

It's a Small World After All: Western Usability Guidelines Predict Behavior of Chinese Users of On-Line Bookstores*

Josephine K.Y. Yau and William G. Hayward

Department of Psychology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, NT, Hong Kong
e-mail: whayward@psy.cuhk.edu.hk

Abstract. The present study examined whether Western usability guidelines apply to Chinese web sites. Nielsen et al. (2000) proposed a set of 207 usability guidelines derived from observations in the field. We took a subset of 48 rules, and looked at the compliance rate (number of guidelines a web site complied with, divided by the total number of guidelines), task completion time, task accuracy, and users' perceived usability and likeability for four Chinese online bookstores. Results showed a clear relationship between adherence to the rules and usability of the site: as the web site's compliance rate increased, so did the usability and the impression the web site received from its users. These results suggest that the rules governing behavior of Chinese users are similar to those of Western users. More generally, this study calls into question the widely-held intuition that usability for Asian web sites should be different than usability for Western sites.

Keywords: web usability, culture, e-commerce, human-computer interaction

Abstrak. Studi ini meneliti apakah pedoman penggunaan dari Barat berlaku juga untuk situs-situs jaringan (*websites*) China. Nielsen et al. (2000) mengumpulkan 207 pedoman penggunaan yang diperoleh dari observasi di lapangan. Kami mengambil subset dari 48 aturan, dan melihat pada jumlah kepatuhan (jumlah pedoman yang cocok dengan suatu situs jaringan, dibagi jumlah total pedoman), waktu penyelesaian tugas, keakuratan tugas, dan kegunaan dan kesukaan yang dirasakan permakai untuk empat toko buku China *on-line*. Hasil-hasil menunjukkan hubungan yang jelas antara kepatuhan pada aturan dan kegunaan situs: bila laju kepatuhan pada situs jaringan meningkat, demikian pula kegunaan dan kesenya yang diterima situs jaringan dari penggunanya. Hasil-hasil ini menyiratkan bahwa aturan yang mengatur perilaku pengguna China mirip dengan aturan untuk pengguna orang-orang Barat. Sebenarnya, studi ini mempertanyakan intuisi yang banyak diyakini bahwa penggunaan situs-situs jaringan untuk orang-orang Asia harus berbeda dari yang untuk orang-orang Barat.

Kata kunci: kegunaan jaringan, budaya, *e-commerce*, interaksi manusia-komputer

It is a truism that usability ultimately determines the success or failure of an interface, be it an aircraft cockpit, a new first-person shooter game, or a web site.

As the New Economy meltdown of 2000 showed us, no amount of funding and attention to features, marketing, and branding can make people buy a system

* This paper was presented at the seaeIPS 2005 in Denpasar, Bali on May 23-25. Courtesy of Prof. William G. Hayward and Josephine K.Y. Yau.