



# Malaysian University Websites Review 2012: Preview



Converting Potential Students to Students

# Malaysian University Websites Review 2012

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University websites are increasingly becoming the first place to visit by potential students. It is the place where university will make its first impression to the potential students. User Experience (UX) of a website means the ease of use, satisfaction and trust that result from dealing with a particular organisation. It really matters. UX affects your potential students' decision about what they do, how they will do it, how much they are happy to pay and how they feel about themselves. Caring about UX will pay off in trust, sales, loyalty, support and savings in the long run.

The objective of this study is to find out how users actually use university websites. Our findings provide invaluable insights on how university should design their website and also discover the best practices within the industry so that they can turn potential students into students.

## Survey Results

This study was conducted in 2 phases. Firstly, a survey was performed on 500 potential students and it showed that they give highest priority to the information on a university website as shown in the graph below.

On the other hand, users have very little regards for social media engagement such as Facebook like or share button. Amongst the respondents, 61% of them expect a university website to have an online application system.

## User Experience (UX) Testing

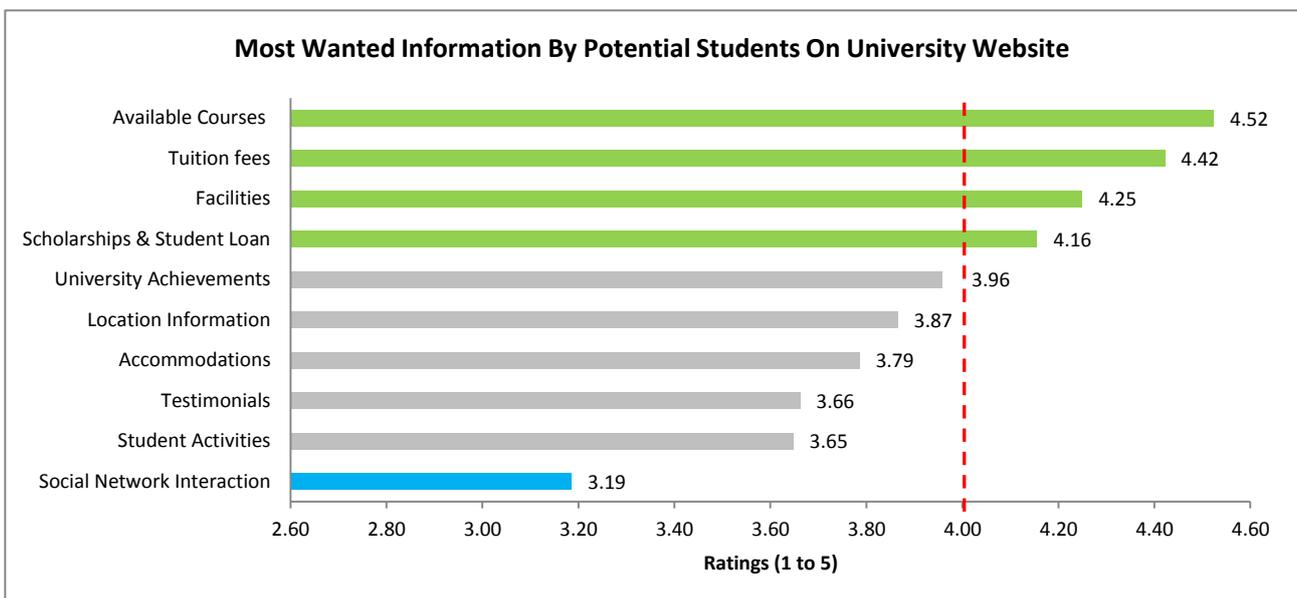
During the second phase, usability testing was conducted on 15 different university websites to investigate whether users were able to find the top four most wanted information according to the survey. Each website was tested with 5 participants according to the standard UX testing practice and their behaviour were recorded in video for analysis.

## First Impression

Based on the feedback from test participants, websites with clearly defined areas are preferred because the participants found it easier to focus on the information important to them. On the contrary, a university that displayed its website in a 'blog post' format made it harder to find information and decreased its level of credibility. There is also a user preference in seeing cheerful students' photo on the homepage.

## Course Information

Most university direct their visitors to use their Global Navigation Bar (GNB) to locate the course they are interested. It is observed that 93% of users managed to find the course information; however, for those who failed, the primary reason was because the users were confused with the name



listed on the navigation menu. For example, users failed to find the postgraduate course because it was listed under the “Research” section.

### **Entry Requirements**

As an integral part of the course information, still, 25% of users were unable to find the relevant entry requirements for the course they wanted. There are a few reasons for this: (1) the entry requirements are not published. (2) They are published within the course brochure but no notification was given to direct the users to download it. (3) They are listed in different part of the website, and it is not intuitive for the users already on the course information page to find them.

On the other hand, users found it particularly easy to find the entry requirements on a few university websites. To learn more about them, please refer to the full report.

### **Tuition Fee**

45% users were unable to find the course fee on university websites although our market survey data tells us it is the second most important information potential students will look for before making an application. These are the reasons that prevented users from finding the information: (1) it is not published on the site. (2) The fee information is in a separate document which needed downloading. But there is no link directing the users to do so from the course page. (3) The fee information is listed in different part of the website and not intuitive for the users already on the course information page to search for it.

### **Scholarships & Student Loans**

Majority of the users managed to find this information. However, other users experienced difficulty because the relevant information is placed at a section of the website that is not intuitive to navigate to. For example, some universities placed their financial aids information under section such as “Student Affairs Division” or “Admission”. These names are not immediately obvious to the users that financial aids information would be found within it.

### **Facilities**

Our findings showed that most university published their facilities information all over the website without a single location where the potential student can visit and get the information on all facilities available. We observed that users were more satisfied with a few universities which provided photos of their facilities.

### **Online Application**

According to our survey, 61% of the respondents are expecting the university website to provide online application system because it is fast and allow them to track their application easily. The future of attracting new students is by having an easy online application system. However, as much as 40% of users were unable to locate and use the university online application system during the UX testing. There are several reasons: (1) the university does not have an online application system. (2) Users were confused with the option to download the course application form (printable version) as opposed to an online application system. (3) The online application link is not listed on the GNB.

### **List of Websites Tested and Analysed:**

1. Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation (APU)
2. HELP University
3. INTI International University & Colleges
4. KDU University College
5. Limkokwing University of Creative Technology
6. Monash University Malaysia
7. Multimedia University
8. Open University Malaysia
9. SEGi University College
10. Sunway University
11. Taylor's University
12. UCSI University
13. Universiti Tun Abdul Razak
14. University of Malaya
15. University of Nottingham Malaysia