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Exploring the Relationship between Web Accessibility and User Experience

Amaia Aizpurua^{a,b,*}, Simon Harper^b, Markel Vigo^b

^a*Faculty of Informatics, University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU,
Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain*

^b*School of Computer Science, University of Manchester,
Manchester, United Kingdom*

Abstract

Understanding the interplay between the user experience (UX) and Web accessibility is key to design Web sites that, beyond access, could provide a better UX for people with disabilities. In this paper we examine the relationship between UX attributes and Web accessibility. We measured accessibility in two ways: the perceived accessibility as reported by participants and accessibility in terms of conformance to guidelines. Findings uncover that perceived Web accessibility is significantly correlated with 27 of the 35 UX attributes analysed, suggesting these two qualities are closely related. The relationship between UX and conformance to WCAG 2.0 is more elusive: we only found significant correlations between the hedonic attributes *original*, *innovative* and *exciting*.

Keywords: Blind users, Screen readers, Web, Web accessibility, User Experience

1. Introduction

The World Wide Web has an incredible potential to make our lives better due to the wide range of services offered through it. The Web can be specially helpful for people with disabilities, as barriers to communication and interaction
5 that many people face in the physical world are removed. While the Web was

*Corresponding author

Email address: amaia.aizpurua@manchester.ac.uk (Amaia Aizpurua)

designed to be universally accessible, in practice this does not always happen (Lopes et al., 2010) mainly because Web sites are often designed without considering human diversity. This leads to poorly designed Web sites which can potentially exclude significant segments of the population. Since the Web is a
10 mainly visual environment, navigating the Web is particularly challenging for blind users. Although assistive technology such as screen readers have been an incredible breakthrough, blind users still face a wide range of difficulties on the Web. In fact, blind users face not only more challenges than sighted users (Bigham et al., 2007), but are also disadvantaged when compared to other
15 groups of users with disabilities (Petrie et al., 2004).

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) through the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) published the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (Chisholm et al., 1999; Caldwell et al., 2008) to promote the design of accessible Web content. While guidelines are an invaluable starting point, prior empirical
20 research (Power et al., 2012) indicates that WCAG 2.0 only cover around half of the problems that blind users encounter on the Web. This implies that a Web site may have an adequate level of accessibility in terms of conformance to guidelines, but still not be sufficient for users. Our experience, which is informed by a series of studies with blind participants, corroborates that a Web site with
25 a significant number of WCAG 2.0 success criteria violations can be perceived to be accessible; on the contrary, a Web site which is compliant to guidelines may not be always perceived to be accessible (Aizpurua et al., 2013).

Research on the behavioural aspects of blind users on the Web has been mainly focused on the analysis of performance in terms of efficiency, errors committed and satisfaction (Leuthold et al., 2008), and on examining the strategies
30 employed to overcome the barriers they encounter and the situations that trigger the use of coping tactics (Vigo & Harper, 2013). These works have provided a valuable knowledge about how blind users behave and navigate on the Web although they say little about the ‘intangible’ aspects of the experience. In other
35 words, since behaviour is accompanied by subjective experience, in addition to assessing objective qualities such as performance-related aspects of the interac-

tion, the interaction with Web sites should be explored in a more holistic way. In this respect user experience (UX) provides a framework to understand how users may perceive an interactive artefact from diverse facets including aesthetics, affect or trust (Law et al., 2009). We claim that having a better understanding of blind users' subjective experience on the Web cannot be disassociated from an analysis of how this experience affects the perceived accessibility.

To shed some light on this association we examined the relationship between the UX and Web accessibility by comparing the subjective experience reported by users, with the perceived Web accessibility and with conformance to accessibility guidelines. User experience scores were collected by means of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews based on the UX model proposed by Hassenzahl (2005). In Section 4.1 we examined the relationship between UX and *perceived Web accessibility* after-use and found that perceived Web accessibility (PWA) is significantly correlated with most of the UX attributes, suggesting the close relationship between these qualities. Secondly, we investigated how UX attributes are related to different *Web Accessibility Indicators* (AIs), which were measured using different accessibility evaluation methods. The outcomes of this analysis reveal in Section 4.2 that compliance to WCAG 2.0 guidelines is significantly correlated to three UX attributes that belong to the hedonic quality: *original*, *innovative* and *exciting*. In Section 4.3 we analysed the interviews with participants in order to provide possible explanations for these relationships. Finally, results and implications are discussed in Section 5. This work is not only novel due to the number of covered UX attributes, but also because we study the experience of blind users with regard to a more holistic view of Web accessibility, as the subjective perception of participants and a more normative assessment of accessibility have been considered.

2. Background

2.1. *The Importance of the Experience*

65 Usability is a clearly defined concept: the ISO 9241-11 (ISO, 1998) defines usability 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”. However, Web sites are much more than interactive artefacts for accomplishing specific tasks. Individuals find the Web as a mean, not only
70 to achieve informational goals, but also for activities related to communication, leisure, social networking or contributing to building the Web (Lindley et al., 2012). Users value interactive artefacts on the basis of how well they satisfy their needs in a particular situation, beyond the objective features that derive from design choices including content, style or functionalities. Therefore, the
75 success of a Web site may not only depend on its actual characteristics, but also on how well these are perceived by users (Hassenzahl, 2005). This highlights the importance of considering the subjective aspects of the interaction in order to understand the actual experience of users. Because the HCI community has acknowledged the importance of these non-instrumental aspects, several works
80 have focused on defining and setting the scope of UX: according to a survey, UX is considered dynamic, context-dependent and subjective and therefore, difficult to agree upon (Law et al., 2009). Similarly, Bargas-Avila & Hornbæk (2011) found a lack of consistency in the methods employed to evaluate different UX attributes. This is a symptom of not having a common framework that
85 allows researchers and practitioners to understand the UX attributes and the relationships among them. So far, only a few models have been proposed, for instance, the most comprehensive ones are the UX model (Hassenzahl, 2005) and the CUE model (Thüring & Mahlke, 2007). Both models share the same foundations, as both include instrumental and non-instrumental qualities, the
90 emotional reactions of users and their appraisal of interactive artefacts.

2.2. Web Accessibility, Usability and UX

There is little agreement when it comes to defining web accessibility, which causes some tensions between the community of users, researchers and accessibility advocates (Yesilada et al., 2012). Moreover, while it cannot be denied
95 that accessibility and usability are two qualities that interact with each other it has always been difficult to define the scope and extent of this relationship. In fact, if accessibility and usability are not properly integrated, Web sites can turn out to be either accessible but barely usable, or usable but barely accessible (Leporini & Paternò, 2008). In a study run by Petrie & Kheir (2007) it
100 was found that sighted and blind users have in common 14% of the problems they encounter, suggesting this figure as the overlap between accessibility and usability.

There are few reliable research works about the relationship of UX and Web accessibility. One exception is a study about the relationship between
105 aesthetic features and accessibility (Mbipom & Harper, 2011). The authors found that there was a relationship between the *visually clean* dimension of aesthetics and conformance to Web accessibility. It must be noted that even if Web accessibility evaluations were carried out following the barrier walkthrough method (Brajnik, 2006), the aesthetic judgements were made by sighted users.
110 This suggests we require a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Web accessibility and UX as experienced and reported by blind users. In addition, the experiential and subjective aspects of Web accessibility remain largely unexplored. In previous work (Aizpurua et al., 2015) it was uncovered that experiential aspects such as prejudices, evoked memories, expectations can
115 influence on how blind users experience the accessibility of a Web site.

2.3. The Experience of Blind Users on the Web

In order to understand the experience of blind users on the Web, previous work has focused on identifying the problems they encounter (Theofanos & Redish, 2003; Murphy et al., 2008; Power et al., 2012), analysing their performance
120 (Leuthold et al., 2008), examining their navigation behaviour and the coping

strategies they use (Vigo & Harper, 2013). Works about the subjective aspects of the interaction of blind users with the Web are scarce: Lazar et al. (2006) conducted a study that examined the frustrating experiences and mood changes of 100 participants with visual disabilities when browsing the Web. One of the
125 main findings showed that frustration causes individuals' mood to deteriorate. More specifically, the factors that had the strongest negative impact on mood were those related to the ability to complete the work.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

130 Eleven participants (4 females and 7 males) took part in the study, as shown in Table 1. The median age of participants was 43 years, with a range of 21–64 years. Expertise varied among participants: 2 were experts, 2 beginners, 4 intermediates and 3 advanced. In an interview which took place before the navigation tasks we asked participants to rate their expertise on the Web on a four-item
135 scale: expert, advanced, intermediate and beginner. Due to the observed lack of reliability of self-reported values, Web expertise was also assessed based on external observation of the navigation skills shown by participants. The first author looked at the strategies employed and the confidence of participants when carrying out the proposed tasks. These assessments were corroborated by the
140 facilitator in charge of the computer training facility at the National Organisation of Spanish Blind People (ONCE), who had trained the participants. In line with the findings of van der Geest et al. (2014), who found that self-rated competence of visually impaired users is not always related to their actual performance, Table 1 shows that self-rated and observed skills do not necessarily
145 match.

3.2. Apparatus

All participants were legally blind and utilised screen readers to navigate on the Web: ten participants were Jaws users (version 10, except for P01 and P03

Table 1: Demographic data and characterisation of Web expertise

part. id	gender	age	Web familiarity	frequency of Web use	expertise	
					self-reported	observed
P01	f	29	>7 years	daily	advanced	expert
P02	f	29	>7 years	daily	advanced	expert
P03	m	39	>7 years	daily	advanced	advanced
P04	m	54	4-6 years	daily	intermediate	intermediate
P05	m	43	1-3 years	weekly	beginner	intermediate
P06	m	21	1-3 years	weekly	beginner	beginner
P07	m	64	>7 years	daily	intermediate	advanced
P08	m	58	>7 years	daily	intermediate	intermediate
P09	f	54	4-6 years	daily	intermediate	advanced
P10	m	64	4-6 years	daily	beginner	intermediate
P11	f	42	>7 years	weekly	intermediate	beginner

who used version 12) on Internet Explorer and Windows XP and Windows 7
 150 respectively, while just one participant (P02) was a VoiceOver user on Safari
 over MacOS. The first three participants were observed in the research facility
 of the HCI laboratory at the School of Computer Science of the University of the
 Basque Country, where they brought their own laptop. Remaining sessions took
 place in a room at the ONCE delegation in Donostia-San Sebastián, where these
 155 eight participants used the same laptop and keyboard, which were provided by
 the ONCE.

3.3. Stimuli Selection

We recruited local participants and selected Web sites of restaurants that
 were popular in the area where participants lived in order to let the subjective
 160 dimensions emerge. We focused on one type of Web site for two main reasons: 1)
 to establish analogous tasks across different stimuli; and 2) to minimise potential
 confounding factors resulting from different types of Web sites.

In order to select the final set of Web sites we first listed 25 Web sites of
 local restaurants of different styles. We then analysed their homepages, using
 165 four automated Web accessibility evaluation tools: AChecker (Gay & Li, 2010),

EvalAccess (Abascal et al., 2004), TAW¹ and WAVE². Using the WAQM metric (Vigo et al., 2007) we evaluated again the homepage and two more Web pages. Based on the results we classified the Web sites into 2 groups: highly accessible and poorly accessible sites. Within each group we separated Web sites into two
170 other groups considering the style of the restaurant: traditional and innovative. Then we performed manual accessibility evaluations: we applied the Barrier Walkthrough (BW) inspection method (Brajnik, 2006) in three Web pages of each Web site. Based on the results, we finally selected the two most and least accessible Web sites for each type of restaurant.

175 We evaluated the final four Web sites against the AA conformance level of WCAG 2.0³. The selected Web sites contained different features and problems: in general, W1 and W2 satisfied more AA level success criteria (SC) than W3 and W4. The homepages of W1, W2, W3 and W4 satisfied respectively 73%, 69%, 52% and 36% of the SC for the AA level of WCAG 2.0. The most severe
180 accessibility problem of W3 was that the seven links that conform the navigation menu, all of them have the same text which is ‘image’. In the case of W4, the main accessibility problem is about Flash content which is not accessible using a screen reader.

Regarding the above-mentioned selection criteria with respect to branding,
185 W1 and W3 represent internationally well-known restaurants with an innovative character and a culinary style based on research and creativity. In contrast, W2 and W4 Web sites correspond to restaurants that are locally popular and their style is based on traditional Basque cuisine. The visual design of the Web sites is in line with the style of the restaurant. The Web sites of the internationally
190 well-known restaurants (W1 and W3) have more stylised visual layouts, as they have had their typographies designed and make use of high-quality close-up pictures. In contrast, the Web sites of the traditional-style restaurants (W2

¹<http://www.tawdis.net>

²<http://wave.webaim.org/>

³Both VoiceOver and Jaws screen readers were used on BW and WCAG 2.0 evaluation.



(a) W1: high accessibility and innovative (b) W2: high accessibility and traditional



(c) W3: low accessibility and innovative (d) W4: low accessibility and traditional

Figure 1: Screenshots of Web sites.

and W4) have a more basic and less elaborated visual aesthetic designs (see a snapshot of their homepages in Figure 1).

195 3.4. Procedure

Each session was conducted with one participant at a time. Once the participants were informed about the objectives of the study and the procedure of the session they signed a consent form. In order to reduce bias in the obtained answers we told participants that we had no conflict of interests with the Web
 200 sites, and that we had only selected those Web sites for the purpose of the study. We let the participants know that we were interested in their personal opinions in order to let them play the role of testers rather than tested subjects. We also made it clear that there were no right or wrong answers. Thus, they would feel free to respond as honestly as possible.

205 Then, we asked each participant questions about demographics, and their
Web expertise, including their familiarity with the Web and the frequency of
access to the Web. After that, each participant was interviewed about his pre-
vious experiences and expectations regarding restaurant Web sites. Once the
interview had finished, the participant could start to navigate the first Web
210 site. Following a within-subject design, each participant was asked to complete
the same three consecutive tasks within each Web site (more in Section 3.5).
Repeating tasks on all Web sites did not introduced a potential learning effect
bias as each Web site structured its content in a different manner. In order to
minimise order effects, Web site navigation order was counterbalanced. Once
215 they finished the tasks or withdrew from them, participants were asked to rate
the items of the questionnaires (more in Section 3.6). Then they were inter-
viewed about their browsing experience. Each session, including the navigation
on Web sites and interviews, was video and audio recorded to enable subsequent
analysis.

220 3.5. Tasks

The three tasks were: 1) freely navigate on the Web site in order to become
familiar with it; 2) find information about the gastronomic offer; and 3) find the
means offered by the Web site to make a booking. The idea was to let the users
explore the Web site through real tasks, which would induce a more naturalistic
225 behaviour. Even if tasks were set in advance, they were not very specific and
were kept open, as participants were not given explicit clues or directions to
follow in order to find the information. This allowed the participants to explore
and browse each Web site with ample opportunities. Participants were told
that the time estimated for each task was between 5-10 minutes. However we
230 insisted on their freedom to spend more time or withdraw from navigating if
they wanted. For this reason completion times were irrelevant and not useful
for the scope of our study.

3.6. Data Collection

We used existing instruments to capture the UX of participants in order
235 to focus on their perception of the Web sites and the emotional reactions they
had. The instruments we selected after reviewing the literature were: Attracdiff
2 (Hassenzahl, 2008) and the emotion word prompt list (EWPL) by Petrie &
Precious (2010) both in Table 2. Attracdiff 2 was used for collecting the in-
sights from participants about the Web sites. This questionnaire consists of a
240 set of 23 word pairs reflecting opposite adjectives that can be rated on a 7-point
scale to assess perceptions of users about an interactive artefact on pragmatic
quality (PQ) and hedonic quality (HQ) attributes also including judgements on
beauty and goodness. PQ refers to the usability of the artefact, and focuses
on task-related aspects. In contrast, HQ refers to more subjective quality at-
245 tributes in terms of stimulation, identity communication (identification) and
valued memories. The emotions that emerged during the interaction with the
Web sites were obtained by means of the emotion word prompt list (EWPL).
The EWPL consists of 11 emotional words: *annoyed, bored, confident, confused,*
disappointed, frustrated, happy, interested, hopeful, pleased and *unsure* that can
250 be rated through 7-point Likert items where 1 means low intensity and 7 high
intensity. We translated both questionnaires into Spanish.

Information about the Web accessibility perceptions of participants was ob-
tained by asking participants to rate the accessibility of each Web site in a
7-point Likert-type question, from 1 (very inaccessible) to 7 (very accessible).
255 We also used semi-structured interviews to gather deeper insights on the aspects
collected by the questionnaires. Some of the prompts we gave them aimed at
knowing more about the moment and the reasons for their emotional reactions,
the problems they encountered while navigating, the positive and negative as-
pects of the Web sites, etc.

260 The accessibility indicators (AIs) were obtained applying the different evalu-
ation methods described in Section 3.3. As a result, we computed 37 accessibil-
ity indicators that derived from four main sources: the TAW online automated

evaluation tool⁴ (*tool*), the metrics from the WAQM software (*m*) and those obtained through inspection methods: conformance to WCAG 2.0 (*sc*) and the
265 Barrier Walkthrough method (*bw*). These four main AIs were broken down into more specific indicators resulting in a list of 37 AIs: the automatically detected problems (*e*), warnings that require manual verification (*w*); the four accessibility principles of the WCAG 2.0 guidelines: perceivable (*p*), operable (*o*), understandable (*u*) and robust (*r*); the conformance level (*a*, *aa*) and the number of
270 satisfied (*sat*) and not-satisfied (*nsat*) success criteria (*sc*). For instance, *m* represents the average accessibility score computed by WAQM, *tool_w_p* refers to the number of warnings reported by the tool for the *p* principle, *tool_e_u* corresponds to the number of errors reported by the tool for the *u* principle, *sc_sat_a* represents the number of satisfied *sc* for the A conformance level, *sc_nsat_aa_p*
275 indicates the number of not satisfied *sc* for the AA conformance level for the *p* principle, and *bw* corresponds to the number of barriers found using the Barrier Walkthrough method.

3.7. Data Analysis

We run analyses of statistical correlation to observe the relationships between: 1) UX attributes and perceived Web accessibility (PWA) as reported by
280 participants; and 2) UX attributes and accessibility indicators (AIs) as generated by tools and inspections by experts. The statistical software used was R⁵. We also analysed data from the interviews in order to better understand the importance of the identified relationships and the reasons why they emerged.

⁴We chose the TAW online tool because it provides a straightforward way to discriminate automatically reported violations and warnings that require human verification.

⁵<http://www.r-project.org/>

285 4. Results

4.1. UX and Perceived Web Accessibility

Table 2 shows that most correlations between PWA and UX attributes (27 out of 35) are statistically significant when we compute Kendall’s Tau test⁶. We found strong significant ($\tau > 0.5$ and $p < 0.001$) correlations between PWA
290 and six attributes of the hedonic quality-identification (integrating, professional, valuable, inclusive, brings me closer to people, presentable), one attribute of the hedonic quality-stimulation (creative), five attributes of the pragmatic quality (simple, practical, direct, clear, manageable), goodness, appeal, annoyed, disappointed, frustrated, happy, interested and pleased. We also found significant
295 and moderate correlations ($0.4 \geq \tau \geq 0.5$ and $p < 0.001$) between PWA and one attribute of hedonic quality-identification (classy), three attributes of hedonic quality-stimulation (original, exciting, new), beauty, bored and confused.

4.2. UX and Accessibility Indicators

We examined the relationship between the UX attributes rated by partici-
300 pants and the accessibility indicators corresponding to Web sites. Since Likert scales can actually be considered somewhere between an ordinal and a true interval scale (Maxwell, 2006), it has been a subject of debate for years how these scales should be appropriately analysed (Carifio & Perla, 2007; Norman, 2010). Due to the exploratory nature of our research, we decided to apply both
305 parametric and non-parametric tests including Pearson, Spearman and Kendall correlation tests. If we focus on large effect sizes (above 0.5) the Pearson and Spearman test yielded some significant correlations, while the Kendall test did not. Table 3 shows that, predominantly, *conservative-innovative* (HQS_4) and *lame-exciting* (HQS_5) attributes are the ones with more strong and significant
310 correlations. We observe that these correlations correspond to those criteria in which conformance to WCAG 2.0 guidelines was evaluated by human testers,

⁶Kendall’s Tau is preferred to Spearman test because it performs better with small sample sizes (Clark-Carter, 2004).

Table 2: Correlations between PWA and UX attributes for the Kendall test [N=44, 11 participants x 4 Web sites]. Significance of tests are reported at $p < 0.05$ (*), $p < 0.005$ (**), $p < 0.001$ (***)

UX attributes	Kendall's Tau (τ)
Attracdiff – Hedonic quality-identification	
HQI.1 isolating–integrating	0.63***
HQI.2 amateurish–professional	0.64***
HQI.3 gaudy–classy	0.44***
HQI.4 cheap–valuable	0.62***
HQI.5 noninclusive–inclusive	0.68***
HQI.6 takes me distant from people–brings me closer to people	0.66***
HQI.7 unpresentable–presentable	0.67***
Attracdiff – Hedonic quality-stimulation	
HQS.1 typical–original	0.43***
HQS.2 standard–creative	0.55***
HQS.3 cautious–corageous	0.18
HQS.4 conservative–innovative	0.29*
HQS.5 lame–exciting	0.47***
HQS.6 easy–challenging	-0.19
HQS.7 commonplace–new	0.45***
Attracdiff – Pragmatic Quality	
PQ.1 technical–human	0.37**
PQ.2 complicated–simple	0.52***
PQ.3 impractical–practical	0.64***
PQ.4 cumbersome–direct	0.53***
PQ.5 unpredictable–predictable	0.39**
PQ.6 confusing–clear	0.55***
PQ.7 unruly–manageable	0.60***
Attracdiff – Evaluational Constructs	
beauty	0.48***
goodness	0.68***
appeal	0.61***
EWPL	
annoyed	-0.56***
bored	-0.46***
confident	0.10
confused	-0.47***
disappointed	-0.58***
frustrated	-0.58***
happy	0.59***
interested	0.54***
hopeful	0.41**
pleased	0.54***
unsure	-0.26*

and specially the ones related to the number of satisfied and non-satisfied success criteria for the Perceivable principle.

Table 3: Correlations between Accessibility Indicators and UX attributes for the Pearson test [N=88, 11 participants x 4 Web sites x 2 Web pages)] for $p < 0.001$. Values between brackets correspond to the Kendall test.

	HQI.1	HQS.4	HQS.5	PQ.2	PQ.7
	isolating	conservative	lame	complicated	unruly
AI	integrating	innovative	exciting	simple	manageable
m_u			0.54		
tool_w_u	-0.50			-0.50	-0.50
sc_sat_aa		0.52 (0.54)			
sc_sat_aa_p		0.50			
sc_sat_aa_o		0.50			
sc_sat_aa_u		(0.50)			
sc_sat_a_p			0.51 (0.53)		
sc_sat_a_u		(0.50)			
sc_nsat_aa		-0.50 (-0.51)			
sc_nsat_aa_p		-0.52 (-0.52)			
sc_nsat_aa_o		-0.50			
sc_nsat_a_p		-0.52 (-0.53)	-0.51 (-0.52)		

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show the correlation matrices corresponding to the coefficients obtained from Pearson, Spearman and Kendall tests respectively, providing a general overview of all the correlations in addition to those with large effect sizes in Table 3. Matrices show that the more and stronger correlations are between *typical-original* (HQS.1), *conservative-innovative* (HQS.4) and *lame-exciting* (HQS.5) attributes and those AIs generated through the expert evaluation of Web site compliance to WCAG 2.0, particularly again to those success criteria belonging to the Perceivable principle.

In order to check the consistency and robustness of the results we performed Pearson's correlation test using sampling with replacement. We applied the bootstrapping technique for different numbers of bootstrap replicates (R=100, 500, 1000, 1500, 5000, 10000) for the same confidence level (0.95). We obtained

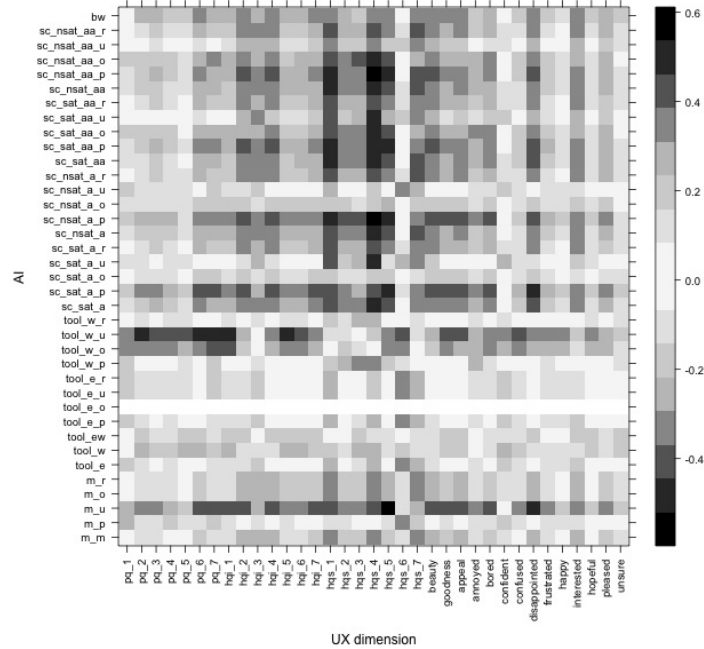


Figure 2: Correlation matrix for the AIs and UX attributes, using the Pearson test [N=88, 11 participants x 4 Web sites x 2 Web pages, $p < 0.001$].

the bias (the difference between the mean of the R bootstrap samples and the original estimate), the standard error (the standard deviation of the R bootstrap samples) and the confidence intervals for R samples. We did not observe big differences on the confidence intervals depending on the size of R. On the other

330 hand the bias and the standard error are very low, which suggests the similarity with the original estimate. For instance, if we take the bootstrap results for the correlation between the HQS_5 attribute and the sc_sat_aa AI, the obtained minimum and maximum values for the bias and the standard error were [-0.0094, 0.001], [0.066, 0.071] respectively. We also applied the bootstrapping technique

335 by relaxing the confidence level (0.90, 0.92). In this case the confidence intervals kept stable even when increasing alpha. As the bias and the standard error obtained as a result of applying the bootstrapping technique is very low, none of the confidence intervals include the zero value and the range of the intervals

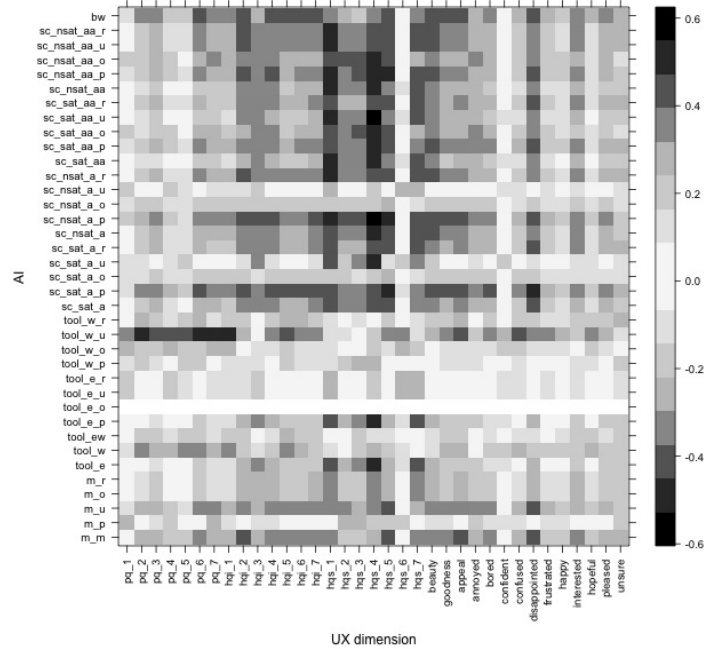


Figure 3: Correlation matrix for the AIs and UX attributes, using the Spearman test [N=88, 11 participants x 4 Web sites x 2 Web pages, $p < 0.001$].

is not very wide we conclude that the correlations are robust.

340 *4.3. Analysis of the Interviews*

We looked into the transcriptions of the interviews in order to better understand the practical importance of the identified correlations and the reasons why they emerged. For this analysis we only focused on those three UX attributes *typical-original* (HQS_1), *conservative-innovative* (HQS_4) and *lame-exciting* (HQS_5), which showed stronger and more consistent correlations across
 345 the three statistical tests we performed.

We queried the transcripts using the synonyms and antonyms of the word-pairs of the identified UX attributes. Then we annotated and coded the excerpts

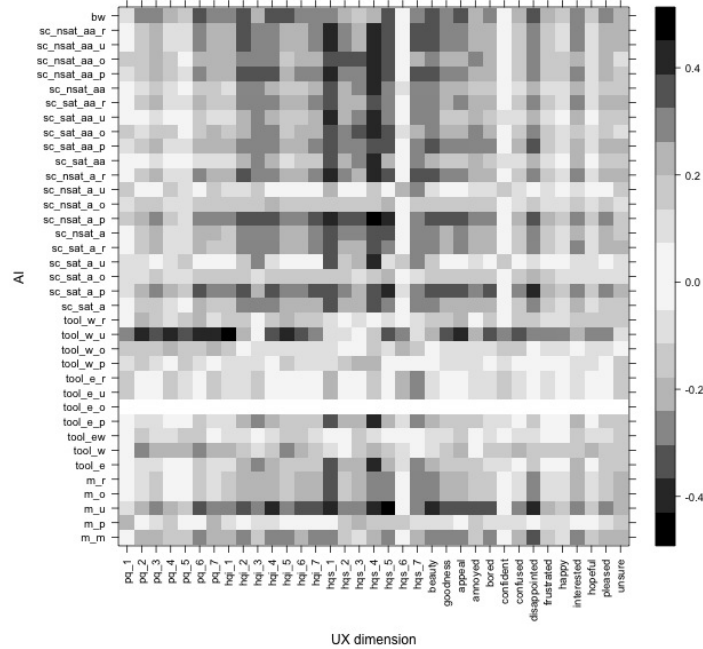


Figure 4: Correlation matrix for the AIs and UX attributes, using the Kendall test [N=88, 11 participants x 4 Web sites x 2 Web pages, $p < 0.001$].

we retrieved. We used the Merriam-Webster online dictionary⁷, the Collins
 350 online dictionary⁸ and the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 10 for this
 analysis.

4.3.1. Hedonic Quality-Stimulation: Typical-Original (HQS_1)

Typical can be defined as being or serving as a representative example of a
 particular type, characteristic, having the qualities associated with the members
 355 of a particular group or kind. We looked up synonyms (such as archetypal,
 standard, model, normal, classic) and opposites (including unique, unusual,
 unexpected, exceptional) in the transcripts. The majority of comments were
 observations about situations that occur regularly such as coming across non-

⁷<http://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/>

⁸<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus>

accessible Web sites. Two expert users (P01, P02) said that finding accessible
360 sites is still uncommon, particularly when it comes to restaurant Web sites:
“*Restaurant Web sites are those that I find especially non-accessible (P01)*”.
P05 said that he would not spend much time on W3 if he was not participating
in the study: “*This is the typical page I say – out! [snap of fingers]*”.

If a Web site provides an accessible version, the link pointing to it, is often
365 located at the bottom of the Web page and thus, not easily reachable: “*Normally
the buttons for the accessible version are at the bottom (...) normally I cannot
get to the accessible version (...) it always happens (P02)*”. Since not all Web
sites have an alternative version, it is not very usual to find one: “*It’s assumed
that the most suitable for us is the accessible one, because the ‘normal’ one is*
370 *the one that everyone uses (P07)*”.

Original is related to something unusual, novel, not known or experienced be-
fore. We looked up synonyms (new, novel, different, unusual, unknown) and
opposites (old, standard, traditional, normal, usual, ordinary). Most excerpts
about originality and accessibility have to do with content (i.e. textual infor-
375 mation) and a few refer to the layout of the Web site (i.e. how the information
is arranged). Regarding textual content the uncommon name of the dishes on
W1 drew the attention of participants. Unlike ordinary restaurants, this one
organises cultural events like live music or plays to enhance the gastronomic
experience: “*I found the Web site funny and very interesting. It called my at-
380 tention that the guy is in the artistic wave. The mix with culture, theatre, music
(...) (P05)*”.

Regarding unconventional layouts, the gastronomic information on W2 was
conveyed through links in a hierarchical multi-level layout, instead of providing
the information on the same page, which was not expected by P09: “*The menu,
385 I was expecting a document, right? and then of course, it was not a menu as
such, it was like a bunch of links*”. P02 said that it was unusual to find the
link to the accessible version of the Web site quite at the beginning of the Web
page on W1: “*No, it’s not usually the case (...) it’s quite at the top*”. The fact
that the content was placed before the navigation menu on W1 attracted P03

390 participant's attention.

Apart from the aspects related to Web content and layout, some participants valued the novel experience of visiting a restaurant Web site for the first time: “*First time I visit a restaurant Web site, I didn't know what it could contain and I really liked it because it was non-accessible but if you try, you get to* 395 *know new things (P06-W1)*”. Many participants praised and linked originality and the accessibility of W1 and W2 Web sites although this was not always the case: “*It's not original, it gets to the point and is very professional, it is not arty (...) the page lacks an artistic touch (P05-W2)*”. This suggests that not only the accessibility of a Web site, but the quality of the textual content 400 provided on the Web site influences the perception of originality: “*The text meets the objective of informing, and the more interesting the better, we ignore all the visual part of about the venue and the dishes so textual explanations are interesting for us (P10)*”.

4.3.2. Hedonic Quality-Stimulation: Conservative–Innovative (HQS_4)

405 This attribute is closely related to the previous one (*typical-original*, HQS_1) as many comments coded as *original* were also coded into the *innovative* category. Nevertheless, there is a subtle but important difference about the meaning: unlike HQS_1, HQS_4 deals more with conservatism and innovation, which are somehow related to progress and evolution.

410 **Conservative** represents a tendency to favour the preservation of established ideas, conditions, values or institutions, opposing innovation. Some synonyms are traditional, conventional, moderate, cautious and reactionary. While liberal, radical, progressive, innovative, and imaginative are some examples of opposites.

We found few examples of comments which relate both *conservative* and 415 inaccessibility: “*The feeling is that the page hasn't served me for anything (...) in addition to annoying me I feeling the site is totally conservative, it has no innovation, it is not accessible at all (P04-W3)*”. P05 goes further and suggests that the lack of accessibility is an indicator of non-evolved society or country: “*I think they haven't thought much about people who are not able to see, right?*”

420 *Regarding accessibility, nowadays it should already be there (...) I'm sure that
in the Netherlands these non-accessible Web sites aren't developed any more
... (P05-W3)*".

Innovative relates to showing a noteworthy use of the imagination and creativity especially in creating new things and inventing. Synonyms include novel,
425 new, original, different, fresh, unusual and unfamiliar. Most comments who link innovation and accessibility refer to the W1 Web site: "*Seeing a different design has aroused my curiosity (...) what I have liked most is its innovative character... (P10-W1)*".

4.3.3. Hedonic Quality-Stimulation: Lame-Exciting (HQS_5)

430 **Lame** means falling short of a standard, painful or weak, unconvincing, not effective or enthusiastic, conventional or uninspiring. Synonyms include defective, unconvincing, poor, inadequate, weak, insufficient and unsatisfactory. Most comments were about the W3 Web site, where we found at least one comment for each participant about W3: "*It is not easy to handle. The information
435 is quite hard to find with a screen reader, unspecific (...) It's too much effort, you waste a lot of time, the information you get is not very reliable. The messy links were not very clarifying, they do not give an idea of the content in each link (...) it was like a labyrinth, too complicated (...) to get something specific you would have to invest much time, effort and I'm not sure if one would get
440 to anything concrete (...) it forces you to have to do all the tour of the entire page. It's like to get a room in a hotel you would have to go through the 360 rooms it has (...) is the most difficult one of the four Web sites, for a screen reader user is unsatisfactory (P07)*".

We only found comments from one participant who would stress the lameness
445 of W4: "*Disappointed, confused in many moments, completely bored and very annoyed (P02)*". We also found a few comments about the most accessible Web sites, W1 and W2: "*It's not a very clear content as to the presented links. It's promising, it seems it will provide information, but the information that exposes is very literary. Very literary and very repetitive for a screen reader (P07-W1)*".

450 **Exciting** is related to causing great emotional or mental stimulation. Synonyms
for exciting would be stimulating, inspiring, thrilling or sensational while oppo-
sites include boring, dull, dreary, monotonous, uninspiring. Most comments are
about the accessible Web sites, W1 and W2: “*I found the Web page attractive
(...) a desirable place to go (...) a Web site with very specific and clear infor-*
455 *mation, and very attractive content (P03-W2)*”. Some participants suggested
the possibility to revisit the Web site and other even showed their willingness
to go to the restaurant: “*I’ll check it at home, maybe I’ll write them an email
telling them that the Web site is perfect (P06-W2)*”.

5. Discussion

460 5.1. On the Relationship between UX Attributes and Perceived Web Accessibility

Results suggest that perceived Web accessibility is associated to most UX
attributes. The strong and moderate significant statistical correlations found
between PWA and the attributes belonging to the hedonic quality-identification
(i.e. inclusive, presentable, brings me closer to people, professional, integrating,
465 valuable and classy) indicate that participants may feel closer or more identified
with Web sites they experience to be accessible. And the other way around:
they may feel more distant from Web sites perceived as non-accessible, as if
these Web sites were foreign artefacts that are not designed for them.

We found a relationship between PWA and pragmatic quality, which rep-
470 represents the usability perceived by participants. A Web site that participants
considered accessible is related to aspects such as practical, manageable, direct,
clear and simple and predictable; whereas a non-accessible perception of a Web
site is related to aspects like impractical, unruly, cumbersome, confusing com-
plicated and unpredictable. Results for the relationship between PWA and the
475 hedonic quality-stimulation attribute indicate that Web sites experienced as ac-
cessible are related to perceptions such as creative, original, exciting and new.
In contrast, Web sites considered to be non-accessible are related to perceptions
like standard, typical, lame and commonplace. Findings also support that a

positive accessibility perception is related to appraisals of goodness, appeal and
480 beauty. This suggests that a Web site which is experienced to be accessible
is perceived as good, appealing and beautiful, while a non-accessible Web site
is considered as bad, repelling and ugly. In summary, participants perceived
positive qualities on Web sites experienced as accessible, and the opposite ef-
fect happened, in Web sites perceived as non-accessible negative qualities were
485 predominant.

We also found strong and moderate correlations of PWA with emotion-
bearing words. PWA is positively related to emotional words with positive
valence (i.e. happy, pleased, interested and hopeful) and negatively related to
emotional words with negative valence (i.e. disappointed, frustrated, annoyed,
490 confused and bored). Accessible Web sites are related to positive emotional
reactions, while non-accessible ones are correlated to the negative ones. This
indicates that participants may feel better on a Web site they experience as
accessible than when navigating on a Web site perceived as non-accessible.

These results show that the experienced accessibility of participants is not
495 only associated to perceptions on task-oriented aspects, but also to even more
subjective and experiential ones like hedonic aspects, emotional reactions or
appraisals on beauty, goodness and appeal. While these outcomes are not sur-
prising, we provide empirical evidence indicating that perceived accessibility
and user experience could be understood as interchangeable qualities for blind
500 users. A practical implication of these findings is about informing the design
of instruments and protocols to be used in studies involving users. Because we
know the UX attributes that are strongly correlated to PWA, UX terminology
could be used as an indirect way to elicit information about how users perceive
or experience the accessibility of a Web site on questionnaires, questions on
505 focus groups and interviews. Participants will probably be more familiarised
with terms representing UX attributes (e.g. emotional reactions such as disap-
pointment and frustration) than with technical terms about the Web, assistive
technologies and accessibility. The identified attributes do not only serve as
proxies for perceived Web accessibility, but they can also facilitate the commu-

510 nication during user studies, leading to a better understanding of the experience
of blind users with a Web site.

5.2. *On the Relationship between UX Attributes and Web Accessibility Indicators*

We found evidence to support the relationship between the UX attributes
515 corresponding to the hedonic quality-stimulation *typical-original* (HQS_1), *conservative-
innovative* (HQS_4), *lame-exciting* (HQS_5) and AIs representing the confor-
mance to WCAG 2.0 guidelines. We observed a slight predominance of AIs
corresponding to the *Perceivable* principle of WCAG 2.0. Accessible Web sites
(in terms of a higher number of satisfied SC or fewer number of non-satisfied
520 SC) are perceived to be original, innovative and exciting, whereas non-accessible
ones (in terms of a lower number of satisfied SC or higher number of non-satisfied
SC) are perceived as typical, conservative and lame.

Comments of participants during the interviews provided additional evidence
to support the correlations found between compliance to guidelines and three
525 hedonic quality-stimulation attributes: original, innovative and exciting. Par-
ticipants may consider accessible Web sites original because they still find many
non-accessible Web sites on the Web. Expert users claimed there are still many
non-accessible Web sites (especially restaurant Web sites) and coming across
an accessible Web site is considered a novelty. In line with this, some users
530 appreciated the uncommon event of encountering alternative and theoretically
more accessible versions of Web sites. We also learned that the perception of
originality is not only influenced by the Web site's accessibility: the quality of
textual content and its arrangement boosted the perception of originality. Nev-
ertheless, we are cautious about this statement as user expertise and familiarity
535 with the domain seem to play the role of moderator variables.

Accessible Web sites were considered to be innovative and related to progress
and evolution, while non-accessible ones were regarded as conservative. A clear
relationship between *lame* and lack of accessibility as well as between *exciting*
and accessibility was observed. With regard to *lame*, participants gave some

540 illustrative metaphors which reflect how it is like to navigate on a Web site with
serious accessibility problems: “*a labyrinth, a loop going nowhere, trying each
room of a hotel to select just one, a fortress for the accessibility, a bunker. . .*”.
Conversely, participants were strongly motivated on accessible Web sites, which
led to Web site revisitation or even to physically go to the restaurant featured
545 on the Web site. The experience of accessing a different type of Web site for
the first time may have contributed to some extent to the motivation of par-
ticipants. This suggests that the hedonic quality-stimulation is not only driven
by the characteristics of the stimuli, but by other experiential aspects, such as
expectations and previous experiences on the Web.

550 Nevertheless, we found it surprising the unbalanced number of comments
about the *lame* attribute on the Web sites with low accessibility (W3 and W4).
One possible explanation for this is that the severity of accessible barriers may
have more impact than their number. For instance, W3 did not have proper
text alternatives for the navigational image links, which had devastating con-
555 sequences on the hedonic quality-stimulation attributes. Even if the content
about the gastronomic offer was accessible users were totally demotivated when
exploring the homepage. On the other hand, the texts of the navigation menu
link in W4 were clear and concise although the content about gastronomic offer
was not completely accessible. This can be explained in light of previous works
560 that highlighted the importance of the information architecture and the under-
standability of the texts in navigation menus. Blind users use them to get an
overview of Web sites, which helps them form a mental model of the Web site
(Leuthold et al., 2008).

Few works in the literature relate UX attributes and Web accessibility. One
565 exception is the study by Mbipom & Harper (2011) where accessibility indi-
cators were computed using the Barrier Walkthrough method and aesthetic
judgements were made by sighted users. They found that Web pages judged
on the classical aesthetics attribute as being visually clean showed significant
correlations with accessibility. No correlation was found between the expressive
570 aesthetic attributes and accessibility indicating that an expressive design is not

necessarily in conflict with accessibility. In fact, expressive aesthetics (Lavie & Tractinsky, 2004; Hassenzahl, 2008) match with the hedonic quality-stimulation attribute from Hassenzahl’s model. Specifically the *original*, *innovative* and *exciting* attributes map to *original*, *creative* and *fascinating* expressive aesthetics
575 attributes respectively. Hence, our findings do not only corroborate that an expressive design is not necessarily in conflict with accessibility, but we provide additional evidence on the interplay between Web aesthetics and accessibility. In this context, we emphasise that web aesthetics should be conceived beyond the visual representation and content of Web sites. In order to increase the
580 aesthetic perception of Web sites the information architecture and the quality of texts should be paid attention.

Whether compliance to accessibility guidelines implies a satisfying user experience is a controversial topic. Our findings suggest that compliance to guidelines benefits the *original*, *innovative* and *exciting* attributes of the hedonic
585 quality-stimulation attribute. It seems reasonable to assume that an accessible Web site is more likely to offer users new impressions and opportunities than a non-accessible Web site. If the content of a Web site is accessible, users will have more chances to be stimulated and motivated to navigate on that Web site than on a poorly accessible Web site.

590 5.3. Implications for Design

The accessibility problems participants encountered are those covered by previous works and guidelines (Theofanos & Redish, 2003; Leuthold et al., 2008; Leporini & Paternò, 2008). These works provide already a substantial body of knowledge on the design recommendations to build more accessible Web sites.
595 Our findings corroborate how critical information architecture and navigation menus are, how beneficial it is to provide ‘skip navigation’ links and the effect of text quality of the aesthetic perception of Web sites. As far as design recommendations are concerned, our findings stress the criticality of the mentioned features in that they do not only improve accessibility, but they also boost a
600 positive perception of Web sites.

6. Conclusions

In order to acquire a better understanding of the interplay between UX and Web accessibility, we analysed the relationships between UX attributes and perceived Web accessibility (PWA) and accessibility indicators derived from conformance of Web sites to guidelines (AIs). Results revealed that most UX attributes are significantly correlated with PWA indicating that perceived accessibility is related to hedonic and pragmatic qualities. As concepts that belong to these UX attributes (e.g. interested, disappointed, frustrated and annoyed) are probably more familiar to users than technical terms about the Web and assistive technology, they can be employed to facilitate the communication between researchers and in ethnography, contextual enquiry, focus groups or interview studies. We also uncover significant relationships between three hedonic quality-stimulation attribute pairs (*typical-original*, *conservative-innovative* and *lame-exciting*) and accessibility indicators that represent the number of satisfied WCAG 2.0 success criteria. These attributes can be understood as proxy measures for Web accessibility conformance as far as blind users are concerned. Including these attributes in questionnaires or other sort of enquiry method would be an indirect way to obtain estimates of conformance to accessibility guidelines.

Our findings may be generalisable to the remit of the type, domain and qualities of the Web sites used in the study. The Web sites under test have more hedonic than pragmatic qualities since their main objective is to attract potential customers rather than to provide a service or functionality. Thus, at most, and using the Web site classification framework by De Marsico & Levialdi (2004) we could generalise these results to commercial sites, which target a general audience and with an informative-seductive communication style. Future studies should address the possibility of generalising results to other type of stimuli.

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