

# Culture Context Profiles: A Case of Institutional Websites in Nigeria

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*Received: 9 December 2016 Accepted: 1 January 2017 Published: 15 January 2017*

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## Abstract

Criticisms owing to rigidity and obsolescence has been directed to the hallowed positions (and often cited) cultural models proposed by Hall and Hofstede. This is largely because globalization and culture are verily fluid, amorphous and always in transition; and not defined by geographical borders existing between countries. In this paper we consider the cultural contexts of several websites owned by commissions/agencies of the Nigerian Government, using recent improvements of Hall's and Hofstede's model because their dimensions did not include Africa. Specifically, we evaluated we evaluate websites of the Cooperate Affairs Commission of Nigeria, Federal Inland Revenue Service of Nigeria, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Commission of Nigeria, National Pension Commission of Nigeria, Nigeria Export Promotion Commission, Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, National Emergency Management Agency of Nigeria so as to determine their cultural context profiles. In order to actualize these we employed the online survey methodology by distributing questionnaires to different groups of experts drawn from the various regions of Nigeria. Finally, the results showed that, most website designers in Nigeria follow the high context style in terms of animation, promotion of values, level of transparency, navigation, multiple use of links, color, search and polite/direct approach in actualizing their websites.

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**Index terms**— website, culture contexts, e-governance.

## 1 Introduction

he proliferation of internet use coupled with the increasing number of web designers has positively affected institutions in showcasing and achieving their dreams on the World Wide Web through their websites. The marketing industries mostly, were quick to adopt this approach since it provided a better platform for showcasing their goods and services to both local and foreign customers. Recently, websites have gone beyond simple static and text-based styles to dynamic and interactive styles with multimedia possibilities like; the addition of flash, sound and video. There by, setting a higher level of quality for better communication through the web. However, in order to create a crosscultural satisfactorily website from a marketing perspective, designers must deal with issues that surround "culture-specific color connotations, preferences in layout, animation, sounds, and other effects that are characteristic of today's generation of Web sites" [7]. This stand point is maintained to a large extent for e-government websites which basically strive to provide a citizen-centric tool for effective and efficient service delivery by government agencies. Studying user dispositions to design elements elicits, some of the clues a designer should exploit to ensure that "values and behavior indoctrinated through cultural influences may be reflected in design practices" [7].

Criticisms on the rigidity and obsolescence of some designs has been directed to the hallowed positions of cultural models proposed by Hall [2] and Hofstede [4]. This is largely because globalization and culture are

verily fluid, amorphous and always in transition [5]; and not defined by geographical borders existing between countries. Despite these criticisms, qualitative studies on websites designs still border on the propositions of Hall and Hofstede. Hall proposed some variable that aids the situating of cultures along a dimension spanning from high-content/low-content to the low-context/high-content. These variables include Nonverbal communication, Directness vs Indirectness, Time perception (monochronic vs polychronic) and Message speed. On the other hand Hofstede also proposed variables for culture which include Collectivism versus Individualism dimension.

## II.

### 3 Related Empirical Studies

Using Hall's dimensions, Wurtz [7] performed a cross-cultural qualitative analysis in order to explore and explain the differences between website samples of both High Context (HC) and Low Context (LC) cultures. To aid his analysis, different countries were first classified as either HC or LC. Specifically, Japan, China, and Korea were classified under HC while Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and the United States were classified as LC. The design parameters with which the analyses were conducted include visual communication and navigation. In the study, while visual communication was based on the analytical model of Thorlacius [6] and dealt with the featured product on the site using layout, images, photographs, and animation. The navigation dealt with the features of the website being considered.

Taking a different perspective from e-governance websites, Gygi and Spyridakis [1] developed a cultural model based on extant demographic data and values in order to analyze a school's website in Uzbek with the assumption that "Web sites designed by local producers for local users would embody and exhibit identifiable cultural markers". More so they evaluated the effect of language (Russian/English) in the Uzbek school website.

Yeratziotis and Greunen [8], employed Hall's cultural model of cultural context to determine the culture context profile of the South Africa (SA) government website and it ascertained whether it followed the standard e-government guidelines of the UK government for its design and implementation. Using a table they presented an assessment of the SA government's website on a three point scale compliancy level. However, they discovered that the SA government website did not follow the U.K. guidelines for government website development. Therefore, the website just provided a basic level of satisfaction for service delivery.

In order to aid governments in ensuring that their websites cater for actual needs of local users, Herselman and Greunen [3], performed a global survey on culture differences and contexts. They argued that their contribution will add to the websites effectiveness and usability. The study focused its questionnaire on selected populations; therein ten participants were identified through purposive sampling and divided into two groups (5) in low-context culture and (5) in highcontext culture. Results of the study were contrary to literature and have it that high-context participants preferred more low-context styles when using government websites.

It is noteworthy that the analyses on the contexts of culture in websites in Yeratziotis and Greunen [8] and Herselman and Greunen [3] were done using parameters gleaned from Table 1 and Table 2 below. While, Table 1 present the observations of the characteristics of high and low cultures websites, Table 2 present the other perspectives for values and features that are necessary when designing software products for high and low-context societies.

## 4 Methodology

To generate requisite information for the study, three major sources were explored. Firstly, a literature review was carried out on the fields of culture, culturecontext dimensions, e-government and government websites design. Apart from analyzing these concepts individually, analyses of one concept in relation to the other were also done. The aim of the analysis was to generate an online questionnaire survey to enable the evaluation of the e-government websites in Nigeria. A sample size drawn from the six geopolitical regions of Nigeria contributed to the survey findings. The questionnaire was designed to mirror the parameters shown in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively. The selected websites for the survey are presented in Table 3.

## 5 Results Yielded by the Study

The considered some of the basic factors listed in tables 1 and 2. The design parameters gleaned from the tables included animation, promotion of values, individuals separate or together with the product, level of transparency, linear vs parallel navigation on the web site, multiple use of links, creating friendly relationship with the website visitor, use of aesthetics, color and use of search engines.

A four point method was employed to analyze the above-listed heuristics. These include; a. YES: when one concurs with a statement b. NO: when one disagrees with a statement c. UNDECIDED: when one cannot seem to make up his/her mind on an accurate answer to a statement d. NOT APPLICABLE (N/A): when one feels that the statement does not apply to the web site.

The questionnaire also included a section for open ended answers with respect to Table 1 and Table 2. Therefore, we solicited for the rationale for response to the questions using any of the four points listed above. In addition, the respondents were instructed to judge the use of more than one image/banner as high and to judge the use of more than three colors as high. The implication of this is that, one image alone is judged as low

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while the use of less than three colors is judged as low. Eventually, the entire questionnaires were collated and analyzed according to whether a particular design parameter is either high or low-context.

## 6 a) Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)

This commission/agency is an independent body whose function is to regulate the creation as well as the management of companies in Nigeria. Specifically, their functions include registration of new companies, registration of business names and the registration of incorporated trustees. They are able to achieve all these through accredited members of some associations within the country. The commission's website is depicted in Figure 1 while the analyses of its culture context profile are presented in Table 4.

## 7 b) Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS)

The FIRS is a government institution that is charged with collating and collection of federal government taxes across Nigeria. Their other functions include ensuring tax payment compliance by companies, enterprises and individuals, giving taxpayers the moral and legal right to demand for the culture of accountability and providing sustainable finance and funding for governance, public and social services and economic development. The commission's website is depicted in Figure 2 while the analyses of its culture context profile are presented in Table 5. NAFDAC is another federal government agency in Nigeria whose responsibilities include the regulation and control of the manufacture, importation, exportation, advertisement, distribution, sale and use of every type of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, chemicals and packaged water. The organization also performs tests, inspection of the items mentioned above and ensures that there is a total compliance with stipulated and acceptable standards and quality. The agency's website is depicted in Figure ?? while the analyses of its culture context profile are presented in Table ??.

## 8 Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology

Volume XVII Issue II Version I ( ) Promotion of values High 3.

Individuals separate or together with the product Low 4.

Level of transparency High/Low 5.

Linear vs parallel navigation on the web site High 6.

Multiple use of links High 7.

Sell approach Low 8.

Use of aesthetics Low 9.

Color High 10.

Searching High 11.

Polite/Direct High

## 9 e) Nigeria Export Promotion Council (NEPC)

This Council in Nigeria, is the leading Federal Government agency charged with the responsibility of promoting non-oil export in Nigeria to diversify away from oil and build a formidable economy. The agency is also saddled with the responsibility of promoting development of export trade, maintaining adequate representation in other countries and to administer grants and benefits related to export promotion and development. The council's website is depicted in Figure 5 while the analyses of its culture context profile are presented in Table 8. NTDC is the Nigerian agency to the federal government which is responsible for the overall development of the country's tourism. The agency promotes the country as a domestic and international tourist destination for leisure, business, religion, festivals and commerce. The commission's website is depicted in Figure 6 while the analyses of its culture context profile are presented in Table 9. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is a federal government agency in Nigeria, created with the sole purpose of managing all types of disasters. Their functions include the coordination of resources towards efficient and effective disaster prevention, preparation, mitigation and response in Nigeria. The agency's website is depicted in Figure 7 while the analyses of its culture context profile are presented in Table 10. Promotion of values High 3.

Individuals separate or together with the product Low 4.

Level of transparency High/Low 5.

Linear vs parallel navigation on the web site High 6.

Multiple use of links High 7.

Sell approach High 8.

Use of aesthetics High 9.

Color High 10.

Searching High 11.

Polite/Direct High

V.

## 10 Conclusion

This study employed the online survey method in order to determine the culture context profile of some prominent Nigerian institution's websites. The questionnaires were distributed to a group of experts in the field of website design and their responses were collated and analyzed and presented in Table 11. According to the answers derived from the respondents' to the questionnaire based on the reasons for the choice of their answers, the following conclusions were derived; That the following four agencies which include; CAC, NAFDAC, NEPC, NEMA out the seven websites understudied, used green and white for their design. These are the colors that make up the Nigerian flag. Also, the websites involved the use of lots of images and banners. As an example, the NEMA homepage in two separate sections has 9 banners and 5 images. The banners and images alternatively appear on the homepage. There were also cases where respondents answered both YES and NO to questionnaire items with respect to the design parameters and gave their reasons for doing so. The implication of these is that such websites exhibited both high and low context tendencies in that design parameter. Table 12 depicts the profile of institutions' website in Nigeria in terms of actual design parameter. Apart from parameters 3 in the table 12, individual/separate and together with product, 7 (sell approach) and 8 (use of aesthetics), other parameters was high-context style. The implication is that, Nigerian agencies' website designers follow high context style in terms of animation, promotion of values, level of transparency, navigation, multiple use of links, color, search and polite/direct approach. But for aesthetics, the responses for high were for harmony and beauty which is evident in some of the websites and not for art, designs and nature. Furthermore, we would perform a more holistic study to determine the culture-context profiles of other websites in Nigeria. This is verily necessary if we are to posit Nigeria (and Africa) in Hall's culture continuum.



Figure 1: Figure 1 :



Figure 2: Figure 2 :



Figure 3: Figure 5 :





Figure 4: Figure 6 :



Figure 5: Figure 7 :

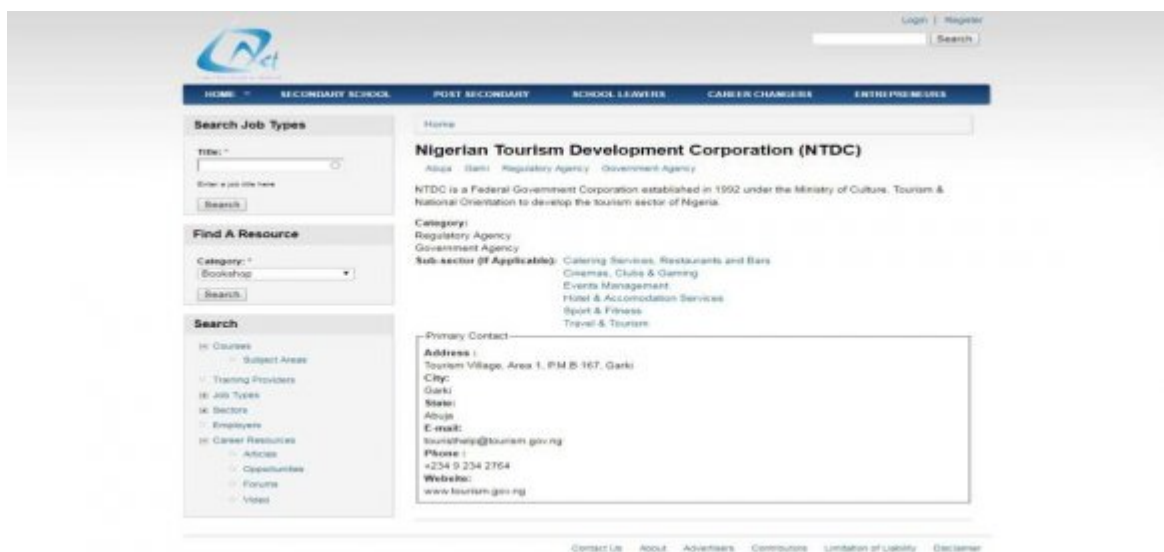


Figure 6:



Figure 7:

1

Figure 8: Table 1 :

### 2

	Culture Context Profiles: A Case of Institutional Websites in Nigeria
Year	
2017	
22	
Volume	Parameter HC Cultures promote Characteristic Images of collectivist values societies (e.g., being in g
XVII	Promo-
Is-	tion of
sue	Values
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Ver-	
sion	
I	

( ) physical shape, spending time with family and friends)  
G

Global	Individuals	High-context features	Polychronic aspects of time	Multiple use of images and/or banners
Jour-	separate			
nal	or			
of	together			
Com-	with the			
puter	product			
Sci-	Level of			
ence	trans-			
and	parency			
Tech-	Linear			
nol-	vs.			
ogy	parallel			
	naviga-			
	tion on			
	the Web			
	site			

Create a friendly relationship  
with the customer (soft-sell  
approach)  
Use of aesthetics to elicit <sup>8</sup>  
emotion (harmony, beauty,  
nature, art, designs)

confrontational  
Sales orientation (hard-sell  
approach)

Direct communication (focus  
on rank and prestige,  
superlatives,  
directness)



3

Institutions

Figure 10: Table 3 :

4

S/N

Animation (Multiple use of images/banners)  
 Promotion of values  
 Individuals separate or together with the product  
 Level of transparency  
 Linear vs parallel navigation on the web site  
 Multiple use of links  
 Sell approach  
 Use of aesthetics  
 Color  
 Searching  
 Polite/Direct

Design Culture	Pa-ram-eter	Context Status
		High
		Low
		Low
		Low
		High/Low
		High
		High
		Low
		Low
		High
		Low

Figure 11: Table 4 :

5

S/N

Animation (Multiple use of images/banners)  
 Promotion of values  
 Individuals separate or together with the product  
 Level of transparency  
 Linear vs parallel navigation on the web site  
 Multiple use of links  
 Sell approach  
 Use of aesthetics  
 Color  
 Searching  
 Polite/Direct  
 c) National Agency for Food and Drug Administration  
 Control (NAFDAC)

Design Culture	Pa-ram-eter	Context Status
		High
		Low
		N/A
		Low
		High/Low
		High
		Low
		Low
		High
		High
		Low

Figure 12: Table 5 :

7

S/N	Design Parameter	Culture Context Status
1.	Animation (Multiple use of images/banners)	High
2.		

Figure 13: Table 7 :

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Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology	S/N	Design Parameter	Animation (Multiple use of images/banners)	Promotion of values Individuals	Culture Context Status
	1. 2.				
	3. 4.		separate or together with the product transparency	Level of	High High
	5.		Linear vs parallel navigation on the web site		Low High
	6.		Multiple use of links		High
	7.		Sell approach		Low
	8.		Use of aesthetics		Low
	9.		Color		High
	10.		Searching		High
	11.		Polite/Direct		Low

[Note: f) Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation(NTDC) ]

Figure 14: Table 8 :

9

S/N	Design Parameter	Culture Context Status
1.	Animation (Multiple use of images/banners)	Low
2.	Promotion of values	Low
3.	Individuals separate or together with the product	Low
4.	Level of transparency	High
5.	Linear vs parallel navigation on the web site	High/Low
6.	Multiple use of links	High
7.	Sell approach	N/A
8.	Use of aesthetics	Low
9.	Color	Low
10.	Searching	High
11.	Polite/Direct	N/A
g) National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)		

Figure 15: Table 9 :

10

S/N	Design Parameter	Culture Context Status
1.	Animation (Multiple use of images/banners)	High
2.		

Figure 16: Table 10 :

11

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Figure 17: Table 11 :

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S/N.	Design Parameter	High	Low	High/Low	N/A
1.	Animation (Multiple use of images/banners)	6	1	-	-
2.	Promotion of values	4	3	-	-
3.	Individuals separate or together with the product	-	5	-	2
4.	Level of transparency	2	3	2	-
5.	Linear vs parallel navigation on the web site	4	-	3	-
6.	Multiple use of links	7	-	-	-
7.	Sell approach	2	4	-	1
8.	Use of aesthetics	2	5	-	-
9.	Color	5	2	-	-
10.	Searching	7	-	-	-
11.	Polite/Direct	3	3	-	1
	Total	42	26	5	4

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Figure 18: Table 12 :

.1 d) National Pension Commission (NPC)

The National Pension Commission fondly called PenCom, is the Nigerian federal government commission charged with the supervision and regulation of the contributory pension scheme (CPS) and the old defined benefits (DB) scheme as well as the pension translational arrangement directorate (PTAD). In summary, the organization's duty is to ensure that retirement benefits are paid to retirees as and when due. The commission's website is depicted in Figure ?? while the analyses of its culture context profile are presented in Table ??.

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