition, they also enable job seekers to search and compare employment opportunities of a number of organisations, whilst staying on one website (Couzins & Beagrie, 2003). These specialised websites can take the form of 'job listing websites', which is very similar to printed classified advertisements; 'work wanted websites', which emphasize the side of prospective employees; or 'online recruiters' who make use of other websites as a resource for finding clients and customers (Galanaki, 2002). 'Online recruiter websites' can also differ in the focus of their advertising (Smith & Rupp, 2004; Thomas & Ray, 2000). For example, the focus could be general websites (which focuses on a wide range of job advertisements such as

CareerJunction or *Monster Board*), niche websites (which focus on a specific industry) or industry-wide websites (which are associated with organisations within a specific recognised profession).

Using specialised job sites incur no costs for job seekers or applicants, but employer costs can vary from website to website. The fee charged by most specialised job sites, is generally based on the amount of content listed in the advertisement (Thomas & Ray, 2000). Consequently, the information job seekers are presented with regarding the recruiting organisation is often limited and considerably less than that which is normally available on the recruiting organisation's website (Braddy et al., 2006). Depending on the website's purpose, a link to the website of the recruiting organisation can be provided, but in many cases, job seekers can only apply indirectly via the specialised job site.

Media sites, chat-rooms and newsgroups

Media sites are websites of newspapers or magazines. Organisations pay to place a traditional printed advertisement in a newspaper or magazine. The advertisement then appears on the newspaper or magazine's website simultaneously with the traditional printed advertisement (Galanaki, 2002).

Chat rooms and newsgroups can also be used to recruit. It rarely incurs any cost to advertise an employment opportunity on these websites. However, their effectiveness may be limited, due to the fact that job postings generally lack uniformity and the search process, to locate an advertised employment opportunity, is awkward and difficult (Thomas & Ray, 2000).

2.7 FACTORS AFFECTING THE DECISION TO RECRUIT THROUGH THE INTERNET

As argued previously, utilising organisational websites for recruitment purposes hold the potential to provide an organisation with key intellectual capital (employees) that could assist in maximising the organisation's ability to be innovative, flexible and competitive. The organisation could therefore gain a competitive advantage which cannot be imitated by its competitors and that should allow it to stay a step ahead of its competition.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to shed light on possible factors that might influence the organisation's decision to make use of online recruiting. The advantages and limitations pertaining to the use of organisational websites to recruit are often discussed in the research literature. A brief discussion to delineate these is provided next.

2.7.1 Advantages of online recruitment

Better reach and exposure to potential applicants

The Internet is connecting people at a worldwide level and therein transforming the world into a global village. Compared to any newspaper advertisement, which is generally limited to a local or national audience, the Internet offers recruiters a vast audience across the world (Galanaki, 2002). Thus, firstly, online recruitment provides the recruiter with global coverage and therein allowing the recruitment message to reach a wider audience of potential applicants (Chapman & Webster, 2003).

Secondly, organisational websites provide potential applicants with the latest updated information concerning the organisation and its vacancies twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (Singh & Finn, 2003). This '24 x 7' convenience, enable potential applicants to get to know the organisation and apply for a position at a time and place that is convenient for them (Management Today, 2002).

Thirdly, the Internet holds the potential to deliver higher calibre recruits (Galanaki, 2002). The Internet offers recruiters a vast audience for job postings and a large talent pool to draw from. General perceptions held by organisations concerning this 'large talent pool', is that only the unemployed visits organisational websites and that experienced candidates are not online (Franzinger, 2001). According to a survey by iLogos Research (Franzinger, 2001) on job seekers' online behaviour, it was found that 72% of visitors to career sections of organisational websites are employed and 21% of that 72% are in fact happy with their current jobs. The survey also found that 8% of online candidates seek director or executive-level positions, whilst 34% search for middle-management positions. According to the National Online Recruiting Audience Survey (NORAS) for winter 2005, the quality of candidates who apply for jobs using the Internet is rising within the UK (Personnel Today, 2005a). The NORAS survey also reported that the average online jobseeker is 33 years of age, with 13 years of employment history, of which 5% are chief executives or directors and 30% are senior managers or managers.

Fourthly, recruiting online has the potential to attract the passive job seeker. Passive job seekers are those individuals who are regarded as highly competent but not actively seeking employment (Singh & Finn, 2003). Passive job seekers are considered as the most highly prized catch by recruiters (Galanaki, 2002). An organisation's website allows passive job seekers to take his/her time to get to know the organisation, the potential it holds and career possibilities it has to offer.

Lastly, recruiting online gives the organisation a more up-to-date image (Galanaki, 2002; Gatewood et al., 1993; Thomas & Ray, 2000). The workforce of today can be characterised as being more educated and open to new technology. An organisational website with a recruitment orientation contributes and strengthens the organisational image of innovation and flexibility (HR Focus, 2003; Williamson et al., 2003). This will improve the general image of the organisation, which could result in the organisation being branded as an employer of choice.

Faster hiring process

Another key advantage of online recruitment is that it speeds up the recruitment process, thereby reducing the average hiring cycle (Cappelli, 2001; Du Toit, 2003; Galanaki, 2002; HR Focus, 2003; Newell & Shackleton, 2000). However, the actual time organisations save when using online recruitment; vary greatly from organisation to organisation. Galanaki (2002) proposes that using the Internet to recruit can save up to 30% of HR's time. A study by Taleo Research (1999) claims that per recruitment cycle, some organisations save up to two days, whilst others who combine the Internet with more sophisticated innovations, could save up to 20 days to fill a vacancy within an organisation.

Posting a vacancy on the Internet can be done instantaneously, whereas more traditional forms of advertising such as newspaper advertisements, can take time to design, process and publish (Bakker, 2001a; Smith & Rupp, 2004). Job seekers that are interested in an advertised vacancy can apply with the click of a button, resulting in a near paperless process which saves HR departments even more time in processing and screening applications (Taleo Research, 1999). However, as mentioned above, the amount of time organisations save recruiting via an organisational website could differ depending on whether the website's full potential is utilised. This is a direct result of the organisation's ability to manage and coordinate the whole recruitment process (Thomas & Ray, 2000).

Lower recruiting cost

Using the Internet as a media source ensures a dramatic increase in exposure for the organisation to job seekers, at a fraction of the cost of traditional job advertising methods (Bakker, 2001a; Cappelli, 2001; HR Focus, 2003). Online recruitment reduces all three costs generated by the recruitment process, namely job awareness costs, candidate selection costs and loss of productivity due to time saved in filling the position (Galanaki, 2002). Once an organisation has decided to recruit online, it is imperative (and a prerequisite) for them to have a well-planned and properly implemented recruitment strategy, in order to reduce the cost involved in the recruiting process (Thomas & Ray, 2000).

2.7.2 Limitations of online recruitment

Integration into the recruitment process

To secure the success of online recruitment, it is imperative that it is implemented as part of an integrated recruitment process (Galanaki, 2002; Greengard, 1998). Unfortunately, not all organisations have access to the necessary resources and/or experience to achieve this. It is of the utmost importance that organisations realise what challenges and responsibilities accompany the decision to recruit on the 'information highway'. For example, they need to be prepared to deal with the relevant IT tools, such as search engines database or CV screening, as well as undertake a change management effort in order to help employees familiarise themselves with the implementation of the necessary tools (Galanaki, 2002; Greengard, 1998; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

Recruiting online increases the risk of receiving an overload of applications

Online recruitment is faster and reaches more applicants, but the organisational system must be able to support both the speed and volume of responses and applications received in order to avoid overload (Chapman & Webster, 2003; Greengard, 1998). Without the proper systems in place to sort, screen and contact applicants, the organisation are in danger of losing not only potential new intellectual capital, but also the competitive advantage that online recruitment offers (Greengard, 1998; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

The implementation of an online recruitment strategy implies extra time and effort

Should organisations limit the usage of the Internet to that of a media source (distributing their recruitment message) and not integrate it as a strategic business tool to screen and automate the processes involved in recruiting; the workload involved in recruiting will require more time and effort (Taleo Research, 1998). As previously argued, online recruitment, to varying degrees, reduces the time involved in generating a satisfactory pool of applicants (Du Toit, 2003; Galanaki, 2002; Newell & Shackleton, 2000). However, without

the proper mechanisms and trained personnel in place, to manage and coordinate the recruitment process, as well as process the volume of applications submitted, organisations risk being overwhelmed and may forfeit the competitive advantage online recruitment offers (Thomas & Ray, 2000).

Online recruitment is more effective for well-known organisations

The success of an organisational website as a recruitment method is influenced by the organisation's image and corporate reputation (Gatewood et al., 1993; Thomas & Ray, 2000). The websites of well-known organisations, are more likely to be successful than those of less-known organisations, since corporate image and recruitment image are significant predictors of job seekers' initial decision to pursue contact with an organisation (Cappelli, 2001; Gatewood et al., 1993). Job seekers are also more likely to be aware of well-known organisations, whilst the existence of a strong corporate brand name decreases the time needed to attract their attention (Cober et al., 2000; Greengard, 1998). In addition to an organisation's 'icon' status, the 2005 NORAS survey conducted in the UK reported that job seekers are more likely to revisit and use only those websites (e.g. job boards) that they have previously used successfully to locate employment opportunities (Personnel Today, 2005a).

According to research conducted by Nielson/Netrating on the Internet usage of those South Africans with Internet access at home or work (excluding Internet cafes, WAP-enabled cell phones and academic institutions), it was reported that in June 2001, South African Internet users visited an average of 20 websites per month (Epnnet, 2001). In March 2007, Nielson/Netrating reported the number to be 35 websites (Nielson/Netrating, 2007). This is considered relatively high, since the average number of websites visited in 2001 in the USA was 10, the UK average was six and the global average was 15 websites (Epnnet, 2001; Personnel Today, 2005a). According to Sue Bolton, the sales and marketing director in South Africa for Nielson/Netrating, such a high average is a common characteristic of an Internet community that is developing rapidly and has yet to reach maturity (Epnnet, 2001). South Africans are still in the process of exploring and searching for their preferred websites. However, once the Internet community has reached a certain level of maturity, the average number of websites visited, will decline (in line with global trends) and the challenge organisations face to raise awareness and attract job seekers to their websites, will increase for smaller less-known organisations.

2.8 ONLINE RECRUITMENT: NATIONAL VS. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

A survey conducted by Taleo Research (formerly known as iLogos Research), commenced in 1998 to examine the best 500 organisations in the world (Global 500) in terms of their use of their organisational websites as a component of their recruitment strategy (iLogos Research, 2003; Taleo Research, 1998). The survey results revealed that over a course of five years (1998 – 2003) the use of organisational website by these organisations (Global 500) increased from 29% to 94% (figure 2.2) (iLogos Research, 2003).

The Global 500's adoption of online recruitment via their organisational websites, closely matches the 'diffusion of innovation theory', which relates to the spread of an innovation over time (iLogos Research, 2003; Mowen, 1990; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). According to the theory, adoption of an innovation (e.g. new technology) is divided into segments starting with innovators moving through early adopters, early majority, late majority and finally laggards (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Innovators are generally viewed as risk takers

and visionaries, whereas early adopters are considered respectable opinion leaders. The early majority is deliberately ahead of the curve, but only willing to make safe investments, whereas the late majority is considered the sceptics (iLogos Research, 2003; Mowen, 1990; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). The percentages occupied by these five segments are shown by the bell-shaped curve in figure 2.4.

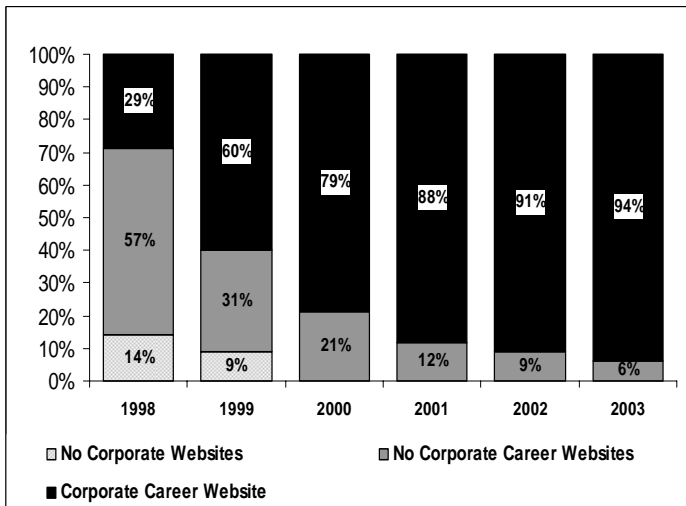


Figure 0.3: Global 500 organisations with organisational career websites, 1998 – 2003 (iLogos Research, 2003, p3; Sukazi, 2004, p.3)

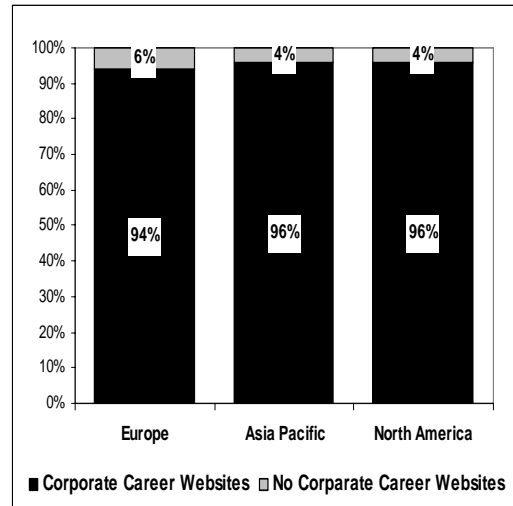


Figure 0.4: Global 500 companies with organisational career websites, 2003: by region (iLogos Research, 2003, p. 4)

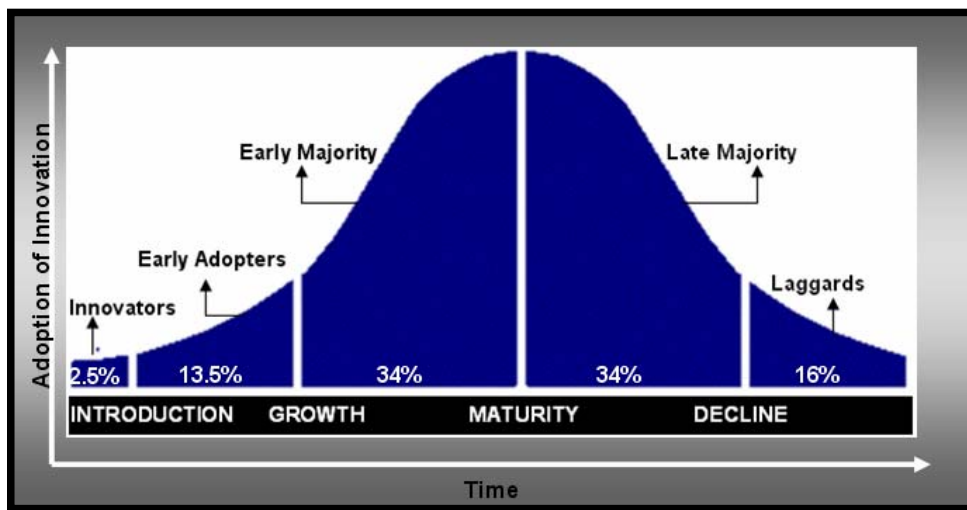


Figure 0.5: Adopters categories based on innovativeness (Adopted from 'phases in product life cycle'; Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff, Terblance, 2004, p.272)

The theory holds that once new technology (e.g. the Internet or website recruitment) has moved out of the pioneering 'innovators' and 'early adopters' phases into the mainstream, the adoption rate of that new technology will accelerate. Only after the majority has embraced the new technology, the sharp increase in the adoption rate will start to decline, whilst waiting for the 'late majority' and 'laggards', with a more conservative attitude to change, to join the majority (iLogos Research, 2003; Mowen, 1990; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004).

The cumulative frequency distribution of the adoption or diffusion of new technology can be compared to a 's-shaped' curve (figure 2.5). In line with the s-curve, figures 2.2 and 2.3 indicate that the rate of the Global 500's website recruitment adoption is declining as the adoption rate nears 100%. This is to be expected, since the 'late-adopters' and 'laggards', those organisations with a more conservative attitude towards embracing new technology and marketing strategies, will take longer to embrace the idea of online recruitment. In 2003 iLogos Research (2003) projected that it is most likely that a 100% adoption rate by the Global 500 should be achieved around 2004 – 2005. However, the statistics to confirm this projection is not yet available.

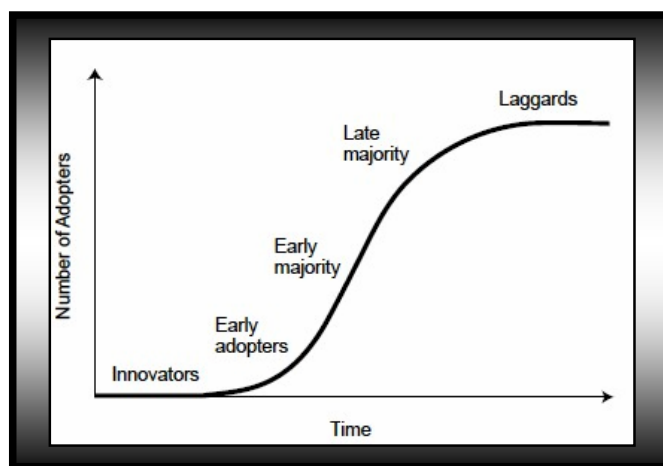


Figure 0.6: The innovation adoption s-curve (Rogers, 1995, p.72)

Since the Global 500 is considered to be representative of 'innovators' and 'early adopters', it is evident that across the globe, the Internet is in fact an increasingly growing medium being incorporated into the recruitment strategy of organisations. As a recruitment medium without geographical borders or limitations, the Internet enables organisations to disseminate their recruitment message to the broadest audience possible (Galanaki, 2002). With Internet usage growing rapidly, such as within the UK from 26.2% in 2000 to 62.6% in 2006 (Taleo Research, 2006a), it becomes imperative that organisations adjust their recruitment strategy according to the search behaviour of job seekers (Devitt, 2005). Across the world, the incorporation of the Internet in all sectors of business, especially the recruitment sector, is emerging (Chapman & Webster, 2003; iLogos Research, 2003). For example, according to 'The 2006 Seek Intelligence Employee Satisfaction and Motivation Survey' the majority (87%) of job seekers in Australia prefer the Internet to locate and obtain information regarding employment opportunities (Cincotta, 2007).

It is therefore evident that on an international level, the Internet has changed the traditional recruitment landscape and due to technological advancements and globalisation, the influence of the Internet on the South African recruitment landscape is inevitable. The extent to which South Africa have adopted and incorporated the Internet (Internet penetration within SA), is an important determinant of the extent to which SA organisations are using their organisational websites for recruitment purposes. However, there are a number of factors within developing countries, such as SA, that can either promote or hinder the incorporation and diffusion of the Internet on national, organisational and individual level (Bazar, 1997). These factors include the country's infrastructure; level of economic development; government policies and

regulations towards telecommunication and Internet services; IT penetration in the country itself; language (which is considered a barrier if the Internet application is not available in the local language) and cultural factors (such as individual beliefs, value systems and attitudes towards information sharing).

Recent statistics show that 10.3% of the SA population currently have access to the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2007b). Within Africa, SA is the country with the highest percentage of Internet users, comprising 15.3% of all African Internet users. However, within a global Internet usage context, Africa's Internet user population comprises a mere 3% of all Internet users (Internet World Stats, 2007a).

The Internet's influence on the SA recruitment market was already evident in 2001, when Computing SA (2001) reported that due to the Internet, SA's recruitment industry was experiencing the beginning of an online recruiting revolution, already entrenched in the United States and European markets (Cappelli, 2001). In line with global trends, the migration to online job-hunting is increasing in SA (Sukazi, 2004). For example, according to De Klerk (2007), general sales manager of Job Mail (an online recruitment organisation, that specialises in advertising employment opportunities on behalf of recruiting organisations), not only has the online recruitment industry in SA boomed over the past five years, but the growth is also expected to accelerate as more people gain access to the Internet. Even though some organisations still prefer traditional printed advertisement, there has been a mass migration of employers and recruitment agencies to online advertisement in the last few years (De Klerk, 2007). It is therefore expected that online recruitment in SA will follow the same pattern illustrated by the diffusion of innovation theory.

The global online recruitment market was estimated at \$2 billion in 2002 (Management Today, 2002), but within the SA context where only 10.3% of the population have access to the Internet either at home or work, the market size is much smaller (Internet World Stats, 2007b). World Wide Worx's annual study pertaining to the SA Internet access industry, reported that 3.6-million South Africans were able to access the Internet in 2005 (World Wide Worx, 2006a). This amounted to a 5% growth in 2005, which was slightly higher to the 4% growth documented in 2004. Thus, statistically speaking, only one in every 12 South Africans had access to the Internet in 2005, which is marginally higher than one in 13 at the end of 2003 and one in 15 at the end of 2001 (World Wide Worx, 2006a).

The 2007 NORAS survey reported that the usage of mobile phones with Internet access is a key trend in the UK, employed by job seekers (Personnel Today, 2007). It is evident that the Internet is gaining significant grounds in becoming the most preferred way of searching for employment opportunities; it therefore is only natural that new mobile technology would become an extension to online recruitment. According to De Klerk (2007), South African job hunting styles are in line with international trends, hence the movement of job hunting via cell phones is also emerging in the South African market (e.g. *Job Mail's* employment postings, are also cell phone accessible). This trend might become more pronounced as cell phone penetration in SA increases. For example, according to Statistics South Africa 2001 census, only 32.3% of South African households owned a cell phone (Statistics South Africa, 2001). However, in 2005 a significant increase was evident, when Statistics South Africa (2005) reported that 59.7% of all households indicated cell phone availability and regular usage.

The turnover of SA's recruitment market in 2000 was estimated to be R500 million per year, with the recruitment media market (agencies and employers) spending in the vicinity of R100 million to R120 million each year. Up to 15% of that figure was allocated to online recruitment (Richardson, 2000). World Wide Worx (2006b) expects the online advertising revenue within SA to reach R183 million in 2006 and pass the R200-million mark in 2007. South African based job boards, such as *Pnet*, *JobNavigator* and *CareerJunction* are doing very well in advertising and recruiting employees on behalf of organisations (Fontyn, 2001). For example, during the first two weeks of January 2004, *CareerJunction* reported having more than 2000 concurrent users (Sukazi, 2004). Whereas, during the month of March 2007, *CareerJunction* received a record posting of more than 36 000 new job advertisements, over 5.7 million job views and over 630 000 job applications (Jarzebowski, 2007). It is therefore clear that within SA, online recruitment is a reality that organisations should consider when reviewing their recruitment strategy and methods.

CareerJunction has also noted a change in the traditional profile of online job seekers, in terms of their career level and age. Current online job seekers are older and more experienced (Jarzebowski, 2007). Traditionally, the Internet was viewed to be a domain predominantly for the youth and those just entering the job market (Franzinger, 2001; Personnel Today, 2005a). However, *CareerJunction* reports that only 14% of their career seekers are below the age of 24, 67% are between the ages of 25 and 39, and 15% are over the age of 40. In terms of career level, 55% of career seekers are in a skilled, senior or management level (Jarzebowski, 2007).

Online recruitment with specific reference to organisational website recruiting in SA is still in the early phase. Currently it would seem that instead of moving from one extreme to another (traditional recruitment methods to technological advanced methods), some organisations are rather adopting a more holistic or dual recruitment strategy in combining both traditional print and online advertising methods (Chapman & Webster, 2003; De Klerk, 2007). For example, the use of short-print advertisements in newspapers with reference to the full advertisement on their organisational website is common. Hence, within the following section, strategies that would maximise the effectiveness of online recruitment are briefly explored.

2.9 STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE ONLINE RECRUITMENT

Taleo Research (1998) proposes that organisations at the forefront of Internet recruiting share a common business model that enables them to optimise the ability of their organisational website to gain a competitive advantage in recruiting online (see figure 2.6).

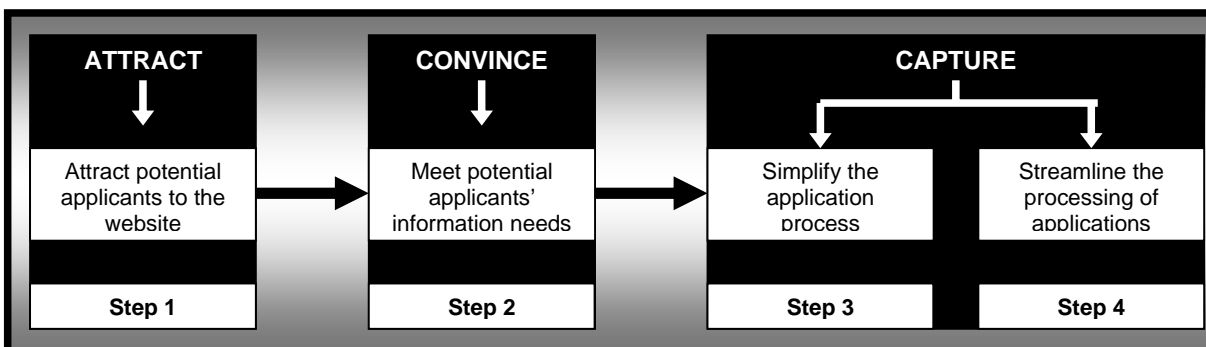


Figure 0.7: Business model for effective Internet recruitment (Adapted from Taleo Research, 1998, p.13)

The first step is to attract job seekers to the organisation's website in order to create an awareness of the organisation's recruiting needs. In doing so, the organisation is being placed in a position to sell itself to potential applicants by meeting their information needs and convincing them of their status as an employer of choice (step two). Steps three and four, aim to capture the potential applicant. Once the information needs of a potential applicant have been met, Internet recruitment organisations focus their efforts on simplifying and streamlining the application process.

On closer inspection, Taleo Research's (1998) business model for effective Internet recruitment (see figure 2.6), share a remarkable similarity with the first three stages of the conceptual model of the online recruitment cycle developed by Cober et al. (2000), in terms of the process to optimise the effectiveness of a website as an online recruitment method (see figure 2.7).

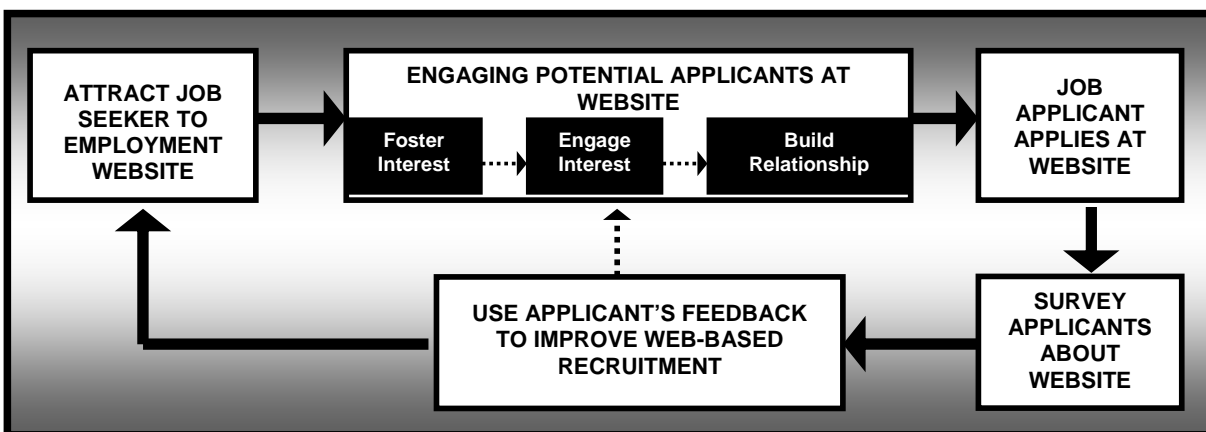


Figure 0.8: Conceptual model of the online recruitment cycle (Cober et al., 2000, p.484)

Cober et al. (2000) propose that there are three primary stages, in the online search process of job seekers, to consider when designing effective organisational webpages for recruitment purposes. First, job seekers need to be attracted to the organisation's website. Secondly, the website must maintain the interest of potential applicants, in order to ensure that they process the information being presented via the website. Thirdly, the potential applicant must be able to apply for available positions via the website. The model further suggests that applicants may be surveyed and that the feedback could then be used to improve the website in its online recruitment efforts.

In order to maximise the effectiveness of an organisation's recruitment strategy, organisations should also consider the decision-making process of job seekers. Individuals searching for an employment opportunity progress through a series of stages, which is very similar to that which consumers experience in making a purchase (Summey & Anderson, 1992). The five stages common to both the purchasing and the job-seeking process are the recognition of a need, information search, the evaluation of alternatives, decision-making and post choice evaluation (Cross, 1999; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004; Summey & Anderson, 1992). Current successful marketers align their marketing efforts to each stage of the decision-making process of consumers in order to provide them with the necessary information and incentive to make a purchase decision (Cappelli, 2001; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Summey & Anderson, 1992). In using a creative consumer-behaviour approach (i.e. job marketing), organisations can develop similar strategies to attract and educate

job seekers who have insufficient information, negative attitudes and unrealistic expectations that interfere with successful recruiting (Maurer & Liu, 2007).

2.10 THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WHEN CHOOSING A JOB

Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) define a decision as the selection of an option from two or more alternatives. The process of making a job choice is characterised as a series of decisions by an applicant as to which jobs and organisations to pursue for possible employment (Gatewood et al., 1993). Understanding the decision-making process of job seekers and potential applicants is crucial to the success of an organisational website as a recruitment method. Not only will such an understanding enable organisations to identify the information needs of potential applicants, it will also enable organisations to meet and satisfy those information needs, thereby assisting potential applicants in their decisions. Insight into the decision-making process will also enable organisations to align their recruitment strategy to attract potential applicants to its website; convince them of its suitability as an employer via the information available on the website; and capture potential applicants via the submission of an application.

2.10.1 The five stages of the job decision-making process

There are essentially five stages in a potential applicant's attempt to decide what type of job and in which organisation he/she would like to pursue a career in (see figure 2.8). These are the recognition of an employment need; career information search; evaluation of career alternatives; identification and subsequent acceptance of employment; and post-choice evaluation (Summey & Anderson, 1992).

Recognition of an employment need

Problem recognition is the first stage in the decision-making process. It transpires when a discrepancy develops between the individual's actual and desired state of being (e.g. current job vs. desired employment situation) and is therefore an awareness of the need to change the existing state to conform to the desired or ideal state (Cant, Brink & Brijball, 2002). The process of problem recognition is brought about by either internal- or external stimuli (Sheth & Mittal, 2004). Internal stimuli are perceived states of discomfort and can be physical or psychological (e.g. strenuous work environment, in conflict with superiors, physically dangerous job), whereas external stimuli are marketplace information (e.g. recruitment advertising) that leads individuals to recognise a problem within their current employment situation or need to change their current employment situation.

An organisation can therefore direct its recruitment campaign (online and offline advertising) to develop a discrepancy between an individuals' actual and desired state and thereby facilitate the development of the 'problem recognition stage' within the individual. It is important to take note that the discrepancy created has to cross the individual's absolute threshold of awareness, in order to set the decision-making process in motion (Statt, 1997). However, even if the discrepancy created crossed the absolute threshold of awareness, resulting in a need recognition, the right conditions may not be in place to trigger the decision-making process. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the individual might not consider the recognised need to be sufficiently important to act on; or secondly, the individual might not be able to satisfy the need (Statt, 1997).

Career information search

Once a need has been recognised, individuals search for information about various alternative ways to solve the problem or satisfy the need. The search for information is a learning process that consists of mental and physical activity undertaken by the individual (Cant et al., 2002). Two types of search processes exist (e.g. internal and external search) (Statt, 1997). Internal search involves the attempt to retrieve information from the long-term memory that will help solve the problem. In contrast, an external search involves the acquisition of information from outside sources. An external search is affected by individual differences and environmental influences (Cant et al., 2002). Individual differences include resources available, motivation, involvement, knowledge, attitudes, personality, lifestyle and demographics. Environmental influences include personal information sources, business and marketing forces (advertising), neutral sources (booklets, brochures, pamphlets) and social and cultural influences.

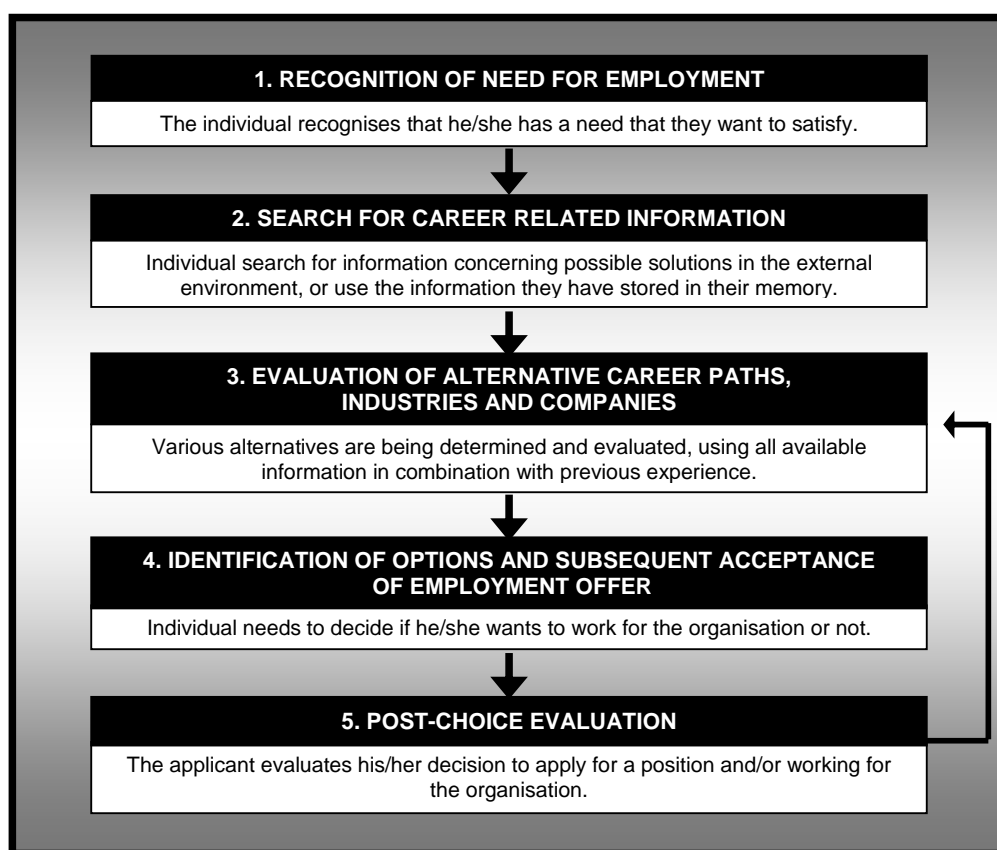


Figure 0.9: The five stages in the decision-making process (Summey & Anderson, 1992, p.54)

The choice of information sources being consulted by the individual depends partly on the search strategy that is employed. A search strategy is the pattern of information acquisition job seekers utilise to solve a problem or to satisfy a need (Sheth & Mittal, 2004). Since information acquisition has costs in terms of time, physical effort, and mental effort, job seekers weigh the costs against the likely gains from the acquired information. Such comparisons help them decide how much information they will acquire, as well as the sources to be used in the acquisition of information. The amount of information required and the importance of the decision (e.g. career change), will dictate which problem solving strategy (routine, limited or extended) will be followed (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004; Sheth & Mittal, 2004).

When designing an organisational website for online recruitment purposes, it is imperative that the content of the website adequately address the needs inherent to this stage (search for career related information) of the job decision-making process. Thus, in addition to providing potential applicants with information that they consider important and relevant to their decision-making process, the organisational website should also market itself and provide information on what it is that makes the organisation a unique and better employer than its competitors (Cappelli, 2001).

Evaluation of career alternatives

The evaluation of career alternatives is the third stage in the decision-making process of potential applicants. Evaluation is the act of identifying alternative solutions to a problem and assessing the relative merits and demerits of each (Cant et al., 2002). Potential applicants will evaluate each employment opportunity, which they find to be attractive, in terms of its merits and demerits. The criteria to determine the attractiveness of an potential employment opportunity is different for each potential applicant, as it is moulded and influenced by individual and environmental variables. The evaluative criteria being used, can also be both objective (location, salary, training, company attributes, etc.) and subjective (company reputation, prestige, meaningful work, etc.) (Summey & Anderson, 1992).

Identification and acceptance of employment

A decision is the mental process of selecting the most desirable alternative from a set of alternatives generated by the information search (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Once a potential applicant has evaluated the alternative positions that the organisation has to offer, a conscious decision is made, regarding whether he/she wants to work for the organisation. This, within the online recruitment process, will amount to either applying for a position, or the potential applicant will exit the website, in search for a position more compatible with his/her needs. Subsequent to the initial decision (i.e. applying for the position), applicants also have to decide (a) whether they will remain active applicants (whilst waiting for the organisation to process and identify those employees it desires) and (b) whether to accept an extended offer of employment (Murphy & Tam, 2004).

Post-choice evaluation

In the last phase of the decision-making process, the applicant evaluates his/her decision to accept a position within a specific organisation. What is of particular importance is the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction the new employee experience after the acceptance of a position within a particular organisation (Summey & Anderson, 1992). The employee's experience is being fed back into the 'evaluating of career alternatives' stage of the decision-making process, consequently influencing the employee's future decisions and behaviour.

2.11 ALIGNMENT OF AN ONLINE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY WITH THE POTENTIAL APPLICANT'S JOB DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

In order to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of its organisational website as an online recruitment method, organisations should strive to align each stage of its online recruitment strategy to assist potential applicants in each stage of their job decision-making process, as illustrated in figure 2.9.

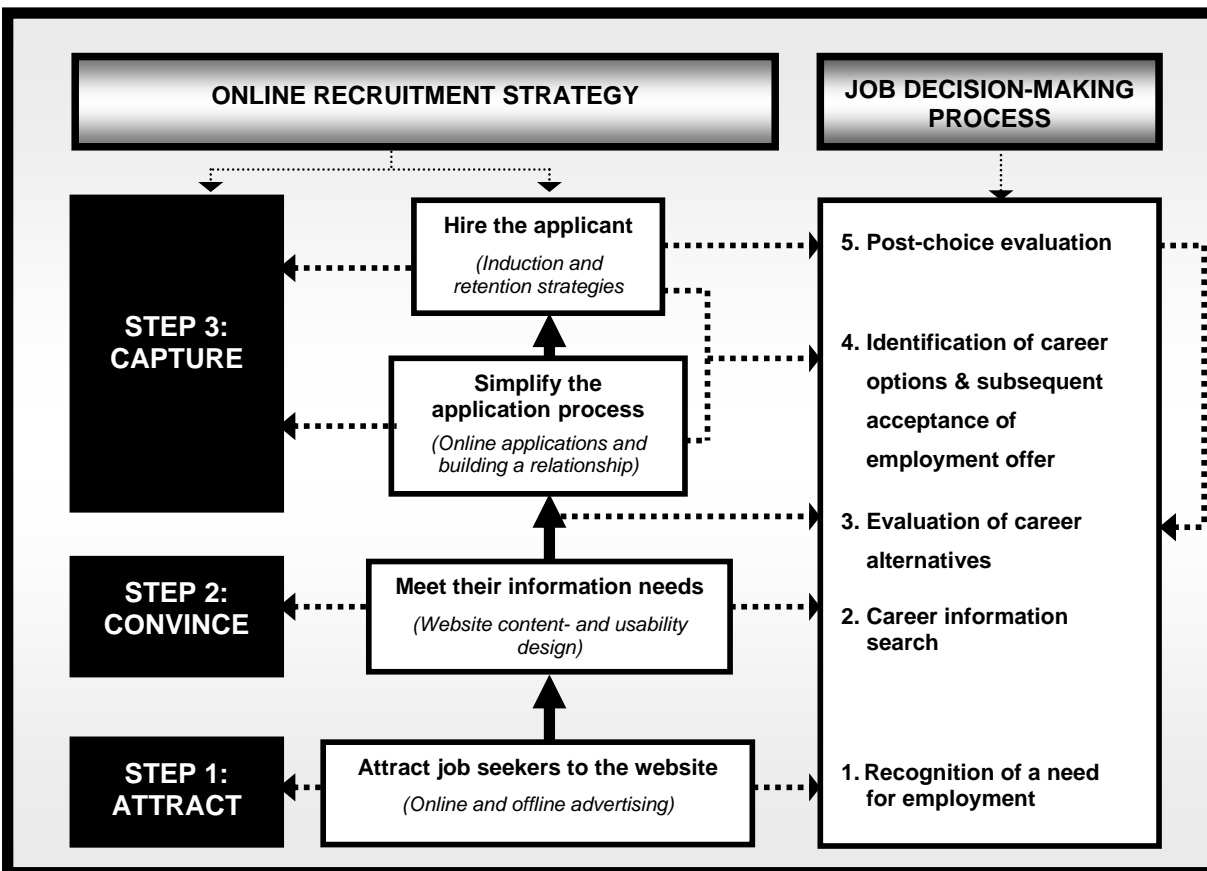


Figure 0.10: The alignment of an online recruitment strategy with a potential applicant's job decision-making process (Adapted from Cober et al., 2000, p.484; Summey & Anderson, 1992, p.54; Taleo Research, 1998, p.13; Taleo Research, 1999, p.22)

In order for organisations to attract (step 1) job seekers to their organisational website, online and offline, advertisements should be structured in such a manner that the message being communicated facilitates the development of an employment need. Once a need for employment has been recognised, potential applicants will proceed with a search for career related information. Here organisations should focus its website design upon convincing (step 2) potential applicants of its suitability as an employer of choice, through the provision of relevant career related information that would satisfy their information needs. If potential applicants perceive the information gathered to be sufficient, he/she will progress to the third stage of the job decision-making process, which entails the evaluation of career alternatives. Upon evaluation of the possible career alternatives, potential applicants' initial decision will entail deciding upon which of the identified career alternatives they found suitable enough to pursue for possible employment. By simplifying the application process at this stage, the organisation could increase the probability of capturing (step 2) potential applicants, who consider working for the organisation, via the submission of an online application.

Provided within the following section is a detailed discussion, specifically focussed on the alignment of an online recruitment strategy and potential applicants' job decision-making process. The discussion is divided into three prominent sections that focuses on the recruitment steps (attract, convince and capture) illustrated in figure 2.9. Within each of the sections, the discussion firstly explores the job decision-making phase applicable to the recruitment step (attract, convince or capture), in terms of how the organisation can strategically position itself to facilitate the development and potential applicants' progression through the job decision-making phase in question. The discussion then shifts to related theories, benchmarks and strategies that organisations can utilise to align its recruitment strategy with the decision-making process, in order to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of an organisational website as a recruitment method.

In essence, all three steps are vital to the success of an organisational website that is utilised for recruitment purposes. However, for the purpose of this study the primary focus is the second step (convince). Within the section that discusses the 'convince' step, website design (content and usability) is investigated and benchmarks (that are measurable and practically executable) are identified that would be conducive to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. It is argued that these website design elements are crucial in maximising the website's ability to satisfy potential applicants' information needs (second stage of the job decision-making process) and convince them of the organisation's suitability as an employer. For the purpose of this study, the researcher deems a potential applicant 'captured' once he/she decides to submit an application. Hence, only those benchmarks (content- and usability design), which are aimed at convincing potential applicants of the organisation's suitability as an employer in order to facilitate the decision to submit an application, are relevant to the scope of this study. The remainder of the discussion pertaining to 'capturing' (how to simplify the application process, submission of online applications and the hiring of the applicant), is provided to illustrate the importance of aligning the two processes (i.e. the recruitment strategy and job decision-making process). The content- and usability design benchmarks presented in this chapter, are at the core of this study. It represents the basis upon which the empirical assessment instruments for this study were developed (e.g. Website Benchmarks Checklist and Website Evaluation Questionnaire).

2.11.1 Attract

a) Recognition of an employment need

The first step in an effective recruitment strategy is to enhance job seeker's awareness of available positions within a particular organisation (figure 2.9). Creating awareness among job seekers (recognising an employment need) can be facilitated by various recruitment methods, such as special-events recruiting, vacation work, traditional printed advertisements and/or online advertisements.

All advertisements, whether online or offline have one basic underlying principle, which is communication (Erasmus et al., 1998). The communication process consist of a sender (in this case representing the recruiting organisation), sending a message via a particular medium (newspaper, radio, television, Internet, etc.) to a receiver (in this case the job seeker) (Statt, 1997). Organisations commonly use the AIDA (Attention; Interest; Desire; and Action) formula, which represent the stages of consumer involvement with a promotional message, to structure printed and verbal advertisements (Blem, 2000; Lamb et al., 2004).

Recruiting organisations should apply this formula when constructing online and offline advertisements in order to facilitate the development and recognition of an employment need, therein attracting job seekers to its website. However, it is important to note that the AIDA formula is also applicable to the design of a recruitment organisational website, since the website is also a marketing tool, which attempts to sell and increase the attractiveness of the organisation as a potential employer (Cober et al., 2003). The AIDA advertising formula, which is an abbreviation of its components, comprises of the following:

- **Attention:** It is imperative that advertisements attract job seekers' attention, to ensure its intended audience can 'hear' and 'see' what the organisation have to offer them (Cober et al., 2003). This can be achieved in paying close attention to certain aspects of an advertisement that makes it stand out from its surroundings such as the visual lay out (size, colour and position on the page) and its heading (which should be meaningful, descriptive, large and readable) (Erasmus et al., 1998). Traditionally advertisements with the abovementioned features (e.g. colour, size and page position) are expensive; however, online recruitment enables organisations to incorporate such features at a fraction of the cost.
- **Interest:** Once the advertisement has captured an individual's attention, it needs to maintain his/her interest (Cober et al., 2003). Maintaining the individuals' interest can be achieved by presenting the information he/she is looking for and/or emphasizing a desired outcome (Erasmus et al., 1998). Should offline and online recruitment advertisements (e.g. specialised job site or a banner) fail to interest the job seeker, only a limited number of job seekers will be directed to the organisation's website.
- **Desire:** A desire can be created by illustrating how the advertised product (e.g. employment opportunity) will satisfy the individual's needs (e.g. day-care facility, flexible working hours; compensation) (Lamb et al., 2004)
- **Action:** The intensity of the desire created will determine whether the desire will amount to action (i.e. visit the advertising organisation's website to view its available employment opportunities, submitting an application) (Lamb et al., 2004).

b) Attracting job seekers to organisational career websites

Job seekers' initial decision concerning whether to contact and pursue employment within an organisation, is greatly influenced by the amount of information available, as well as the general impression they have regarding the image and reputation of the organisation (Cappelli, 2001; Gatewood et al., 1993; Maurer & Liu, 2007). An increase in the amount of information potential applicants are exposed to will enhance the organisation's image held by potential applicants, the attractiveness of the organisation as an employer and the applicants' willingness to follow up on an interview (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993). An organisational website offers an unlimited amount of space at practically no additional cost (Maurer & Liu, 2007; Peters, 2001), which will allow the organisation to present potential applicants with the necessary information concerning the organisation, available positions and qualifications required (Erasmus et al., 1998).

Well-known organisations with a strong brand name have a competitive advantage in terms of less time spend on attracting job seekers to the organisation's website, compared to unknown organisations that lack brand name recognition (Cober et al., 2000). Less known organisations can attempt to rectify this disadvantage by using a more intensive advertising campaign to attract job seekers to their organisation's

website. Whether well known or unknown, organisations can utilise the same online and offline recruitment methods to direct traffic (job seekers) to its organisational website.

Offline strategies

Traditional recruitment methods compliment online recruiting efforts in terms of directing job seekers to the organisation's website (Singh & Finn, 2003). The most common traditional (offline) recruiting methods utilised to promote and attract job seekers to an organisational website are billboards, campus fairs, career fairs, pamphlets, newspaper advertisements, open houses, radio, referrals, trade publications and television.

According to Taleo Research (1999), the key component in integrating online with offline strategies is the way in which offline advertising is utilised. Printed advertisements are no longer the only source of information on an organisation and available employment opportunities. As a result, detailed advertisements are currently being replaced by brief advertisements containing the organisation's website address, which refers the job seeker to the organisational website for more detailed information. In addition, research also indicates that organisations need to integrate their recruiting effort with the organisation's overall marketing campaign (Cappelli, 2001; Summey & Anderson, 1992; Taleo Research, 1999). All promotions, advertising and other marketing efforts influence consumers and consequently prospective employees. Adding the organisation's website address to these advertisements (on radio, on television, in cinemas and printed) and promotions (such as food and wine shows, coffee mugs, hats and t-shirts) will not only direct job seekers to an organisation's website, but also reinforce the organisation's brand (Cappelli, 2001).

Online strategies

A thorough understanding of the methods job seekers utilise in their search for recruitment websites will enable organisations to be more effective in attracting them to the organisation's website. Research indicates that the media sources most frequently used to identify new websites are search engines, other websites, friends, printed media, online directories, e-mails, television, newsgroups and books (Cober et al., 2000; Taleo Research, 1999). However, the electronic methods most frequently used by job seekers to locate an organisation's website address, include job boards, search engines, and banners (Taleo Research, 1999).

Job boards

Job boards are websites that specialise in posting job openings and are usually searchable by keyword, location and/or industry. They appear typically as the online version of a newspaper's career section or a website strictly devoted to the advertising of employment opportunities on behalf of recruiting organisations (e.g. *CareerJunction*; *Pnet*, *JobNavigator*) (Taleo Research, 1999). Job boards are good at attracting both active and passive job seekers, in granting them the opportunity to view available positions within a certain field at their own time, while allowing them to stay anonymous. However, some enjoy higher brand name recognition than others (Cober et al., 2000). Organisations can, however, capitalise on the reputation of popular and well-known job boards by advertising on them, thereby not only increasing the reach of its recruitment message, but also the size and diversity of job seekers exposed to it.

Job boards have the capacity to level the playing field for less-recognised brand name organisations, by enabling its recruitment message to reach a global audience at a fraction of the cost traditional media would

have incurred (Peters, 2001). However, it does not offer in-depth information on the recruiting organisation. The amount of unique organisational information, communicated to the job seeker, is therefore limited (Cober et al., 2000; Taleo Research, 1999). This hurdle can be overcome with the incorporation of a hyperlink to the recruiting organisation's website, thereby directing and increasing traffic to its organisational website.

Search engines

A search engine is a program that uses keywords to find information on the Internet and returns a list of relevant documents (Parsons & Oja, 2002). Job seekers browsing for vacant positions, that are unaware of specific job boards or the address of an organisation's website, can use search engines (e.g. Yahoo and Google) to aid their search effort. It is therefore imperative that organisations register their website address, as well as appropriate metatags (an HTML code line that makes the content of webpages recognisable to search engine indexes), to ensure that their webpages are detected by search engines (Taleo Research, 1999). Williams and Klau (1997) suggest that organisations can be creative when deciding upon a website address or they can stick to the basic "www. your company name" approach. They do however, caution against using unnecessary long and hard-to-remember website addresses.

Banners

Banners are images displayed on a website that advertises a product, service or job opportunities. It acts as a hyperlink, taking the interested party directly to the advertiser's website when clicked upon. They are an effective tool to be used (on the recruiting organisation's website or elsewhere on the Internet) to attract job seekers to the career section of its website (Taleo Research, 1999). However, relying only on banners will not guarantee success, since they are more effective as part of an overall recruitment advertising strategy to increase the visibility and direct traffic to an organisation's website.

Organisational websites

All the previously discussed online and offline advertising methods focus on attracting job seekers to either the organisation's homepage or the career section of the website. However, to avoid frustration and exiting of the website, which might still occur, the following guidelines pertaining to website design, should be implemented to aid potential applicants in their search for employment opportunities and therein increase the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour (Cappelli, 2001; Goodridge, 2000; Taleo Research, 2001a; Thomas & Ray, 2000; Workforce, 2000). Firstly, organisations should provide a direct link from the homepage to the career section and avoid hiding employment opportunities behind layers of links. Secondly, provide a search engine on the website that the potential applicant can use to search for career related information. Thirdly, to take advantage of website visitors' personal referral network, an 'e-mail to a friend' feature, enabling visitors to forward information regarding employment opportunities, should be incorporated.

2.11.2 Convince

As previously mentioned, the convince phase is at the core of this study. The main focus of this study is to identify website design (content- and usability) benchmarks that (when incorporated into the design) may contribute to the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. It is argued that when

these design factors are adhered to, it will not only enable the website to better assist potential applicants with their 'search for career related information', as well as enhance the organisation's attractiveness, but also enable organisations to convince potential applicants of its suitability as an employer. In addition, it should also enable potential applicants to make an informed decision pertaining to the advertised employment opportunity and improve the person-organisation fit that can be achieved, which subsequently could reduce labour turnover due to a poorly informed decision to apply or accept an employment offer.

a) Career information search

The potential applicant now enters the second stage of the decision-making process, namely searching for career related information (see figure 2.9). However, regardless of the success of an organisation's advertising campaign to attract job seekers to its website, the presence of potential applicants on its website is not sufficient to guarantee the website's success as a recruitment method (responsible for generating a pool of qualified applicants).

In order to establish the organisation's suitability and status as an employer of choice, potential applicants should be viewed as customers and organisations should therefore market (promote and sell) the idea of working for them, as well as actively promote what the organisation offers potential employees (Cappelli, 2001; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Story, 2002). Hence, within this phase (convince), it is imperative that the organisational website provides potential applicants with information they desire (Taleo Research, 1999). The amount of information available may greatly influence the application decision and/or the organisation's attractiveness (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993). More specifically, the quality of information potential applicants are exposed to could enhance the organisation's image, which impacts on the attractiveness of the organisation as a potential employer, as well as potential applicants' intention of pursuing employment within the organisation (Cober et al., 2003; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

Based on the AIDA formula, the organisation now finds itself in the position where generating and maintaining the 'interest' of potential applicants, is imperative, in order to create the 'desire' to be employed by the organisation (Blem, 2000; Cober et al., 2003; Lamb et al., 2004). Effectively communicating the appropriate employment information in order to meet potential applicants' information needs is crucial to the success of an organisational website as recruitment method, as well as the organisation's overall recruitment strategy (see figure 2.9). Thus, central to the second step (convince) of an effective online recruitment strategy, is the design (content and usability) of the organisational website, which should ultimately meet and satisfy potential applicant's information needs and therein convince them of the organisation's suitability and status as an employer of choice (Cober et al., 2003).

b) Website design to meet and satisfy the information needs of potential applicants

For the purposes of online recruitment, the design of an organisational website should meet both the usability and content requirements of the target audience (i.e. potential applicants) (Cober et al., 2003). According to De Marsico and Levialdi (2003), the first step in designing an organisational website is to plan the informative structure. It is crucial that the content of the website is adequate, complete and relevant with respect to the needs of its target audience (i.e. potential applicants). The second step is to design the

interactive environment (i.e. usability of the website), responsible for communicating the useful and informative content in an effective and satisfactory manner.

Websites utilised for recruitment purposes can be orientated towards accomplishing the same function as an employment interview, which is generally to either distribute information concerning the organisation to applicants, collect information to screen and hire applicants, or both (DeBell, Montgomery, McCarthy & Lanthier, 1998). Determining the website's orientation is crucial to its content design, since it will not only determine the content potential applicants are presented with, but also influence potential applicants' initial attraction to the organisation (Williamson et al., 2003). The three website orientations that Williamson et al. (2003) differentiate between, include:

- **Recruiting-orientation:** When following this orientation, the information provided by the organisational website is aimed at promoting and selling the organisation (Williamson et al., 2003). This can be accomplished in providing potential applicants with information concerning the benefits of working for the organisation, detailed descriptions of specific job openings, training opportunities and available promotion opportunities. The website therefore serves as a marketing tool aimed at encouraging candidates to apply for a position (Cappelli, 2001).
- **Screening-orientation:** Websites with a screening-orientation are primarily used to gather information (e.g. work experience, knowledge, skills, abilities and values) from applicants. To improve the effectiveness of the selection process, the information collected is used to evaluate and screen applicants, in order to identify those most compatible with the organisation's hiring needs (Cappelli, 2001; Williamson et al., 2003).
- **Dual-purpose orientation:** When following a dual-purpose orientation, the organisational website combines the recruiting- and screening-orientation. The website is therefore used to promote and sell the organisation, whilst simultaneously collecting information that would improve the effectiveness of its selection process (Williamson et al., 2003).

Williamson et al. (2003) determined that potential applicants respond more favourably and are significantly more attracted to organisations that utilise a recruiting-orientated website as opposed to a website with a screening-orientation. However, the highest level of attraction can be achieved with a dual-purpose orientation, which maximises the organisation's attractiveness as an employer, with useful content, whilst minimising the negativity associated with the incorporation of screening questions and tools.

Based on previous research, a theoretical framework is presented within the following two sub-sections, from which content- and usability design benchmarks (guidelines) were derived, that when adhered to, may contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour and maximise the organisational website's potential to deliver a pool of qualified applicants. The items that constitute the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire (see appendix B), are the website content- and usability design benchmarks derived from the theoretical framework presented within the following two sub-sections. These website content-and usability design benchmarks are at the core of this study and they constitute the basis upon which a checklist and questionnaire for the website audit and evaluation were constructed (see appendices B, C and D). However, since this study's primary focus is on 'convincing' potential applicants and not on the 'capturing' process itself, the identified website design benchmarks relate to promoting and selling

the organisation as an employer to potential applicants. Hence, the identified content- and usability benchmarks relate to the 'convince phase' and are most relevant for websites designed with a recruitment orientation. Although details concerning the 'capture phase' in terms of the incorporation of an online application function for screening purposes, are also discussed, however, the identification of guidelines to maximise its effectiveness as part of an online recruitment strategy, does not fall within the scope of this study.

Website content design (literature review and benchmarks)

Potential applicants searching for career related information are in the second stage of their job decision-making process (figure 2.9). Organisations can capitalise on this opportunity, by providing detailed information concerning the organisation, and its employment opportunities, whilst actively promote how being employed by the organisation will serve the applicant's interest (i.e. job marketing), thereby increasing the attractiveness of the organisation as an employer and subsequently the size of their applicant pool (Cober et al., 2003; Maurer & Liu, 2007).

Nielson (2000) recommends that webpages should be dominated by content of interest to users. As previously argued the content of an organisation's website depends on its goals and are greatly influenced by its orientation (Cober et al., 2000; Williamson et al., 2003). Therefore, when planning the informative structure of a website, it is important that organisations consider content appropriateness and flexibility (Thatcher & Kruger, 2003). Content appropriateness (usefulness) refers to the degree to which the content of the website meets the needs of its users. According to Hassan and Li (2001), the breath, dept and currency of the content on the website, is of immense importance. The usefulness of a website's content, plays an influential role in the development of a potential applicant's perception regarding an organisation's attractiveness as a potential employer (Cober et al., 2003; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Williamson et al., 2003). Content flexibility, on the other hand, refers to the flexibility the website offer users in terms of reading or downloading important content.

Research suggests that the content of an organisational website is one of the key determinants of its success as a recruitment method (Cober et al., 2003; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Williamson et al., 2003). However, research also cautions organisations to guard against posting too much information, as it might result in loss of interest and exiting behaviour (i.e. leaving the website). In order to generate interest amongst potential applicants, the organisation must provide sufficient information on the organisation itself, a detailed job description, location of employment opportunity, training opportunities, and information concerning compensation and benefits (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; Erasmus et al., 1998; Taleo Research, 1999; Williamson et al., 2003).

Organisational information

In a survey conducted by Taleo Research (1999), it was found that next to the job description, corporate information is the most important piece of information to include on a website. The recruiting organisation therefore needs to market itself and its jobs, by emphasising all characteristics that makes it different and better than its competitors (Cappelli, 2001; Cober et al., 2000). The goal is to provide potential applicants with a realistic picture of the organisation, which will enable them to determine whether or not a good person-

organisational fit can be achieved. The potential applicant needs to decide whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate within the culture and work climate of the organisation. However, it is important that the information do not facilitate the creation of unrealistic expectations (concerning the organisation and available positions), since it can result in dissatisfaction once the applicant is appointed, which could result in an lower productivity and/or an increase in labour turnover (Cober et al., 2000).

Every organisation has its own culture and set of values that sets it apart from its competitors. It is imperative that the organisation's culture and values are communicated clearly and prominently throughout the website (Braddy et al., 2006; Cober et al., 2000; Taleo Research, 1999). The accurate presentation of an organisations' culture and values is crucial, since it will enable potential applicants to make an informed judgement on the person-organisational fit (in terms of values and cultural fit) that can be achieved (Braddy et al., 2006; Taleo Research, 2001b). Identifying with an organisation's culture and values might facilitate the creation of a desire (according to the AIDA formula, Blem, 2000; Lamb et al., 2004) within potential applicants to apply and work for that particular organisation. Additional aspects organisations can elaborate on include its history, line of business, work ethic, organisational goals, growth potential, expectations for the future, the extent to which diversity are valued within the organisation, team orientation, its environmental stance, community outreach programmes, work-life balance policies and casual dress policies (Braddy et al., 2006; Brice & Waung, 2002; Erasmus et al., 1998).

Detailed job description

The Internet is keyword driven, for example, potential applicants enter keywords into search engines in search for specific jobs. Organisations should identify a list of keywords associated with each job and incorporate those words into the job description, thereby increasing the visibility of the job description (Taleo Research, 1999).

The most important difference between a job description on an organisational website and one in a newspaper is the amount of space available, which allows the potential employer to communicate more in-depth information concerning the available position (Maurer & Liu, 2007; Peters, 2001). The organisation is therefore in the position to provide potential applicants, at a fraction of the normal cost, with a detailed description of the advertised job, its requirements (i.e. skills, experience and education), geographical location, closing date, instructions (on how to apply) and their preferred channel for receiving applications (Taleo Research, 1998; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

Compensation and organisational benefits

When competing for skilled employees, organisations need to sell and promote themselves (Story, 2002; Williamson et al., 2003). An organisational website easily allows for the inclusion of a detailed description of the benefit package (monetary and non-monetary compensation). Employee benefits (not normally included in traditional advertisements, due to space constraints) such as medical and dental plan, stock options, flexible work arrangements, day-care facilities, training, etc., are valuable information potential applicants need when deciding whether they want to pursue employment within an organisation (Braddy et al., 2006; Cober et al., 2003; Taleo Research, 2001b).

A survey conducted by Taleo Research (2001b), found that three-quarters of job seekers prefer salary information in order to decide whether or not to apply for an available position. However, listing a proposed salary has advantages and disadvantages (Brice & Waung, 2002; Erasmus et al., 1998). For example, in addition to having a direct impact on the time it takes to fill a position and the attractiveness of that position in the eyes of potential applicants, advertising the pay level also serves as an important screening device, saving HR time in processing unnecessary applications (Cober et al., 2003; Williams & Dreher, 1992). However, it can also result in competitors raising their current salary levels in order to remain competitive.

Organisations should take into account that, although compensation is considered important, (unless the pay scale is extremely low) compensation is rarely the only reason employees resign (Brox, 2007). Best results in recruiting and retaining employees can be achieved in presenting a 'package deal' that focuses on both monetary and non-monetary rewards, that satisfies the needs of potential applicants and current employees (Story, 2002).

Privacy policy

A privacy statement is a vital aspect of recruiting, since many potential applicants are concerned about sending personal information via the Internet (Thomas & Ray, 2000). Addressing these fears is extremely important, since failure to do so might negatively influence potential applicants' intention to apply online.

In the current global era, organisations have to work harder to establish a trusting relationship with potential applicants. Providing a statement, that communicates to potential applicants that the organisation takes their privacy seriously, is a valuable first step to encouraging such a trust relationship (Nielson & Tahir, 2002). It is therefore imperative that organisations include a privacy statement on the website to reassure and counter applicants' fear of submitting personal information online (Taleo Research, 2001a; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Organisations that use such statements have the opportunity to attract and convince a larger pool of applicants from which new employees can be selected.

Website usability design (literature review and benchmarks)

According to Hartson (cited in van Welie, van der Veer & Eliëns, 1999, p. 613), the term usability is used to denote that a design is 'good' from a human computer interaction (HCI) point of view. However, within literature and amongst the professionals in the usability community, not one generally agreed upon definition of usability exist. Informally, usability can be thought of as how easy it is to use a product or system (Jordan, 2001). Although in a more formal context, according to the International Standards Organisation (ISO 9241-11), usability is defined as, "the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use" (cited in De Marsico & Leviaidi, 2003, p. 382).

According to the ISO definition, usability is not simply a property of a product in isolation. The usability of a product depends (to a large degree) on who is using it, what they are trying to achieve (task or goal) and the environment in which it is used (Bevan, 1995; Bevan & Macleod, 1994; Schackel & Richardson, 1991). Individual differences that might affect the perceived usability of a product/system (e.g. a website) and which

should always be taken into consideration, includes the user's previous experience, knowledge of similar products, age, gender and technical aptitude (Jordan, 2001).

According to Bevan (cited in van Welie et al., 1999, p. 19) this formal ISO definition of usability is a rather abstract way of viewing usability, however, it does provide three solid pillars (effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction) for viewing and measuring the usability of a product or system. Performance measures (attributes) of usability provide quantifiable means of determining the usability of any given system or product (Schackel & Richardson, 1991). Bevan and Macleod (1994, p.136) define the usability of a product as "the ability of a product to be used with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction by specified users to achieve specified goals in particular environments". Ideally, to measure usability the features and attributes required to make a product (e.g. website) usable, would have to be specified in order to determine whether such features and attributes are in the product (e.g. the identification of website usability design benchmarks that, when incorporated into website design, should enhance a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour) (Bevan & Macleod, 1994). These attributes outline the characteristics of a product (that influence its effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction), with which users can achieve specified goals in a particular environment (Bevan, 1995). In addition to the three attributes cited within the formal definition of usability (i.e. effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction), an additional three usability attributes, relevant to this study, are briefly discussed next.

- **Effectiveness (ease of use):** Effectiveness is defined as the accuracy and completeness with which users achieve specified goals or tasks (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003). It is important to take note though that the measure of effectiveness of a website will be determined by the level of satisfaction of user expectations.
- **Efficiency:** Efficiency refers to the amount of effort or energy required to accomplish the specified goal or task. More broadly stated, efficiency refers to the degree to which the system enables the user to complete the tasks in a timely, competent and economical fashion.
- **Satisfaction (likeability):** Satisfaction refers to the level of comfort that users feel in using the product and how acceptable the product is to users as a vehicle for achieving their goals (Bevan & Macleod, 1994; Jordan, 2001).
- **Compatibility:** Compatibility refers to designing a product so that its method of operation is compatible with users' expectations based on their knowledge of other types of products and the 'outside world' (Jordan, 2001).
- **Error management and messages:** It is inevitable that whilst using a website, users will make errors from time to time. Hence, the error rate of a product is one of the most common used measures of efficiency. The design of a usable product should minimise the likelihood of error occurrence and when errors do occur, the system should allow the user to quickly and easily rectify the mistake (Jordan, 2001). Hence, error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application allows the user to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors. Error messages should always be written in plain and user-centred language (Nielsen, 2000). Instead of simply pointing out that a problem has been encountered, error messages should be constructive and suggest a solution to help users overcome the problem.
- **Usefulness/utility:** According to Rubin (1994), the usefulness of a product concerns the degree to which it enables a user to achieve his or her goals as well as acting as an assessment of the user's

motivation for using the product. Utility refers to the functionality (thus the value, worth and helpfulness) of the system. Motivation is considered the key determinant of the usefulness of a product, since even if the product is easy to use, easy to learn and satisfying, if the product fails to enable the user to reach a specific goal, it will not be used (Bevan, 1995; Rubin, 1994).

Website usability is one of the most important factors that determine the success of an organisation's website (Hassan & Li, 2001). Research by Williamson et al. (2003) revealed that the extent to which website visitors develop positive attributions concerning an organisation depends on the extent to which users are satisfied with the usability of a website. Organisations can therefore increase its attractiveness in the eyes of potential applicants, through the development of an organisational website with a high level of usability (Cober et al., 2000). A high level of usability will enable potential applicants to navigate easily and conveniently, through the website and help them locate career related information. It will also ensure that potential applicants stay focused, interested and are able to process the information they are presented with. If an organisational website rates low on usability, potential applicants will experience difficulty navigating through the website and locating career related information (Cober et al., 2000). As a result, they may become frustrated and exit the website, which deprives the organisation of the opportunity to convince them of its potential as an employer due to the lack of exposure to career related information (see figure 2.9).

Designers and evaluators are exposed to an abundance of website design guidelines and usability literature, all of which varies in terms of coverage, clarity, suitability, quality and comprehensiveness (Nielsen, 2000). Therefore, Hassan and Li (2001) identified generic criteria of website usability, which consists of seven main factors (also known as SCANMIC when abbreviated) that focuses on website screen design, content, accessibility, navigation, media usage, interactivity and consistency. With the exception of the 'content' factor, the SCANMIC model's taxonomy was used in this study to identify website usability design benchmarks that would maximise the presentation of informative content (e.g. employment related information such as the job description) and therein facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. It should be noted that these benchmarks are guidelines or recommended best practices sourced from a thorough literature review. Hence, they are suggestions on usability features that should be incorporated in the website design in order to maximise the website's ability to present informative content in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner, and therefore may contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.

Screen design

The first impression of a website on potential applicants is of a visual nature (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003). Research by Tractinsky, Cokhavi, Kirchenbaum and Sharfi (2006) concur that, in addition to determining user's initial attraction (i.e. 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression), the visual aesthetics of a website also plays an important role in users' evaluations of the website (i.e. the interactive system) in general. Hence, if recruitment is to be effective, the screen design of the website, especially the homepage must seize the attention (AIDA formula, Blem, 2000; Cober et al., 2003; Lamb et al., 2004) of the potential applicant, as to encourage further exploration.

Job seekers move rapidly from one website to another and research has shown that less than 10% of website visitors scroll for information beyond that which is presented on the first webpage (screen

impression) they are presented with (Cober et al., 2000). Nielson/Netrating (2007), which specialises in Internet audience measurement and analysis, reported (in March 2007) that the global average time (duration) webpages are viewed, generally is 46 seconds. The window of opportunity organisations are presented with to attain a potential applicant's attention and interest is therefore limited. Since the technology currently used by the majority of website visitors, allows for the display of only one webpage at a time, it is imperative that organisations carefully consider the screen design or layout of each webpage in terms of space provision, colour scheme, readability and scannability (Bevan, 1999; Hassan & Li, 2001).

- **Space provision and allocation:** To facilitate potential applicants' ability to focus their attention and avoid confusion, the space on each webpage should be properly allocated for the display of navigational functions and its informative content (Hassan & Li, 2001). Nielson (2000) recommends that the content presented on a webpage should preferably account for 80% of the webpage (but no less than half) and navigation features should be limited to 20%. In addition, De Marsico and Levialdi (2003), advise that the spatial arrangement of information in the page layout should be driven by alignment and balancing criteria, dividing each webpage into thematic areas that are visually identifiable. Since it is impossible to predict what size monitor will be used to display a webpage, it is best that a liquid layout (which automatically adapts the webpage to the size of the user's browser window) opposed to a frozen layout, be employed to maximise the screen design of the website (Nielson & Tahir, 2002).

Screen design that requires excessive scrolling by visitors to locate the information they desire, should be avoided (Cober et al., 2000). Henceforth, the most important information should fit into the first screen to maximise exposure (Bevan, 1999). Scrolling can be limited by simplifying webpages through (a) a well thought out navigational design (index or table of contents) throughout the website; (b) internal links directing the user to information at the top or bottom of the webpage, or (c) secondary webpages to avoid compressing all the information into a single screen (Nielson & Tahir, 2002).

According to Nielson (2000), the homepage of a website is its flagship and should have a slightly different design, although its underlying style should match and be repeated throughout the entire website. The initial goal of the homepage is to orientate the visitor in terms of 'where they are' and 'what the website can do/offer them'. The homepage should therefore establish the website's identity and provide a clear overview of the content available (Bevan, 1999). Nielson (2000), suggests the prominent placement of the website sponsor (name of the organisation), preferably in the upper-left corner of the homepage. In addition, the placement of a 'home' button on the homepage should be avoided, since it simply redirects users to the same page, which may cause frustration.

- **Choice of colour:** The proper use of colour can attract potential applicants (according to the AIDA formula, Blem, 2000; Lamb et al., 2004), generate interest in the job opportunity, ease navigation and improve the website visitor's learning and processing of vital information (Cober et al., 2003; Hassan & Li, 2001). Improper use may degrade the website's usability (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003). Hassan and Li (2001) propose the following 'choice of colour' criteria for screen design to maximise the usability of a website. Firstly, to maximise readability, a sharp contrast should exist between the colours employed for the background and text. Nielson and Tahir (2002) recommend black text on a white background to achieve maximum contrast and highest readability. Secondly, colour should be used in such a manner

that it enables visitors to differentiate between function areas (e.g. tool, bar, menu bar or the list of content) and the 'content' of the website.

Colour can also be effectively used within the body of text, to indicate a hypertext/hyperlink (Nielsen & Tahir, 2002). The text colour employed in a website will determine the best alternative colour for the hypertext, however, it is recommended that a clear discernable colour be used to indicate an unvisited hyperlink (e.g. blue) and a lighter or less saturated colour (e.g. grey) to indicate its status as visited (Nielsen & Tahir, 2002). The usage of non-standard colours to indicate a hypertext status (e.g. visited) may impede the user's ability to distinguish which parts of the website they have visited and which parts remain unexplored (Nielsen, 2000).

- **Readability and scannability:** As reading from a computer screen is different than reading from paper, the use of a conventional paper-writing format could result in the webpage being a failure (Personnel Today, 2005b). Since the organisation's goal is to convince potential applicants of its status as an employer via the content of the website, the use of fonts that are easy to read and assist potential applicants to easily scan through the information, is important (De Marsico & Levaldi, 2003). The readability of the content of a website can be increased with the use of both upper and lower case in text, different text sizes for headings and sub-headings, and the limitation/avoidance of animations that could distract potential applicants (Hassan & Li, 2001; Nielsen & Tahir, 2002).

Guidelines for website writing focus on concise and scannable writing, whilst paying close attention to language and hyperlink usage (Nielsen, 2000). Firstly, content writing should be brief and to the point, preferably 50% fewer words than would have been employed in traditional print. Secondly, although the usage of hyperlinks can be advantageous, it should be used sparingly. Good hyperlink usage provides additional information and divides long pieces of text into multiple webpages. Thirdly, for recruitment purposes, professional, yet standard day-to-day English should be used that is grammatically correct. In addition, the style and tone should be consistent whilst long sentences, which can introduce ambiguity, should be avoided (Personnel Today, 2005b). Finally, to maximise readability, website writing should focus on scannability through using key words, headings, sub-heading, bullets and short paragraphs.

Accessibility

General website accessibility refers to the ease with which users are able to establish a connection with a website and browse all available content (Hassan & Li, 2001; Thatcher & Kruger, 2003). In order to maximise an organisational website's accessibility, and thereby increase the number and diversity of potential applicants browsing the website, organisations need to consider the website's browser compatibility (e.g. via Internet Explorer or Netscape), loading time, and search capability (Hassan & Li, 2001).

Bevan (1999) and Nielsen (2000) recommend that organisations test their websites to ensure that all webpages format correctly using different browsers. Download or loading speed refers to the amount of time it requires a browser to download data and files from a web server (Hassan & Li, 2001). When designing a website, it is important that designers design for download speed, since the threshold of frustration for most computing tasks or downloads are around 10 seconds (Nielsen, 2000). The occurrence of 'download fatigue', when users are waiting for webpages to download, increases the likelihood that the potential applicant will

exit the website and move on to another one (Cober et al., 2000). Despite a slow loading speed, download fatigue can be addressed with the presentation of the text first, whilst the remaining graphics, images and/or tables load (Nielsen, 2000). This will enable potential applicants to process and scan through the available information, whilst waiting for the remaining content (e.g. graphics) to load. To avoid download fatigue, graphics and multimedia effects (i.e. video clips, audio) should only be included if it truly adds value to the website and users' understanding of the message that the website is attempting to convey (e.g. video on a typical working day within the organisation) (Bevan, 1999; Nielsen, 2000).

The accessibility of large, multi-layered websites can be increased with the inclusion of a search facility (Bevan, 1999). This tool enables and assists users in locating information according to the search criteria they provide. Nielsen (2000) advises that the search function should only search the website at hand. Including the option to search the Internet, have little utility and may even enhance exiting behaviour by potential applicants, whilst taking up valuable space on the website itself. Nielsen and Tahir (2002) recommend that the search function should be white (in a box format), called 'search' or 'go' and be located in one of the corners in the upper part of the webpage.

The accessibility of a website may also be customised to cater for people with visual, auditory, cognitive and motor disabilities (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003; Nielsen, 2000). The most serious accessibility problems relate to users with visual disabilities (e.g. blind and colour-blind). In addition, some users have difficulty with detailed mouse movement and holding down multiple keyboard keys simultaneously (Nielsen, 2000). Furthermore, not all users possess equal cognitive skills in terms of space spatial visualisation. Website accessibility can be increased by catering for users with limited spatial reasoning skills, via the provision of a sitemap to help them visualize the structure and scope of the website (Bevan, 1999; Nielsen, 2000).

Navigation

Website navigability refers to, "the ease with which users can find their way around a website without getting disoriented, lost or diverted by something more interesting" (Thatcher & Kruger, 2003, p.26). A crucial element of website navigability is webpage navigability, which refers to, "the ease, with which users can locate information of interest on a particular webpage" (Thatcher & Kruger, 2003, p.26). According to Nielsen (2000), the three fundamental questions a good navigational interface should enable users to answer, are "where am I, where have I been and where can I go?" Since the first impact of a website on users is of a visual nature, it is imperative that users are able to understand and comprehend the navigational system at first sight, in order to encourage further exploration (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003). Good website and webpage navigability that provide users with efficient paths to information will therefore enhance the usability of a website and consequently directly impact on the attractiveness of the organisation as an employer (Cober et al., 2003; Williamson et al., 2003).

The four most popular navigation schemes employed on homepages with good usability are the left navigational rail, tabs, links across the top and categories in the middle of the webpage (Nielsen & Tahir, 2002). It is important that users are able to easily identify and grasp the logical structure (i.e. navigation system) of the website at first sight. Good website and webpage navigability can be accomplished by structuring the links among pages in a multi-graph rather than a tree structure (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003).

The rationale behind a multi-graph structure is that different users might expect different categorisation, and therefore different paths to the information they desire. Providing multiple paths, to the same content with a minimum number of clicks (hyperlinks), will maximise the navigability of the website. However, should the website consist of a large number of webpages, specific navigational tools such as a sitemap and/or search function should also be incorporated to ease navigability of the website (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003; Nielson & Tahir, 2002).

Additional guidelines for optimising the navigability of a website include (Bevan, 1999; Hassan & Li, 2001; De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003; Nielson & Tahir, 2002; Nielson, 2000):

- providing a menu/list of content on every page of the website;
- the organisational logo should be a hyperlink to the homepage of the website;
- both textual- and graphical links (matching users' previous experience and cognitive map) that are accurate, up to date and in working order, should be incorporated;
- employ metaphors that are compatible on a cognitive and conceptual level with users' mental map;
- enable the website user to easily navigate and read through information pages by using self-explanatory text links (e.g. instead of incorporating a long definition or explanation of a specific concept, make the key word clickable/hypertext);
- provide users with visual feedback such as highlighting a hyperlink/button if mouse is moved over it;
- use a consistent page layout throughout the website and provide a clear overview of the content. The most important information should fit on one screen, as some users will not make the effort to scroll down; and
- since avoiding duplication is a general usability principle, it is suggested that the bottom of the webpage should not be used to repeat menu/table of content options, but rather be reserved for footnotes (e.g. copywriting information, privacy policy, legal disclaimer, contact information, etc).

De Marsico and Levialdi (2003) caution against the usage of graphics for navigational purposes, since it may be difficult to find appropriate graphical links that are self-explanatory and unambiguous. They point out that navigating a website via images, rather than traditional worded links, is problematic. Not only do images require mouse scanning to reveal its function and be identified as a navigational element, but images also fail to indicate a change in its status when visited (e.g. when visited, the colour of hyperlink become less saturated than its surroundings).

Consistency

According to Jordan (2001), when a product is designed for consistency, it implies that similar tasks should be performed in a similar manner. Once a user has gained experience with a product, they should be able to generalise from what has been learned when performing one task with the product to help achieve another.

De Marsico and Levialdi (2003) advise that website design should follow the principle of 'minimum amazement'. This implies that sharp, unmotivated changes should be avoided, since it will only confuse users. It is imperative that all the webpages of a website exhibit a common look. This implies that the underlying design of a website should be used consistently throughout the website, ultimately unifying all the webpages into one coherent website. Providing a consistent page layout (for titles, subtitles, page footers,

background), navigation scheme and icons (in terms of colour, size, space and fonts used), will assist with the development of a mental map of the website, speed up users' learning to navigate the website and facilitate the processing of important information (Hassan & Li, 2001; Thatcher & Kruger, 2003).

Interactivity and electronic media usage

Interactivity refers to the extent to which the website encourages the user to actively engage with its functionality, as well as supporting two-way communication between the user (potential applicant) and the website sponsor (potential employer) (Hassan & Li, 2001; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Thatcher & Kruger, 2003). Interactivity can be facilitated through features such as e-mail, a guest book, online application forms, completion of a screening test and online conferencing. Traditional advertising media sources lack this feature. Research on the integration of electronic media material such as graphics, images, animation and audio, indicate that if used effectively to enhance interactivity, it helps to maintain applicant interest and enhance usability (Hassan & Li, 2001; Maurer & Liu, 2007). Should it be used effectively during the online recruitment process, it could minimise the time involved in identifying and appointing highly qualified applicants and therefore enhance the organisation's competitive advantage (Chapman & Webster, 2003). However, if not used effectively, it will not only distract potential applicants, but it will also have a detrimental effect on the usability of the website, which in turn could result in the alienation and loss of potential applicants.

Nielson (2000) recommends that graphics on a webpage should be employed in accordance with the required download time. De Marsico and Levialdi (2003) differentiate between three different types of graphical elements. Content graphics, which support the interpretation of information; decorative graphics, which has a purely aesthetic role; and navigation graphics, which can be combined with, or replace textual links. The use of graphical elements can therefore either have a supportive function or be obtrusive in the process of convincing potential applicants of the organisation's suitability as an employer.

Using animation and video to demonstrate a point or assist understanding can be quite effective, though organisations need to consider the fact that it prolongs download time. It is recommended that the file format and size should be indicated in parentheses after a video link (Nielson, 2000). Organisations that are recruiting can take full advantage of the video link feature in providing potential applicants with testimonials from employees discussing the organisation, its culture, values, their experiences in working for the organisation and a typical workday within the organisation (Braddy et al., 2006). An animation can also have a supportive function, such as when it is used to attract potential applicants to a particular section of a webpage (e.g. newly posted vacancies). However, since locating quality content is the main reason for visiting organisational websites, it is recommended that organisations focus on providing 'answers' (i.e. quality content aimed at convincing potential applicants of the organisations suitability as an employer), rather than focusing on eye-catching graphics or 'cool' features that may distract visitors and contribute to prolonged download time (Nielson, 2000).

c) Evaluation of career alternatives

As shown in figure 2.9, the 'evaluation of career alternatives' is the third stage of the job decision-making process and it is positioned between step two (convince) and step three (capture) of the organisational

recruitment strategy. Its positioning is based on the fact that the organisation has no influence on this stage of the decision-making process, other than the information it supplied potential applicants with during their search for career related information (Cross, 1999).

Since evaluation is the act of identifying alternative solutions to a problem and assessing the relative merits and demerits of each (Cant et al., 2002), potential applicants will evaluate each of the employment opportunities (that they found to be attractive) in terms of its merits and demerits. Comparisons will be made among career fields, industries, jobs, and organisations (Summey & Anderson, 1992). Not only will newly identified employment opportunities be compared with each other, a comparison will also be made with the potential applicant's current employment situation. The criteria employed by each potential applicant to determine the attractiveness of an available position, is different. Not only is the evaluative criteria employed moulded and influenced by individual and environmental variables, but it can also be objective (location, salary, training, company attributes, etc.) and subjective (organisational reputation, prestige, meaningful work, etc.) (Summey & Anderson, 1992). According to Devitt (2005), career professionals tend to use more objective and job specific evaluative criteria, whereas the criteria employed by graduates, tend to be more subjective, such as being drawn to the brand of the organisation, with little or no regard for the actual day-to-day job role.

2.11.3 Capture

a) Identification of career options and subsequent acceptance of employment offer

The fourth stage of potential applicants' decision-making process coincides with the 'capture' phase (step three) of an organisation's recruitment strategy (see figure 2.9). This stage comprises of two decisions.

- **Decision 1: Identification of preferred employment opportunities.** Once a potential applicant has evaluated all career alternatives generated through the information search, a decision, based on his/her accumulated knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and desires will be reached (Murphy & Tam, 2004; Summey & Anderson, 1992). The potential applicant's desire, whether positive or negative, to work for a particular organisation will amount to action (according to the AIDA formula, Blem, 2000; Lamb et al., 2004). For example, the potential applicant will either submit an application or discard the idea of working for the organisation, which results in the potential applicant exiting the organisational website to continue his/her search elsewhere.
- **Decision 2: Acceptance of employment.** If the potential applicant submitted more than one application and was successful enough to secure a number of interviews from potential employers, a decision amongst a number of alternatives still needs to be made (Murphy & Tam, 2004; Summey & Anderson, 1992). Firstly, subsequent to the initial decision (i.e. applying for the position), applicants also have to decide (a) whether they will remain active applicants (whilst waiting for the organisation to process and identify those employees it desires). Secondly, after initial contact with the organisation (interview), the applicant has to decide whether he/she is willing to attend a follow-up interview, if invited. Finally, the applicant needs to decide whether he/she is willing to accept the employment offer.

It is important to note though, that for the purpose of this study a potential applicant is considered 'captured' once he/she decides to submit an application for an available position. The scope of this study does not

include the actual submission of an application, since the focus of this study is limited to the identified website (content and usability) design benchmarks aimed at maximising the website as a recruitment tool used to convince potential applicants of the organisation's suitability as an employer, through the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour. However, for the purpose of a comprehensive overview of the job decision-making process and the alignment thereof with the organisational recruitment strategy, the researcher will continue the discussion pertaining to capturing and hiring potential applicants.

b) Simplify the application process

At this stage of the online recruitment process, the organisation has managed to attract and convince potential applicants of the organisation's potential as an employer. The third phase of an effective online recruitment strategy is aimed at capturing potential applicants through the provision of an online application function and the development of a relationship with the applicant (see figure 2.9).

Online applications

The longer the time-lapse between potential applicant's exposure to a recruitment message and the opportunity to apply, the less likely it is that the potential applicant will follow through with his/her intention to apply (Cober et al., 2000). During the time that passes potential applicants are exposed to an assortment of job-related information, which could result in failure to remember the information that was presented and/or the source of the information (e.g. which organisation advertised which employment opportunity). Simplifying the application process (e.g. enabling potential applicants to apply online), not only counteracts source confusion, but also maximises the website's ability to capture potential applicants and thereby increase the size of its applicant pool.

Methods utilised by organisations to gain applicant personal information differ from organisation to organisation. Current business practices allow applicants, to varying degrees, to submit their applications or resumes online or via traditional channels such as fax or mail (De Klerk, 2007; Taleo Research, 1999). Online submission entails any online method in which information is transferred from the applicant to the organisation via the Internet (Thomas & Ray, 2000). Such submissions can be conducted directly (online resume builders or online application forms) or via e-mail (Cober et al., 2000; Taleo Research, 1998; Thomas & Ray, 2000). With direct submission, the workload at the organisation's end is reduced, since all information is automatically entered into specified fields. This not only increases speed and convenience, but also lowers the recruiting cost involved in tracking and identifying applicants. E-mail submission on the other hand, is not as convenient as direct submission, it does however give the applicant more control over information that is submitted and where it is sent.

Two of the most prominent website features commonly used to simplify the application process, include:

- **Online resume builders.** To accommodate those individuals without a ready to use resume, whilst simultaneously counteracting the occurrence of source confusion, organisations can incorporate a resume builder into their website (Taleo Research, 1999). Since the resume is directly entered into the organisation's database when submitted, data is automatically sorted and applicants need not worry about the presentation of the resume, the wording or the cover letter (Taleo Research, 1998; Williams & Klaus, 1997). Organisations can also employ it as a screening device, to gather more specific

information that are usually not included in traditional resumes, such as specific skills, work experience, salary requirements, qualifications and relocation flexibility (Cober et al., 2000; Taleo Research, 1999).

- **Multiple applications.** Providing applicants with tools (i.e. job cart and saved candidate account) to re-use their personal information for multiple job applications is a growing trend, especially amongst the Global 500 companies (Taleo Research, 2001c). Enabling applicants to apply for multiple positions whilst only having to provide personal information once, is not only more efficient, convenient and time saving, but it also simplifies the entire application process.

Building a relationship with potential applicants

According to Cappelli (2001), a prominent weakness of online recruiting is that recruiters spend too much time finding potential employees and not enough time developing relationships or persuading them to accept an employment offer. Therefore, the 'capture' phase does not only entail simplifying the application process (i.e. online applications), but also includes all other related strategies utilised to build a relationship with the applicant, until a final offer of employment is extended and accepted (figure 2.9) (Online Recruiting Magazine, 2007).

Online applications and resume builders ask applicants questions and therefore act as a screening device (Cober et al., 2000; Taleo Research, 1999). Data from online applications are instantly entered into the organisation's HR database. This effectively positions the organisation ahead of its competitors in terms of being able to recruit key intellectual capital before the competition becomes aware of the applicant or before the competitor's offer of employment reaches the applicant. To maintain and maximise this advantage, it is crucial that organisations initiate contact with the pool of applicants generated by its recruitment strategy and utilise the opportunity to start building relationships with them (Cappelli, 2001; Cober et al., 2000; Perry, 2002; Williams & Klaus, 1997).

Organisations can initiate this relationship, by acknowledging their effort with a letter of acceptance, informing the applicant that they did in fact receive his/her application (Online Recruiting Magazine, 2007; Taleo Research, 2006b). A partnering program (linking an applicant with a current employee, who work in a similar field as the applicant) to simplify and assist applicants through the application and recruitment process, is also a recommended strategy to facilitate the development of a relationship (Cappelli, 2001; Taleo Research, 1998, 1999). In addition, organisations can also be proactive and use 'permission marketing' to facilitate the development of an ongoing relationship. Permission marketing entails informing previously unsuccessful applicants of available vacancies that matches their job skills or area of interest (provided that they gave the organisation permission to contact them, e.g. registered with a 'job agent') (Taleo Research, 2001c). In doing so, the organisation minimises the time required to generate a satisfactory pool of applicants.

c) Post-choice evaluation

The fifth stage of potential applicants' decision-making process also coincides with the 'capture' phase (step three) of the recruitment strategy (see figure 2.9). This stage entails the evaluation of the decision to accept employment within a particular organisation. The question of whether the right choice was made in terms of career path, career change and employer, requires reassuring information to avoid post-choice dissonance

and dissatisfaction (Lamb et al., 2004). The amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction experienced by a newly appointed employee is of great importance and organisations usually overlook this part of the recruiting and employment process (Summey & Anderson, 1992). A new employee's level of satisfaction with his/her decision, depends greatly on the compatibility of his/her initial expectations (based on the pre-choice information obtained) and the actual 'on the job reality' experienced (Cross, 1999; Summey & Anderson, 1992). As shown in figures 2.8 and 2.9, upon evaluating his/her decision, the newly appointed employee's overall experience, is fed back into the "evaluating of career alternatives" stage, which consequently influences the employee's future decisions and behaviour (Murphy & Tam, 2004). For example, should the 'on the job' reality not measure up to his/her initial expectations, this general feeling of dissatisfaction could result in a need for a new employment opportunity at a different employer, subsequently resulting in the submission of a resignation.

d) Hire the applicant

As shown in figure 2.9, the final step in the organisational recruitment strategy is that of 'hiring the applicant', which effectively classifies the applicant as being 'captured'. There are numerous issues and important processes involved in the appointment of an applicant, such as the interviewing process, reference check, the employment contract, legislative requirements, etc. However, with the post-choice evaluation stage in mind, the researcher would like to focus on the induction of new employees and the importance of retention strategies, since they are integral parts of the recruitment cycle and post-choice evaluation phase.

Induction and retention of employees

Internet recruitment is considered a double-edged sword with advantages and disadvantages. It is not only much easier to hire experienced workers, but it is also that much easier for competitors to lure away an organisation's key intellectual capital (Cappelli, 2001; Perry, 2002). Hence, the retention of talent, is frequently listed as one of the biggest challenges organisations are currently faced with (Brox, 2007; Rothman, 2006; Smith & Rupp, 2004; Story, 2002). Traditionally, recruitment and retention were viewed as two separate functions, but a shift is occurring as organisations are realising the true cost of replacing key talent. Hence, organisations are increasingly viewing recruitment and retention as a continuum, where the success of their recruitment strategy depends on the organisation's ability to retain its key talent (Story, 2002).

The art of recruiting and retaining experienced employees is much alike, since similar philosophies underlie these two processes (Story, 2002). The key is to know what job seekers and employees desire, what is important to both these groups in terms of what will attract them to the organisation and keep them loyal to their current employer. Since job seekers and employees seldom search or desire just one specific feature, organisations should present them with an optimal desirable 'package deal' (Story, 2002). A good starting point to maximise both recruitment and retention strategies, is to focus on the corporate culture, a pleasant work environment, empowerment, feedback on performance, job shadowing, training and skills development, motivating employees, recognition and appreciation, advancement opportunities, meaningful and challenging work (Brox, 2007; Parrish, 2006; Rothman, 2006; Smith & Rupp, 2004; Story, 2002). The development of a good monetary and non-monetary reward system is important, but focusing on a purely monetary system to

motivate employees is not advised, since it is a hygiene factor and organisations should rather focus on a 'package deal' (Brox, 2007; Story, 2002).

It is therefore evident that simply attracting good talent is not sufficient to ensure the effectiveness of an organisation's recruitment strategy. Equally important is its ability to retain current employees, since retention allows organisations to recover their initial investment on recruitment and training. Savings from lower recruitment costs can be directed toward the development and the retention of current employees, to avoid constantly dealing with a high turnover (Story, 2002). A high turnover of key talent and consequently the recruitment of new employees will result in less time and resources being devoted to proper growth planning and the expansion of the organisational base (Smith & Rupp, 2004). Ultimately, this will have a detrimental affect on the organisation's sustained competitiveness and its future survival.

2.12 CONCLUSION

Within this chapter a broad overview of recruitment, with specific reference to online recruitment was provided. The researcher also explored organisations' general recruitment strategies, relevant concepts and related theories concerning the incorporation of the AIDA marketing formula for recruitment purposes and the job related decision-making process of potential applicants.

The focus of this chapter was to explore the alignment of the organisational online recruitment strategy and the five stages of potential applicants' job decision-making process. These two processes were aligned and divided into three steps (attract, convince and capture), in order to explore website content- and usability design requirements that may be conducive to an organisational website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour in each of these phases. It is argued that the incorporation of these design guidelines into an organisational website, used for online recruitment, should enable the organisation to recruit the best key intellectual capital and therein capitalise on the ability of its website to secure a unique competitive advantage (i.e. workforce), which no other organisation can imitate. It was determined that an organisation's ability to 'convince' potential applicant of its suitability as an employer, is greatly influenced by the website's content- and usability design. Due to the importance of the content- and usability design factors, the researcher performed an in-dept study of the relevant literature to identify benchmarks that could enhance a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour, and therein maximise the website's success as an online recruitment method.

The alignment of the organisational online recruitment strategy and the job decision-making process discussed in this chapter, in collaboration with the relevant marketing and usability theories formed the basis for the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks for the proposed website audit. The subsequent chapters will focus on (a) the development of a Website Benchmark Checklist, (b) the audit of a sample of online recruitment organisational websites' content and usability design, (c) the subjective evaluation of three of these websites by potential applicants, and finally (d) the findings and conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to audit a sample of South African organisations [drawn from a survey conducted by the Corporate Research Foundation (2005) to identify the 'best' South African employers], in order to determine the extent to which the design of their online recruitment websites, may contribute to the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour. For this purpose, a list of benchmarks that may contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour, and therein maximise an organisational website's effectiveness and efficiency as a recruitment method, were compiled from a survey of the relevant literature. In chapter two a theoretical discussion of the relevant website content- and usability design benchmarks were presented (the list of benchmarks pertaining to this study is available in appendix B). These benchmarks provided the basis upon which (a) a checklist of website content- and usability design benchmarks were developed, (b) an audit was conducted on the websites of a sample of SA organisations and (c) three websites were subjectively evaluated by potential applicants.

This chapter presents an overview of the framework of how this study was executed. The discussion focuses on the research aim, problem, objectives and goals of the study. In addition, the research design and methodology utilised to attain the specified goals of this study, are also presented.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR THIS RESEARCH

The survival of an organisation in a global competitive and rapid changing business environment depends on its flexibility and adaptability (Thomas & Ray, 2000). According to Bakker (2001a), it is the combined skills, abilities and knowledge of its employees that enable organisations to be flexible and competitive. For this reason, employees are considered to be the building blocks of an organisation and consequently become its most important asset, since it is the human factor that equips an organisation with a competitive edge that no other organisation can imitate (Singh & Finn, 2003; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Hence, the effectiveness of an organisation's recruitment function fulfils a critical role, since its primary responsibility is that of generating and securing employees with the right attributes and qualifications to ensure its sustained competitiveness, success and ultimately its survival.

The challenge SA organisations face in recruiting capable employees have become increasingly difficult due to a number of labour force problems. Amongst these labour force problems are a shrinking pool of older experienced and young educated workers due to HIV/AIDS pandemic; the migration of intellectual capital to foreign countries; and a severe mismatch between the skills increasingly in demand in the labour market and those that are available (Baxter, 2002; Oberholzer, 2001; Perry, 2002; Story, 2002). It is against this backdrop of labour force problems and an ever-increasing competitive and turbulent business environment that the competition, to obtain talented employees, is greater than ever. As a result, organisations are turning to online recruitment via their organisational website, since it holds the potential of minimising the cost and time it requires to locate and hire, the most sought after and scarce talent (Maurer & Liu, 2007; Singh & Finn, 2003).

The investment to design or update an organisational website for recruitment purposes is expensive (Cober et al., 2000; Galanaki, 2002). Ensuring that the organisational website works effectively and efficiently as a recruitment method and placing the necessary support mechanisms and software in place, are costly in terms of time, effort and capital invested. Irrespective of the cost involved, however, the mere presence of an organisational website does not guarantee its success as a recruitment method. The success of an organisational website, to a large degree, depends on the organisation's ability to (a) attract job seekers to the website, (b) convince potential applicants of the organisation's suitability as an employer, and (c) capture potential new employees via the submission of an application (Cappelli, 2001; Cober et al., 2003; Taleo Research, 1999; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

Harnessing the full potential that an organisational website offers as a recruitment method is essential to the survival of an organisation in terms of securing key intellectual capital. As argued in chapter two, the key to developing an organisational website that could contribute to the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour and therein increase the organisation's attractiveness as an employer, as well as maximize its efficiency as an online recruitment source, lies within its content- and usability design. The inability of an organisational website to communicate crucial employment information (content design) to potential applicants in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner (usability design), could have a detrimental effect on the website's ability to successfully generate qualified applicants (Cappelli, 2001; Cober et al., 2003; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Williamson et al., 2003). Failure to attract and hire quality employees, will not only affect future growth potential and limit the organisation's innovativeness, flexibility and adaptability, but ultimately also affect its bottom line and the organisation's survival (Smith & Rupp, 2004; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

The quality of potential applicants' interaction with a website, not only influences their opinion of the website, but also their perception of the corporate image of the organisation sponsoring the website, which heavily impacts on the attractiveness of an organisation as an employer (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993). For example, Karr (2000) reported that 26% of college students rejected considering an organisation as a potential employer, based on the poor design of the organisation's website. In addition, Pastore (cited in Maurer & Liu, 2007, p. 305) reported that based on the poor design of an organisational websites, more than 20% of job seekers have rejected employment opportunities.

An organisational website operating and recruiting at its full potential should increase the size and diversity of an organisation's applicant pool, facilitate the best possible employee-organisational fit, reduce labour turnover and secure intellectual capital that could enhance an organisation's competitive advantage (Cober et al., 2000; Thomas & Ray, 2000). Hence, an investigation into the website content- and usability design of a sample of SA organisations that recruit online was needed, in order to assess their compliance with the identified best practice (content- and usability design) benchmarks. Increasing awareness of these website content- and usability design factors should enable South African organisations to determine their website's shortcomings, as well as illustrate how to harness the full potential of an organisational website as a recruitment method.

3.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM

The primary aim of this descriptive research study was to investigate the extent to which the websites of a sample of SA organisations (Corporate Research Foundation, 2005) facilitate 'successful online applicant behaviour', based on their incorporation of (or compliance with) the identified website content- and usability design benchmarks.

The identified content- and usability benchmarks were derived from literature recommended best practices. The adherence to, or incorporation of, such a benchmark does not necessarily guarantee its intended outcome (i.e. convincing potential applicants of the organisation's suitability as an employer and the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour). However, it does enable the organisation to strategically design its website, to best assist the possible attainment of such an outcome. "Successful online applicant behaviour" for the purpose of this study, referred to potential applicants (i.e. any job seeker, whether active, passive, experienced or novice, entering an organisational website in search of potential employment opportunities) being able to:

- browse the organisational website without any difficulty;
- obtain relevant and sufficient information about the organisation and available positions;
- assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation; and
- gather details regarding the application process.

Being aware of the content- and usability design factors that could contribute to an organisational website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour is essential for the organisation. Not only could such an awareness and knowledge enable organisations to convince potential applicants of its suitability as an employer and therein increase the size of the pool of applicants generated, it should also enable organisation to identify and rectify their website's shortcomings. This should enable the organisation to take advantage of the full potential of its website as a recruitment method (responsible for supplying the organisation with key intellectual capital), which could contribute to its future survival and sustained competitiveness.

Hence, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

- which content and usability design benchmarks that may aid in the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour can be identified from a literature review?
- to what extent does the sample of SA organisations, surveyed in this study, incorporate the identified benchmarks into the design of their website, when used for online recruitment purposes?
- how does potential applicants' subjective assessment of an online recruitment website's content- and usability design, reflect the extent to which the identified benchmarks are incorporated (i.e. compliance with the benchmarks)?

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is a process through which the researcher systematically attempts to find an answer to a question or a solution to a problem with the support of demonstrable fact (Leedy, 1997; Merriam & Simpson, 1984).

Reaves (1992) defines research as a systematic way of answering questions about the world, by means of scientific methods. According to Kerlinger and Lee (2000), a scientific approach is a special organised form of reflective thinking and inquiry, which enables the researcher to obtain facts by means of systematic observation and recording.

Babbie (1995) proposes that research within any science serves three main purposes namely, exploration, description or explanation. Reaves (1992), however, states that research can be divided into four broad categories (e.g. descriptive-, exploratory-, theoretical-, and applied research), according to the purpose for which it is conducted. Each of these categories represents a fundamentally different way of studying behaviour, which will result in different types of information being obtained. However, these different categories of research and their subsequent purposes are not mutually exclusive (Babbie, 1995). One study can have more than one purpose, as is the case with the current study, which is descriptive and exploratory in nature.

Descriptive research aims to answer questions regarding the current state of affairs or a specific situation or event, without necessarily explaining how it came about. It attempts to capture the complexity of everyday behaviour, in providing a 'snapshot' of thoughts, feelings or behaviours at a given place and a given time. The researcher would therefore deliberately and carefully observe a specific phenomenon and then precisely and accurately describe what is observed. Descriptive research therefore has no purpose other than to describe a particular situation or event (Reaves, 1992).

The purpose of exploratory research, on the other hand, is to examine a new interest or to create a beginning for growing familiarity with a topic, when the subject of study is relatively new and unstudied (Babbie, 1995). It is generally used to gather as much information as possible for the development of a more thorough understanding of the phenomena being studied, and not to test already established theories. In essence exploratory research is primarily descriptive, as it is directed more towards describing what happens in certain situations and less toward explaining why it happens or testing theories about it. According to Reaves (1992), it is different from purely descriptive research by virtue of its interest going beyond simple description, towards understanding or explaining the situation. Exploratory research is essential, as it almost always yield new insight into a particular topic.

3.5 RESEARCH PROCESS AND DESIGN

3.5.1 The research process

The research design entails the procedures followed by a researcher to conduct the research, for example, the specific method that is utilised to collect and analyse empirical evidence, as well as the interpretation thereof (Stangor, 2004). The research design should enable the researcher to answer research questions as validly, objectively, accurately, and economically as possible. In this section an overview of the research design (which consisted of four phases, see figure 3.1) employed in this study, is outlined.

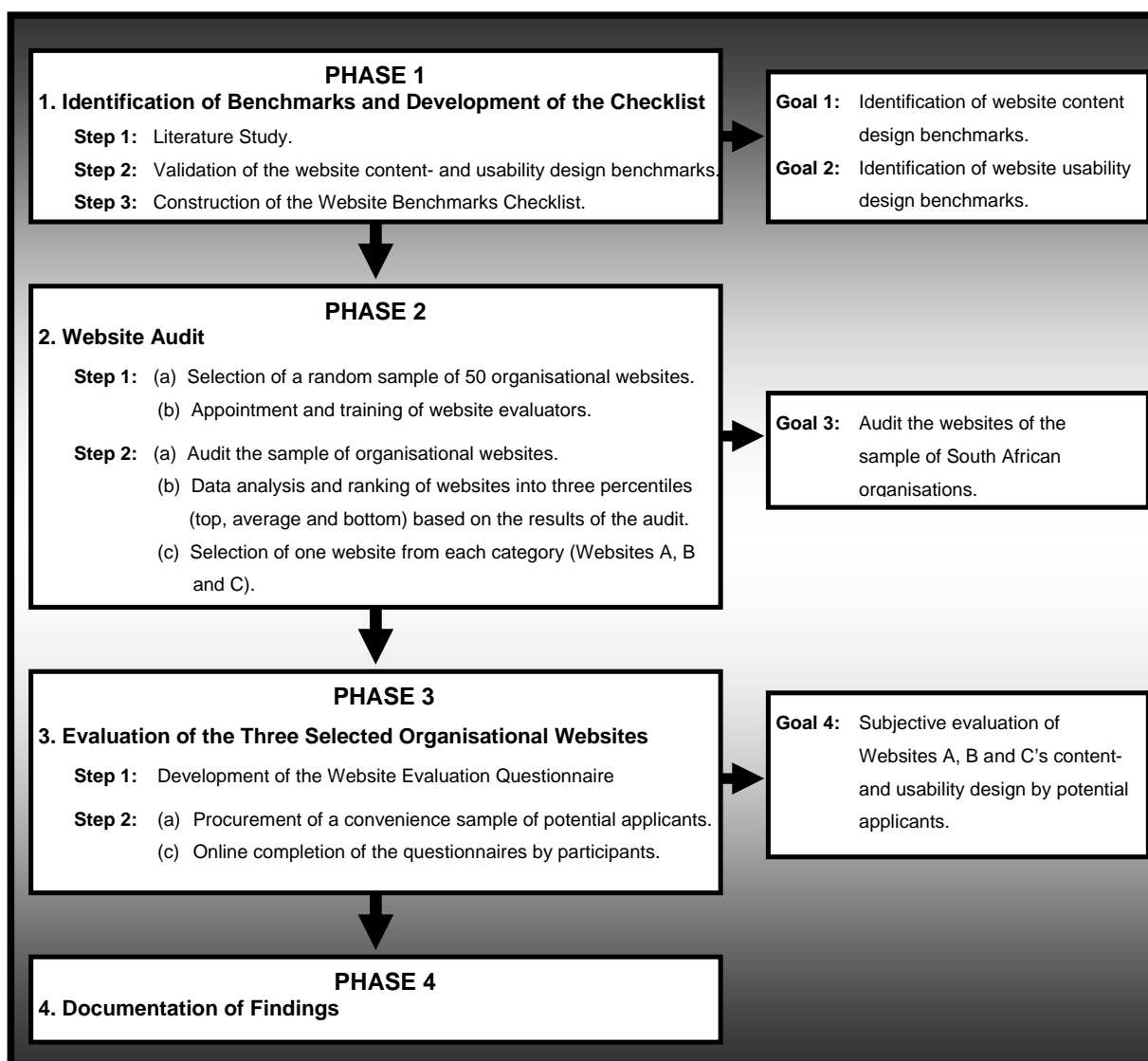


Figure 0.11: The research process

Phase one

In phase one the researcher set out to identify the relevant content- and usability design benchmarks with the aim of developing and constructing the Website Benchmarks Checklist (see figure 3.1). In order to achieve this, the first step in phase one, entailed a thorough literature study, which enabled the researcher to:

- determine the specific information potential applicants search for during the second stage of their job decision-making process, that would assist them to make an informed decision regarding an advertised employment opportunity (i.e. website content design benchmarks); and
- determine, how to best present and communicate informative content in an efficient, effective and satisfactory manner to potential applicants (i.e. website usability design benchmarks).

Step two of phase one required the validation of the identified website design benchmarks through application of Lawshe's (1975) Content Validation Technique (a more detailed discussion of the technique is

presented in section 3.8.2). Step three entailed the construction of the Website Benchmarks Checklist (see appendix C), based on the results obtained from the content validation analysis (Lawshe, 1975).

Phase two

In phase two an audit of the organisational websites of a random sample of 50 South African organisations was conducted. The sample was drawn from the Corporate Research Foundation's (2005) survey of the 'best' South African employers (n=69). In addition to the researcher, another evaluator was appointed, trained and familiarised with the process and criteria for auditing the websites. The purpose of the audit (goal three) was to determine the extent to which the selected organisations currently incorporate the identified and validated benchmarks of content- and usability design in their online recruitment websites. Upon completion of the audit, the data was analysed and organisations ranked in accordance with their website's performance (the extent to which the benchmarks were incorporated into their website design). Based upon the ranking, the sample was divided into three percentiles (top, average and bottom). From each percentile, one website was selected for incorporation into the third phase of this study.

Phase three

Phase three involved the subjective evaluation of the three selected organisational websites (Websites A, B and C) by potential applicants (i.e. sample of students) (goal four) in order to investigate how their subjective assessment reflect on the extent to which the website design incorporated the benchmarks. For example, did an organisation, which adhered to more of the content- and usability design benchmarks, receive a more positive evaluation from the potential applicants? Did the potential applicants perceive / view such an organisation in a more favourable light? The process firstly entailed the development of a valid and reliable Website Evaluation Questionnaire. Secondly, through convenience sampling, a sample of potential applicants was identified. Upon their agreement to participate in the study, the Website Evaluation Questionnaire, which provided detailed instructions and a series of tasks that had to be executed online, prior to the completion of the questionnaire, was e-mailed to them.

Phase four

The final phase of the study entailed the documentation of all the findings (see chapter 4 of this thesis).

3.5.2 The research method: survey

The primary function of research methodology is not only to control the study and dictate the acquisition of data, but also to arrange and organise the data after acquisition and extract meaningfulness from it (Leedy, 1997). An array of research methods is available to conduct research. According to Babbie (1995), the best research design is one that employs more than one research method, taking advantage of their different strengths whilst ensuring that both subjective and objective measures are obtained. These designs could include experiments, survey research, field research, content analysis, existing data research, comparative research and evaluation research (Babbie, 1995). After careful consideration of the purpose, objectives, time and budgetary constraints of this study, it was decided to employ the survey research method.

The survey method

Survey research is the most common method for obtaining primary data (data collected for a specific purpose or inquiry), and it is often employed for descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory purposes (Babbie, 1995). A survey is defined as a set of standardised self-report questions administered to a sample of individuals, whose answers when, collected and combined, represent an entire population (Reaves, 1992; Stangor, 2004). The goal of a survey is to produce a “snapshot” (intensely accurate description) of a specific phenomenon (e.g. behaviour, attitudes, orientations, beliefs, experiences and opinions) at a given time.

Amongst the strengths survey research has on offer, is its ability to gather information (regarding attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences) from large samples with less effort and expense than most other data gathering techniques. In addition to the use of a standardised questionnaire, which provides standardised data, survey research is also flexible and versatile in terms of enabling the researcher to ask numerous questions regarding a specific topic (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Babbie, 1995, Mitchell & Jolley, 1988). The decision to employ survey research in this study was based on its ability to effectively:

- capture the opinions of recruitment- and usability experts, regarding the website design benchmarks;
- capture the findings of the website audit; and
- measure potential applicants’ attitudes with regards to the content- and usability design of Websites A, B and C.

To conduct survey research, three categories of data collection instruments are generally used, namely the questionnaire-, the interview- and the telephonic survey (Babbie, 1995; Leedy, 1997; Mitchell & Jolley, 1988; Stangor, 2004). Questionnaire surveys include (a) the self-administered survey, where respondents complete questionnaires in the absence of the researcher; and (b) the investigator-administered questionnaire, where the questionnaire is completed in the presence of a researcher. Since the questionnaires employed within this study were self-administered questionnaires this method will be briefly discussed.

Self-administered questionnaire

Stangor (2004) describes a questionnaire as a set of fixed-format, self-report items that are completed by respondents at their own pace, often without supervision. A number of ways exist through which these self-administered questionnaires can be distributed, such as respondents gathering at the same place and time, traditional mail or online methods (e.g. website or via e-mail).

This particular study’s method of questionnaire distribution was e-mail. Similar to traditional mail surveys, e-mail surveys are self-administered. In addition to being more economic (time efficient) than mail or face-to-face interviews, e-mailed self-administered questionnaires also provide respondents with more privacy and anonymity, than a face-to-face interview would have, hence encouraging more candid responses (Babbie, 1995).

3.6 THE RESEARCH GOALS

Given the specific nature of this study, four research goals were formulated. Within each goal, specific objectives are outlined, and where applicable, the strategy employed to reach the goal will be discussed (see figure 3.1).

Phase one

Goal 1: Identify organisational website content design benchmarks that would contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour; and

Goal 2: Identify organisational website usability design benchmarks that would contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.

Background

A significant contribution of this study is the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks (i.e. best practices) from existing research literature, that when adhered to, could increase the organisational website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. In addition, an awareness of the benchmarks are created, which may be used by organisations in the design/redesign of online recruitment websites. Hence, the benchmarks could serve as guidelines that, if adhered to in design of the websites, could increase the probability that the organisational website operates at maximum efficiency, supplying the organisation with the necessary key intellectual capital to gain and maintain a competitive advantage.

In order to increase the potential of an online recruitment website, it is imperative that both the content- and usability design of the organisational website satisfy the needs of the potential applicant (Cober et al., 2003; Williamson et al., 2003). For example, the content of the website should be adequate, complete and relevant with respect to the information needs of the potential applicants. Equally important is the usability design. The usability design should allow for the presentation and communication of the informative content (e.g. job description, organisational culture, career development, application details, etc.) in an efficient, effective and satisfactory manner to potential applicants. Hence, the following three objectives concerning goals one and two, are specified within phase one of this study:

- **Objective 1:** Determine potential applicants' information needs and identify related content design benchmarks.

The content design of a website should assist potential applicants in their search for information regarding the organisation and its advertised employment opportunities. Hence, potential applicants' information needs are considered as being met, when they are able to locate the information they desire and make an informed decision regarding advertised employment opportunities (i.e. successful online applicant behaviour).

- **Objective 2:** Identification of website usability design benchmarks.

The usability of a product is defined as, "the ability of a product to be used with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction by specified users to achieve specified goals in particular environments" (Bevan & Macleod, 1994, p.136). For the purpose of this study, 'specified users' refer to potential applicants (i.e. individuals whom are actively or passively, searching for an employment opportunity). 'Specified goals'

refer to the process of: (a) locating an employment opportunity of interest, and (b) obtaining relevant and sufficient information pertaining to the organisation and its advertised employment opportunities. The reference to 'in particular environments' refers to the specific organisational website being browsed by potential applicants in their search for employment opportunities.

Website usability is strongly related to the manner in which information is presented to potential applicants. It influences the user's perception of the organisation, as well as their willingness to proceed with searching a website for employment opportunities (Cober et al., 2000, 2003; Karr, 2000; Williamson et al., 2003). Hence, the second objective of phase one, aspired to the identification of website usability benchmarks, that could be influential in maximising the presentation of informative content to potential applicants.

- **Objective 3:** Development of a checklist consisting of website content- and usability benchmarks.

The development of the Website Benchmarks Checklist is an essential aspect of this study, since it is the measurement instrument that was used to conduct the audit. On its own, however, the checklist presents organisations with a valuable tool, since it consists of validated content- and usability design benchmarks that if adhered to, could maximise a recruiting website's ability to present informative content in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner. For example, the checklist can be used to evaluate a functional online recruitment website, but it may also be consulted within the development phase of designing the content- and usability structure of such a website. This then enables organisations to incorporate crucial content- and usability features into its website's design and avoid features that are counterproductive to the website's ability to operate effectively and efficiently as a recruitment method. Ultimately, the checklist provides organisations with an economic option (in term of minimising the time and cost involved) to develop and/or evaluate the effectiveness of their recruitment website. In addition, the checklist also enables organisations to minimise the cost that the utilisation and consultation of expensive experts for the task (e.g. development or evaluation of a recruitment website), would have incurred.

Strategy

The comprehensive literature review presented in chapter two resulted in the identification of generic benchmarks regarding the concept of (a) website usability design and (b) website content design within the context of online recruitment via organisational websites. Hence, a generic list (Website Benchmarks Questionnaire – see appendix B) of website content- and usability design benchmarks that might contribute to the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour, were compiled. Thus, effectively addressing the first two objectives and goals of phase one.

The third objective of phase one, entailed the validation of the benchmark items within the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire and the development of the Website Benchmarks Checklist. Hence, the validity of the identified benchmarks was investigated with Lawshe's Content Validation Technique (Lawshe, 1975). Based on the results, only those benchmarks contained in the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire that illustrated satisfactory content validity, were included in the Website Benchmarks Checklist. A detailed

discussion outlining the application of Lawshe's content validation technique, in this study, is provided in sections 3.8.2 and 3.8.3 of this chapter.

Phase two

Goal 3: Audit the websites of the sample of South African organisations.

Background

According to research on worldwide recruitment trends, the next frontier of recruitment in today's global competitive environment is the Internet (Cober et al., 2003; Computing SA, 2001; Maurer & Liu, 2007; Singh & Finn, 2003; Taleo Research, 1999; Thomas & Ray, 2000). The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which a sample of prominent South African organisations (i.e. companies identified by the Corporate Research Foundation's 2005 survey, as 'best' South African employers), have redirected their recruitment strategy to incorporate the fast growing Internet domain, through making use of online recruitment via their organisational website. In addition, the researcher also investigated the extent to which the organisations, in the sample, currently incorporate the identified benchmarks into their websites.

As argued in chapter two, the worldwide adoption of online recruitment matches the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (iLogos Research, 2003; Mowen, 1990; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). The theory states that, the adoption of new technology is divided into segments, starting with 'innovators' moving through 'early adopters', 'early majority', 'late majority' and finally 'laggards'. According to the Corporate Research Foundation (2005), the 'best' SA employers that their survey identified are all at the forefront of incorporating new business strategies, especially in the field of recruitment, selection and human resources. The basis upon which the researcher selected the sample organisations, was that within the SA context, these organisations are most likely to be classified as "innovators/early adopters" of new technologies and strategies. Hence, it was assumed that these organisations would most likely have an organisational website, which is utilised for recruitment purposes.

According to Rubin (1994), an audit refers to the evaluation of a product or system by comparing its design against a checklist of standards. Such standards can be obtained from criteria established by a previously successful product or, as in the case in this study, from the body of research and literature related to the product or system. The following three objectives are specified for the website audit:

- **Objective 1:** Determine the extent to which the sample of SA organisations uses their websites as a recruitment method to advertise employment opportunities;
- **Objective 2:** Determine the extent to which those SA organisations that use their websites as a recruitment method and at the time of the investigation had vacancies advertised, incorporate the identified content- and usability design benchmarks; and
- **Objective 3:** Select three websites (for further analysis), one from each of the three percentiles (top, average and bottom) that the sample was divided into, based on the combined audit findings (i.e. the result of the extent to which the website content-and usability benchmarks was adhered to).

Strategy

The Website Benchmarks Checklist provided the researcher with a tool to audit the sample of websites in a time efficient and economic manner (i.e. eliminating the cost that the employment of expensive experts for the audit, would have incurred). As result of the Corporate Research Foundation (2005) survey, 69 SA organisations were classified as the 'best' SA employers. The Corporate Research Foundation's study was primarily an opinion-based assessment on how employees are managed, as well as the strategies and practices utilised by the organisation, to mobilise its workforce for high performance. The criteria employed to assess and compare the organisations included, "particular employer attributes, recruitment and selection strategies, career opportunities and development, human capital metrics, organisational strengths, the human face of the organisation, leadership effectiveness, human resources management strategy, corporate governance and international orientation" (Corporate Research Foundation, 2005, p.2). However, for the purpose of this study, the audit was only conducted on 50 (of the 69) organisation's websites. The 50 organisations was randomly selected (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS; version 14) from the bigger Corporate Research Foundation (2005) sample.

In conjunction with the researcher, a junior evaluator with previous exposure to the field of Ergonomics and Usability was appointed, to assist in the audit. The evaluators trained together and familiarised themselves with the Website Benchmarks Checklist by testing it independently on three different websites. During the debrief session findings were discussed, uncertainties clarified and differences in findings were investigated. Various changes to the checklist were made, based on the debriefing sessions. These included better clarification of statements and the inclusion of qualifying questions at strategic points in the Website Benchmarks Checklist. The purpose of the qualifying questions was to ensure that no ambiguity existed within the checklist items and that all websites were evaluated on the same merit. A more thorough discussion regarding the development of the Website Benchmarks Checklist will follow in section 3.8.3.

Upon completion of the audit, two respective total scores were calculated for all the websites that did have employment opportunities advertised at the time of the audit. Based on these scores, which represented the extent to which either the identified content- or usability design benchmarks were integrated into the website's design, the sample was ranked and divided into three percentiles (top, average and bottom). Websites that incorporated 68% and more of the benchmarks were positioned in the 'top percentile', whereas those that incorporated less than 33% of the benchmarks were positioned in the bottom percentile. The average percentile comprised of those benchmark total scores that ranged between 34% and 67%. Thus, enabling the researcher to determine the extent to which the sample's website design, respectively incorporated either the identified content- or the usability design benchmarks (second objective).

Next, the researcher proceeded with the calculation of a combined total score, merging the previous two calculated scores (content design score and usability design score) into a single total score for each website. The combined total score was thus representative of the extent to which each website adhered to both the content- and usability design benchmarks. Based on the combined total scores, the researcher adjusted the percentile intervals with 15%, to compensate for the absence of a website in the bottom percentile. Next, the sample was again divided into a top, average and bottom percentile, from which Websites A, B and C was selected (third objective), to be evaluated by potential applicants in phase three of this study.

Phase three

Goal 4: Subjective evaluation of Websites A, B and C's content- and usability design by potential applicants.

Background

The presence of an organisational website with a recruitment section, does not necessarily guarantee its success as a recruitment method able to deliver qualified applicants and highly skilled employees. As previously argued, the quality of potential applicants' interaction with a website (i.e. informative content provided and presented in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner) is crucial. Not only does it influence potential applicants' perception of the corporate image and the attractiveness of an organisation as an employer, but also their intention to pursue employment within the organisation (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993, Karr, 2000).

A next level of testing organisational websites' potential to be an effective recruitment method is therefore potential applicants' subjective appraisal of the website's ability to satisfy their information needs in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner. Henceforth, a subjective evaluation of the content- and usability design of Websites A, B and C was conducted in order to investigate potential applicants' subjective perceptions (e.g. satisfaction). Therefore, the following objectives were outlined:

- **Objective 1:** Determine potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions (subjective measurements) of the content design of Websites A, B and C.
- **Objective 2:** Determine potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions (subjective measurements) of the general usability of Websites A, B and C.
- **Objective 3:** Explore whether a similarity exists between potential applicants' subjective evaluation of each of the three selected websites and their percentile placement (top, average and bottom) based on the results of the audit.

Strategy

Convenience e-sampling (i.e. requesting participation via e-mail) was used to secure the sample of participants (i.e. 'potential applicants'). The Website Evaluation Questionnaire was developed by combining the Website Benchmarks Checklist and the Virtual Information Space Usability Questionnaire (VIS Project) (Ekermans, 2003). Upon potential applicants' agreement to participate in the study, the Website Evaluation Questionnaire was e-mailed to them. The questionnaire provided potential applicants with instructions and a series of tasks that had to be executed online, prior to the completion of the questionnaire. A more thorough discussion pertaining to the development of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire will follow in section 3.8.4.

3.7 THE SAMPLES

Sampling refers to the selection of a smaller group to participate in a research project, with the goal of being able to use the information obtained from the group to make inferences about the population (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). There are two sampling methods, namely probability- and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, procedures are used to ensure that each element in the identified population has a known statistical likelihood of being selected as part of the sample. In doing so, the likelihood that the sample is representative of the population increases, which enable the researcher to make observations that can be generalised to a much wider population (Lamb et al., 2004; Stangor, 2004). Although probability sampling

will never be perfectly representative, there is a greater likelihood that a probability sample will be more representative of the population from which it is drawn than that of a non-probability sample (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Examples of probability sampling include simple random-, systematic random-, stratified- and cluster sampling.

Due to situational constraints, probability sampling is not always possible, but non-probability sampling techniques do provide a feasible alternative. Lamb et al. (2000) defines a non-probability sample as any sample in which little or no attempt is made to get a representative cross-section of the population. In general, non-probability sampling methods are regarded as less reliable than probability sampling methods, but on the other hand, they are often easier and cheaper to use (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Examples of non-probability sampling include convenience-, judgement-, quota- and snowball sampling.

Convenience sample

Even though the sampling method employed within this study (i.e. convenience e-sample) is generally classified as a relative weak form of sampling, it is the most frequently used sampling method and has its own merits when used with reasonable knowledge and care (Black, 1999; Stangor, 2004). However, the results obtained from a convenience sample should be generalised with caution, since the possibility exist that the sample was 'chosen' by the participants rather than the researcher (Reaves, 1992). Such 'self-selected samples' are convenient, but not representative since they consist only of respondents that volunteered to take part in the experiment or exercise at hand. By nature, convenience sampling is considered to be non-representative. The findings derived from such a sample are applicable to the sample only, and cannot be used to generalise findings to an entire population (Lamb et al., 2004; Leedy, 1997; Stangor, 2004). However, should a different researcher at a different time and location confirm the results of such a study with new samples, then the representativeness of a convenience sample may be validated and the findings be generalised to an entire population (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

3.7.1 Sampling procedure

Alreck and Settle (2004, p.60) state, that with enough time and money it is possible to, "buy higher reliability, and lower sampling error". This statement refers to the fact that statistics calculated from large samples are more accurate (i.e. lower sampling error and greater reliability), than those calculated from small samples. However, similar to a minimum sample size, below which data is considered worthless, a point of saturation exists, where additional data becomes insignificant. The ideal therefore is to find a delicate balance between the sample size desired and the resources (time and money) available.

Through convenience sampling, the researcher obtained a sample of (a) usability- (n=13) and recruitment experts (n=11) to validate the identified benchmarks, (b) SA organisational websites to audit (n=50), and (c) potential applicants to evaluate Websites A, B and C (n=36).

Sampling process

As part of ethical research, as well as the convenience sampling procedure employed, participants were invited to partake in the study through an official letter that was e-mailed to them (see appendix A). Upon indicating their willingness to participate, the usability- and recruitment experts were sent (depending on their

field of expertise) a Usability Benchmarks Questionnaire or a Content Benchmarks Questionnaire (see appendix B). Potential applicants were presented with a Website Evaluation Questionnaire, upon indicating their willingness to participate (see appendix D). Following the return of a completed questionnaire, a personal e-mail was sent to each respondent, thanking him or her for their participation and willingness to share their experience.

Sample of usability- and recruitment experts

A survey of authors of published articles, conference speakers, lecturers and consultants in the private sector provided the basis upon which prominent South African recruitment and usability experts were identified and invited to participate in the study. A minimum of five experts should serve on a content validation panel (Lawshe, 1975). Eleven of the initial 32 recruitment experts that were approached indicated their willingness to participate in the validation of the Content Benchmarks Questionnaire (Section A of the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire). For the validation of the Usability Benchmarks Questionnaire (Section B of the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire), 13 of the initial 18 usability experts that were asked to participate, agreed to do so.

Sample of websites

A survey, conducted by The Corporate Research Foundation (2005), identified 69 of the 'best' South African employers, from which a sample of 50 organisations was randomly selected with SPSS. In addition to varying in size and the sectors of business within which they operate within SA, some of the organisations have also managed to expand their base to an international level. Despite these differences, the identified 'best' employers have one thing in common - the understanding that the key to their success and sustained competitiveness is vested in their workforce.

Based on the results of the qualifying questions in the Website Benchmark Checklist, fifteen of the organisations (from the sample of 50) were not included in this study, as:

the organisation did not employ their organisational website for online recruitment purposes; or employment opportunities were not listed / advertised at the time of the website audit.

Therefore, only 35 of the initial sample of 50 websites were audited. Based on the combined results of the audit pertaining to the extent to which the websites currently incorporate the identified content- and usability design benchmarks, the sample was divided into three percentiles (top, average and bottom) from which Websites A, B and C were randomly selected.

Sample of potential applicants

Obtaining a representative sample of all computer literate South Africans with access to the Internet (at home or work), that are actively or passively searching for employment opportunities, is virtually impossible. Hence, the sample of 'potential applicants' was limited to final year- and postgraduate students (n=36) with access to an Internet connection (at their tertiary institution).

3.8 MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

3.8.1 Introduction

Measurement is formally defined as the assignment of numbers to objects or events according to specific rules (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Stangor, 2004). Measurement, which is considered one of the fundamental pillars of research, is generally divided into (a) self-report measures, where individuals are asked to respond to questions posed by an interviewer/questionnaire, or (b) behavioural measures, which are specifically designed to directly measure an individual's actions (Stangor, 2004). Within this study, self-report measures were utilised.

During the course of the study, three separate questionnaires were administered to address the specific goals of the study and to obtain specific quantitative data. Although the development of each of the questionnaires will be discussed individually, the following points concern all of the questionnaires used within this study.

- **Question format:** Self-report measures generally include free-format measures (open-ended questions) or fixed-format measures (closed-ended questions) (Alreck & Settle, 2004). Open-ended questions allow respondents to express whatever thoughts or feelings they have regarding a topic, without imposing any constraints on respondents. Closed-ended questions require that respondents choose an answer from a specific set of response alternatives (Babbie, 1995; Stangor, 2004). The closed-ended questions incorporated in all three questionnaires employed Likert type-, semantic differential- and/or force ranking scales. Upon careful consideration, it was decided to include both open-ended and closed-ended questions in the Website Evaluation Questionnaire.
- **Question wording:** To obtain meaningful answers, questions must be formulated by way of appropriate words that are combined and arranged in a manner fitting respondents' frame of reference. Effective survey questions share three very important characteristics, namely focus, brevity, and clarity in its question wording (Alreck & Settle, 2004). Amongst the guidelines for the appropriate wording of questions are avoiding (a) double-barrelled questions, (b) biased or general questions, (c) ambiguous wording and (c) over-demanding recall (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Babbie, 1995; Reaves, 1992). Great care was taken in the construction of the questionnaires to adhere to these recommendations.
- **Response choices:** Various response scales were incorporated in each questionnaire, based on the goals of the measurement instrument. These response scales include:
 - *Likert scale.* Probably the most popular type of fixed format scales is the Likert scale, which measures opinions and beliefs (Stangor, 2004). It consists of a series of items or statements upon which respondents are required to respond to, by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. As a precautionary measure, to avoid acquiescent responding (when a participant tends to agree with everything) not all items were phrased in the same direction. Some items were negatively worded. The scores obtained from the negatively keyed items were reversed scored before the data was analysed.
 - *Semantic differential scale.* The semantic differential scale is equipped to assess the feelings (positive or negative) of participants regarding a specific topic. To enable respondents to rate their general appraisal of Websites A, B and C, the researcher selected a series of adjectives to describe it (e.g. Terrible – Wonderful, Difficult – Easy and Dull – Stimulating). Typically, in the semantic

differential scale, the topic of interest to be evaluated will be situated at the top of the page. Following the topic will be a scale, consisting of pairs of adjectives located at the two endpoints of a standard response format. The respondent expresses his/her opinion by selecting one point in the dimension. The scale was quantified by assigning a number to each possible response (e.g. +1 most negative and +4 most positive) and the score of each scale was calculated by averaging across all responses to each of the scales (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Stangor, 2004).

- *Forced ranking scale.* The forced ranking scale, which yields ordinal level data, enable respondents to rank a series of items in sequential order, but with no 'ties' or equal rankings allowed. The data obtained, therefore, not only indicates respondents' most preferred choice, but also the ranked sequence of the items (Alreck & Settle, 2004).

The three questionnaires that were developed and administered to address the specific goals of the study included (a) the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire, (b) the Website Benchmarks Checklist, and (c) the Website Evaluation Questionnaire. In the following section, the development of each of these questionnaires is discussed.

3.8.2 Development of the website benchmarks questionnaire

Meeting potential applicants' information needs (i.e. website content design) in a manner that is effective, efficient and satisfactory (i.e. website usability design) is crucial to the success of a website that is being employed as an online recruitment method. Hence, a comprehensive list of website content- and usability design benchmarks were identified (see Chapter 2) and compiled into the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire (appendix B). In order to validate the content validity of the items in the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire and subsequently develop the Website Benchmarks Checklist, Lawshe's (1975) content validation technique was employed.

Lawshe's content validation technique

According to Lawshe (1975), criterion-related validity principles and strategies evolved so much over time that the idea of what is generally considered to be "commonly accepted professional practice" became credible and reliable. However, due to its (i.e. commonly accepted professional practice) limited applicability to demonstrate validity, practitioners gradually turned to content validity. Hence, Lawshe proposed a widely acceptable approach, not only able to enhance the content validity concept, based on what is considered to be "commonly accepted professional practice", but also capable of quantifying content validity of the issue at hand (e.g. website content- and usability benchmarks).

The content evaluation panel

In order to employ the validation technique, a number of experts in a specific field, function or discipline (in this case recruitment- and usability specialists) were required to participate as part of a 'content evaluation panel' for either the content- or the usability section of the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire.

Depending on their field of expertise, panellists were presented with a Website Content- or Usability Benchmarks Questionnaire. Independently from the other panellists, each participant had to evaluate the importance of each item in the questionnaire in terms of whether it is viewed as "essential"; "useful, but not

essential”, or “not necessary”. In order to establish the content validity of each item, which would determine whether it would be included in the Website Benchmarks Checklist, the responses obtained for each section of the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire were pooled and the number indicating “essential” for each item was calculated.

To justify the validity of the panellists’ judgement, Lawshe (1975) states that if the entire panel agrees on the importance of an item (e.g. essential; useful, but not essential; or not necessary), then it must be concluded that either the panellists are “all wrong” or they are “all right”. Since the panellists are all experts in the respective areas of the inquiry, there is no basis upon which to contest such a strong consensus and not accept the validity of their judgement. Thus, if a consensus exist among the panellists, concerning the importance of an item (e.g. “essential” or “not necessary”), then it can be concluded with confidence that a specific item is “essential” or “not necessary”. It is only when the strength of the consensus among the panellists moves away from strong agreement towards a fifty-fifty agreement, that problems concerning the validity of their judgement arise.

The feedback received from the recruitment experts (n=11) and usability experts (n=13) were extremely valuable. The recruitment experts reported being extensively involved in their respective organisation’s recruitment function (advertising, interviewing, selection and/or induction) and all, except for one, indicated having a relevant postgraduate qualification. The entire usability panel reported having postgraduate qualifications and extensive experience in the academic and practical field of usability and website design.

Calculation of the content validity ratio’s

Two assumptions underlie the calculation of the content validity ratios (CVR), used to quantify consensus amongst the panellists (Lawshe, 1975). These include:

any item which is perceived to be very important (“essential”) by more than half of the panellists, is considered to have some degree of content validity; and
the more panellists (50% and up) that perceive an item to be very important (“essential”), the greater the extent or degree of content validity.

Based on these assumptions, Lawshe (1975, pp. 567 - 568) proposes the following formula to calculate the CVR:

$$\text{CVR} = \frac{n_e - N_2}{N_2}$$

In this formula, n_e represents the number of panellists rating an item as very important (“essential”) and N refers to the total number of panellists. The calculated CVR is a direct linear transformation of the percentage of panellist rating an item as very important (“essential”). Henceforth, its value is derived from its characteristics:

if less than half of the panellists rate an item as “essential”, the CVR is negative;

if half of the panellists rate an item as “essential” and half do not, the CVR is zero;

if the entire panel rate an item as “essential”, the CVR is calculated to be 1.00 (the CVR is then adjusted to .99 for ease of manipulation); and should the number of panellist rating an item as “essential” be more than half, but less than all, the CVR is between zero and .99.

Thus, to validate the benchmarks comprising the content- and usability section of the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire, a CVR value for each item was calculated. The CVR served as an item statistic used to determine whether a specific item should be retained and be included in the Website Benchmarks Checklist.

Table 0.1: Minimum CVR values depending on the number of panellists

Number of Panellists	Minimum Value
5	.99
6	.99
7	.99
8	.75
9	.78
10	.62
11	.59
12	.56
13	.54
14	.51
15	.49
20	.42
25	.37
30	.33
35	.31
40	.29

(Lawshe, 1975, p.568)

Lawshe’s content validation technique is not without its shortcomings, it lacks a ‘true’ content validity ratio. However, it does provide CVR values, which are estimates, arrived at through human judgement. As a precautionary measure, to eliminate the possibility of a ‘by chance’ consensus amongst members of the evaluation panel, Shipper (cited in Lawshe, 1975, p. 568), compiled a minimum CVR value. Hence, depending on the number of panellists, a minimum CVR value is provided that must be met in order to satisfy the five percent level of agreement (refer to table 3.1). Accordingly, the content evaluation panel of the Website Content Benchmarks Questionnaire (which comprised of 11 panellists), required a minimum CVR of .59 for each item (see table 3.2). A CVR of .54 for each item of the Website Usability Benchmarks Questionnaire was required, since its content evaluation panel consisted of 13 panellists (see table 3.3). Therefore, in an attempt to counteract the inherent unreliability in the judgement of panellists, only those items with a CVR value that attained the minimum value were retained and incorporated into the Website Benchmarks Checklist.

Both Tables 3.2 and 3.3, illustrate the cumulative ratings of the panellists on all items of the content- and usability sections of the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire in terms of its importance (“essential”, “useful, but not essential”, or “not necessary”). In addition, each statement’s calculated CVR value is also provided. Only those items that illustrated satisfactory content validity were retained in the Website Benchmarks

Checklist (i.e. in table 3.2 items with minimum CVR of .59 were retained and in table 3.3 items with a minimum CVR of .54 were retained).

Table 0.2: Website content benchmarks questionnaire's obtained CVR values (n = 11)

Aggregated Score Allocation For All Items On The WEBSITE CONTENT BENCHMARKS QUESTIONNAIRE					
BENCHMARK ITEMS	STATEMENT			MIN. CVR 0.59	
	Essential	Useful, But Not Essential	Not Necessary	Obtained CVR	
1. GENERAL INFORMATION DISCLOSED REGARDING THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ON THE WEBSITE					
1.1	Employment opportunities should be advertised on the homepage of the organisational website.	2	6	3	-0.64
1.2	Employment opportunities should be advertised under "About Us" section on the organisational website.	1	4	6	-0.82
1.3	Provision should be made for a separate College/entry-level career section for those potential applicants with little/no previous work experience.	2	7	2	-0.64
1.4	The list of employment opportunities should be updated on a regular basis (implying that those employment opportunities which closing date has expired are removed from the list of employment opportunities).	11	0	0	.99
1.5	Potential applicants should be provided with the date the website was last revised.	5	6	0	-0.09
1.6	It should be clearly stated if a position within the organisation is subject to the organisation's Employment Equity Policy.	10	1	0	0.82
1.7	Potential applicants should be provided with information related to the proposed salary/salary range associated with the available position.	3	5	3	-0.45
2. JOB DESCRIPTION					
2.1	A general description (or job description) of each position posted on the organisational website should be available.	10	1	0	0.82
2.2	The title of the available position should be clearly mentioned in the job description.	10	1	0	0.82
2.3	The job description should explain to potential applicants what tasks the employment opportunity entails.	8	1	2	0.45
2.4	The job description should explain to potential applicants what responsibilities the employment opportunity entails.	9	1	1	0.64
2.5	The job description should describe to potential applicants what abilities the position requires.	9	1	1	0.64
2.6	The job description should describe to potential applicants what credentials (qualification) are a prerequisite.	11	0	0	0.99
2.7	The job description should describe to potential applicants what experience is required in order to apply for the available position.	10	1	0	0.82
2.8	The job description should specify the location of the employment opportunity.	10	1	0	0.82
3. APPLICATION DETAILS					
3.1	Instructions on how to submit an online application form.	11	0	0	0.99
3.2	Instructions on how/where to e-mail an application.	10	1	0	0.82
3.3	Information on how to apply through alternative channels such as via fax or (snail) mail.	9	0	2	0.64
3.4	Information concerning the preferred channel (online applications, e-mail, fax or snail mail) for receiving applications.	9	1	1	0.64
3.5	The closing date for submitting applications for each employment opportunity that is advertised.	11	0	0	0.99
3.6	Potential applicants should be provided with a "Contact" link (e.g. Contact Us) directing them to information on how to contact the organisation.	10	1	0	0.82
Contact details for questions or additional information that potential applicants are provided with should include:					
3.7	The name of a contact person.	6	4	1	0.09
3.8	The contact person's telephone number.	5	4	2	-0.09
3.9	Helpdesk.	5	6	0	-0.09

Table 3.2: (continued)

BENCHMARK ITEMS	STATEMENT			MIN. CVR 0.59	
	Essential	Useful, But Not Essential	Not Necessary	Obtained CVR	
4. PRIVACY POLICY					
4.1	There should be a privacy policy posted on the organisational website.	10	1	0	0.82
4.2	The privacy policy posted on the website should be a generic privacy policy, with no mention of recruiting.	1	4	6	-0.82
4.3	The privacy policy posted on the website should cite recruiting as the specific purpose for gathering personal information of potential applicants.	9	1	1	0.64
The privacy policy posted on the organisational website should cite:					
4.4	What personal information is being collected?	7	3	1	0.27
4.5	How an individual can access his or her own data.	7	3	1	0.27
4.6	How the information is being used.	9	1	1	0.64
4.7	What security measures are in place to protect the user's information during the collection process and storage?	7	3	1	0.27
5. ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE					
1.1	Potential applicants should be provided with a link directing them to information about the organisation.	10	1	0	0.82
1.2	The link directing potential applicants to information about the organisation should be called "About<name-of-company>".	2	5	4	-0.64
1.3	The link directing potential applicants to information about the organisation should be called "About Us".	2	7	2	-0.64
1.4	The link directing potential applicants to information about the organisation should be called "Company Information".	2	7	2	-0.64
The organisational culture should be explained to potential applicants through the provision of:					
1.5	Information touching on the organisation's line of work.	9	1	1	0.64
1.6	Information on the work ethics within the organisation.	6	4	1	0.09
1.7	The values of the organisation.	9	2	0	0.64
1.8	The goals of the organisation.	6	5	0	0.09
1.9	Information concerning the organisation's vision statement.	6	5	0	0.09
1.10	Information concerning the organisation's mission statement.	6	5	0	0.09
1.11	Information touching on the organisations diversity stance.	5	6	0	-0.09
1.12	Information touching on the organisations employment philosophy.	9	1	1	0.64
1.13	Information on the organisation affirmative action stance/policy.	6	4	1	0.09
1.14	Information concerning the organisation's community outreach programmes.	3	6	2	-0.45
1.15	Information concerning the organisation's emphasis on teamwork.	4	6	1	-0.27

Table 0.3: Website usability benchmarks questionnaire's obtained CVR values (n = 13)

Aggregated Score Allocation For All Items On The WEBSITE USABILITY BENCHMARKS QUESTIONNAIRE					
BENCHMARK ITEMS	STATEMENT			MIN. CVR 0.54	
	Essential	Useful, But Not Essential	Not Necessary	Obtained CVR	
1. SCREEN DESIGN					
1.1 Space Allocation					
1.1.1	The logo of the organisation should appear in the upper left corner of the website.	8	5	0	0.23
1.1.2	On the homepage there should be an index, table of contents, or some other clear indicator of the contents of the website.	13	0	0	1.00
1.1.3	The most important information on each webpage should be presented in the first screen potential applicants are provided with (they do not need to scroll down in search of such information).	12	1	0	0.85
1.1.4	If the webpage is longer than two full screens, potential applicants should be provided with internal links (e.g. to the top of the page) to reduce the need for scrolling.	8	4	1	0.23
The position of the menu (list of content) on the webpage should be on the:					
1.1.5	Left hand side of the webpage.	6	7	0	-0.08
1.1.6	Right hand side of the webpage.	0	5	8	-1.00
1.1.7	Top of the webpage.	3	6	4	-0.54
1.2 Choice of Colour					
1.2.1	Colour should be used to differentiate functional areas (e.g. tool bar, menu bar and list of content).	6	4	3	-0.08
1.2.2	Sharp colour contrast should exist between the text and background colours that are used (e.g. black on white).	11	2	0	0.69
1.2.3	A clear discernable and less saturated colour should be used to indicate (hyper) links in text.	11	1	1	0.69
1.2.4	The colour of links should indicate their status as visited or unvisited.	11	2	0	0.69
1.3 Readability					
1.3.1	Different text sizes should be used to enable users to differentiate between title headings and text on each webpage.	12	1	0	0.85
1.3.2	When text appears on the screen, both uppercase and lowercase letters should be used instead of all capitals.	12	1	0	0.85
1.3.3	The same textual visual theme in terms of font, size and colour should be repeated throughout the website.	10	2	1	0.54
1.3.4	Critical elements such as the logo of the organisation on each webpage should not be animated	10	3	0	0.54
1.3.5	The main headline of each webpage should not be animated.	10	3	0	0.54
1.4 Scannability					
1.4.1	The user should be able to quickly determine the basic content/purpose of the website.	13	0	0	1.00
1.4.2	The website sponsor/provider should be clearly identifiable.	6	6	1	-0.08
1.4.3	Each webpage should be labelled with a clear title/heading to indicate what information is about to follow.	12	1	0	0.85
1.4.4	Clear headings and sub headings should appear in the text.	11	2	0	0.69
1.4.5	The content of each webpage should be divided into short paragraphs (no more than 6 sentences).	8	5	0	0.23
1.4.6	Links within the text should be underlined.	10	2	1	0.54
1.4.7	The links used on the website should be clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	13	0	0	1.00
2. ACCESSIBILITY					
2.1 Loading Speed					
<i>Network Connection</i>					
2.1.1	The potential applicant should be able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website.	11	1	1	0.69
2.1.2	The loading speed of the website should be rapid (10 seconds or less)	9	4	0	0.38
2.1.3	If there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page (greater than 10 seconds) the most informative and important items (such as the text) should become visible while the rest of the page (such as images) loads.	11	2	0	0.69

Table 3.3: (continued)

BENCHMARK ITEMS	STATEMENT			MIN. CVR 0.54	
	Essential	Useful, But Not Essential	Not Necessary	Obtained CVR	
<i>Modem</i>					
2.1.4	The potential applicant should be able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website.	11	2	0	0.69
2.1.5	The time it takes for the website to load is 20 seconds (acceptable loading time is 10 – 20 seconds).	8	5	0	0.23
2.1.6	If there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page, the most informative and important items (such as the text) should become visible first while the rest of the page (such as images) loads.	11	2	0	0.69
2.2 Search Facility					
2.2.1	The search function should be placed in the upper right corner of the webpage.	3	7	3	-0.54
2.2.2	The search function should be placed in either the upper left corner of the webpage.	2	5	6	-0.69
2.2.3	The colour of the search box should be white.	1	10	2	-0.85
2.2.4	The search button should be called “search” or “go”.	5	6	2	-0.23
3. NAVIGATION					
3.1	The menu or list of content should be available on every webpage of the website.	10	3	0	0.54
3.2	The website should provide potential applicants with a sitemap of the website.	8	5	0	0.23
3.3	The meaning of icons, buttons, and symbols should be in tune with the cognitive map of the potential applicant (e.g. video camera representing a video clip).	12	1	0	0.85
3.4	The organisational logo on all the other webpages (except the homepage) should be a link that leads the potential applicant back to the website’s homepage.	5	7	1	-0.23
3.5	Footer navigational links should be reserved for links such as copyright, contact information and/or privacy policy.	6	6	1	-0.08
3.6	As the user of the website, you should be able to tell “Where you are”.	12	1	0	0.85
3.7	As the user of the website, you should be able to tell “Where you have been”.	9	4	0	0.38
3.8	As the user of the website, you should be able to tell “Where you can go”.	12	1	0	0.85
The webpage should provide useful visual feedback :					
3.9	Buttons are highlighted if mouse is over it.	6	7	0	-0.08
3.10	Feedback if a button is pressed.	10	3	0	0.54
3.11	All links accessed on the website is accurate in taking the potential applicant to his/her intended destination.	12	1	0	0.85
4. ERROR MESSAGES					
4.1	Error messages should be written in clear understandable language.	12	1	0	0.85
4.2	Error messages should diagnose the source and cause of the problem.	12	1	0	0.85
4.3	Error messages should indicate what action needs to be taken to resolve the problem.	11	2	0	0.69
5. CONSISTENCY					
5.1	The website should effectively repeat visual themes to unify the website.	11	2	0	0.69
A consistent page layout should be used throughout the website in terms of:					
5.2	Screen size for content display.	10	3	0	0.54
5.3	Position of navigational elements (e.g. the menu bar/list of contents).	13	0	0	1.00
5.4	Banners.	9	4	0	0.38
5.5	Layout for titles and subtitles.	13	0	0	1.00
5.6	Page footers.	11	2	0	0.69
5.7	Background.	11	1	1	0.69
Consistent use of text in terms of text:					
5.8	Font.	11	2	0	0.69
5.9	Size.	11	2	0	0.69
5.10	Colour.	11	2	0	0.69
Consistent use of navigational aids (e.g. the menu bar, buttons and links) throughout the website in terms of its:					
5.11	Colour.	12	1	0	0.85
5.12	Size.	13	0	0	1.00
5.13	Fonts.	13	0	0	1.00

3.8.3 Development of the website benchmarks checklist

To conduct an audit of the websites of the sample of South African organisations (phase 2) and their compliance with the validated benchmarks, a Website Benchmark Checklist was developed. The checklist consisted of a content- and usability benchmarks section and was compiled from the validated items, identified in the previous phase (see tables 3.4 & 3.5 for the retained items). The purpose of the audit was twofold. Firstly, to determine the extent to which organisational websites are being used as a recruitment method to advertise employment opportunities. Secondly, to evaluate compliance with the content- and usability benchmarks, provided that the organisation employs their website for online recruitment, and at the time of the study had vacancies advertised.

Content validity index of the website benchmarks checklist

Upon calculation of the CVR values and the elimination of non-qualifying items from the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire, it was possible to calculate a content validity index (CVI) for the respective sections of the Website Benchmarks Checklist. The CVI for each section (i.e. content and usability) was computed by calculating the mean of the CVR values that each section comprised of.

Lawshe (1975) cautions that the CVI should not be confused with a coefficient of correlation. The CVI is simply the average percentage of overlap between the retained checklist items and the defined performance area (i.e. the ability of a website's content- or usability design to contribute to the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour). As shown in table 3.4, the calculated CVI for the Website Content Benchmarks Checklist is 0.78, whereas the calculated CVI for the Website Usability Benchmarks Checklist is 0.76 (table 3.5). Based on both these calculated CVI values for the respective sections, the researcher concludes that the Website Benchmarks Checklist demonstrate satisfactory content validity and is appropriate for the purpose it was developed for.

Construction of the website benchmarks checklist

The construction of the Website Benchmarks Checklist commenced upon the identification of those content- and usability design items that illustrated satisfactory content validity as stipulated by Lawshe (1975). Table 3.4 contains only those content related items that met the minimum CVR value of .59, whereas table 3.5 holds only those usability related items that met the minimum CVR value of .54. In addition to illustrating the combined total (summation) of the panellists' rating on each item in terms of its importance ("essential", "useful, but not essential", or "not necessary"), both Tables 3.4 and 3.5 provide each statement's calculated CVR value, as well as the overall calculated CVI values.

Table 0.4: Single CVI and multiple CVR values of the retained items to be included into the content section of the Website Benchmarks Checklist

WEBSITE CONTENT BENCHMARKS CHECKLIST (retained items only)					
BENCHMARK ITEMS	STATEMENT			MIN. CVR 0.59	CVI 0.78
	Essential	Useful, But Not Essential	Not Necessary	Obtained CVR	
1. GENERAL INFORMATION DISCLOSED REGARDING THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ON THE WEBSITE					
1.1	The list of employment opportunities should be updated on a regular basis (implying that those employment opportunities which closing date has expired are removed from the list of employment opportunities).	11	0	0	0.99
1.2	It should be clearly stated if a position within the organisation is subject to the organisation's Employment Equity Policy.	10	1	0	0.82
2. JOB DESCRIPTION					
2.1	A general description (or job description) of each position posted on the organisational website should be available.	10	1	0	0.82
2.2	The title of the available position should be clearly mentioned in the job description.	10	1	0	0.82
2.3	The job description should explain to potential applicants what responsibilities the employment opportunity entails.	9	1	1	0.64
2.4	The job description should describe to potential applicants what abilities the position requires.	9	1	1	0.64
2.5	The job description should describe to potential applicants what credentials (qualification) are a prerequisite.	11	0	0	0.99
2.6	The job description should describe to potential applicants what experience is required by the available position.	10	1	0	0.82
2.7	The job description should specify the location of the employment opportunity.	10	1	0	0.82
3. APPLICATION DETAILS					
3.1	Instructions on how to submit an online application form should be provided.	11	0	0	0.99
3.2	Instructions on how/where to E-mail an application should be provided.	10	1	0	0.82
3.3	Information on how to apply through alternative channels such as via fax or (snail) mail should be provided.	9	0	2	0.64
3.4	Information concerning the preferred channel (online applications, e-mail, fax or snail mail) for receiving applications should be provided.	9	1	1	0.64
3.5	The closing date for submitting applications for each employment opportunity t should be available.	11	0	0	0.99
3.6	Potential applicants should be provided with a "Contact" link (e.g. Contact Us) directing them to information on how to contact the organisation.	10	1	0	0.82
3.7	Contact details for questions or additional information that potential applicants are provided with should include an E-mail address.	10	0	1	0.82
4. PRIVACY POLICY					
4.1	There should be a privacy policy posted on the organisational website.	10	1	0	0.82
4.2	The privacy policy posted on the website should cite recruiting as the specific purpose for gathering personal information of potential applicants.	9	1	1	0.64
4.3	The privacy policy posted on the organisational website should cite how the information that is being collected will be used.	9	1	1	0.64
4.4	Potential applicants should be provided with a link directing them to information about the organisation.	10	1	0	0.82
5. ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE					
The organisational culture should be explained to potential applicants through the provision of:					
(a)	Information regarding on the organisation's line of work (e.g. banking industry).	9	1	1	0.64
(b)	The values of the organisation.	9	2	0	0.64
(c)	Information regarding the organisations employment philosophy.	9	1	1	0.64

Table 0.5: Single CVI and multiple CVR values of the retained items to be included into the usability section of the Website Benchmarks Checklist

WEBSITE USABILITY BENCHMARKS CHECKLIST (retained items only)					
BENCHMARK ITEMS	STATEMENT			MIN. CVR 0.54	CVI 0.76
	Essential	Useful, But Not Essential	Not Necessary	Obtained CVR	
1. SCREEN DESIGN					
1.1 Space Allocation					
1.1.1	On the homepage, there should be an index, table of contents, or some other clear indicator of the contents of the website.	13	0	0	0.99
1.1.2	The most important information on each webpage should be presented in the first screen potential applicants are provided with (they do not need to scroll down in search of such information).	12	1	0	0.85
1.2 Choice of Colour					
1.2.1	Sharp colour contrast should exist between the text and background colours that are used (e.g. black on white).	11	2	0	0.69
1.2.2	A clear discernable and/or less saturated colour should be used to indicate (hyper) links in text.	11	1	1	0.69
1.2.3	The colour of (hyper) links in the text should indicate their status as visited or unvisited	11	2	0	0.69
1.3 Readability					
1.3.1	Different text sizes should be used to enable users to differentiate between title headings and text on each webpage.	12	1	0	0.85
1.3.2	When text appears on the screen, both uppercase and lowercase letters should be used instead of all capitals.	12	1	0	0.85
1.3.3	The same textual visual theme in terms of font, size and colour should be repeated throughout the website.	10	2	1	0.54
1.3.4	Critical elements such as the logo of the organisation on each webpage should not be animated	10	3	0	0.54
1.3.5	The main headline of each webpage should not be animated.	10	3	0	0.54
1.4 Scannability					
1.4.1	The user should be able to quickly determine the basic content/purpose of the website.	13	0	0	0.99
1.4.2	Each webpage should be labelled with a clear title/heading to indicate what information is about to follow.	12	1	0	0.85
1.4.3	Clear and meaningful headings and sub headings should appear in the text.	11	2	0	0.69
1.4.4	Links within the text should be underlined.	10	2	1	0.54
1.4.5	The links used on the website should be clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	13	0	0	0.99
1.4.6	The potential applicant should be able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website.	11	1	1	0.69
2. ACCESSIBILITY					
2.1 Loading Speed					
<i>Network Connection</i>					
2.2.1	The potential applicant should be able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website.	11	1	1	0.69
2.2.2	If there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page (greater than 10 seconds) the most informative and important items (such as the text) should become visible while the rest of the page (such as images) loads.	11	2	0	0.69
<i>Modem</i>					
2.2.3	The potential applicant should be able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website.	11	2	0	0.69
2.2.4	If there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page, the most informative and important items (such as the text) should become visible first while the rest of the page (such as images) loads.	11	2	0	0.69
3. NAVIGATION					
3.1	The menu or list of content should be available on every webpage of the website.	10	3	0	0.54
3.2	The meaning of icons, buttons, and symbols should be in tune with the cognitive map of the potential applicant (e.g. video camera representing a video clip).	12	1	0	0.85
3.3	As the user of the website, you should be able to tell: "Where you are".	12	1	0	0.85
3.4	As the user of the website you should be able to tell: "Where you can go".	12	1	0	0.85
3.5	The webpage should provide useful visual feedback if a button/hyperlink is selected/clicked on.	10	3	0	0.54
3.6	All links on the website should be accurate in taking the potential applicant to the intended destination (no "ERROR" messages).	12	1	0	0.85
4. ERROR MESSAGES					
4.1	Error messages should be written in clear understandable language.	12	1	0	0.85
4.2	Error messages should diagnose the source and cause of the problem.	12	1	0	0.85
4.3	Error messages should indicate what action needs to be taken to solve the problem.	11	2	0	0.69

Table 3.5: (continued)

BENCHMARK ITEMS	STATEMENT			MIN. CVR 0.54	CVI 0.76
	Essential	Useful, But Not Essential	Not Necessary	Obtained CVR	
5. CONSISTENCY					
1.5	The website should effectively repeat visual themes to unify the website.	11	2	0	0.69
A consistent page layout should be used throughout the website in terms of:					
1.6	Screen size for content display.	10	3	0	0.54
1.7	Position of navigational elements (e.g. the menu bar/list of contents).	13	0	0	0.99
1.8	Layout for titles and subtitles.	13	0	0	0.99
1.9	Page footers.	11	2	0	0.69
1.10	Background.	11	1	1	0.69
A consistent use of text in terms of text:					
1.11	Font.	11	2	0	0.69
1.12	Size.	11	2	0	0.69
1.13	Colour.	11	2	0	0.69
Consistent use of navigational aids (e.g. the menu bar, buttons and links) throughout the website in terms of its:					
1.14	Font.	13	0	0	0.99
1.15	Size.	13	0	0	0.99
1.16	Colour.	12	1	0	0.85

Next, all the retained items were rewritten into checklist format. Additional qualifying questions (see table 3.6) were added to ensure that the websites were audited on the same merit. For example, should the website fail to qualify (i.e. privacy policy was not available on the website), the researcher would discontinue the evaluation of the website on the dimension in question and proceed with the evaluation on the remaining dimensions. In addition, one qualifying question (the first question on the checklist) was incorporated for the purpose of allowing the evaluator to discontinue the audit should the website not have met the minimum requirement (i.e. employment opportunities was not advertised at the time of the study). The final version of the Website Benchmarks Checklist (see appendix C) consisted of two sections.

Table 0.6: Qualifying questions incorporated into the Website Benchmarks Checklist

ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITE CONTENT CHECKLIST				
SA1Q	1. General information regarding the employment opportunity on the website:		Yes	No
	Employment opportunities/vacancies are advertised on the organisational website (Potential applicants are provided with a link directing them to employment opportunities/vacancies within the organisation).	2	1	
	There is available employment opportunities/vacancies currently listed on the website. If employment opportunities/vacancies are listed on the website, please continue completing Questions 3 – 18.	2	1	
SA2Q	4. Privacy Policy		Yes	No
19.	A privacy policy is available on the organisational website. If yes, please continue completing Questions 20 & 21.	2	1	
SA3Q	5. Organisational Culture		Yes	No
22.	Potential applicants are provided with a link directing them to information about the organisation. If 'yes', please continue completing Questions 23 - 25	2	1	
ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITE USABILITY CHECKLIST				
SB4Q	4. Error Messages		Yes	No
24.	While browsing, did the website produce any error messages? If you were presented with an ERROR message, please answer the following questions.	2	1	

Section a: the website content benchmarks checklist

This section of the checklist focuses on the information recruiting organisations should make available on their websites in order to maximise the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.

The sub-sections include:

- **General information.** Information regarding employment opportunities on the website;
- **The job description.** The information pertaining to the tasks, duties, objectives and standards required for each particular employment opportunity;
- **Application details.** All information pertaining to and supporting the application process;
- **Privacy policy.** An official statement pertaining to why particular information is being collected and the security measures in place to protect potential applicants' personal information; and
- **Organisational culture.** Any information concerning the organisation that is communicated through the website that will help the potential applicants decide whether they will fit in with the organisation.

Section b: the website usability benchmarks checklist

This section of the checklist focuses on the identified usability benchmarks that would add to the website's ability to present its informative content in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner and subsequently contribute to the website's potential to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. The sub-sections in the checklist include:

- **Screen design.** The screen design benchmarks focus on:
 - *space allocation*, which refers to the proper allocation of space for the display of functions and content on the webpage;
 - *the choice of colour*, which refers to the consistent and optimal use of the colour scheme to enhance learning, ease navigation and unify the webpages into one coherent website;
 - *readability*, which refers to maximising potential applicants' ability to accurately read the content of the website; and
 - *scannability*, which refers to the presentation of the content. Users should be able to scan through the text and easily locate the needed information, without having to read through everything.
- **Accessibility.** The accessibility benchmarks focus on establishing a connection and browsing the content of the website:
 - *loading speed* or download speed refers to the time it takes for a website to load.
- **Navigation.** Navigability refers to the ease with which users can find their way around a website, without getting disoriented and lost.
- **Error messages.** Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application allows and/or enables the potential applicant to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors.
- **Consistency.** Consistency refers to the underlying design of the website, which should be reoccurring, repeated and consistent throughout the website.

3.8.4 Development of the website evaluation questionnaire

Phase three of this study entailed the subjective evaluation of three selected websites (with the Website Evaluation Questionnaire - see appendix D) by a sample of potential applicants. The objective was to obtain a subjective measurement of potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions of the usability of Websites A, B

and C, as well as the recruitment content available on these websites. In addition, a comparison of the results of potential applicants' evaluation of the three websites, with the findings of the audit was also conducted. The purpose was to explore the extent to which the rankings (percentile placement) of the websites (e.g. audit results position Website A in the top percentile and Website B in the bottom percentile) coincided with the subjective evaluation results.

The questionnaire was developed by merging and consolidating items from both the Website Benchmarks Checklist and the Virtual Information Space (VIS) Usability Questionnaire (Ekermans, 2003). A Likert-type rating scale, which provided respondents with four options (ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') was used. In addition, open-ended questions were also included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three sections (see appendix D).

Section a – biographical information

Biographical information was obtained in three broad sections. Firstly, general questions about gender, academic qualifications, etc. was included. Questions regarding respondents' computer experience (e.g. literacy, frequency of use, etc.) and Internet usage behaviour were included in section two. Section three merged potential applicants' Internet usage and search for employment opportunities and elicited specific information regarding respondents' past behaviour, previous exposure and usage of the Internet to locate employment opportunities.

Section b – website content design and general website appraisal

The focus of Section B was to investigate respondents' attitudes and perceptions of the quality and usefulness of the information pertaining to the advertised employment opportunities, available on Websites A, B and C. Open-ended questions enable potential applicants to express whatever thoughts or feelings they might have regarding a particular topic, without imposing any constraints on them. Upon collating and coding the information obtained (from the five open ended questions) through content analysis, the researcher obtained subjective information that would not otherwise have been captured by the Website Evaluation Questionnaire. In addition to the open-ended questions pertaining to the informative content, various semantic differential scales were also incorporated to determine potential applicants' general appraisal of the content- and usability design of Websites A, B and C.

Section c – website usability questionnaire

Section C of the questionnaire focused on general website usability attributes that included:

- **Usefulness/Utility, Effectiveness and Efficiency:**
 - *usefulness* concerns the degree to which a product enables a user to achieve his or her goals and is an assessment of the user's motivation for using the product;
 - *utility* refers to the functionality (thus the value, worth and helpfulness) of the system;
 - *effectiveness* refers to the accuracy and completeness with which the system enables the user to achieve a goal or task; and
 - *efficiency* refers to the degree to which the system enables the user to complete the tasks in a timely, competent and economical fashion.

- **Ease of use:**
 - *general ease of use* refers to the effortless and user-friendliness of the system;
 - *consistency* refers to the ability of the system to respond to user inputs in a consistent way and to allow the user to perform similar tasks in similar ways;
 - *error management* refers to the degree to which the system/software application allows the user to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors; and
 - *compatibility* refers to the degree to which the system's method of operation matches the user's expectations based on their knowledge of other types of products and the 'outside world'.
- **User satisfaction:**
 - *satisfaction* refers to the level of comfort that the user feels when using a product and how acceptable the product is to the user as a vehicle for achieving his/her goals.

Reliability

A questionnaire has high reliability should it deliver the same result every time the same property is measured in the same way. Synonyms for reliability are repeatability, dependability, predictability and consistency, though formally reliability is defined as the extent to which a measured variable is free from random error (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Mitchell & Jolley, 1998; Stangor, 2004). Generally, the reliability of a measurement instrument is based on the extent of the similarity between the results obtained (from one measurement to a next) - the more similar the obtained results are, the more reliable the measurement instrument is (Reaves, 1992).

Different approaches (e.g. test-retest-, interrater-, alternate-form- or the internal consistency) are used to determine reliability. Most commonly, the internal consistency approach (i.e. calculating Cronbach's alpha), which investigates the extent to which the score on the items of a scale correlate with each other, is used. The reliability of the usability dimensions of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire was evaluated by calculating Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The results for each dimension (for each website measurement) are presented in table 3.7.

Table 0.7: Alpha coefficients for the usability dimensions of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire as measured for Website A, B and C

No. of Items	Usability Dimension	Website A	Website B	Website C
		Alpha	Alpha	Alpha
11	General Usefulness/Utility	.88	.89	.91
10	General Effectiveness	.87	.76	.84
5	Efficiency	.47	.65	.43
17	Ease of Use	.78	.92	.91
5	Consistency	.57	.80	.78
7	Error Management	.74	.81	.84
5	Compatibility	.55	.79	.74
8	User Satisfaction	.85	.84	.90

Theoretically, the coefficient alpha ranges from 0.00 (indicating that the measure is entirely error) to +1.00 (indicating that the measure has no error). Generally, reliability should never fall below 0.50, unless a very

short questionnaire is used. Scales with less than ten items commonly produce low Cronbach values, because these values are quite sensitive to the number of items in a scale (e.g. the efficiency-, consistency- and compatibility dimensions, which consisted of only five items). An alpha value of .7 or above is considered acceptable, however, the higher the score the better the evidence that items in the instrument are measuring the same trait (Babbie, 1995; Leedy, 1997; Reaves, 1992; Stangor, 2004).

Almost all of the usability dimensions achieved a reliability coefficient of .7 and above, providing evidence for the reliability of those sections of the measurement instrument (see table 3.7). However, not only did the efficiency dimension achieve a reliability coefficient below .7 across all three websites, but the alpha values for Website A and Website C, were also below .5. Upon examination of the efficiency dimension data of Websites A, B and C, the researcher was unable to locate any negative inter item correlations. The removal of those items with a low Cronbach alpha value that accounted for the low item-total correlation of the efficiency dimension was considered. However, since scales with less than 10 items, commonly produce low Cronbach values (such as the efficiency, consistency and compatibility dimension, which consists of only five items), the researcher refrained from removing any of the items and rather decided to ensure that the results for this scale were interpreted with caution.

Validity

Due to the descriptive nature and constraints faced in completing this study, it was not possible to pre-test the usability questionnaire. The study did however permit determining the face validity of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was therefore presented to a group of (a) subject experts, whom reported it to be, at face value, measuring the variables of interest; and (b) non-experts that reported the questions to be clearly worded and easily understood.

3.9 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data obtained from the various measurement instruments administered throughout this study, was analysed using version 7 of STATISTICA (StatSoft Inc, 2004). Chapter four provides a detailed description of the data analysis and the subsequent findings of this study.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This study is descriptive and exploratory by nature. By utilising survey research (self-administered questionnaires) website content- and usability design was investigated, which holds the potential to influence successful online applicant behaviour, a key determinant of an effective and successful online recruitment system.

To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of an organisational website as a recruitment method, benchmarks, for website content- and usability design that may increase a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour, were identified and validated. Based on the validated benchmarks, a Website Benchmarks Checklist was developed for the purpose of an audit, to investigate the status quo amongst a sample of South Africa's best employers' (according to the Corporate Research Foundation survey results) usage of their organisational website as part of their recruitment strategy. This chapter also

discussed the development of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire utilised for the subjective evaluation of Websites A, B and C by potential applicants.

In addition to the detailed discussion on the research process, design and the methodology employed within this study, this chapter also provided an in-depth description of the research problem and objectives. Within the following chapter a detailed description of the data analysis and the research findings obtained are reported.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Through conducting descriptive research, the primary aim of this study was to describe the extent to which the website design of the sample of SA organisations may contribute to its website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. In order to achieve this aim, self-administered questionnaires as a survey research method, were utilised. To audit the sample of websites, benchmarks that may contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour, and therein maximise an organisational website's effectiveness and efficiency as a recruitment method, were compiled from a survey of the relevant literature.

The identified benchmarks for website content- and usability design are at the core of this study. It constituted the basis upon which (a) a checklist of website content- and usability design benchmarks was developed, (b) an audit of a sample of SA organisational websites was conducted and (c) three websites were subjectively evaluated by potential applicants. In this chapter, a detailed report of the findings of this study is presented in a systematic and logical order. The layout of the chapter follows the sequential order of the research process (see figure 4.1) and is structured to provide a logical exposition of the research goals and the attainment thereof.

4.2 RESULTS: THE WEBSITE BENCHMARKS QUESTIONNAIRE

As illustrated in figure 4.1, phase one of this study, entailed the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks, to facilitate the development of the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire.

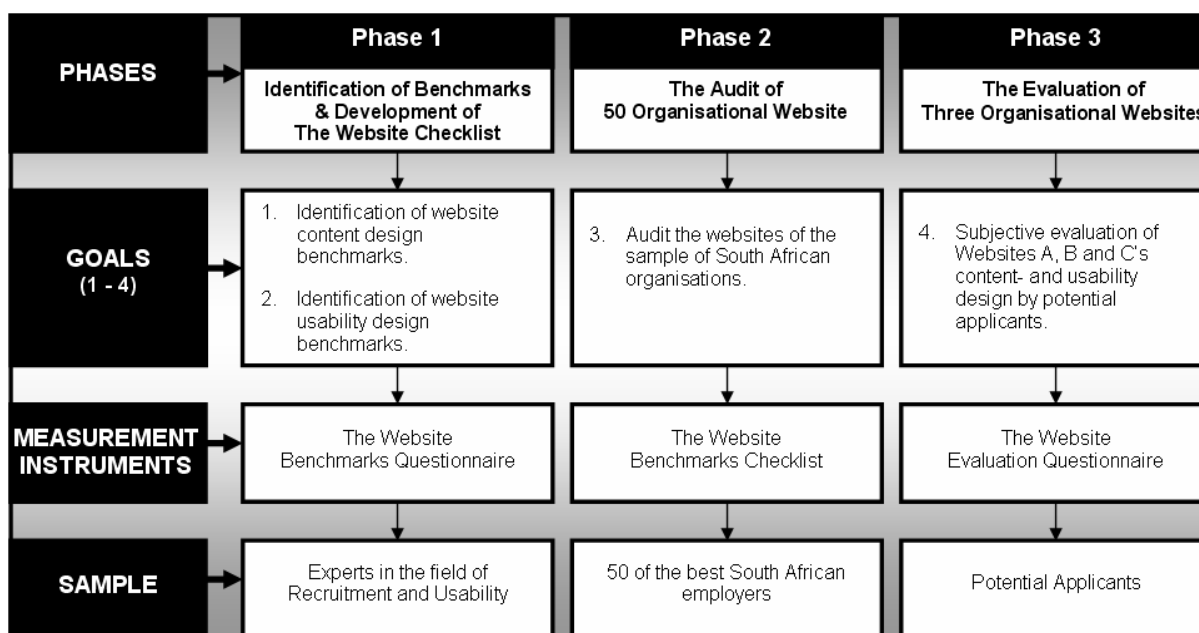


Figure 0.12: Review of the research process, samples and questionnaires utilised

The two goals specified to be achieved in phase one, were:

- **Goal 1:** The identification of organisational website content design benchmarks that would contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.
- **Goal 2:** The identification of organisational website usability design benchmarks that would contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.

Upon attainment of the above-mentioned two goals and their interrelated objectives (see chapters two and three), the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire was constructed and subjected to Lawshe's (1975) content validation technique. The development of the questionnaire (see appendix B), the sample of usability- and recruitment experts employed in the validation process, as well as the final results obtained, have been addressed in section 3.8.2. Based on the results of the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire, as discussed in section 3.8.2, the Website Benchmarks Checklist was constructed (see section 3.8.3 and appendix C), which constituted the third and final objective of phase one (see section 3.8.3).

4.3 RESULTS: WEBSITE BENCHMARKS CHECKLIST

4.3.1 Introduction

As illustrated in figure 4.1, phase two of this study entailed an audit of the websites of a random sample (n=50) of the best 69 employers in South Africa (according to the Corporate Research Foundation's 2005 survey). The results pertaining to the following objectives are presented in this section:

- **Objective 1:** Determine the extent to which the sample of South African organisations uses their websites as a recruitment method to advertise employment opportunities;
- **Objective 2:** Determine the extent to which those South African organisations that use their websites as a recruitment method and at the time of the investigation had vacancies advertised, incorporate the identified content- and usability design benchmarks; and
- **Objective 3:** Select three websites (for further analysis), one from each of the three percentiles (top, average and bottom) that the sample was divided into, based on the combined audit findings (i.e. the result of the extent to which the website content-and usability benchmarks was adhered to).

4.3.2 Results: online recruitment via organisational websites

The first two items (Sa1Q1 & Sa1Q2) in the Website Content Benchmarks Checklist (see table 3.6 and section 3.8.3) were qualifying questions. In addition to addressing objective one of the audit, the qualifying questions also served as a filtering mechanism, which enabled the researcher to limit the sample for the remainder of the audit to only those websites that advertised vacancies available at the time of the study.

As shown in table 4.1, the results revealed that:

- 41(82%) of the surveyed organisations (n=50) utilise their website as a recruitment method to advertise employment opportunities; and
- 35 (70%) had available employment opportunities listed on their website.

Table 0.8: Frequency table for item one and two (qualifying questions) of Section A of the Website Benchmarks Checklist

SECTION A		WEBSITES		YES		NO	
		Count		Count	%	Count	%
1. General Information							
Sa1Q1	Employment opportunities/vacancies are advertised on the organisational website (Potential applicants are provided with a link directing them to employment opportunities/vacancies within the organisation).	50		41	82	9	18
Sa1Q2	There is available employment opportunities/vacancies currently listed on the website.	50		35	70	15	30

Discussion

From the results, it is evident that the majority of the sample, employs their organisational website as a recruitment method to advertise employment opportunities. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory states that the adoption of new technology is divided into segments, starting with 'innovators' moving through 'early adopters', 'early majority', 'late majority' and finally 'laggards' (iLogos Research, 2003; Mowen, 1990; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Since the sample of SA organisations surveyed, are at the forefront of incorporating new strategies, especially in the field of recruitment, selection and human resources (Corporate Research Foundation; 2005), these organisations are most likely to be classified as innovators and early adopters of new technologies and strategies. Based on the results, it appears that the sample have progressed through the 'late majority' phase, and is now only waiting for the 'laggards', to adopt this strategy. It is therefore concluded that the majority of the sample have redirected their recruitment strategy to incorporate the Internet, through online recruitment via their organisational website.

4.3.3 Results: audit data obtained from the evaluators

Two evaluators audited the sample of 50 organisational websites independently. Based on the second qualifying question (Sa1Q2), 15 websites were eliminated from the remainder of the study. Hence, the sample was limited to those 35 websites that had vacancies advertised at the time of the audit. Upon completion of the website audit, the data obtained from both the evaluators on all the checklist items were compared, in order to determine the variation in their findings (see table 4.2).

To determine the variance between the data received from both evaluators the number of inconsistent answers for each item on the checklist was calculated. By summing the inconsistencies detected over 35 websites, a total score for each item was calculated as illustrated in table 4.2 under the heading "discrepancy" [e.g. for item Sb1Q2, only one inconsistency was identified between the findings of both evaluators across all 35 websites). Each item's total score of inconsistencies was then converted to a percentage value, (i.e. Sb1Q2 with a total score of 1; $1/35 \times 100 = 2.86\% = 3\%$). The average inconsistency per checklist section was calculated by summing the percentage value of each item's total score of inconsistencies of either Section A or Section B, and dividing it by the number of items on the respective section of the Website Benchmarks Checklist.

Based on the calculations that compared the audit data, received from both evaluators (see table 4.2), it was evident that the average inconsistency on the Website Usability Benchmarks Checklist was 6%, whereas a

slightly higher average inconsistency of 9% existed on the Website Content Benchmarks Checklist. The inverse of the average inconsistencies is the consistency between the findings of both evaluators, which was 94% for the usability section and 91% for the content section. Thus, based on the consistency of the audit data obtained from the evaluators, the researcher concluded that the data was a reliable reflection of the sample's compliance with the checklist items.

Table 0.9: Per item variation between evaluators' audit data

THE WEBSITE BENCHMARKS CHECKLIST					
Section A Website Content Benchmarks Checklist			Section B Website Usability Benchmarks Checklist		
Item	Discrepancy	Percentage	Item	Discrepancy	Percentage
SA1 Q1	-	-	SB1 Q1	-	-
SA1 Q2	-	-	SB1 Q2	1	3%
SA1 Q3	6	17%	SB1 Q3	-	-
SA1 Q4	5	14%	SB1 Q4	7	20%
SA1 Q5	-	-	SB1 Q5	7	20%
SA1 Q6	-	-	SB1 Q6	4	11%
SA1 Q7	1	3%	SB1 Q7	-	-
SA1 Q8	1	3%	SB1 Q8	2	6%
SA1 Q9	2	6%	SB1 Q9	3	9%
SA1 Q10	3	9%	SB1 Q10	1	3%
SA1 Q11	1	3%	SB1 Q11	1	3%
SA1 Q12	1	3%	SB1 Q12	-	-
SA1 Q13	3	9%	SB1 Q13	1	3%
SA1 Q14	5	14%	SB1 Q14	5	14%
SA1 Q15	4	11%	SB1 Q15	1	3%
SA1 Q16	3	9%	SB2 Q16	-	-
SA1 Q17	1	3%	SB2 Q17	-	-
SA1 Q18	7	20%	SB3 Q18	8	23%
SA2 Q19	4	11%	SB3 Q19	1	3%
SA2 Q20	8	23%	SB3 Q20	-	-
SA2 Q21	9	26%	SB3 Q21	5	14%
SA3 Q22	-	-	SB3 Q22	-	-
SA3 Q23	-	-	SB3 Q23	5	14%
SA3 Q24	7	20%	SB4 Q24	3	9%
SA3 Q25	11	31%	SB4 Q25	4	11%
			SB4 Q26	4	11%
			SB4 Q27	4	11%
			SB5 Q28	1	3%
			SB5 Q29	-	-
			SB5 Q30	3	9%
			SB5 Q31	-	-
			SB5 Q32	-	-
			SB5 Q33	2	6%
			SB5 Q34	0	-
			SB5 Q35	1	3%
			SB5 Q36	1	3%
			SB5 Q37	-	-
			SB5 Q38	-	-
			SB5 Q39	3	9%
Maximum difference		31%	Maximum difference		23%
Minimum difference		0%	Minimum difference		0%
Average difference		9%	Average difference		6%

However, since the second objective of the website audit entailed determining the extent to which the sample comply with the recommended website content- and usability design benchmarks, the identified inconsistencies had to be addressed, to ensure that a true reflection of the sample's compliance was provided. Hence, both evaluators revisited the checklist items and subsequent websites in question, in order to obtain a consensus, which enabled the researcher to address the second objective of the website audit, with data upon which both evaluators agree.

4.3.4 Results: website content benchmarks checklist

The second objective of phase two of this study, was to determine the extent to which the identified website content- and usability design benchmarks has been incorporated by the sample of websites (n=35), that advertised vacancies at the time of the audit (see table 4.3).

Table 0.10: Audit results - Website Content Benchmarks Checklist

WEBSITE CONTENT BENCHMARKS		WEB-SITES	YES		NO	
		Count	Count	%	Count	%
Section A1: General and Employment Information						
1. General Information						
Sa1Q1	Employment opportunities/vacancies are advertised on the organisational website (Potential applicants are provided with a link directing them to employment opportunities/vacancies within the organisation).	50	41	82	9	18
Sa1Q2	There is available employment opportunities/vacancies currently listed on the website.	50	35	70	15	30
If employment opportunities/vacancies are listed on the website, please continue completing Questions 3 – 18.						
Sa1Q3	The list of employment opportunities is updated on a regular basis (implying that those employment opportunities which closing date has expired are removed from the list of employment opportunities).	35	25	71	10	29
Sa1Q4	It is clearly stated if a position within the organisation is subject to the organisation's Employment Equity Policy.	35	19	54	16	46
2. Job Description						
Sa1Q5	A general description (or job description) of each position posted on the organisational website is available.	35	31	89	4	11
Sa1Q6	The title of the available position is clearly mentioned in the job description.	35	32	91	3	9
The job description specifies what:						
Sa1Q7	Responsibilities the employment opportunity entails.	35	30	86	5	14
Sa1Q8	Abilities the position requires.	35	29	83	6	17
Sa1Q9	Credentials (qualifications) are a prerequisite.	35	30	86	5	14
Sa1Q10	Experience is required by the available position.	35	29	83	6	17
Sa1Q11	The location of the employment opportunity is (i.e. Stellenbosch).	35	28	80	7	20
3. Application Details						
The organisational website provides potential applicants with:						
Sa1Q12	Instructions on how to submit an online application form.	35	28	80	7	20
Sa1Q13	Instructions on how/where to e-mail an application.	35	9	26	26	74
Sa1Q14	Information on how to apply through alternative channels such as via fax or (snail) mail.	35	8	23	27	77
Sa1Q15	Information concerning the preferred channel (online applications, e-mail, fax or snail mail) for receiving applications.	35	29	83	6	17
Sa1Q16	The closing date for submitting applications for each employment opportunity that is being made available.	35	25	71	10	29
Sa1Q17	A "Contact" link (e.g. Contact Us) directing potential applicants to information on how to contact the organisation.	35	34	97	1	3
Sa1Q18	An e-mail address to contact the organisation if they have any questions or additional information needs.	35	24	69	11	31
Section A2: Privacy Policy						
Sa2Q19	A privacy policy is available on the organisational website.	35	27	77	8	23
If YES, please continue completing Questions 20 & 21.						
Sa2Q20	The privacy policy on the website cites recruiting as the specific purpose for gathering personal information of potential applicants.	27	17	63	10	37
Sa2Q21	The privacy policy posted on the organisational website specifically cites how the collected information will be used.	27	21	78	6	22
Section A3: Organisational Culture						
Sa3Q22	Potential applicants are provided with a link directing them to information about the organisation.	35	35	100	-	-
If YES, please continue completing Questions 23 – 25						
The organisational culture is explained to potential applicants through the provision of:						
Sa2Q23	Information touching on the organisation's line of work.	35	35	100	-	-
Sa2Q24	The values of the organisation.	35	27	77	8	23
Sa2Q25	Information touching on the organisations employment philosophy.	35	21	60	14	40

Presented in table 4.3, are the results pertaining to the content design, which focused on:

- **General and employment information.** This section of the checklist consisted of three sub-sections, which focused on (a) general information, (b) job description, and (c) application details. In order to complete these sub-sections, the evaluators were instructed to locate and familiarise themselves with all the information available on one of the advertised employment opportunities and how to apply (submit an application) for the position. As previously discussed and illustrated in table 4.3, the first two items (Sa1Q1 and Q2) were qualifying questions, based on which only 70% (35 websites) of the original sample of 50 websites, were subjected to the remainder of the audit.
- **Privacy policy.** Evaluators were required to locate and familiarise themselves with the website's privacy policy in order to complete this section. As shown in table 4.3, item 19 (Sa2Q19) was a qualifying question incorporated into the Website Benchmarks Checklist. The results obtained revealed that only 77% of the sample provided a privacy policy, hence, only 27 websites (77%) were subjected to the two remaining privacy policy benchmark items of the checklist.
- **Organisational culture.** Evaluators had to locate information concerning the organisation and its culture, prior the completion of this section. Based on item Sa3Q22 (qualifying question), all the websites (100%) provided a link, directing potential applicants to information concerning the organisation (see table 4.3). Therefore, all 35 websites were subjected to the remaining three benchmark items.

4.3.5 Results: website usability benchmarks checklist

The evaluators were not required to complete any task or browse the website further, prior to the evaluation of the usability design, as the specified content evaluation tasks were sufficient exposure to complete the audit effectively. As shown in table 4.4, section B of the Website Benchmarks Checklist, comprised of five sub-sections, which included:

- **Screen design;** which focused on the layout of each webpage in terms of:
 - the proper allocation of space for the display of functions and the content on a webpage (space provision);
 - the colour scheme employed throughout a website;
 - maximising website visitors' ability to read the content of a website (readability); and
 - the scannability of the website's content.
- **Accessibility;** which centred around the ability to establish a stable online connection and the speed at which the website was downloaded;
- **Navigability;** which entailed the ease with which the users were able to find their way around the website, without getting disoriented or lost;
- **Error management;** which referred to the degree to which the system/software application enabled the user to identify, diagnose and rectify errors. Based on item Sb4Q24 (qualifying question), only four websites (11%) produced an error message(s) at the time of the audit. Hence, only these four websites were subjected to the remaining three error management benchmark items; and
- **Consistency;** focused on the underlying design of the website, which should be reoccurring, repeated, consistent and unify all the webpages into one coherent website.

Table 0.11: Audit results - Website Usability Benchmarks Checklist

THE WEBSITE USABILITY BENCHMARKS		WEB-SITES	YES		NO	
		Count	Count	%	Count	%
SECTION B1: Screen Design						
1. Space Allocation						
Sb1Q1	On the homepage, there is an index, table of contents, or some other clear indicator of the content of the website.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb1Q2	The most important information on each webpage is presented in the first screen potential applicants are provided with (you do not need to scroll down in search for such information).	35	34	97	1	3
2. Choice of Colour						
Sb1Q3	Sharp colour contrast exists between the text and the background colour(s) that are used (e.g. black on white).	35	34	97	1	3
Sb1Q4	A clear discernable and/or less saturated colour is used to indicate (hyper) links in text.	35	31	89	4	11
Sb1Q5	The colour of the (hyper) links in text indicates their status as visited or unvisited (E.g. visited Blue links change to Grey links).	35	10	29	25	71
3. Readability						
Sb1Q6	Different text sizes are used to enable users to differentiate between title headings and text on each webpage.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb1Q7	When text appears on the screen, both uppercase and lowercase letters are used instead of all capitals.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb1Q8	The same textual visual theme in terms of font, size and colour are repeated throughout the website.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb1Q9	Critical elements such as the logo of the organisation on each webpage are not animated.	35	33	94	2	6
Sb1Q10	The main headline of each webpage is not animated.	35	35	100	-	-
4. Scannability						
Sb1Q11	The user is able to quickly determine the basic content/purpose of the website.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb1Q12	Each webpage is labelled with a clear title/heading to indicate what information is about to follow.	35	34	97	1	3
Sb1Q13	Clear and meaningful headings and sub headings appear in the text.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb1Q14	Links within the text are underlined.	35	29	83	6	17
Sb1Q15	The links used on the website is clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	35	34	97	1	3
SECTION B2: Accessibility						
Loading Speed						
Sb2Q16	Were you able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website?	35	35	100	-	-
Sb2Q17	In the rendering of a whole webpage, the most informative and important items (such as the text) become visible first, while the rest of the page (such as the images) was loading?	35	35	100	-	-
SECTION B3: Navigation						
Sb3Q18	The menu or list of content is available on every webpage of the website.	35	27	77	8	23
Sb3Q19	The meaning of icons, buttons, and symbols is in tune with the cognitive map of the potential applicant (e.g. video camera representing a video clip or envelope representing e-mail).	35	34	97	1	3
Sb3Q20	As the user of the website, are you able to tell "Where you are".	35	34	97	1	3
Sb3Q21	As the user of the website, are you able to tell "Where you can go".	35	32	91	3	9
Sb3Q22	Does the website provide you with useful visual feedback when a button / hyperlink is selected / clicked on?	35	35	100	-	-
Sb3Q23	All links accessed on the website is accurate in taking the potential applicant to his/her intended destination.	35	31	89	4	11
SECTION B4: Error Management						
Sb4Q24	While browsing, did the website produce any error messages?	35	4	11	31	89
If you were presented with an error message, please answer the following questions.						
Sb4Q25	The error message(s) was written in a clear understandable manner.	4	3	75	1	25
Sb4Q26	The error message(s) diagnosed the source and the cause of the problem.	4	3	75	1	25
Sb4Q27	The error message(s) indicated what action needed to be taken to solve the problem.	4	1	25	3	75

Table 4.4: (continued)

THE WEBSITE USABILITY BENCHMARKS		WEB-SITES	YES		NO	
		Count	Count	%	Count	%
SECTION B5: Consistency						
Sb5Q28	The website effectively repeats visual themes to unify the website.	35	33	94	2	6
A consistent page layout is used throughout the website in terms of:						
Sb5Q29	Screen size for content display.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb5Q30	Position of navigational elements (e.g. the menu bar/list of contents).	35	32	91	3	9
Sb5Q31	Layout for titles and subtitles.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb5Q32	Page footers.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb5Q33	Background.	35	31	89	4	11
Text is consistently used throughout the website in terms of text:						
Sb5Q34	Font.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb5Q35	Size.	35	34	97	1	3
Sb5Q36	Colour.	35	33	94	2	6
Consistent use of navigational aids (e.g. the menu bar, buttons and links) throughout the website in terms of its:						
Sb5Q37	Font.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb5Q38	Size.	35	35	100	-	-
Sb5Q39	Colour.	35	31	89	4	11

4.3.6 Overall audit results

Compliance with content- and usability benchmarks

Upon completion of the audit, two total scores, that represented the extent to which each website complied with either the content- or usability design benchmarks (objective 2), for each of the 35 websites were calculated. This was achieved by summing the ratings of each website, divided by the number of items (i.e. content section – 25 items; usability section 39 items) on the respective section of the Website Benchmarks Checklist.

Table 0.12: Website percentile placement based on audit results

ORIGINAL WEBSITE PERCENTILE PLACEMENT						
	Bottom Percentile (0% - 33%)		Average Percentile (34% - 67%)		Top Percentile (68% - 100%)	
	Website Count	Sample %	Website Count	Sample %	Website Count	Sample %
Calculated total scores based on:						
Content benchmarks checklist	2 websites	6%	10 websites	28%	23 websites	66%
Usability benchmarks checklist	-	-	-	-	35 websites	100%
Content & usability benchmarks checklist	-	-	2 websites	6%	33 websites	94%
WEBSITE PLACEMENT WITHIN ADJUSTED PERCENTILES						
	Bottom Percentile (53% - 68%)		Average Percentile (69% - 84%)		Top Percentile (85% - 100%)	
	Website Count	Sample %	Website Count	Sample %	Website Count	Sample %
Calculated total score based on:						
Content & usability benchmarks checklist	2 websites	6%	14 websites	40%	19 websites	54%
Percentile placement of Website A, B & C	Website A		Website C		Website B	
Calculated total score of website A, B & C	53%		84%		88%	

As shown in table 4.5, the total scores calculated for each of the 35 websites based on the Website Content Checklist, indicated that:

- the availability of content on two-thirds (66%) of the websites, may facilitate more successful online applicant behaviour as the calculated total scores of these websites ranged from 71% to 90%, which effectively positioned them in the top percentile (67% – 100%) of the sample;
- only two of the websites (6%) were positioned in the ‘bottom percentile’ of the sample, due to their total scores (19% and 32%) being less than 33%; and
- the total scores (ranging from 52% to 67%) of the remaining ten websites (28%) positioned them in the ‘average percentile’ (34% - 67%).

The range of the total scores, based on the Website Usability Checklist, indicated that the usability of all the websites might increase the website’s ability to facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour (table 4.5). Not one of the 35 usability total scores attained was below 80%. Six websites obtained total scores ranging from 80% to 89%, whilst five websites attained a perfect 100%. The remaining 24 ranged between 91% and 98%. Based on the total scores for the usability of the websites, the entire sample was positioned in the ‘top percentile’ (67% - 100%).

Discussion

As a second objective of the audit, the extent of compliance of current online recruitment website design, with the validated content- and usability benchmarks, were investigated. Thirty-five organisational websites with listed vacancies were included in the audit. The total scores calculated for these websites, based on their compliance with the usability benchmarks, ranged from 80% to 100%. Hence, it may be concluded that the usability of all the websites have the potential to facilitate more successful online applicant behaviour. For example, it may facilitate the effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction, related to the presentation of the informative content, experienced by the potential applicants. This should then enable more effortless and user-friendly interaction in gaining access to the informative content (be the potential applicant), in order to make an informed decision pertaining to the advertised employment opportunity and the suitability of the organisation as a potential employer.

However, the results on the compliance with the content benchmarks were not as favourable as the sample’s compliance with the usability benchmarks. Based on their compliance with the content benchmarks, only two third of the sample were positioned in the top percentile with total scores ranging from 71% to 90% (see table 4.5). It is therefore concluded that the content design of the majority of the websites (i.e. 66% in the top percentile), may be conducive to the facilitation of more successful online applicant behaviour. However, based on the extent to which the websites adhere to the benchmarks, the opportunity to improve their website’s content design still exist, should these organisations desire to maximise their websites’ potential as a recruitment method. The total scores of the remaining 33% of the websites were located in the average- and bottom percentile, ranging from 19% to 67%. Hence, to varying degrees, the content design of a third of the sample fails to provide potential applicants with the recommend information. Consequently, these websites fail (to a certain degree) to assist potential applicants with their decision-making process and may therefore not effectively be facilitating successful online applicant behaviour. These findings suggest that a number of the organisations may still be in the process of recognising the potential of employing their organisational website as a recruitment method, as well as how to maximise the potential of this recruitment

method. At this stage, it would seem that they are somewhat unsuccessful at recognising and maximising the potential of their organisational website, employed as a recruitment method.

Website selection

The third objective of the website audit, entailed the selection of one website from each of the three percentiles (top, average and bottom) of the sample, calculated in the previous section. Consequently, a single total score, representative of each website's compliance with both the content- and usability benchmarks, had to be calculated.

Upon summing each website's content – and usability checklist total scores and converting it to a percentage value, a significant change in the range of the final scores was apparent (as shown in table 4.5). Not one of the websites was positioned in the 'bottom percentile', only two (total score of 53% and 65%) in the 'average percentile', whilst the total scores of the remainder of the sample (which ranged from 73% to 94%) positioned them in the top percentile (68% - 100%).

Henceforth, an adjustment of the interval percentile (i.e. 15%), were calculated. As a result, the bottom percentile (53% to 68%) contained only two websites, whilst the average percentile (69% to 84%) contained 14 and the top percentile (85% to 100%) contained 19 websites. Next, one website from each of the three adjusted percentiles, was randomly selected (see table 4.5). Website A was selected from the bottom percentile, Website B from the top percentile; however, some difficulty was encountered with the selection of a website from the 'average percentile'. In some cases the vacancies, listed at the time of the audit, had expired and were removed or would have expired whilst respondents had to complete the survey. Hence, Website C [which was the best-ranked website (84%) in the average percentile], was selected, since its advertised vacancies suited the time frame for the evaluation.

4.4 RESULTS: WEBSITE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

4.4.1 Introduction

The third phase of this study entailed (see figure 4.1) the subjective evaluation of the content- and usability design of the three selected organisational websites (i.e. Websites A, B and C). The following section presents the results of the subjective evaluation conducted by a sample of potential applicants (goal 4).

The evaluation was conducted with the Website Evaluation Questionnaire (appendix D), which provided respondents (n=36) with a detailed set of instructions, specifying tasks to be executed on each website, prior to completion of the questionnaire. In addition to locating and familiarising themselves with any employment opportunity advertised on the website, they were also instructed to locate and read all available information pertaining to applying for the position, contact details, privacy policy and the organisational culture. Three objectives related to this part of the study were formulated. They included to:

- **Objective 1:** Determine potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions (subjective measurements) regarding Websites A, B and C's content design for recruitment purposes;
- **Objective 2:** Determine potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions (subjective measurements) regarding the general usability of Websites A, B and C; and

- **Objective 3:** Explore whether a similarity exists between potential applicants' subjective evaluation of each of the three selected websites and their percentile placement (top, average and bottom) based on the results of the audit.

The evaluation of Websites A, B and C, is a repeated measure design, since the same respondents (potential applicants) and measurement instrument were used. According to Stangor (2004), if respondents are able to guess the research hypothesis, they might change their responses according to what they think it is the researcher desire. The possibility therefore existed that if the websites were presented in the exact same sequence of their percentile placement (e.g. top, average and bottom or visa-versa), respondents may have been able to guess the sequence and adjust their responses accordingly. In an effort to counter balance this potential problem, the order in which the three websites were presented to the respondents were changed. As shown in table 4.5, Website A was selected from the 'bottom percentile', Website B from the 'top percentile' and Website C from the 'average percentile'.

Presented within the following sections are the research findings of potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions of the three websites. The findings are presented in five sections. In the first section a brief description of the biographical profile of the sample are provided. The second section focuses on the evaluation of Website A and the results obtained pertaining to the content- (objective 1) and usability design (objective 2) evaluations. Similar to the structure of the second section, the evaluation results obtained for Websites B and C are presented in the third and fourth sections. In section five, the third objective is addressed through a comparative review of the findings pertaining to the three websites and that of the audit.

4.5 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 36 final year- and post-graduate students, all from the same tertiary institution in the Western Cape. Every student had access to the Internet via a network connection provided by the institution. This ensured consistency in terms of the Internet connection employed by the sample for the evaluation of Websites A, B and C. The gender composition of the sample reflected slightly more female (53%) than male respondents, with a mean age of 24 years ($SD = 1.6$). The academic qualifications of the sample reflected a high educational standard, since 56% of the sample had obtained a 'bachelor's degree or equivalent' and 25% had obtained an 'honours degree or equivalent'. The fact that the sample mainly consisted of 'final year students, actively searching for employment' (78%) and 'employed, but part-time students' (22%), ensured that respondents had a pre-existing framework of what information it is that they seek and consider pertinent to their decision to submit an application. Consequently, the sample (which consisted of active- and passive job seekers) was deemed suitable to evaluate the content design of Websites A, B and C.

The mean age of 24 ($SD = 1.6$), positioned the sample within the Net-generation (individuals born between 1977 and 1997), which is generally not only comfortable with computers, but computers are also a

* Note: All calculations were limited to four decimals numbers, but for presentation-purposes within this chapter, all percentages were rounded off to the nearest 10th of a percentage (no decimals). Hence, the sum of the percentages on a number of items (presented in the frequency tables to follow), will vary from 99%, 100% or 101%.

fundamental aspect of their every day lives in terms of how they work, learn, play, communicate, socialise and even shop (Leung, 2003). In accordance with the Net-generation description, 92% of the sample indicated 'work related and personal activities' to be the main reason behind their computer usage and 97% reported using computers on a daily basis. In addition to describing themselves as computer literate (i.e. 72% are able to perform complex operations on a computer), 67% of the sample reported browsing the Internet on a daily basis. With regards to the amount of time spend on the Internet per week, 19% indicated 5 hours and more, only 8% reported less than one hour and the remaining 73% were positioned between one and five hours.

Thus far its been established that in addition to actively searching for employment opportunities and being computer literate, the majority of the sample also uses computers on a daily basis and browses the Internet to varying frequencies on a weekly basis. Therefore, in addition to exploring respondents' media source(s) preferences (e.g. magazines, websites, newspapers and classifieds), the final component of the biographical questionnaire section, contained questions pertaining to previous exposure and Internet usage behaviour related to online advertised employment opportunities. [Note: The frequencies obtained on each of the biographical dimensions are provided in appendix E].

The results of the 'current media usage profile' questions revealed that all the respondents (100%) indicated that they frequently use specialised jobsites when searching for employment opportunities. The second most employed media source was 'organisational websites' (94%); followed by 'word of mouth' (92%) and traditional hardcopy 'newspapers and classifieds' (89%) (figure 4.2). However, upon presenting respondents with the scenario of all media sources being readily available in their search for employment opportunities, the ranking of the four most preferred media sources reflected the exact same preference as their current usage (figure 4.3). The most preferred source was 'specialised jobsite' (83%), followed by 'organisational websites' (78%). 'word of mouth' was ranked in third position (70%), followed by 'newspapers and classifieds' as their fourth preferred media source (68%).

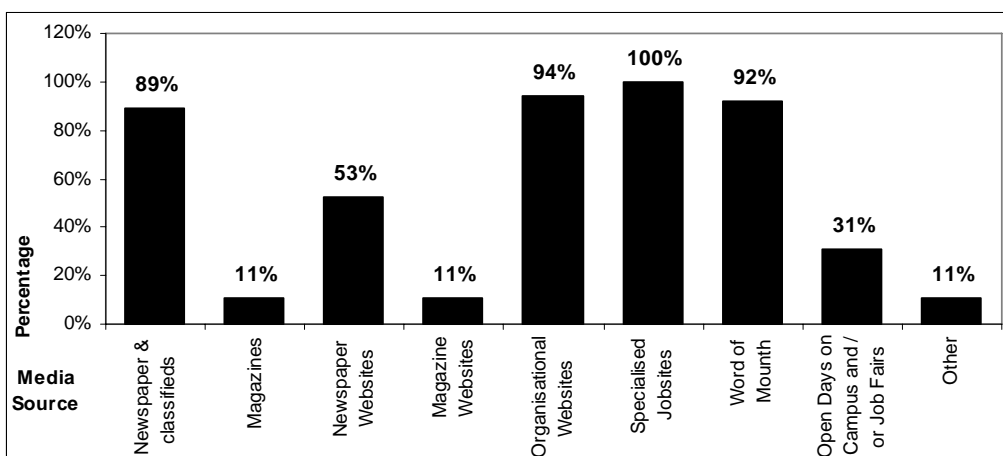


Figure 0.13: Sample's current media usage profile

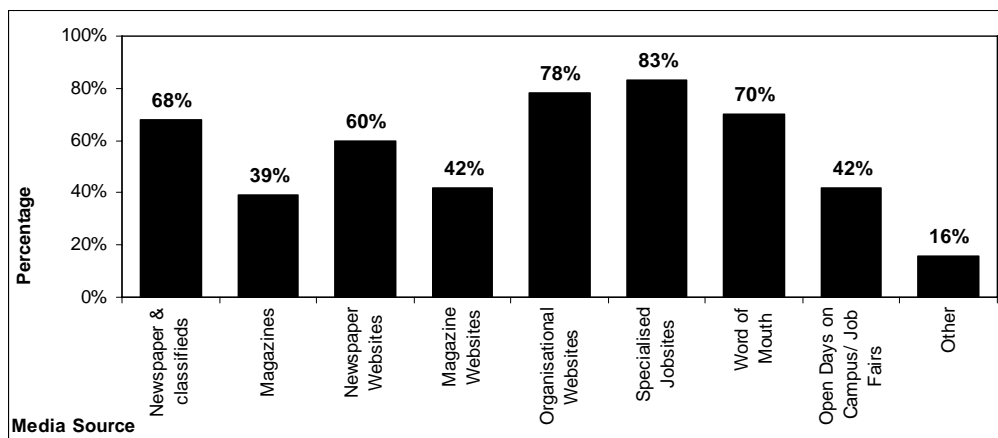


Figure 0.14: Sample's preferred media usage profile

The feedback obtained pertaining to respondents' preferred and current media usage profile is extremely valuable. Not only does it provide insight into the search methods employed by the sample, but it is also an indication of the importance of an online presence (e.g. organisational website or advertising on specialised job sites). Since organisational websites are the second most used and preferred media source consulted for employment opportunities and career related information, it is most likely that the it will be the 'first contact' that the potential applicant have with the organisation as a potential employer. This confirms the importance of ensuring a satisfying 'first experience' (through adequate content and usability design) in order to maximise the organisation's attractiveness as an employer, as well as its ability to convince potential applicants of its suitability as an employer.

The results pertaining to the sample' online behaviour in terms of searching for employment opportunities and submitting applications, revealed the following.

- **Internet:** To varying degrees, almost the entire sample (94%) reported that they had used the Internet previously to search for employment opportunities (figure 4.4). The application channels most often used by 72% of the sample (that had applied for an employment opportunity that they located on the Internet), included e-mail (64%), the online application function provided (42%) and traditional channels (17%) (figure 4.5).
- **Organisational websites:** The majority of the respondents (84%) reported that they had previously browsed organisational websites; specifically in search of employment opportunities (figure 4.6). The application channels used by those respondents that have previously applied for a vacancy advertised on an organisational website, generally included e-mail (61%) and/or the online application function available (47%) (see figure 4.7).
- **Application channel:** The majority (91%) of the respondents indicated 'e-mail' to be their most preferred channel for the submission of an application, whereas their least preferred channel was 'snail mail' (30%). The 'online application function', was rated second (79%), followed by 'fax' (50%).

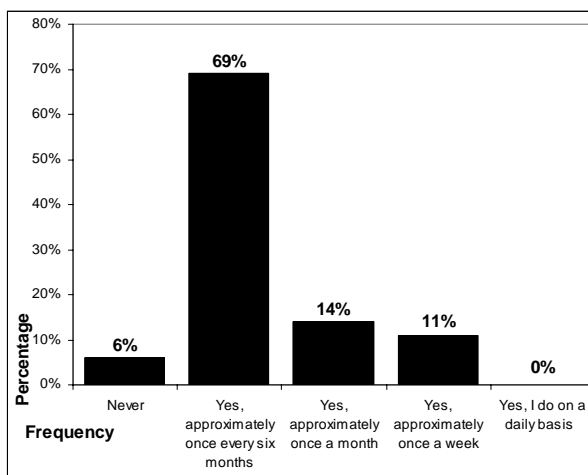


Figure 0.15: Frequency of browsing the Internet for employment opportunities

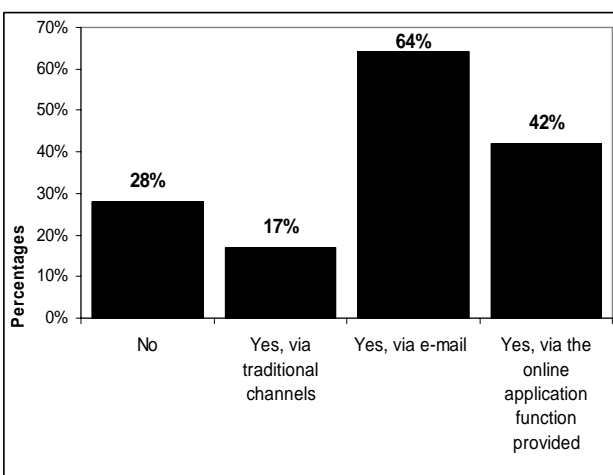


Figure 0.16: Applied for an employment opportunity advertised on the Internet

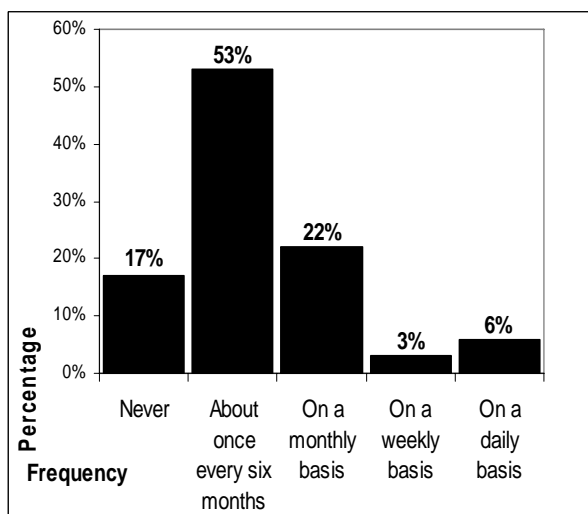


Figure 0.17: Frequency browsing organisational website for employment opportunities

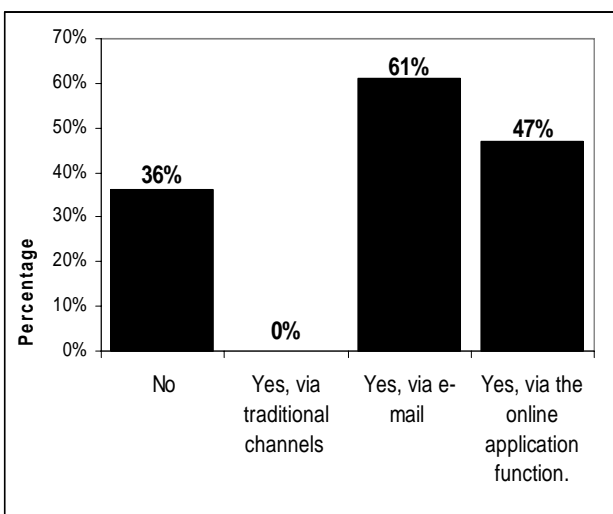


Figure 0.18: Applied for an employment opportunity advertised on an organisational website

4.6 RESULTS: WEBSITE A

4.6.1 Content evaluation and general appraisal of website A (bottom percentile)

The following section provides a description of the findings obtained from Section B of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire. It focused on potential applicants' (n=36) evaluation of Website A's content design for recruitment purposes (i.e. data gathered with open-ended questions), but also included a semantic differential scale, aimed at determining potential applicants' general appraisal of Website A's content- and usability design (see figure 4.8 and tables 4.6 and 4.7).

Content design evaluation of website A

Responses on the following five questions were gathered:

- is there any additional information (which is not provided on the website), which you as a potential applicant consider essential in your decision to apply for an advertised vacancy/employment opportunity?

- while browsing the website, were you able to acquire specific information and/or an idea of what the organisational culture of the particular organisation entails?
- would you feel confident and secure about disclosing personal information online via the website to the organisation?
- did you use the “search function” to locate any information on the website?
- will you continue to visit Websites A, B, or C, in your search for employment opportunities? (Respondents were instructed not to base their decision on the attractiveness of the specific employment opportunity explored, but rather on the general satisfaction and usefulness of the website as a tool to research potential employment opportunities and the organisation as a future employer).

Firstly, the responses for each of the five open-ended questions were collated, in order to identify various coding categories. Then the free-format data (responses) were condensed by systematically dividing it into the identified categories. Based on the responses (see table 4.6), the following results are reported.

- **Additional information needs:** The majority (89%) of the respondents indicated that they consider the information available on Website A as insufficient. When asked to list which additional information should be provided, the area of information most frequently listed by respondents centred around a more detailed ‘job description’ (81%). Amongst the most commonly cited information, that Website A neglected to provide, was the geographical location of the employment opportunity (69%), salary and benefits information (67%), the closing date by which applications have to be submitted (67%) and the ‘skills and abilities’ (53%) required.
- **Organisational culture:** Although all respondents indicated that they were able to locate information concerning the organisation’s culture, 58% indicated that the information available was insufficient.
- **Disclosure of personal information:** The majority (69%) of the respondents reported that they would not feel confident or secure about disclosing their personal information online via Website A. A quarter of the respondents listed the absence of a confidentially statement/privacy policy as the main deterrent, whereas 42% cited that they do not trust the organisation due to its inability to provide them with the necessary and desired information.
- **Search function usage:** The majority of the respondents (97%) reported not using the search function to locate information. Slightly less than a third (33%) indicated that the layout of the website was user-friendly, which enabled them to locate the desired information without the use of the search function.
- **Revisit Website A for potential employment opportunities:** The majority (81%) of the respondents indicated that they would not return to Website A in their search for employment opportunities. Slightly less than two thirds (61%) of the respondents cited Website A’s inability to provide the desired information, whereas 31% reported that the unfavourable manner in which the organisation, as a potential employer was projected, to be the main deterrent for not revisiting the website.
- **Revisit Website B for potential employment opportunities:** The majority (97%) of the respondents indicate that they would continue to visit the website. The reason most frequently provided, related to website characteristics (86%) such as providing up-to-date information, being informative and easy to use. Two-thirds (66%) indicated that if all other websites were as informative, innovative and thorough as Website B, they would continue to visit organisational websites (including Website B) in search of employment opportunities. In addition, a quarter (25%) indicated that their decision to return is based on the favourable and very professional organisational image portrayed by the website.

Table 0.13: Frequency table for the evaluation of Website A's content design

1. Additional information needs	Count	%
Respondents' feedback on open-ended question one:		
• No additional information required. I am satisfied with the amount of information pertaining to the employment opportunity that was provided.	4	11%
• Yes, I require additional information. Information provided was not sufficient for my needs.	32	89%
Information needs as listed by respondents:		
• Job description;	29	81%
• Location of the employment opportunity;	25	69%
• Salary and/or benefits information;	24	67%
• Closing date;	24	67%
• Skills and abilities required;	19	53%
• Qualifications and/or experience required;	14	39%
• Advancement or career growth opportunity;	10	28%
• Full time employment opportunity / contractual opportunity;	9	25%
• Organisational culture; and	5	14%
• Affirmative action and employment equity policy.	1	3%
2. Establish what the culture of the organisation entails		
Respondents' feedback on open-ended question two:		
• Yes, I was able to locate such information and I am satisfied with the amount of information regarding the organisation and/organisational culture that was provided.	15	42%
• Yes, I was able to locate such information, but the information provided was insufficient with regards to my information needs (regarding the organisation and its organisational culture).	21	58%
3. Disclosure of personal information online		
Respondents' feedback on open-ended question three:		
• Yes, I feel confident and secure about disclosing my personal information.	11	31%
• No, I do not feel confident or secure about disclosing my personal information.	25	69%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'yes' answer:		
• Even though no privacy policy is present, I feel secure and confident about disclosing my personal information.	11	31%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'no' answer:		
• I do not trust the organisation with my personal information, due to its inability to provide me with the necessary information (concerning the organisation itself and its advertised employment opportunities).	15	42%
• No confidentiality statement / privacy policy was present on the website to address my concerns.	9	25%
4. Search function usage		
Respondents' feedback on open-ended question four:		
• Yes, I used the search function.	1	3%
• No, I did not use the search function.	35	97%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'no' answer:		
• I did not use the search function, because none was provided on the website.	30	83%
• The layout of the website was user-friendly, hence I located the information I required without employing the search function.	10	30%
5. Revisit Website A for potential employment opportunities		
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question five:		
• Yes, I will continue visiting this website in search of employment opportunities.	7	19%
• No, I will not continue visiting this website in search of employment opportunities.	29	81%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'no' answer:		
• The website does not satisfy my information needs.	22	61%
• The image the website portrays of the organisation is not favourable and is evidence of very little effort and planning being invested into it. Hence, I do not want to work for such an organisation.	11	31%

General appraisal of website A

In addition to the open-ended questions, respondents were asked to indicate their general appraisal/perception of Website A, by rating it on a series of adjectives presented in a four point semantic differential scale. Positive and negative attributes were listed at the extreme ends of the scale (e.g. scale one, terrible vs. wonderful). Figure 4.8 shows the calculated mean of respondents' general appraisal per scale. In addition, shown in table 4.7, are the frequency distributions for the general appraisal of Website A

on each of the six scales (appendix F contain histograms of the frequency distribution of respondents' general appraisal).

GENERAL APPRAISAL					
	Negative		Positive		
	0	1	2	3	4
Difficult			2.7		Easy
Dull			2.2		Stimulating
Rigid		1.9			Flexible
Terrible		1.7			Wonderful
Frustrating		1.6			Satisfying
Not Informative		1.4			Informative

Figure 0.19: Mean ratings of respondents' general appraisal of Website A

Table 0.14: Frequency table for respondents' general appraisal of Website A

		Negative				Positive				
		1		2		3		4		
Scale		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Scale
1.	Terrible	16	44%	15	42%	5	14%	-	-	Wonderful
2.	Difficult	5	14%	8	22%	15	42%	8	22%	Easy
3.	Frustrating	19	53%	12	33%	4	11%	1	3%	Satisfying
4.	Dull	12	33%	9	25%	11	31%	4	11%	Stimulating
5.	Rigid	16	44%	11	31%	6	17%	3	8%	Flexible
6.	Not Informative	22	61%	13	36%	-	-	1	3%	Informative

The results (see figure 4.8 and table 4.7) revealed a relatively definite negative appraisal.

- To varying degrees, 86% of the respondents consider Website A, 'terrible' and 'frustrating'. On the 'terrible vs. wonderful' four point scale, the mean of the responses was 1.7 and the mean for 'frustrating vs. satisfying' was 1.6. As shown in figure 4.8, the position of both means indicate a slightly negative appraisal on these two scales.
- The majority of the respondents (97%) indicated that they consider the website 'not informative' (mean = 1.4) and 75% perceived the combined content- and usability design of the website as 'rigid' (mean = 1.9). The content of a website is considered 'rigid', should it fail to offer users flexibility in terms of reading or downloading important content (Thatcher & Kruger, 2003).
- Despite the fact that slightly more than half (58%) of the respondents perceive the website as 'dull', the mean of 2.2 for the 'dull vs. stimulating' scale, positions respondents' appraisal as slightly positive.
- The appraisal of Website A on the 'difficult vs. easy' scale was positive, since the calculated mean is 2.7 and almost two thirds of the respondents (64%), rated it as 'easy to use'.

4.6.2 Usability evaluation of website A (bottom percentile)

The second objective within the fourth goal of this study was to investigate potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions concerning the general usability of Website A. In this section, the results for the usability evaluation of Website A are reported (see Section C of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire in appendix D). The usability criteria included usefulness/utility, effectiveness, efficiency, ease of use, consistency, error management, compatibility and user satisfaction.

A frequency table, for each of the above mentioned usability dimensions, is presented. Within each frequency table, the number refers to the usability questionnaire item number. The results obtained should be read in conjunction with the usability statement (i.e. item) it refers to in appendix D. The frequency table displays both the count and percentage of the responses obtained for each of the usability items.

General usefulness/utility

Usefulness concerns the degree to which the product or system (i.e. Website A) enables the user to achieve his/her goals and is an assessment of the user's motivation for using the system. Utility refers to the functionality (thus the value, worth and helpfulness) of the system.

Table 0.15: Frequency table for the Usefulness/Utility of Website A

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1.	Usefulness 1	-	-	4	11%	9	25%	23	64%
2.	Usefulness 2	15	42%	13	36%	6	17%	2	6%
3.	Usefulness 3	23	64%	11	31%	2	6%	-	-
4.	Usefulness 4	14	39%	16	44%	5	14%	1	3%
5.	Usefulness 5	18	50%	13	36%	5	14%	-	-
6.	Usefulness 6	17	47%	13	36%	6	17%	-	-
7.	Usefulness 7	3	8%	4	11%	12	33%	17	47%
8.	Usefulness 8	7	19%	6	17%	11	31%	12	33%
9.	Usefulness 9	19	53%	9	25%	8	22%	-	-
10.	Usefulness 10	19	53%	12	33%	4	11%	1	3%
11.	Usefulness 11	22	61%	10	28%	4	11%	-	-

As depicted in table 4.8, the majority of the respondents did not perceive Website A to be useful.

- In addition to the 89% that agreed (64% strongly agree and 25% agree) that the website failed to increase the productivity of their search for employment opportunities, 86% disagreed that the website improved communication (information sharing regarding vacancies) between potential applicants and the organisation. Hence, 83% perceived the website as an ineffective tool, when used to research an organisation and its employment opportunities (47% strongly disagree and 36% disagree).
- 89% of the respondents indicated that the available content failed to reach its intended purpose of providing the information that they desire; consequently, more than three-quarters of the sample (86%) considered the website not worth visiting.
- Due to the website's inability to satisfy potential applicants' information needs (53% strongly disagree and 25% disagree), 95% reported being unable to make an informed decision concerning the advertised employment opportunities.

General effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the accuracy and completeness with which the system enables the user to achieve a goal or task (e.g. locating an advertised employment opportunity on Website A).

The results (table 4.9) revealed a very strong negative evaluation regarding the effectiveness of Website A.

- The majority (81%) of the respondents indicated (50% strongly disagree and 31% disagree) that they were unable to effectively complete their search for employment related information and vacancies.

- In addition, 78% of the respondents (47% strongly disagree and 31% disagree) considered the content outdated, whereas 86% (69% strongly disagree and 17% disagree) indicated that the job description insufficiently described the responsibilities, abilities, qualifications and experience required by the position. Consequently, 83% (47% strongly disagree and 36% disagree) of the sample reported that visiting the website was not worthwhile, due to the insufficient amount of information provided.
- Furthermore, 88% (69% strongly disagree and 19% disagree) reported that they were unable to make an informed decision on whether to apply for the advertised position. Consequently, the majority of the sample agreed (69% strongly agree and 25% agree) that they require additional information (which was not provided), in order to decide whether to apply for the employment opportunity.

Table 0.16: Frequency table for the Effectiveness of Website A

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
12.	Effectiveness 1	18	50%	11	31%	7	19%	-	-
13.	Effectiveness 2	8	22%	6	17%	22	61%	-	-
14.	Effectiveness 3	1	3%	8	22%	18	50%	9	25%
15.	Effectiveness 4	25	69%	6	17%	4	11%	1	3%
16.	Effectiveness 5	25	69%	7	19%	4	11%	-	-
17.	Effectiveness 6	9	25%	12	33%	13	36%	2	6%
18.	Effectiveness 7	17	47%	11	31%	8	22%	-	-
19.	Effectiveness 8	17	47%	13	36%	6	17%	-	-
20.	Effectiveness 9	21	58%	11	31%	3	8%	1	3%
21.	Effectiveness 10	-	-	2	6%	9	25%	25	69%

Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the degree to which the system enables the user to complete the tasks in a timely, competent and economical fashion.

Table 0.17: Frequency table for the Efficiency of Website A

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
22.	Efficiency 1	11	31%	13	36%	10	28%	2	6%
23.	Efficiency 2	13	36%	13	36%	7	19%	3	8%
24.	Efficiency 3	7	19%	14	39%	11	31%	4	11%
25.	Efficiency 4	1	3%	4	11%	20	56%	11	31%
26.	Efficiency 5	3	8%	12	33%	16	44%	5	14%

The results (see table 4.10) revealed more variation in attitudes regarding this dimension, although it would seem that the majority of responses were positive.

- Slightly more than a third of the respondents agreed (6% strongly agree and 28% agree) that Website A enabled them to efficiently complete their search for career related information and employment opportunities. In addition, only 27% agreed (8% strongly agree and 19% agree) that time could be saved by using the website to search for employment opportunities.
- However, more than half of the respondents (19% strongly disagree and 39% disagree) were satisfied with the speed at which the website responded to their inputs, and the majority (84%) agreed that each webpage downloaded in an acceptable amount of time (53% agreed and 31% strongly agreed).

- In addition, slightly more than half of the respondents agreed (44% agree and 14% strongly agree) that when a webpage was downloaded, the most informative and important items become visible first (e.g. text), whilst the remaining parts were still downloaded (such as pictures or photos).

Ease of use

Ease of use refers to the effortlessness and user-friendliness with which a system enables the user to achieve a goal or accomplish a task.

Table 0.18: Frequency table for the Ease of Use of Website A

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
27.	Ease of use 1	8	22%	2	6%	22	61%	4	11%
28.	Ease of use 2	4	11%	3	8%	25	69%	4	11%
29.	Ease of use 3	8	22%	9	25%	16	44%	3	8%
30.	Ease of use 4	1	3%	5	14%	26	72%	4	11%
31.	Ease of use 5	1	3%	5	14%	25	69%	5	14%
32.	Ease of use 6	10	28%	8	22%	16	44%	2	6%
33.	Ease of use 7	3	8%	3	8%	27	75%	3	8%
34.	Ease of use 8	3	8%	6	17%	23	64%	4	11%
35.	Ease of use 9	2	6%	10	28%	22	61%	2	6%
36.	Ease of use 10	14	39%	18	50%	2	6%	2	6%
37.	Ease of use 11	9	25%	9	25%	13	36%	5	14%
38.	Ease of use 12	1	3%	-	-	20	56%	15	42%
39.	Ease of use 13	13	36%	20	56%	1	3%	2	6%
40.	Ease of use 14	2	6%	7	19%	20	56%	7	19%
41.	Ease of use 15	3	8%	8	22%	21	58%	4	11%
42.	Ease of use 16	3	8%	6	17%	23	64%	4	11%
43.	Ease of use 17	2	6%	6	17%	24	67%	4	11%

As depicted in table 4.11, the majority of the responses, concerning the ease of use of Website A, were positive.

- To varying degrees respondents agreed (61% agree and 11% strongly agree) that the homepage of the website provided a clear indication of the content available on the website, whilst slightly more than half agreed (44% agree and 8% strongly agree) that they could, with relative ease and speed, locate alternative webpage options, still available for exploration.
- Furthermore, the majority of the respondents agreed that whilst browsing the website, they were constantly able to tell their location, in terms of 'where they are' (75% agree and 8% strongly agree) and 'where they can still go' (64% agree and 11% strongly agree).
- 89% of the respondents indicated (39% strongly disagree and 50% disagree) that they found the website easy to use, however, only half agreed (36% agree and 14% strongly agree) that it was easy to locate the advertised employment opportunities on the website.
- 75% of the respondents indicated that they felt confident and in control using the website (56% agree and 19% strongly agree) and slightly more than two-thirds were satisfied with the level of ease with which they were able to complete their tasks (58% agree and 11% strongly agree). Consequently, 78% of the respondents reported that they considered the website user friendly (67% agree and 11% strongly agree).

Consistency

Consistency refers to the ability of the system (i.e. website) to respond to user inputs in a consistent way and to allow the user to perform similar tasks in similar ways.

Table 0.19: Frequency table for the Consistency of Website A

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
44.	Consistency 1	10	28%	21	58%	3	8%	2	6%
45.	Consistency 2	1	3%	5	14%	18	50%	12	33%
46.	Consistency 3	1	3%	1	3%	24	67%	10	28%
47.	Consistency 4	3	8%	3	8%	20	56%	10	28%
48.	Consistency 5	3	8%	2	6%	26	72%	5	14%

The results presented in table 4.12 show that the majority of the responses, concerning the consistency of Website A, were positive.

- In addition to the 86% that indicated that the website did respond to their inputs in a consistent manner (58% disagree and 28% strongly disagree), 95% agreed that throughout the website, the navigational mechanism was also used in a consistent manner (67% agree and 28% strongly agree).
- The majority (83%) of the respondents agreed that the same textual visual theme (in terms of font, text size and colour) was used throughout the website, whilst more than two thirds agreed (72% agree and 14% strongly agree) that they easily grasped the meaning of the icons, buttons and symbols that were employed throughout the website.

Error management

Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application allows the user to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors.

Table 0.20: Frequency table for the Error Management of Website A

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Not Applicable	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
49.	Error Management 1	2	6%	2	6%	17	47%	15	42%		
50.	Error Management 2	12	33%	20	56%	2	6%	2	6%		
51.	Error Management 3	2	67%	-	-	1	33%	-	-	33	92%
52.	Error Management 4	1	33%	-	-	2	67%	-	-	33	92%
53.	Error Management 5	1	33%	1	33%	1	33%	-	-	33	92%
54.	Error Management 6	1	33%	1	33%	1	33%	-	-	33	92%
55.	Error Management 7	1	33%	1	33%	-	-	1	33%	33	92%

Note: The 'not applicable' option was only relevant for items 51 – 55, hence available to those respondents that did not encounter an error message whilst browsing the website.

As depicted in table 4.13, the results on the error management dimension, revealed a very strong positive evaluation.

- The majority of the respondents (89%) indicated that all links on the website were accurate in taking them to the intended destination (47% agree and 42% strongly agree); whilst 89% indicated that they found it easy to recover if a mistake was made (33% strongly disagree and 56% disagree).

- In view of the fact that item 51 to 55 focused on the error message(s) that respondents were presented with, the 'not applicable' option was made available to those respondents (92%) that did not encounter any error messages whilst browsing the website. However, the 8% that did encounter error messages reported that although the system sufficiently diagnosed the source and cause of the problem (67% agree), it was not written in a clear or an understandable manner (67% strongly disagree) and that the solution suggested was not helpful (66%).

Compatibility

Compatibility refers to the degree to which the system's method of operation matches the user's expectations, based on their knowledge of other similar types of products and the 'outside world'.

Table 0.21: Frequency table for the Compatibility of Website A

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
56.	Compatibility 1	5	14%	23	64%	5	14%	3	8%
57.	Compatibility 2	9	25%	12	33%	14	39%	1	3%
58.	Compatibility 3	2	6%	4	11%	28	78%	2	6%
59.	Compatibility 4	2	6%	4	11%	24	67%	6	17%
60.	Compatibility 5	7	19%	22	61%	4	11%	3	8%

The results (table 4.14) show that the majority of responses, concerning the compatibility of Website A, were positive.

- 78% of the respondents considered the menu/icons to be logically organised, whilst 67% agreed and 17% strongly agreed that the use of terminology was in line with standard information technology terminology.
- However, although slightly more than half of the respondents (25% strongly disagree and 33% disagree) considered the icons used, to be non-standard and not similar to the ones generally employed by websites, 80% did indicate (19% strongly disagree and 61% disagree) that the intended destination of the icons, buttons and/or symbols, was easily grasped.

User satisfaction

User satisfaction refers to the level of comfort users feels when using a product as well as how acceptable the product is to users in achieving their goals.

Table 0.22: Frequency table for the User Satisfaction of Website A

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
61.	User Satisfaction 1	9	25%	15	42%	8	22%	4	11%
62.	User Satisfaction 2	2	6%	3	8%	7	19%	24	67%
63.	User Satisfaction 3	2	6%	7	19%	8	22%	19	53%
64.	User Satisfaction 4	3	8%	8	22%	7	19%	18	50%
65.	User Satisfaction 5	23	64%	7	19%	6	17%	-	-
66.	User Satisfaction 6	7	19%	9	25%	17	47%	3	8%
67.	User Satisfaction 7	8	22%	10	28%	14	39%	4	11%
68.	User Satisfaction 8	20	56%	11	31%	5	14%	-	-

As can be seen from table 4.15, the majority of the responses concerning user satisfaction of Website A, were negative.

- For example, only a third (33%) of the respondents indicated that working with the website was a satisfying experience (22% agree and 11% strongly agree), whilst only 12% indicated that they would use the website frequently, (6% strongly disagree and 8% disagree).
- In addition, slightly more than two-thirds of the respondents agreed (50% strongly agree and 19% agree) that it was frustrating to work with the website and only half (39% agree and 11% strongly agree) was satisfied, with the time it took to locate and research an employment opportunity on the website.
- Consequently, 67% indicated that they would not recommend the website to potential applicants, in search of employment opportunities, whilst only 14% agreed that both occasional and regular users would like to use the website.

4.7 RESULTS: WEBSITE B

4.7.1 Content evaluation and general appraisal of website B (top percentile)

The following section provides a review of the results concerning Section B of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire. Information pertaining to respondents' general appraisal of Website B's content- and usability design for recruitment purposes was obtained through open-ended questions and various semantic differential scales.

Content design evaluation of website B

Based on the results (see table 4.16) pertaining to the content design of Website B, the following can be reported:

- **Additional information needs:** Slightly more than two thirds (69%) of the respondents were satisfied and indicated that they desired no additional information. Where a need for additional information was indicated, it was mostly related to salary and benefits information (33%).
- **Organisational culture:** All respondents indicated that they were able to locate information on the website pertaining to the organisational culture and 97% was satisfied with the quality and quantity of the information available.
- **Disclosure of personal information:** The majority of the respondents (97%) indicated that they would feel confident and secure about disclosing their personal information online, via Website B to the organisation. The most frequently provided reason listed by respondents, related to the availability of a privacy policy (61%), the professional portrayal of the organisation via the website (42%), and trust created through the information provided by the organisation (33%).
- **Search function usage:** As shown in table 4.16, it is evident that the majority of the respondents (78%) did not employ the 'search function' to locate any information. Most indicated that due to the user-friendly layout of the website, they did not require the use of the search function. One respondent indicated using the 'search function' to save time (i.e. avoid browsing the website to search for the desired information).
- **Revisit Website B for potential employment opportunities:** The majority (97%) of the respondents indicate that they would continue to visit the website. The reason most frequently provided, related to website characteristics (86%) such as providing up-to-date information, being informative and easy to use. Two-thirds (66%) indicated that if all other websites were as informative, innovative and thorough as Website B, they would continue to visit organisational websites (including Website B) in search of

employment opportunities. In addition, a quarter (25%) indicated that their decision to return is based on the favourable and very professional organisational image portrayed by the website.

Table 0.23: Frequency table for the evaluation of Website B's content design

1. Additional information needs	Count	%
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• No additional information required. I am satisfied with the amount of information regarding the employment opportunity that was provided.	25	69%
• Yes, I require additional information. Information provided was not sufficient for my needs.	11	31%
Information needs as listed by respondents:		
• Salary and benefits Information;	12	33%
• Location of the employment opportunity; and	2	6%
• Office climate/working environment (What type of people would I be working with?).	1	3%
2. Able to determine what the culture of the organisation entails		
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• Yes I was able to locate such information and I am satisfied with the amount of information regarding the organisation and/organisational culture that was provided.	35	97%
• Yes, I was able to locate such information, but the information provided was insufficient with regards to my information needs (regarding the organisation and its organisational culture).	1	3%
3. Disclosure of personal information online		
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• Yes, I feel confident and secure about disclosing my personal information.	35	97%
• No, I do not feel confident or secure about disclosing my personal information.	1	3%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'yes' answer:		
• The privacy policy addressed all my concerns regarding the usage and protection of my personal information.	22	61%
• The organisation presents itself in a very professional manner via their website.	15	42%
• I trust the organisation with my personal information, since it provided me with all the necessary and updated information regarding the organisation, available employment opportunities and information on how to contact the organisation.	12	33%
• The amount of effort that went into designing this website gives me the confidence to submit my personal information.	1	3%
4. Usage of search function		
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• No, I did not use the search function.	28	78%
• Yes, I used the search function.	8	22%
Reason Provided to substantiate a 'no' answer:		
• The layout of Website B was user-friendly and I found the information I required without employing the search function.	28	78%
• Upon locating the information I desired without employing the search function, I tested it. I found it useful and I was satisfied with the effectiveness and accuracy of the results delivered by the search function.	8	22%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'yes' answer:		
• It was difficult to locate the desired information, I therefore employed the search function provided on Website B.	2	6%
• I wanted to save time. Instead of browsing the website, I searched for the desired information via the search function.	1	3%
5. Revisit Website A for potential employment opportunities		
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• Yes, I will continue visiting this website in search of employment opportunities.	35	97%
• No, I will not continue visiting this website in search of employment opportunities.	1	3%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'yes' answer:		
• The website is easy to use (user-friendly), informative (satisfy my information needs) and updated on a regular basis.	31	86%
• Should all other websites be as informative, innovative and thorough as Website B, I would continue visiting organisational websites in search of employment opportunities.	32	66%
• The image the website portrays of the organisation is favourable and very professional.	9	25%
• Website B projects a lot of effort and planning being put into it and I want to work for such an organisation.	3	8%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'no' answer:		
• I do not like visiting organisational websites in search of employment opportunities.	2	6%

General appraisal of website B

Respondents had to conduct a general appraisal of Website B on a series of adjectives, which described its content- or usability design in terms of positive or negative attributes. The adjectives were positioned on the extreme ends of a four point semantic differential scale. Depicted in figure 4.9 are the calculated mean of the responses obtained per scale, whereas the frequency distribution of the general appraisals are presented in table 4.17 (see appendix F for histograms of each scale's frequency distribution).

GENERAL APPRAISAL					
	Negative		Positive		
	0	1	2	3	4
Not Informative					4 ■■■■ Informative
Terrible				3.8 ■■■■	Wonderful
Frustrating				3.8 ■■■■	Satisfying
Difficult				3.7 ■■■■	Easy
Dull				3.5 ■■■■	Stimulating
Rigid				3.3 ■■■■	Flexible

Figure 0.20: Mean ratings of respondents' general appraisal of Website B

Table 0.24: Frequency table for respondents' general appraisal of Website B

	Negative				Positive				Scale
	1		2		3		4		
Scale	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Scale
1. Terrible	-	-	-	-	7	19%	29	81%	Wonderful
2. Difficult	-	-	1	3%	9	25%	26	72%	Easy
3. Frustrating	-	-	-	-	9	25%	27	75%	Satisfying
4. Dull	-	-	2	6%	14	39%	20	56%	Stimulating
5. Rigid	1	3%	2	6%	20	56%	13	36%	Flexible
6. Not Informative	-	-	-	-	1	3%	35	97%	Informative

In reviewing the results (table 4.17 and figure 4.9), it was evident that this website attained a strong positive overall evaluation from the majority of the respondents. The results indicate that:

- To varying degrees, all the respondents (100%) rated the website as 'wonderful', 'satisfying' and 'informative'. The mean of the responses for each of these three scales, illustrate the consistency of the strong positive ratings. The calculated mean on the 'not informative vs. informative' scale was four, whereas the mean on both the 'terrible vs. wonderful' - and 'frustrating vs. satisfying' scales, were 3.8.
- 97% of the respondents considered the website as 'easy' to use, whilst 95% indicated the content to be 'stimulating'. In addition, 92% of the respondents rated the website content as 'flexible' (i.e. content flexibility which refers to the flexibility the website offer users in terms of reading or downloading important content; Thatcher & Kruger, 2003). The consistency of respondents' general positive appraisal was also evident with the calculated mean of 3.7 for the 'difficult vs. easy' scale, 3.5 for the 'dull vs. stimulating' scale and 3.3 for the 'rigid vs. flexible' scale.

4.7.2 Usability evaluation of website B (top percentile)

The following section reports on potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions for the usability of Website B (Section C of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire). A frequency table, for each of usability dimensions, is

presented. Within each frequency table, the number refers to the usability questionnaire item number. The results obtained should be read in conjunction with the usability statement it refers to in appendix D.

General usefulness/utility

Usefulness concerns the degree to which the product or system (i.e. Website B) enables the user to achieve his/her goals and is an assessment of the user's motivation for using the system. Utility refers to the functionality (thus the value, worth and helpfulness) of the system.

Table 0.25: Frequency table for the Usefulness/Utility of Website B

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1.	Usefulness 1	26	72%	10	28%	-	-	-	-
2.	Usefulness 2	-	-	1	3%	15	42%	20	56%
3.	Usefulness 3	-	-	1	3%	17	47%	18	50%
4.	Usefulness 4	-	-	-	-	19	53%	17	47%
5.	Usefulness 5	-	-	7	19%	15	42%	14	39%
6.	Usefulness 6	-	-	-	-	17	47%	19	53%
7.	Usefulness 7	21	58%	15	42%	-	-	-	-
8.	Usefulness 8	1	3%	3	8%	17	47%	15	42%
9.	Usefulness 9	-	-	2	6%	14	39%	20	56%
10.	Usefulness 10	-	-	-	-	15	42%	21	58%
11.	Usefulness 11	-	-	-	-	17	47%	19	53%

Table 4.18 shows that a very large majority of the responses concerning the usefulness/utility of Website B, were positive.

- For example, the entire sample indicated that the website increased the productivity of their search for employment opportunities and 97% agreed that the website enabled them to make an informed decision regarding the advertised employment opportunities.
- Furthermore, 81% of the respondents indicated (42% agree and 39% strongly agree) that using the website, would improve communication (information sharing regarding vacancies between potential applicants and employers), while the entire sample also agreed that the website was a productive tool to research the organisation and its employment opportunities (47% agree and 53% strongly agree).
- 95% of the respondents indicated that the website met all their information needs. In addition, there was unanimous agreement that the available information is sufficient and makes the website worth visiting (42% agree and 58% strongly agree).
- Henceforth, all respondents agreed (47% agree and 53% strongly agree) that the content of the website effectively achieved its intended purpose of providing potential applicants with valuable information regarding vacancies and the organisation.

General effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the accuracy and completeness with which the system enables the user to achieve a goal or task (e.g. locating an advertised employment opportunity on Website B).

Table 0.26: Frequency table for the Effectiveness of Website B

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
12.	Effectiveness 1	-	-	3	8%	22	61%	11	31%
13.	Effectiveness 2	-	-	6	17%	15	42%	15	42%
14.	Effectiveness 3	17	47%	13	36%	5	14%	1	3%
15.	Effectiveness 4	-	-	1	3%	13	36%	22	61%
16.	Effectiveness 5	-	-	3	8%	11	31%	22	61%
17.	Effectiveness 6	-	-	1	3%	14	39%	21	58%
18.	Effectiveness 7	-	-	-	-	12	33%	24	67%
19.	Effectiveness 8	-	-	-	-	12	33%	24	67%
20.	Effectiveness 9	-	-	1	3%	17	47%	18	50%
21.	Effectiveness 10	11	31%	21	58%	3	8%	1	3%

The results (table 4.19) revealed a very strong positive evaluation regarding the effectiveness of Website B.

- To varying degrees, 92% of the respondents agreed, that the website effectively enabled them to complete their search for employment related information and vacancies.
- With regards to the content provided by the website:
 - all respondents agreed (100%) that the content was current (strongly agree 67% and 33% agree);
 - 97% indicated that the job description sufficiently described the responsibilities, abilities, qualifications and experience the position required (36% agree and 61% strongly agree); and
 - 58% strongly agreed and 39% agreed that the website provided sufficient instructions on how to apply for a position.
- Consequently, all the respondents agreed that the available information, not only made visiting the website worthwhile (33% agree and 67% strongly agree), but also enabled them to make an informed decision regarding whether to apply for a position (31% agree and 61% strongly agree).
- Finally, 97% agreed that the content of the website effectively achieved its intended purpose of providing valuable information regarding vacancies within the organisation and information on the organisation (47% agree and 50% strongly agree).

Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the degree to which the system enables the user to complete the tasks in a timely and economical fashion.

Table 0.27: Frequency table for the Efficiency of Website B

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
22.	Efficiency 1	-	-	2	6%	21	58%	13	36%
23.	Efficiency 2	-	-	2	6%	21	58%	13	36%
24.	Efficiency 3	15	42%	13	36%	7	19%	1	3%
25.	Efficiency 4	-	-	4	11%	20	56%	12	33%
26.	Efficiency 5	3	8%	5	14%	20	56%	8	22%

As depicted in table 4.20, the results on the efficiency dimension, revealed a very strong positive evaluation.

- To varying degrees, the majority (94%) of the respondents agreed that using this website would save them time and enable them to efficiently complete their search for career related information and employment opportunities (58% agree and 36% strongly agree).
- In addition, 78% of the respondents (42% strongly disagree and 36% disagree) were satisfied with the speed at which the website responded to their inputs, whilst 89% agreed that the webpages of the website, downloaded in an acceptable amount of time (56% agree and 33% strongly agree).
- Furthermore, the majority of the respondents agreed (55% agree and 22% strongly agree) that when downloading a webpage, the most informative and important items became visible first (e.g. text first, whilst pictures or photos were still downloading).

General ease of use

Ease of use refers to the effortlessness and user-friendliness with which a system enables the user to achieve a goal or accomplish a task.

Table 0.28: Frequency table for the Ease of Use of Website B

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
27.	Ease of use 1	-	-	-	-	13	36%	23	64%
28.	Ease of use 2	-	-	3	8%	18	50%	15	42%
29.	Ease of use 3	1	3%	3	8%	16	45%	16	45%
30.	Ease of use 4	-	-	2	6%	19	53%	15	42%
31.	Ease of use 5	-	-	2	6%	20	56%	14	39%
32.	Ease of use 6	-	-	-	-	19	53%	17	47%
33.	Ease of use 7	-	-	3	8%	18	50%	15	42%
34.	Ease of use 8	1	3%	2	6%	19	53%	14	39%
35.	Ease of use 9	-	-	-	-	21	58%	15	42%
36.	Ease of use 10	21	58%	11	31%	3	8%	1	3%
37.	Ease of use 11	1	3%	9	25%	20	56%	6	17%
38.	Ease of use 12	-	-	2	6%	14	39%	20	56%
39.	Ease of use 13	5	14%	22	61%	9	25%	-	-
40.	Ease of use 14	-	-	2	6%	19	53%	15	42%
41.	Ease of use 15	-	-	3	8%	18	50%	15	42%
42.	Ease of use 16	1	3%	5	14%	21	58%	9	25%
43.	Ease of use 17	-	-	2	6%	23	64%	11	31%

The results (see table 4.21) revealed that the majority of responses concerning the ease of use of Website B were positive.

- 89% of the respondents indicated that they found the website easy to use (58% strongly disagree and 31% disagree), whilst 73% agreed that it was easy to locate the advertised employment opportunities on the website (65% agree and 17% strongly agree).
- In addition, the majority of the respondents agreed that whilst browsing the website they were constantly aware of 'where they are' (50% agree and 42% strongly agree) and 'where they can still go' (53% agree and 39% strongly agree).
- Almost all the respondents indicated that they felt confident and in control while using the website (53% agree and 42% and strongly agree) and 92% were satisfied with the level of ease with which they were able to complete their tasks (50% agree and 42% strongly agree).

- Hence, 95% of the respondents agreed (64% agree and 31% strongly agree) that the website was user friendly, whilst 83% agreed that it was designed for both experienced and novice users (58% agree and 25% strongly agree).

Consistency

Consistency refers to the ability of the system (i.e. website) to respond to user inputs in a consistent way and to allow the user to perform similar tasks in similar ways.

Table 0.29: Frequency table for the Consistency of Website B

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
44.	Consistency 1	16	44%	19	53%	-	-	1	3%
45.	Consistency 2	-	-	1	3%	19	53%	16	44%
46.	Consistency 3	-	-	1	3%	21	58%	14	39%
47.	Consistency 4	-	-	2	6%	15	42%	19	53%
48.	Consistency 5	-	-	2	6%	18	50%	16	44%

Once again, the results revealed a positive evaluation of the consistency of Website B (see table 4.22).

- To varying frequencies, the majority of the sample indicated that the website responded to their inputs in a consistent manner (44% strongly disagree and 53% disagree), whilst 97% indicated that the navigational system, was used consistently throughout the website (58% agree and 39% strongly agree).
- The majority of the respondents (53% agree and 44% strongly agree) agreed that the same textual visual theme (in terms of font, text size and colour) was used throughout the website, whilst almost all the respondents agreed (50% agree and 44% strongly agree) that they easily grasped the meaning of the icons, buttons and symbols.

Error management

Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software (i.e. website) application allows the user to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors.

Table 0.30: Frequency table for the Error Management of Website B

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Not Applicable	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
49.	Error Management 1	-	-	1	3%	16	44%	19	53%		
50.	Error Management 2	12	33%	16	44%	3	8%	5	14%		
51.	Error Management 3	-	-	-	-	3	100%	-	-	33	92%
52.	Error Management 4	-	-	-	-	3	100%	-	-	33	92%
53.	Error Management 5	-	-	1	33%	2	67%	-	-	33	92%
54.	Error Management 6	-	-	-	-	2	67%	1	33%	33	92%
55.	Error Management 7	-	-	2	67%	-	-	1	33%	33	92%

Note: The 'not applicable' option was only relevant for items 51 – 55, hence available to those respondents that did not encounter an error message whilst browsing the website.

As depicted in table 4.23, the results on the error management dimension, revealed a very strong positive evaluation.

- For example, the majority of the respondents (97%) indicated that all the links on the website were accurate in taking them to the intended destination (i.e. no errors were encountered) (44% agree and 53% strongly agree).
- Almost all the respondents (92%) reported that they did not encounter any error messages whilst browsing the website. With regards to the error messages that 8% of the sample were presented with, it can be reported that all the respondents agreed that the error message(s) were written in a clear understandable manner, that it sufficiently diagnosed the source and cause of the problem, whilst only 67% agreed that a helpful solution to the problem encountered, was suggested.

Compatibility

Compatibility refers to the degree to which the system's method of operation matches the user's expectations based on their knowledge of other similar types of products and the 'outside world'.

Table 0.31: Frequency table for the Compatibility of Website B

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
56.	Compatibility 1	15	42%	15	42%	5	14%	1	3%
57.	Compatibility 2	-	-	3	8%	21	58%	12	33%
58.	Compatibility 3	-	-	-	-	21	58%	15	42%
59.	Compatibility 4	-	-	3	8%	18	50%	15	42%
60.	Compatibility 5	17	47%	16	44%	3	8%	-	-

The majority of the responses pertaining to the compatibility of Website B were predominantly positive (see table 4.24).

- Most of respondents considered the menu/icons to be organised in a logical manner (42% disagree and 42% strongly disagree), whilst 91% reported that they easily grasped the intended destination of the icons, buttons and/or symbols (47% strongly disagree and 44% disagree).
- All the respondents agreed that the links on the website were clear and obvious in terms of the intended destination and finally, 92% agreed (50% agree and 42% strongly agree) that the terminology employed on the website, was in line with commonly used information technology terminology.

User satisfaction

User satisfaction refers to the level of comfort users feels when using a product as well as how acceptable the product is to users in achieving their goals.

Table 0.32: Frequency table for the User Satisfaction of Website B

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
61.	User Satisfaction 1	-	-	-	-	20	56%	16	44%
62.	User Satisfaction 2	13	36%	18	50%	5	14%	-	-
63.	User Satisfaction 3	17	47%	17	47%	2	6%	-	-
64.	User Satisfaction 4	18	50%	13	36%	5	14%	-	-
65.	User Satisfaction 5	1	3%	1	3%	21	58%	13	36%
66.	User Satisfaction 6	1	3%	-	-	20	56%	15	42%
67.	User Satisfaction 7	-	-	1	3%	20	56%	15	42%
68.	User Satisfaction 8	-	-	1	3%	19	53%	16	44%

Table 4.25 shows that a very large majority of the responses, concerning potential applicants' general satisfaction with the website, were positive.

- All respondents (100%) agreed that working with the website, was a satisfying experience. 56% agreed with this statement and 44% strongly agreed.
- In addition to the 86% that reported that they would use the website frequently, 98% indicated that they were satisfied with the time it took to locate and research an employment opportunity on the website (56% agree and 42% strongly agree).
- Consequently, almost all the respondents agreed (53% agree and 44% strongly agree) that both occasional and regular users would like to use the website, whereas 94% indicated that they would recommend the website to users in search of employment opportunities (58% agree and 36% strongly agree).

4.8 RESULTS: WEBSITE C

4.8.1 Content evaluation and general appraisal of website C (average percentile)

Within the following section, a concise account of potential applicants' (n=36) responses to Section B of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire is provided. In addition to focusing on Website C's content evaluation (information available on the website), Section B contained various semantic differential scales to capture the general appraisal of Website C's content- and usability design.

Content design evaluation of website C

Based on the responses obtained regarding the content design of Website C (see table 4.26), the following can be reported on each of the key areas highlighted by the five open-ended questions:

- **Additional information needs:** Slightly more than half (58%) of the respondents indicated that the information available on the website, was sufficient. However, amongst the general comments provided, 28% of the respondents reported detecting inconsistencies among the basic information available on the advertised vacancies they explored (i.e. some were more detailed regarding location, remuneration and qualifications required, whereas other vacancies neglected to provide the information). 17% of the respondents indicated that they desired a more detailed job description, whilst some of the respondents were more specific with regards to the information that the job description failed to provide. For example, respondents indicated that they desired information pertaining to the 'salary and benefits' (22%), 'qualifications or training' required (36%) as well as the responsibilities (14%) that the employment opportunity would entail.
- **Organisational culture:** All respondents indicated that they were able to locate the information pertaining the organisation's culture. However, 11% were not satisfied with the quality/amount of information available and indicated that they desired more information pertaining to the organisation's black economic empowerment (3%) and affirmative action policies (8%).
- **Disclosure of personal information:** The majority of the respondents indicated (94%) that they would feel confident and secure about disclosing their personal information online via Website C to the organisation. The subsequent response most frequently provided as to why they would feel confident and secure, related to the presence of a privacy policy (58%). In addition, 25% cited trust, which is based on their perceived legitimacy of the website and organisation, to be encouraging their feelings of

confidence and security. However, the 6% that indicated that they would not feel confident nor secure about disclosing their personal information online, reported that they perceived the advertised vacancies to be a ploy aimed at generating a database of CV's and not necessarily to fill a position within the organisation.

Table 0.33: Frequency table for the evaluation of Website C's content design

1. Additional information needs	Count	%
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• No additional information required. I am satisfied with the amount of information regarding the employment opportunity that was provided.	21	58%
• Yes, I require additional information. Information provided was not sufficient for my needs.	15	42%
Information needs and/or comments listed by respondents:		
• There are inconsistencies amongst the basic information provided on each of the advertised positions (e.g. some were more detailed regarding location, remuneration, qualifications required, etc. while others neglected to mention it).	10	28%
• Qualifications / training required;	10	36%
• Salary and/or Benefits Information;	8	22%
• Job description;	6	17%
• Responsibilities;	5	14%
• Information provided was too general, I require more indebt information;	3	8%
• Number of positions available;	2	6%
• Working hours per week;	2	6%
• Location of the employment opportunity; and	2	6%
• Closing date	1	3%
2. Able to determine what the culture of the organisation entails		
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• Yes, I was able to locate such information and I am satisfied with the amount and quality of information that was provided.	32	89%
• Yes, I was able to locate such information, but the information provided was insufficient with regards to my needs.	4	11%
Additional information needs as listed by respondents:		
• Affirmative action policy and	3	8%
• Black economic empowerment policy	1	3%
3. Disclosure of personal information online		
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• Yes, I feel confident and secure about disclosing my personal information.	34	94%
• No, I do not feel confident or secure about disclosing my personal information.	2	6%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'yes' answer:		
• The privacy policy addressed all my concerns regarding the usage and protection of my personal information.	21	58%
• The website and organisation looks legitimate and encourages trust.	9	25%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'no' answer:		
• I perceive this organisation to be posting vacancies for the mere sake of receiving CV's to build a database and not necessarily to fill a position.	3	6%
4. Usage of search function		
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:		
• No, I did not use the search function.	31	86%
• Yes, I used the search function	5	14%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'no' answer:		
• No, the layout of the website was user-friendly and I found the information I required without employing the search function.	23	64%
• I was unable to locate the search function when I needed it.	6	17%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'yes' answer:		
• I was unable to locate the required links that would direct me to the information I desire.	5	14%
• I was distracted by the busyness (animations flickering) and crowdedness of each webpage.	5	14%
General comment:		
• Even though I did not use the search function, I found the pages of the website to be distractingly busy and too much information being squeezed into one page (Information overload).	6	17%

Table 4.26: (Continued)

5. Revisit Website A for potential employment opportunities		Count	%
Respondents' feedback on the open-ended question:			
• Yes, I will continue visiting this website in search of employment opportunities.		34	94%
• No, I will not continue visiting this website in search of employment opportunities.		2	6%
Reason provided to substantiate a 'yes' answer:			
• The website is informative and satisfies my information needs.		22	61%
• The website was easy to use (user-friendly).		11	31%
• Yes, the image the website portrays of the organisation and how they projects themselves via their website, is favourable and very professional.		5	14%
General comment:			
• Organisational websites (Website C and other) enables respondents to get a 'feel' for the organisation before applying for a position.		9	25%
• Should all other websites be as informative, user-friendly and innovative as this one, I would continue visiting organisational websites in search of employment opportunities.		8	22%
• I am sceptical because I feel they might only be using Website C to generate a database of CV's. Therefore, your application never reaches the employer and you never receive feedback from the employer.		7	19%
• I am sceptical because it all sounds too good to be true.		6	17%

- **Search function usage:** The majority of the respondents (86%) reported not using the 'search function' to locate information on the website. The reasons provided by almost two-thirds (64%) of the respondents relate to the user-friendly layout of the website, however, 17% indicated that they were unable to locate the search function. In addition, 17% commented that too much information was compressed into each webpage and 14% cited this compressed page layout and the constant activity (e.g. flickering animations) of the webpages, as the reason they used the search function.
- **Revisit Website C for potential employment opportunities:** The majority of the respondents (94%) reported that they would continue to visit the website in search of employment opportunities. The primary reason provided by slightly less than two-thirds (61%) of the respondents was related to Website C being informative and able to satisfy their information needs. Although, amongst the general comments cited, it was evident that a number of the respondents were wary of the advertised employment opportunities. For example, 17% indicated that 'it all sounded too good to be true' (travelling possibilities, salary and benefits associated with the vacancies advertised) and 19% cited the possibility that Website C is only used to generate a database of CV's for the company.

General appraisal of website C

In order to determine respondents general appraisal of Website C's content- and usability design, respondents were requested to rate the website on a series of adjectives presented on extreme ends of a four point semantic differential scale. Presented in figure 4.10 and table 4.2, are the calculated mean scores and frequency distributions per scale (see appendix F for an illustration of each scale's frequency distribution per histogram).

GENERAL APPRAISAL					
	Negative		Positive		
	0	1	2	3	4
Not Informative				3.3 ■	Informative
Terrible				3.2 ■	Wonderful
Dull				3.1 ■	Stimulating
Rigid				3 ■	Flexible
Difficult				2.9 ■	Easy
Frustrating				2.8 ■	Satisfying

Figure 0.21: Mean ratings of respondents' general appraisal of Website C

Table 0.34: Frequency table for respondents' general appraisal of Website C

Scale	Negative				Positive				Scale
	1		2		3		4		
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
1. Terrible	-	-	5	14%	20	56%	11	31%	Wonderful
2. Difficult	1	3%	7	19%	22	61%	6	17%	Easy
3. Frustrating	2	6%	7	19%	22	61%	5	14%	Satisfying
4. Dull	2	6%	8	22%	12	33%	14	39%	Stimulating
5. Rigid	2	6%	6	17%	19	53%	9	25%	Flexible
6. Not informative	1	3%	1	3%	19	53%	15	42%	Informative

The results (see figure 4.10 and table 4.27) revealed that the general appraisal, held by the majority of the respondents concerning Website C, was positive. To varying degrees respondents:

- rated the website as 'informative' (95%), 'wonderful' (87%) and 'stimulating' (72%). The consistency of the positive ratings was evident in the calculated mean of 3.3 for the 'not informative vs. informative' scale, 3.2 for the 'terrible vs. wonderful' scale and 3.1 for the 'dull vs. stimulating' scale; and
- considered the website 'easy to use' (78%), 'satisfying' (75%), and 'flexible' (78%).

4.8.2 Usability evaluation of website C (average percentile)

In the following section, the findings pertaining to potential applicants' evaluation of the usability of Website C (Section C of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire) is discussed.

General usefulness/utility

Usefulness concerns the degree to which a product or system (i.e. Website C) enables the user to achieve his/her goals and is an assessment of the user's motivation for using the system. Utility refers to the functionality (thus the value, worth and helpfulness) of the system.

Table 0.35: Frequency table for the Usefulness/Utility of Website C

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1.	Usefulness 1	10	28%	24	67%	2	6%	-	-
2.	Usefulness 2	-	-	2	6%	22	61%	12	33%
3.	Usefulness 3	-	-	6	17%	22	61%	8	22%
4.	Usefulness 4	-	-	2	6%	24	67%	10	28%
5.	Usefulness 5	1	3%	5	14%	21	58%	9	25%
6.	Usefulness 6	-	-	3	8%	23	64%	10	28%
7.	Usefulness 7	14	39%	21	58%	1	3%	-	-
8.	Usefulness 8	-	-	2	6%	26	72%	8	22%
9.	Usefulness 9	1	3%	4	11%	22	61%	9	25%
10.	Usefulness 10	-	-	-	-	25	69%	11	31%
11.	Usefulness 11	-	-	5	14%	19	53%	12	33%

The majority of the responses concerning the usefulness/utility of Website C were positive (see table 4.28).

- Almost all (95%) the respondents indicated that the website increased the productivity of their search for employment opportunities, whereas 92% deemed the website a useful tool to use when researching the organisation and its employment opportunities (64% agree and 28% strongly agree).
- In addition, 83% of the sample agreed (58% agree and 25% strongly agree) that the website improved communication (information sharing regarding vacancies between potential applicants and employers)

and enabled them to make an informed decision regarding the advertised employment opportunities (61% agree and 22% strongly agree).

- Subsequently, 86% of the respondents agreed that the website met their needs (61% agree and 25% strongly agree) and all respondents agreed that the available information was sufficient, which made the website worth visiting (69% agree and 31% strongly agree).
- Finally, 53% agreed and 33% strongly agreed that the content of the website effectively achieved its intended purpose of providing valuable information pertaining to vacancies and the organisation.

General effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the accuracy and completeness with which the system enables the user to achieve a goal or task (e.g. locating an advertised employment opportunity on Website C).

Table 0.36: Frequency table for the Effectiveness of Website C

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
12.	Effectiveness 1	-	-	3	8%	23	64%	10	28%
13.	Effectiveness 2	1	3%	9	25%	17	47%	9	25%
14.	Effectiveness 3	9	25%	21	58%	6	17%	-	-
15.	Effectiveness 4	-	-	7	19%	25	69%	4	11%
16.	Effectiveness 5	-	-	4	11%	24	67%	8	22%
17.	Effectiveness 6	-	-	-	-	17	47%	19	53%
18.	Effectiveness 7	-	-	1	3%	22	61%	13	36%
19.	Effectiveness 8	-	-	1	3%	23	64%	12	33%
20.	Effectiveness 9	-	-	1	3%	22	61%	13	36%
21.	Effectiveness 10	7	19%	23	64%	5	14%	1	3%

The results (table 4.29) revealed a strong positive evaluation regarding the effectiveness of Website C.

- For example, 64% of the respondents agreed and 28% strongly agreed that the website effectively enabled them to complete their search for employment related information and vacancies.
- All the respondents agreed that the content was current (agree 61% and 36% strongly agree) and that sufficient instructions were provided on how to apply for a position (47% agree and 53% strongly agree). In addition, 80% indicated that the job description sufficiently described the responsibilities, abilities, qualifications and experience that the employment opportunity required (69% agree and 11% strongly agree).
- Furthermore, the majority of the respondents agreed (61% agree and 36% strongly agree) that the available content effectively achieved its intended purpose of providing valuable information pertaining to the organisation and its vacancies.
- Consequently, based on the sufficiency of the information provided, 97% agreed that it made their visit worthwhile (64% agree and 33% strongly agree), whilst 89% reported that it enabled them to make an informed decision regarding whether to apply for a position (67% agree and 22% strongly agree).

Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the degree to which the system enables the user to complete the tasks in a timely and economical fashion.

Table 0.37: Frequency table for the Efficiency of Website C

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
22.	Efficiency 1	-	-	4	11%	21	58%	11	31%
23.	Efficiency 2	-	-	6	17%	21	58%	9	25%
24.	Efficiency 3	5	14%	21	58%	6	17%	4	11%
25.	Efficiency 4	-	-	1	3%	29	81%	6	17%
26.	Efficiency 5	2	6%	6	17%	23	64%	5	14%

As can be seen from table 4.30, the majority of responses concerning the efficiency of Website C revealed a strong positive evaluation.

- To varying degrees, the majority of the respondents agreed that using this website would save them time (58% agree and 36% strongly agree) and that it enabled them to efficiently complete their search for career related information and employment opportunities (58% agree and 31% strongly agree).
- Furthermore, 72% indicated that they were satisfied with the speed at which the website responded to their inputs, whilst 98% agreed that each webpage downloaded in an acceptable amount of time (81% agree and 17% strongly agree).
- Finally, the majority of the respondents agreed (88%) that when a webpage downloaded, the most informative and important items become visible first, whilst the remainder of the webpage (e.g. picture and graphics) were still downloading.

General ease of use

Ease of use refers to the effortless and user-friendliness with which a system enables the user to achieve a goal or accomplish a task.

Table 0.38: Frequency table for the Ease of Use of Website C

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
27.	Ease of use 1	-	-	4	11%	28	78%	4	11%
28.	Ease of use 2	1	3%	6	17%	22	61%	7	19%
29.	Ease of use 3	1	3%	10	28%	20	56%	15	14%
30.	Ease of use 4	-	-	2	6%	24	67%	10	28%
31.	Ease of use 5	-	-	5	14%	23	64%	8	22%
32.	Ease of use 6	1	3%	4	11%	20	56%	11	31%
33.	Ease of use 7	1	3%	6	17%	23	64%	6	17%
34.	Ease of use 8	-	-	9	25%	19	53%	8	22%
35.	Ease of use 9	-	-	4	11%	25	69%	7	19%
36.	Ease of use 10	15	42%	19	53%	-	-	2	6%
37.	Ease of use 11	-	-	3	8%	18	50%	15	42%
38.	Ease of use 12	1	3%	3	8%	23	64%	9	25%
39.	Ease of use 13	5	14%	19	53%	11	31%	1	3%
40.	Ease of use 14	-	-	4	11%	19	53%	13	36%
41.	Ease of use 15	-	-	6	17%	18	50%	12	33%
42.	Ease of use 16	1	3%	4	11%	22	61%	9	25%
43.	Ease of use 17	1	3%	3	8%	23	64%	9	25%

As depicted in table 4.31, the majority of the responses, concerning the ease of use of Website C, were positive.

- 95% (42% strongly disagree and 53% disagree) indicated that they found the website easy to use, whereas the majority of the respondents agreed that whilst browsing the website, they were constantly aware of their location in terms of 'where they are' (64% agree and 17% strongly agree) and 'where they can still go' (53% agree and 22% strongly agree).
- Furthermore, 92% indicated that it was easy to locate the advertised employment opportunities on the website, whilst 89% reported that they felt confident and in control while using the website (53% agree and 36% and strongly agree). Consequently, 83% reported that they were satisfied with the level of ease with which they were able to complete their tasks (50% agree and 33% strongly agree).
- In addition to the 61% that agreed and 25% that strongly agreed that the website was designed for both experienced and novice users, the majority of the respondents reported that they considered the website to be user friendly (64% agree and 25% strongly agree).

Consistency

Consistency refers to the ability of the system (i.e. website) to respond to user inputs in a consistent way and to allow the user to perform similar tasks in similar ways.

Table 0.39: Frequency table for the Consistency of Website C

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
44.	Consistency 1	9	25%	24	67%	3	8%	-	-
45.	Consistency 2	-	-	2	6%	25	69%	9	25%
46.	Consistency 3	-	-	4	11%	25	69%	7	19%
47.	Consistency 4	-	-	4	11%	22	61%	10	28%
48.	Consistency 5	-	-	-	-	30	83%	6	17%

Table 4.32 shows that the majority of responses, concerning the consistency of Website C, were positive.

- The majority of the respondents (82%) indicated that the website responded to their inputs in a consistent manner (25% strongly disagree and 67% disagree), whilst 89% agreed that the visual theme and the consistent style of presentation, which was repeatedly used on all webpages throughout the website, unified the webpages into one coherent website (61% agree and 28% strongly agree).
- In addition, 94% of the respondents agreed that the same textual visual theme (in terms of font, text size and colour) was used consistently throughout the website (69% agree and 25% strongly agree). The entire sample also agreed, that they easily grasped the meaning of the icons, buttons and symbols employed throughout the website (83% agree and 17% strongly agree).

Error management

Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application allows the user to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors.

Table 0.40: Frequency table for the Error Management of Website C

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Not Applicable	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
49.	Error Management 1	1	3%	-	-	17	47%	18	50%		
50.	Error Management 2	12	33%	14	39%	5	14%	5	14%		
51.	Error Management 3	-	-	-	-	3	100%	-	-	33	92%
52.	Error Management 4	-	-	-	-	3	100%	-	-	33	92%
53.	Error Management 5	-	-	-	-	3	100%	-	-	33	92%
54.	Error Management 6	-	-	-	-	2	67%	1	33%	33	92%
55.	Error Management 7	1	33%	1	33%	-	-	1	33%	33	92%

Note: The 'not applicable' option was only relevant for items 51 – 55, hence available to those respondents that did not encounter an error message whilst browsing the website.

The responses concerning the error management capability of Website C were predominantly positive (see table 4.33).

- Almost all the respondents (97%) indicated that all links on the website were accurate in taking them to the intended destination (i.e. no errors were encountered) (47% agree and 50% strongly agree), whilst 72% indicated that they found it easy to recover when a mistake was made.
- In addition, 92% of the respondents reported that they did not encounter any error messages whilst browsing the website. With regards to the error message that the remaining 8% of the respondents were presented with, it can be reported that all the respondents (100%) agreed that the error message(s) was written in a clear understandable manner, which diagnosed the source and cause of the problem and suggested a helpful solution to the problem encountered.

Compatibility

Compatibility refers to the degree to which the system's method of operation matches the user's expectations based on their knowledge of other similar types of products and the 'outside world'.

Table 0.41: Frequency table for the Compatibility of Website C

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
56.	Compatibility 1	6	17%	19	53%	10	28%	1	3%
57.	Compatibility 2	-	-	4	11%	26	72%	6	17%
58.	Compatibility 3	-	-	2	6%	25	69%	9	25%
59.	Compatibility 4	-	-	-	-	29	81%	7	19%
60.	Compatibility 5	6	17%	26	72%	3	8%	1	3%

Consistent with the assessment of the other usability dimensions, the responses related to the compatibility of the website, was primarily positive (see table 4.34).

- For example, more than two thirds (70%) of the respondents indicated that they consider the menu/icons (navigational system) to be organised in a logical manner and 89% indicated that they easily grasped the intended destination of icons, buttons and/or symbols employed throughout the website.
- Almost the entire sample (94%) agreed (to varying degrees) that the links employed on the website, were clear and obvious in terms of the intended destination, and finally, the entire sample agreed that the terminology utilised was in line with standard information technology terminology.

User satisfaction

User satisfaction refers to the level of comfort users feels when using a product, as well as how acceptable the product is to users in achieving their goals.

Table 0.42: Frequency table for the User Satisfaction of Website C

Item No.	Dimension	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
61.	User Satisfaction 1	1	3%	2	6%	22	61%	11	31%
62.	User Satisfaction 2	10	28%	19	53%	6	17%	1	3%
63.	User Satisfaction 3	12	33%	20	56%	3	8%	1	3%
64.	User Satisfaction 4	14	39%	16	44%	5	14%	1	3%
65.	User Satisfaction 5	-	-	3	8%	19	53%	14	39%
66.	User Satisfaction 6	-	-	5	14%	23	64%	8	22%
67.	User Satisfaction 7	1	3%	1	3%	22	61%	12	33%
68.	User Satisfaction 8	1	3%	3	8%	20	56%	12	33%

As can be seen in table 4.35 the majority of the responses on the usability dimension, pertaining to potential applicants' level of satisfaction with Website C, were positive.

- The majority of the respondents reported that working with the website was a satisfying experience (61% agree and 31% strongly agree) and that they would use the website frequently (53% disagree and 28% strongly disagree).
- Furthermore, 61% agreed and 33% strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the time it took to locate and research an employment opportunity on the website.
- In addition, 92% indicated that they would recommend the website to users in search of employment opportunities (53% agrees and 39% strongly agrees), whilst almost all agreed (89%) that both occasional and regular users would like to use the website.

4.9 RESULTS: COMPARISON BETWEEN WEBSITES A, B & C

4.9.1 Introduction

Objective three of the website evaluation, entailed an investigation into whether a similarity existed between potential applicants' personal subjective evaluation of Websites A, B and C and their original percentile placement (i.e. top percentile - Website B, average percentile - Website C and bottom percentile - Website A) based on the results of the website audit. Therefore, a comparative review of the three websites is presented in this section.

4.9.2 Content evaluation and general appraisal of websites A, B & C

Content design comparison

As is evident from figures 4.11 and 4.12, Website B's (top percentile) content design, in terms of the sufficiency of information pertaining to employment opportunities (69%) and the organisational culture (97%), consistently obtained the most favourable rating by potential applicants. A similar appraisal also emerged with regards to the website's ability to encourage the disclosure of personal information online via the website (97%) and potential applicants' intention to return to Website B in search of employment opportunities (97%) (see figures 4.13 and 4.14). Potential applicants' evaluation of Website C (average

percentile) on these four aspects, were also consistently positive, although slightly less favourable than that of Website B. However, Website A's (bottom percentile) available content failed to provide potential applicants with sufficient information on its employment opportunities (89%) or its organisational culture (58%). Consequently, less than a third (31%) of the respondents indicated that they would feel confident and secure about disclosing their personal information, whilst only 19% indicated that they intended returning to Website A.

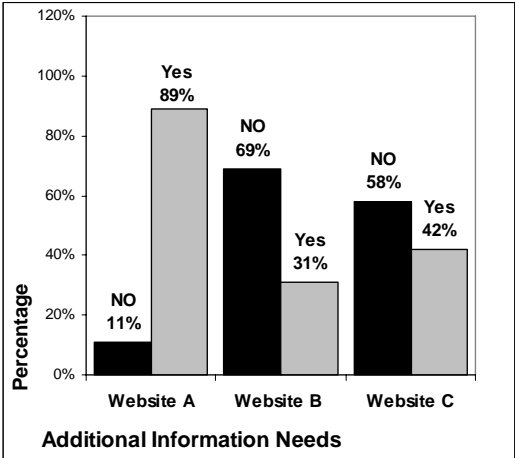


Figure 0.22: Additional information required as indicated per website

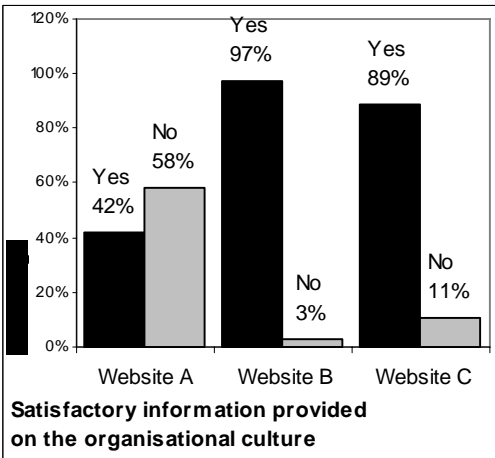


Figure 0.23: Satisfaction with information pertaining to the organisational culture provided

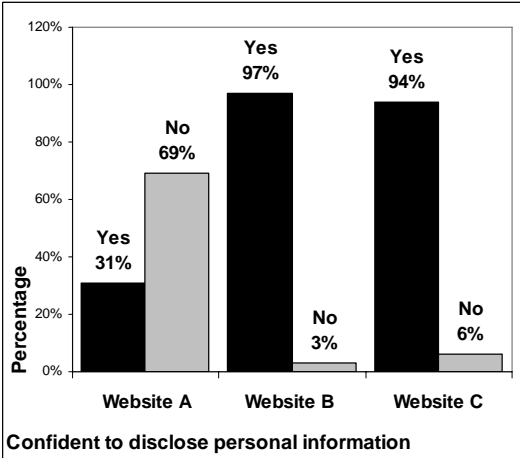


Figure 0.24: Would you feel confident and secure about disclosing personal information?

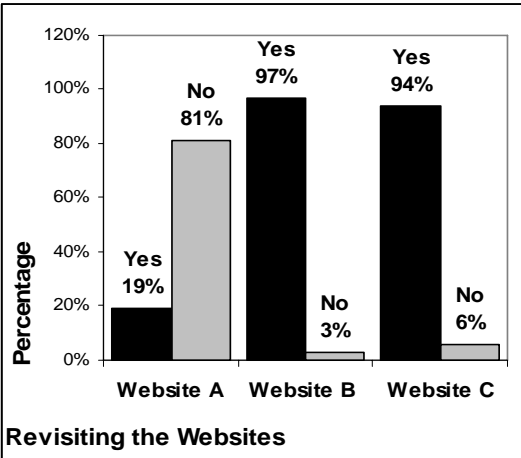


Figure 0.25: Would you revisit the website?

Based on the content related comparison, it may be concluded that Website B obtained the most favourable evaluation in terms of measured content dimensions, closely followed by Website C. The responses obtained pertaining to Website A's content design, does not reflect the same positive appraisal as reflected by Websites B and C. In summary, it may be concluded that the results of the subjective assessments corroborate the website placement as it emerged from the audit.

Index of the general appraisal of the three websites

In order to provide a comparative overview of potential applicants' general appraisal of the three websites, an index was calculated for each of the six general appraisal scales by summing all respondents' ratings to calculate a single mean score for each of the scales. The mean of the respondents' ratings on each scale (see table 4.36), as well as a comparative illustration of the means are presented in figure 4.15. In addition to the percentage mean and standard deviation, table 4.36 also shows respondents' minimum and maximum rating of each scale.

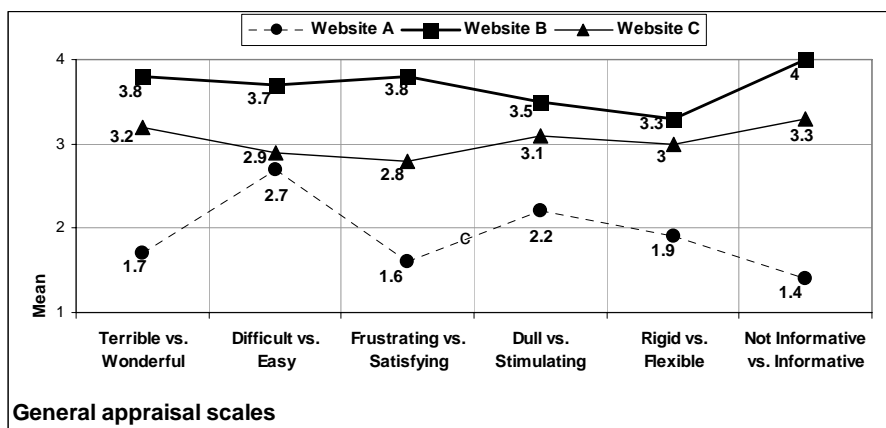


Figure 0.26: Websites A, B and C's calculated mean (on the four point semantic differential scale) per general appraisal scale

Table 0.43: Descriptive statistics for respondents' general appraisal of Websites A, B and C on the semantic differential scales

GENERAL APPRAISAL: WEBSITE A (BOTTOM PERCENTILE)					
General Appraisal Scale	Mean	Mean %	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1. Terrible vs. Wonderful	1.7	42%	0.71	1	3
2. Difficult vs. Easy	2.7	68%	0.97	1	4
3. Frustrating vs. Satisfying	1.6	41%	0.80	1	4
4. Dull vs. Stimulating	2.2	55%	1.04	1	4
5. Rigid vs. Flexible	1.9	47%	0.98	1	4
6. Not Informative vs. Informative	1.4	36%	0.65	1	4

GENERAL APPRAISAL: WEBSITE B (TOP PERCENTILE)					
General Appraisal Scale	Mean	Mean %	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1. Terrible vs. Wonderful	3.8	95%	0.40	3	4
2. Difficult vs. Easy	3.7	92%	0.52	2	4
3. Frustrating vs. Satisfying	3.8	94%	0.44	3	4
4. Dull vs. Stimulating	3.5	88%	0.61	2	4
5. Rigid vs. Flexible	3.3	81%	0.69	1	4
6. Not Informative vs. Informative	4.0	99%	0.17	3	4

GENERAL APPRAISAL: WEBSITE C (AVERAGE PERCENTILE)					
General Appraisal Scale	Mean	Mean %	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1. Terrible vs. Wonderful	3.2	79%	0.65	2	4
2. Difficult vs. Easy	2.9	73%	0.69	1	4
3. Frustrating vs. Satisfying	2.8	71%	0.74	1	4
4. Dull vs. Stimulating	3.1	76%	0.92	1	4
5. Rigid vs. Flexible	3.0	74%	0.81	1	4
6. Not Informative vs. Informative	3.3	83%	0.68	1	4

The means of all six scales, on both Websites B and C, are positioned amid two and four, indicating a positive general appraisal (table 4.36 and figure 4.15). However, the mean results of Website B (top percentile), on all six scales, are slightly higher and therefore more positive than that of Website C (average percentile). Only two of the calculated means for Website A (bottom percentile), are positioned between the values two and four (2.7 for the 'difficult vs. easy' scale and 2.2 for the 'dull vs. stimulating' scale). The means of the remaining four scales, are positioned amid zero and two, which indicate a negative general appraisal of Website A on the 'terrible vs. wonderful'-, 'frustrating vs. satisfying'-, 'rigid vs. flexible'- and 'not informative vs. informative' scales. Upon closer inspection, it is also evident that the means of Websites B and C on all six scales are higher than that of Website A (table 4.36 and figure 4.15).

Therefore, based on these results, it is evident that Website B obtained the most favourable 'general appraisal' on the six measured scales. This result, once again corroborate the fact that Website B was drawn from the 'top percentile' of the original sample, based on the audit findings. In addition, the results of Website A (obtained the least favourable general appraisal) and C (consistent higher means than Website A), also resemble their percentile placement in the original sample (A – bottom percentile and C- average percentile). In summary, it can therefore be concluded that the results obtained pertaining to potential applicants' general appraisal (content- and usability design) of the three website, consistently reflects the website rankings (percentile placement) determined from the audit.

4.9.3 Usability evaluation of websites A, B, & C

Index of the usability dimensions of the three evaluated websites

In order to compare the usability assessments obtained for each website, an index was calculated for each of the dimensions of the usability section of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire. This was achieved by calculating a total score for each respondent on each of the usability dimensions (which entailed summing the score of the individual items comprising a particular dimension, after reverse-scoring the necessary items). Since the number of items per usability dimension differs, the total scores computed for the various dimensions were not directly comparable. Hence, the total score of each dimension was converted to a percentage score. This was done by dividing each respondent's total score by the theoretical maximum for that dimension, and multiplying the resulting value by 100. For example, if a dimension comprises of 10 items, the theoretical maximum for that dimension would be 40 (e.g. 10 items multiplied by the highest value of 4, equals 40). Should a respondent have a total score of 20 out of 40, the percentage score is 50%. The mean percentages for the total scores of each usability dimension, is presented in table 4.37.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a statistical procedure designed to compare the means of dependent variables across the levels of an experimental research design (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Mitchelle & Jolley, 1988; Stangor, 2004). Since the same respondents evaluated Websites A, B and C, a repeated measures design (RMANOVA) was utilised, to compare the means of the various usability dimensions for Websites A, B and C (table 4.37).

Table 0.44: Descriptive statistics on the usability dimensions of Websites A, B and C

USABILITY EVALUATION: WEBSITE A – BOTTOM PERCENTILE							
No. of Items	Usability Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	P-value	Minimum	Maximum
11	General Usefulness/Utility	44	14	135.39	.0000	25	77
10	General Effectiveness	44	13	145.33	.0000	25	75
5	Efficiency	63	12	26.193	.0000	35	80
17	Ease of Use	70	9	13.640	.00001	50	96
5	Consistency	77	11	5.6810	.00517	50	95
7	Error Management	95	17	0.41046	.66493	20	100
5	Compatibility	68	12	17.484	.00000	40	100
8	User Satisfaction	48	16	68.407	.0000	25	78

USABILITY EVALUATION: WEBSITE B – TOP PERCENTILE							
No. of Items	Usability Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	P-value	Minimum	Maximum
11	General Usefulness/Utility	87	10	135.39	.00	70	100
10	General Effectiveness	86	9	145.33	.0000	70	100
5	Efficiency	80	11	26.193	.0000	60	100
17	Ease of Use	83	10	13.640	.00001	59	100
5	Consistency	85	11	5.6810	.00517	65	100
7	Error Management	96	12	0.41046	.66493	56	100
5	Compatibility	83	12	17.484	.00000	60	100
8	User Satisfaction	84	11	68.407	.0000	66	100

USABILITY EVALUATION: WEBSITE C – AVERAGE PERCENTILE							
No. of Items	Usability Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	P-value	Minimum	Maximum
11	General Usefulness/Utility	80	11	135.39	.00000	52	100
10	General Effectiveness	79	10	145.33	.00000	57	97
5	Efficiency	75	9	26.193	.00000	60	100
17	Ease of Use	77	10	13.640	.00001	53	100
5	Consistency	79	10	5.6810	.00517	65	100
7	Error Management	97	11	0.41046	.66493	56	100
5	Compatibility	77	10	17.484	.00000	55	100
8	User Satisfaction	80	13	68.407	.00000	47	100

Within each usability dimension's RMANOVA summary table, an *F*-value and *p*-value is provided. The *F* statistic is a calculated ratio of the 'between-group variance' and 'within-group variance'. Associated with the *F*-value, is an *p*-value, which is compared to alpha (.05). If the *p*-value is less than alpha (< .05), then *F* is considered statistically significant, which indicates that the null hypothesis (i.e. the calculated means of all three websites, on a particular dimension, are the same due to chance) is rejected. Thus, a statistical significant *F* indicates that the calculated means in the conditions are significantly different (the calculated mean, for Websites A, B and C, is not the same on the particular usability dimension in question). Should the *p*-value equal 0.000 (< 0.0001), it indicates that it is virtually impossible for the difference in the mean scores of Websites A, B and C (on a particular usability dimension), to be purely the result of sampling error (Stangor, 2004).

However, a statistical significant *F*-value only indicates whether the websites do in fact differ on a particular usability dimension, but not which website is significantly different from each other. Thus, in the cases where the *F*-test was significant, a post hoc multiple comparisons were employed, to test the difference between, and among particular group means. To this end, the Bonferroni multiple comparisons procedure was applied to compare the statistical significance of differences between the three websites on the usability dimensions. Should the *p*-value of two websites being compared, be less than alpha (< 0.05), it indicates that the two

websites are in fact different. In addition, the residual plot of each usability dimension was also inspected to check normality. In cases of non-normality, a non parametric test (Friendmans rank sum test) was utilised (e.g. the compatibility dimension).

Table 4.37 shows each usability dimension's calculated mean percentage, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores. It also provides the calculated p -values and F -values on each of the usability dimensions for Websites A, B and C.

General usefulness/utility

The null hypothesis for the RMANOVA states that the levels of the response variables (in this case general usefulness/utility) over the three websites are the same. As shown in table 4.37 and figure 4.16, there is a significant difference between the means of Websites A, B and C, on the general usefulness/utility dimension, (F) $2.70 = 135,39$ and $p < 0.0001$. F is statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$). The closer the F -value is to one, the more similar the websites are, on the particular usability dimension in question. However, for the general usefulness/utility dimension, F (135.39) indicates that the means of Websites A, B and C differ significantly from each other. The results of the Bonferroni test analysis confirmed ($p < 0.05$) that all three websites, individually, showed significant differences on the usefulness/utility dimension.

General effectiveness

The results of the RMANOVA for the general effectiveness dimension revealed significant differences between the three websites on this dimension ($p < 0.0001$). The null hypothesis, that the calculated means of Websites A, B and C are the same, is therefore rejected ($p < 0.05$) (figure 4.17 and table 4.37). Consequently, F (145.33) indicates that the Websites are significantly different on the general effectiveness dimension. Based on the calculated p -values ($p < 0.05$) of the Bonferroni test, it is evident that, individually, the means of the three websites are significantly different from each other on the general effectiveness dimension.

Efficiency

As shown in table 4.37 and figure 4.18, there is a significant difference between the means of Websites A, B and C on the efficiency dimension ($F(2.70) = 26.193$; $p < 0.0001$). The results of the Bonferroni test for this dimension revealed that Website A differs significantly from Website B ($p < 0.0001$) and from Website C ($p < 0.0001$). However, the p -value calculated for the comparison of Websites B and C ($p > 0.05$), indicates that the means of Websites B and C on the efficiency dimension, do not differ significantly.

Ease of use

As shown in table 4.37 and figure 4.19, a noteworthy statistical significant difference exist between the three websites on the 'general ease of use' dimension ($F(2.70) = 13.640$; $p < 0.05$). The Bonferroni test results revealed that Website A differs significantly from Website B ($p < 0.0001$) and from Website C ($p < 0.05$). However, the p -value calculated for the comparison of Websites B and C ($p > 0.05$), indicates that Websites B and C's calculated means on the 'ease of use' dimension, do not differ significantly.

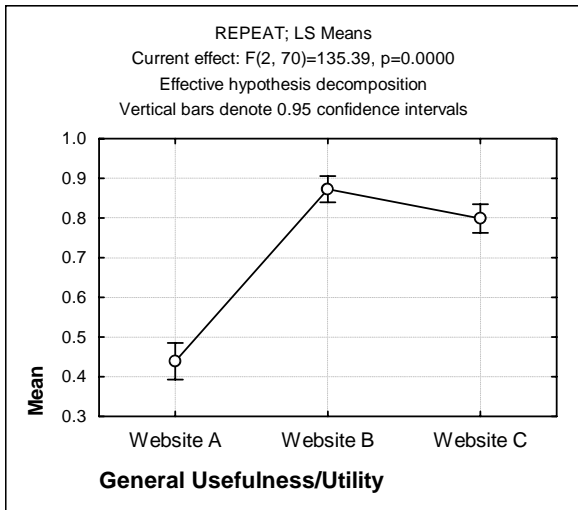


Figure 0.27: Usefulness/utility dimension means

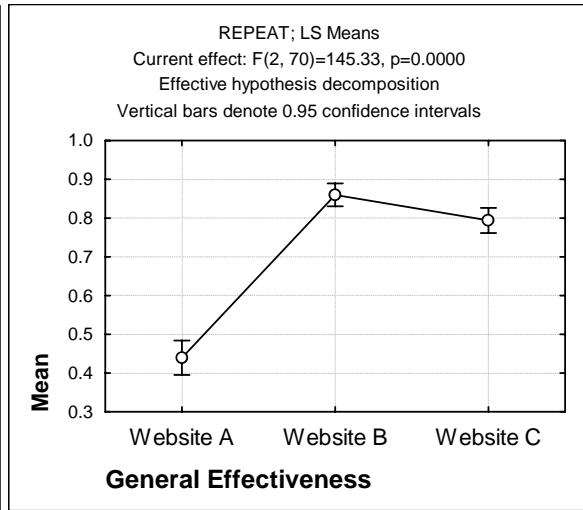


Figure 0.28: General effectiveness dimension means

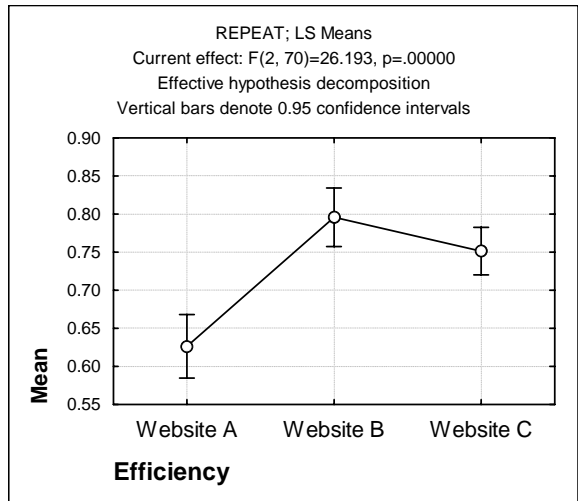


Figure 0.29: Efficiency dimension means

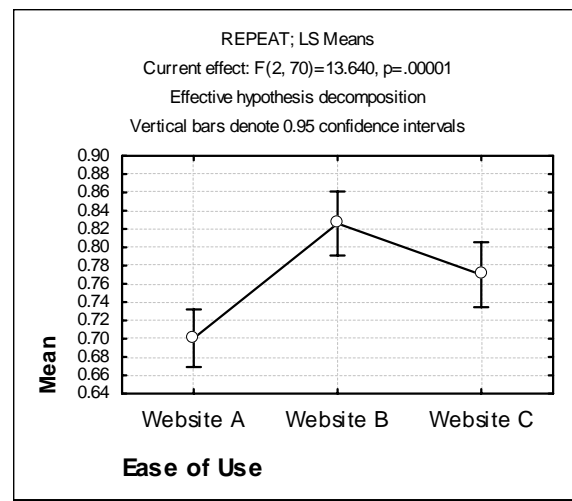


Figure 0.30: Ease of use dimension means

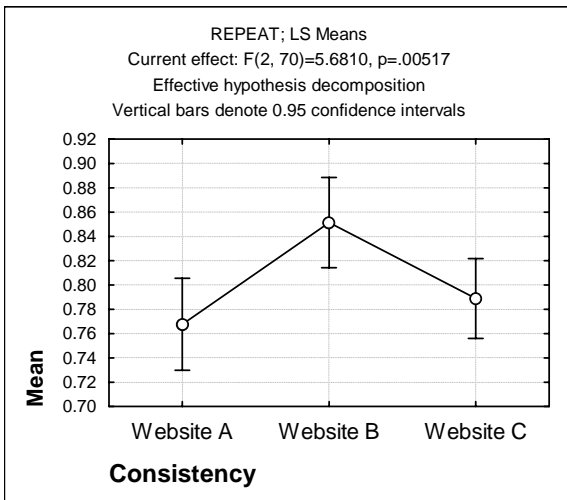


Figure 0.31: Consistency dimension means

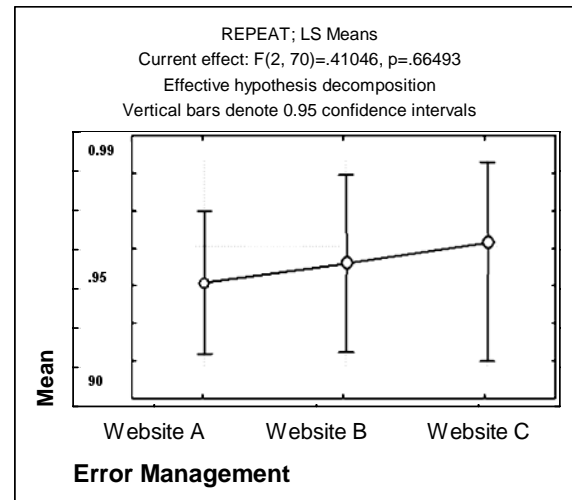


Figure 0.32: Error management dimension means

Consistency

Based on the RMANOVA results, statistically significant differences ($F(2,70) = 5.6810$; $p < 0.05$) exist between the three websites on the consistency dimension (see table 4.37 and figure 4.20). The Bonferroni test results reveal that, Website A differs significantly from Website B ($p < 0.05$). However, both the p-values calculated for the comparison of Website B and Website C ($p > 0.05$) and Website A and Website C ($p > 0.05$) was non significant. Hence, the means of Websites B and C as well as the means of Websites A and C on the consistency dimension, do not differ significantly.

Error management

Based on the results it is evident that the means for the three websites on the error management dimension, does not differ significantly from each other ($F(2,70) = 0.41046$; $p > 0.05$) (see table 4.37 and figure 4.21). Hence, no post hoc analyses were conducted.

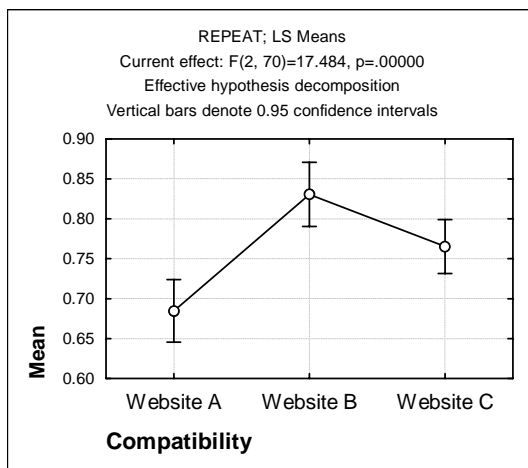


Figure 0.33: Compatibility dimension means

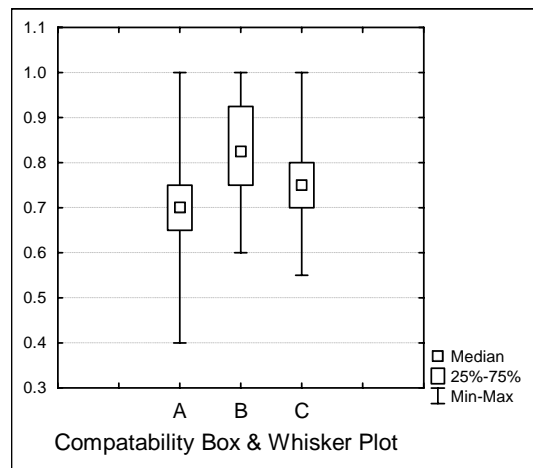


Figure 0.34: Compatibility box and whisker plot

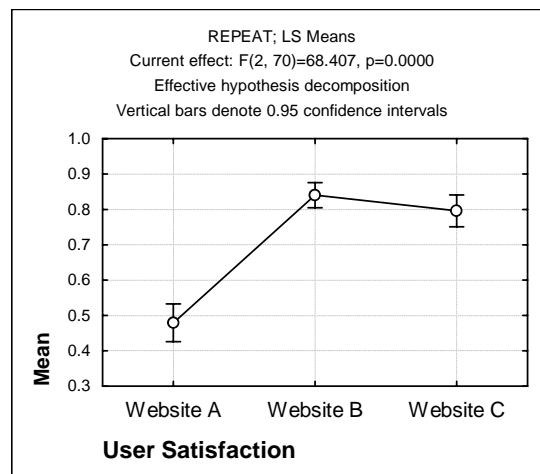


Figure 0.35: User satisfaction dimension means

Compatibility

As shown in table 4.37 and figure 4.22, a significant difference exists between the means of Websites A, B and C, on the compatibility dimension; ($F(207) = 17.484$, $p < 0.0001$). The results of the Bonferroni test confirmed that, individually Websites A, B and C differ significantly from each other on the compatibility

dimension. For this dimension, however, inspection of the residuals revealed that the normality assumption was violated. Hence, the analysis was repeated with a non-parametric test (Friedmans rank sum test), which confirms the original ANOVA results of statistical significant mean differences, with a p -value ($p < 0.05$) less than alpha (figure 4.23).

User satisfaction

The RMANOVA results revealed that the means on the user satisfaction dimension for the three websites differ significantly; $F(2,70) = 68.407$, $p < 0.0001$ (see table 4.37 and figure 4.24). The Bonferroni test analyses results revealed that Website A differs significantly from Websites B ($p < 0.0001$) and C ($p < 0.0001$). However, the means of the user satisfaction dimension of Websites B and C does not differ significantly ($p > 0.05$).

Summary of the usability evaluation results

As is evident from table 4.37 and figure 4.25, Website B obtained consistently higher means on all the usability dimensions, as opposed to those of Websites A and C. However, the Bonferroni test results revealed that:

- the only three usability dimensions where a significant mean differences ($p < 0.05$) existed between Website A, B and C, was on the general usefulness/utility -, general effectiveness -, and the compatibility dimension;
- the mean of Website A differed significantly ($p < 0.05$) from Website B and Website C on the efficiency -, ease of use - and user satisfaction dimension. Although between Website B and Website C, no significant difference existed, on these three usability dimensions;
- no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) existed between Websites A, B and C, on the error management dimension; and
- the only statistical significant difference detected on the consistency dimension, was between Website A and Website B. The Bonferroni test was unable to detect a significant difference between the means of Websites C and A, or between Websites C and B.

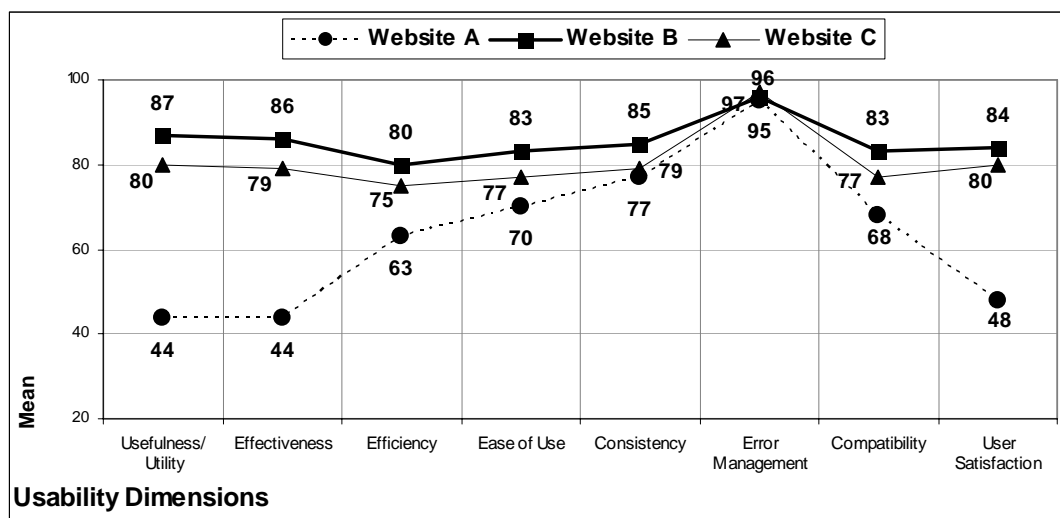


Figure 0.36: Plotted mean distributions of usability dimensions for Websites A, B and C

The third objective of the website evaluation was to explore whether a similarity existed between the percentile placement (top, average and bottom) of Websites A, B and C based on the results of the website audit and potential applicants' subjective assessments. Based on the audit results, Website B was selected from the 'top' percentile, Website C from the 'average' percentile and Website A from the 'bottom' percentile (table 4.5).

Based on the findings of the usability evaluation, the researcher concludes the following pertaining to the percentile placement of:

- **Website A:** The Bonferroni test revealed that the means of Website A differed significantly ($p < 0.05$) from that of Website B and Website C on the majority (six) of the usability dimensions. In addition to these significant differences between the means, the calculated mean on each of the usability dimensions for Website A, was consistently lower than that of Websites B and Website C (table 4.37 and figure 4.25). Thus the bottom percentile placement of Website A (based on the audit results) was confirmed by potential applicants' evaluation of Website A.
- **Website B:** The Bonferroni test results concerning the usability evaluation of Websites B and C, revealed no statistical significant difference on four of the usability dimensions, whereas on three of the dimensions a statistical significant difference between the means was evident. In addition to the three significant mean differences, Website B's calculated mean for seven of the usability dimensions, was consistently higher than that of Website C. Based on these results, the researcher consider respondents' subjective evaluation of Website B's usability, to be slightly more favourable than that of Website C. Hence, the original top percentile placement of Website B (based on the website audit results), is confirmed by potential applicants' evaluation of Website B.
- **Website C:** The Bonferroni test results concerning the usability of Websites C and B, revealed no statistical significant difference on four of the usability dimensions, whereas on three of the usability dimensions a statistical significant difference between the means was evident. The Bonferroni test also revealed that the means of Website A differ significantly ($p < 0.05$) from that of Website C on six of the usability dimensions. In addition to these Bonferroni test results, the calculated mean for Website C on each of the usability dimensions, was consistently higher than that of Website A, but also consistently lower than that of Website B. Consequently, based on these results, the researcher considers respondents' subjective evaluation of Website C's usability, to be more favourable than that of Website A, but less favourable than that of Website B. Hence, the original 'average' percentile placement of Website C (based on the website audit results), is confirmed by potential applicants' evaluation of Website C.

The researcher therefore concludes that subjective usability evaluation of Websites A, B and C by potential applicants, reflects favourably and consistently the results (percentile placement) of the website audit.

4.10 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to report the research results obtained from the various measurement instruments. Within this chapter, the analyses of the data was discussed in terms of the specific research objectives formulated within each of the research goals as specified in the preceding chapters.

The primary aim was to describe the extent to which the websites of the sample of SA organisations comply with the content- and usability design benchmarks, and hence may be more successful in facilitating successful online applicant behaviour. The audit results provided an overview of the extent to which the identified website content- and usability design benchmarks were complied with, by the sample of organisations. Upon completion of the website audit, three websites were selected and subjected to an evaluation by potential applicants. A detailed description of the findings pertaining to potential applicants' general appraisal of Websites A, B and C's content- and usability assessments of the three Websites, was provided.

In the following chapter, a summary of the general conclusions that can be drawn from the interpretation of the data, a discussion on the problems and limitations experienced, as well as recommendations for future research, are discussed.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Individuals in search of an employment opportunity, progress through a series of decision-making stages, which is very similar to that which consumers experience when deciding on a purchase (Summey & Anderson, 1992). The five decision-making stages, common to both the purchasing and the employment-seeking process, are the recognition of a need, information search, the evaluation of alternatives, decision-making and post choice evaluation (Cross, 1999; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004; Summey & Anderson, 1992). Current successful marketers align their marketing efforts to each stage of the decision making process, in order to provide consumers with the necessary information and incentive to make a purchase decision (Maurer & Liu, 2007; Summey & Anderson, 1992). In applying this creative consumer-behaviour approach, organisations can develop similar strategies to assist potential applicants in their job decision-making process (i.e. the creation of an employment need and the search for career related information).

Organisations at the forefront of Internet recruiting share a common business model (attract, convince, and capture), which enables them to optimise the effectiveness and efficiency of their website to gain a competitive advantage through the recruitment of key intellectual capital (Cober et al., 2000; Taleo Research, 1998). The alignment of the 'convince' phase of an organisation's online recruitment strategy, with the second stage of potential applicants' job decision-making process (i.e. the search for career related information) should enable organisations to maximise the potential of their website as a recruitment method.

Organisations should view potential applicants as customers and therefore sell the idea of working for the organisation and the organisation being an employer of choice to them (Cappelli, 2001; Maurer & Liu, 2007). Based on the AIDA formula (Blem, 2000; Cober et al., 2003; Lamb et al., 2004), once potential applicants' *attention* is captured sufficiently, to merit a visit to an organisational website, maintaining their *interest* is imperative. This presents the organisation with the unique opportunity to make a sales pitch aimed at convincing potential applicants of its suitability and status as the employer of choice. In addition to influencing potential applicants' initial attraction to the organisation, the presentation of the career related information they seek also influences the attractiveness of the organisation as an employer (Cober et al., 2003). Effectively communicating employment information via an organisational website, could ultimately result in either a *desire* to work for the organisation (or not) and therein prompt the submission of an application (*action*) or the continuation of their search (*action*) elsewhere.

It is therefore crucial that the content of the website should be adequate, complete and relevant with respect to the needs of potential applicants. The attractiveness of an organisation as a potential employer and potential applicants' initial decision to apply are greatly influenced by the amount of information available (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993). This implies that the quality of the information potential applicants are exposed to, may result in an enhancement of the organisation's image, its attractiveness as a potential employer and potential applicants' intention of pursuing employment within the organisation. It is important though that the information potential applicants are presented with; do not facilitate the creation of unrealistic expectations concerning advertised employment opportunities (Cober et

al., 2000). Such unrealistic expectations might cause dissatisfaction once the applicant is appointed, which may result in an increase in labour turnover and ultimately the inability to recover the organisation's initial investments in recruitment and training (Story, 2002). The goal is to provide a realistic picture of the organisation that would enable potential applicants to determine whether a good person-organisational fit can be achieved.

Even though the content of a website is considered an integral aspect of an effective online recruitment strategy, it may not be the only factor related to enhancing successful online applicant behaviour. The facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour could more realistically be proposed as being influenced by both the content- and usability design of the website, utilised for online recruitment purposes. These two aspects of website design may be considered as equally important, since the usability of a website is responsible for the effective and efficient communication of the informative content in a satisfactory manner to potential applicants (Cober et al., 2000; Cober et al., 2003; De Marsico & Levialdi, 2003). For example, Williamson et al. (2003) have proposed that the development of positive attributions concerning an organisation greatly depends on the extent to which a website visitor is satisfied with the usability of the website. Whilst, Karr (2000) and Pastore (cited in Maurer & Liu, 2007, p. 305) have also indicated that not only could a poorly designed website result in the rejection of considering an organisation as a potential employer, but also in the rejection of an employment opportunity. Organisations are therefore in the position to increase the attractiveness of their organisation and increase their status as an employer of choice, through the presentation of a website with quality content and a high level of usability (Cober et al., 2000; Cober et al., 2003).

Within this chapter, the main findings of the study pertaining to the specified research goals and objectives are briefly summarised. In addition to discussing the shortcomings of the study, recommendations for future research are also presented.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose and primary aim of this study was to audit the websites of a sample of South African organisations, drawn from a survey conducted by the Corporate Research Foundation (2005) to identify the 'best' SA employers. The subsequent goals of the audit were to determine the extent to which the sample's websites are used for online recruitment, as well as the extent to which the design might contribute to its ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. The latter refers to potential applicants' ability to browse the organisational website without any difficulty and obtain relevant and sufficient information concerning the organisation and its listed vacancies. This should not only enable potential applicants to assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation (i.e. decide whether he/she would like to work for the organisation), but also to contact the organisation in order to address additional information needs or questions.

Underlying the primary aim and a prerequisite for the achievement thereof, was the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks, from relevant published research (pertaining to website usability and online recruitment) that may be instrumental in the process of facilitating successful online applicant

behaviour. The identified benchmarks for website design constituted the core of this study, since it were the basis upon which the questionnaires were developed, the audit conducted and the three websites evaluated.

The study was conducted in three phases, during which the four goals and their linked objectives were addressed by means of survey research (self-administered questionnaires). The following section presents a summary of the main findings and conclusions obtained from the data analysis as described in Chapter 4.

5.2.1 Phase 1: identification of website design benchmarks and the development of the website benchmarks checklist

The first phase of this study comprised of two goals and three objectives. The goals required the identification of website content- (first goal) and usability design benchmarks (second goal), that have been linked to enhancing a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. The next step was the development of a Website Benchmarks Checklist (third objective of phase one). First, the identified benchmarks were consolidated into the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire and submitted to Lawshe's (1975) content validation technique. Based on the usability- and recruitment experts' input, only those benchmark items that illustrated sufficient content validity, were retained and incorporated into Website Benchmarks Checklist (see sections 3.8.2 and 3.8.3).

Considering the fact that the benchmarks incorporated into the Website Benchmarks Questionnaire were previously established and recommended practices, compiled from various sources of literature, the researcher anticipated more of the benchmarks to be retained. However, it would seem that both the content- and usability experts were surprisingly modest in their rating of the benchmark items as being 'essential'. Based on the extent to which the experts evaluated the benchmarks as 'essential', 'useful, but not essential' or 'not necessary', it appears that the experts preferred the 'safe' option (useful, but not essential) and exhibited a rather modest approach with the 'essential' rating.

5.2.2 Phase 2: website audit

The second phase of this study entailed an audit of the websites of the sample (n=50) of SA organisations (third goal). The audit entailed the evaluation of the websites based upon the checklist of website content- and usability design benchmarks (see section 4.3 for the specified objectives of the audit).

Summary and interpretation: usage of organisational websites as a recruitment method

As reported in section 4.3.2, the data obtained revealed that at the time of the audit, the majority (82%) of the sample employed their organisational website as a recruitment method. Based on the results, it was concluded that the majority of the sample of SA employers surveyed has adjusted their recruitment strategy, to incorporate the Internet as a media source, by means of online recruitment via their organisational website.

It is important to note that the sample of the 'best' SA employers (n=50) (Corporate Research Foundation, 2005), was selected based on it consisting of organisations that are in the forefront of incorporating new strategies, especially in the field of recruitment, selection and human resources. The assumption underlying the sample's selection for the audit was that these organisations are most likely to be classified as innovators

and early adopters of recruitment via their organisational website. Consequently, the results pertaining to the extent to which websites are employed as a recruitment method, is therefore a 'best case scenario' and can not be generalised, since the sample is not representative of all SA employers. The results, however, do indicate that online recruitment via organisational websites is a noteworthy phenomena in SA, although the true extent of its usage is not known.

Currently only 10.3% of the SA population have access to the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2007b). However, a number of factors do exist, that can either promote or hinder the diffusion and usage of the Internet on national, organisational and individual level within developing countries, such as SA (Bazar, 1997). These factors include the country's infrastructure; level of economic development; government policies and regulations towards telecommunication and Internet services; IT penetration in the country itself; language (which is considered a barrier if the Internet application is not available in the local language) and cultural factors (such as individual beliefs, value systems and attitudes towards information sharing). Provided the right conditions are in place, to facilitate and promote Internet usage on an organisational and individual level, the extent to which the SA population have access and use it, should also increase. Consequently, such an increase in Internet access and usage should have a positive impact on the extent to which SA organisations employ their website as a recruitment method.

Summary and interpretation: website audit results

The second objective of the audit was to determine the extent of the sample of organisations' compliance with the website design benchmarks. Based on the prerequisite (i.e. at least one employment opportunity had to be listed on the website) to qualify and be included in the audit, 15 websites were eliminated from the remainder of the study.

The audit results revealed that based on the sample's calculated usability total scores (which ranged from 80% to 100%), the entire sample was positioned in the 'top percentile' (68% - 100%). The researcher therefore concluded that the usability design of the sample's websites might contribute and be conducive to its ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. For example, it may facilitate the effectiveness, efficiency with which the informative content is communicated, which ultimately, may increase potential applicants' overall satisfaction. This should then enable more effortless and user-friendly interaction in gaining access to the informative content (be the potential applicant), in order to make an informed decision pertaining to the advertised employment opportunity and the suitability of the organisation as a potential employer. Derived from the results it is evident that the sample of organisations [or the individual(s) contracted by the organisation, to design their websites] are aware of, and comprehend the importance of incorporating the principles of usability into website design.

The results pertaining to the sample's incorporation of the website content design benchmarks was notably different from its incorporation of the usability benchmarks. Based on the calculated total scores for the adherence to the content benchmarks, two-thirds of the sample was positioned in the top percentile and the remaining third of the sample, with total scores that ranged from 19% to 67%, was positioned in the bottom-(0% - 33%) and average percentiles (34% - 67%). Hence, the researcher concluded that the content design of the majority (two-thirds in the top percentile) of the sample's websites, may be conducive to its ability to

facilitate successful online applicant behaviour (Cober et al., 2003; Murphy & Tam, 2004). However, the results concerning the remaining third of the sample, suggest that a number of these organisations might just be following the 'movement' of employing their organisational website as a recruitment method (e.g. just adding a recruitment page to its website). Implying that it is most likely that an inadequate amount of time, energy and resources were invested, to ensure that the website's content design is supportive and conducive to its function as a recruitment source. It is therefore concluded that the content design of a third of the websites' is not operating at its full potential in terms of meeting or satisfying potential applicants' information needs, which, as a result, may impact unfavourably on these organisations' attractiveness as an employer of choice (Cober et al., 2003; Murphy & Tam, 2004). Consequently, not only may the content-design of these websites not succeed in contributing to the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour, but it may also fail to assist potential applicants in their search for career related information (i.e. the second stage of the job decision-making process). Ultimately, this might affect the ability of a website operating as a recruitment source, responsible for generating a satisfactory pool of qualified applicants, adversely.

Selection and percentile placement of websites A, B & C

The third objective of the audit required the selection of one website from each of the three percentiles that the sample was divided into. Hence, a single total score representative of the extent to which the website's design adhered to the recommended content - and usability design benchmarks, was calculated. Based on these final calculated total scores, the sample was divided into three adjusted percentiles (which ranged from 53% to 100%) with an interval of 15% between each percentile. Website A (53%) was selected from the bottom percentile, Website C (84%) from the average percentile and Website B (88%) from the top percentile (see table 4.5). However, it is important to note that Website C was the best-ranked website in the average percentile (which was selected due to logistic challenges pertaining to the other websites in that percentile). Hence, the researcher anticipated the possibility that only a slight amount of variability could exist in terms of the results based on potential applicants' subjective evaluation of Websites C and B.

5.2.3 Phase 3: evaluation of the three organisational websites

In essence, an organisation's online recruitment strategy can be divided into three equally important sequential steps (i.e. attract, convince and capture), each of which serves as the foundation for the following step. Thus implying, that the success of a website as a recruitment method, depends to a large degree, on the organisation's ability to firstly attract job seekers to the website and secondly, convince potential applicants of the organisation's suitability as an employer. Finally, the third step entails capturing potential new employees via the submission of an application (Cappelli, 2001; Cober et al., 2003; Taleo Research, 1999; Thomas & Ray, 2000).

The focus of this study was on the convince step in terms of the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks that may be conducive to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. The rationale being that the quality of potential applicants' interaction with a website is critical to its success as a recruitment method. It not only influence potential applicants' opinion and perception of the corporate image of the organisation, but it also impacts on the organisation's attractiveness as an employer of choice and potential applicants' intention of pursuing employment within the organisation

(Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; De Marsico & Levialedi, 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993). Hence, an investigation of the quality of potential applicants' interaction with the selected websites, constituted the third phase and the fourth goal of this study. This entailed a subjective evaluation of Websites A, B and C by potential applicants (see section 3.6 for an outline of the three objectives).

The following section summarises the key findings obtained from the Website Evaluation Questionnaire, designed to capture potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions regarding the content- and usability design of Websites A, B and C.

Discussion: sample properties

In accordance with being positioned in the Net-generation (sample's mean age of 24), which comprises of individuals born between 1977 and 1997 (Leung, 2003), almost the entire sample indicated that they use computers on a daily basis for personal and work related activities. The majority of the respondents also reported that they have used the Internet and specifically browsed organisational websites in their search for employment opportunities, whilst more than half have applied for employment opportunities that they located on the Internet or organisational websites. Although not empirically investigated, the sample properties (i.e. frequency of computer and Internet usage, youthfulness and relatively high level of academic qualifications) combined with being positioned within the Net-generation, may be positively related to their willingness to adopt the Internet as a media source to search for employment opportunities.

It is useful to note that the respondents indicated that the two media sources, which they prefer and most frequently use in their job searches, are specialised job sites and organisational websites. Although the sample of potential applicants surveyed here, should not at all, be considered as being representative of job seekers in a wider SA context, their media source preference and usage do indicate the importance of an online presence, should an organisation desire to increase its visibility as a potential employer. In addition, it also emphasises the necessity of ensuring a satisfying 'first experience' (through adequate content and usability design) in order to maximise the organisation's attractiveness as an employer of choice, as well as its ability to convince potential applicants via the website content, of its suitability as an employer (Cober et al., 2003). For example, research indicates that potential applicants' initial decision concerning whether to contact and pursue employment within an organisation, is greatly influenced by the information available, as well as the general impression they have regarding the image and reputation of the organisation (Cappelli, 2001; Gatewood et al., 1993; Maurer & Liu, 2007). Hence, an increase in potential applicants' exposure to useful and relevant information, could enhance the organisation's image held by potential applicants, the attractiveness of the organisation as an employer and applicants' willingness to submit an application and follow up on an interview (Brice & Waung, 2002; Cober et al., 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993).

Summary and discussion: content design assessment of websites A, B & C

Section B of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire focused on potential applicants' assessment of the three websites' content design for recruitment purposes (i.e. data gathered with open-ended questions), but it also included six semantic differential scales, aimed at determining potential applicants' general appraisal of the websites' content- and usability design. Within the following section, a brief integrated summary and

discussion pertaining to the findings of potential applicants' general assessment of Websites A, B and C's content design (first objective), are provided.

Summary: Content design evaluation and general appraisal of the websites

As argued in section 4.9.2 a similar assessment of the content design of the websites emerged from both the open-ended questions and the semantic differential scales. The content design of Website B (top percentile) consistently obtained the most favourable rating by the sample in terms of the sufficiency of information pertaining to employment opportunities and the organisational culture (see figures 4.11 and 4.12). The results on the 'not informative vs. informative' semantic differential scale, confirmed the favourability of respondents' appraisal of Website B's content design (see figure 4.15). A similar assessment was also apparent with regards to Website B's ability to encourage the online disclosure of personal information via the website (see figure 4.13). Based on the results it is evident that the sample considered the information provided via Website B, to be adequate and relevant with regards to their information needs. The fact that the majority of the sample indicated that they intend to return to Website B in search of employment opportunities (see figure 4.14), could be related to the quality of their interaction with the content design of Website B being satisfactory (as confirmed with the positive appraisal of Website B on the 'frustrating vs. satisfying' scale).

As is evident from figures 4.11 to 4.15, potential applicants' assessment of Website C (average percentile) were also consistently positive, although slightly less favourable than that of Website B. However, the evaluation of Website A's (bottom percentile) content design was notably less favourable than that of Websites B and C. For example, in addition to the negative appraisal of 'not informative' on the semantic differential scale, respondents also indicated that Website A's available content failed to provide sufficient information on its employment opportunities or its organisational culture. Accordingly, less than a third of the sample indicated that they would feel confident and secure about disclosing their personal information, whilst less than a fifth of the sample indicated that they intend to return to Website A. This unfavourable assessment of Website A was also apparent from the negative appraisal received in terms of being considered 'terrible' and 'frustrating' on the respective semantic differential scales.

Discussion: content design assessment of the websites

From the results, it may be argued that the quality of potential applicants' interaction with the website, greatly affected their opinion, assessment and intention to return to the website. This points towards the fact that the extent to which the content design manages to assist potential applicants in their search for career related information (second stage of the job-decision-making process) and satisfy their information needs, seems to be a crucial determinant of the sample's satisfaction and a valuable possible predictor of the sample's intention to return to the website. This confirms the importance of ensuring that the content design of websites (used for recruitment purposes), is adequate and relevant with regards to potential applicants' information needs.

Summary and discussion: usability design evaluation of websites A, B & C

Section C of the Website Evaluation Questionnaire focused on assessing potential applicants' attitudes and perceptions concerning the general usability of the websites. Usability, according to the ISO (9241-11), is

defined as “the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use” (cited in De Marsico & Leviardi, 2003, p. 382). Derived from the definition, usability refers to the quality of use within a specific context of use. Hence, it may be argued that a good usability design (on its own) is not sufficient, since the usability of a product (e.g. website) greatly depends on the extent to which a product enable users (e.g. potential applicants) to complete a task or achieve a specific goal in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner. Implying that, although the three websites received a high usability rating (total score) based on their incorporation of the benchmarks, a subjective evaluation of their usability, by potential applicants, is considered a more truthful and accurate assessment of their usability.

Within the following section a brief integrated summary and discussion pertaining to potential applicants' subjective evaluation of Websites A, B and C's usability design (second objective), is provided (see table 4.37).

Summary: usability design assessment of websites A, B & C

As discussed in section 4.9.3, the findings pertaining to potential applicants' subjective evaluation, revealed the following concerning Websites A, B, and C's:

- **General usefulness/utility.** Potential applicants' assessment of the usefulness/utility of Website A was negative, whereas their assessment of Websites B and C indicated a strong positive general impression. Analyses of the RMANOVA and Bonferroni test results revealed that significant differences existed amongst the calculated means of Websites A, B and C on the general usefulness/utility dimension.
- **General effectiveness.** Overall, the general perception of Website A's effectiveness was negative. However, respondents' perception of Websites B and C's effectiveness was positive. The RMANOVA and Bonferroni test results revealed that significant differences existed amongst the calculated means of the three websites, on the general effectiveness dimension.
- **Efficiency.** To varying degrees, respondents' general perception of Websites A, B and C's efficiency was positive. The results of the repeated measures analyses revealed that a significant difference existed amongst the calculated means of respondents' perception of the websites' efficiency. The Bonferroni test results indicated that Website A differed significantly from Websites B and C. However, no significant difference existed between the p -value calculated for the means of Websites B and C ($p > 0.05$).
- **Ease of use.** Respondents' 'ease of use' perception across all three websites was positive. The results of the repeated measures analyses, revealed a significant difference between the calculated means of the three websites on the 'ease of use' dimension. The Bonferroni test results revealed that Website A differed significantly from Websites B ($p < 0.0001$) and C ($p < 0.05$). However, the results also revealed that the means of Website B did not differ significantly ($p > 0.05$) from Website C.
- **Consistency.** The results revealed that respondents' perception of all three websites on the consistency dimension was positive. The results of the repeated measures analysis revealed a significant difference between the calculated means of the websites. The Bonferroni test results indicated that Website A differed significantly from Website B ($p < 0.05$); however, it also revealed that no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) existed between Websites B and C or between Websites A and C.

- **Error management.** To varying degrees, respondents' evaluation of the websites' error management (or rather error prevention) capability was positive. The results of the repeated measures analysis revealed that no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) existed between the calculated means of Websites A, B and C on the error management dimension.
- **Compatibility.** The evaluation results revealed respondents' perception of Websites A, B and C on the compatibility dimension to be positive. The repeated measures analyses and Bonferroni test results revealed a significant difference between the calculated means of the websites on the 'compatibility' dimension.
- **User satisfaction.** The general perception of Website A on the user satisfaction dimension was negative, whereas respondents' perception of Websites B and C was positive. The repeated measures analysis results revealed a significant difference between respondents' evaluation of Websites A, B and C. The Bonferroni test results indicated that the mean of Website A differed significantly ($p < 0.0001$) from the mean of both Websites B and C; however, the results did not reveal a significant difference between the means of Websites B and C.

Discussion: usability design assessment of websites A, B & C

It is important to note that based on the initial usability total scores calculated for the website audit, the entire sample was positioned in the top percentile (i.e. not one of the 35 websites' obtained a usability total score below 80%) (see section 4.3.6 and figure 4.5). More specifically, the usability total scores of the three selected websites were 100% for Website B, 94% for Website C and 86% for Website A. Therefore, in theory, based on the high usability total scores that the websites received during the audit, it would have been logical to assume that potential applicants' assessment of the dimensions should be positive and a significant difference should be very small or non-existent between the usability dimensions of the three websites.

However, from the previously discussed results, it is evident that potential applicants' subjective assessment of the usability dimensions did differ. These differences were most apparent on those usability dimensions where the website's content design played an influential role / contributed to the favourability of the usability evaluation. Hence, the usability dimensions where the content design influenced the usability results include those dimensions where potential applicants' ability to achieve a certain goal or complete a task, greatly depended on the content available on the website. For example, the user satisfaction dimension is influenced by potential applicants' ability to achieve a certain goal (e.g. locate an employment opportunity and gather satisfactory information pertaining to the opportunity and the organisational culture). Therefore, irrespective of how usable the website is or how comfortable potential applicants feel using the website, if the content of the website fails to meet potential applicants' information needs and fail to assist them in their decision-making process, the user will not have a satisfactory experience.

In addition to the user satisfaction dimension, other dimensions where the content design interacted and consequently influenced potential applicants' usability assessment of the websites include the usefulness/utility-, effectiveness-, efficiency-, and the ease of use dimensions. However, the dimensions where the content design's influence on the usability assessment was most apparent - to the extent that it resulted in a negative assessment of Website A by potential applicants - include the usefulness/utility-,

effectiveness- and user satisfaction dimensions. In addition, the Bonferroni test results also revealed that Website A's mean differed significantly from the means of Websites B and C on all five usability dimensions, perceived to be influenced by the content design of the website (i.e. user satisfaction-, usefulness/utility-, effectiveness-, efficiency- and the ease of use dimensions).

Potential applicants' positive evaluation of the three remaining usability dimensions (i.e. the consistency-, error management- and compatibility dimensions) that are theoretically considered not to be influenced by the website's content design corroborates the audit results pertaining to the three websites having a high level of usability. In addition to the strong positive evaluation that all three dimensions received from potential applicants, the significant differences (Bonferroni test) between the calculated means of the websites on each of the three dimensions were small or non-existent (e.g. the error management dimension).

Comparison of the website audit and website evaluation percentile placement of websites A, B & C

The third objective of the website evaluation was to investigate whether a similarity existed between potential applicants' personal subjective evaluation of Websites A, B and C and the original percentile placement (top, average and bottom) of each website based on the results of the website audit. Hence, provided within the following section are a brief integrated summary of the findings (percentile placement) and conclusions drawn from potential applicants' subjective assessment of Websites A, B and C's content- and usability design.

Summary: website content- and usability assessment of the websites

Based on the content evaluation (i.e. open-ended questions) and general appraisal (i.e. semantic differential scales) of the content design of the three websites, Website B received the most favourable assessment, closely followed by Website C (see section 4.9.2). As previously stated, the researcher anticipated the possibility that only a slight variation could exist between the assessment of Websites B and C, since the latter was the best-ranked website (84%) in the average percentile. In addition, the assessment of Website A was consistently more negative than that of Websites B and C. Hence, it was concluded that the ranking of the websites, indicated by these results, corroborate the results (i.e. percentile placement of Websites A, B and C) of the website audit.

As argued in section 4.9.3, the results obtained concerning respondents' perception of Websites A, B and C's usability was consistent with the findings of the website audit. Based on the results obtained, it was evident that respondents' subjective evaluation of Website C's usability, to be more favourable than that of Website A, but less favourable than that of Website B. The results of the evaluation, therefore confirmed the audit results in terms of the percentile placement of Websites B (top percentile), C (average percentile) and A (bottom percentile). Hence, it was concluded that the percentile placement of the websites based on the subjective usability evaluation by potential applicants, favourably and consistently verify the results (percentile placement) of the website audit.

Discussion: website content- and usability assessment of the websites

The results of the subjective evaluation show that potential applicants consider the design of the websites to be different (in terms of the dimensions that constitute the content- and usability design) to the extent that it

corroborates the audit results (in terms of the websites' percentile placement). From the results concerning potential applicants' subjective experiences, it may be argued that the extent to which the website incorporate the benchmarks could serve as an indicator that can be used to ensure that a website's design is conducive to the goal it is designed for. For the purpose of this study, for example, the goal of the website's design, referred to its ability to operate successfully as a recruitment method, as well as being able to convince potential applicants of the organisation's suitability as an employer through the communication of informative content in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The descriptive research methods, which was primarily utilised to conduct the study, was aimed at describing the extent to which the websites of a sample of the 'best' SA employers (Corporate Research Foundation, 2005) incorporate the identified website design benchmarks (content and usability) that may increase its ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.

In addition to being considered the most frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences, survey research is also the most common employed method, to obtain primary data (Babbie, 1995; Black, 1999; Stangor, 2004). Amongst the strengths survey research has to offer, is its ability to gather information regarding attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences from large samples with less effort and expense than most other data gathering techniques. It enables the researcher to produce a "snapshot" (intensely accurate and reliable description) of a specific phenomenon (e.g. behaviour, attitudes, experiences and opinions), at a given time (Reaves, 1992). Hence, the decision to employ survey research in this study was based on its ability to effectively capture (a) the opinions of recruitment- and usability experts regarding the website design benchmarks, (b) the results of the website audit, and (c) potential applicants' subjective attitudes and perceptions of Websites A, B and C. However, using survey research is not without its shortcomings or weaknesses. The researcher is aware of this and that the results obtained, should be viewed in light of the fact that survey research generally demonstrates weak validity, is considered to be inflexible and seldom able to deal with the context of social life, since it can only collect self-report of recalled past actions or prospective (hypothetical) actions.

With regards to the limitations concerning the samples employed within this study, the researcher deems it necessary to mention the following pertaining to the:

- **Development of the Website Benchmarks Checklist.** Even though the minimum sample size ($n = 5$) required for the application of Lawshe's content validation technique (Lawshe, 1975) was met (i.e. 11 recruitment experts and 13 usability experts), it may be valuable to obtain a more representative sample of experts in order to execute a more representative validation of the benchmarks.
- **Website audit.** Due to budgetary, time and personnel constraints imbedded within this study, a convenience sample of only 50 SA organisations was selected and subjected to the website audit. The majority of the sample (82%) utilised their websites to advertise employment opportunities, but only 70% of the websites were subjected to the audit, as not having a vacancy listed at the time of the audit, resulted in the exclusion of 30% of the websites from the audit. If time constraints were not faced, in terms of the completion of the audit, the audit results could have been more representative (i.e. if the

evaluators could wait for an employment opportunity to be listed on the website). Furthermore, as previously argued, the sample of websites selected for the audit was not representative of all SA employers and constituted only a general 'snapshot of a best case scenario' of websites utilised for recruitment purposes. It is therefore recommended that not only should future research strive to employ a representative sample of SA employers, but such a sample could also concentrate on a specific industry (e.g. healthcare, banking or insurance). For example, since organisations within the same industry, generally compete with each other for the best key intellectual capital, an industry-based audit (e.g. ABSA, First National Bank and Nedbank) should not only provide valuable insight into how the design of an organisational website measures up against its competitors' website, but also enable organisations to identify and address their website's shortcomings.

- **Evaluation of Websites A, B and C.** The convenience sampling method employed, as well as the fact that the sample of potential applicants was, to a large degree, limited to final year or postgraduate students, severely restricts the generalisability of the findings. Based on the youthfulness of the sample, combined with the reported familiarity with computers, the frequency of computer and Internet usage for work and personal activities, the sample is most likely to be more representative of a well-educated Net-generation than that of all job seekers within SA (which include, for example baby boomers, the X-generation and Net-generation). In addition, the sample's limited work experience may also have influenced respondents' general assessment of the quality and sufficiency of the employment related information available on the websites. For example, job seekers with extensive work experience may employ objective criteria and have a clearly defined frame of reference pertaining to what constitutes essential information that would satisfy their information needs and enable them to make an informed job decision. Whereas, job seekers with limited work related insight and experience (e.g. students), may be satisfied with less information, as well as prefer and base their decision on more subjective criteria (e.g. organisational image and reputation), with little or no regard of what the job entails (Devitt, 2005). Thus for future purposes, the researcher recommends that the sample employed to evaluate the employment related information provided by websites for recruitment purposes (a) include respondents with more extensive work experience; and/or (b) include respondents involved in a specific vocation (e.g. engineers evaluating the information provided for an engineering position advertised). The latter, should enable organisations to determine more specific information needs of potential applicants within a specific vocation and therein ensure that the employment related information provided, is relevant and sufficient with regards to their needs

In addition, time constraints based on the closing date of advertised vacancies on Websites A, B and C resulted in a decrease of the respondents from 45 to 36. The vacancies posted on Website C expired during the assessment period and no new positions were listed. This left further evaluation of Website C not useful, since questionnaires were only partially completed. To ensure consistency with regards to the employment information (which required an advertised vacancy on the websites) potential applicants were presented with, the researcher rejected those questionnaires received, which were only partially completed. Furthermore, the length of, and hence the time involved in completing the Website Evaluation Questionnaire should be considered as a possible limitation of this study. It may be that the onset of fatigue influenced potential applicants' thoroughness and willingness (response rate) to evaluate Websites A, B and C.

In addition to the above mentioned limitations of this study, it is also important that due attention be directed at an additional perceived weakness associated with the evaluation of the three websites, as well as general limitations of the study. Firstly, although all respondents indicated that they accessed the Internet via the connection provided by the same tertiary institution in the Western Cape, one of the perceived weaknesses embedded in the evaluation of Websites A, B and C concerns the lack of control over variables that might have influenced the results of the website evaluation. Variables such as (a) the version of the operating software installed on the personal computer of respondents (e.g. Windows 95, Windows 97, and Windows XP); (b) computer processing speed; and (c) specific software program employed to browse the Internet (e.g. Firefox or Internet Explorer) could have had an influence on for example loading speed, errors encountered, etc. This could have influenced the respondent's perception of the effectiveness / efficiency of the system and ultimately would have influenced user satisfaction. It is therefore recommended that future research that entails the evaluation of websites, employs a more controlled environment (e.g. laboratory test), to ensure a standardised testing and evaluation environment.

Finally, the scope of this study was limited to identifying website design factors (content- and usability benchmarks) that would assist potential applicants' in their job decision-making process (i.e. the search for employment opportunities and career related information) and be conducive to the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. The study, did therefore, not explore individual differences (such as age, computer anxiety, computer literacy) that may influence potential applicants' intention of using the Internet in search of employment opportunities. The focus of this study did also not include an investigation into the recruitment process in terms of website driven 'capturing' strategies (e.g. online application forms, resume builder, job agent, job cart) or the usage of an organisational website to simplify the recruitment process (e.g. the development of online selection or screening instruments or conducting online interviews). In addition, due to logistic limitations, the quantity or quality of applications generated by organisational websites as recruitment methods (pointing towards the actual performance of these methods), versus more traditional recruiting methods, could not be studied (or be incorporated into this research).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As a first recommendation for further research, it is suggested that a future investigation should explore the extent to which potential applicants' work experience (none, very little, average or extensive) influence their perception of a website's content design for recruitment purposes. As argued in chapter two, the evaluative criteria employed by potential applicants to determine the attractiveness of an available position, is different (Summey & Anderson, 1992). According to Devitt (2005), career professionals (extensive work experience) tend to use more objective and job specific evaluative criteria (e.g. location, salary, training, company attributes, etc.), whereas the criteria employed by graduates tend to be more subjective, such as being drawn to the brand or reputation of the organisation, with little or no regard for the actual day-to-day job role. Thus, determining how potential applicants level of work experience impacts on their perception (positive or negative) of a website's content is crucial, since it may enable organisations to customise the content of an advertised employment opportunity to fit the ideal job candidate's information needs, therein possibly maximising the organisation's attractiveness as an employer.

In addition, such an investigation could also explore the extent to which computer skills (limited computer experience, computer literacy and/or Internet browsing experience) influence the perceived usability of a website. It is also recommended that the sample, employed to evaluate employment related information provided by websites for recruitment purposes, include respondents involved in a specific vocation (e.g. a cashier evaluating the content of an advertisement pertaining to a teller/bank clerk position), since job seekers within a specific vocation, would most likely search for more job specific information.

The scope of this study was limited to the identification of website content- and usability benchmarks that would contribute to a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. Hence, the study only explored those aspects of website design that would assist potential applicants' decision-making process and enhance the effectiveness of an organisational website as a recruitment method. With the inevitable increase of South African organisational websites being employed for recruitment purposes, it is expected that organisations' focus will shift from merely having a website with a career section, to expanding the website's involvement in the recruitment process. Instead of fulfilling only an advertising function in the recruitment process, such websites will also be orientated towards expediting the submission of applications, the screening process and the consequential hiring decision. It is therefore recommended that future research should focus on identifying benchmarks with regards to:

- maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of a website's online application function and support offered during the application process,
- the development of applicant screening instruments incorporated into the online application function of a website; and
- maximising website accessibility for potential applicants with visual and/or auditory disabilities.

Finally, it is also proposed that a study should be conducted to investigate and/or compare the effectiveness of organisational websites versus alternative recruitment methods (such as traditional newspaper advertisements or specialised recruiting websites) in supplying applicants during the recruitment process. More specifically, it could be explored how using these recruitment methods differ, in comparison with each other, in terms of (a) the quality and quantity of applications generated and (b) the total number of appointments eventually made. The quality of the appointments may then be investigated in terms of job performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship and labour turnover. In addition, the final stage of newly appointed employees' decision-making process (i.e. post-choice evaluation) could also be investigated to learn more about the impact of the recruitment process and recruitment method (e.g. online recruitment) on their behavioural patterns related to locating and applying for employment opportunities.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In essence, this study focused on the identification of website content- and usability design benchmarks that may be conducive to a website's ability to facilitate more successful online applicant behaviour. That should assist potential applicants in their search for career related information (i.e. the job decision-making process), as well as increase the effectiveness and efficiency of organisational websites as a recruitment method.

The primary aim of the study was to audit the websites of a sample of SA organisations, in order to determine the extent to which the sample's website design may contribute to the website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour (based on their incorporation/compliance with the identified benchmarks). Based on the audit results, three websites were selected and subjectively evaluated by potential applicants on its content- and usability design for recruitment purposes. The results revealed a similarity in the percentile ranking of the websites based on the findings of the website audit and potential applicants' subjective evaluation of those websites.

In addition to describing the status quo of the usage of organisational websites for recruitment purposes, amongst a small sample of SA organisations, the website audit findings were also used to describe the extent to which the content and usability design of the websites, may contribute to its ability to facilitate more successful online applicant behaviour. From the audit results, it was evident that online recruitment via organisational websites, within the sample, has moved beyond the 'innovator' and 'early adoption' phase. Hence, the researcher concluded that for the time being, the development, as well as the effective and efficient usage of an organisational website for online recruitment, might add to an organisation's competitive advantage in helping to secure the best intellectual capital (employees) available in the market. However, as the adoption rate of online recruitment via organisational websites move towards saturation, the usage thereof, in a highly competitive global environment, will come to play an even more essential role in the mere survival of an organisation.

The researcher would like to emphasise that this study was a first step in the identification of website design benchmarks that may be conducive to an organisational website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour, which should maximise its ability to assist potential applicants in their job decision-making process and subsequently support the 'convince' phase of the online recruitment process. However, many unanswered questions remain and future research pertaining to the 'attract', 'convince' and 'capture' phases of an online recruitment strategy may be essential to ensure the effectiveness of organisational websites as a recruitment method.

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APPENDIX A:
LETTERS OF INVITATION

OFFICIAL INVITATION

Website Benchmarks Questionnaire

Requesting recruitment and usability experts to participate in the validation of benchmarks for the development of a Website Benchmarks Checklist

Dear Sir / Madam;

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE VALIDATION OF MISS L SWART'S CHECKLIST FOR HER MASTER THESIS.

I am currently completing my master's degree at the Department of Industrial Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch. The title of my research study is an audit of online recruitment via South African organisational websites in order to determine to what extent it facilitates successful online applicant behaviour.

Aim and goal of the study

The aim of this study is to determine the extent to which a selected number of South African organisations' website design (content and usability) may contribute to its ability to facilitate "*successful online applicant behaviour*". For the purpose of this study "*successful online applicant behaviour*", refers to a potential applicant (i.e. any active or passive job seeker that enters an organisational website) being able to:

- browse the organisational website without any difficulty;
- obtain relevant and sufficient information concerning the organisation and listed vacancies;
- assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation; and
- contact the organisation to address additional information needs or questions.

Your involvement with this study

Incorporated into two questionnaires, are literature recommended content- and usability design benchmarks, as identified by the researcher. In order to validate the Questionnaires, *Lawshe's Content Validation Technique* will be utilised, which is based on the concept of using experts in the field, whom will then serve as the evaluation panel of the content of the questionnaires.

You have been selected, based on your expertise in the field of *usability / recruitment*, to serve on the validation panel for the content of the questionnaire. **All that is required of each member on the evaluation panel, is to read a number of statements, and then independently from the other panellists rate the importance ("essential", "useful but not essential" or "not necessary") of each statement** (estimated time allocation for completion of checklist is about 15 minutes). The entire panel's responses are then pooled to determine the validity of the content of each questionnaire.

I hereby request that you please consider participating in the validation of the *website usability- / website content* benchmarks questionnaire, as part of the evaluation panel for your area of expertise.

If your decision is favourable, and you are willing to serve on the evaluation panel, please indicate so, by sending me an e-mail. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Me Gina Ekermans.

Your effort and time is highly appreciated.

Many thanks.

Lani Swart

(Researcher)

Me Gina Ekermans

(Supervisor)

Department of Industrial Psychology: Stellenbosch University

OFFICIAL INVITATION

Website Evaluation Questionnaire

Requesting potential applicants to participate in the evaluation of Websites A, B and C based on their content –and usability design.

Dear Sir / Madam;

My name is Lani Swart and I am currently completing my Master's degree at the Department of Industrial Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch. I hereby request your participation in the evaluation of three (3) websites.

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE EVALUATION OF THREE WEBSITES

In essence, my research entails an audit of the online recruitment function of a selection of South African organisational websites, in order to determine the extent to which its design may contribute to the facilitation of successful online applicant behaviour. The latter refers to the extent to which the websites' design contributes to the potential applicants' ability to browse the organisational website without any difficulty and obtain relevant and sufficient information concerning the organisation and its listed vacancies. Which, in addition to enabling potential applicants to assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation (i.e. decide whether he/she would like to work for the organisation), should also enable potential applicants to contact the organisation to address additional information needs or questions.

The purpose of your involvement in the evaluation of the three websites is to obtain feedback from end-users (i.e. potential job applicants), pertaining to their perceptions and assessment of the website's content design (information potential applicants are provided with, regarding to the organisation and its employment opportunities) and usability design.

Your involvement with this study:

For the purpose of this study, you will be assuming the role of a potential applicant in search of an employment opportunity / vacancy within **three different specified organisations**. You are required to visit each of the three organisational websites and browse for specific information as explained in the 'Instructions for Browsing the Websites' section of the Questionnaire. As the end-user of the organisational website, you should then evaluate the usability (Section B of the questionnaire) of the website and share your general perception (Section C of the questionnaire) of each website based on your subjective experience.

The goal of your search as a potential applicant is (a) to locate an employment opportunity (job or vacancy) advertised on each of the three organisational websites and (b) to gather as much information as possible regarding the employment opportunity and the organisation itself to assist you in making an informed decision regarding applying for the vacant position.

It is important to remember that:

- This exercise is a role-play, and the employment opportunity you choose to research (read up on), might not in reality be in your current line of work, experience level or pay grade. However, for the purpose of this study it is essential that the research you do on the advertised employment opportunity on each of the specified organisations should be as if you are truly interested in the employment opportunity.
- You are not required to submit any personal information on any of the three websites or apply for any of the positions; you are merely required to browse the websites for information.

I hereby request your participation in this exercise by completing the attached Website Evaluation Questionnaire.

The Questionnaire should be returned via e-mail or fax at your earliest convenience, preferably no later than the end of September. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Miss Gina Ekermans, if you have any questions or concerns.

Your time and effort is highly appreciated.

Many thanks,

Lani Swart

(Researcher)

Me Gina Ekermans

(Supervisor)

Department of Industrial Psychology: Stellenbosch University

APPENDIX B:
WEBSITE BENCHMARKS QUESTIONNAIRE



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
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Dear Sir / Madam,

REQUEST TO COMPLETE A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE MASTER THESIS OF MS L SWART.

An Audit of Online Recruitment via Organisational Websites that Facilitates Successful Online Applicant Behaviour: A South African Perspective.

I am currently completing my master's degree at the Department of Industrial Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch. The title of my research study is an audit of online recruitment via South African organisational websites in order to determine to what extent it facilitates successful online applicant behaviour.

Aim and Goal of the Study

The aim of this study is to determine to what extent the content design and usability design of a selected number of South African organisations' websites may contribute to its ability to facilitate "*successful online applicant behaviour*". For the purpose of this study, "*successful online applicant behaviour*" refers to the extent to which the websites' design contributes to the potential applicants' ability to browse the organisational website without any difficulty and obtain relevant and sufficient information concerning the organisation and its listed vacancies. Which, in addition to enabling potential applicants to assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation (i.e. decide whether he/she would like to work for the organisation), should also enable potential applicants to contact the organisation to address additional information needs or questions.

The goals of this study is therefore to (a) gain an understanding into possible website content and usability design issues that could contribute to an organisational website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour, and (b) determine the extent to which selected South African organisations are currently incorporating such measures in their organisational website recruitment effort.

Your Involvement With This Study

The benchmarks for content design and usability design that is identified (and incorporated into the questionnaire) by the researcher is based on a thorough literature study. In order to validate the questionnaire, *Lawshe's Content Validation Technique* will be utilised. *Lawshe's Content Validation Technique* is based on the concept of using experts in the field, whom will then serve as the evaluation panel of the content of the questionnaire. The evaluation panel will be utilised to validate and determine the content validity ratios of the questionnaires.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire, which has been developed to facilitate reaching the goals of the study, focuses on two main categories, namely:

- (a) **Website content design**, which refers to the information potential applicants are provided with via the organisational website to assist them in their decision making process. Research on what information should be available on the website to assist potential applicants in their job decision-making, focuses on general information, job description, organisation culture, application details and privacy policy.
- (b) **Website usability design**. The general usability of a website not only determines the manner in which the content is presented to potential applicants, it also influences potential applicants' perception and attractiveness of the organisation, as an employer. In order to determine the general usability of an organisational website, the researcher identified five categories to be assessed, namely screen design, accessibility, navigation, error management and consistency.

I hereby request that you **please complete the questionnaire on usability and/or website content**, as part of the evaluation panel for your area of expertise, by expressing your opinion (essential, useful but not essential or not necessary) on the importance of each statement.

The questionnaire should be returned to me via e-mail or fax at your earliest convenience, preferably no later than the 5th of July 2005. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my Supervisor, Me Gina Ekermans if you have any questions or concerns.

Your effort and time is highly appreciated.

Many thanks,

Lani Swart

(Researcher)

Me Gina Ekermans

(Supervisor)

Department of Industrial Psychology: Stellenbosch University

SECTION A
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions.

- 1. SURNAME:
- 2. NAME:
- 3. ORGANISATION:
- 4. NUMBER OF YEARS WORK EXPERIENCE?
- 5. NUMBER OF YEARS EXPERIENCE IN THE RECRUITMENT INDUSTRY?

6. WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION OBTAINED? *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Secondary school	
Standard 10 or equivalent	
Post-school certificate / diploma	
National diploma / National higher diploma	
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	
Honours degree or equivalent	
Masters degree or equivalent	
Doctoral degree or equivalent	

7. HOW DOES YOUR JOB TOUCH ON RECRUITMENT? *(Mark the appropriate options)*

Website design (usability or update)	
Compiling advertisements	
Interviewing	
Selection	
Induction	
Other (please specify).	

8. WHAT IS YOUR JOB LEVEL WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION? *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Non-Managerial	
Lower level management	
Middle level management	
Upper level management	
Top management	
Professional	

End of Section A.

SECTION B

WEBSITE CONTENT BENCHMARKS QUESTIONNAIRE

This section consists of a list of statements. Each of these statements indicates possible website content (information) and features that are deemed important to assist potential applicants in their online search for employment opportunities and career related information. Your response to each of these statements will provide the researcher with information concerning which website content is considered essential in supporting successful online applicant behaviour. Below each section of statements there is a comment box. Please indicate any comments / recommendations based on the statements. Any information as to WHY compliance with the best practices is not (could not be) possible will be very helpful.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please evaluate all of the following items pertaining to website content by choosing one response to each of these statements. You are provided with three options for each item, ranging from "essential", "useful but not essential", to "not necessary". Please read each statement carefully and choose only one answer.

1 = Essential

2 = Useful, but not Essential

3 = Not Necessary

FOR EXAMPLE:

If you are of the opinion that the presence of the following information on the organisational website is important to potential applicants career related information search and job decision making process, then mark block number 1.

STATEMENT	Essential	Useful but not Essential	Not Necessary
The closing date for submitting applications for each employment opportunity should be available.	1	2	3

Following each section of statements, a textbox is provided for possible **COMMENTS** regarding the statements. Please indicate the corresponding number of the statement to which your comment applies to. Comments on the statements could also touch on possible organisational constraints that might influence such a statement or any organisational factor that might inhibit compliance to such a guideline, for example a shortage of resources, organisational infrastructure, lack of expertise, etc.

Read each statement carefully and choose only ONE answer!

1. GENERAL INFORMATION DISCLOSED REGARDING THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ON THE WEBSITE.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	Employment opportunities should be advertised on the homepage of the organisational website.	1	2	3
2.	Employment opportunities should be advertised under "About Us" section on the organisational website.	1	2	3
3.	Provision should be made for a separate College/entry-level career section for those potential applicants with little/no previous work experience.	1	2	3
4.	The list of employment opportunities should be updated on a regular basis (implying that those employment opportunities which closing date has expired are removed from the list of employment opportunities).	1	2	3
5.	Potential applicants should be provided with the date the website was last revised.	1	2	3
6.				
7.	It should be clearly stated if a position within the organisation is subject to the organisations Employment Equity Policy.	1	2	3
8.	Potential applicants should be provided with information touching on the proposed salary/salary range associated with the available position.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

2. JOB DESCRIPTION

The job description is a statement describing the tasks, duties, objectives and standards required by a job.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	A general description (or job description) of each position posted on the organisational website should be available.	1	2	3
2.	The title of the available position should be clearly mentioned in the job description.	1	2	3
3.	The job description should explain to potential applicants what tasks the employment opportunity entails.	1	2	3
4.	The job description should explain to potential applicants what responsibilities the employment opportunity entails.	1	2	3
5.	The job description should describe to potential applicants what abilities the position requires.	1	2	3
6.	The job description should describe to potential applicants what credentials (qualification) are a prerequisite.	1	2	3
7.	The job description should describe to potential applicants what experience is required by the available position.	1	2	3
8.	The job description should specify the location of the employment opportunity.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

3. ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Culture is being defined as any information concerning the organisation that is being communicated through the website that will help the potential applicant decide whether he/she will fit in with the organisation.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	Potential applicants should be provided with a link directing them to information about the organisation.	1	2	3
2.	The link directing potential applicants to information about the organisation should be called "About<name-of-company>".	1	2	3
3.	The link directing potential applicants to information about the organisation should be called "About Us".	1	2	3
4.	The link directing potential applicants to information about the organisation should be called "Company Information".	1	2	3
The organisational culture should be explained to potential applicants through the provision of:				
5.	Information regarding the organisation's line of work.	1	2	3
6.	Information on the work ethics within the organisation.	1	2	3
7.	The values of the organisation.	1	2	3
8.	The goals of the organisation.	1	2	3
9.	Information concerning the organisation's vision statement.	1	2	3
10.	Information concerning the organisation's mission statement.	1	2	3
11.	Information regarding the organisations diversity stance.	1	2	3
12.	Information regarding the organisations employment philosophy.	1	2	3
13.	Information on the organisation affirmative action stance/policy.	1	2	3
14.	Information concerning the organisation's community outreach programmes.	1	2	3
15.	Information concerning the organisation's emphasis on teamwork.	1	2	3
16.	Design features (such as a virtual tour, profiles of employees, day-in-the-life of narratives) should be used to convey information concerning the culture of the organisation.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

4. APPLICATION DETAILS

Application details refer to all information touching on (pertaining) and supporting the application process.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
The organisational website should provide potential applicants with:				
1.	Instructions on how to submit an online application form.	1	2	3
2.	Instructions on how to E-mail an application.	1	2	3
3.	Information on how to apply through alternative channels such as via fax or (snail) mail.	1	2	3
4.	Information concerning the preferred channel (online applications, e-mail, fax or snail mail) for receiving applications.	1	2	3
5.	The closing date for submitting applications for each employment opportunity that is being made available.	1	2	3

6. Potential applicants should be provided with a "Contact" link (e.g. Contact Us) directing them to information on how to contact the organisation.	1	2	3
Contact details for questions or additional information that potential applicants are provided with should include:			
7. The name of a contact person.	1	2	3
8. The contact person's telephone number.	1	2	3
9. E-mail address.	1	2	3
10. Fax number.	1	2	3
11. Postal address.	1	2	3
12. Helpdesk.	1	2	3
No.	Comment		

5. PRIVACY POLICY

The privacy policy of a website's refers to that website's official statement regarding the information is being collected and the security measures in place to protect the potential applicant.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	There should be a privacy policy posted on the (homepage) of the organisational website.	1	2	3
2.	The privacy policy posted on the website should be a generic privacy policy, with no mention of recruiting.	1	2	3
3.	The privacy policy posted on the website should cite recruiting as the specific purpose for gathering personal information of potential applicants.	1	2	3
The privacy policy posted on the organisational website should cite:				
4.	What personal information is being collected.	1	2	3
5.	How an individual can access their own data.	1	2	3
6.	How the information is being used.	1	2	3
7.	What security measures are in place to protect the user's information during the collection process and storage?	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

End of Section B.

SECTION C
ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITE USABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

This section consists of a list of statements. Each of these statements indicates possible website usability features that literature deems important and conducive to the communication of informative content (i.e. employment opportunities and career related information essential to potential applicants' job decision making process) in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner. Your response to each of these statements will provide the researcher with website usability benchmarks that are considered essential in the process of supporting and maximising a website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour. Provided below each section of statements, is a comment box. Please indicate any comments / recommendations based on the statements. Any information as to WHY compliance with the benchmark is not (could not be) possible will be very helpful.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please evaluate all of the following items pertaining to website usability by choosing one response to each of these statements. You are provided with three options for each item, ranging from "essential", "useful but not essential", to "not necessary". Please read each statement carefully and choose only one answer.

1 = Essential

2 = Useful but not essential

3 = Not Necessary

FOR EXAMPLE:

If you are of the opinion that the following statement is important to maximising the usability of the organisational website, then mark block number 1.

STATEMENT	Essential	Useful, but not Essential	Not Necessary
The colour of (hyper)links should indicate their status as visited or unvisited.	1	2	3

Following each section, a textbox is provided for possible **COMMENTS** regarding the statements. Please indicate the corresponding number of the statement to which your comment applies to. Comments on the statements could also touch on possible organisational constraints that might influence such a statement or any organisational factor that might inhibit compliance to such a guideline, for example a shortage of resources, organisational infrastructure, lack of expertise, etc.

Read each statement carefully and choose only ONE answer!

1. SCREEN DESIGN

1.1 Space Allocation

Space allocation refers to the proper allocation of space for the display of functions and content on the webpage.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	The logo of the organisation should appear in the upper left corner of the website.	1	2	3
2.	On the homepage there should be an index, table of contents, or some other clear indicator of the contents of the website.	1	2	3
3.	The most important information on each webpage should be presented in the first screen potential applicants are provided with (they do not need to scroll down in search of such information).	1	2	3
4.	If the webpage is longer than two full screens, potential applicants should be provided with internal links (e.g. to the top of the page) to reduce the need for scrolling.	1	2	3
The position of the menu (list of content) on the webpage should be on the:				
5.	Left hand side of the webpage.	1	2	3
6.	Right hand side of the webpage.	1	2	3
7.	Top of the webpage.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

1.2 Choice of Colour

The choice of colour refers to the colour scheme being used throughout the website to unify the website as one, enhance learning and ease navigation through the website.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	Colour should be used to differentiate functional areas (e.g. tool bar, menu bar and list of content).	1	2	3
2.	Sharp colour contrast should exist between the text and background colours that are used (e.g. black on white).	1	2	3
3.	A clear discernable and less saturated colour should be used to indicate (hyper) links in text.	1	2	3
4.	The colour of links should indicate their status as visited or unvisited	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

1.3 Readability

Readability refers to maximising the potential applicant's ability to read the content of the website.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	Different text sizes should be used to enable users to differentiate between title headings and text on each webpage.	1	2	3
2.	When text appears on the screen, both uppercase and lowercase letters should be used instead of all capitals.	1	2	3
3.	The same textual visual theme in terms of font, size and colour should be repeated throughout the website.	1	2	3
4.	Critical elements such as the logo of the organisation on each webpage should not be animated.	1	2	3
5.	The main headline of each webpage should not be animated.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

1.4 Scannability

Scannability refers to the content of a website being presented in such a manner that without literally reading every word, but rather scanning through the content, potential applicants should be able to find what they are looking for.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	The user should be able to quickly determine the basic content/purpose of the website.	1	2	3
2.	The website sponsor/provider should be clearly identifiable.	1	2	3
3.	Each webpage should be labelled with a clear title/heading to indicate what information is about to follow.	1	2	3
4.	Clear headings and sub headings should appear in the text.	1	2	3
5.	The content of each webpage should be divided into short paragraphs (no more than 6 sentences).	1	2	3
6.	Links within the text should be underlined.	1	2	3
7.	The links used on the website should be clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

2. ACCESSIBILITY

The accessibility of a website refers to potential applicants being able to establish a connection with a website and browse all content available.

2.1 Loading Speed

Loading speed or download speed refers to the time it takes for a website to load.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
Network Connection				
1. The potential applicant should be able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website.		1	2	3
2. The loading speed of the website should be rapid (10 seconds or less)		1	2	3
3. If there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page (greater than 10 seconds) the most informative and important items (such as the text) should become visible first, while the rest of the page (such as images) loads.		1	2	3
Modem				
1. The potential applicant should be able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website.		1	2	3
2. The time it takes for the website to load is 20 seconds (acceptable loading time is 10 – 20 seconds).		1	2	3
3. If there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page, the most informative and important items (such as the text) should become visible first while the rest of the page (such as images) loads.		1	2	3
No.	Comment			

2.2 Search Facility

A "Search Facility" is a search tool, provided by the organisational website that searches for data according to the description supplied by the potential applicant.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1. The search function should be placed in the upper right corner of the webpage.		1	2	3
2. The search function should be placed in either the upper left corner of the webpage.		1	2	3
3. The colour of the search box should be white.		1	2	3
4. The search button should be called "search" or "go".		1	2	3
No.	Comment			

3. NAVIGATION

Navigability refers to the ease with which users can find their way around a website, without getting disoriented and lost.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	The menu or list of content should be available on every webpage of the website.	1	2	3
2.	The website should provide potential applicants with a sitemap of the website.	1	2	3
3.	The meaning of icons, buttons, and symbols should be in tune with the cognitive map of the potential applicant (e.g. video camera representing a video clip).	1	2	3
4.	The organisational logo on all the other webpages (except the homepage) should be a link that leads the potential applicant back to the website's homepage.	1	2	3
5.	Footer navigational links should be reserved for links such as copyright, contact information and/or privacy policy.	1	2	3
As the user of the website you should be able to tell:				
6.	"Where you are".	1	2	3
7.	"Where you have been".	1	2	3
8.	"Where you can go".	1	2	3
The webpage should provide useful visual feedback:				
9.	Buttons are highlighted if mouse is over it.	1	2	3
10.	Feedback if a button is pressed.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

4. ERROR MANAGEMENT

Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application enables the user to identify, diagnose and rectify errors.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	All links on the website should be accurate in taking the potential applicant to the intended destination (no "ERROR" messages).	1	2	3
2.	Error messages should be written in clear understandable language.	1	2	3
3.	Error messages should diagnose the source and cause of the problem.	1	2	3
4.	Error messages should indicate what action needs to be taken to resolve the problem.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

5. CONSISTENCY

The design that unifies the website as one, should be a reoccurring one throughout the website.

Statement		Essential	Useful, but not essential	Not Necessary
1.	The website should effectively repeat visual themes to unify the website.	1	2	3
A consistent page layout should be used throughout the website in terms of:				
2.	Screen size for content display.	1	2	3
3.	Position of navigational elements (e.g. the menu bar/list of contents).	1	2	3
4.	Banners.	1	2	3
5.	Layout for titles and subtitles.	1	2	3
6.	Page footers.	1	2	3
7.	Background.	1	2	3
Consistent use of text in terms of text:				
8.	Font,	1	2	3
9.	Size.	1	2	3
10.	Colour.	1	2	3
Consistent use of navigational aids (e.g. the menu bar, buttons and links) throughout the website in terms of its:				
11.	Colour,	1	2	3
12.	Size.	1	2	3
13.	Fonts.	1	2	3
No.	Comment			

End of questionnaire.

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX C:
WEBSITE BENCHMARKS CHECKLIST

WEBSITE BENCHMARKS CHECKLIST

INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this **organisational website audit** is to determine the extent to which the sample of South African organisations' websites incorporate/adhere to the identified **content-** (information potential applicants are provided with, regarding to the organisation and its employment opportunities) and **usability benchmarks**, that could increase its website's ability to facilitate successful online applicant behaviour.

Section A consists of a list of statements, regarding website content (information) and features that are deemed important to potential applicants in their online search for employment opportunities and career related information, in order to assist them in the job decision-making process. **Section B** consists of statements regarding website usability features that are deemed important and conducive to the communication of a website's informative content in an effective, efficient and satisfactory manner to potential applicants. Your response to each of these statements will provide the researcher with information regarding which of the identified Website Content & Usability Benchmarks are incorporated and available on the sample of websites.

PLEASE NOTE:

All information provided is considered **CONFIDENTIAL** and will only be used and handled by the researcher.

It is crucial that **ALL** questions are answered as **HONESTLY & TRUTHFULLY** as possible; it must reflect what "**you can find**" or "**can not find**" on the organisational website.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please evaluate all of the following items pertaining to website content by choosing only one response to each of these statements. You are provided with two options (**YES or NO**) for each item.

Please, make sure that you:

- read each statement carefully,
- search the website for it, and
- provide only one answer.

FOR EXAMPLE:

If you, are able to locate the information referred to in the statement below, then mark block number 1.

STATEMENT	Yes	No
The closing date for submitting an application for each employment opportunity is available.	1	0

Read each statement carefully and choose only ONE answer!

Name Of Website Being Evaluated	
Questionnaire Number <i>(for office use only)</i>	

SECTION A: ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITE CONTENT CHECKLIST

1. GENERAL INFORMATION DISCLOSED REGARDING THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ON THE WEBSITE.

TASK: a) Find employment opportunities being advertised on the website.

(Possible places to search for it, includes the homepage, under "About Us" or Careers@the-company-name)

b) Select a position being advertised & read the details concerning the position.

SA1Q	Statement	Yes	No
1.	Employment opportunities/vacancies are advertised on the organisational website (Potential applicants are provided with a link directing them to employment opportunities/vacancies within the organisation).	1	0
2.	There is available employment opportunities/vacancies currently listed on the website.	1	0
If employment opportunities/vacancies are listed on the website, please continue completing Questions 3 – 18.			
3.	The list of employment opportunities is updated on a regular basis (implying that those employment opportunities which closing date has expired are removed from the list of employment opportunities).	1	0
4.	It is clearly stated if a position within the organisation is subject to the organisations Employment Equity Policy.	1	0

2. JOB DESCRIPTION

The job description is a statement describing the tasks, duties, objectives and standards required by a job.

TASK: a) Find employment opportunities being advertised on the website.

(Possible places to search for it, includes the homepage, under "About Us" or Careers@the-company-name)

b) Select a position being advertised & read the details concerning the position.

SA1Q	Statement	Yes	No
5.	A general description (or job description) of each position posted on the organisational website is available.	1	0
6.	The title of the available position is clearly mentioned in the job description.	1	0
The job description specifies what:			
7.	Responsibilities the employment opportunity entails.	1	0
8.	Abilities the position requires.	1	0
9.	Credentials (qualifications) are a prerequisite.	1	0
10.	Experience is required by the available position.	1	0
11.	The location of the employment opportunity is (e.g. Stellenbosch, Johannesburg).	1	0

3. APPLICATION DETAILS

Application details refer to all information touching on (pertaining) and supporting the application process.

TASK: Locate and read all information regarding applying for a position.

SA1Q	Statement	Yes	No
The organisational website provides potential applicants with:			
12.	Instructions on how to submit an online application form.	1	0
13.	Instructions on how/where to E-mail an application.	1	0
14.	Information on how to apply through alternative channels such as via fax or (snail) mail.	1	0
15.	Information concerning the preferred channel (online applications, e-mail, fax or snail mail) for receiving applications.	1	0
16.	The closing date for submitting applications for each employment opportunity that is being made available.	1	0
17.	A "Contact" link (e.g. Contact Us) directing potential applicants to information on how to contact the organisation .	1	0
18.	An e-mail address to contact the organisation if they have any questions or additional information needs.	1	0

4. PRIVACY POLICY

The privacy policy of a website's refers to that website's official statement regarding why the information is being collected and the security measures in place to protect the potential applicant.

TASK: Locate and read the organisation's Privacy Policy.

SA2Q	Statement	Yes	No
19.	A privacy policy is available on the organisational website.	1	0
If YES, please continue completing Questions 20 & 21.			
20.	The privacy policy on the website cites recruiting as the specific purpose for gathering personal information of potential applicants.	1	0
21.	The privacy policy posted on the organisational website specifically cites how the collected information will be used.	1	0

5. ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Culture is being defined as any information concerning the organisation that is being communicated through the website that will help the potential applicant decide whether he/she will fit in with the organisation.

TASK: Locate & read information regarding the organisation itself (e.g. "About<name-of-company>", "About Us", "Company Information".)

SA3Q	Statement	Yes	No
22.	Potential applicants are provided with a link directing them to information about the organisation.	1	0
If YES, please continue completing Questions 23 - 25			
The organisational culture is explained to potential applicants through the provision of:			
23.	Information touching on the organisation's line of work.	1	0
24.	The values of the organisation.	1	0
25.	Information touching on the organisations employment philosophy.	1	0

End of Website Content Section .

SECTION B: ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITE USABILITY CHECKLIST

1. SCREEN DESIGN

1.1 Space Allocation

Space allocation refers to the proper allocation of space for the display of functions and content on the webpage.

SB1Q	Statement	Yes	No
1.	On the homepage there is an index, table of contents, or some other clear indicator of the content of the website.	1	0
2.	The most important information on each webpage is presented in the first screen potential applicants are provided with (you do not need to scroll down in search for such information).	1	0

1.2 Choice of Colour

The choice of colour refers to the colour scheme being used throughout the website to unify the website as one, enhance learning and ease navigation through the website.

SB1Q	Statement	Yes	No
3.	Sharp colour contrast exists between the text and the background colour(s) that are used (e.g. black on white).	1	0
4.	A clear discernable and/or less saturated colour is used to indicate (hyper) links in text.	1	0
5.	The colour of the (hyper) links in text indicates their status as visited or unvisited (E.g. visited Blue links change to Grey links).	1	0

1.3 Readability

Readability refers to maximising the potential applicant's ability to read the content of the website.

SB1Q	Statement	Yes	No
6.	Different text sizes are used to enable users to differentiate between title headings and text on each webpage.	1	0
7.	When text appears on the screen, both uppercase and lowercase letters are used instead of all capitals.	1	0
8.	The same textual visual theme in terms of font, size and colour are repeated throughout the website.	1	0
9.	Critical elements such as the logo of the organisation on each webpage are not animated.	1	0
10.	The main headline of each webpage is not animated.	1	0

1.4 Scannability

Scannability refers to the content of a website being presented in such a manner that without literally reading every word, but rather scanning through the content, potential applicants should be able to find what they are looking for.

SB1Q	Statement	Yes	No
11.	The user is able to quickly determine the basic content/purpose of the website.	1	0
12.	Each webpage is labelled with a clear title/heading to indicate what information is about to follow.	1	0
13.	Clear and meaningful headings and sub headings appear in the text.	1	0
14.	Links within the text are underlined.	1	0
15.	The links used on the website is clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	1	0

2. ACCESSIBILITY

The accessibility of a website refers to potential applicants being able to establish a connection with a website and browse all content available.

2.1 Loading Speed

Loading speed or download speed refers to the time it takes for a website to load.

TASK: Please complete either (a) or (b), depending on the connection you are using to access the Internet.

SB2Q	Statement	Yes	No
(a) Network Connection			
16.	Were you able to easily establish a stable connection with the organisational website?	1	0
17.	If there was a substantial delay in the rendering of a whole webpage (greater than 10 seconds): Was the most informative and important items (such as the text) visible first, while the rest of the page (such as the images) was loading?	1	0

3. NAVIGATION

Navigability refers to the ease with which users can find their way around a website, without getting disoriented and lost.

SB3Q	Statement	Yes	No
18.	The menu or list of content is available on every webpage of the website.	1	0
19.	The meaning of icons, buttons, and symbols is in tune with the cognitive map of the potential applicant (e.g. video camera representing a video clip or envelope representing e-mail).	1	0
20.	As the user of the website, are you able to tell "Where you are".	1	0
21.	As the user of the website, are you able to tell "Where you can go".	1	0
22.	Does the website provide you with useful visual feedback when a button / hyperlink is selected / clicked on?	1	0
23.	All links accessed on the website is accurate in taking the potential applicant to his/her intended destination.	1	0

4. ERROR MESSAGES AND MANAGEMENT

Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application enables the user to identify, diagnose and rectify errors.

SB4Q	Statement	Yes	No
24.	While browsing, did the website produce any ERROR messages?	0	3
If you were presented with an ERROR message, please answer the following questions.			
25.	The error message(s) was written in a clear understandable manner.	1	0
26.	The error message(s) diagnosed the source and the cause of the problem.	1	0
27.	The error message(s) indicated what action needed to be taken to solve the problem.	1	0

5. CONSISTENCY

The design that unifies the website as one, should be a reoccurring one throughout the website.

SB5Q	Statement	Yes	No
28.	The website effectively repeats visual themes to unify the website.	1	0
A consistent page layout is used throughout the website in terms of:			
29.	Screen size for content display.	1	0
30.	Position of navigational elements (e.g. the menu bar/list of contents).	1	0
31.	Layout for titles and subtitles.	1	0
32.	Page footers.	1	0
33.	Background.	1	0
Text is consistently used throughout the website in terms of text:			
34.	Font.	1	0
35.	Size.	1	0
36.	Colour.	1	0
Consistent use of navigational aids (e.g. the menu bar, buttons and links) throughout the website in terms of its:			
37.	Font.	1	0
38.	Size.	1	0
39.	Colour.	1	0

End of questionnaire.

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX D:
WEBSITE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire Number <i>(for office use only)</i>	
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Website Evaluation Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this **Website Evaluation Questionnaire** is to obtain feedback from the perspective of the end-user (potential job applicants), to determine the extent to which the website's design supports and contributes to the website's ability to facilitate **successful online applicant behaviour**, in terms of:

- the website's **content design** (information potential applicants are provided with, regarding to the organisation and its employment opportunities) and
- the website's **usability design**.

[Successful online applicant behaviour, refers to the extent to which the websites' design contributes to the potential applicants' ability to browse the organisational website without any difficulty and obtain relevant and sufficient information concerning the organisation and its listed vacancies. Which, in addition to enabling potential applicants to assess whether he/she will be able to fit, perform and accelerate in the work climate and culture of the organisation (i.e. decide whether he/she would like to work for the organisation), should also enable potential applicants to contact the organisation to address additional information needs or questions.]

Your Involvement Entails the Completion of Two Phases:

Phase 1 Complete Section A – Biographical Information. (Completion of Section A is required only once.)

Phase 2 For the purpose of this study, you will be assuming the role of a potential applicant in search of an employment opportunity / vacancy within **three different specified organisations**. You are required to visit each of the three organisational websites and browse for specific information as explained in the 'Instructions for Browsing the Website' section. As the end-user of the organisational website, you should then evaluate the usability (Section C of the Questionnaire) of the website and share your general appraisal (Section B of the Questionnaire) of each website based on your experience.

Phase 2 therefore requires that the remainder of the questionnaire, consisting of sections B and C be completed for each of the three websites mentioned. Therefore, the following steps should be followed:

- Step 1 Read and familiarise yourself with the Instructions for Browsing the Website
- Step 2 Upon completion of browsing **the first website** (www.website-A.co.za), it is required that you complete Sections B₁ & C₁
- Step 3 Upon completion of browsing **the second website** (www.website-B.co.za), it is required that you complete Sections B₂ & C₂.
- Step 4 Upon completion of browsing **the third website** (www.website-C.co.za) it is required that you complete Sections B₃ & C₃.

Against each statement in **Section C** there are four boxes representing a continuum, ranging from "*strongly disagree*" to "*strongly agree*". Please indicate with an "X" the box on the continuum that most accurately represents your perception in light of your personal experience of browsing the organisational website. **Please, complete all the question and statements within Sections B & C.**

Remember there are **no right or wrong answers**.

EXAMPLE: If you "agree" with the statement made, then mark box number 3.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19	I find the website useful in my search for a potential employment opportunity and/or employment related information.	1	2	3	4

You should only mark the first box if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement made and the last box if you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement.

PLEASE NOTE that all information provided is considered **CONFIDENTIAL** and will only be used and handled by the researcher. It is crucial that you answer **ALL** the questions as **HONESTLY & TRUTHFULLY** as possible for the research to yield valid results

End of Instructions, Please start Section A

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER *(for office use only)*

--

1. **SURNAME**

--

2. **NAME**

--

3. **AGE**

--

Please answer the following questions.

4. **GENDER** *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Female	1
Male	2

5. **HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION OBTAINED** *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Grade 10 / Standard 8	1
Grade 12 / Standard 10	2
Post-school certificate / diploma	3
National diploma / National higher diploma	4
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	5
Honours degree or equivalent	6
Masters degree or equivalent	7
Doctoral degree or equivalent	8

6. **USER GROUP** *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Final year student (searching for employment next year – 2007)	1
Employed, but part time student	2
Employed (not a student)	3

7. **COMPUTER EXPERIENCE** *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Less than one year computer experience	1
1 – 3 years computer experience	2
4 – 6 years computer experience	3
More than 6 years computer experience	4

8. **LEVEL OF COMPUTER LITERACY** *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Illiterate	(I am unable to perform even basic operations on a computer)	1
Moderately Literate	(I can only perform basic operations on a computer)	2
Literate	(I can perform complex operations on a computer)	3
Expert Literacy	(I can perform extremely complex operations on a computer and I am skilled in the technical operations and programming of computers)	4

9. I HAVE ACCESS TO A COMPUTER *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Never	1
At home	2
At Work	3
At home & at work	4

10. THE TIME YOU SPEND ON THE INTERNET PER WEEK IS APPROXIMATELY: *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Less than 1 hour per week	1
1 – 2 hours per week	2
3 – 4 hours per week	3
3 – 5 hours per week	4
5 hours or more per week.	5

11. MAIN REASON WHY YOU USE A COMPUTER? *(Mark the appropriate option)*

I do not use a computer	1
Personal activities (e.g. reading news headlines, e-mailing friends)	2
Work related activities (e.g. studies, work related e-mailing or research)	3
Work related and personal activities	4

12. HOW FREQUENT DO YOU USE A COMPUTER? *(Mark the appropriate option)*

I almost never use a computer	1
Approximately once a month	2
Approximately once a week	3
On a daily basis	4

13. HOW OFTEN DO YOU BROWSE THE INTERNET? *(Mark the appropriate option)*

I almost never browse the Internet	1
Approximately once a month	2
Approximately once a week	3
On a daily basis	4

14. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY USED THE INTERNET IN SEARCH OF AVAILABLE JOB OPPORTUNITIES? *(Mark the appropriate option)*

Never	1
Yes, approximately once every six months	2
Yes, approximately once a month	3
Yes, approximately once a week	4
Yes, I do on a daily basis	5

15. FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY, WHAT CONNECTION TO THE INTERNET ARE YOU USING? *(Mark the appropriate option)*

External Modem Connection (e.g. 56K per second)	1
External Broadband Connection	2
Network connection (e.g. University of Stellenbosch Intranet)	3

16. WHEN APPLYING FOR A VACANCY / EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY, WHICH IS YOUR PREFERRED CHANNEL FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION?

*(Please rate the following by **assigning a numerical value from 1 to 4** to each of the channels.*

1 being your preferred channel and 4 being your least preferred channel to use when submitting an application)

Post (snail mail).	
Fax	
E-mail (sending an application and / or CV via e-mail)	
Applying via the online application function provided on the website.	

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS MIGHT HAVE MORE THAN ONE APPLICABLE ANSWER.

If more than one statement is true, please indicate accordingly.

(Mark "X" in all the corresponding boxes where the statements are true/applicable)

17. IF I CONSIDER FINDING NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, I WILL USE THE FOLLOWING MEDIA IN MY SEARCH: *(Please mark [X] next to all answers applicable)*

Newspapers & Classifieds	(traditional hardcopy)	1
Magazines	(traditional hardcopy)	2
Newspaper Websites	(Online duplicate of a traditional hardcopy newspaper)	3
Magazine Websites	(Online duplicate of a traditional hardcopy magazine)	4
Organisational Websites		5
Specialised jobsites	(Websites that specialises in recruiting, e.g. job boards, online recruiters, such as CareerJunction, JobMail, etc.)	6
Word of Mouth		7
Open Days on Campus and / or Job Fairs	(Potential employers visit campus in an effort of making students aware of their organisation, what they have to offer and/or recruit them)	8
Other (please specify)		9

18. IF ALL OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED MEDIA ARE READILY AVAILABLE TO USE WHEN SEARCHING FOR AN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY/VACANCY, I WOULD MOST LIKELY USE:

*(Please rate the following by **assigning a numerical value from 1 to 9** to each of the channels. 1 being your preferred channel and 9 being your least preferred channel to use when searching for an employment opportunity.*

a. Newspapers & Classifieds	(traditional hardcopy)	
b. Magazines	(traditional hardcopy)	
c. Newspaper Websites	(Online duplicate of a traditional hardcopy newspaper)	
d. Magazine Websites	(Online duplicate of a traditional hardcopy magazine)	
e. Organisational Websites		
f. Specialised jobsites	(Websites that specialises in recruiting, e.g. job boards, online recruiters, such as CareerJunction, JobMail, etc.)	
g. Word of Mouth		
h. Open Days on Campus (Job Fairs)	(Potential employers visit campus in an effort of making students aware of their organisation, what they have to offer and/or recruit them)	
i. Other (please specify)		

19. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR AN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY THAT YOU FOUND ON THE INTERNET (e.g. job board, online newspaper classifieds, organisational website, etc.)

(Please mark [X] next to all answers applicable)

No	1
Yes, I applied via traditional channels (fax and/or snail mail)	2
Yes, I applied via e-mail (send application and/or CV via e-mail)	3
Yes, I applied via the online application function provided	4

20. HOW OFTEN DO YOU BROWSE ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITES IN SEARCH OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE? (Please mark [X] next to all answers applicable)

Never	1
About once every six months	2
On a monthly basis	3
On a weekly basis	4
On a daily basis	5

21. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR AN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY THAT WAS ADVERTISED ON AN ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITE? (Please mark [X] next to all answers applicable)

No	1
Yes, I applied via traditional channels (fax or snail mail)	2
Yes, I applied via e-mail (send application & CV via e-mail)	3
Yes, I applied via the organisational website's online application function.	4

End of Section A, Please start Section B

INSTRUCTIONS ON BROWSING THE WEBSITE

The goal of your search as a potential applicant is (a) to locate an employment opportunity (job or vacancy) advertised on each of the three organisational websites and (b) to gather as much information as possible regarding the employment opportunity and the organisation itself to assist you in making an informed decision regarding applying for the vacant position.

It is important to remember that this exercise is a role-play, and the employment opportunity you choose to research (read up on), might not in reality be in your current line of work, experience level or pay grade. For the purpose of this study it is essential that the research you do on the advertised employment opportunity in the specified organisation should be as if you are truly interested in the position.

Your Involvement Therefore Entails:

Phase 2: Completing the remainder of the questionnaire (consisting of Sections B & C) for each of the three websites.

Step 1 Read and familiarise yourself with the Instructions for browsing the websites as provided below.

Step 2 Upon completion of browsing **the first website** (www.website-A.co.za), it is required that you complete Sections B₁, C₁.

Step 3 Upon completion of browsing **the second website** (www.website-B.co.za), it is required that you complete Sections B₂, C₂.

Step 4 Upon completion of browsing **the third website** (www.website-C.co.za), it is required that you complete Sections B₃, C₃.

Instructions for Browsing Website A

1. Go to www.website-A.co.za

Once the website is opened, you (as a potential applicant in search of an employment opportunity) are required to **search, locate and selectively read** the information pertaining to:

- (a) any employment opportunities/vacancies advertised on the website;
- (b) specific details of the advertised employment opportunity/vacancy;
- (c) how to apply for the advertised employment opportunity/vacancy;
- (d) the organisation itself and its culture;
- (e) how to contact the organisation;
- (f) the privacy policy posted on the website.

Since this exercise is a simulation/role-play, it is imperative that your search through the website for information about the organisation and the available vacancy as you would do in reality if you were truly interested in the available position and consider working for the specific organisation. The tasks provided, regarding what to search for on the website is a guideline, if there are additional information you as the potential applicant should require, search for it and be sure to mention it as you are completing the questionnaire.

2. Once you (as the potential applicant) are satisfied that the information regarding the organisation and the employment opportunity you have collected is sufficient, or that you have browsed the website sufficiently even though it might not have met your needs, please continue **completing Sections B₁ & C₁**.
3. **Upon completion of browsing** www.website-A.co.za (which should take approximately 20 minutes at most) **and the completion of Sections B₁ & C₁ of the questionnaire**, the same procedure should be followed with www.website-B.co.za (completing Sections B₂ & C₂) and www.website-C.co.za (completing Sections B₃ & C₃).

Please Continue with Section B₁

SECTION B₁: WEBSITE CONTENT DESIGN AND GENERAL WEBSITE APPRAISAL

NAME OF WEBSITE YOU ARE EVALUATING	www.website-A.co.za
QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER <i>(for office use only)</i>	

PLEASE answer the following questions, and try to **AVOID** a simple **YES** or **NO** answer.
It would be more insightful if you could provide a reason to substantiate your answer.

1. **Is there any additional information (content), which was not provided on the website, which you as a potential applicant consider essential in your decision to apply for an advertised vacancy/employment opportunity?** (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

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2. **While browsing the website, were you able to acquire specific information and/or an idea of what the organisational culture of the particular organisation entails.** (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

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3. **Would you feel confident and secure about disclosing personal information online via the Website to the organisation?** (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

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4. Did you use the “search function” to locate any information on the website? If YES, please specify when/why you used it. If NO, please state why you did not use it.

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5. Would you continue visiting Website A in your search for vacancies / employment opportunities? (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

(Please note that the decision should not be based on the attractiveness of the specific employment opportunity explored, but rather on the general satisfaction and usefulness of the website as tool to research potential employment opportunities and future employers).

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As a potential applicant whom has just visited this website in search of a potential employment opportunity, what is your general reaction towards this particular website?

6.	Terrible	1	2	3	4	Wonderful
7.	Difficult	1	2	3	4	Easy
8.	Frustrating	1	2	3	4	Satisfying
9.	Dull	1	2	3	4	Stimulating
10.	Rigid	1	2	3	4	Flexible
11.	Not worth the effort of visiting (NOT informative)	1	2	3	4	Worth while (Informative)

End of Section B₁, Please start Section C₁

SECTION C₁: USABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME OF WEBSITE YOU ARE EVALUATING	www.website-A.co.za
QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER <i>(for office use only)</i>	

1. Usefulness/Utility, Effectiveness & Efficiency

1.1 General Usefulness/Utility

Usefulness concerns the degree to which a product enables a user to achieve his or her goals and is an assessment of the user's motivation for using the product at all.

Utility refers to the functionality (thus the value, worth and helpfulness) of the system.

Please rate the **usefulness/utility** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Visiting this website would not increase the productivity of my search for an employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
2.	I find the website useful in my search for a potential employment opportunity and/or employment related information.	1	2	3	4
3.	The website enables me to make an informed decision regarding an advertised employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
4.	Visiting this website made my search for employment opportunity and/or career related information easier.	1	2	3	4
5.	The website improves communication (information sharing regarding vacancies) between potential applicants and employers.	1	2	3	4
6.	The website is a productive tool to use when researching an organisation and its employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
7.	Using this website does not add value to my search for potential employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
8.	Advertising employment opportunities on a website enhances the competitiveness of the organisation as a potential employer.	1	2	3	4
9.	The website does what I want it to do, thus meeting my needs.	1	2	3	4
10.	There is sufficient information to make the website worth visiting.	1	2	3	4
11.	The content of the website effectively achieves its intended purpose of providing me with valuable information regarding vacancies and the organisation itself.	1	2	3	4

1.2 General Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the accuracy and completeness with which the system enables the user to achieve a goal or task.

Please rate the **general effectiveness** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12.	I can effectively complete my search for employment related information and vacancies by using this website.	1	2	3	4
13.	The website enables me to effectively communicate additional concerns or questions about the vacancy to the relevant people (e.g. via the contact information provided such as. e-mail addresses or telephone numbers).	1	2	3	4
14.	Using the website does not improve the communication of information between potential applicants and the organisation.	1	2	3	4
15.	The job description sufficiently describes the responsibilities, abilities, qualifications and experience the available position requires.	1	2	3	4
16.	The information provided via the website enables me to make an informed decision about whether I want to apply for a position within this organisation.	1	2	3	4
17.	The website provides sufficient instructions on how to apply for a position (e.g. electronically via e-mail or an online application form; or via traditional channels such as fax or snail mail).	1	2	3	4
18.	The content of the website is current (not outdated – e.g. vacancies which closing date for submitting an application has expired, is not still listed on the website).	1	2	3	4
19.	There is sufficient information to make the website worth visiting.	1	2	3	4
20.	The content of the website effectively achieves its intended purpose of providing me with valuable information regarding vacancies and the organisation itself.	1	2	3	4
21.	I need additional information not provided on the website in order to decide whether to apply for the position.	1	2	3	4

1.3 Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the degree to which the system enables the user to complete the tasks in a timely, competent and economical fashion.

Please rate the **efficiency** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22.	I was able to efficiently complete my search for career related information and potential employment opportunities by using this website.	1	2	3	4
23.	I can save time by using this website in my search for employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
24.	The speed at which this website responds to my input is not fast enough.	1	2	3	4
25.	Every webpage loads in an acceptable amount of time.	1	2	3	4
26.	When there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page - <i>greater than 10 seconds</i> - the most informative and important items become visible and are meaningful while the rest of the page loads (e.g. text becomes visible first, whilst pictures or photos download).	1	2	3	4

2. Ease of Use

2.1 General ease of use

Ease of use refers to the effortlessness and user-friendliness of the system.

Please rate the **general ease of use** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
27.	On the homepage there is an index, site map, or some other clear indicator of the content of the website.	1	2	3	4
28.	I consider the menu or table of contents on the websites to be organised in a logical and easy to anticipate manner.	1	2	3	4
29.	On each webpage it is easy to see at a glance the other options in terms of alternative webpages on the website, I can explore.	1	2	3	4
30.	Each webpage is labelled with a clear heading/ title indicating which information will follow.	1	2	3	4
31.	Different text sizes enable me to easily differentiate between headings, sub-headings and text on each webpage.	1	2	3	4
32.	It is easy to read the various characters (typescript) on the screen.	1	2	3	4
33.	Browsing the website, I was always able to tell "Where I am"	1	2	3	4
34.	Browsing the website, I was always able to tell "Where I can still go".	1	2	3	4
35.	All links provided on the website is clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	1	2	3	4
36.	I found the website difficult to use.	1	2	3	4
37.	It is easy to locate employment opportunities advertised on the website.	1	2	3	4
38.	Locating information on how to contact the organisation is easy.	1	2	3	4
39.	Too many steps are required to locate the information I desire (e.g. I have to click to may times through layers of links to locate the desired information)	1	2	3	4
40.	I felt very confident and in control using the website.	1	2	3	4
41.	I am satisfied with the level of ease with which I could complete the tasks asked of me.	1	2	3	4
42.	The website seems to be designed for all levels of users (experienced and novice users).	1	2	3	4
43.	The website is user friendly.	1	2	3	4

2.2 Consistency

Consistency refers to the ability of the system to respond to user inputs in a consistent way and to allow the user to perform similar tasks in similar ways.

Please rate the **consistency** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
44.	The website is not consistent (i.e. it does not respond to my inputs in the same way every time I use it).	1	2	3	4
45.	The same textual visual theme in terms of font, size and colour are repeated throughout the website.	1	2	3	4
46.	Throughout the website navigational mechanisms are used in a consistent manner.	1	2	3	4
47.	The visual theme used as well as the consistent style of presentation which is repeatedly used on all webpages, unifies the website.	1	2	3	4
48.	The meaning of icons, buttons, and symbols are in tune with my cognitive map (When clicking on a symbol, the results are what I expected them to be, e.g. envelope representing e-mail).	1	2	3	4

2.3 Error Management

Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application allows the user to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors.

Please rate the **error management** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

(The box on the far right hand side of the continuum is reserved for instances where the statement made is **NOT APPLICABLE** to the website you are evaluating)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
49.	All links on the website was accurate in taking me to the intended destination (no "error" encountered).	1	2	3	4	
50.	Whenever I made a mistake using the website I found it difficult to recover.	1	2	3	4	
If you were presented with an ERROR MESSAGE whilst browsing the website, please answer the following questions (Questions 51 – 55).						
51.	Error message(s) is written in a clear understandable manner.	1	2	3	4	5
52.	Error message(s) diagnose the source and cause of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	The error messages suggest solutions to the problems.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	The solution suggested by the error message is helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	It is difficult to find the help function on the screen.	1	2	3	4	5

2.4 Compatibility

Compatibility refers to the degree to which the system's method of operation matches the user's expectations based on their knowledge of other types of products and the 'outside world'.

Examples of Icons:



Please rate the **compatibility** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

(**Note:** The following 5 'Compatibility' questions pertain to the use of Icons within the specific website)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
56.	The way the menu and/or icons is organised, is not logical.	1	2	3	4
57.	Standard icons are used on the website, which is similar to other interfaces I have used or have been trained in.	1	2	3	4
58.	The links used on the website is clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	1	2	3	4
59.	The terminology used throughout the website (i.e. vacancies, application form, etc.), is in line with standard day-to-day terminology (usage of jargon is avoided).	1	2	3	4
60.	The intended destination of icons, buttons and/or symbols is NOT easily grasped (recognised).	1	2	3	4

3. User Satisfaction

3.1 User Satisfaction

Satisfaction refers to the level of comfort that the user feels when using a product and how acceptable the product is to users as a vehicle for achieving their goals.

Please rate the user satisfaction dimension of the organisational website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
61.	Working with this website application is satisfying.	1	2	3	4
62.	I would not use this website frequently.	1	2	3	4
63.	I feel awkward using this website in my search for a potential employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
64.	It is frustrating to work with this website.	1	2	3	4
65.	I would recommend this website application to other potential users/job applicants I interact with.	1	2	3	4
66.	The website has an organised (well thought-out) presentation.	1	2	3	4
67.	Overall I am satisfied with the amount of time it took to locate and research an employment opportunity on the website.	1	2	3	4
68.	Both occasional and regular users would like to use this website.	1	2	3	4

End of Section C₁

Please continue Evaluating Website No.2

www.website-B.co.za

And complete Section B₂ & C₂ on it.

Step 1 Read and familiarise yourself with the Instructions for Browsing the Website as provided below.

Instructions for Browsing the Website

1. Go to www.website-B.co.za

Once the website is opened, you (as a potential applicant in search of an employment opportunity) are required to **search, locate and selectively read** the information pertaining to:

- (a) any employment opportunities/vacancies advertised on the website;
- (b) specific details of the advertised employment opportunity/vacancy;
- (c) how to apply for the advertised employment opportunity/vacancy;
- (d) the organisation itself and its culture;
- (e) how to contact the organisation;
- (f) the privacy policy posted on the website.

Since this exercise is a simulation/role-play, it is imperative that your search through the website for information about the organisation and the available vacancy as you would do in reality if you were truly interested in the available position and consider working for the specific organisation. The tasks provided, regarding what to search for on the website is a guideline, if there are additional information you as the potential applicant should require, search for it and be sure to mention it as you are completing the questionnaire.

2. Once you (as the potential applicant) are satisfied that the information regarding the organisation and the employment opportunity you have collected is sufficient, or that you have browsed the website sufficiently even though it might not have met your needs, please continue **completing Sections B₂ & C₂**.
3. **Upon completion of browsing www.website-B.co.za** (which should take approximately 20 minutes at most) **and the completion of Sections B₂ & C₂** of the questionnaire, the same procedure should be followed with www.website-C.co.za (completing Sections B₃ & C₃).

Please Continue with Section B₂

SECTION B₂: WEBSITE CONTENT DESIGN AND GENERAL WEBSITE APPRAISAL

NAME OF WEBSITE YOU ARE EVALUATING	www.website-B.co.za
QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER <i>(for office use only)</i>	

**PLEASE answer the following questions, and try to AVOID a simple YES or NO answer.
It would be more insightful if you could provide a reason to substantiate your answer.**

- 1. Is there any additional information (content), which was not provided on the website, which you as a potential applicant consider essential in your decision to apply for an advertised vacancy/employment opportunity? (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)**

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- 2. While browsing the website, were you able to acquire specific information and/or an idea of what the organisational culture of the particular organisation entails. (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)**

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- 3. Would you feel confident and secure about disclosing personal information online via the Website to the organisation? (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)**

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4. Did you use the “search function” to locate any information on the website? If YES, please specify when/why you used it. If NO, please state why you did not use it.

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5. Would you continue visiting Website A in your search for vacancies / employment opportunities? (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

(Please note that the decision should not be based on the attractiveness of the specific employment opportunity explored, but rather on the general satisfaction and usefulness of the website as tool to research potential employment opportunities and future employers).

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As a potential applicant whom has just visited this website in search of a potential employment opportunity, what is your general reaction towards this particular website?

6.	Terrible	1	2	3	4	Wonderful
7.	Difficult	1	2	3	4	Easy
8.	Frustrating	1	2	3	4	Satisfying
9.	Dull	1	2	3	4	Stimulating
10.	Rigid	1	2	3	4	Flexible
11.	Not worth the effort of visiting (NOT informative)	1	2	3	4	Worth while (Informative)

End of Section B₂, Please start Section C₂

SECTION C₂: USABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME OF WEBSITE YOU ARE EVALUATING	www.website-B.co.za
QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER <i>(for office use only)</i>	

1. Usefulness/Utility, Effectiveness & Efficiency

1.1 General Usefulness/Utility

***Usefulness** concerns the degree to which a product enables a user to achieve his or her goals and is an assessment of the user's motivation for using the product at all.*

***Utility** refers to the functionality (thus the value, worth and helpfulness) of the system.*

Please rate the **usefulness/utility** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Visiting this website would not increase the productivity of my search for an employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
2.	I find the website useful in my search for a potential employment opportunity and/or employment related information.	1	2	3	4
3.	The website enables me to make an informed decision regarding an advertised employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
4.	Visiting this website made my search for employment opportunity and/or career related information easier.	1	2	3	4
5.	The website improves communication (information sharing regarding vacancies) between potential applicants and employers.	1	2	3	4
6.	The website is a productive tool to use when researching an organisation and its employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
7.	Using this website does not add value to my search for potential employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
8.	Advertising employment opportunities on a website enhances the competitiveness of the organisation as a potential employer.	1	2	3	4
9.	The website does what I want it to do, thus meeting my needs.	1	2	3	4
10.	There is sufficient information to make the website worth visiting.	1	2	3	4
11.	The content of the website effectively achieves its intended purpose of providing me with valuable information regarding vacancies and the organisation itself.	1	2	3	4

1.2 General Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the accuracy and completeness with which the system enables the user to achieve a goal or task.

Please rate the **general effectiveness** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12.	I can effectively complete my search for employment related information and vacancies by using this website.	1	2	3	4
13.	The website enables me to effectively communicate additional concerns or questions about the vacancy to the relevant people (e.g. via the contact information provided such as. e-mail addresses or telephone numbers).	1	2	3	4
14.	Using the website does not improve the communication of information between potential applicants and the organisation.	1	2	3	4
15.	The job description sufficiently describes the responsibilities, abilities, qualifications and experience the available position requires.	1	2	3	4
16.	The information provided via the website enables me to make an informed decision about whether I want to apply for a position within this organisation.	1	2	3	4
17.	The website provides sufficient instructions on how to apply for a position (e.g. electronically via e-mail or an online application form; or via traditional channels such as fax or snail mail).	1	2	3	4
18.	The content of the website is current (not outdated – e.g. vacancies which closing date for submitting an application has expired, is not still listed on the website).	1	2	3	4
19.	There is sufficient information to make the website worth visiting.	1	2	3	4
20.	The content of the website effectively achieves its intended purpose of providing me with valuable information regarding vacancies and the organisation itself.	1	2	3	4
21.	I need additional information not provided on the website in order to decide whether to apply for the position.	1	2	3	4

1.3 Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the degree to which the system enables the user to complete the tasks in a timely, competent and economical fashion.

Please rate the **efficiency** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22.	I was able to efficiently complete my search for career related information and potential employment opportunities by using this website.	1	2	3	4
23.	I can save time by using this website in my search for employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
24.	The speed at which this website responds to my input is not fast enough.	1	2	3	4
25.	Every webpage loads in an acceptable amount of time.	1	2	3	4
26.	When there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page - <i>greater than 10 seconds</i> - the most informative and important items become visible and are meaningful while the rest of the page loads (e.g. text becomes visible first, whilst pictures or photos download).	1	2	3	4

2. Ease of Use

2.1 General ease of use

Ease of use refers to the effortlessness and user-friendliness of the system.

Please rate the **general ease of use** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
27.	On the homepage there is an index, site map, or some other clear indicator of the content of the website.	1	2	3	4
28.	I consider the menu or table of contents on the websites to be organised in a logical and easy to anticipate manner.	1	2	3	4
29.	On each webpage it is easy to see at a glance the other options in terms of alternative webpages on the website, I can explore.	1	2	3	4
30.	Each webpage is labelled with a clear heading/ title indicating which information will follow.	1	2	3	4
31.	Different text sizes enable me to easily differentiate between headings, sub-headings and text on each webpage.	1	2	3	4
32.	It is easy to read the various characters (typescript) on the screen.	1	2	3	4
33.	Browsing the website, I was always able to tell "Where I am"	1	2	3	4
34.	Browsing the website, I was always able to tell "Where I can still go".	1	2	3	4
35.	All links provided on the website is clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	1	2	3	4
36.	I found the website difficult to use.	1	2	3	4
37.	It is easy to locate employment opportunities advertised on the website.	1	2	3	4
38.	Locating information on how to contact the organisation is easy.	1	2	3	4
39.	Too many steps are required to locate the information I desire (e.g. I have to click to may times through layers of links to locate the desired information)	1	2	3	4
40.	I felt very confident and in control using the website.	1	2	3	4
41.	I am satisfied with the level of ease with which I could complete the tasks asked of me.	1	2	3	4
42.	The website seems to be designed for all levels of users (experienced and novice users).	1	2	3	4
43.	The website is user friendly.	1	2	3	4

2.2 Consistency

Consistency refers to the ability of the system to respond to user inputs in a consistent way and to allow the user to perform similar tasks in similar ways.

Please rate the **consistency** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
44.	The website is not consistent (i.e. it does not respond to my inputs in the same way every time I use it).	1	2	3	4
45.	The same textual visual theme in terms of font, size and colour are repeated throughout the website.	1	2	3	4
46.	Throughout the website navigational mechanisms are used in a consistent manner.	1	2	3	4
47.	The visual theme used as well as the consistent style of presentation which is repeatedly used on all webpages, unifies the website.	1	2	3	4
48.	The meaning of icons, buttons, and symbols are in tune with my cognitive map (When clicking on a symbol, the results are what I expected them to be, e.g. envelope representing e-mail).	1	2	3	4

2.3 Error Management

Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application allows the user to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors.

Please rate the **error management** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

(The box on the far right hand side of the continuum is reserved for instances where the statement made is **NOT APPLICABLE** to the website you are evaluating)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
49.	All links on the website was accurate in taking me to the intended destination (no "ERROR" messages).	1	2	3	4	
50.	Whenever I made a mistake using the website I found it difficult to recover.	1	2	3	4	
If you were presented with an ERROR message whilst browsing the website, please answer the following questions (Questions 51 – 55).						
51.	Error message(s) is written in a clear understandable manner.	1	2	3	4	5
52.	Error message(s) diagnose the source and cause of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	The error messages suggest solutions to the problems.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	The solution suggested by the error message is helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	It is difficult to find the help function on the screen.	1	2	3	4	5

2.4 Compatibility

Compatibility refers to the degree to which the system's method of operation matches the user's expectations based on their knowledge of other types of products and the 'outside world'.

Examples of Icons:



Please rate the **compatibility** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

(Note: The following 5 'Compatibility' questions pertain to the use of Icons within the specific website)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
56.	The way the menu and/or icons is organised, is not logical.	1	2	3	4
57.	Standard icons are used on the website, which is similar to other interfaces I have used or have been trained in.	1	2	3	4
58.	The links used on the website is clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	1	2	3	4
59.	The terminology used throughout the website (i.e. vacancies, application form, etc.), is in line with standard day-to-day terminology (usage of jargon is avoided).	1	2	3	4
60.	The intended destination of icons, buttons and/or symbols is NOT easily grasped (recognised).	1	2	3	4

3. User Satisfaction

3.1 User Satisfaction

Satisfaction refers to the level of comfort that the user feels when using a product and how acceptable the product is to users as a vehicle for achieving their goals.

Please rate the user satisfaction dimension of the organisational website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
61.	Working with this website application is satisfying.	1	2	3	4
62.	I would not use this website frequently.	1	2	3	4
63.	I feel awkward using this website in my search for a potential employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
64.	It is frustrating to work with this website.	1	2	3	4
65.	I would recommend this website application to other potential users/job applicants I interact with.	1	2	3	4
66.	The website has an organised (well thought-out) presentation.	1	2	3	4
67.	Overall I am satisfied with the amount of time it took to locate and research an employment opportunity on the website.	1	2	3	4
68.	Both occasional and regular users would like to use this website.	1	2	3	4

End of Section C₂

Please continue Evaluating Website No.3

www.website-C.co.za

And complete Section B₃ & C₃ on it.

Step 1 Read and familiarise yourself with the Instructions for Browsing the Website as provided below.

Instructions for Browsing the Website

1. Go to www.website-C.co.za

Once the website is opened, you (as a potential applicant in search of an employment opportunity) are required to **search, locate and selectively read** the information pertaining to:

- (g) any employment opportunities/vacancies advertised on the website;
- (h) specific details of the advertised employment opportunity/vacancy;
- (i) how to apply for the advertised employment opportunity/vacancy;
- (j) the organisation itself and its culture;
- (k) how to contact the organisation;
- (l) the privacy policy posted on the website.

Since this exercise is a simulation/role-play, it is imperative that your search through the website for information about the organisation and the available vacancy as you would do in reality if you were truly interested in the available position and consider working for the specific organisation. The tasks provided, regarding what to search for on the website is a guideline, if there are additional information you as the potential applicant should require, search for it and be sure to mention it as you are completing the questionnaire.

2. Once you (as the potential applicant) are satisfied that the information regarding the organisation and the employment opportunity you have collected is sufficient, or that you have browsed the website sufficiently even though it might not have met your needs, please continue **completing Sections B₃ & C₃**.

Please Continue with Section B₃

SECTION B₃: WEBSITE CONTENT DESIGN AND GENERAL WEBSITE APPRAISAL

NAME OF WEBSITE YOU ARE EVALUATING	www.website-C.co.za
QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER <i>(for office use only)</i>	

PLEASE answer the following questions, and try to **AVOID** a simple **YES** or **NO** answer.
It would be more insightful if you could provide a reason to substantiate your answer.

- 1. **Is there any additional information (content), which was not provided on the website, which you as a potential applicant consider essential in your decision to apply for an advertised vacancy/employment opportunity?** (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

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- 2. **While browsing the website, were you able to acquire specific information and/or an idea of what the organisational culture of the particular organisation entails.** (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

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- 3. **Would you feel confident and secure about disclosing personal information online via the Website to the organisation?** (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

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4. Did you use the “search function” to locate any information on the website? If YES, please specify when/why you used it. If NO, please state why you did not use it.

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5. Would you continue visiting Website A in your search for vacancies / employment opportunities? (Please provide a reason to substantiate your answer.)

(Please note that the decision should not be based on the attractiveness of the specific employment opportunity explored, but rather on the general satisfaction and usefulness of the website as tool to research potential employment opportunities and future employers).

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.....

As a potential applicant whom has just visited this website in search of a potential employment opportunity, what is your general reaction towards this particular website?

6.	Terrible	1	2	3	4	Wonderful
7.	Difficult	1	2	3	4	Easy
8.	Frustrating	1	2	3	4	Satisfying
9.	Dull	1	2	3	4	Stimulating
10.	Rigid	1	2	3	4	Flexible
11.	Not worth the effort of visiting (NOT informative)	1	2	3	4	Worth while (Informative)

End of Section B₃, Please start Section C₃

SECTION C₃: USABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME OF WEBSITE YOU ARE EVALUATING	www.website-C.co.za
QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER <i>(for office use only)</i>	

1. Usefulness/Utility, Effectiveness & Efficiency

1.1 General Usefulness/Utility

Usefulness concerns the degree to which a product enables a user to achieve his or her goals and is an assessment of the user's motivation for using the product at all.

Utility refers to the functionality (thus the value, worth and helpfulness) of the system.

Please rate the **usefulness/utility** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Visiting this website would not increase the productivity of my search for an employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
2.	I find the website useful in my search for a potential employment opportunity and/or employment related information.	1	2	3	4
3.	The website enables me to make an informed decision regarding an advertised employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
4.	Visiting this website made my search for employment opportunity and/or career related information easier.	1	2	3	4
5.	The website improves communication (information sharing regarding vacancies) between potential applicants and employers.	1	2	3	4
6.	The website is a productive tool to use when researching an organisation and its employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
7.	Using this website does not add value to my search for potential employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
8.	Advertising employment opportunities on a website enhances the competitiveness of the organisation as a potential employer.	1	2	3	4
9.	The website does what I want it to do, thus meeting my needs.	1	2	3	4
10.	There is sufficient information to make the website worth visiting.	1	2	3	4
11.	The content of the website effectively achieves its intended purpose of providing me with valuable information regarding vacancies and the organisation itself.	1	2	3	4

1.2 General Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the accuracy and completeness with which the system enables the user to achieve a goal or task.

Please rate the **general effectiveness** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12.	I can effectively complete my search for employment related information and vacancies by using this website.	1	2	3	4
13.	The website enables me to effectively communicate additional concerns or questions about the vacancy to the relevant people (e.g. via the contact information provided such as. e-mail addresses or telephone numbers).	1	2	3	4
14.	Using the website does not improve the communication of information between potential applicants and the organisation.	1	2	3	4
15.	The job description sufficiently describes the responsibilities, abilities, qualifications and experience the available position requires.	1	2	3	4
16.	The information provided via the website enables me to make an informed decision about whether I want to apply for a position within this organisation.	1	2	3	4
17.	The website provides sufficient instructions on how to apply for a position (e.g. electronically via e-mail or an online application form; or via traditional channels such as fax or snail mail).	1	2	3	4
18.	The content of the website is current (not outdated – e.g. vacancies which closing date for submitting an application has expired, is not still listed on the website).	1	2	3	4
19.	There is sufficient information to make the website worth visiting.	1	2	3	4
20.	The content of the website effectively achieves its intended purpose of providing me with valuable information regarding vacancies and the organisation itself.	1	2	3	4
21.	I need additional information not provided on the website in order to decide whether to apply for the position.	1	2	3	4

1.3 Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the degree to which the system enables the user to complete the tasks in a timely, competent and economical fashion.

Please rate the **efficiency** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22.	I was able to efficiently complete my search for career related information and potential employment opportunities by using this website.	1	2	3	4
23.	I can save time by using this website in my search for employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4
24.	The speed at which this website responds to my input is not fast enough.	1	2	3	4
25.	Every webpage loads in an acceptable amount of time.	1	2	3	4
26.	When there is a substantial delay in rendering the whole page - <i>greater than 10 seconds</i> - the most informative and important items become visible and are meaningful while the rest of the page loads (e.g. text becomes visible first, whilst pictures or photos download).	1	2	3	4

2. Ease of Use

2.1 General ease of use

Ease of use refers to the effortlessness and user-friendliness of the system.

Please rate the **general ease of use** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
27.	On the homepage there is an index, site map, or some other clear indicator of the content of the website.	1	2	3	4
28.	I consider the menu or table of contents on the websites to be organised in a logical and easy to anticipate manner.	1	2	3	4
29.	On each webpage it is easy to see at a glance the other options in terms of alternative webpages on the website, I can explore.	1	2	3	4
30.	Each webpage is labelled with a clear heading/ title indicating which information will follow.	1	2	3	4
31.	Different text sizes enable me to easily differentiate between headings, sub-headings and text on each webpage.	1	2	3	4
32.	It is easy to read the various characters (typescript) on the screen.	1	2	3	4
33.	Browsing the website, I was always able to tell "Where I am"	1	2	3	4
34.	Browsing the website, I was always able to tell "Where I can still go".	1	2	3	4
35.	All links provided on the website is clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	1	2	3	4
36.	I found the website difficult to use.	1	2	3	4
37.	It is easy to locate employment opportunities advertised on the website.	1	2	3	4
38.	Locating information on how to contact the organisation is easy.	1	2	3	4
39.	Too many steps are required to locate the information I desire (e.g. I have to click to may times through layers of links to locate the desired information)	1	2	3	4
40.	I felt very confident and in control using the website.	1	2	3	4
41.	I am satisfied with the level of ease with which I could complete the tasks asked of me.	1	2	3	4
42.	The website seems to be designed for all levels of users (experienced and novice users).	1	2	3	4
43.	The website is user friendly.	1	2	3	4

2.2 Consistency

Consistency refers to the ability of the system to respond to user inputs in a consistent way and to allow the user to perform similar tasks in similar ways.

Please rate the **consistency** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
44.	The website is not consistent (i.e. it does not respond to my inputs in the same way every time I use it).	1	2	3	4
45.	The same textual visual theme in terms of font, size and colour are repeated throughout the website.	1	2	3	4
46.	Throughout the website navigational mechanisms are used in a consistent manner.	1	2	3	4
47.	The visual theme used as well as the consistent style of presentation which is repeatedly used on all webpages, unifies the website.	1	2	3	4
48.	The meaning of icons, buttons, and symbols are in tune with my cognitive map (When clicking on a symbol, the results are what I expected them to be, e.g. envelope representing e-mail).	1	2	3	4

2.3 Error Management

Error management refers to the degree to which the system/software application allows the user to effectively identify, diagnose and rectify errors.

Please rate the **error management** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

(The box on the far right hand side of the continuum is reserved for instances where the statement made is **NOT APPLICABLE** to the website you are evaluating)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
49.	All links on the website was accurate in taking me to the intended destination (no "ERROR" messages).	1	2	3	4	
50.	Whenever I made a mistake using the website I found it difficult to recover.	1	2	3	4	
If you were presented with an ERROR message whilst browsing the website, please answer the following questions (Questions 51 – 55).						
51.	Error message(s) is written in a clear understandable manner.	1	2	3	4	5
52.	Error message(s) diagnose the source and cause of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	The error messages suggest solutions to the problems.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	The solution suggested by the error message is helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	It is difficult to find the help function on the screen.	1	2	3	4	5

2.4 Compatibility

Compatibility refers to the degree to which the system's method of operation matches the user's expectations based on their knowledge of other types of products and the 'outside world'.

Examples of Icons:



Please rate the **compatibility** of the website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
56.	The way the menu and/or icons is organised, is not logical.	1	2	3	4
57.	Standard icons are used on the website, which is similar to other interfaces I have used or have been trained in.	1	2	3	4
58.	The links used on the website is clear and obvious in terms of its intended destination.	1	2	3	4
59.	The terminology used throughout the website (i.e. vacancies, application form, etc.), is in line with standard day-to-day terminology (usage of jargon is avoided).	1	2	3	4
60.	The intended destination of icons, buttons and/or symbols is NOT easily grasped (recognised).	1	2	3	4

3. User Satisfaction

3.1 User Satisfaction

Satisfaction refers to the level of comfort that the user feels when using a product and how acceptable the product is to users as a vehicle for achieving their goals.

Please rate the user satisfaction dimension of the organisational website by responding to all the statements below.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
61.	Working with this website application is satisfying.	1	2	3	4
62.	I would not use this website frequently.	1	2	3	4
63.	I feel awkward using this website in my search for a potential employment opportunity.	1	2	3	4
64.	It is frustrating to work with this website.	1	2	3	4
65.	I would recommend this website application to other potential users/job applicants I interact with.	1	2	3	4
66.	The website has an organised (well thought-out) presentation.	1	2	3	4
67.	Overall I am satisfied with the amount of time it took to locate and research an employment opportunity on the website.	1	2	3	4
68.	Both occasional and regular users would like to use this website.	1	2	3	4

End of Section C₃

End of Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX E:
FREQUENCIES OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF
POTENTIAL APPLICANTS

Table E-1: Age

AGE	Count	%
22 years	5	14%
23 years	11	31%
24 years	8	22%
25 years	6	17%
26 years	4	11%
27 years	1	3%
30 years	1	3%
Mean age	24	
Maximum age	30	
Minimum age	22	

Table E-2: Gender

GENDER	Count	%
Female	19	53%
Male	17	47%

Table E-3: Highest academic qualification obtained

HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION OBTAINED	Count	%
Grade 10 / Standard 8	-	-
Grade 12 / Standard 10	4	11%
Post-school certificate / diploma	1	3%
National diploma / National higher diploma	-	-
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	20	56%
Honours degree or equivalent	9	25%
Masters degree or equivalent	2	6%
Doctoral degree or equivalent	-	-

Table E-4: User group

USER GROUP	Count	%
Final year student (searching for employment next year – 2007)	28	78%
Employed, but part time student	8	22%
Employed (not a student)	-	-

Table E-5: Computer experience

COMPUTER EXPERIENCE	Count	%
Less than one year computer experience	-	-
1 – 3 years computer experience	3	8%
4 – 6 years computer experience	6	17%
More than 6 years computer experience	27	75%

Table E-6: Level of computer literacy

LEVEL OF COMPUTER LITERACY		Count	%
Illiterate	(I am unable to perform even basic operations on a computer)	-	-
Moderately Literate	(I can only perform basic operations on a computer)	2	6%
Literate	(I can perform complex operations on a computer)	26	72%
Expert Literacy	(I can perform extremely complex operations on a computer and I am skilled in the technical operations and programming of computers)	8	22%

Table E-7: Computer access

COMPUTER ACCESS	Count	%
Never	-	-
At home	11	31%
At Work	5	14%
At home & at work	20	56%

Table E-8: Time spend on the Internet per week

TIME SPEND ON THE INTERNET PER WEEK	Count	%
Less than 1 hour per week	3	8%
1 – 2 hours per week	9	25%
3 – 4 hours per week	10	28%
4 – 5 hours per week	7	19%
5 hours or more per week.	7	19%

Table E-9: Reason for computer usage

MAIN REASON WHY YOU USE A COMPUTER	Count	%
I do not use a computer	-	-
Personal activities (e.g. reading news headlines, e-mailing friends)	-	-
Work related activities (e.g. studies, work related e-mailing or research)	3	8%
Work related and personal activities	33	92%

Table E-10: Frequency of computer usage

HOW FREQUENT DO YOU USE A COMPUTER	Count	%
I almost never use a computer	-	-
Approximately once a month	-	-
Approximately once a week	1	3%
On a daily basis	35	97%

Table E-11: Frequency of Internet browsing

HOW OFTEN DO YOU BROWSE THE INTERNET	Count	%
I almost never browse the Internet	-	-
Approximately once a month	1	3%
Approximately once a week	11	31%
On a daily basis	24	67%

Table E-12: Previous Internet usage in search of available job opportunities

HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY USED THE INTERNET IN SEARCH OF AVAILABLE JOB OPPORTUNITIES?	Count	%
Never	2	6%
Yes, approximately once every six months	25	69%
Yes, approximately once a month	5	14%
Yes, approximately once a week	4	11%
Yes, I do on a daily basis	-	-

Table E-13: Internet connection used

FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY, WHAT CONNECTION TO THE INTERNET ARE YOU USING?	Count	%
External Modem Connection (e.g. 56K per second)	-	-
External Broadband Connection	-	-
Network connection (e.g. University of Stellenbosch Intranet)	36	100%

Table E-14: Preferred channel for the submission of an application

Dimension	PREFERRED CHANNEL FOR THE SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION							
	1		2		3		4	
	Least Preferred						Most Preferred	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Post (snail mail).	29	81%	7	19%	-	-	-	-
Fax	6	17%	25	69%	4	11%	1	3%
E-mail (sending an application and / or CV via e-mail)	-	-	-	-	13	36%	23	64%
Applying via the online application function provided on the website.	1	3%	4	11%	19	53%	12	33%

Table E-15: Current media usage when locating employment opportunities

CURRENT MEDIA USAGE WHEN LOCATING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES	Count	%
a. Newspapers & Classifieds (traditional hardcopy)	32	89%
b. Magazines (traditional hardcopy)	4	11%
c. Newspaper Websites (Online duplicate of a traditional hardcopy newspaper)	19	53%
d. Magazine Websites (Online duplicate of a traditional hardcopy magazine)	4	11%
e. Organisational Websites	34	94%
f. Specialised jobsites (Websites that specialises in recruiting, e.g. job boards, online recruiters, such as CareerJunction, JobMail, etc.)	36	100%
g. Word of Mouth	33	92%
h. Open Days on Campus and / or Job Fairs (Potential employers visit campus in an effort of making students aware of their organisation, what they have to offer and/or recruit them)	11	31%
i. Other (please specify)	4	11%

Table E-16: Preferred media usage when locating employment opportunities

Item	1 Least Preferred		2		3		4		5 Neutral		6		7		8		9 Most Preferred	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
a. Newspapers & Classifieds	-	-	-	-	3	8%	7	19%	6	17%	2	6%	6	17%	8	22%	4	11%
b. Magazines	1	3%	12	33%	9	25%	6	17%	2	6%	4	11%	1	3%	1	3%	-	-
c. Newspaper Websites	-	-	3	8%	4	11%	4	11%	8	22%	6	17%	5	14%	5	14%	1	3%
d. Magazine Websites	1	3%	5	14%	12	33%	9	25%	4	11%	3	8%	1	3%	1	3%	-	-
e. Organisational Websites	-	-	-	-	1	3%	1	3%	3	8%	7	19%	10	28%	8	22%	6	17%
f. Specialised jobsites	1	3%	-	-	1	3%	1	3%	2	6%	4	11%	4	11%	7	19%	16	44%
g. Word of Mouth	-	-	3	8%	3	8%	1	3%	4	11%	7	19%	6	17%	5	14%	7	19%
h. Open Days on Campus and / or Job Fairs	2	6%	12	33%	3	8%	7	19%	6	17%	2	6%	2	6%	1	3%	1	3%
i. Other (please specify)	33	92%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3%	1	3%	1	3%		%		%

Table E-16: Preferred media usage when locating employment opportunities

PREFERRED MEDIA USAGE WHEN LOCATING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES		Count	%
a. Newspapers & Classifieds	(traditional hardcopy)	221	68%
b. Magazines	(traditional hardcopy)	125	39%
c. Newspaper Websites	(Online duplicate of a traditional hardcopy newspaper)	194	60%
d. Magazine Websites	(Online duplicate of a traditional hardcopy magazine)	136	42%
e. Organisational Websites		252	78%
f. Specialised jobsites	(Websites that specialises in recruiting, e.g. job boards, online recruiters, such as CareerJunction, JobMail, etc.)	270	83%
g. Word of Mouth		226	70%
h. Open Days on Campus and / or Job Fairs	(Potential employers visit campus in an effort of making students aware of their organisation, what they have to offer and/or recruit them)	136	42%
i. Other (please specify)		51	16%

Table E-17: Submission of an application for an employment opportunity that was found on the Internet

SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION FOR AN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY THAT WAS FOUND ON THE INTERNET	Count	%
No	10	28%
Yes, I applied via traditional channels (fax or snail mail)	6	17%
Yes, I applied via e-mail (send application & CV via e-mail)	23	64%
Yes, I applied via the organisational website's online application function.	15	42%

Table E-18: Frequency organisational websites are browsed in search of potential employment opportunities

FREQUENCY ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITES ARE BROWSED IN SEARCH OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES	Count	%
Never	6	17%
About once every six months	19	53%
On a monthly basis	8	22%
On a weekly basis	1	3%
On a daily basis	2	6%

Table E-19: Submission of an application for an employment opportunity that was advertised on an organisational website

SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION FOR AN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY THAT WAS ADVERTISED ON AN ORGANISATIONAL WEBSITE	Count	%
No	13	36%
Yes, I applied via traditional channels (fax or snail mail)	-	-
Yes, I applied via e-mail (send application & CV via e-mail)	22	61%
Yes, I applied via the organisational website's online application function.	17	47%

APPENDIX F:
POTENTIAL APPLICANTS'
GENERAL APPRAISAL OF WEBSITES A, B AND C

GENERAL APPRAISAL OF WEBSITE A

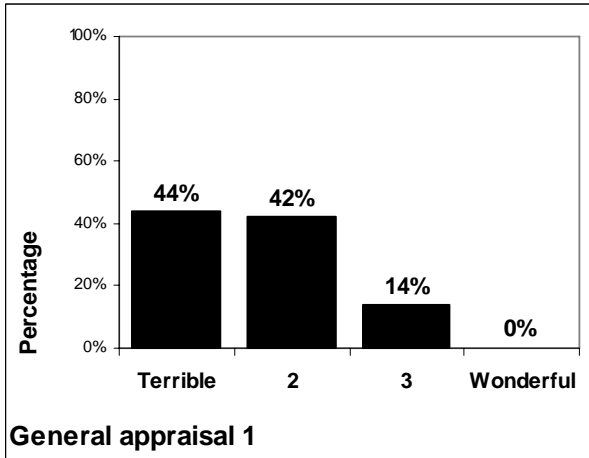


Figure F-1: General appraisal of Website A on the terrible vs. wonderful scale.

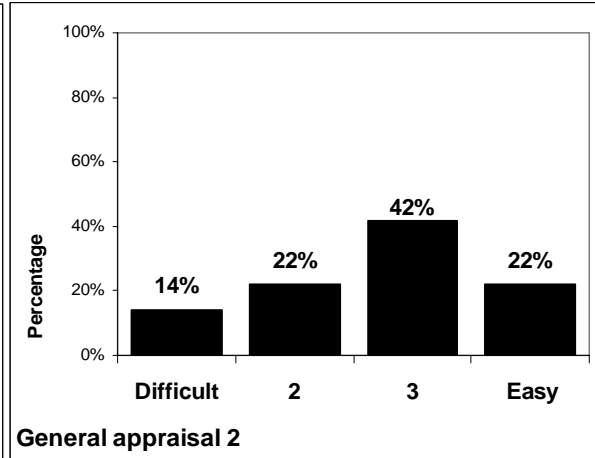


Figure F-2: General appraisal of Website A on the difficult vs. easy scale.

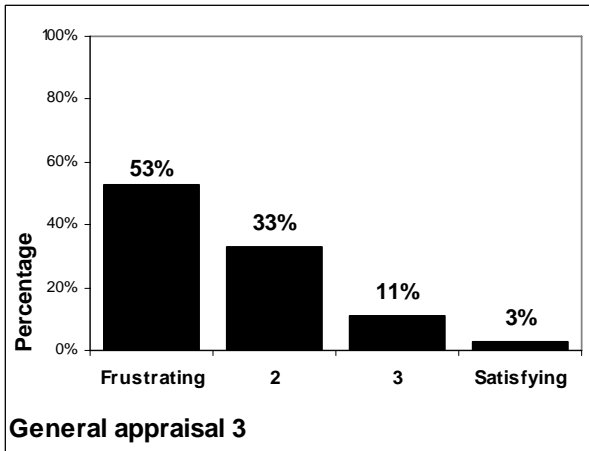


Figure F-3: General appraisal of Website A on the frustrating vs. satisfying scale.

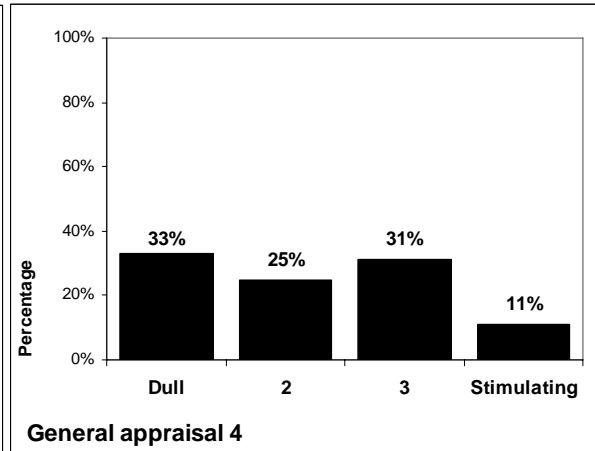


Figure F-4: General appraisal of Website A on the dull vs. stimulating scale.

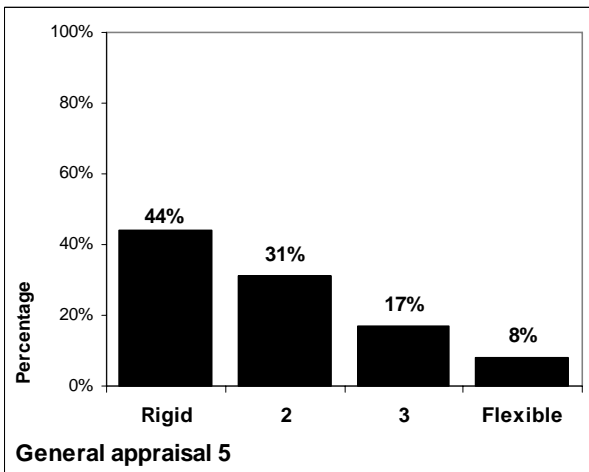


Figure F-5: General appraisal of Website A on the rigid vs. flexible scale.

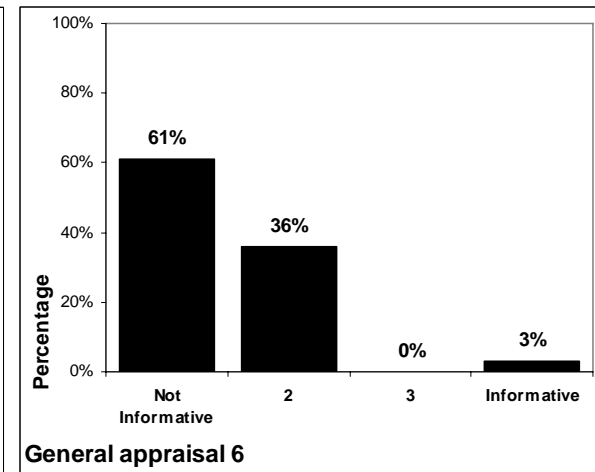


Figure F-6: General appraisal of Website A on the not informative vs. informative scale.

GENERAL APPRAISAL OF WEBSITE B

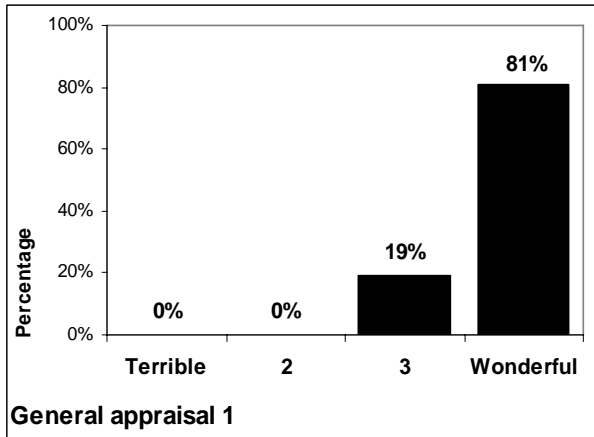


Figure F-7: General appraisal of Website B on the terrible vs. wonderful scale.

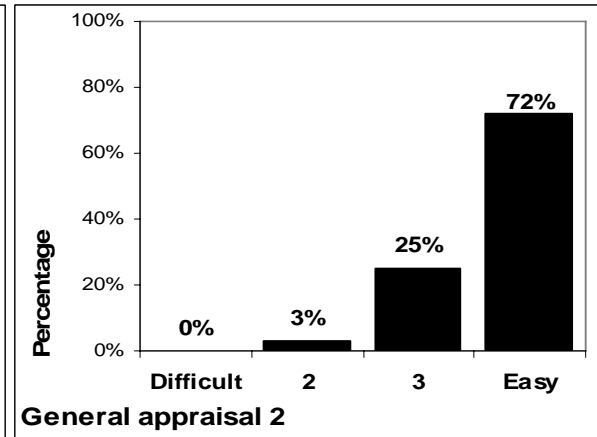


Figure F-8: General appraisal of Website B on the difficult vs. easy scale.

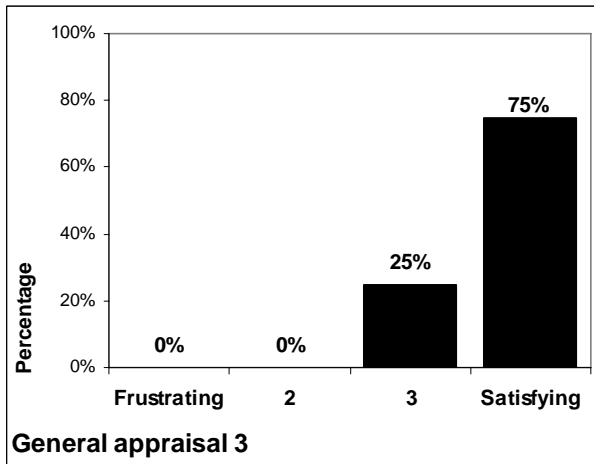


Figure F-9: General appraisal of Website B on the frustrating vs. satisfying scale.

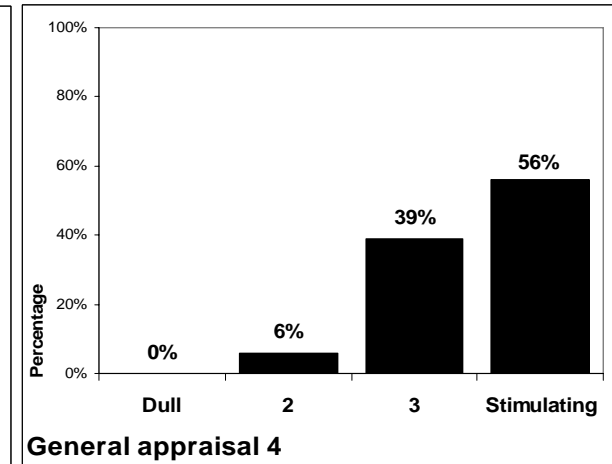


Figure F-10: General appraisal of Website B on the dull vs. stimulating scale.

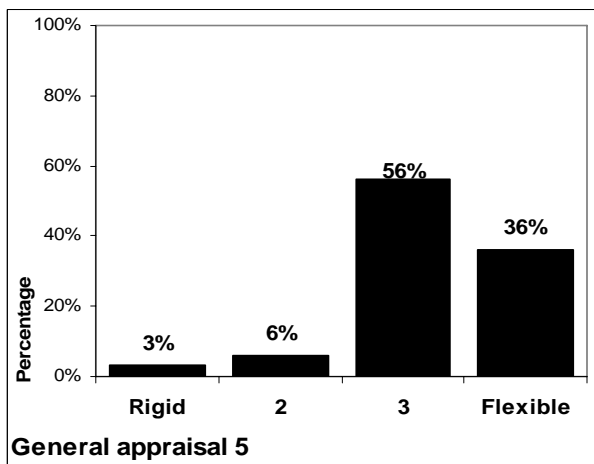


Figure F-11: General appraisal of Website B on the rigid vs. flexible scale.

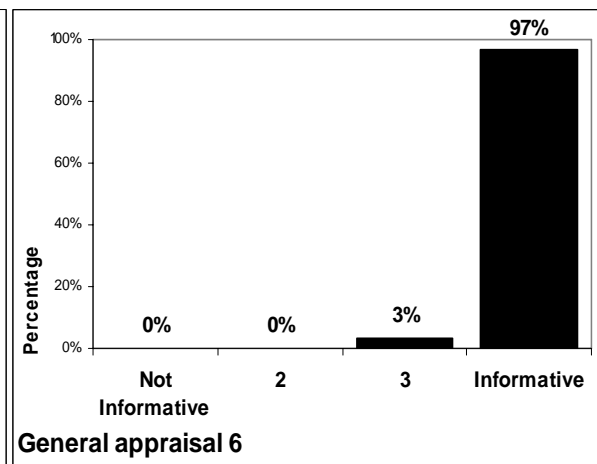


Figure F-12: General appraisal of Website B on the not informative vs. informative scale.

GENERAL APPRAISAL OF WEBSITE C

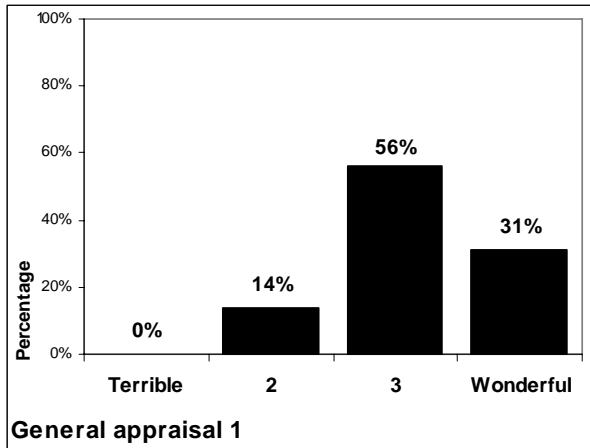


Figure F-13: General appraisal of Website C on the terrible vs. wonderful scale.

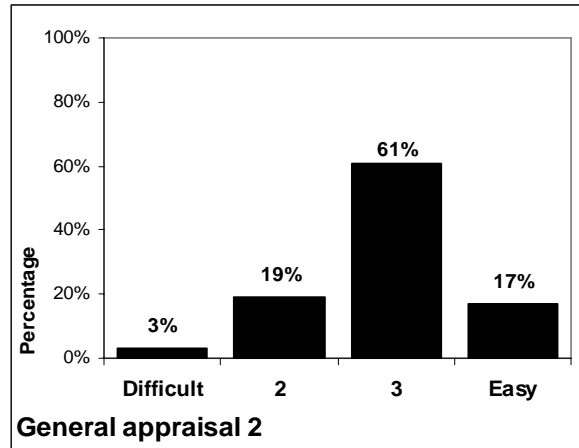


Figure F-14: General appraisal of Website C on the difficult vs. easy scale.

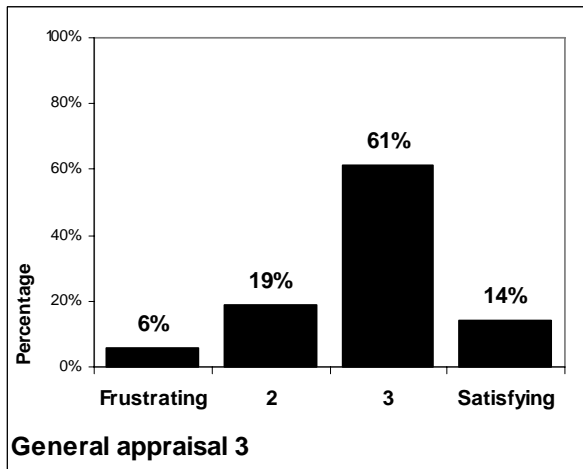


Figure F-15: General appraisal of Website C on the frustrating vs. satisfying scale.

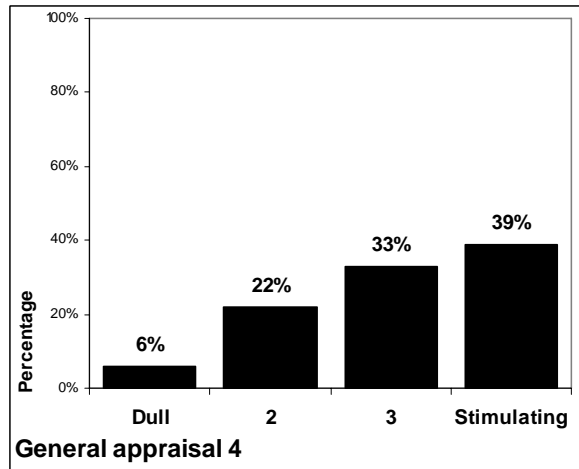


Figure F-16: General appraisal of Website C on the dull vs. stimulating scale.

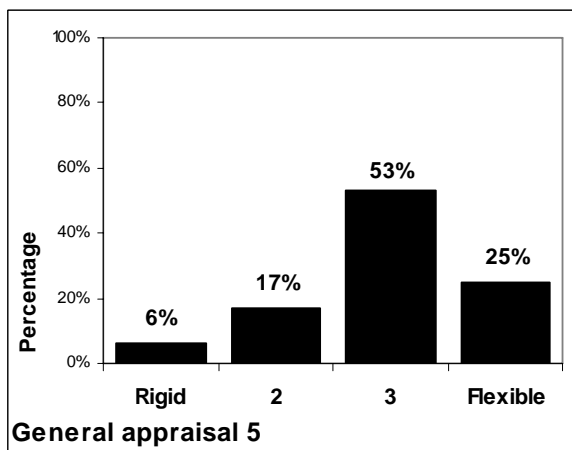


Figure F-17: General appraisal of Website C on the rigid vs. flexible scale.

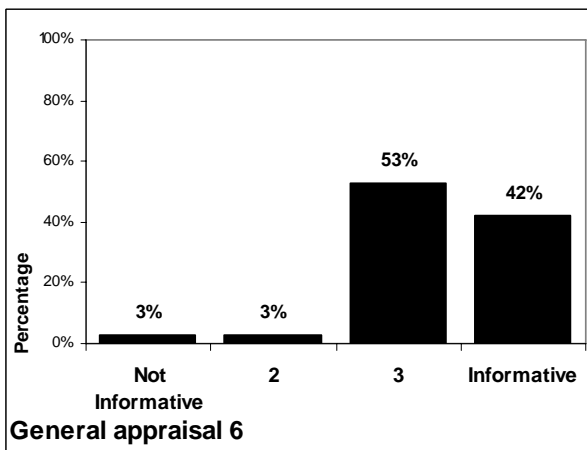


Figure F-28: General appraisal of Website C on the not informative vs. informative scale.