The E-Cultural Adaption Framework (E-CAF): Adapting the Local Travel Interface for Egyptian Consumers

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Abstract

Although the Internet has become a global medium, which companies use to access individuals worldwide, it is argued in this thesis that cultural issues still need to be taken into account when designing Web sites. In fact, international marketers agree that culture in terms of consumers' values and beliefs remains a significant constraint for reaching international consumers. Professional analysts and designers generally agree that well-designed user interfaces improve the performance and appeal of the Web and help in reaching large numbers of consumers across cultures. Therefore, one way of improving the user-interface is by paying attention to users' culture, which means developing culturally adapted Web sites.

The Web localisation literature addresses the users' cultural concerns by utilising some of the popular cultural models like those of Hofstede and Hall; however these tools are not appropriate for handling the cultural values affecting the online behaviour of consumers. Effective Web localisation can be achieved through an appropriate cultural framework that incorporates the cultural values that affect the online behaviour of consumers. This thesis introduces the electronic cultural adaption framework or E-CAF, as a structure for adapting local Web interfaces. The E-CAF, constructed for the travel domain, uses six cultural dimensions derived from the observation of behaviour and identifies unique cultural variables that affect online consumer behaviour.

The E-CAF is constructed using grounded theory methodology and is then evaluated as a tool for adapting local Web interfaces. This includes discussing the applicability of the E-CAF as a tool for identifying online marketing strategies suitable for targeting consumers across cultures and using the E-CAF to assess and evaluate the cultural adaptation of three Egyptian local travel interfaces. Finally, the E-CAF is utilized as a means for developing questions that can help designers to collect the clients' designing requirements. This helps the designers to build an effective local interface based on an understanding of each client's special design requirements.

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Authors' Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

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1. Introduction

The Internet is a medium that has the ability to communicate with consumers in any part of the world, providing information about products and services and even selling them directly to the end-users. However, Malhotra et al. (1998) note that there is still a broad debate with regard to the convenience of market globalisation. The individual's cultural factors, which we understand as the group of beliefs and values shared by a group of persons, are considered a key factor in determining international consumer attitudes and behaviour. Hong and Chiu (2001) point out that the way individuals perceive their social environment is directly related to their cultural background. The individuals' own evaluation and regulation of day-to-day conduct partly reflects the cultural knowledge that they have acquired throughout their lives. Therefore, it is to be expected that these values and standards, which are typical in a certain society, affect the decision processes carried out daily by the individual members of this society in their condition as consumers. The lack of convergence preferences among consumers from different countries and cultures in a "multicultural world" with a cultural heterogeneous nature will be the most significant barrier to the development of global market strategies.

The idea of global culture has been defended by many authors. For example, Schlegelmilch and Sinkovics (1998) argued that the Internet is considered a new economic and social context with its own values, rules and forms of communication, which are assimilated by users from different cultures. Similarly, Orlowski (1997) highlights that it is more than possible that the values acquired by the users in the "cyberspace culture" can be passed over into general society. The contribution of Steidtmann (2000) follows this line when he points out that the Internet may be considered as what he calls the "Consumer Nation" (CN), related to the growing social mass that is independent of their places of origin and shares a series of values.

On the other hand, Waller and Shyan (1999) stated that despite the market globalisation process, it is necessary to consider the differences between countries due to several factors, among them cultural ones, as these are partly responsible for the marketing environment in any market. Similarly, McGorry (2000) points out the fact that companies must be aware of cultural and social movement in different national markets, with the aim of adequately addressing the needs of the global consumers. Raju (1995) argued that regardless of the generalisations made with regard to consumers' behaviour in global markets, one must not forget that each country is unique. Finally, Mattila (1999) argues that as global competition increases, firms will require a greater

understanding of the consumers' culture from different target markets, due to the existing differences between countries. In their model of cross-cultural behaviour, Sheth and Shethi (1977) consider cultural lifestyle as an important factor affecting the propensity of buyers to change and subsequently adopt innovations. Following such a model, the adoption of such an innovative medium as the Internet can be hypothesized to be different in diverse cultures.

In fact, if marketers can understand the use of the Internet for marketing their products or services in such different cultural settings, they can use this medium more effectively and efficiently for marketing communications, as an information channel, as a distribution channel and even to influence product choice.

1.1 Research background and motivation

The necessity to consider the effect of culture on marketing has been stressed by the international marketing literature, since culture influences consumers' behaviour (Quelch and Klein, 1996). Identifying the cultural values of targeted customers remains a challenge for even the most expert marketers (Smith and Taylor, 2004). Smith and Taylor identify some cultural variables that marketers should consider. These are religion, eating, greeting, habits, lifestyle and the role of women. Marketers should respond to different cultural variables and barriers by adopting different strategies that consider customers' local culture (Tadajewski and Brownlie, 2008). International marketing and marketing communication literature has tried to address handling cultural variables for targeting international consumers, however, it is not clear how this can be done effectively.

Smith and Taylor (2004) stated that cultural adaption is even more complicated on the Web. Although the Internet is a global information medium, companies still need to customise their interface based on cultural issues. Several authors have warned that the perception of the Internet as a global medium may lead marketers to forget the cultural barriers that may still remain (Quelch and Klein, 1996). They have argued that marketers can ensure using the new media more effectively and efficiently if they consider the different cultural values that may still exist between online consumers. Professional analysts and designers generally agree that culturally-designed user interfaces improve the performance and appeal of the Web. Culture is one of the important mental models used to interpret the interface context (Evers, 2001). This means that users usually process and interpret Web content and information using their

cultural context.

Previous cross-cultural studies on the Web have explored issues such as Web sites interactivity, site quality, navigation, and their perception by international visitors (Luna et al., 2002; Simon, 2001; Tsikriktsis, 2002). These studies conclude that international visitors prefer locally adapted Web content, but do not provide any guidance, theory, or frameworks to achieve Web site localisation. Further culture and Web communication researchers such as Gong, Li and Stump (2007) incorporated the users' cultural issues using some of the existing cultural models as a tool for analysing the cultural values affecting online communication. These cultural models will be described later in sections 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. Researchers such as Gong, Li and Stump (2007) and Lee and Choi (2005) used the existing cultural model as a theoretical framework to describe the cultural effect on Internet usage across different countries. They stressed the role culture can play in forming the consumers' response toward online communication.

In fact, the literature is heavily dependent on the existing cultural models for describing the cultural values and attitudes shaping online consumers' behaviour across cultures. The dimensions of the existing cultural models are facing a big challenge because they are unable to capture the cultural values of online consumers' behaviour. These models are not built to capture the cultural values of online consumers. Thus, there is still a doubt about using such cultural models as a basic tool for handling the cultural variables influencing online consumers' behaviour. Researchers such as Ess and Sudweeks (2005) are calling for more work based on an analytical review of each culture to capture the "complex details of online communication" for varied cultural groups. It is clear that more work is needed to capture the unique cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour, which represents the main motivation of this research. The construction of such a framework as well as evaluating it is the main challenge of this research.

1.2 Research context

Tourism is the main sector covered in this research due to its Internet marketing applicability and sensitivity to consumers' cultural background. This can be summarized in the following points:

1. ***Travel Internet marketing applicability***

The travel industry is very conductive to Internet marketing due to the amount of searching associated with this type of service. In fact, travel is characterized by being an intensive search product. This is due to the unique travel service features such as being high risk, high involvement, high price and an informational intensive product.

2. ***Travel cultural sensitivity***

Travel is a culturally sensitive product due to the following reasons:

- Travel is a service dealing with consumers from diverse cultural backgrounds
- The main focus of the travel service is on consumers instead of the product itself.
- Expectations toward travel service quality are usually driven from the tourists' cultural background.
- Considering the tourist's culture is important to minimise the cultural shocks associated with that service, thus encouraging repeated visits over the long run.

This research questions if there is a cultural difference between travellers' online searching behaviour. Can the cultural differences between consumers in the travel domain be considered an important issue? Can understanding the cultural differences in travellers' searching behaviour result in better Web interfaces? Answering these questions will help in providing guidelines to adapt local travel Web interfaces. These guidelines will facilitate the development of a Web localisation framework.

This leads to the research context, which integrates three main areas to help answer the research questions. As visualized in Figure 1.1, the three areas include culture and tourism, culture and consumer behaviour, culture and Web interfaces research.

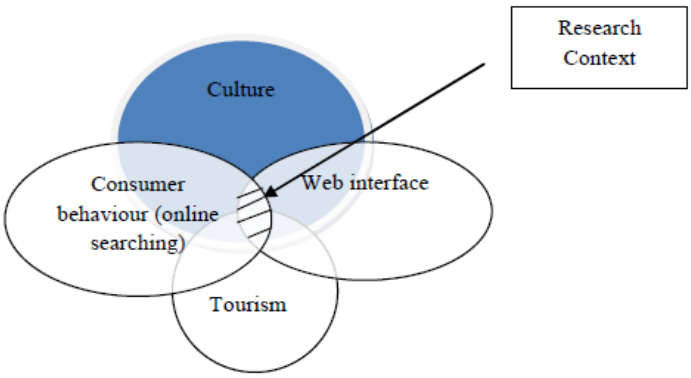


Figure 1.1- Research context

1.3 Research aim

The research aim is to develop and utilise a framework that captures the cultural perceptions affecting online consumer behaviour. This framework, by assessing and identifying the common cultural values and beliefs affecting online consumers' behaviour within the travel domain provides a structure for adapting a local travel site that satisfies the travel consumers' cultural needs.

1.4 Research objectives

- To develop a suitable framework for Web interfaces adaption and more specifically, for tourism interfaces.
- To provide cultural adaptation guidelines for an effective adaption of the travel interface as a communication tool**.**
- To facilitate research in the cross-cultural interface area by providing cross-cultural Web localisation researchers with an empirical framework to follow in their studies.

1.5 Research contribution

A. Theoretical level

First, and foremost, the study is establishing an empirical framework that is driven from the analysis of online consumers' behaviour, and thus captures the unique cultural values of that behaviour.

Second, the research provides better understanding of the cultural values and beliefs as a significant factor of online consumer behaviour. This contributes in enhancing online branding, online brand loyalty and online purchase intension.

Third, the research enriches the fields of online marketing and online consumer behaviour with an appropriate cultural theoretical base for adapting online services/ products to consumers with varied cultural backgrounds.

Fourth, the research adds to the existing cultural theories a new cultural understanding of online consumer behaviour.

Fifth, the research contributes in providing a suitable framework for adapting a local interface such as the travel interface.

Finally, this research will facilitate cross-cultural interface research by providing

researchers with an applicable framework to follow in their studies.

B. Practical level

First, the study will help travel marketers to understand consumers' online cultural behaviour, and to provide them with recommendations to accommodate different online strategies when adapting their local travel sites.

Second, the research will provide Web designers with guidelines required for gathering the necessary design information from clients, which will be helpful in designing effective local Web interfaces.

C. Methodological contribution

The research will provide cross-cultural researchers with a cultural methodological tool. This tool will be able to be used for visualizing the cultural differences and similarities that exist across different countries.

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter reviews the existing cultural models, Web interfaces design approaches, and the limitations of the existing IT adaption theories. This analysis will show that the cultural variables are not well structured in the existing IT adaption theories. This chapter introduces tourism as a research applicable area due to its cultural sensitivity and Internet marketing applicability.

In addition, the chapter looks at the issues inherited in handling the cultural variables through Web interfaces localisation research, consumer behaviour and online travel searching behaviour. This review shows that the literature mainly depends on the existing cultural models such as those of Hofstede, Hall and Schwartz in handling the cultural variables that affect international consumers' behaviour. These cultural models will be described later in sections 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. In fact, such models are still facing many problems such as the inapplicability of handling the cultural variables affecting consumers' behaviour. This is a main challenge of this research and establishes the need for a framework that captures the cultural variables shaping online consumers' behaviour as travel domain users.

Chapter 3 and 4: Research methodology and the framework

This chapter describes the choice of the grounded theory methodology for establishing

the E-CAF, and will identify the data gathering instruments and the choice of the sample set. In addition, the chapter reviews in detail the process of data analysis, coding and assessing the validity of the E-CAF in identifying the cultural variables affecting online behaviour of travel domain consumers. This is followed by **chapter 4**, which goes over the construction of the E-CAF using the grounded theory methodology.

Chapter 5: Positioning the E-CAF

Chapter 5 looks at adapting an Egyptian local travel interface using the E-CAF as a structure to establish applicable online marketing strategies for Egyptian consumers, providing a checklist for evaluating the existing Egyptian travel local interfaces and establishing a list of questions that can help Web designers in generating their clients' local travel interface requirements.

Chapter 6: The framework in action - Developing online marketing strategies for targeting Egyptian consumers

This chapter discusses using the E-CAF as a tool for establishing online marketing strategies for targeting Egyptian consumers. In addition, it will look at evaluating the suggested strategies through consulting three travel marketing experts working at three different travel agencies. This evaluation aims to investigate the reliability and applicability of E-CAF as a tool for targeting Egyptian consumers as well as describing Egyptian travel consumers' behaviour.

Chapter 7: The framework in action - Exploring the Egyptian travel interface

This chapter looks at using the checklist derived from the E-CAF in exploring three Egyptian local travel interfaces used by Egyptian consumers. The aims of this exploration are to assess each travel interface and provide recommendations for enhancing the adaption of the local travel interface when targeting Egyptian consumers.

Chapter 8: Assessing the designers' travel interface generating questions in action

This chapter aims to evaluate designers' travel interface generating questions listed in chapter 5. This is done by discussing the reviews of three designers working at three different design companies. The discussion reviews the applicability and reliability of the suggested list of questions in generating the client's design requirements.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the main steps undertaken to finalise the research. In addition, the chapter reviews the theoretical and practical contributions of the E-CAF to the travel marketers and Web designers. This is followed by reviewing the key findings of the

research. The chapter ends by emphasising the implications of the E-CAF across varied cultures and domains as well as reviewing the limitations of the framework, and suggesting some future research directions.

1.7 Summary

This chapter introduced the research context, aims, objectives and contribution. In addition, the chapter reviewed the applicability of the travel sector for this research. The next chapter reviews the literature in some of the research relevant areas such as culture and Web interfaces, culture and tourism, culture and consumer behaviour. This review focuses on the main cultural models used through the literature to handle the cultural variables of the international consumer. In addition, the next chapter introduces the challenges and problems faced in handling culture through a review of the literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

Companies with an aim of extending their business globally via the Web are struggling between two options: whether use global interface or to localise the Web page. Many researchers such as Singh, Zaho and Hu (2003) and Singh et al. (2006) have empirically proved that a localised page results in a user friendly interface, which may lead to favourable attitudes toward the site. On the other hand, limitation in culturally adapted interfaces may lead to limited success due to the lost opportunity of attracting and keeping visitors (Singh and Pereira, 2005). However, there are still few sites that culturally customise their Web interfaces. This may be due to lack of a theoretical framework that approached designing a culturally localised interface (Singh, Toy and Wright, 2009).

Tourism is a sector that tends to be quite sensitive to cultural issues, where it is dealing with international consumers with different values and beliefs that affect their behavioural perception toward the service quality. Tourism sites are gaining much attention from Arab users, who have started to depend on them to plan their trips. However, most of the previous studies that consider cultural difference among Internet users are still focusing on western culture and ignoring eastern or Arab culture. The goal of this study is to provide a culturally customized framework for adapting Web interfaces such as travel sites for different cultures, including Egyptian culture.

In order to develop such a framework, the researcher needs to start with reviewing the literature in some relevant areas. This chapter reviews areas such as culture, existing cultural models, Web localisation research, tourism cultural research and online searching behaviour. This review considers the issues inherent in handling the effect of consumers' culture on directing and shaping their online searching behaviour, and how this cultural effect is incorporated for achieving better Web interfaces. Through this review various problems and research gaps in the literature will be revealed. In addition, the review will examine the cultural models used through the literature to handle the consumers' cultural values, and the main problems associated with them. These problems indicate the need for a framework that captures the unique cultural variables affecting the online behaviour of the travel domain consumers. Thus, this framework can be used for adapting better local Web interfaces such as the travel domain.

2.2 Culture

Watson et al. (2002) described culture as a set of values determined by a structure of interacting beliefs. Hong and Chiu (2001) point out that several studies have shown that the way individuals perceive their social environment is directly related to their cultural background. Individuals' evaluation and regulation of their day-to-day conduct partly reflect the cultural knowledge that they have acquired throughout their lives. This was viewed by Thomas (1997) as sharing a similar way of thinking, feeling or behaving.

Terlutter et al. (2005) divided cultural research into two main categories. These are studies concerned about the objective criteria and others that are more interested in the subjective criteria. They stated that objective criteria can be related to economic, geographical and socio-demographic dimensions. On the other hand, subjective cultural criteria can include values, attitudes, behaviour etc. The Terlutter et al. (2005) cross-cultural studies classification is shown in Figure 2.1.

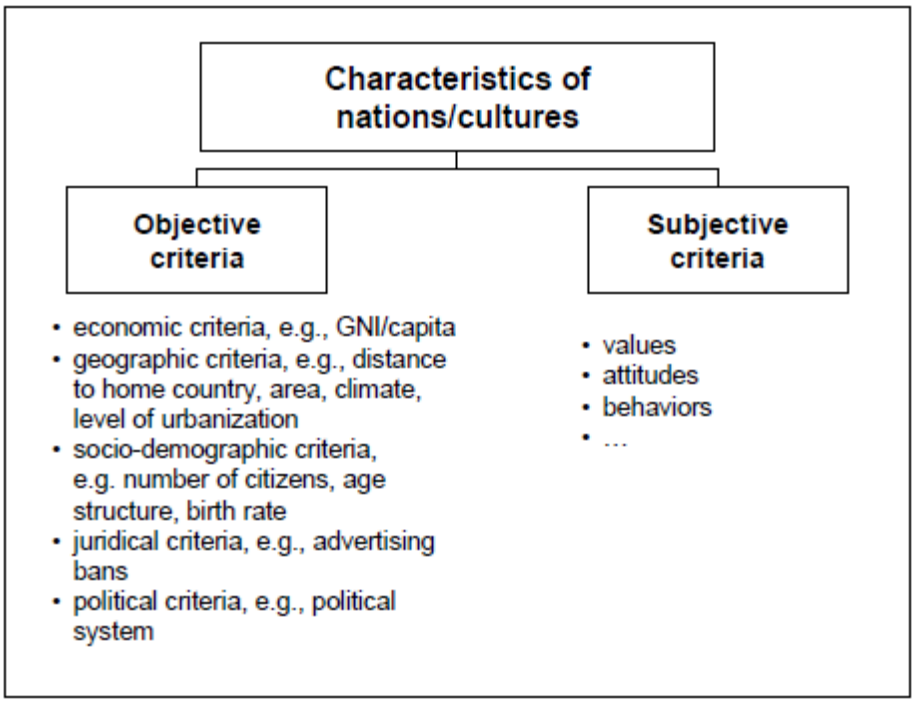


Figure 2.1 - Characteristics of cultures (Terlutter et al., 2005)

Terlutter et al. (2005, p.422) stressed the importance of values in cultural research. They argued that "values can be one of the most powerful explanations of, and influences on, consumer behaviour". As shown in figure 2.2, this research identifies cultural values and beliefs as a significant factor of consumers' attitudes and behaviour, which should be reflected through Web interface design.

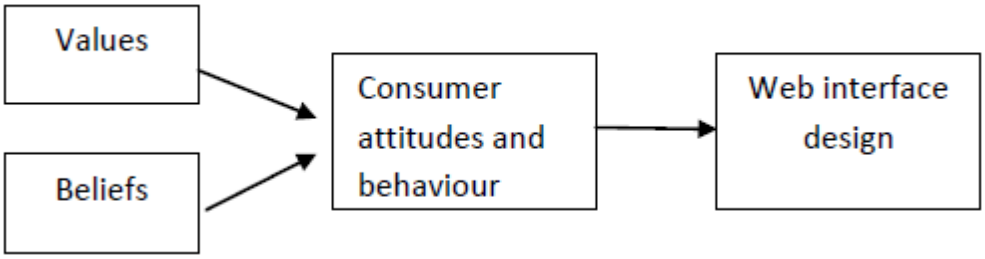


Figure 2.2 The impact of cultural values and beliefs on web interface design (Author)

There are a number of existing models aiming to broadly classify different cultures according to specific values. One of the most famous among social science research is that of Hofstede (1980). However, scholars increasingly criticise Hofstede's dimensions because of its age. Beyond the age-based critiques, researchers argued that Hofstede's dimensions are data driven and do not have a strong enough base in theory (Fernandez et al., 1997; Huang, 1995; Myers and Tan, 2002; Steenkamp, 2001). Other models are provided by Hall (1977) and Schwartz (1994). Different models will be reviewed in the following section.

2.2.1 Hofstede's cultural model

Many authors have carried out research in the field of cultural dimensions. One of the most famous studies was conducted by Geert Hofstede. In the 1970s and 80s he carried out an attitude survey questionnaire at IBM that "dealt mainly with the employees' personal *values* related to the work situation…" He covered 72 national subsidiaries, 38 occupations, 20 languages; the total sample was about 116,000 people. Based on this survey he established five dimensions of culture variability. These are individualism-collectivism (IDV), low-high uncertainty avoidance (UA), low-high power distance (PD), and masculinity-femininity (MAS) (Hofstede, 1980). Later, Hofstede (1991, 2001) extended his four dimensions to five by adding short-term vs. long-term (TO) orientation.

Table 2.1 provides a detailed description of the five cultural dimensions as stated by Hofstede (1980, 1991, and 2001). Hofstede's cultural framework has been applied extensively and validated in a variety of cultural management (Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2003) and information technology research (Gallupe and Tan, 1999; Myers and Tan, 2002).

Hofstede's study has some appealing attributes such as the sample size and the codification of cultural traits along numerical indices (Furrer, Liu, and Sudharshan,

2000). Hofstede's study is also one of the most widely used among international marketing and management scholars (Sivakumar and Nakata, 1999; Sodergaard, 1994). It has also been argued that Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been validated as an important part of cultural theory (Singh and Baak, 2004).

However, researchers are still questioning Hofstede's methodology and sample (Huang, 1995; Myers and Tan, 2002). In addition, Hofstede's model is facing the aging factor problem; his model data was collected from 1967 to 1973 and is aging. Beyond age-based critiques, researchers argued that Hofstede's dimensions are data driven and do not have a strong enough base in theory (e.g., Smith and Schwartz, 1997). The final and most significant problem scholars point out is that Hofstede's survey is specific to work values and may not apply to marketing research (Soares et al., 2007).

Dimension	Description
Power distance	The manner in which society deals with human inequality. The degree to which society perpetuates or discourages differences in power and wealth. Larger power distance implies greater disparity in distribution of wealth and power among members of the society.
Individualism	Relation between the individual and his or her fellow individuals. Self-interest versus interest of group or family. In individualistic societies ties between individuals are loose. In contrast, collectivism societies tend to be tightly integrated.
Masculinity	The division of roles traditionally associated with the different sexes in society; in a "masculine-like" society, such roles as the importance of showing off. Performing, and achieving something visible permeates society. In a "feminine-like" society, importance is placed on discretion, relationships and quality of life.
Uncertainty avoidance	The manner in which society conditions its members to deal with uncertainty. When uncertainty avoidance is strong, societies term institutions that create security and avoid risk. In "weak" societies, members are more tolerant of risk. They will not work as hard and accept behaviours and opinions different from their own.

Long-term orientation	Long-term orientation, toward the future, is respected by values such as perseverance, ordering relationship by status and observing that order, thrift and having a sense of shame. Short-term orientation toward the past and present is respected by values such as personal steadiness and stability, saving face, respect from tradition, and reciprocation of greetings, favour, and gifts.

Table 2.1 - Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001)

2.2.2 Hall's cultural model

Hall (1977) identified context as a verbal feature that governs people's discourse. According to Hall (1984), some cultures prefer communication that is explicit, direct, and unambiguous (low-context communication), whereas other cultures prefer a more nonverbal mode of communication (high-context communication). Most Asian cultures prefer high-context communication, whereas most Western cultures prefer low-context.

Hall's context model is used to complement Hofstede's model, as it has been proven to be a useful framework in communication research (Hermeking, 2005). However, Hall's model raises concerns about simply classifying a complex concept such as culture into two general dimensions high context and low context culture (Cardon, 2008).

2.2.3 Schwartz's cultural model

Schwartz (1994) uses seven dimensions to explain cultural variation:

1. Conservatism (CM) — emphasises the importance of group-relations in a society, societal balance, social order, security, conformity, and tradition.
2. Intellectual autonomy (IA) — values individual curiosity, self-direction, creativity and broad-mindedness.
3. Affective autonomy (EA) — values individual goals over group goals with importance being placed on the pursuit of self-gratification, pleasure and enjoyment.
4. Egalitarian commitment (EC) — values voluntary commitment to the promotion of societal welfare, equality, social justice, freedom and responsibility.
5. Harmony (H) — values beauty, peace, harmony with nature, and protection of the environment.
6. Mastery (M) — values efforts to modify one's environment through self-assertion, ambition and independence.
7. Hierarchy (HY) — values status and hierarchy consciousness, social power, an

authority.

Schwartz's cultural values are driven by the analysis of varied sub-nations across different countries (Schwartz, 1999). While Schwartz's framework has some clear advantages relative to Hofstede's work, such as being theoretically based, empirically tested and based on a globally representative sample, the framework does not apply extensively, especially in a marketing context (Watson and Wright, 2000). Therefore, ease of use and applicability are still in question.

2.3 Cultural variables and the Arab culture

Hofstede's model included seven Arab countries: Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates. Hofstede suggested that all the Arab countries share similar cultural values. This was similarly done by Hall (1977) who identified that all the Arab countries share high context culture.

Many authors (Karande, Almurshidee and Olayan, 2006; Atiyyah, 1997) share with Hofstede and Hall the idea of culture homogeneity among Arab countries. They argue that the Arab language contributes to Arab cultural homogeneity. Similarly Kaynak (1986) believed that Arab countries have a large number of unified cultural characteristics (Atiyyah, 1997). Tables 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 map how the literature assumed that Arab culture shares similar cultural variables using Hofstede's, Hall's and Schwartz' cultural models, respectively.

2.3.1 Mapping Arab culture based on Hofstede's dimensions

Hofstede's dimensions	Arab culture	Description
Collectivism /individualism (IDV)	Collectivism culture	Many authors agree on the collective nature of the Arab countries, For example, Barakat (1993) and Kabasakal and Bodur (2002) argued that family and groups are the basic element of social structure in the Arab world. Similarly Attiyyah (1997) realised that relationships within the family and groups are still very strong within Arab countries. Other research was done by Melikian and Diab (1974) and Yasin (1996), who found that individuals' first loyalty within the Arab world is to their families then to their national groups and country. They also noticed that Arab people do prefer to take group decisions

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)	High uncertainty avoidance culture	Some authors mentioned the high degree of uncertainty avoidance within the Arab world and their concerns and fears about security. Yasin and Yavas (2007) highlighted face-to-face interaction as the best way of interaction within Arab countries due to their culture that is characterized by conservatism towards any unfamiliarity. According to Elbeltagi (2007), high uncertainty level within Arab countries was the main reason behind the failure of many online companies who depend mainly on credit card payments for online shopping. He argued that Egypt is an example of an Arab country that lacks the technological infrastructure for electronic exchange of payment; this makes them prefer cash payment instead of debit/credit card.
Power distance (PDI)	High power distance culture	Workman (2008) stated that Egypt and other Arab countries are characterized by high power distance culture, where they are more comfortable with vertical hierarchical and centralized organisations. Similarly, Yasin and Yavas (2007) argued that the main authorities in the Arab world are government or top management, where they are the main sources of information while others are provided with information only on a need basis. They also realised that sharing information is not valued as in western countries.
Femininity /Masculinity (MAS)	Feminine culture	Soeters (1996) argued that the Arab world is characterized by a feminine culture, where being tender and taking care of the poor. The feminine culture in the Arab world is derived from families and society engagement. Similarly, Sigala and Sakellaridis (2004) mentioned that Arab feminine culture is due to their home orientation and tenderness.
Long/short term orientation (LTO)	NA	Hofstede's (1991, 2001) index shows no scoring for LTO dimension for Arab countries. Baron (2008) stated that LTO dimension was built based on a Chinese questionnaire to reflect the Chinese Asian east culture. Therefore, she argued that Arab world findings reflect PDI, IDV, MAS and UAI but not LTO.

Table 2.2 - Mapping Arab culture using Hofstede' dimensions (Author)

2.3.2 Mapping Arab culture based on Hall's (1977) context dimensions

Hall's dimension	Arab culture	Description
Context dimension	High context culture	Yasin and Yavas (2007) argued that Arab countries are characterized by a high context culture, where personal relationship is valued in the communication process. They argued that oral communication is preferred over written and face-to-face communication or at least telephone is valued over fax and email. Therefore, the efficiency of delivering a message is not as important as the way of delivering it. Similarly, Zaharna (1995) classified Arab culture as an oral dominant communication culture which relies more on emotional symbolism rather than the analytical content of the message. Therefore the message should contain less information; instead more information should be derived from the presentation of the message. Burgmann, Kitchen and Williams (2006) realised the effect of the context dimension on Web interface design, where high context culture prefers Web sites with limited pages and hierarchal structure. On the other hand, low context culture, such as in western countries, prefers a search system on Web sites and a flat structure where all the information is available on the home page.

Table 2.3 - Mapping Arab culture using Hall's context dimensions (Author)

2.3.3 Mapping Arab culture based on Schwartz's (1994) dimensions

Schwartz's dimension	Arab culture	Description
Conservatism(CM)	High conservatism culture	Conservatism (corresponding to Hofstede's collectivism)

Intellectual autonomy (IA) and affective autonomy(EA)	Low autonomy culture	Both intellectual and affective autonomy (corresponding to Hofstede's individualism)
Egalitarian commitment (EC)	Low Egalitarian commitment culture	Tallawy (2005) argued that Arab countries are characterized by low egalitarian culture due to the restricted political freedom. Similarly, Laïdi-Hanieh (2008, pp.30-33) agreed that in Arab societies "access to services and benefits, even survival, depends on personal, family, and factional ties, more than on egalitarianism enjoyment". He related this to the insufficient structure of Arab governments. Others, such as Fernández (2005), measured egalitarianism in Arab countries through relating it to Hofstede's feminine and high power distance in Arab societies. He stated that in high power distance and feminine culture, such as in Arab countries, relations are less egalitarian.

Harmony (H)	High harmony culture	Singh, Zaho and Hu (2003) mentioned that in high context culture such as Arab countries communication should emphasise on high harmony, beauty, and oneness with nature. Use of art, designs, beautiful scenery, and nature appeals. Additionally, harmony in the Arab world may refer to their feminine nature.
Hierarchy (HY)	High hierarchy culture	This dimension corresponds to Hofstede's power distance
Mastery (M)	Low mastery culture	mastery (corresponding to Hofstede's masculinity)

Table 2.4 - Mapping Arab culture using Schwartz's dimensions (Author)

From the previous review, it is clear that the literature is defining Arab cultural variables using Hofstede's, Schwartz's and Hall's models. Arab culture is defined as a unified culture that shares similar cultural values. This way of defining Arab culture is one of the biggest concerns of the existing cultural framework. Culture is based on a complex concept which makes it inappropriate to group many countries into one big group; assuming they share similar values. Each Arab country still has unique cultural characteristics that differentiate it from other Arab countries. Egyptian culture is a unique culture compared to other Arab cultures. Therefore, it is inapplicable to generalise Egyptian culture into conforming with Arab culture. This research addresses this issue by capturing the unique cultural variables of the Egyptian consumers.

2.4 Web interfaces and culture

Culture is respected as an important variable for international marketing. From that perspective, Fletcher (2006) considered socio-cultural factors as the interference factors that may disrupt communication to a greater extent in the international context than in domestic marketing context. This was due to the complexity of the international environment.

This section points to the importance of considering culture as a significant factor for

effective local Web interfaces and how different research incorporates the users' culture. This will be done by introducing the term Web interfaces and varied designing approaches such as the design-centred approach and the user-centred approach. The user-centred approach introduces the idea of considering users' background and needs for reaching an effective design. This will be followed by introducing the main Web interface components that can be adapted when approaching an effective user-centred design.

This chapter introduces culture as an important issue to consider through each of the interface components. At this point an important question will be raised: to what extent do the IT adaption theories capture the users' culture as an important variable for IT adaption? After a review of the important IT adaption theories, it will be concluded that culture is not well structured as an important variable for the IT adaption theories. As a result, culture and Web interfaces literature is still suffering from a debate between Web localisation and the internationalization approach.

The Web localisation approach will be defended through assessing the cultural sensitivity of the Web as a communication medium. In addition, it will be shown how the different usability literature places emphasis on the importance of culture and its effect on enhancing Web usability. This importance is enriched by introducing the culturability concept, which is the merging between two concepts: culture and usability. The section ends with a review of the different Web interfaces and cultural research to investigate how they incorporated the users' cultural effect for adapting local Web interfaces. This review is followed by a discussion of the main problems encountered by Web interfaces and cultural research in handling the users' cultural effect on Web interfaces.

2.4.1 What are Web interfaces?

Interface is the means or medium by which humans access computers (Biocca and Levy, 1995). Another definition was introduced by Galitz (2002), who stated that user interface design is a field that focuses on human-computer interaction (HCI). This means that interface design should be focusing on how people and computers are going to work together.

Galitz (2002) recognized that Web interface design should focus on navigation and information representation .It is a way of balancing menus, navigation, graphics and colours for better and easier presentation and accessibility for different users with various needs.

Many researchers such as Schmidt et al., (2007) and Palmer and McCole (2000), introduced interface as an important aspect of providing interactivity through Web sites. They defined interactivity in terms of ease of access, search mechanisms, standard layout and helpful interfaces. This enables a good opportunity for the interaction between users and organisations. Given the role that interface can play in linking users and companies, it is important to consider an effective design for different users with different needs. This enables the creation of an effective Web interface with a two-way dialogue between users and computers (Feldman, 2006).

The criteria used to determine what makes a well designed Web interface has been the subject of many studies, such as Barnard, (1999), Cooper (1997) and Satov (1998). These studies discussed download speed, screen layout, searching capabilities, currency of information, colours, navigation and orientation, consistency, inclusion of help facilities and graphic elements. These factors are important when considering the users' satisfaction level and obtaining a meaningful and effective Web interface. Galitz (2002) identified further factors for good interface design: productivity, increasing users' benefits and usability.

From the previous discussion of its definition, Web interfaces significant designing factors can be summarized into navigation, interactivity and good presentation of graphics and content.

2.4.2 Interface design approaches

According to Web interface design there are two main approaches. These are the conceptual model (designer-centred approach) and the mental model (user-centred approach) as presented by Plass (1998) in Figure 2.2.

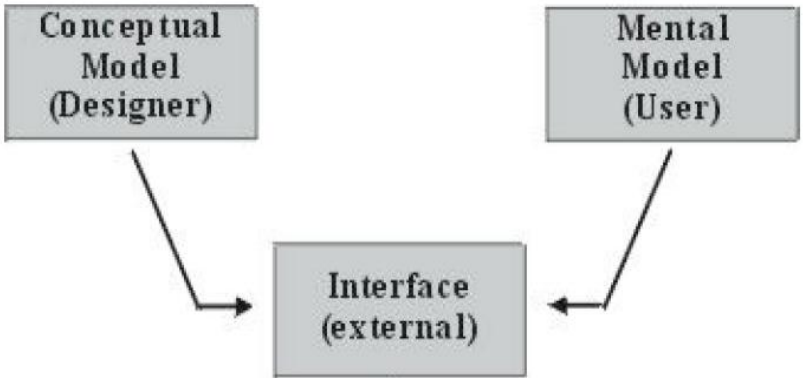


Figure 2.3 - Interface design approaches (Plass, 1998)

A. Conceptual model (designer-centred approach)

Norman (1999) defined the designer-centred approach as the implementation of design features which are solely based on the designer's preferences and intuition. He argued that this approach often results in inconsistent features that don't fit into the user's mental model; this is an important issue to consider when designing the interface. Stewart and Williams (2005) stated that the designer-centred approach also ignores users' involvement in the interface design as well as failing to conduct usability.

Plass (1998) argued that implementing this approach for interface design was based more on how the computer processes and stores information than on how the human user processes and stores it. He mentioned that this results in the users' requirement to "memorize procedural information that is irrelevant to the actual learning task but which is necessary for communication with the computer" (Plass, 1998 p.41).

B. Mental model (User-centred approach)

Abras et al (2004, p.763) defined the user-centred design approach as "a broad term to describe design processes in which end-users influence how a design takes shape".

Plass (1998) argued that this approach focuses on how humans process and store information. Hence, the main goal of this approach is allowing the user to focus on the task and to communicate effectively with the computer. This approach requires extensive testing of the interface with actual users to study their behaviour and different cultural backgrounds. In other words, this approach stresses the need to involve the actual users in the product being designed for them. This means that users should become a central part of the development process. Their involvement leads to more effective, efficient, safer products and contributes to the acceptance and success of the products (Preece, Rogers, and Sharp, 2002). In addition, Raskin (2000) argued that the user-centred approach is used as an effective way to set interaction between users and interface.

2.4.3 Web interface components

The user-centred approach needs to be integrated with the designer-centred approach for designing an effective web site. Considering the users' needs is essential when designing any web interface. However, this should be combined with the technical expertise of the designer who may be aware of issues that the user might not have the knowledge or understanding to express. This ensures a good adaption of the web interface technical features that suit each user's needs. Focusing on how each interface

component can be affected by users' varied cultural backgrounds can help to achieve this. From the definitions provided in section 2.4.1, it is clear that the Web interface is defined in terms of different components such as navigation, interactivity and good presentation of graphics and content. These components were summarized by Marcus and Gould (2000) into five design elements: metaphor, mental model, navigation, interaction and appearance.

2.4.3.1 Interface metaphor component

Metaphor plays an important role in user interface design, which enhances the usability of computer interfaces. The interface metaphor is used to hide the actual system and creates the illusion of a familiar environment for the user. Gentner (1983) defined metaphor as the process of interpreting and discovering a valid context to the targeted users. Sherson (1999) argued that metaphors were adopted because they allow new users to quickly learn new concepts by applying their existing knowledge to the interface metaphor. He suggested using metaphors based on the real world and therefore familiar objects and activities.

Hamilton (2000, p. 245-249) concentrated her work on the use of metaphors in human-computer interfaces. One of the points she noticed is users having certain expectations of what a metaphor should stand for (Hamilton, 2000; Marcus, 1994). An unfulfilled expectation leads to what Hamilton (2000, p. 246) calls a mismatch. This leads to a user being 'quite seriously bothered'.

One important aspect of metaphor that users have expectations about is icons and what function they stand for depending usually on their colours. These are used to make it easier for users to identify different icons' functions. For example, Lanquetin (2007) argued that red colour icons can be used to inform users that they should wait. On the other side, green icons can be used to say go. However, different colours do not always mean the same to different users with different cultural backgrounds. From that perspective, Gibb and Matthaiakis (2006) stated that colours used in traffic lights in the USA are red, yellow and green, while in Japan they are red, yellow and blue. Therefore, green does not always mean go to different cultures.

This reflects the importance of the cultural metaphor concept. A metaphor should consider different users' cultural backgrounds for effective interface communication. A cultural metaphor is cognitively and emotionally identified by a given culture (Gannon, 2000; 2002). In addition, the cultural metaphor concept can be described through semiotics, which is often called the study (or theory) of signs. This involves the study of

signs, anything that stands for something else (Chandler, 2000). Semiotics focuses on the ways of creating signs and the ways audiences understand those signs (Littlejohn, 1999).

Evers (1998) stated that when localising Web interfaces we need to localise metaphors. He clarifies that metaphor localisation does not only mean translating it. A metaphor needs to be replaced completely by another one that will be more specific to a target group and its culture. However, Evers (2001) noticed that most often designers apply a metaphor from their own culture. They neglect to consider the culture of targeted users. Therefore, Evers (2001) advised designers to adapt metaphor based on the targeted user's culture.

2.4.3.2 Interface mental model component

Norman (1988) discussed three mental models that make up a system (Rankin, 2003):

- The Design Model: How the designer chooses to represent the model.
- The Users Mental Model: How the user understands the system.
- The System Model: How a system works from the perspective of the programmer.

Constantine and Lockwood (1999) argued that design begins with the designer's mental model of what the interface should look like to support the user. Norman (1988, p.189) stated that a user's model and the design model should be the same (Rankin, 2003). Thus, designers should design the interface to reflect the user's backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences (Sasse, 1997).

Marcus and Gould (2000) defined the user's mental model as the concepts people have in mind. Users have mental models about the tasks they accomplish with the Web interfaces. These models are defined by the user's prior Internet experience, existing knowledge, and preconceptions about tasks (Lanter and Essinger, 1991).

Evers (2001) reflects the importance of mental models in understanding the metaphor context. In addition, he discussed the role of culture in enhancing users' understanding of interface metaphor. Evers agreed with Marcus and Gould (2000) in the different mental ways of interpreting interface; but he added culture as a significant mental model used to understand the interface. He stated three different mental models to be used in understanding the metaphor context:

- User's prior Internet experience: "the user's previous experience with other Web sites which influences their understanding of items on the Web site." (Evers,

2001, p.30)

- User's real world environment (existing knowledge): "The user's experience with his/her immediate environment will influence understanding of items on the screen, especially when these items are similar to objects they are familiar with in the real world." (Evers, 2001, p.30)
- Culture: "Users of a particular culture are exposed to other ways of communication, objects, traditions and surroundings compared to users from a different culture." (Evers, 2001, p.30)

Ashcraft (1994) described the mental model as the domain knowledge or as "any information you have stored in memory about a situation, an event, a procedure, and so on can be termed a mental model in this sense" (p. 561). Satzinger and Olfman (1998) stated that a user's mental model will affect how the user uses an application, based on the consistency of an interface. They defined a mental model as what the user knows about a particular application. This is based on what mental model users develop for the system when interacting with the interface (Welie, 2001). The mental model is part of the long-term memory and it is an internal representation of the system. Welie argued that most usability problems are often caused by a mismatch between the users' mental model and the interface design.

Mental models are constructed from the user's perception, imagination, or interpretation of reality (Khella, 2002). However, most users are not even conscious of their mental models but they use them continuously to understand and interact with the interface (Rankin, 2003). Therefore, designers can increase the effectiveness of an interface through a design that reflects the user's existing mental model. This can be done through an extensive study of the target group's culture that can be used as a reflection of their mental model.

2.4.3.3 Interface interaction component

One important way of defining Web interfaces, as mentioned by the literature, is its interactive features. Marcus and Gould (2000) stated that the interaction component of an interface is any communication between the user and the computer, whether direct or indirect. Therefore, user-interface designers are concerned with "input output techniques, status displays, and other feedback, both locally and globally" (Marcus, 2000, p.23)

With the rapid rise of the Web as a commercial medium, interactivity emerges as a unique characteristic that distinguishes the Web from other traditional media. Blattberg

and Deighton (1991) defined interactivity as communication between individuals and organisations directly regardless of where or when. Interactivity is defined from the marketing perspective by Spalter (1995) and Pavlik (1998) as an adjective for showing the two-way character of the process. In the two-way communication process there is an additional goal, which is to get the user's feedback. Pitt et al. (1996) and Struabhaar and LaRose (1997) use the term interactive to refer to situations where Web interfaces could be used to elicit customers' feedback. This is an important element that characterises the interaction with customers on the Internet. This new technology reflects the importance of customer participation in marketing communication. Hence, facilitating an interface to engage customers will help to build a strong relationship with the users.

Shneiderman (1998, p.71) identified five interaction styles that are commonly used within Web interfaces:

Menu selection: in which users read a list of items and select the most appropriate to their task.

Forms fill in: in which users are required to enter data, in which users move a cursor among the fields and enter data where desired.

Command language: "the domain of expert frequent users, who often derive a greater satisfaction from mastering a complex set of semantics and syntax". Shneiderman (1998) argued that command language gives the users a strong feeling of control.

Natural language: using natural-language sentences and phrases to engage or interact with users.

Direct manipulation: when designers create a visual presentation of the interface content, such as different metaphor components.

Robbins and Styliaou (2002) argued that it would be expected to have varied online interaction methods that work for different cultures. From that perspective, Raskin (2000) mentioned the significance of studying the targeted users to accommodate the differences among individuals. This should be reflected through a tailored interface. This can be done through adopting a user-centric approach due to the high level of involvement and engagement it encourages between users and interface. For an effective tailored interface, Raskin advised designers to start with what is common among individuals regarding interface. Later on, it will be necessary for the designers to accommodate the differences in individual's needs and cultural background. Similarly, Feldman (2006) argued that an interactive interface should consider users' goals,

expectations and needs. Therefore, the interface should be flexible enough to accommodate the different people's tastes and preferences.

Some researchers, such as Luna et al. (2002) and Koufaris (2002), argued that interactivity can be achieved through the interface flow. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988) defined flow as "the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement" (Koufaris, 2002, p.36). Interface flow can be achieved when many users feel that they are fully involved within the interface (Pearce et al., 2005; Chen et al., 1999). Thus, it can be argued that the localised interface will lead to greater involvement with the Web interfaces. This results in an effective interface due to the high level of interaction provided to users. Therefore, designers should enable the users flow by adapting a user-centred localised interface.

2.4.3.4 Interface navigation component

Simon (2001) considers navigation and site interaction as a part of the communication interface, which include actions by the user to effectively use the medium. Marcus and Gould (2000) argued that navigation can be understood as the "movement through the mental model". The user-interface designers have to facilitate this movement by using appropriate menus, dialog boxes, control panels, icons and tool palettes. Without a clear and facilitated path to information, users become lost within the Web structure (Bernard, 2002).

One common type of navigation style is alphabetical order (Sun, 2001). Further navigation styles are mentioned by Tullis et al. (2005):

- "Yahoo-style" Menu: where all items are organised under a menu heading. However, due to the length of the menu, the page must be scrolled vertically to see the entire menu.
- Flash Menu: where clicking on a heading opens the menu item to show its sub-items, and automatically closes the previously opened menu.
- Expand/Collapse Menu: where clicking on a closed menu opens it and clicking on an open menu closes it.
- Fly-out Menu: on mouseover, these menus open automatically, and sub-items are selectable.

Tullis et al. (2005) argued that the problem with that type of navigation style is what they call the "diagonal problem". That is when users attempt to select a submenu item and mistakenly move the mouse over another menu item, thereby losing the required

fly-out.

- Drop-down Menu*:* On mouseover, these menus open automatically, with no clicking required. Sub-menu items are selectable.
- Rollover Menu: On mouseover of each menu item, each heading visually changes and provides some textual description of the sub-items.

Again, for user-centred interfaces, navigation styles will be different according to users. Therefore, the interface should be tailored to users' needs and what they are familiar with.

A navigation style which is culturally adapted helps to avoid what Bernard (2002) refers to as "disorientation", meaning the navigational errors users make when searching for specific information. From that perspective, Marcus and Gould (2000) stated that navigation should reflect the user's culture. For example, users from cultures who "feel anxiety about uncertain or unknown matters" would prefer "navigation schemes intended to prevent users from becoming lost" (Marcus and Gould, 200, p.19). Similarly, Luna et al. (2002) argued that culturally adapted Web content decreases the mental effort required to process information on the site, and represents a clearer environment. This leads to an easier navigation and favourable attitude toward the interface. This is because the navigation styles are usually facilitated by the cultural schemas (D'Andrade, 1992).

2.4.3.5 Interface appearance component

Marcus and Gould (2000) defined appearance as the visual characteristics of the Web interface. The user-interface designer has to make choices of fonts, colours, styles, sounds or tactile perception like vibration modes.

One of the most investigated components of Web interfaces is colour. When applied to the Web design, colour may impact the user's expectations about navigation, content and links, as well as the overall satisfaction. Several examples of colour preferences related to culture exist in the literature, such as Barber and Badre (2001) and Simon (2001). Barber and Badre mentioned several colours and their meaning to various cultures. Red, for example, means happiness in China, but danger in the U.S. Simon (2001) found that Asians prefer "less bright colours" while Europeans and North Americans prefer "lighter/brighter colours".

Another important element in the interface appearance is multimedia, which includes streaming video, sound or animation. Marcus and Gould (2000) found that more

"assertive" cultures had strong preferences for graphics and multimedia. They described "assertive" culture in alignment with Hofstede's dimension of masculinity.

2.4.4 IT adaption and consumer behaviour theories

It is clear, then, that web design should consider users' culture for adapting each of the Web interface components. This raises a question as to what extent this idea is guided by IT adaption theories. Does culture prove to be an important variable that is raised by different IT adaption theories? This section aims to answer this question.

Sherrill (1997, p. 60) stated that adaption theory "is the art and science of managing variables so as to achieve desired outcomes" (Lieberman and Houston-Wilson, 2002). More specifically, IT adaptation theories are concerned with making the technology sensible to its users by focusing on the right target group and understanding their attitudes and the structures of the society (Hafström and Hofbauer, 2004). This reflects the importance of IT localisation. The following sections focus on the adaption theories that are more concerned about the cultural adaption of IT for effective online communication. In addition, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) will be reviewed as an important theory that explains the online consumer behaviour. According to Grabner-Kräuter and Kaluscha (2003), most of the models established to explain the online consumer behaviour are mainly based on Theory of Planned Behaviour.

2.4.4.1 Presence theory

The concept of presence is a very complex construct and one which is defined through many disparate fields. In the area of digital communication, presence refers to the experience of being in a computer-generated environment that feels like reality. Presence has been defined by Slater (1999) as being in a place that has some present meaning to the viewer. Heeter (1992) and Witmer and Singer (1998) argued that presence is a subjective experience of being in one place or environment; even when one is physically situated in another. Heeter (1992) divides the concept presence into three dimensions: personal presence, social presence and environmental presence. Personal presence is a measure of the extent to which a person feels as if she/he is in a virtual world. Social presence refers to the extent to which others, both living and synthetic, exist in the virtual world and appear to react to you. Environmental presence refers to the extent to which the environment itself appears to know that you are there and reacts to you.

On the other hand, Short et al. (1976) considered social presence as a single dimension when describing the presence concept. Based on Short et al.'s (1976) opinion, several

factors represent the presence concept. These are capacity to transmit information about facial expression, direction of looking, posture and non-verbal cues as perceived by the individual to be presented in the medium. These factors affect the level of presence and to what extent the medium is perceived as sociable, warm, sensitive or personal when interacting with users. The literature focuses on the social presence theory, and makes no clear difference between the social and cultural presence concepts. This is clear through some researchers work such as Celentano and Nodari (2004), Riva et al. (2004) and Schroeder (2002).

Champion (2007) identified social and cultural presence concept confusion in his research about the virtual heritage environment. He attempted to establish a clear difference between social and cultural presence. Champion argued that social presence is the degree to which a person experiencing a virtual environment feels part of the potential or actual social interaction. On the other hand, cultural presence is the feeling of being in the presence of a similar or distinctly different cultural belief system. Champion called at the end of his research for a cultural presence theory, which is an important issue for virtual heritage environments. In addition, he argued that this theory will be useful for virtual travel, tourism sites and Web interfaces in general. This research supports Champion (2007) in recalling the need for cultural presence theory. This theory will contribute in describing the localisation of tourists' sites and other virtual communities.

From the previous arguments it is clear that culture is considered as a vital factor affecting Web interfaces. Due to this importance, Web designers would benefit from a systematic model for Web localisation.

2.4.4.2 Technology acceptance model (TAM)

TAM is a theory that explains the user acceptance or rejection of a new technology. Applying TAM improves the user's acceptance through better system design (Davis, 1993). According to Davis et al. (1989), an efficient system design is summarized by perceived usefulness and ease of use. The original TAM presented by Davis et al. (1989) indicated that only external variables such as the system design characteristics, user characteristics and task characteristics affect the perceived usefulness and ease of use. Davis et al. (1989) found that subjective norms have no effect on perceived usefulness and ease of use and were omitted from their original model (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000).

The lack of the social variables in TAM has been criticized by many researchers such as

Mathieson (1991) and Taylor and Todd (1995b). Moreover, other researchers, such as Evers and Day (1997), Mao and Palvia (2001) and Straub et al. (1997) tried to extend the TAM model to include social and cultural variables among the TAM external variables that contribute to technology acceptance. All of the previous studies support cultural effect as a main determinant of any system acceptance.

Mao and Palvia (2001) found that the existing studies did not create clear relationships between cultural variables, IT adoption and usage determinants. Therefore, they adapted a research model that shows the effect of culture on technology acceptance in China. Their cultural model was supported as a major aspect of TAM. Another trial was made by Rose and Straub (1998) to investigate the link between cultural variables and IT adoption using the TAM model within Arab culture. They confirmed the essential role of TAM in the adoption of IT in the Arab world.

Moreover, Evers and Day (1997) used TAM to assess the cultural effect on interface acceptance. Results indicated that culture affects interface design preferences, and therefore the user's interface acceptance. This research supports Evers and Day's work on the vital role culture can play in shaping varied interface preference, which will contribute to interface acceptance.

At the end of the IT adaption theories review, an answer can be provided for the question raised at the beginning of this section, that is to what extent IT adaption theories captured culture as an essential variable that is affecting the IT adaption for different users? After the reviewing the previous theories, it can be argued that the cultural variables are not shown to be well structured in IT theories. Instead there is confusion between social and cultural concepts, which is clear in the presence theory. On the other hand, some theories, such as TAM, missed the cultural and social variables. This was identified through the literature by an attempt to provide an extended TAM model that includes the cultural variable. However, considering culture within TAM is still in its early stages. Therefore, the researcher can argue that there is a clear lack of a theory which directly contributes to cultural presence on Web interfaces.

2.4.4.3 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as introduced by Ajzen (1985) is well known as a successful model in predicting and explaining online consumer behaviour across variety of domains (Ajzen, 1985). This theory is an extension of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) introduced by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). It incorporates social influence and personal factors as predictors of the behaviour intension. TPB proposes that

attitudes moderate between subjective norms, beliefs and the behavioural intensions. This means that the subjective norms and beliefs are the main predictors of behaviour (Ajzen, 1985).

Based on Jarvenpaa et al (1999), the TPB has been applied and supported in much IT usage behaviour research. More specifically, the TPB has been used within technology adoption research to predict, explain and understand the consumer behavioural intentions. An example is Liaw's (2004) research, which used the TPB to investigate the behavioural intention of the online consumers to use search engines as a learning tool. Another example is the study of Goby (2006), who used the TPB to study behaviour intension of online purchasing. Others such as Hsu et al. (2006) used the TPB model to predict online shopping behaviour. It is clear that the use of the TPB is expanding within the online consumer behavioural field. However, the TPB emphasises the subjective norms and beliefs as the main indictors of the behavioural intension, while ignoring the cultural values and beliefs that should have direct impact on the consumer behavioural intensions.

2.4.5 The debate of Web internationalization and localisation approaches

The concern raised previously about the unclear positioning of culture within IT adaption theories opens the door for the debate in the literature about whether to deal with the Web as a global medium or a culturally sensitive one. This literature debate resulted in two Web design approaches, that is the Web internalization and localisation approaches. Regarding this, Baumgartner (2003) stated that studying the users' cultural habits is essential for the field of user-interface design. This facilitates the creation of an effective Internet communication tool. Researchers start thinking about whether organisational user-interfaces are culturally neutral or whether the graphical user-interfaces are culturally bound, intervening and influencing the ability to communicate across cultures. To answer this question researchers went in two directions: interface localisation or interface internationalization. Hermeking (2005) validated the two directions. He argued that both standardization and adaption discussion for cross-cultural marketing research are relevant to the interface design.

In a cross-cultural design, a global approach or adapting to various cultures and languages, known as 'Internationalization', may not be appropriate. Sometimes 'localisation' or tailor-made Web design for a specific target audience, is important. From that perspective, Collis and Remmers (1997) categorise Web interfaces into two groups: (a) local sites that have a high level of cultural contextualization; (b) cross-

cultural sites that have a low level of contextualization.

Baumgartner (2003, p.7) defined Internationalization as “the process of creating a base design that can be modified or augmented for various audiences worldwide”. On the other hand, Evers (1998, p.16) defined Localisation as “the process in which an internationalized package is extended with a specific cultural context”. Another attempt was made by Gibb and Matthaiakis (2006) to define localisation. He defined it as the adaptation of a product or service to meet the language, cultural and other requirements of a specific target audience.

Much research, such as Schlegelmilch and Rudolf (1998) and Jhonston and Johal (1999) have opposing ideas about interface localisation. These authors argued that the Internet is a global market with shared values and beliefs. On this line, Schlegelmilch and Rudolf (1998) sustained that the Internet has not only broken down the cultural and geographic barriers between countries, but moreover that it is contributing to the creation of a new one. In the same way, Jhonston and Johal (1999) considered the Internet as a “cultural region” with its own distinguishing marks, being made up of a mass of individuals who share a wide number of beliefs and values. Shneiderman (1998) argued that the growth of worldwide computer markets means that designers must be prepared for the internationalization of interfaces.

However, cultural differences have become an important issue in international interface design. From that perspective, DePalma (1998) defends the idea of interface localisation by arguing that localisation can be seen as a response to globalisation and the increased internationalisation of markets. For instance, it was established relatively early in the development of e-commerce sites that users are three times more likely to buy a service or product when content is in their own language.

Similarly, Würtz (2005) argued that the Web site is not just a collection of text, animated graphics, and sounds. Therefore, a company that defines itself as cross-cultural or international should realise that a culturally adapted Web site is no longer just a matter of language modification or time- and date-formats. The following represents the opinion of some human interaction researchers such as Dunckley and Jheita (2004) and Evers (1999) in the localisation context. Dunckley and Jheita stated that: “It is well understood that people from different cultures perceive and understand things differently, and this extends to the domain of human computer interaction.”(Dunckley and Jheita, 2004, p.91) While Evers argued that: “There is a clear need for more cross-cultural research into the understanding and perception of

interfaces. This cultural awareness should be fuelled by the desire to offer equal opportunities in technological development for all people." (Evers, 1999 p. 153)

Cross-cultural Web design requires dealing with the design issues including culture-specific colour, animation, sounds and preferences in layout. In order to do this successfully, the designer must study the target group of the Web site. The users' values and beliefs should be reflected in the design practices as a significant factor of online consumer behaviour and attitudes.

Gibb and Matthaiakis (2006) argued that one important benefit of localisation is its facilitation of the Web site personalization. They argued that personalization of Web sites is important, but it is not always possible to acquire the information to be able to achieve this goal. Nevertheless, content can be made as accessible as possible for more general groups of users based on the characteristics that they have in common. Therefore, localisation can be seen as an intermediate stage before the full stage of personalization. Many researchers, such as Singh, Zaho and Hu (2003) and Singh et al. (2006) have empirically proven that a localised page results in a more user friendly interface. This leads to favourable attitudes toward the site. Furthermore, effectively localised Web interfaces can result in a 200% increase in the e-sales of a company (Tixier, 2005).

On the other hand, failing to adapt interfaces for different cultures may lead to limited success due to a lost opportunity of attracting and keeping visitors (Singh and Pereira, 2005). Hermeking (2005) defined a culturally well designed Web site as "communicating the right information at the right place with the right layout in the right manner and in the right time according to the culture of each of its users". According to Dunn and Marinetti (2006), localisation generally consists of two stages. First of all, writing the content using very basic (usually English) language, avoiding ambiguity or dual meaning, and communicating at the most effective level. Secondly, translating and making minor changes to the specific target groups or cultures. Going beyond Web translation to consider users' shared values was also stressed by Sheth et al. (2001). They argued that cultural barriers still remain even with wide Web local language translation. They stated that Web translation is not enough when adapting a local interface. Marketers need to go beyond that to avoid cultural barriers on the Web.

The previous debate raised that although the Internet is a global market which eliminates many of the communication constraints, Web designers should consider interface localisation that goes beyond language translation. This will maximise the

effectiveness of Web sites as a communication tool. From that perspective, this research adopts the idea of Web interfaces localisation, which will be defended in the following section.

2.4.6 Defending the Web localisation approach

It has been previously shown that the Web localisation approach enhances the effectiveness of Web sites as a communication tool. In addition, Web localisation can be defended as a better Web site design approach in two ways: the cultural sensitivity of Web sites as a communication tool and the effect of culture on enhancing: Web site usability, which will be discussed through the culturability concept. This concept merges culture and usability.

- *World Wide Web cultural sensitivity*

Designers are facing the challenge of how to adapt different interfaces for different users. A vital role of a Web interfaces is firstly to attract visitors, then persuade them to take an action. Attracting and persuading visitors from a different cultural background is a challenge. This requires an understanding of the targeted users' values, perception and beliefs (Singh and Pereira, 2005).

According to Luna et al. (2002, p.400), "culturally congruent Web content decreases cognitive effort to process information on the site". This leads to an environment where information is clear and navigation is easier. As a result, users will reflect a favourable attitude toward the Web interfaces where processing and interpreting communication is facilitated by their cultural categories. Research from Singh, Zhao and Hu (2003) focuses on each of the unique Web site characteristics that are quite sensitive to cultural issues. Table 2.4 shows the cultural implication of Web site characteristics as presented by Singh, Zhao and Hu (2003).

Characteristic	Cultural implication of the characteristic
The web is a general open network having global accessibility	The web is viewed by people across cultures thus lending itself to vast cultural variability
Inherent interactive nature of the web	The interactive nature of the web makes it an ideal medium to create culturally sensitive dialogue
Web is characterized by hyperlinks and self-search option	Hyper links and self-search options rely on consumer motivation to browse, therefore if web content is not customized for global customers on individual bases the interactive efforts might be wasted (Fock, 2000)
Web technologies can help capture customer data that can be used for mass customization	Using customer databases and software country specific profiles can be created and used to make the web sites culturally adapted
Media convergence and broad-band technology make web an ideal medium to interact with audio, video, graphic and text	Media convergence on the web can be used to develop country-specific themes, pictures, videos, and sounds to create localized web sites
On the web the capacity to hold the visitors attention "the flow state" is an important challenge	The web sites that are culturally congruent or closely match the social perceptions of users are more likely to engage the users (Simon, 2001)

Table 2.5 - Cultural implications of Web site characteristics (Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2003)

Different users prefer different Web interface characteristics depending on their cultural perception in term of navigation, colours, information and content. Hermeking (2005) defined a well designed Web site as "communicating the right information at the right place with the right layout in the right manner and in the right time according to the culture of each of its users". This means that in an environment where customers are a few clicks away from other competitors, companies are facing the challenge of increasing their interface stickiness. In order to do so, companies should consider targeted users' preferences and their cultural perception. This to make sure that the Web site designer is not underestimating the power of culture when developing Web interfaces for different users.

- *Interface Culturability*

Usability was defined by Brinck, Gergle and Wood (2002, p.2) as "the degree to which people (users) can perform a set of required tasks". Dumas and Redish (1999) referred to usability as equivalent to functionality where it measures how people can easily work with the Web interfaces to satisfy their needs. Jordan (1998) stressed satisfaction as an important aspect to measure the usability effectiveness.

Usability problems were studied by Welie (2001). He realised that these problems are often caused by a mismatch between the users' mental model and the interface design. It

has been argued previously by Evers (2001) that culture represents an important determinant of users' mental perceptions. Therefore, this research stresses the importance of considering culture in the process of interface design. This will help to increase Web interface usability. The importance of culture in enhancing usability has been stressed through the literature (Jordan, 1998; Fock, 2000; Simon, 2001; Ford, 2005). This leads to the culturability concept, which appears as a response to various arguments regarding interface localisation.

Barber and Badre (1998) presented 'culturability' as the merging of culture and usability. It represents the relationship between design elements and culture. Badre (2000, p.2) argued that "Cultural usability is a term we use to emphasize the importance of the relationship between culture and usability in WWW design…Color, spatial organization, fonts, shapes, icons, and metaphors, geography, language, flags, sounds, and motion contribute to the design and content of a Web page, which directly affects the way that a user interacts with the site."

Culturability also includes preferences for text versus graphics and navigation tools (Cyr and Trevor-Smith, 2004). Therefore, when site visitors are more comfortable with design and usability features they will be more satisfied, and hence revisit the site. This reflects the importance of understanding Web site preferences across cultures, and its role in developing customer loyalty in the online environment.

2.4.7 Web interfaces and cultural localisation research

By positioning Web localisation as an effective design approach, the researcher is facing a challenge as to how cultural values as a significant factor of online consumer behaviour can be incorporated to approach Web interface localisation. In order to answer this question, this section aims to review the different approaches and cultural models used through the literature to handle the effect of cultural variables on Web interfaces.

It is possible to identify two approaches that have been used for assessing the cultural effect on Web interfaces. The first one is using existing cultural theories such as Hofstede's, Schwartz's and Hall's cultural models to investigate the effect of culture on Web adaption. One of the most famous applied cultural models across the literature is Hofstede's framework. This framework is used by Gong, Li and Stump (2007) to empirically investigate the impact of cultural dimensions, including the recently added dimension of a nation's long-term orientation on Internet access and usage across multiple countries. Similarly Singh et al. (2008) used Hofstede's cultural model to

prove that consumers share some values and beliefs about Web design which should be considered by marketers.

Other research, such as Zahedi et al. (2001) and Hermeking (2005) preferred to combine more than one cultural model for analysing the cultural content of Web sites. They applied multiple cultural models, such as Hofstede's and Hall's models, to explain culture's reflection on the Web. Zahedi et al. (2001) developed a conceptual framework primarily based on Hofstede's five dimensions of culture. The framework is used to explore the differences in how Web documents are used and perceived by diverse individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds. Their framework included Hall's "Monochronic vs. Polychronic Time Orientation" as a sixth dimension of culture. They concluded that the effectiveness of the Web as a communication tool is influenced by two sets of factors: cultural factors and individual characteristics. Similarly, Hermeking (2005) assessed the cultural effect on Internet consumption using Hofstede's and Hall's context model. He argued that dimensions such as uncertainty avoidance, individualism and low context had a great influence over Internet consumption.

Other research adopted Schwartz's cultural model to complement Hofstede's for assessing the cultural effect on the Web. This was done by Ng et al. (2006) who attempted to test whether the two cultural frameworks provided by Hofstede and Schwartz are congruent or not. They argued that these two models are not congruent. Therefore, researchers should carefully consider which cultural base is most appropriate for use in their study.

However, most of the previous studies that used existing cultural theories, whether Hofstede's or multiple cultural models, overemphasise cultural behaviour and ignore cultural perception and symbolism on Web interfaces such as navigation styles, colours and symbols preferred by different users.

The second approach adopted by culture and Web interface research is using different interface design aspects such as language and colours to assess the different cultural preferences amongst the users. One attempt was made by Gibb and Matthaiakis (2006) who used language as the main indictor for culture to provide a framework for Web site localisation. Their research provided a two-by-two matrix which incorporated language in one dimension and non-language criteria in the other. Web sites are then evaluated against these criteria and mapped into the matrix to assess the relative level of localisation between Web sites. However, language cannot be considered as the only indicator for Web site localisation as done by Gibb and Matthaiakis. Language

translation is not enough to adapt a Web interface; the interface may need to be replaced completely by another interface that considers the culture of the targeted users (Evers, 1998).

Another aspect to consider is the colour preference of different cultures in Web interfaces. In this perspective, Barber and Barber (1998) noticed that the colours of the national flags were usually used by governmental sites in all the countries they studied, with the exception of Brazil, which used a variety of bright colours. Similarly, Duncker et al., (2000) investigated the Web site colour choices among students with various cultural backgrounds. He realised that English students tended to use pastel colours, and grey, while Scandinavians preferred dark hues. Black was frequently chosen by African students, while U.S. students preferred bright backgrounds.

Another important issue for Web interface research is the reaction of different users to the graphical banners. This was the main focus of Noiwan and Norcio's (2006) research, which assessed the effect of users' culture when interacting with animated graphical banners. They argued that users from different cultural backgrounds act similarly in ignoring banners, especially when they are searching for specific information.

While the first research approach overemphasises cultural behaviour, the second approach focuses on cultural perception and the symbolism within interfaces and ignores the cultural behaviour aspects. Culturally customized Web interfaces were defined by Singh and Pereira (2005, p.14): "A comprehensive cultural customization will reflect three levels of cultural adaptation: perception, symbolism, and behaviour". By carefully assessing the previous definition, the researcher can realise a gap between the two approaches. There is an essential need to combine both approaches for investigating the cultural effect on Web interfaces. Combining the previous approaches can facilitate the creation of a suitable framework that best describes the dimensions of culturally customized Web interfaces as stated by Singh and Pereira (2005).

Some researchers realised the need for such a framework that combines assessing the three levels of culture (perception, symbolism, and behaviour) to describe the cultural adaption of Web interfaces. An attempt was made by Marcus and Gould (2000), who used the three levels of culture to build their culturally customized Web framework. Marcus and Gould have consistently advocated the link between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and characteristic factors of user interfaces. They examined these dimensions and their possible impact on user-interface design depending on five design

components: metaphor, mental model, navigation, interaction and appearance.

While Marcus and Gould's framework provides some guidelines for designing interfaces, research such as Dormann and Chisalita (2002) found difficulties in following that framework. They stated that they had problems in applying the approach practically, specifically regarding the site operationalisation. Others such as Singh, Zaho and Hu (2003) argued that Marcus and Gould's framework is not empirically tested and depends on one cultural model, that of Hofstede.

Singh, Zaho and Hu raise the need for a culturally customized Web interface framework that uses more than one cultural model that best serves to explain the culture's reflection on the Web. In order to do so, Singh, Zaho and Hu used Hall's context model as complementary to Hofstede's model. They were aiming to provide marketers and Web site designers with a culturally customized Web framework using the three cultural levels described by Singh and Pereira (2005).

While the previous frameworks (Marcus andGould, 2000; Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2003) provided some guidelines for designing an intercultural interface, most of these guidelines were based on self reported data and experience rather than actual observation of users' cultural behaviour and perception. In fact, they did not start building their framework by assessing the users' behaviour; which is an important step to assess the users' cultural behaviour. Instead, they depended on general cultural models such as Hofstede's and Hall's, which are not primarily built for the purpose of assessing the online user's culture. In addition, those cultural models assume a similar meaning of their cultural dimensions within all countries. Furthermore, Marcus and Gould's (2000) and Singh, Zaho and Hu's (2003) frameworks offer general guidelines to assess the cultural effect on different Web domains. This means that they do not focus on a specific domain or sector (e.g. travel or education) to assess their users' cultural preferences, which may differ from one sector to another.

Despite those limitations, some researchers tried to empirically test the previous frameworks within different sectors and cultures. An example was the work done by Burgmann, Kitchen and Williams (2006), who explored the impact of culture on the graphical user interface, allowing for transparent communication between different cultures. Burgmann, Kitchen and Williams utilized "uncertainty avoidance" and "power distance" dimensions as described by the Marcus and Gould framework to demonstrate the influence of culture on Web site design. They did a comparative content analysis for a sample of Web sites from two industry sectors (banking and education) across three

countries (Germany, Greece and UK) with quite similar cultural values. Burgmann, Kitchen and Williams supported Marcus and Gould in their findings about the dislike of many hypertext links within high uncertainty avoidance culture. High powers distance cultures do prefer interfaces that show authority and respect within different groups. Similarly, Callahan (2006) used Marcus and Gould's framework to assess the cultural differences among universities interface users in Malaysia, US, Ecuador, Japan, Sweden, Greece and Denmark. He used Web content analysis to investigate the cultural difference within different university interfaces. Using the Marcus and Gould's framework, studies by Callahan (2006) and Burgmann, Kitchen and Williams (2006) revealed that Hofstede's cultural dimensions can be reflected within the interface design.

Other researchers preferred to adapt Singh, Zaho and Hu's (2003) framework, which combined more than one cultural model (Hofstede's and Hall's models). One of those researchers was Singh and Baack (2004) who used Singh, Zaho and Hu's framework to investigate cultural presence on American and Mexican Web sites. Qualitative content analysis of sites was used to investigate the cultural differences. They stated that American Web pages show less collectivism themes, low uncertainty avoidance, lower levels of power distance and higher masculinity categories compared to Mexican Web sites. Other research was done by Singh, Kumar and Baack (2005) who used Singh, Zaho and Hu's framework to prove cultural presence on some foreign Web sites. Both Singh and Baack (2004) and Singh, Kumar and Baack (2005) concluded that Singh, Zaho and Hu's design dimensions were useful in evaluating Web sites.

Although previous research has highlighted the usefulness of Singh, Zaho and Hu's framework, other research such as Sinkovics, Yamin and Hossinger (2007) still doubted the usability of this framework. They used Singh, Zaho and Hu's framework to investigate the cultural adaption of German, U.S., U.K. and Latin American Web sites by analysing the page content. This was done by adapting an assessment sheet used by two researchers to rate the level of cultural presence within each Web interface. The study revealed that the cultural values adopted by Singh, Zaho and Hu do not have a strong effect on German, U.S., U.K. and Latin American markets.

All of the previous studies which tried to empirically test Marcus and Gould's or Singh, Zaho and Hu's frameworks went on testing their cultural dimensions on some local Web interfaces to test the cultural presence on those sites. This means they are testing the Web designer's culture instead of actual users' culture which differs. In fact, they

would benefit more from describing the users' cultural preferences when interacting with Web interfaces. Moreover, all of the previous studies focused on investigating many of the Western and Asian cultures to incorporate their cultural values on local Web interfaces. Egyptian culture and other Arab cultures are ignored in the previous research.

The limitation of the previous frameworks (Marcus and Gould, 2000; Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2003) was recognized by some researchers such as Würtz (2005), Dormann and Chisalita (2002). As a result, they preferred not to depend on any of the previous frameworks in their studies. However, the three cultural levels adapted by Singh and Pereira (2005) were adapted in their research to provide more validated Web cultural models. Würtz (2005) explored the different Web strategies used for high and low-context culture. His research indicated that Web sites in HC cultures differ from Web sites in LC cultures in a variety of ways. HC culture depends more on extensive use of animation, family representative images, tall hierarchies' (i.e. new pages open in new windows) and process-oriented navigation. On the other hand, LC culture prefers low use of animation, non-humanity images, flat hierarchies and goal-oriented navigation.

Dormann and Chisalita (2002) prefer to use Hofstede's cultural model for their research instead of Hall's context model. They limit their research to one cultural dimension – masculinity-femininity to assess the cultural presence on universities' Web interfaces. They found that most university interfaces express feminine cultural values like tenderness, quality of life or good relationships. On the other hand, masculinity should be expressed through values such as tradition and authority.

However, most of the previous research still depends on existing general cultural model, such as Hofstede's and Hall's, or even satisfied with one cultural dimension of those models, such as Dormann and Chisalita (2002), without a valid justification of their choice. Dormann and Chisalita did not start their analysis with observing the users' behaviour to determine which cultural model or dimension is important to consider on the Web. Therefore, they lost the chance of discovering new cultural categories that may emerge as important variables when assessing the users' behaviour on Web interfaces.

2.4.8 Summary of Web interfaces and cultural research problems

The previous review of Web interfaces and cultural research revealed the main problems in the methods used to understand the effects of culture on Web interfaces. First of all, the literature is heavily dependent on existing cultural models such as

Hofstede's, Schwartz' and Hall's. In fact, the cultural models provided by Hofstede's and Hall's and even Schwartz's model did not mainly build to capture the cultural differences of online consumers' behaviour. As mentioned earlier in section 2.2.1., Hofstede's model was originally developed to assess the work values context (Soares et al., 2007). Hofstede himself applied his framework to human resource management (Dawar et al., 1996; Shamkarmahesh et al., 2003). Other cultural models, such as the one provided by Hall, mainly assess the cultural values influencing communication patterns across cultures. Finally, Schwartz's work captures general cultural dimensions from different nations across varied countries.

Despite the fact that none of the previous cultural models handle the cultural context of consumers' behaviour, they are still used to build frameworks such as those provided by Marcus and Gould (2000) and Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) to assess the cultural effect on Web interfaces. In general, this means that Hofstede's, Schwartz' and even Hall's model are not appropriate for incorporating the cultural values of the online users for approaching Web interface localisation.

A second problem is that although useful guidelines are provided by Marcus and Gould's (2000) and Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) cultural frameworks for adapting a local interface, they provide unified guides for comparing all the Web domains. They assumed that their frameworks can be used similarly to compare different Web sectors such as travel, banking or education. Finally, the Web and culture literature mainly focuses on the effect of different western culture on Web interface localisation. Arab culture, including Egypt, received less attention through the Web interface adaption research.

2.5 Egyptian culture

One of the problems facing Web and culture literature as discussed earlier in section 2.4.8 is ignoring the assessment of many Arab cultures, including Egyptian culture. Among the Arab countries, Egypt is selected to be the main investigation of this research for several reasons. Egyptian culture was defined by Parnell and Hatem (1999, p.403) as "a rich culture and commercial tradition, its culture is a blend of Islamic, Arabic and Middle Eastern"

Egypt has a unique culture that distinguishes it from all other Arab cultures. Egyptians themselves see their culture and history as a unique one. From that perspective, Barakat (1993) referred in his book to anthropologists such as Laila Elhamamsy and Saad Eddin Ibrahim who examined Egyptian identity. As a result, those anthropologists prefer to

use the term Egyptianization instead of Arabization to best describe the Egyptian cultural identity. Similarly, Parnell and Hatem (1999) agreed with the previous anthropologists in the uniqueness of Egyptian identity compared to other Middle Eastern cultures, as well as the African nations.

The unique nature of Egyptian culture can be put down to many variables. One of those variables is the long history (Parnell and Hatem, 1999). Egyptian ancients developed one of the most famous and earliest civilizations. The second variable is the strategic location of Egypt (Parnell and Hatem, 1999). Parnell and Hatem stated that the strategic location of Egypt that is bordered by Africa, Asia and Europe gave it its unique culture. Feghali (1997) introduced the Egyptian Arabic language as another variable that affects the unique features of Egyptian culture. He referred to the unique characteristics of Egyptian Arabic with its "focus on names, labels, family terms respects, friendly and joking terms" (Feghali, 1997, p.362) A final variable that is identified as affecting the uniqueness of the Egyptian culture is Egyptian literature. The Egyptian filming industry was one of the most famous and the most affecting in the Arab world. Egyptian film and television was the bridge that transferred many of the aspects of Egyptian culture to the rest of the Arab world.

It is clear that there is still doubt and concern about the similarity of cultural values among the Arab countries. Therefore, it is irrelevant to assume cultural similarities among all the Arab countries, as Hofstede's cultural model did. The previous arguments reflect the complex and unique nature of Egyptian culture, which influences most of the culture of Arab countries. However, there was no clear idea about what are the unique cultural variables that characterise Egyptian culture.

2.6 The Internet in Egypt

Egyptian online consumers represent an interesting area for investigation due to the rapid growth of Internet users in Egypt. The total number of Internet users in Egypt increased from 9,866,762 in 2006 to 16,635,753 in 2009 (World Development Indicators, 2010). Egypt was considered as one of the most forward looking among the Arab countries in the IT industry (International Telecommunication Union, 2001). This was due to the great effort made by the Egyptian government to develop the IT industry as a national priority. The Egyptian government selected Dr. Nazef, who was the minister of IT and information technology, to be the principle minister of what is called the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in 2004. Since then the

Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology started to stimulate the rapid growth in this sector. This was achieved by encouraging Internet uptake by Egyptian consumers through free Internet subscription (Mohsen, 2005).

In May 2004, the Egyptian president declared the establishment of Egyptian high speed broadband. In December 2010 the Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology announced that they were willing to spend 4 billion Egyptian pounds to expand the broadband service in Egypt (Le Coq, 2010). This was done to support the plan of building a proper e-commerce infrastructure to bring more customers online. This provided a good opportunity for companies within and outside Egypt to sell their products and services online. However, little is currently known about the cultural factors that may affect Egyptian online consumers. Revealing those cultural values could help companies to design effective and friendly interfaces for reaching large numbers of Egyptian online consumers. Some of the research investigating the interface localisation for the Egyptian consumer is discussed below.

2.7 Egyptian and Arab interface localisation research

A few studies, such as Rose and Straub (1998) and Hasan and Dista (1999), stressed the need for IT adaption within the Arab countries including Egypt. Rose and Straub used the Technology Adaption Model (TAM) to understand the factors influencing technology adoption within five Arab countries: Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and The United Arab Emirates. They concluded that the two variables of TAM, ease of use and perceived usefulness, can help in IT adaption within the Arab countries.

Hasan and Dista (1999) used Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension to assess IT localisation in Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Egypt. By comparing the findings with Australia, he concluded that uncertainty avoidance represents an important factor to consider for IT localisation of Middle Eastern countries. In fact, neglecting that dimension is one of the reasons for IT resistance within those countries. In addition, Hasan and Dista realised that western IT design is based more on low context culture, which they found not applicable for the high context of Middle Eastern countries.

All of the previous research stressed the need of IT adaption for Arab countries including Egypt. However, they do not provide a clear understanding of how different cultural variables can be incorporated to achieve a better Web localisation for Arab countries, and the effect of these cultural variables on the online behaviour of Arab consumers. This idea has been considered recently by a few researchers, such as Elsaid

and Galal-Edeen (2009) and Marcus and Hamoodi (2009).

Marcus and Hamoodi (2009) used Marcus and Gould's (2000) framework to assess whether Arabian Web sites reflect their culture. Marcus and Hamoodi analysed Arabic Web sites in three countries – Jordan, Egypt and United Arab Emirates – to determine whether Arabic educational Web sites reflect their culture. They also conducted a few interviews with Arabic students who use sites to perform different tasks. The study revealed some guidelines that help designers aiming to localise educational sites for Arabic users. The study showed that most Arabic universities' Web sites use horizontal orientation and many links within the sites. Furthermore, students showed a need for more pictures of university buildings, frequently updated information and specific content that can answer questions by both new and experienced students. Most users preferred interactive sites with blue and green colours.

Elsaid and Galal-Edeen (2009) used Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension to examine the effect of Egyptian culture as an example of Arab culture on the online purchasing behaviour of online users. The study analysed the Egyptian participants using an experimental survey during shopping experience. The study revealed that Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension shows a significant association with online trust, where store reputation and familiarity strongly affect consumers' online trust.

Marcus and Hamoodi (2009) and Elsaid and Galal-Edeen (2009) provide useful studies in the area of assessing Arabic localised interfaces. However, these studies depend on Hofstede's model to handle the cultural effect of the Arab and the Egyptian users. In particular, they share the same assumption of Hofstede about the unified Arab culture. Egyptian culture is shown to have unique cultural values compared to other Arab culture. Besides, as shown earlier in section 2.3, there are still some concerns about sharing unified culture between the Arab countries. Despite, the shared values that may exist between the Arab countries, each Arab culture still has its unique values compared to other Arab countries. These values need to be revealed by examining the users' behaviour from each culture to determine the extent to which these values can affect the Web interfaces.

2.8 Tourism and culture

As mentioned earlier, in section 2.4.8, a problem facing the Web interface, localisation frameworks, such as Marcus and Gould (2000) and Singh, Zaho and Hu (2003), is providing general guidelines that can be used similarly for adapting different Web

domains. Given the possibility of different behaviour within different domains, Web localisation frameworks need to consider one sector or domain when analysing the users' behaviour within a different culture. This section will introduce the tourism online sector as the main domain used for investigating the effect of culture on user interaction with Web interfaces. The reasons for selecting the travel domain will be summarized into two main parts: the travel domain Internet marketing applicability and its cultural sensitivity to consumers' cultural background.

This will be followed by investigating the effect of culture as considered by consumer behaviour research in general, and by tourism consumer behaviour research specifically. This review aims to assess how research has incorporated the effect of culture on consumers' behaviour. A following section will summarise the main problems specifically encountered by tourism and cultural research in handling the consumers' cultural effect. This discussion will end with some problems encountered by tourism and cultural research, such as ignoring the uniqueness of each tourist's culture that can play an important role in shaping the online consumers' behaviour within a domain such as the travel sector. In addition, tourism and cultural research still mainly focuses on traditional tourist behaviour and ignores tourist's online behaviour.

2.8.1 Internet and the tourism sector

Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest growing industries worldwide. It has been argued that tourism has emerged as one of the most relevant sectors on a world level, positing itself as one of the major sources of wealth in a number of countries (WTO, 1997). Many researchers, such as Gilmore (2003), asserted tourism as an important example of the services that contribute heavily to the economic development of many developed and underdeveloped countries.

Tourism directly and indirectly creates about 204 million jobs, which is more than 10% of the world's labour force. This is estimated to grow to more than 11% of global manpower. Tourism contributes to more than 10% of global GDP, and those numbers continues to grow (Mattila, 2004). The World Travel and Tourism Council stated that the tourism and hospitality sectors will contribute about $9.3 trillion in economic activity by 2011(Shapero, 2006).

One definition of tourism was developed by Jafari (2000, p.590), who stated that "Tourism consists of people's activities when they are travelling to or staying at places outside of their usual environment for a shorter period of time than a year for leisure, business or other purposes".

On the Internet, both online companies (e.g. Cheapest Flights) and Internet-enabled companies (e.g. Thomas Cook, British Airways, etc), are expanding every day and the number of customers dealing with them is increasing annually. Hence, it is more appropriate to consider such wide online business sectors to provide guidelines for Egyptian users' interface design.

There are hundreds of tourism services sites on the Internet (e.g. flight booking, hotels reservations, car rentals, etc) and many tourists all over the world are now more familiar with such sites and are using them in planning their trips.

2.8.2 Tourism services as an applicable field work sector

The research will consider tourism as the study area, as it is particularly susceptible to cultural effects in online interfaces. The term 'culture shock' is often used as an everyday language indicator of various difficulties experienced while visiting foreign countries as tourists (Hottola, 2004). Furthermore, tourism is a sector that is very suitable for Internet marketing. This highlights the two main reasons behind the applicability of the tourism sector for this research: Internet marketing applicability and its cultural sensitivity.

- *Tourism service Internet marketing applicability*

The Web is a critical communication tool for some industries; tourism is a sector that can successfully market itself through the Web. This is due to the unique features of tourism services, which make the Web an important communication engine that helps to facilitate its marketing.

Some researchers, such as Kiang, Raghu and Shang (2000), highlighted the fact that being an information search intensive product increases its suitability for Internet marketing. One of the most important features of the tourism industry that makes it more suitable for Internet marketing is being an informational-intensive product. Buhalis (1998) argued that accurate, relevant and prompt information about destinations, activities and attractions are often the key to satisfaction for most tourists. Huang (2005) realised that tourism is an industry that is surrounded by a wide range of information, in which the Web can be an effective way to integrate all required information in one source. Therefore, the Internet comes as an effective and transparent tool that helps tourists to access all relevant information and to easily compare it with alternatives. Furthermore, keeping tourists well informed usually tends to reduce the gap between customers' expectations and their real experience and thus maximise their

satisfaction (Buhalis, 1998). Burke and Gitelson (1990) argued that this comes from the Internet's power to enhance tourists' knowledge about the place rather than influencing them to visit it.

In addition to being an informational-intensive product, Burger (1997) argued that travel services are well suited to Internet marketing because of their distinctive high priced, high involvement, heterogeneous and high risk characteristics. Peterson et al. (1997) suggested that when products are expensive they are more suited to Internet marketing. Most customers recognise the travel industry as providing expensive services, in which they prefer to carry out an intensive information search to get the least expensive deal. Herein lies the power of Internet, where it can help consumers to identify the least expensive sources regardless of supplier location. Liu (2000) argued that nowadays more informed Internet consumers have forced most travel agents to reach standardized prices across companies or even more broadly, where the Internet enables tourism companies to realise competitors' prices and make real-time adjustments at a button touch in response to competitor moves.

Consumers with a high risk perception of tourism services are another important feature that increases its suitability for Internet marketing. Buhalis and Laws (2001) stated that Travel and leisure services are associated with financial and emotional risk, where the entire family can be involved, and it is one of the few times in a year that this kind of critical decision is made. Joëlle, Magali and Emmanuel (2007) argued that travel is a service in which a traveller cannot expect or evaluate the service until they experience it, usually after consumption, which makes it more risky. The Internet offers a way to reduce the risk associated with the travel service by providing tourists with a wide range of integrated information and allowing them to compare many alternative competitors.

The point raised previously by Joëlle, Magali and Emmanuel (2007) that tourism is an experienced-based service leads to heterogeneity in such services. This makes customization an important issue in this kind of service. Many authors, such as Chaffey et al. (2006) and Fill (2005), agreed that the Internet is an effective tool for product or service customization; it helps in understanding customers' preferences and allows offerings to be tailored based on them. Many travel sites, such as British Airways and Egyptian Airlines, are using a link such as Plan your Travel in response to the high heterogeneity included in their services. Joëlle, Magali and Emmanuel (2007) considered that the Internet is a perfect tool that helps travellers to design their own package and trip, therefore giving them the feeling that they created their own trip

experience. This feeling tends to satisfy a wide range of tourists with a wide range of heterogeneous preferences.

Another important feature of tourism as a service is its intangibility. Tourism is largely intangible in nature except for tangible cues such as tickets, and nowadays it is becoming more intangible through electronic tickets (Liu, 2000). As mentioned previously by Pitt, Berthon and Watson (1999), the Internet has the power to make the intangible tangible. Despite the fact that it cannot enhance physical tangibility, it has the ability to make travel services mentally tangible through interactivity features that enable the mind creativity. Buhalis and Laws (2001) argued that travel product cannot be tested or experienced before consumption, especially because it is geographically fixed, which increases its intangibility. He realised the importance of the Internet as a communication tool in travel services, in which it offers the information needed for clear presentation of the visited places. Using multimedia tools online allows tourist operators to add tangible cues using the graphical details of the destinations, and to enable tourists to see and listen to different information about the visited places, attractions and activities.

- *Tourism service cultural sensitivity*

Many researchers raise the importance of considering consumers' culture in the tourism sector, For example, Resisinger and Turner (1999) highlighted the fact that tourism is an activity where the focus should be on consumers rather than the product itself. Tourism is a service that deals with international consumers with diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, a clear understanding of consumers' preferences and culture should be considered for this type of service, which may help to increase tourists' satisfaction.

Others found that consumers' culture affects their perception toward the tourism service quality. Hsieh and Tsai (2008) argued that tourists' specific expectations toward service quality are partially driven from their cultural background. Similarly, Reisinger and Turner (1998) stated that the needs and expectations of tourists are culturally driven, where cultural differences in their needs and expectations can cause a problem in interaction. Hsieh and Tsai (2008) considered the problem of cultural shocks. They argued that considering consumers' culture can help to decrease cultural shocks associated with tourism services, therefore persuading tourists to revisit over the long term. Reisinger and Turner (2003) argued that without a high level of returning visitors, destinations must attract new consumers. Repositioning tourism products for new customers is more risky and expensive than the continuous targeting of satisfied

consumers. Table 2.5 summarizes the main issues of tourism cultural sensitivity.

Tourism cultural implications
Expectations toward service quality are partially derived from tourists' cultural backgrounds.
Focus should be on consumers rather than the product itself.
Considering culture can help to minimise cultural shocks associated with travel services.
Considering culture can help to persuade consumers to revisit a tourist destination in the future.
The tourism sector deals with international consumers with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Table 2.6 - Tourism cultural implications (Author)

2.8.3 Culture and consumers' behaviour research

Culture is considered an important variable that is having a great effect on determining consumers' behaviour. Different behaviour encountered by consumers is shown to be affected by their cultural background. This includes decision making, purchasing behaviour, providing feedback and searching behaviour. The area of culture and consumer behaviour has been investigated from different perspectives. These perspectives can be summarized into four trends. The first trend is how culture can affect consumers' decision making and judgments. From that perspective some scholars investigated the effect of uncertainty avoidance and collectivism culture on decisions undertaken by customers (Choi and Geistfeld, 2004; Shavitt, Lee and Torelli, 2008). They argued that collectivism culture influences consumers to adjust their buying decisions based on social opinions and group conformity. Therefore, consumers can be persuaded by messages that contain group interest harmony. Furthermore, those from uncertainty avoidance cultures are highly distrustful and need more information to make a decision. Choi and Geistfeld (2004) limited their study on uncertainty avoidance and collectivism cultural dimensions. On the other hand, Shavitt, Lee and Torelli (2008) extended their research to assess other cultural dimensions, such as power distance and models, such as Hall's context model. They stated that consumers with a high power distance culture were persuaded using symbols that represent status and different positions within society. According to Hall's context model, Shavitt, Lee and Torelli realised that those from high context culture can be persuaded using symbolism and

aesthetics instead of direct approaches.

Culture can play an important role in determining consumer decision making strategy (Weber and Hsee, 2000; Zhang, 1992; Yates and Lee, 1996). Previous research has focused mainly on collectivism culture and how it can intervene in shaping the decision making strategy. Weber and Hsee (2000); Zhang (1992); Yates and Lee (1996) argued that collectivism culture are less associated with an in depth cognitive way of thinking, which means that such culture considers main and direct points instead of following more analytical and critical way of thinking. This results in what is called "folk-precedent" (Zhang, 1992; Yates and Lee, 1996), "category based or case based" decision strategies (Weber and Hsee, 2000). This means that decisions within those cultural groups depend more on past experience recalled from family and friends. Other scholars refer to risk prevention decision strategy adopted by collectivism customers (Briley and Aaker, 2006; Chen, Ng and Rao, 2005). Those customers will judge any product or service based on its ability to prevent perceive risk. Therefore a preventive message is more appropriate for those groups instead of a promotional one.

Another way of investigating the cultural effect on consumer behaviour is assessing the purchasing behaviour within different cultural groups. Researchers stated that within the purchasing process the collectivism cultural group value products based on their social needs (Kim et al., 2002; Kacen and Lee, 2002). Those cultural groups adjust their purchasing behaviour to what is socially acceptable, controlling their own desire in favour of interest goals. As a result, purchasing decisions within the collectivism cultural group are affected by brand decisions and loyalty. Hence, brands are used to stress social prestige and similarities within different groups. In addition, those from collectivism cultures tend to display risk prevention buying behaviour (Shavitt, Lee and Torelli, 2008). Therefore they can be persuaded using information that addresses their concerns.

Other scholars assessed the different ways of providing feedback within cultural groups (De Luque and Sommer, 2000; Liu and McClure, 2001; Kacen and Lee, 2002). They argued that collectivism cultures prefer not to express negative emotions and if expressed they are more likely to be discussed within a public setting. This means that dissatisfied customers are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth behaviour. This will be done by collectivism cultures where their social values stress preventing family and friends any bad experience. Morever, De Luque and Sommer (2000) argued that uncertainty avoidance culture tends to use less formal rules and procedures to provide

their feedback.

Finally, searching behaviour was stressed within literature to be more affected by consumers' cultural background. Researchers argued that high power distance and "holistic-oriented" or collectivism cultures are more dependent on non-formal searching sources such as family and friends (De Luque and Sommer, 2000; Dawar, Parker and Price, 1996). Therefore, marketers who are targeting online searchers need to depend more on consumer-to-consumer interactive function online (Cho and Cheon, 2005). Furthermore, uncertainty avoidance culture seeks more information as they do not express independence of thought (Zaheer and Zaheer, 1997; De Luque and Sommer, 2000).

All across the four trends of culture and consumer behaviour research (decision making, purchasing behaviour, providing feedback and searching behaviour) Hofstede's collectivism dimension is used as the only measure to describe the behaviour of consumers from different cultural backgrounds. Hence, studies do not offer a full account of how other specific cultural dimensions can affect consumer behaviour whether within decision making, purchasing behaviour, providing feedback or searching behaviour.

2.8.4 Culture and tourism behaviour research

As shown earlier, culture has a great effect on shaping different consumers' behaviour. This effect is shown to have a greater influence within the tourism service due to this sector cultural sensitivity. Many researchers have investigated the effects of culture on tourists' consumer behaviour and preferences. This investigation divides into three trends. The first one is assessing the influence of culture on directing the consumers' decisions undertaken to evaluate the tourism services' quality. For example, Sigala and Sakellaridis (2004) assess the impact of Web users' cultural profiles on their perception of E-service quality within the tourism industry. They used Hofstede's cultural model to investigate the effect of cultural dimensions on E-service quality (E-SQ) using the WEBQUAL model as well as Web site design features. A question was submitted to multinational students from six countries including Iran, Cyprus, France, Italy, the UK and Greece. Sigala and Sakellaridis concluded that high power distance has a significant effect on Web interactivity expectations. Feminine culture was found to be more affected by interface visual appeal than masculinity. On the other hand, Sigala and Sakellaridis realised that individualism and uncertainty avoidance has no effect on E-SQ.

Another study was made by Crotts and Erdmann (2000) to investigate the influence of national culture on different ways consumers undertake to evaluate travel services. They draw a sample from the foreign visitors to the US. Crotts and Erdmann limited their analysis to three levels of the masculinity dimension provided by Hofstede: high, medium and low. They reported airlines' positive evaluation perceived by the low masculinity group, while the high masculinity group reported lower rating of airline service quality. However, no statistical differences were found between the lower and middle masculinity groups in travel service evaluation.

Other research was introduced by Hsieh and Tsai (2009); they used SERVQUAL and Hofsted's cultural model to examine the cultural influence on the perception of international hotel service quality. A self-administrated questionnaire was given to American and Taiwanese consumers. Among the SERVQUAL dimensions they found that all of the service quality dimensions including tangibility, reliability, reaction, empathy and assurance were completely or at least partially affected by culture. For example, intangibility was highly affected by tourists' culture, in which strong power distance orientation and high uncertainty avoidance culture tended to value ''tangibles'' more than any other consumers.

Other research, such as that provided by Cho (2006), completely rejected the effect of Hofstede's cultural variable on evaluating tourism service quality. The research examined the cultural differences within Japanese and American restaurants in how they perceive tipping-related service quality dimensions. He realised that the cultural differences proposed by Hofstede's cultural dimensions were not supported in his study, which was unexpected. Cho argued that one reason for the unexpected findings might be that "traditional reactions to service quality evaluations play more important roles in tipping behaviour than specific cultural dimensions" (Cho, 2006, p.91)

Other researchers, such as Turner, Reisinger and McQuilken (2002), went beyond Hofstede's model to examine the effect of culture on level of satisfaction and importance of actual travel service perceived by tourists. They reviewed the literature to set some variables for satisfaction levels such as the promptness of service, the hours of operation, the opportunity to speak with service providers, the amount of time spent with service providers and the access to attractions. Other variables were used to represent importance of service, such as the ability of staff to speak your language, the ability of staff to ensure your personal safety, the quality of the physical facilities provided and the knowledge and skills of staff. A sample of tourists was drawn from

five cultures including Australia, USA, Canadian and Japanese. Turner, Reisinger and McQuilken found that there was a considerable difference between what each cultural group considers important and their actual experience. They also realised that satisfaction level was perceived by different variables depending on tourists' cultural background. However, from reviewing Turner, Reisinger and McQuilken's work, it is difficult to specify how exactly culture may affect levels of satisfaction within the tourism sector.

All of the previous studies assess the effect of culture on tourism service quality using only Hofstede's cultural model and SERVQUAL model. However, through the literature there was no agreement on a specific relation between Hofstede's cultural dimension and service quality. This may be due to the focus on a specific cultural dimension such as Crotts and Erdmann's (2000) research which focused mainly on the masculinity dimension. Others such as Turner, Reisinger and McQuilken (2002) did not specify exactly how culture may affect tourism service quality. Furthermore, the effect of Hofstede's cultural variable on evaluating tourism service quality was completely rejected by Cho (2006).

In addition, the SERVQUAL model has been used by Hsieh and Tsai (2009) to assess the cultural influence over the service quality perception. This means that the SERVQUAL model focuses only on one dimension of online consumer behaviour, which is the online quality perception. It fails to handle the cultural influence over further dimensions of online consumer behaviour such as online branding, online brand loyalty and online decision making. This makes it inappropriate to handle the cultural values affecting the online consumer behaviour. Moreover, the SERVQUAL model is facing serious critique such as the concerns raised regarding the universal dimensions and the scale points used for establishing this model (Buttle, 1996). Concern regarding the unstable dimensions of SERVQUAL is raised by Cook and Thompson (2000) as well as Landrum and Prybutok (2009). From this perspective, Cook and Thompson (2000) investigated validity and the reliability of SERVQUAL dimensions. They found that the SERVQUAL dimensions can be demonstrated in three responsive dimensions instead of the five dimensions suggested by the original model. Cook and Thompson argued that responsiveness, empathy, and assurance dimensions can be overlapped when assessing the quality of some services such as the library service.

This encouraged researchers to depend on other cultural models besides Hofstede's, such as Hall's, in assessing cultural effects on perception of tourist service quality. Lee,

Khan and Ko (2008) focused on the importance of service recovery in supporting the perception of service quality. Their study explores the cross-cultural impacts on the perception of service recovery experience such as word-of-mouth and loyalty. They used Hofsted's and Hall's context model to describe the cultural difference. A questionnaire was used to compare between Korean and American consumers to assess the importance of service recovery. Results indicated that those from high context culture tend to share their negative or positive service recovery experience more than those from low context. Moreover, high uncertainty avoidance culture people tend to avoid returning to a restaurant in which they have had an unsatisfactory service recovery experience. Lee, Khan and Ko note that high power distance cultural customers prefer to deal with a higher employee level as this confirms their cultural expectations about respect and their values of employees' inequality. It can therefore be implied that higher level employees will be able to deal more effectively with this customer group.

The second trend in tourism cross-cultural research is investigating the effect of tourists' culture on the external sources used to gather trip information. This trend was the main focus of Gursoy and Chen's (2000) research which analysed the information search behaviour used by German, French, and British travellers who travelled to the United States in 1997. Their study revealed that British and French information searching behaviour is alike, where both used travel agencies for trip information gathering. Therefore tourism service providers should focus on travel agencies to reach British and French travellers. While German travellers preferred to use the Internet, so tourism marketers should provide them with Web pages that contain extensive information. Similar research was made by Mihalik et al. (1993), in a study of Japanese and German tourists to the United States; they realised that travel agents, brochures, and books were the most important information resources used by Japanese tourists due to their high uncertainty avoidance culture.

Different sources of information used by tourists with different cultural backgrounds was also realised by Chen (2000) who argued that leisure tourists of Japan, South Korea, and Australia had different preferences for their trip planning. An analysis of Hofstede's dimensions revealed that due to the collectivism nature of Japanese tourists, they prefer to depend on the opinion of others when acquiring travel information. On the other hand, Australian travellers tend to be more individualistic and prefer to depend on more than one source such as brochures, agencies and Internet. Chen highlighted that

travel service providers need to adapt their promotional channels based on cultural preferences. For example, they advised to get into direct contact with Japanese tourists and to use public relations as an effective way of reaching them due to their collectivist nature. On the other hand, an integrated marketing communication campaign would be preferred to reach Australian tourists due to their individualistic culture.

Gursoy and Chen (2000), Mihalik et al. (1993) and Chen (2000) agreed that high uncertainty and collectivist culture would value travel agencies and personal sources as an important source of information. As has been stated before, collectivism and high uncertainty culture would value public relations as an effective means of communication. Therefore, travel agencies and personal sources would be preferred due to public relations being embedded within those sources of information. At that point the researcher can argue that reaching that cultural group would be difficult online unless the tourist interface stresses building public relations with customers to enhance loyalty.

Furthermore, researchers such as Gursoy and Chen (2000) and Chen and Gursoy (2000) argued that the trip purpose and frequency together with the culture determine the source of information. Gursoy and Chen (2000) discovered that it is necessary to look at the purpose of the trip together with the tourists' cultural background. The combination of these two factors determines the sources of information that are used. They build their model with two main dimensions: business and leisure. Gursory and Chen investigated German, French and British travellers using their two-dimensional model. The study revealed that both leisure and business German travellers tend to be more independent using Internet and travel guides to gather their trip information. On the other hand, the leisure/business British and French travel segment tend to be more dependent travellers. Leisure tourists prefer travel agencies, while the business segment prefers airlines as external sources.

Another study was done by Chen and Gursoy (2000) to differentiate between first time and repeated travellers in their information searching behaviour, in which they analysed the effect of culture on both kinds of travellers. Looking at first-time travellers, the French tend to use travel agencies. The British were more likely to utilise tour companies, while Germans depended on tour guides. With regard to the repeat travellers' information usage, the French were more likely to acquire information from airlines and corporate travel departments. The British prefer travel agencies and finally Germans obtain their travel information from national tourism offices.

Previous research, such as Chen (2000), Mihalik et al. (1993) and Gursoy and Chen (2000), is useful in determining the cultural role in assessing compatible promotional strategies for different tourist groups. However, most of this research focuses on one side of searching behaviour. This is the cultural effect on determining the preferred source for trip information. It is missing other aspects such as the role culture can play in determining the type of information requested by tourism consumers. Furthermore, these studies fail to identify the impact of culture on tourists' behaviour. This means explaining how values and beliefs can affect the consumption behaviour and attitudes of travel service consumers. This deficiency was overcome by the final trend of tourism and cultural research. This trend aimed to assess the effect of consumers' culture on their consumption behaviour.

In this perspective, research by Money and Crotts (2003) highlighted that consumers' culture can affect their consumption of the travel service through four variables, including type of external search, trip planning horizon, trip party characteristics (e.g. size of group) and trip characteristics (e.g. length of stay). They argued that those from high uncertainty avoidance cultures, such as Japan, tend to search for non-marketing sources, which may include sources such as advice from friends. This compares to the German medium uncertainty avoidance group, who prefer marketing and media sources. They also argued that Japanese tourists prefer group trips, long stays and take a longer time for trip planning compared to German tourists. Litvin et al. (2004) confirmed Money and Crotts's (2003) results based on the same four variables that differentiate tourists' cultural group. Their study has been extended through a representative sample of first time leisure visitors to the USA representing 58 nations.

The idea of investigating the effect of tourists' culture on their different ways of consumption has received attention through the literature. For example, Pizam and Jeong's (1996) research included individualism/collectivism beside Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension. They built a questionnaire submitted to Korean tour guides to investigate different ways of American, Korean and Japanese travel consumption. Their analysis revealed six factors that mostly distinguish tourists' consumption and behaviour. Those variables are activities, trip type (long vs. short, adventurous vs. safe), commercial transaction (buy souvenirs or not), social interaction with other tourists, bargains while shopping and group travel. Pizam and Jeong realised that high uncertainty avoidance and collectivist cultures prefer safe trips, short length travel, buying souvenirs, and bargains in shopping and do prefer group trips.

Wong and Lau's (2001) research was based their research on the behavioural characteristics of Hong Kong tourists while on guided group tours. They used travel factors as identified by Pizam and Jeong (1996) to distinguish tourists' behaviour. Wong and Lau confirmed Pizam and Jeong's (1996) result. This was indicated in the preference for safe and group trips in the case of high uncertainty avoidance and collectivist culture.

Another study was done by Mitchell and Vassos (1997) to investigate the cultural and gender effects on risk perception while purchasing different trip package. They used Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension in their assessment. Their study revealed that gender together with culture can play an important role in tourists' risk perception. Mitchell and Vassos realised that Cypriots perceived high risk in holiday purchase more than the British. Cypriot males perceived significantly less risk than Cypriot females.

Most of the previous research, such as Money and Crotts (2003), Litvin et al. (2004) and Mitchell and Vassos (1997), emphasises the cultural effect on tourists' traditional consumption behaviour while ignoring the role of culture in determining tourists' online consumption behaviour. Moreover, they limit their study on uncertainty avoidance and ignore other cultural dimensions implied by Hofstede's model. This can be related to the quick and easy way of recognizing uncertainty avoidance within many cultural groups. While others, such as Pizam and Jeong (1996) and Wong and Lau (2001), extended their research to investigate the effect of the individualism/collectivism dimension. However, they still mainly depend on Hofstede's model to investigate the cultural effect of different tourist groups on their consumption behaviour.

2.8.5 Summary of tourism and cultural research problems

The previous review of tourism and cultural research can be summarized into three trends. The three trends are demonstrated in Figure 2.3. Across the three trends, research mainly depends on existing cultural models, such as Hofstede's and Hall's. As mentioned earlier in section 2.4.8, these cultural models face the significant concern of being unable to incorporate or handle the cultural values influencing online consumers' behaviour. In other words, the unique cultural context of the consumers' behaviour is not integrated into these cultural models. This makes these models unable to investigate the unique culture variables affecting online consumers' behaviour within a sector such as travel.

In addition, it is clear that the final trend of tourism and cultural studies mainly focuses on investigating consumers' cultural effect on tourists' traditional consumption

behaviour while ignoring online consumers' behaviour. Furthermore, previous tourism and cultural research seems to focus on investigating the behaviour of different groups of western tourists, such as Germans, English and Americans and Asian tourists, such as Korean and Japanese. They ignore the investigation of Middle Eastern and Arabic tourist behaviour. This research overcomes this deficiency in the literature by assessing the effect of Egyptian culture on tourism consumers' behaviour.

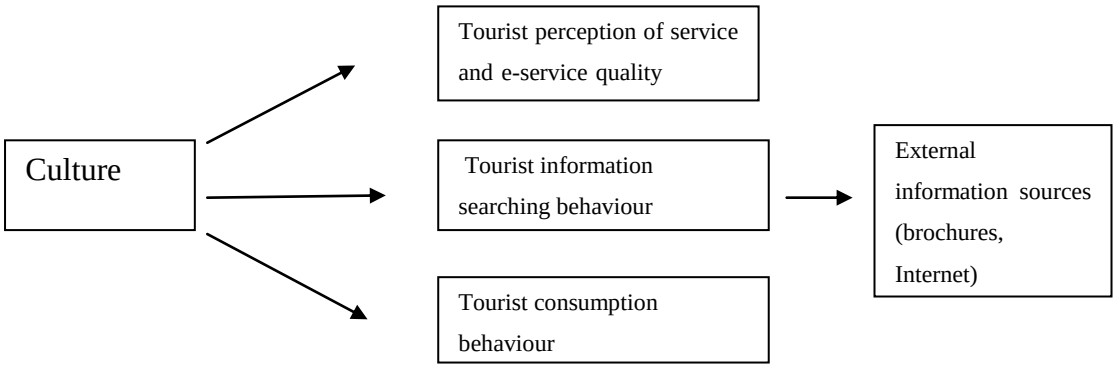


Figure 2.4 - Culture and tourism literature trends (Author)

2.9 Tourism sector and online searching behaviour

It has been shown earlier in section 2.8.3 that culture heavily influences consumer behaviour. This includes their decision making, purchasing behaviour, providing feedback and searching behaviour. Searching behaviour is found to be more affected by tourists' cultural background. This was due to the unique features of the tourism sector such as high involvement, high risk and complexity.

This section will review the importance of searching behaviour for the tourism service sector and the significance of this importance for the online tourism sector. The next section will review the literature that investigates cultural differences in users' online searching behaviour.

2.9.1 Importance of consumers' searching behaviour for the tourism sector

Information search is a vital step undertaken by travellers to collect information about their desired destinations. Searching behaviour has been stressed through the literature as an important aspect of tourism consumers' behaviour.

Researchers relate the importance of searching behaviour within the tourism sector to the unique nature of that service. Some authors, such as Buhalis and Laws (2001), state the fact that the choice of tourist destination is a high involvement decision, where

tourists prefer to engage in an intensive search before their trip. Researchers such as Havitz and Dimanche (1999), Luo, Feng and Cai (2004) and Chaudhuri (2000) found a strong positive relation between the high involvement nature of travel services and information searching behaviour. Consumers with higher product involvement are engaged with high intensity to collect information. Gursoy and Mccleary (2004) agreed with the previous research to stress the correlation between the high involvement nature of tourism products and information searching behaviour. They argued that highly involved tourists tend to go through an extended problem solving process. This is done by searching for the necessary information required to solve the problem before completing the purchasing decision.

It is clear that a highly involved service such as travel tends to be more informational dependent; therefore there is an essential need to understand different searching behaviour conducted by different cultural groups. This will enable marketers to incorporate such understanding in an appropriately designed communication channel. This was raised by Jang (2004) who stated that marketers should consider the differences in tourists' searching behaviour, which will enable them to tailor marketing communication accordingly.

The high risk and complexity of tourism are other features that were raised through literature to stress the importance of searching behaviour within that service sector. The high uncertainty and complexity associated with travel increases the consumer need for information to reduce the risk associated with that service (Öörni, 2004). The complex nature of travel has been described by Juline and Law (2004) who argued that tourism is a package of combined products such as tickets, hotels, transportation, events and activities. These products are delivered by a number of different suppliers. This complex and aggregated nature of tourism products increases the "depth and breadth" of information required by tourists before travelling.

2.9.2 Tourist online searching behaviour

The importance of studying the consumers' searching behaviour for the tourism sector has been previously discussed. This importance shows more significance for the online tourism sector. The Internet is considered an important source of information within the tourism sector. Once consumers have decided to take a trip, the Internet provides them with an easy and effective way for searching different destinations and best offers. Travel searching was raised as one of the most frequent activities performed on the Web, where 6.5 percent of all Web searching is travel related (Toms et al., 2003).

Similarly, Lake (2001) argued that among the Web users 95 percent are searching the Internet for travel related information (Kozak and Decrop, 2009). Among the users accessing travel sites, 66.2 percent are aiming information and very few engage in a further stage of online booking (Lang, 2000). Fittkau and Maass (2005) argued that 60 percent of travel site searchers finally buy offline.

Researchers have investigated the reasons that cause travel site users to stop on the stage of searching for information without engaging in an online purchase. These are summarized into two main reasons. The first one is related to users and the second is concerned with Web interfaces facilities. Authors such as Kim et al. (2007) and Kozak and Decrop (2009) identified the users' level of uncertainty avoidance as the main reason behind using travel sites as merely a source of travel information. They argued that the higher the level of uncertainty avoidance, the more heavily travel site users' demand on the Web as an information source without engaging in a further stage of online booking. Others confirmed that the Web interfaces are more responsible for stopping users at the stage of gathering information. One example was Lexhagen (2004) who found that users face difficulties during online purchases in response to insufficient support provided within the travel interfaces. Lexhagen stated that another reason was that users found no value added service on the travel interface. This results in an interface that does not support users' needs within the travel domain.

From the researcher's point of view, recently travel site providers have enhanced their Web interface designs with many facilities to increase site usability and to support users' needs. However, they are still facing the challenge of reducing users' uncertainty avoidance level; this can be done through more effort to understand the users' backgrounds and culture. This will help Web site designers to personalise a friendlier interface and to minimise the users' uncertainty avoidance level.

Despite the raised importance of searching behaviour within the tourism sector, together with the Internet as an important source of travel related information, few researchers paid attention to online searching behaviour in the travel sector. Among these few studies, some investigated the information users needs on travel sites. Tierney (2000) argued that the most preferred information includes trip activities, attractions, maps, shopping, special events, festivals and accommodation. Similarly, Chu (2001) realised that travellers who visited airline sites were expecting destination information, local activities, hotel booking, special trip packages, weather conditions, car rental, entertainment guides, souvenirs, gifts, bonus mileage, train passes and travellers

cheques.

Pan and Fesenmaier (2006) and Toms et al. (2003) argued that online searching behaviour will vary based on experience across different domains. They assessed how the travel metaphor can be personalized for easy mental interface processing. Interesting research was introduced by Pan and Fesenmaier (2006), who provide a mental model of online tourists' search behaviour, based on the travel domain Internet experience. Fifteen subjects from a large university in the USA were chosen to engage in an observation session for a vacation planning exercise to San Diego. This was followed by a semi-structured interview asking subjects to discuss San Diego as a preferred destination. The result indicated that users follow a hierarchical process for vacation planning, including different decisions and sub-decisions with varied rigidity level. Pan and Fesenmaier (2006) visualised different decisions in a network, where each decision was represented in a node. The Pan and Fesenmaier (2006) model is shown in Figure 2.4, where Network A represents different decision nodes with varied darkness depending on their rigidity. Network B is an illustration of two main generalized decisions of destination and activities.

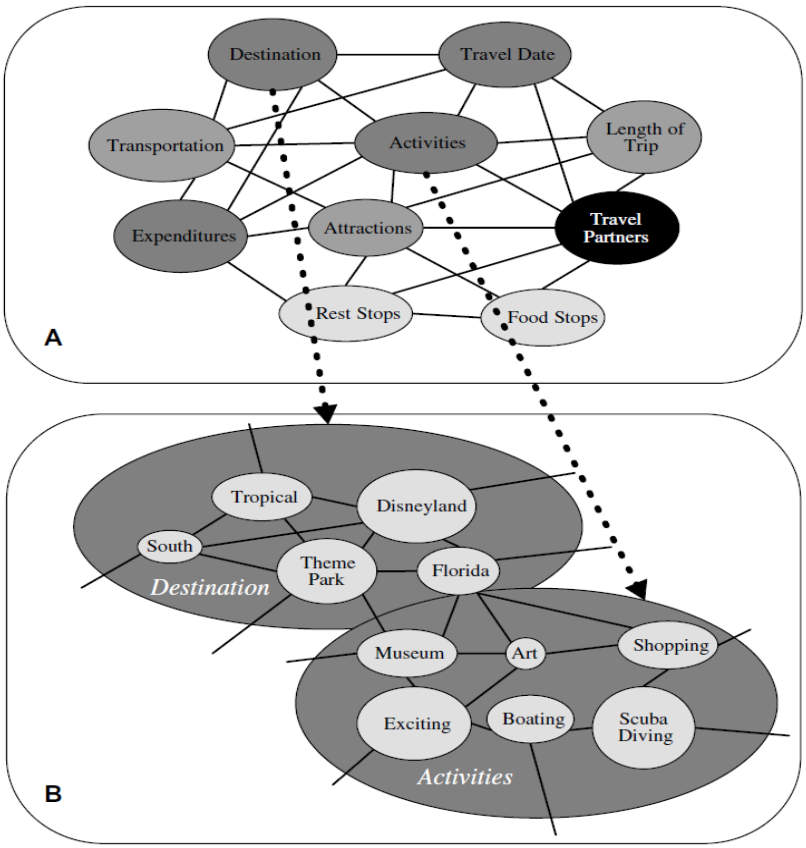


Figure 2.5 - Semantic model of a vacation planner (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006)

The Pan and Fesenmaier model is based on an assumption that all users will follow their mental Internet experience with similar domains to interpret the travel interface. This assumption was similarly adapted by Toms et al. (2003). They investigated how different domains including health and travel can be personalized according to the user's Internet experience with similar domains. Using 48 participants interacting with Google, the result indicated that searching behaviour within travel domains were open and uncritical in early searching stages. Participants initially began with some general information about the destination and became more specific at further searching stages. Toms et al. (2003) argued that overall the travel search is characterized by a large number of hits returned. The large number of hits can be seen as an advantage for users trying to evaluate specific activities or arrangements.

The studies by Pan and Fesenmaier (2006) and Toms et al. (2003) were considered to be two of the most fruitful studies in the area of online tourism searching behaviour. However, their studies focused on experience within a specific domain as the only mental model used to interpret metaphor context. Both of them ignored the users' knowledge and culture as an important mental model, as shown earlier by Marcus and Gould (2000) and Evers (2001) in section 2.4.3.2. In fact, ignoring the study of the users' cultural impact on tourist online behaviour is not a new conclusion. It was concluded earlier, in section 2.8.5, to be a main defect of tourism and cultural research.

2.9.3 Culture and online searching behaviour research

Consumers' online searching behaviour is revealed as an interesting area to study, especially for the tourism sector. It has been shown in the previous section that online tourism searching behaviour research has focused mainly on the users' experience within similar tourism domains as the only factor affecting the consumers' searching behaviour. The studies ignored the users' culture as an important mental model affecting consumers' searching behaviour within the tourism domain.

In fact, the effect of users' culture on their online searching behaviour is still limited through the literature. Very few studies examined the way culture can affect users' online searching behaviour. One study was done by Iivonen and White (2001) to investigate the difference between Finnish and American Web user searchers. They used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess their adapted searching strategies, which were direct address, subject directory or search engines. Results indicated that different cultural groups use different searching strategies. Finns depend more on search engines and less on subject directories. On the other hand, Americans

are heavy users of the subject directory searching strategy. Neither group use the direct address strategy.

Iivonen and White (2001) focused mainly on the adapted searching strategies through the World Wide Web (direct address, subject directory or search engines). They ignored the way users' search and navigate the content of a specific Web page or domain, in particular, how culture may influence the way users locate information and what exactly the information they are looking for. This can help in identifying the different ways users prefer presentation or visualisation of information on Web interfaces. Moreover, Iivonen and White (2001) did not show how specific cultural variables may or may not contribute to the adopted searching strategy.

This deficiency was overcome by Evers (2001) who stressed the relation between cultural background and the implementation of online searching strategies. Evers claimed that searching strategies adopted by the different users should be used to tailor Web interfaces accordingly. Participants were involved in an observation session to evaluate the interface design of DirectED virtual campus Web site for North American, English, Japanese and Dutch users. Evers also emphasised the way participants preferred different Web content and adopt varied ways to search and navigate the content of Web interfaces. He concluded that due to the masculine nature of Americans, they adopt a very structured approach in their searching and navigating of the information they need. On the other hand, Dutch people's feminine nature stimulates them to depend more on the unstructured approach, randomly navigating the site using their emotions and feelings to evaluate the site. English people seemed to adopt an approach somewhere in the middle.

In addition, Evers (2001) reported that due to the collectivist nature of Japanese participants together with the individualist nature of the searching task, they were unable to adopt a specific searching approach. Therefore, Evers indicates that it would be useful to provide local problem solving support when localising Japanese Web interfaces. According to the content preferred by each cultural group, the Dutch and Japanese demand more detailed information and pictures. Moreover, Evers stated that different cultural groups have different orders of Web navigation. Evers (2001) represents one of the few trials to provide a detailed investigation of how culture may affect the way people navigate and search Web content. However, Evers still mainly depends on Hofstede's model to investigate the cultural effect on the users' searching behaviour.

Culture and searching behaviour is still in its infancy. More research is needed to assess the effect of users' cultural background on their searching behaviour within different domains. This will help to adapt usable local Web interfaces for a targeted cultural group. This research aims to overcome that deficiency in the literature to cover the travel domain and assess how Egyptian users may adopt varied searching behaviour. This will be useful for providing some guidelines to localise friendlier travel Web interfaces for Egyptian consumers.

2.10 Summarizing the literature problems

This chapter identifies some of the major problems encountered through the literature, summarized in sections 2.4.8 and 2.8.5. By reviewing the whole literature, it is clear that the literature underpins the understanding of the cultural effects using existing cultural models such as Hofstede's, Hall's and Schwartz's. Hofstede's model is one of the most applied models in marketing research. As identified earlier, Hofstede's model was mainly built to assess work cultural values. This raises doubts about the applicability of this model for marketing research.

Schwartz's and Hall's models represent other examples of the cultural models adapted through the literature to handle the cultural effect of international consumers. First of all, Schwartz's model provides general cultural dimensions that govern the life values of people from varied countries. Few studies have attempted to validate Schwartz's model through empirical applications. Watson and Wright (2000) argued that Schwartz's work is not applied extensively, especially in a marketing context. Therefore, ease of use and applicability are still in question. This is due to the scattered findings of Schwartz across large number of publications (Okazaki and Mueller, 2007). Each publication focuses on a single dimension of the total number of Schwartz's cultural dimensions. Another thing that prevents research from validating Schwartz's model depends on more accepted model such as Hofstede's. Finally, Hall's model aims to define the cultural context that helps to identify the varied communication patterns across cultures.

Both Hofstede's and Hall's models are used for building frameworks to assess the cultural effect on Web interfaces. As mentioned in the literature, examples of those frameworks are those done by Marcus and Gould (2000) and Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005). These frameworks depend mainly on Hofstede's and Hall's cultural models to determine the cultural dimension of their frameworks. As identified earlier in this section, Hofstede's and Hall's models for the most part did not define the cultural

context of the online consumers' behaviour. Instead, Hofstede's work aimed to capture the working value, and Hall's model identified the cultural values affecting the communication patterns. In other words, Hofstede's and Hall's models fail to determine the cultural factors affecting online consumers' behaviour. This means that Hofstede's and Hall's models are not appropriate for approaching effective Web localisation.

Therefore, the researcher faces the challenge of how to incorporate the cultural values of different international consumers such as travel consumers. These cultural values are necessary to determine which parts of the travel interface are culturally sensitive. One approach for facing this challenge is that provided by Solomon et al. (2006), who criticise using cultural models such as Hofstede's in handling the cultural values of consumers' behaviour. Instead, Solomon et al. (2006) suggested using Meamber and Venkatesh's (2000) ethnoconsumerism approach to determine the unique cultural context of consumers' behaviour. This approach requires doing field work to gather the necessary data needed for capturing the unique cultural dimensions of consumption behaviour across cultures. These data are best analysed using methods such as ethnography and grounded theory. This will help to reach a better and deeper understanding of the cultural variables influencing consumers' behaviour.

From the previous discussion, it can be argued that there is an essential need for a framework that captures the most important cultural variables affecting online consumers' behaviour and product search strategies within specific shopping domains.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Overview

The previous chapter established the need for a framework that captures the cultural values that can be used for adapting local Web interfaces such as in the travel sector. Having such a framework will help in adapting a suitable travel interface for Egyptian consumers. At that stage the researcher faces the challenge of how to construct this framework and to evaluate it. This chapter describes the methodology used for framework construction and validation.

The chapter starts by describing the basic philosophy embraced by this research. This will be followed by choosing the best research methodology that can contribute to building the framework. After that the chapter will describe in detail the two stages encountered by this research: framework construction and evaluation.

3.2 Research philosophy

Positivist and interpretive paradigms represent two opposing beliefs about how valid knowledge may be generated (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The two research philosophies have a useful role in studying consumer behaviour and culture. The positivist approach is more tied to the deductive approach, where the main concern is to verify the hypothesis to establish it as a fact. The main concern of the enquiry is to establish a cause and effect relationship. On the other hand, interpretive approach is more tied to inductive and abductive approaches; where a new theory can be developed through an extensive explanation of the observed data. In the interpretive approach the enquiry seeks continuous analysis, arguments, critique and reanalysis to reach a specific theory or phenomenon. Interpretive philosophy has emerged as an important strand that has the potential to produce deep insights into social phenomena.

The research investigation has an exploratory nature. It seeks how and why to provide an extensive explanation and analysis of the observed data. This calls for an interpretive philosophy which serves best that type of investigation. Rowland (2005) stated that an important shortcoming of positivism is being unable to answer the how or why questions, while the interpretive approach works well at answering both types of question. Furthermore, the research is trying to gain a clear understanding of the Egyptian cultural issues that interfere within the travel interface from the users' point of view. Therefore, there is an essential requirement of a direct interaction with the people

to understand what exactly they mean. In other words, this research aims for a rich knowledge and description of the users' preferences and experience within the travel domain. This will help the researcher to gain an in depth understanding of the phenomena by accessing the meanings participants assign to them.

The interpretive approach once again is a useful philosophy to approach the research investigation through a critical understanding of the users' perceptions and cultural beliefs. Interpretive research is based on the belief that a deeper understanding of a phenomenon is only possible through understanding the interpretations of that phenomenon by those experiencing it. By placing oneself in the context where the phenomenon is occurring and developing interpretations of the phenomenon based on personal experiences, as well as the experiences of those living it, a researcher can develop insights not possible through other methods of analysis. This has been raised by Schwandt (1994, p.118) who argued that an interpretive approach provides a deep insight into "the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it". Similarly, Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991, p.14) argued that "Social process is not captured in hypothetical deductions, covariance and degrees of freedom. Instead, understanding social process involves getting inside the world of those generating it".

The interpretive philosophy has been found to be a useful tool within different areas of marketing research. Interpretivism was adopted to assess consumer behaviour (Szmigin and Foxall, 2000), marketing communication (Yannopoulou and Elliott, 2008), service quality and the consumers' experience (Schembri and Sandberg, 2002). Szmigin and Foxall (2000) argued that the interpretive approach offers a chance to study the phenomena under the consumers' perspective instead of studying them as a part of the physical world. It allows the researcher to adopt his own measurement as an instrument; where the researchers' understanding is driven by their personal experience as a customer instead of variable manipulation. Similarly, Schembri and Sandberg (2002) used interpretive research philosophy to investigate the consumers' experience toward service quality. It was found that the interpretive approach best answers why questions for a new framework and provides fresh in depth understanding of the consumers' experience. Yannopoulou and Elliott (2008) used the interpretive approach to assess how audiences interpret open text and closed text advertising. He concluded that people from different social classes and genders interpret advertising differently. The interpretive approach enabled Yannopoulou and Elliott (2008) to provide some implication for designing marketing communication from the consumers' perspective.

They used the interview as a data gathering tool to reach better understanding of the consumers' interpretive meanings associated with different ads.

The interpretive philosophy has been also applied successfully within information system, human computer interaction and technology adaption research (Winograd and Flores, 1986; Symons, 1991; Walsham, 1993; Walsham, 1995; Zhang and Li, 2004). The studies called for interpretive philosophy within IS and research to recognise the information system as both a social and technical entity. They argued that ignoring the social environment and treating IS as only a technical aspect will lead to misleading results. Winograd and Flores reached the conclusion that a new orientation is needed for IT design, with a social and object unity. Berntsen et al. (2004) argued that an interpretive approach adopted within IT research can help to understand the relationship between people and technology. Similarly Stockdale and Standing (2006) stated that understanding the social context is essential within IT, which is facilitated by the interpretive approach. This means that designers need to adopt social and technical integrative analysis, which can be done through an interpretive analysis of the users' cultural context to present more effective Web interfaces. Zhang and Li (2004) used an interpretive case study to develop a new framework of HCI issues, which recognises the "dynamics and richness of the interaction between human and technology". They argued that using other interpretive research methods such as ethnography and grounded theory would advance the field. This was due to the richness that the interpretive approach provides in describing the complex and dynamic nature of human interaction with technology, task and context.

Additionally, the interpretive approach offers a useful way to study the social world, which looks to explain and analyse consumer behaviour of humans and their groups from a subject's viewpoint (Bryman, 1994). This was due to its ability to explain the extremely complex relation between the individuals themselves, society and culture (Black, 2006). Therefore, adopting an interpretive philosophy will help the researcher to offer a unique insight into the Egyptian cultural context to support the technical designing aspects.

3.3 Choosing the research methodology

Having the research philosophy identified, it is time now to choose a suitable methodology for constructing the research framework. The first requirement was choosing a methodology which enables the construction of an empirical framework that

identified the unique Egyptian culture based on an actual observation of Egyptian travellers' searching behaviour. Another objective of the research framework is to contribute in understanding the cultural presence on Web interfaces such as the travel interface. This means that the methodology chosen should encourage the researcher to gain in depth understanding of tourist behaviour, symbolic and cultural interpretations perceived by Egyptian users. Secondly, the methodology chosen should enable framework construction together with its suitability for building a theory that is grounded in the gathered and analysed data. Finally, the methodology chosen should enable enough flexibility to incorporate the existing cultural research from Web localisation, tourism and consumer behaviour.

After this quick review of the research requirements, the researcher can now go on to select the most suitable methodology. Robson (2002) introduced three main research strategies for qualitative research which are particularly relevant within real world research: case study, grounded theory and ethnographical study. The three strategies have some common characteristics which were stated by Minnis (1985). Firstly, they all share the belief that human behaviour is related to the context in which it occurs. Secondly, they all include field work. Thus, the researcher goes to people within investigation to collect data within its context. Finally, they all lead to an in depth understanding of the investigated phenomena. Despite the shared characteristics between the three research strategies, each of them has its unique characteristics and research abilities. Therefore, reviewing the unique research abilities of each research strategy represents an important step to select the most appropriate one.

Case study is gaining an extensive knowledge about a single case or phenomena. Yin (1994) described case study as "the preferred strategy when how or why question are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomena within some real-life context". Yin (1994, p. 28) states that in case study "theory development prior to the collection of any case study data is an essential step in doing case studies." This makes case study an unsuitable strategy for this research; case study will be only useful in assessing Egyptians' searching behaviour and their Web interface preferences within the travel domain once a framework is established.

Ethnographical study is a methodology that is developed to study human society and culture. Ethnography is used to provide a sociocultural interpretation for the data (Fernández, 2005). LeCompte et al. (1993, pp.2-3) stated that "Ethnographies recreate

for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, crafts, folk knowledge and behaviours of some groups of people". Ethnographic study on its own cannot be used for the theoretical development that can be modelled for understanding Egyptian searching behaviour and travel interface preferences. However, it can still be used once the framework is established for describing Egyptian culture and its effect on consumers' searching behaviour and preferences within the travel domain.

Grounded theory is a suitable methodology for investigating areas with little theoretical development. Minnis (1985) stated that grounded theory is one the strategies used for constructing theories generated from data analysis and interpretation. This makes grounded theory more related to the abductive approach and distinguishes it from most research strategies. Dooley (2002, p.336) argued that it "is generally more useful in the conceptual development phase of theory building than case study research". This makes the grounded theory approach a suitable strategy for theoretical framework construction.

Grounded theory enables developing a theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection. Shaw (2003) argued that the grounded theory methodology is well suited to researchers who are interested in generating findings, or theories, that are directly tied to (or grounded) in the data, which is the case for that study, by which the researcher believes that the theory is grounded in Egyptian users' perception and their Web experience. Additionally, the GT approach allows a degree of flexibility in both the selection of the sample and the analysis of the data, both of which are well suited for the exploration of new topics and new ideas. In summary, GT was found to cover all of the research objectives.

3.4 Grounded theory

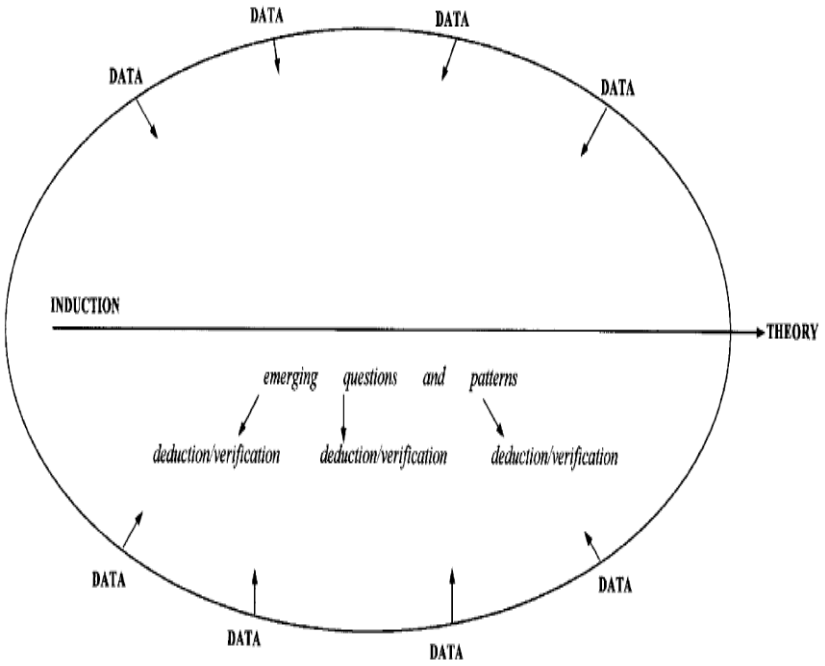
This section covers different aspects about grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory was first presented by Glaser and Strauss in their book, The Discovery of Grounded Theory (1967). Strauss and Corbin (1994) described grounded theory as a set of relationships that offer a plausible explanation of the phenomenon under study, namely, the theory that is grounded in data which are systematically gathered and analysed. The theory develops during the research process itself and is a product of continuous interplay between analysis and data collection (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 1983).

Grounded theory was split into two directions with a main difference in the emphasis on

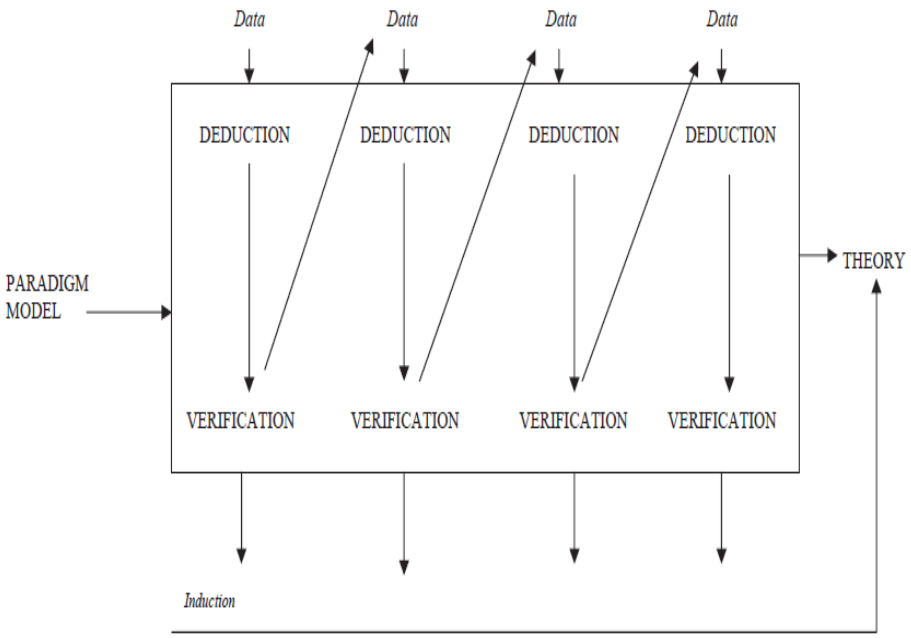
previous knowledge and literature (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). The first one is originally based on the work of Glaser (1978) which is a purely inductive approach. Following this approach the researcher should avoid extensive literature reading to enter the field open minded allowing for the ideas to emerge as a way to a new theory. More focused reading only occurs when the emergent theory is sufficiently developed to allow the literature to be used as additional data (Hickey, 1997). The second is developed by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) who claimed that no one can enter the field completely free from the influence of past experience and reading. Both past experience and literature may be used to stimulate theoretical sensitivity and generate hypotheses.

Data are processed differently in each of Glaser's (1978) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) versions of grounded theory. According to Glaser (1978), inductive ways of dealing with data have been overplayed through the literature, where theory emerges inductively from data (Cutcliffe, 2000). On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin (1990) argued that data should be first tied deductively to the theoretical background generated by the researcher. Those data can be explained via theory by forming hypotheses to be verified. Hypotheses that fail to be explained should be dropped, to reach a theory that best describes the researched phenomena at a later stage.

Heath and Cowley (2004) compared Glaser's and Strauss's versions of data analysis. Heath and Cowley's comparison has been visualized in Figure 3.1.



Glaser (1978, 1992)



Strauss (1987), Strauss and Corbin (1990)

Figure 3.1 - Glaser's and Strauss's versions of data analysis (Heath and Cowley, 2004)

Bryant and Charmaz (2007) argued that the way of data processing provided by Strauss and Corbin (1990) is describing the abductive data analysis approach. Similarly, Charmaz (2006) stated that the particular way of dealing with data in the later version of grounded theory is abductive, because of its inclusion of reasoning about experience that comes from the theoretical explanation to check them through further experience.

Cutcliffe (2000) suggested that decisions about which approach to apply in grounded theory depends on two factors. The first decision relates to when the researcher has little knowledge about the phenomena from the literature, but remains unsure about the most suitable approach. The second decision depends on the importance of previous reading, which may be required by the researcher for clarifying concepts and building an emergent theory. By reviewing the two factors mentioned by Cutcliffe (2000), the researcher decided to use Strauss and Corbin's (1990) abductive approach. This is due to the importance of theoretical sensitivity for building the research framework. This means that the researcher needs to deductively tie the information gathered from data analysis to the theoretical background. Explaining data via theory will help to construct the research theoretical framework.

Charmaz (2006, p.186) defined abduction as: "A type of reasoning that begins by examining data and after scrutiny of these data, entertains all possible explanations for the observed data, and then forms hypotheses to confirm or disconfirm until the researcher arrives at the most plausible interpretation of the observed data". From the previous definition, the abductive approach can be broken into two stages: the first one is deductive where researcher tries to find a theoretical explanation for the data obtained to form the research hypothesis. The second stage is inductive, where it is time for searching for acts that can verify the obtained hypothesis. The two stages are not to be done in isolation, instead the researcher goes backwards and forwards between the data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Dubois and Gadde (2002) argued that the abductive approach is fruitful if the researcher's objective is to discover new things, other variables or other relationships. Additionally, Blaikie (2000) stated that the abductive research strategy provides the greatest scope for studying unrealised phenomena.

Andrade (2009) supported the idea of using previous knowledge, in which he argued that researchers can take into account existing literature or their previous experience. Literature helps the researcher to produce a preliminary theoretical framework that should be regarded as a "sensitizing device" (Klein and Myers, 1999, p. 75). This framework could be modified later according to the actual findings. Avoiding the literature was not an option in this study; conducting the literature review is a formal requirement of any thesis. Without reviewing the relevant literature first, the researcher will not be able to choose the right methodology that comes at a later stage to be the grounded theory. This was stressed by Rowlands (2005) who argued that reviewing

literature is preferable before conducting a grounded theory study. Literature review will help the researcher to make sense of what is happening in the field and guide him/her through the process of data interpretation.

Grounded theory has been successfully used in both culture and HCI research. Lazar, Feng and Hochheiser (2010) introduced and discussed grounded theory as one of the most widely adapted methods in the field of HCI. Sen et al. (2007) adapted grounded theory to do an exploratory study for assessing the influence of cultural background on the "persuasive appeals" of the university homepage. They used semi-structured interviews to investigate what exactly attracts people from different cultures to a specific university homepage. Another example is provided by Swallow et al. (2005); they presented a case study in using the grounded theory within the HCI field.

Grounded theory is considered as a logical methodology to study culture in organisations (Pearse and Kanyangale, 2009), consumer experience (Goulding, 2002) and tourist behaviour (Riely, 1996). Pearse and Kanyangale (2009) argued that grounded theory is presented as an effective tool for cultural research. Grounded theory allows the development of contextual understanding of how people behave and interact within their cultural and social communities.

By nature travel is a complex service involving a large number of decisions. Grounded theory has a flexible nature which helps to describe the complex behaviour associated with the travel service. From that perspective, grounded theory was adapted by Woodside et al. (2004) to provide a thick description of the complex nature of travel service consumption. Grounded theory, with its flexible nature, allows the combination of an emic (self) and etic (researcher) interpretation of leisure travel decisions and tourist behaviour (Woodside et al, 2004; Martin and Woodside, 2008). Martin and Woodside (2008) argued that grounded theory allows them to adapt the story telling approach which enables the tourist to express their own insights and experience. This helps them to best capture the different variables affecting tourist behaviour and decisions.

Grounded theory as a methodological approach is still facing many problems and challenges. One of these challenges is that it can be a time consuming method with lengthy procedures (Hughes and Jones, 2003). Theoretical sampling of data analysis and interpretation can make it difficult to an accurate time scale for the research (Goulding, 2005). Goulding warned the researcher about the problems resulting from the abuse of this method. This includes ignoring the principles of theoretical sampling, inductive

coding and the data interpretation and comparison required for building theoretical relationship. As a result, Strauss and Corbin (1998) argued that this method requires good understanding of the methodology and careful application of the procedures from the researcher. Mullins and Roessier (1998) stated that while the research may be well rigorous, it is hard to claim that it produced a grounded theory in the accepted sense of procedures. Moreover, Goulding (2005) raised the issue that grounded theory is context specific, rather than been developed at a general level. Generalisation of the emerging theory requires extensive application to several contexts, which may take years (Goulding, 2005). However, despite these criticisms, all of the previous arguments provide a rational justification of using grounded theory to construct the research framework. This was due to its researching ability that satisfies all of the research objectives and its importance in the research field whether in HCI, tourism behaviour or cultural research.

3.5 Methodology implementation

Having decided about grounded theory as the research methodology used for constructing the research framework, the next step is to identify the data gathering instrument required for constructing the framework. This data will be used to capture the Egyptian cultural categories that have an effect on their online consumers' behaviour within the travel domain. These categories will be developed through grounded theory's principles, which is open and axial coding.

To proceed with collecting data for the framework construction another important decision needs to be taken, which is to choose an applicable sample set. This section will identify the qualitative primary source used for collecting data as observation and semi-structured interviews. This will be followed by identifying the sample set used to construct the framework.

3.5.1 Data gathering instruments

Selecting the appropriate data instrument is the first decision that needs to be undertaken to construct the research framework. Observation is determined as the first instrument used for collecting the research primary data. Participants will be observed while conducting their online trip search and planning. This will help the researcher to identify the attitudes undertaken by participants while being online travel consumers.

Participants observation will be followed by semi-structured interviews to allow the researcher to perform an interpretive enquiry (Charmaz, 2006), which is required to

build the research theoretical framework. Participant interviews will offer a chance to discuss the participants' experiences, feelings and preferences while being online travel consumers. This will contribute to reflecting the participants' cultural background by digging under the surface of their described experience. Discussing each participant experience will facilitate understanding of the cultural inference within the travel interface.

This section will describe each data collection instrument in detail. This will include each instrument design and administration.

3.5.1.1 Observation

- *Observation design*

Participants will be offered some travel site choices to pick one which they have never used before. Participants will be asked to pretend that they are willing to take a leisure trip and want to collect information about this trip. The selected site will be used for searching and planning an imaginary trip. During the observation session participants will be requested to verbalise their actions and thoughts while searching and planning their trip. This may include expressing any likes, dislikes or difficulties regarding the site they access. All of the observations sessions will be recorded including an audio recording of the participants' actions and thoughts.

- *Observation administration*

For the first two participant groups located at Egyptian universities and IT centres, observation will be conducted online at a convenient time for the participants. Participants will be observed while conducting their online trip search using TeamViewer remote access software. An email will be sent to each participant containing a direct link to install that program before conducting the observation session. This email will also provide some information about the program, how it will be used and how participants can uninstall it.

At the observation time, the researcher will meet each participant online using their preferred Internet voice call software (e.g. Skype, Yahoo, MSN messenger). Participants are required to open the necessary software (TeamViewer) using their personal computers to do the observation session. The software will allow the researchers to access the users' computers for only the 20-minute observation session. The researcher will access this session online using the same software on her own laptop. This software will be used for screen recording and audio recording of the

verbalized actions and thoughts of each participant while searching and planning their trip.

For the third sample group located in the UK, participants will be asked to use the researcher's laptop to conduct an online searching trip. The observation session will be recorded using Video Debut Capture software which will be downloaded on the researcher's laptop. This program will be used for screen recording and audio recording of the verbalized actions and thoughts of each participant while searching and planning their trip. All the three groups' observation records will be written in Arabic.

3.5.1.2 Semi- structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be used as an instrument for constructing the research framework and at a later stage for the framework evaluation

A. Framework construction

- *Interview design*

Interviews are designed to indentify how the Egyptian participants' cultural values and beliefs can affect their attitudes and behaviour while being online travel consumers. This is done to capture the cultural dimensions that might affect the participants' perception, behaviour and preferences on the travel interface. As mentioned earlier in section 3.4, the abductive approach is useful for processing the research data. This means going backwards and forwards between data collection and analysis to verify new emerging categories. In order to so, interviews are structured based on five participant sets'. After finishing each set of five interviews, the researcher will structure the new emerging categories. The new emerging categories from each set will be used to design further interview questions for the next participant set. This will be done to verify the new categories within each new interview set.

- *Interview administration*

For the first two participant groups will be interviewed online using the participants' preferred Internet voice call software (Skype, Yahoo, Msn messenger...). Interviews are expected to run for a minimum of 25 minutes. Each interview will be recorded using the researcher's laptop voice recorder.

For the third sample group located in the UK, participants will be interviewed personally at a location convenient to them. An audio recording will be made of each participant interview using the researcher's mobile voice recorder. The interview

records will be written in Arabic for the three sample groups. This will allow the participants to express their thoughts and experiences fluently.

B. Framework evaluation

Three experts in three different Egyptian travel agencies and Web designing companies are going to be interviewed to evaluate the research framework. Each expert is going to be consulted to evaluate the usefulness of the research framework as an applicable tool in their working field. All the semi-structured interviews will be conducted face-to-face at the experts' working offices at a time convenient to them. The interviews will be recorded using the researcher's mobile phone recorder. All the interviews will be recorded using the experts' Arabic language and an English translation will be done by the researcher. Further details regarding companies' information, location, reasons behind the companies' selection and the interview's main aims are going to be provided later on in the appropriate chapters, which are chapters 6 and 8.

3.5.2 Choosing the sample set

Having identified grounded theory as the research methodology and interviews/observations as the instruments used for collecting data, the next decision that needs to be taken for constructing the research is to determine the appropriate research sample set. This section describes the different aspects related to the research sample set selection.

- *Determination of the sampling frame*

All participants in this research should be Internet users and native local Egyptian speakers who have lived outside Egypt for less than five years. This will help to ensure that the participants have not been over exposed to foreign cultures, which may affect their Internet user behaviour. Additionally, over exposure to foreign cultures may affect the online consumer behaviour of the research participants. Avoiding this over exposure will help to determine the most appropriate cultural values shaping the online consumer behaviour of the Egyptian travel domain users. Participants from both genders and varied ages will be included.

- *Determination of the sampling technique*

In looking at issues of sampling within grounded theory, Charmaz (2006) stated that the theoretical sampling is a grounded theory sampling technique; the researcher uses a targeted group to collect information and categories that help in building his/her theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.201) described the concept of theoretical sampling as "Data

gathering driven by concepts derived from the evolving theory whose purpose is to go to places, people or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions".

Strauss and Corbin (1998), Goulding (2002) and Charmaz (2006) clarify that theoretical sampling within grounded theory is guided by data saturation. This means that the researcher will need to continue gathering data until no new properties emerge, where the data is no longer adding any new categories. Robson (2002) suggests that usually 20-30 interviews are needed to achieve saturation. Guest et al. (2006) studied the adequate sample size for providing the best understanding of the saturation concept. Guest et al. (2006) and Kurzel (1992, pp.31-41) realised that high homogeneity within the sample group would possibly result in lowering the minimum required (n) compared to diverse sample groups. Kurzel (1992, pp.31-41) identified a minimum range of 6-8 interviews in the case of fully homogeneous group. On the other hand, 12 to 20 are used if the sample is highly diverse and/or if the researcher is "trying to achieve maximum variation." Patton (1990) clarified that snowball sampling is a common technique for achieving the maximum variation required for the saturation level.

Guest et al. (2006, p.59) suggest the need for guidelines to support the analysis of the saturation process: "Although the concept of saturation is helpful on a conceptual level, it provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes, prior to data collection, necessary for conducting quality research". Guest et al. (2006) provide a useful way, called "codebook", to guide the identification of the saturation level. Following this, Guest et al. (2006) did a six-interview set; after each set they prepared a coding structure for the six interviews. They used the coding structure to identify the number of new codes for each interview set. They continue to do so until the new interview set resulted in no new categories. The codebook technique will be adapted for this research; the interview set will be five interviews including five participants. After finishing each set the researcher will structure the new emerging categories. The new emerging categories from each set will be used to form further interview questions for the next participant set. This will be done to verify the new categories within the new interview sets. This cycle will be repeated using the snowball sampling technique for at least 20 participants in total, until no new categories are developed.

- *Reaching the sample*

Sample groups will be reached at different Egyptian universities and some IT centres. An email containing the research relevant information and the required participants will

be sent to friends and professionals colleagues working at different Egyptian universities and IT centres located in different Egyptian cities such as Cairo, Alexandria and Tanta. They will be asked to recommend relevant participants within their working environment area. One friend and college generation from each working environment per location will be accepted. The relevant possible participants will be emailed with the research information sheet asking if they are willing to participate. Another sample group will be reached among UK residents who have lived outside Egypt for less than five years. This sample group will be reached based on the researcher's social contacts with some of the Arab communities.

3.6 Data analysis and coding process

Having identified the data gathering instruments and the sample set, it is time now to identify how the data gathered from the research sample set is going to be analysed for the coding process. In order to proceed with data coding and analysis, the researcher is going to start by listening to each participant Arabic record and translating it directly into English. A sample of this transcript will be given to a third party for backward translation to ensure translation accuracy.

Data analysis is going to follow the grounded theory principles using open and axial codes. This will be done for each observation and interview set, where each set consists of five observations and interviews. Based on the researcher's experience, the five sets of interviews and observations revealed enough data to start with open codes. Open codes is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as an analytical process to determine the concepts and their properties as discovered through the data. The recording of each observation and interview session is going to be reviewed for assigning codes to participants' actions and concepts. This assignment will be done using NVIVO software to develop open codes. The researcher will continue in developing the open codes until finishing the five participants of set one.

This will be followed by assessing the open codes to develop axial codes. Axial codes are clarified by Goulding (2002), who describes it as going to achieve a higher level through specifying relationships and determining a core category around the revealed concepts. This will be done by carefully analysing the open codes to specify relations, in order to assign core axial codes. It has been mentioned earlier in section 3.4 that this research adopts the abductive approach provided by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2006) to verify any data categories through further experience. In order to do

so, at the end of each data set analysis, the researcher will identify any new open codes to be verified through further experience provided by the next data set.

The researcher will continue with developing open and axial codes for each interview set. This will be done by going backwards and forward between data collection and analysis to verify any new emerging codes until no new open codes emerge. At that stage, saturation is achieved. This is described by Goulding (2002, p.70), who argued that saturation is achieved when "no new evidence emerges which can inform or underpin the development of a theoretical point". By reaching saturation, the resultant categories can be contextualized against the literature to establish the research theoretical framework. Figure 3.2 visualizes the process of data gathering.

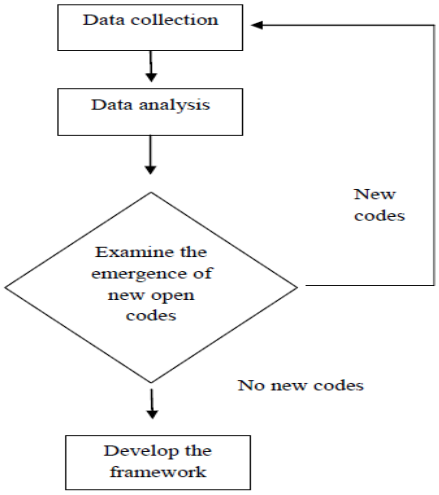


Figure 3.2 - Data gathering process (Author)

3.7 Methodology evaluation

Unlike the positivist approach, which uses quantitative analysis to verify or reject a hypothesis, interpretive research is not quantitatively measured to describe a specific phenomena. There are other ways that can be used to address the grounded theory evaluation. This section will review the different ways used to approach the grounded theory methodology evaluation.

By examining the different evaluation criteria offered by different researchers such as Goulding (2002) and Charmaz (2006), it becomes clear that there is an overlap between the criteria used by those researchers for evaluating the grounded theory research. Based on that, the research adopts some evaluation criteria that can be summarized in the following:

Is the approach taken to build the framework clearly demonstrated? (Charmaz: credibility)

- Does the framework recognise the cultural values of the users while being travel consumers and users of the travel interface? (Charmaz: credibility Goulding: explanation)
- Does the research framework demonstrate the common cultural values of online consumers' behaviour for a specific culture such as Egyptian culture? (Charmaz: resonance. Goulding: explanation)
- Does the research framework provide travel marketers with a structure to select the appropriate online strategies for targeting a specific group of consumers such as Egyptian consumers? (Charmaz: usefulness. Goulding: applicability)
- Does the framework stand as a valuable tool to the travel marketers working in the field? (Patton: external credibility. Charmaz: originality)
- Does the research framework provide marketers with a comparative analysis structure to evaluate the existing travel interfaces? (Charmaz: usefulness. Goulding: applicability)
- Can the research framework provide designers with a list of questions that help in generating the clients' requirements? (Charmaz: usefulness. Goulding: applicability)
- Does the framework stand as a valuable tool to the Web designers working in the field? (Patton: external credibility. Charmaz: originality)

To satisfy the framework evaluation criteria, three approaches have been adopted: audit trail, guidelines for use and expert review.

- **Audit trail**

This criterion is satisfied by chapter 3, which describes the appropriate approach taken to build the framework. In addition, chapter 4 contributes in satisfying this criterion by including data collection, analysis and discussion. This discussion includes a demonstration of how the research framework categories are grounded in both the data collected and previous research. This discussion will reflect how the research framework considers Egyptians' cultural values while being online travel consumers. The previous items cover the validity requirements suggested by Robson (2002) and the credibility mentioned by Charmaz (2006).

- **Guidelines for use**

Chapter 5 will discuss the research framework positioning and how it may provide a unique and different way compared to the existing cultural models in exploring the values affecting online consumers' behaviour within a domain such as the travel sector. Section 5.2 shows how the research framework categories can provide travel site evaluation checklists that can be used for evaluating competitor travel sites. Additionally, Section 5.3 will discuss the relevance of the research framework categories for providing Web designers with a list of questions that can be used to support them while generating their clients' travel interface design requirements.

The first part of chapter 6 will discuss how the research framework categories can be used as a structure for developing the appropriate online marketing strategies to target Egyptian online travel consumers. Therefore, chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate the concept of usefulness provided by Charmaz (2006) and the applicability provided by Goulding (2002).

- **Expert review**

As discussed earlier, the first part of chapter 6 shows how the research framework categories are used to develop the appropriate online marketing strategies for Egyptian travel consumers. The second part of this chapter seeks to evaluate the usefulness of the provided online marketing strategies using travel marketing expert review. Additionally, chapter 8 will evaluate the usefulness of the travel site design generating questions listed in section 5.3 using Web designers' expert review. These expert reviews will demonstrate the concept of usefulness, originality provided by Charmaz (2006), external creditability provided by Patton (2002) as well as applicability provided by Goulding (2002).

- **Case studies**

Using the travel site evaluation checklist provided in section 5.2, chapter 7 discusses the evaluation of three Egyptian local travel sites. These travel sites include a airline site (British Airways), an international travel agent (Thomas Cook) and an Egyptian travel agent (Alforsan Tours). Each site evaluation represents a case study, which demonstrates the concept of usefulness provided by Charmaz (2006) as well as the applicability provided by Goulding (2002).

Table 3.1 summarizes the three approaches used for evaluating the research framework.

	Audit trail	Guidelines for use	Expert review	Case studies
Is the approach taken to build the research framework clearly demonstrated?	✓			
Does the framework recognise the cultural values of the users while being travel consumers and users of the travel interface?	✓			
Does the research framework demonstrate the common values that shape the online consumers' behaviour for a specific culture such as Egyptian culture?	✓			
Does the research framework provide travel marketers with a structure to select the appropriate online strategies for targeting a specific group of consumers such as Egyptian consumers?		✓	✓	
Does the framework stand as a valuable tool to the travel marketers working in the field?			✓	
Does the research framework provide marketers with a comparative analysis structure to evaluate existing travel interfaces?		✓		✓
Can the research framework provide designers with a list of questions that help in generating the clients' requirements?		✓	✓	
Does the framework stand as a valuable tool to the Web designers working in the field?			✓	

Table 3.1 - Approaches for evaluating the E-CAF (adapted from Clark, 2007)

3.8 Summary

This chapter describes the decision process undertaken to select the appropriate methodology to establish the research framework. The chapter starts with setting the interpretive philosophy as the appropriate research paradigm to support the exploratory nature of the research. This includes analysing the cultural values affecting the online behaviour of the travel domain consumers. A view of the different research methodologies has been followed to show the possibilities in supporting the construction of the research framework. This ends with a decision on selecting grounded theory as the appropriate research methodology to build the research framework that captures the cultural values suitable for adapting the travel interface. After selecting grounded theory as the suitable methodology, the chapter reviews other decisions related to methodology implementation such as data gathering instruments and research participants. Observation and semi-structured interviews are selected to collect the research framework primary data. This is followed by discussing the process undertaken to analyse and code the data following grounded theory principles.

The chapter ends by describing the different criteria that can be used to evaluate grounded theory research. Audit trial, guidelines for use, expert review and case study approaches are selected to stratify the research framework evaluation criteria. The next chapter describes how the grounded theory methodology is used to build the research framework.

4. The E-Cultural Adaption Framework

Chapter 2 of this thesis raised the need for a framework that is suitable for adapting travel interfaces. Chapter 3 discusses grounded theory as the suitable methodology for building such a framework. As mentioned earlier in section 3.4, the grounded theory methodology requires going backwards and forwards between data coding and analysis until reaching saturation. This is where no new codes emerge. This chapter describes the process of going backwards and forwards between data gathering and analysis using the grounded theory coding principles. This process resulted in four data sets. The chapter reviews each data set analysis and the resulting open and axial codes. This ends with integrating the categories produced from the open and axial codes of the four data sets to construct the E-CAF. Each theoretical category will then be discussed in detail.

4.1 First data set

The first data set consists of five participants. Four of them are Egyptians who have lived outside Egypt for less than five years and are currently living in the UK and one participant has lived in Egypt for their whole life.

4.1.1 Open codes

The five participants' observation and interviews record sessions are reviewed to extract the common participants' actions and comments. These actions and comments are identified and assigned to open codes using the NVIVO software. For example, during the observation session participant (P1) gets annoyed with the large amount of text information and he stopped reading it. The user action is assigned to the amount of textual information code. He said "This site views much information; they should consider summarizing it". During the interview session of the same participant (P1), he said "the site used hard words such as explore your trip, find your perfect trip. I suggest using a softer word such as enjoy your trip, find your amazing trip". This is assigned to soft subjective selling impressions code.

The first data set resulted in 58 open codes. The full set of resulting open codes developed from the first set of data is shown in Appendix (A).

4.1.2 Axial codes

Axial codes relates to identifying the relations between open codes to construct core categories or common themes that can be used to group open codes. In this phase of

coding, the researcher carefully examined the relationship between the 58 open codes resulting from the analysis of the first data set as shown in Appendix A. This is done to group open codes into common themes. For example, open codes of internal links to local sites, information consistency and harmony are grouped to a common theme called "Interface group harmony". Relations between the 58 open codes resulting from the analysis of the first data set are examined in a similar way. This resulted in developing 16 core categories or axial codes. The 16 axial codes that are used to group the 58 open codes are shown in Table 4.1.

Axial codes	Open codes
Accurate destination information guidance	• Car rental information • Destination attraction information • Famous food • Flight details • Hotel vacancy dates • Hotel location and distance details • Transportation information
Aesthetics concern	• Less textual information • Coloured links • Colours combination • High contrast colours • Represent destination through images and videos • Varied coloured text • Varied font styles • Warmer interface colours • Bigger link size
Reliability	• Evaluating rank of service quality • Focusing on service uniqueness to select the suitable one
Customer involvement and relations	• Friendly introduction • Soft subjective selling impressions • Avoiding cognitive involvement such as expressing improvement thoughts

Encouraging relation between users	• Facilitating user contact • Memorable photos and videos sharing • Sharing destination comments and views
Family orientation	• Family holidays • Viewing family members attractions • Family trip planning
Group and family themes	• Focus on tradition and culture images • Family themes and pictures
Metaphor usability	• Using tabs for organising similar pieces of information • Exploring windows in new page • Simple search engine • Single page varied tasks using multiple tabs • Exploring information by destination • Using familiar link styles
Interface group harmony	• Information consistency and harmony • Internal links to local sites
Emotional dependency support	• Depending on experienced tourist review • Confirming site experience dependency
Cognitive dependency support	• Experienced suggested thoughts and planned programmes • Experienced gifts ideas
Metaphor clarity	• Avoiding synonymous links • Clearly descriptive link titles • Home page body links • Short screen scrolling • Horizontal information viewing
Spoken words	• Chat with advisor • Oral guide • Oral confidence

Predictability	• Choosing the appropriate timing for email offers
Risk avoidance factors	• Comparative price tools • Offering clearly described and organised package • Providing clear access to customer support • Avoiding registration request for new visitors • Booking security assurance information
Image and video processing	• Depending on pictures for easier mental processing • Picture-based link to indicate functionality • Visual confidence

Table 4.1 - Axial codes resulting from open codes of first data set

4.2 Second data set

The second data set consist of five participants. One of them is an Egyptian who has being lived outside Egypt for less than five years and currently lives in the UK, and the other four participants have lived in Egypt for their whole life.

4.2.1 Open codes

The second data set is analysed to assign open codes using NVIVO software as detailed in Appendix B. In addition to the 58 open codes produced in the first data set, 24 new open codes emerged. The 24 open codes are shown in Table 4.2.

- Avoiding direct feedback evaluation questions
- Avoiding independent expressions
- Avoiding submenus and hidden icons
- Consistent colours combinations
- Contrast between text and background
- Customer call service
- Depending on animation
- Depending on videos for easier mental processing
- Depending on virtual tours for easier mental processing
- Destination background information
- Expressing opinions through friends' recommendations and indirect expressions

▪ Family trip precautions ▪ Identifying countries with similar Arab culture ▪ Important people pictures ▪ Personal direct contacts with customers ▪ Personalized email offers ▪ Phone summary email evidence ▪ Short trip offers ▪ Store locator ▪ Site map for predictable interface content ▪ Social networks for gaining friends and family acceptance and advice ▪ FAQs ▪ Varied information sorting options ▪ Assessing family suitability

Table 4.2 - New open codes from second data set

4.2.2 Axial codes

As mentioned in the previous section, the analysis of the second data set produced 25 open codes; 23 open codes were mapped to the existing axial codes. The two remaining codes required a new axial code. The new axial code was named "Word-of-mouth", which was used to group "avoiding direct customer feedback evaluation questions" and "expressing opinion through friends' recommendation and indirect expressions" open codes. Axial codes resulting from the second data set are shown in Table 4.3.

Axial codes	**Open codes**
Accurate destination information	• Destination background information • Important people pictures
Aesthetics concern	• Consistent colours combinations • Contrast between text and background • Depending on animation
Emotional customer involvement and relations	• Personal direct contact with customers
Family orientations	• Family trip precautions • Assessing family suitability

Group and family themes	• Identifying countries with similar Arab culture
Metaphor usability	• Varied information sorting option
Emotional dependency support	• Avoiding independent expressions • Social networks for gaining friends and family acceptance and advice.
Metaphor clarity	• Avoiding submenus and hidden icons
Spoken words	• Customer call service
Predictability	• Personalized email offers • Site map for predictable interface content
Risk avoidance factors	• Phone summary email evidence • Short trip offers • FAQs • Store locator
Image and video processing	• Depending on videos for easier mental processing • Depending on virtual tours for easier mental processing
Word-of-mouth	• Avoiding direct customer feedback evaluation questions • Expressing opinion through friends' recommendation and indirect expressions.

Table 4.3 - Axial codes resulting from open codes of second data set

4.3 Third data set

The third data set consists of five participants. All of the participants have lived Egypt for their whole life.

4.3.1 Open codes

The third data set is analysed to assign open codes using NVIVO software. This revealed 6 new open codes in addition to the 58 open codes produced in the first data set and the 24 codes produced in the second data set. Samples of some Open Coding are shown in Appendix E and the full set of resultant codes is shown in Appendix C. The 6

new open codes are shown Table 4.4.

▪ Depending on site evaluation provided by experienced existing users ▪ Focus on advance trip plan ▪ Important information printing option ▪ Personalized information filtering tools ▪ Phone booking ▪ Question mark to indicate further clarification of unclear information

Table 4.4 - New open codes from third data set

4.3.2 Axial codes

The new 6 open codes identified for this data set are mapped into the existing axial codes resulted from the first data set analysis as shown in Table 4.5.

Axial codes	**Open codes**
Metaphor usability	• Personalized information filtering tools
Emotional dependency support	• Depending on site evaluation provided by experienced existing users
Risk avoidance factors	• Focus on advance trip plans • Important information printing option • phone booking • Question mark to indicate further clarification of unclear information

Table 4.5 - Axial codes resulting from open codes of third data set

4.4 Fourth data set

The fourth data set consists of five participants. Two of them are Egyptians who have lived outside Egypt for less than five years and currently live in the UK and the other three participants have lived in Egypt for their whole life.

4.4.1 Open codes

The fourth data set is analysed to assign open codes using NVIVO software. This is shown in Appendix D. The open codes resulting from this data set were all covered in the previous data sets.

4.4.2 Axial codes

As there were no new open codes resulting from this data set, no new axial codes were developed.

4.5 Developing the research framework

As the fourth data resulted in no new open codes, this indicates that saturation has been reached, which is visualized in Figure 4.1. By reaching data saturation, the final stage of the grounded theory methodology requires an integration of the categories produced from the open and axial codes into a theoretical framework. At this stage the researcher needs to examine the relations between categories and integrate the provided axial codes using the existing literature. This is what is referred to by Charmaz (2006) as integrating the axial codes to "move your analytical store in a theoretical direction". Similarly, Goulding (2002, p.107) suggests using the existing literature as guidance for developing the theoretical framework to "enhance the theoretical sensitivity".

In this research, the relationships between the produced categories are examined using the existing literature to construct the research framework. This is done by grouping the axial codes into theoretical categories as shown in Table 4.6. As a result, six cultural categories are identified for the adaption of a local travel interface. These cultural categories are presented in Table 4.7.

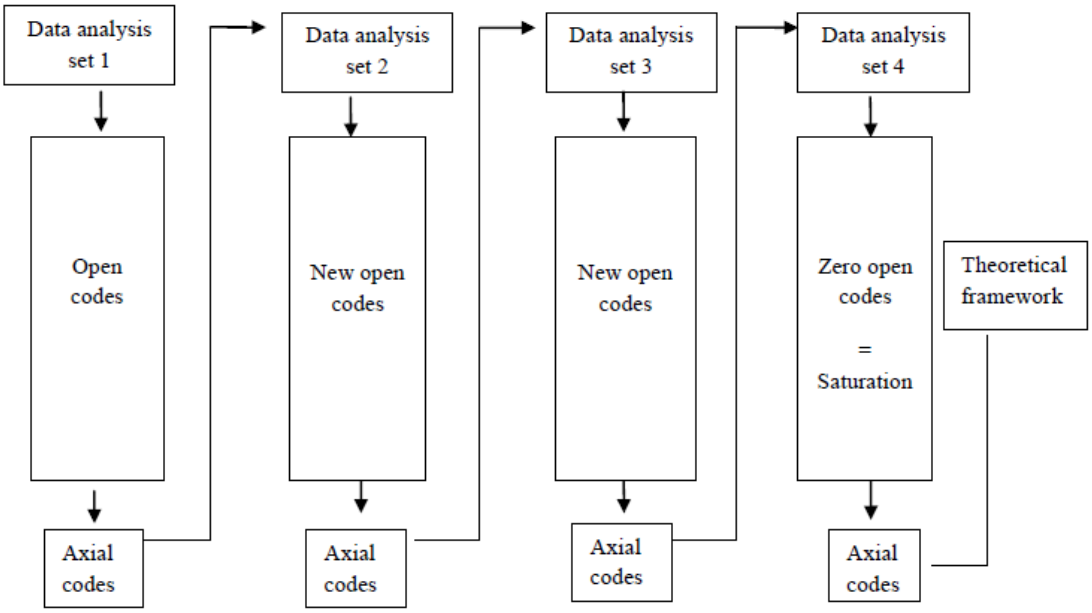


Figure 4.1 - Data analysis process

Theoretical categories	**Axial codes**
High risk concern vs. low risk concern	• Accurate destination information • Reliability • Metaphor usability • Metaphor clarity • Predictability • Risk avoidance factors
Emotional vs. functionality role	• Customer involvement and relations • Encouraging relation between users
Family and group vs. individual role	• Family orientations • Group and family themes • Interface group harmony
Dependency vs. independence	• Emotional dependency support • Cognitive dependency support
Image vs. lexical context role	• Image and video processing • Aesthetics concern
Oral communication vs. written communication	• Spoken word • Word-of-mouth

Table - 4.6 Axial codes grouping

Cultural categories
High risk concern vs. low risk concern
Emotional vs. functionality role
Family and group vs. individual role
Dependency vs. independence
Image vs. lexical context role
Oral communication vs. written communication

Table 4.7 - Cultural adaption categories

4.5.1 High risk concern vs. low risk concern

An adaption of a local travel interface should consider the consumers' risk concerns. This category is one of the most important factors considered through the literature for interface localisation. Risk concern has been used through the literature to demonstrate the influence on local Web interfaces. This influence is shown through different variables. One of them is providing users who show high level of risk concern with accurate information. This is stressed by Reisinger and Turner (1999) as an important factor that is respected by travel consumers. They used Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension to describe the travel consumers' need within some cultural groups for accurate trip information. Reisinger and Turner mentioned that accurate information should be combined with reliable information on the travel interface to minimise the consumers' risk concerns. Similarly, Mitchell and Vassos's (1997) research revealed Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension as an important cultural factor for describing the effect of risk perception on tourist consumers' behaviour. This was emphasised by the research participants, who showed high risk concerns. They expressed a demand for accurate information about the required destination, such as destination attraction information, destination background, car rental, destination famous food, transportations, hotel location and vacancy dates.

Destination attraction and hotel location details are both highly demanded information for Egyptian consumers. This was expressed clearly by P4, who described the information provided by the travel site: "the information presented on the site is more than enough, there is a lot of information about each destination attraction and hotels". Participants want to view the hotel location area in detail as mentioned by P9, who stated that "The site lacks some information, such as the hotel location, if it is near to city centre, airport, attractions and parks, and how far the hotel is from all of these"

Participant P1 thinks that there was missing information on the travel site, he said "there was no clear access to view each destination's main attractions". Other participants, such as P2, were annoyed, saying "it is very annoying, how come a tourist site does not present a list of different destinations and attractions on their page? They should be easily accessible at first glance". The same participants repeated her concern about not finding destination attraction by saying that "it was really unexpected not to find information about the main destination attraction". Similarly, participant P3 was disappointed by not finding information about Greece's main attractions.

In analysing the results of this research, it becomes clear that information reliability can

minimise the risk concerns of the travel consumers. The research participants developed two main factors to express the reliability of the travel site information. This is the information provided to evaluate the rank of each service quality (P7: "the site offers a clear rank of all the hotels, number of stars, this will help me to evaluate the hotel service quality", P8 describes one of his searching actions as "I view each hotel's full service list and the hotel rank or number of stars") and the information mentioned to describe the service uniqueness in detail (P3: "it is very nice that they allow you to view each hotel's unique service to make the best choice, you can compare all and select the one that suits you")

Clear metaphor is another factor that has been demonstrated through the literature to adapt a local interface for consumers with high risk concern. This is expressed by P7, who mentioned that "I usually do not like any hidden icons; I prefer everything to be in front of my eyes. This makes everything clear and easily accessible without getting lost on the site due to hidden icons". Similarly, P10 finds it easy to navigate a travel site using a horizontal bar with no hidden menus. He said "it was easy to navigate and browse this site as it starts with a clear home page with a horizontal bar. The bars should not have any hidden submenus. It is difficult to deal with hidden submenus; you cannot easily view all the available menus at a glance"

The risk concern surrounding the hidden information resulted in preferring short screen scrolling by the research participants. Short screen scrolling allows the research participants to locate most of the required information easily. Besides, the ability to view most of the site information with short screen scrolling helps to minimise the participants' risk concerns. P2 expresses this risk concern by saying "When I need to scroll the page down this means that the information is outside my field of vision". Getting the information within the participants' visual range helps to eliminate their risk concern. The analysis of the research results revealed that the participants believe that the travel interface horizontal orientation enables them to catch most of the information presented on the site. For example, P16 stated that "all the links are viewed in a horizontal order which is easier for me to deal with compared to a vertical one. The vertical link order requires much scrolling and makes it difficult to realise the entire link easily".

Based on Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005), clear metaphor can be achieved by ensuring a users' "guided navigation". This is facilitated by using "well-displayed links". This is demonstrated by the analysis of these research results. The analysis of the research

results indicated that the travel online consumers with high risk concern defined a well displayed link as one that avoids synonymous titles (P2: was confused between "city breaks" and "holidays" links. He said "these two link titles have a quite similar meaning, this is a little bit confusing, based on my opinion both of them are describing holidays") and at the same time provides clearly descriptive titles (P4: "some sites tend to confuse you, as you keep accessing many links to find what you want, the link title is not describing the real information under that link. P1: "look with me at this site home page, the link is saying "summer vacation discounts," but how much is the discount? Is this discount offered for all the destinations? The site mentions 40% discount, but is that discount on a package trip or only if you are booking a flight and hotel? The link titles on that site are not clear at all".

Marcus and Gould (2000) realised the importance of following a user's mentally clear path for the information presented on the Web interfaces (Marcus and Gould, 2000). This path was determined by the analysis of these research results as exploring the travel interface information using the required destination. This was shown by all the participants except P9 during their observation session, when they started by selecting a specific destination to explore all its related information. P9 shows a different behaviour compared to all the other participants. He started his search by using the flights and hotels search engine provide by the site. This unique behaviour shown by P9 was due to using travel sites for more than ten years. This makes him more familiar with the travel sites' searching and information exploring techniques.

According to Marcus and Gould (2000), using familiar metal models helps to reduce the system errors for the users with high uncertainty avoidance culture. From the analysis of these research results, it is clear that Egyptian users are mentally translating coloured underlined text as links. This was shown by P13 and P11, who complained that some words on the travel site are written in different colours; this misleads here by expecting they were links, which is not the case.

Researchers such as Marcus and Gould (2000) and Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) stated that guided navigation is another factor that contributes to system errors reduction, which is necessary for users with high uncertainty avoidance culture. This can be done by using the appropriate tools to facilitate the move through the mental model (Marcus and Gould, 2000). These tools are identified by the travel online consumers with high risk concern as a simple search engine (P4: "searching is very complex, many things need to be identified for performing the searching process. I prefer the typical simple

search engine", personalized information filtering tool (P13: "there are many things you should determine to perform the search; this is very complicated. Instead the site may use a simple search and then allow to provide the users with an option to limit the viewed search based on price or hotel rank"), varied sorting options (P7, P10 and P12 were glad to be able to sort the travel site information based on lowest price or hotel stars), using tabs for organising similar pieces of information (P5: "the site provides well organised hotel information; they use different tabs to show different relevant information such as hotel location, map and pictures"), exploring windows in new pages (P7: "I think it will be much easier to deal with new pages for new information") and finally single page varied task using multiple tabs (P4: "The site also allowed me to perform many tasks in the same page. This means I can view the destination attraction and search for the best suitable hotel in the same page; this saves time and effort, you do not have to access many pages for performing multiple functions or viewing varied information")

Marcus and Gould (2000) realised that one important aspect for adapting a local interface for users with high uncertainty avoidance culture is considering expected results for the user' action. This is confirmed by Cho (2006), who argued that travel consumers with high uncertainty avoidance culture seek "predictability". The research results confirmed predictability enhancement as an important factor for travel online consumers with high risk concerns. The ability to predict or forecast the travel interface contents helps to minimise the consumers' risk concern and enhances the users' involvement. The travel interface can adapt predictability for users with high risk concern by using a site map (P10: "The site needs to consider providing a link for the site map; a site map is easier to locate information and saves much time"), enabling the users to select the suitable time for receiving email offers (P3: "Timing is very important for receiving offers; not all times are suitable for receiving trip offers, so if you can choose the best time it will be great. In that case I think it will be interesting to register with this site"), personalizing the email offers (P10: "If I am able to personalise my email offer content based on the countries I wish to go to, those emails will be useful for me. I will like to receive and read those emails")

Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) identified some general factors that can be considered for adapting local Web interfaces for users with high uncertainty avoidance culture. These are providing customer service support, FAQs and mentioning local stores' contact details. The research result analysis confirmed those factors as important risk avoidance

factors to adapt a travel interface for users with high risk concern. In this research, participants disagree about the most important factor that contributes in avoiding risk on the travel sites. The first group of participants (P12, P14, P15, P16, and P17) stated that it is very important for the travel interface to show information about local branches and provide a phone booking number. On the other hand, the second group of participants (P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P11, and P19) argued that travel sites should provide users with information about booking security assurance as an important aspect.

The reason behind this disagreement can be put down to the different level of risk concern expressed by each group of participants. The first participant group, who had lived their whole life in Egypt, expressed a higher level of risk concern compared to the second group of participants, who were Egyptians currently living in the UK. The first group found it too risky to book online, so they preferred to use a local branch or phone for booking. The second group was willing to book online if they could access some information about online security booking. It seems that the second group was influenced by the behaviour of English tourists, who are more comfortable to book their trip online. However, the second group of participants still had their risk concerns about booking online. These risk concerns can be minimized by adapting a local interface to express the available booking security options.

Despite the previous disagreement between the research participants, they still have a similar need for general factors to reduce their risk concerns associated with using travel sites. Research participants show concerns about registration with new travel sites (P3: “I should get familiar with the site first and if I find it useful sure I will register. Otherwise I will have to deal with many bulk mails which are annoying”). Therefore, it is very important to avoid any registration requirements for enabling the travel consumers to search the site.

Travel consumers with high uncertainty avoidance culture prefer to manage all their trip planning and booking in advance (Money and Crotts, 2003; Litivin et al., 2004). This is confirmed by the research participants. For example, P13 complained about the site using a link title called “last second deals” by saying “this link does not sound good, especially for a travelling site. For travelling you cannot leave it until the last second; everything needs to be planned in advance; it is very risky to leave things until the last minute”. In addition, travel consumers with high uncertainty avoidance culture prefer safe trips, short trips and to avoid any unfamiliarity (Pizam and Jeong, 1996; Wong and Lau, 2001). In fact, well organised trip packages avoiding unfamiliarity together with

short trips are shown to be safer by the research participants. P5 argued that "Going to a new place is quite risky so it is much better and less expensive to plan a short trip. You can enjoy a short period if the trip is well organised by the travel agent". In addition, providing users with trip precautions helps to avoid the risk associated with unfamiliarity, especially when travelling with family members. For example, P4 found it useful to view some family trip precautions listed by the travel site: "they list some precautions if you are travelling with your family".

Participants express their need for FAQs and other important risk avoidance factors when visiting new travel sites. For example, P9 complained about the site he used saying: "there should be clear access to customer support and help on the home page". P8, P9 and P10 expressed a clear demand for an FAQs link on the travel site home page by saying "They may need to add a clear access for FAQs within the home page so you can depend on it".

Other risk avoidance factors that have been revealed by the research participants are using question mark signs on the site for further clarification of unclear information (P14: "It is not clear at all what they meant by the trip supplement added cost. They even did not place a question mark which should be placed beside any unclear information for further clarification. I think they should consider that issue to make the information cost clearer") and providing users with a printing option for the important information (P12: "I would like to print a guide copy for all the information regarding hotel location, destination, transportation and trip programme").

In fact, risk concern is identified through the literature as one of the most influential cultural factors affecting tourist consumption behaviour. Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension clearly describes the risk concerns that are used by researchers such as Money and Crotts (2003), Litvin et al. (2004) and Mitchell and Vassos (1997) to describe the cultural affect on tourist consumption behaviour. However, these researchers limit the cultural effect that appears to influence tourism consumption patterns on uncertainty avoidance.

The codes accurate destination information, reliable information, metaphor clarity, predictability, metaphor usability that matches the users' mental model and considering the risk avoidance factors are combined to express the factors that can be used to adapt a travel site for high risk concern consumers.

4.5.2 Emotional vs. functionality role

Some travel consumers are not simply judging the travel site quality based on its functional aspects and the quality of the information provided; they still value the emotional appeal of the site. This is realised by Sigala and Sakellaridis (2004), who investigated the effect of the users' cultural profile on their perception of E-tourism service quality. They argued that some consumers revealed the emotional appeal of the site as an important factor for evaluating the tourism service quality. Similarly, Blocker and Flint (2007) stated that consumer behaviour is highly affected by their emotional values.

The emotional appeal of the travel interface is described by the research participants as encouraging emotional customer involvement and relations. The participants are more comfortable with site information presented using a softer way. This is described by Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005), who use Hall's context model to differentiate between the soft selling approach and the hard selling approach for adapting local Web interfaces. They argued that the soft selling approach is more applicable for high context culture using "subjective impressions" and, to start with, a "greeting from the company". Researchers such as Cho (2006) and Sigala and Sakellaridis (2004) found that femininity as discussed by Hofstede's model can describe cultures that value relations and prefer a little introduction about the service providers. These factors are confirmed by the research participants. For example, P1 complained about the travel site by saying "The site used hard words such as 'explore your trip', 'find your prefect trip'. I suggest using a softer word such as enjoy your trip, find your amazing trip. In addition, they used expressions such as learn how to pay; these expressions are more professional as if you are dealing with an economic expert. It is better to start with more general and friendly words". Similarly, P5 stated that "Many offers and deals are located on the home page; I think it is better if they start with a little bit about themselves as an introduction"

In fact, the research participants seem to be more comfortable with travel sites that depend on an emotional involvement approaches to engage their users. Besides their preferring of soft words and a friendly introduction from the travel site, they refuse any cognitive involvement approach used by the travel sites such as expressing the users' opinion. This was reflected by P5 who complained about using a link called "help us to improve" by saying "I will never access this link; why they should involve customers in that issue? They should not bother any of their customers with that issue. They should

have a specific department that helps them to improve instead of depending on their customers". Instead, travel consumers value the involvement in a direct relation with customer service staff. Reisinger and Turner (1999) applied Hofstede's cultural model to study travel consumers' behaviour. Their study revealed that tourists with a feminine culture will focus on building warm and friendly relations. In fact, Arab consumers, including Egypt, value personal relations in the communication process (Yasin and Yavas, 2007). This is shown to enhance the emotional involvement with travel consumers. For example, P4 stated that "providing a telephone contact is better, you can then easily call customer service. The phone is friendlier, you can engage in conversation with a real personal, which is warmer"

The research result analysis revealed that participants prefer travel sites that allow users' engagement. This was clearly expressed by P5, who said "I think it would be a good idea if the site provided a chance to post other tourists' experiences, photos. In addition, allowing the chance to contact other tourists through email provides a good chance to contact them personally asking about their own experience". In general, the research participants were found to valued emotion and friendly relations. This culture has previously been described through the literature using Hofstede's feminine dimension.

The axial codes emotional customer involvement and relations and encouraging the emotional relation between users are then combined to reflect the emotional adaption of a travel interface.

4.5.3 Family and group vs. individual role

Consumer behaviour is undertaken based on individual decisions or it can adjusted based on group interest. Weber and Hsee (2000) investigated how the consumers' decision making in some cultures is affected by the group values. Weber and Hsee together with other researchers such as Zhang, 1992 and Yates and Lee, 1996 argued that consumers with group favour culture do not follow a cognitive way of thinking; instead their behaviour is adjusted based on the group interest.

Travel consumers who value group belonging are shown to prefer travelling with group members (Reisinger and Turner, 1999; Cho, 2006; Pizam and Jeong, 1996). Group belonging is described by Hofstede's model, which stated that collectivist culture mainly focuses on group and family interest. This is confirmed through the analysis of the research results; tourism consumers' decisions are found to be guided by their family orientation values. They prefer to go on family holidays (P4: "I love doing everything with my family such as shopping or going to the beach. I really enjoy being

with my family; travelling alone is very boring") and to engage in trip planning with their family members (P6: "I prefer to plan my trip together with my family members, this allows opinion sharing about the best place to visit. We need to agree on a place that satisfies all the family members"). The research participants' decisions are shown to be shaped by the group interest. As a result, they search the travel site for information that helps them to assess the relevance of their decision to family members. This information contains the available family members' attractions to each destination (P3: "I will be interested in checking the different family attractions to make sure that I selected a destination that suits every single member of the family") and the suitability of the selected services to each family member (P10: "It is very good to know if the hotel you are selecting is suitable for children. For example, do they have some entertainment for the children? The site offers very useful information to let you know if the hotel is recommended for couples, families with young children, teenagers or possibly older people").

The research participants are found to be attracted by travel interfaces with family themes. For example, P2 described the pictures that attracted her on a travel interface by saying: "I love pictures of a beach surrounded by buildings and people, they look warm and lovely. It is nice to be with people. I noticed that a lot of tourist sites prefer to place an empty beach picture! The empty beach pictures are unattractive; they reflect a remote place. I would not be interested at all to visit such a place". P7 prefers "pictures that reflect each destination's history, people culture and tradition". In addition, participants show an interest in viewing countries with similar Arab culture. This is reflected by P6, 7, 8 and 10, who like to view "destinations with a closer culture and tradition to Arabs".

In addition to the family themes, the participants are highly demanding of interface group harmony when navigating the travel site. This is expressed through preferences for information harmony and the demand for internal links to local sites. For example, P5, who is working with a Web designer team at the university campus, and is currently engaged in designing a Web site for the university, stated that "One thing the site should care about is trying to ensure that all the information viewed on one page is related. This site views a wide range of information regarding different destinations within one page. This makes me a bit confused. Harmony is one of the important aspects I care about while working on designing a good university site" The local internal links are confirmed by Singh, Zaho and Hu (2003) as a useful tool to adapt Web interfaces for users with high group favour. In the analysis of the research results, internal local links

are shown to enhance the appearance of interface group harmony. Local internal links are demanded by P2, who said "the site may add some links that guide me to detailed information about the required destination". Similarly, P3 was very glad to find an internal official link that guided her to Turkey's main attractions. She commented: "This link is very useful; the site should provide similar links that guide users to each destination's official sites. These links can be accessed to gather all the required information about each destination and its main attractions".

The axial codes family orientation, group and family themes and interface group harmony are gathered into a theoretical category that can be used to describe the adaption of a travel interface for consumers who show group belonging values.

4.5.4 Dependency vs. independence

Dependency related cognition is found to highly affect the dependent person's behaviour. However, most of the previous literature studying the dependent personality effect investigates from the social and clinical psychology fields (Bornstein, 1993).

Dependency culture was identified early on by Browne (2006) as "a set of values and beliefs and a way of life, centred on dependence on others". The dependency culture can exist within different countries due to the educational system, which plays a significant role in shaping the child's dependency behaviour (Drenth et al., 1998). Kirby (2000) argued that dependence culture in some countries can refer to being dependent on families for a long time. This can be seen within most Arab countries, including Egypt, which are characterized by a collectivist culture. People in those countries have strong group relations and show a high dependence on families. Other researchers, such as Zaheer and Zaheer (1997) and De Luque and Sommer (2000) stated that as a result of belonging to a high uncertainty avoidance culture, which needs more information, this culture expresses a high dependency of thought. This means that due to demanding more information some cultures show more cognitive dependency of thought. Consumers belonging to those cultures need continuous cognitive support by offering them some ideas and advice.

In the analysis of the research results, the consumers' cognitive dependency of thought is revealed as an important factor for adapting the travel interface. It has been recognized as an important factor affecting the consumers' behaviour. The research participants express a need for being cognitively supported on the travel interface. They need to be provided with trip ideas, planned trip programmes and gift ideas. For example, P3 argued that "I should be able to depend on the travel site for planning a

nice trip programme, especially a good one for a family trip". Similarly, P1 stated that "I search the travel site for some suggested ideas about the best thing to buy as a gift from each country".

In addition to the cognitive dependency expressed by the research participants, they need to be emotionally supported on the travel interface. Rentzel (1990) stated that the emotional dependency "occurs when the ongoing presence and nurturing of another is believed to be necessary for personal security". The research result analysis revealed that the participants always depend on the outside world to get a good feeling instead of inside. They always feel comfortable to follow experienced people, family or friends to gain an approval or conformity support. This was clear through the participant demand to confirm their choices by viewing experienced tourist reviews (P5: "I like to check other tourist reviews and comments regarding each destination's attractions. I usually depend on these comments to evaluate and assess the most suitable places for me to visit"), experienced users' evaluation of the travel site service (P14: "It would be helpful if the site provided me with some existing customer comments to evaluate the site's service quality"). Participants always need to be emotionally supported by confirming that they are using the right service. Using social networks on travel sites is shown to be a good way for gaining family acceptance and support. For example, P6 found it very useful to use social networks; she commented "Using social networks allows users to connect with their friends, ask them about their best trip and their recommended destination or even their opinion about a certain destination". Furthermore, the independent expressions used on the travel interface are refused by the research participants. Those expressions annoy them as it contradicts their emotional dependency values. Expressions and words used on the travel interface need to reflect the consumers' emotional support. For example, P6 argued that "The site used bad link titles such as 'plan your trip'; this means hard effort needs to be done while I need to enjoy and relax. Instead, the site can adapt other link titles such as 'here are enjoyable suggested activities or attraction for your trip". In fact, all the travel interface content should be integrated to offer emotional support for the consumers.

The axial codes cognitive dependency and emotional dependency are combined into a common theoretical category called dependency vs. independence. The theoretical category reflects the axial codes that can be used for adapting a travel interface for consumers with high dependency culture.

4.5.5 Image vs. lexical context role

One challenge facing international marketing is effectively adapting messages to suit the local consumers' needs (Fill, 2005). On an interactive medium such as Web sites, messages are presented through the interface context. This presentation should vary based on the needs of the local consumers. Rayport and Jaworski (2001) stated that the Web interface context can be aesthetically or functionally dominant. Message presentation represents an important factor for effectively adapting a local travel interface. Zaharna (1995) argued that Arab consumers, including those in Egypt, are found to focus more on symbolism rather than the analytical content of the message. Using Hall's context model, Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) stated that high context culture focuses on aesthetic details such as colour and images as an important aspect of adapting local Web interfaces.

In the analysis of these research results, it is clear that participants give much attention to the travel interface's aesthetic details rather than the interface textual information. For example, P3 stated that "Unfortunately, this site has a large amount of text; I will never read all of that information. Why not replace that text with some more attractive pictures to view the destination". Image is an important component for an aesthetically-oriented travel interface. Travel consumers depend on images to view attractive places at each destination instead of depending on textual information. In the analysis of the research results, it is clear that using images on travel interfaces is one of the highly demanded requirements for travel consumers. For example, P2 said: "I will never think of visiting a country without viewing many pictures of it". Similarly P3 stated: "This site offers a nice range of pictures of Turkey; this is an attractive way to view each city in Turkey".

A second important component of aesthetically-oriented travel interfaces is multimedia and animation (Rayport and Jaworski, 2001). This is confirmed by the research participants who considered animation to be an important aspect of attractive travel interfaces. For example, P6 stated that: "The site is not attractive at all; they need more pictures with some audio and flashing animation. This will make the site more attractive and enjoyable while using it". Similarly P8 said: "I think the site may need to consider a more attractive way of viewing pictures such as a slide show instead of depending on static pictures, which are not attractive at all".

The third important component of an aesthetically-oriented interface is the interface colour. Cultures have different preferences and meanings towards colours (Barber and

Barber, 2001). Participants are much comfortable with warmer travel interface colours such as red, yellow and orange (P8: “The pink colour used on this site is very bright; it annoyed me while was browsing the site. The site should adopt warmer colours that are comfortable for the eyes such as yellow or red”). Participants define an attractive travel interface as one using different colour combinations with high contrast (P5: “I like the colours used by the site; they used a good combination of yellow and orange. They adopt a good contrast between orange and yellow. Those colours are really attractive and make the eye much more comfortable”) and adapt a good contrast between text and background (P7: “The site should ensure a high contrast between the colour used to write the text and the page background. For example, the site I accessed through Google has a black background with white text which is good”). In addition, participants found it attractive to navigate travel sites using more coloured links and text (P10: “Depending on different colours for text and links will help me to easily view the site”).

A final aesthetic concern that has been revealed by the travel consumers is the font of text used on the travel interface and link sizes. The research participants are shown to be much more comfortable with varied text styles (P7: “The text font should be clear with varies sizes and colours to make it more realizable”) and bigger link sizes (P4: “I liked the way they organise this site’s pages as it depends on bigger picture links which are located within the visual field within the main page body”, P5: “The site should depend on bigger links to make it more realisable”).

The research result analysis revealed that travel consumers have to deal with written and visual information on travel interfaces. The research participants can mentally process the travel interface visual elements such as images, virtual tours and videos easier than written content. For example, P3 argued that: “Pictures are easy to deal with instead of depending on boring text. Usually much text information is missed but for pictures each single detail is easily recognisable and you rarely forget it”. In addition, the participants find it easier to deal with visual components of the travel interface such as picture links instead of text links. This is reflected by P5, who argued that “text links titles are sometimes misleading; the title is not always clearly describing the information found under each link. On the other hand, image links allow a clear presentation of the link content, it is usually easier to identify and follow”. Using visual presentation for the interface metaphor is termed by Schneiderman (1998) the direct manipulation interaction style of Web interface. In fact, the research result analysis revealed that the participants have a visual mentality that is used for interpreting the travel interface

content.

The axial codes aesthetics concern, image and video processing are combined into a theoretical category called image vs. lexical context. This can be used to adapt a travel interface for consumers who value image interface context.

4.5.6 Oral communication vs. written communication

Communicating effectively with travel consumers is an important aspect to consider on travel interfaces. Online travel marketers have to decide about the suitable communication strategy to adapt on their travel interface. This may range from an oral to a written communicational strategy. Many researchers, such as Yasin and Yavas (2007), Zaharna (1995) and Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) applied Hall's context model to describe the preferred communicational strategy for different cultures. They argued that high context culture prefers oral communication and spoken words. Yasin and Yavas (2007) argued that the Arab culture, including Egypt, shows a preference for oral and face-to-face communication over written communication. Similarly, Zaharna (1995) defined the Arab culture as an oral dominant communication culture. This is confirmed by the research participants, who value the spoken word in the communication process.

The research participants expressed their preference for the spoken word through their dependence on customer call services and online chat service support, and their confidence in the spoken word. For example, P14 stated that: "I really get annoyed if I cannot find a customer service contact number or online chat support on the site, this stops me from using the site. A chat service or customer phone contact provides a trustworthy way to communicate with customer service; you can speak with a real person and have a conversation until you are completely satisfied". In addition, the research participants find it easy and useful to be provided with oral guides instead of written information. For example, P3, 8, 6, 5 12 and10 stated that it would be a good idea to use an agent video on the travel interface that describes each destination's information instead of depending on written information.

Travel consumers who value oral communication are expected to engage in word-of-mouth behaviour. Kacen and Lee (2002) argued that consumers who prefer oral communication refuse to express their negative feedback and are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth behaviour to express their negative feedback. In the research results analysis, it is clear that the participants refuse to engage in responding to any direct feedback evaluation questions (P9: "I think they should consider that they will never get their customers' real opinion or experience by directly asking them to fill out a survey

or by writing their comments"), and are more likely to express their opinions using online word-of-mouth tools such as a recommend to a friend link (P10: "Usually people in our community prefer to transfer any negative experience to their family and friends trying to make them avoid having a similar one", P8 "This is a very nice offer; I may use the above link to text that page to a friend").

The axial codes spoken word and word-of-mouth are combined under a theoretical category called oral communication vs. written communication. This theoretical category describes the axial codes that can be used to adapt a travel interface for consumers who value oral communication.

4.6 Visualizing the E-CAF

The six cultural adaption categories described above will henceforth be called the E-Cultural Adaption Framework or "E-CAF". A visual representation of E-CAF is shown in Figure 4.2.

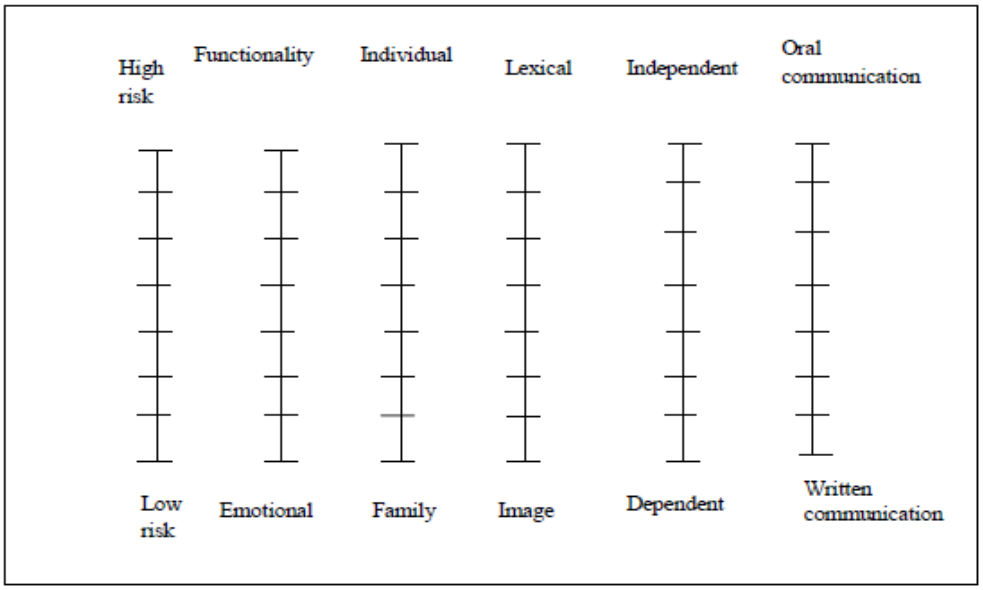


Figure 4.2 - The E-Cultural Adaption Framework (E-CAF)

The visual representation of E-CAF shows a vertical continuum for each cultural category. The horizontal bars shown in each cultural category continuum are a representation of the varied levels of each cultural category that can exist within different countries. For example, the first continuum represents culture with very low risk concern going vertically to cultures with very high risk concern. Varied cultures can lie between the very low and very high risk concern cultures depending on the level of

risk concern shown in each culture. The vertical bars in the high risk concern vs. low risk concern continuum are reflecting the different level of risk concern that can be shown in countries with varied cultures.

Each cultural category continuum can be used to place countries with varied cultures depending on the different level of cultural values existing within each country. This means that the E-CAF can be used to visualise the cultural values of each country, and prepare what is called an E-Cultural adaption line (E-CAL) that can be used as a reference for adapting an effective consumers' local interface. The E-CAF is used to construct the E-CAL for the Egyptian culture as shown in Figure 4.3.

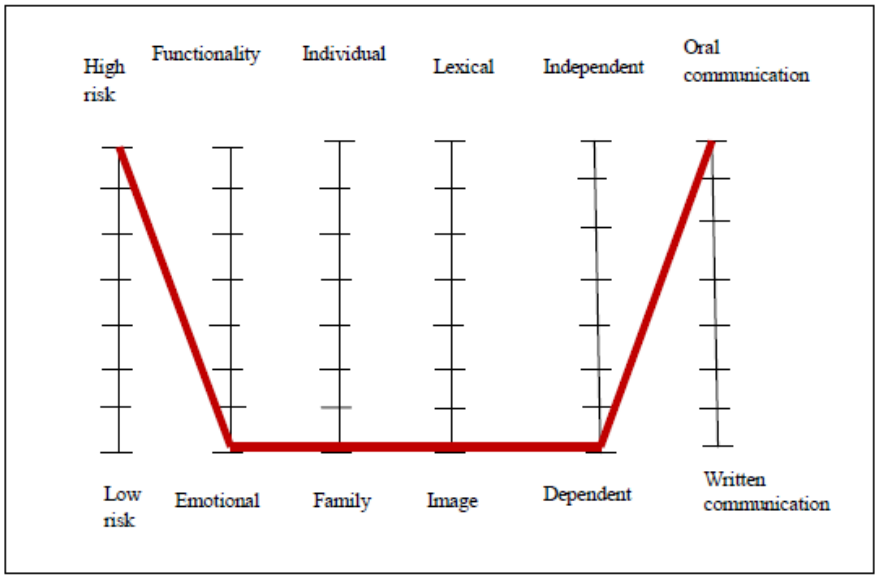


Figure 4.3 - The Egyptian E-Cultural Adaption Line (E-CAL)

Therefore, the E-CAL for the Egyptian culture can be used to adapt a better local interface such as the travel interface for Egyptian consumers. In fact, the E-CAF visual representation provides a useful tool to construct E-CAL for counties with different cultures, and thus provides a basis for comparing and contrasting the consumer culture of countries with varied cultural background.

4.7 E-CAF and the existing cultural models

At first glance, the research result analysis reveals that there is an overlap between three of the E-CAF categories and Hofstede's cultural model. These are high risk concern vs. low risk concern, emotional vs. functionality, family and group vs. individual role that overlap with Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance, masculine vs. feminine and collectivism

vs. individualistic dimensions respectively. Similarly, Hall's context model has been used throughout the literature to describe oral communication and aesthetic cultural preferences.

In fact, the literature revealed similar overlap between Hofstede's model and some of the later existing cultural models. For example, the overlap that emerges between Hofstede's and Schwartz's (1994) cultural model. Wu et al. (2008) mentions that there is an overlap between Hofstede's and Schwartz's model in four dimensions, which are related both conceptually and empirically. According to Wu et al., the four dimensions are: "mastery (corresponding to masculinity, the converse of femininity); conservatism (corresponding to collectivism, the converse of individualism); and both intellectual and affective autonomy (corresponding to individualism, the converse of collectivism)". Another example is the overlap between Hofstede's more recent cultural model which is the global model that was adapted by House et al. (2004). Okazaki and Mueller (2007) argued that with regard to the global nine dimensions model, the first six dimensions were drawn based on Hofstede's work.

Despite the overlaps that exist between the existing cultural model and the E-CAF, the existing cultural models are not mainly constructed to understand and explain consumers' behaviour within different cultures. Hofstede's model is more specific to work values across cultures; Hall's work identifies the cultural values affecting communication patterns, and finally Schwartz's work is more about capturing general cultural values of varied nations across different countries. In contrast, the theoretical cultural categories of the E-CAF provide a basis for capturing the cultural values of online consumers' behaviour.

In addition, the E-CAF offers a unique cultural category, dependency vs. independence, which reveals an impact on online consumers' behaviour. Despite the fact that the dependent vs. independent values is not new to the social and psychology field, it is a new to the cultural understanding of online consumers' behaviour.

4.8 Summary

This chapter described the construction of the E-CAF for adapting the local travel interfaces. This was done through four data sets, where each set consisted of five participants. Saturation was reached after interviewing 20 participants. Data were coded using grounded theory principles. This resulted in developing six theoretical categories for adapting local Web interfaces, such as travel sites. Three of the E-CAF dimensions

overlap with Hofstede's and Hall's cultural model such as high risk concern vs. low risk concern, emotional vs. functionality, family and group vs. individual role that overlap with Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance, masculine vs. feminine and collectivism vs. individualistic dimensions respectively. However, the E-CAF provided in-depth understanding of the cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour. In addition, the E-CAF offers the dependent vs. independent dimension, which helps to understand the dependent vs. independent cultural values of online consumers' behaviour.

At the end of this chapter, the E-CAF dimensions were visualized and used to construct the E-CAL for Egypt. The E-CAF visualization offered a good tool for constructing and comparing the E-CAL for various cultural groups, and thus provides an overview for the cultural values of each targeted group of users. The E-CAL works as a good basis for adapting better local Web interfaces. The next chapter will discuss the issues related to the E-CAF positioning. This includes reviewing guidelines for using the E-CAF for adapting a local travel interface.

5. Positioning the E-CAF

Chapter 2 of this thesis raised the need for a suitable framework for adapting local Web interfaces, such as travel interfaces, and chapter 3 described the construction of such a framework. This chapter will focus on the issues related to how the E-CAF can be used to adapt a local travel interface for Egyptian consumers.

5.1 Developing online travel marketing strategies

Marketers have taught to respect consumers' culture and take it into account when marketing offline or online. Chaffey et al. (2006) and Chaston (2001) stated that marketers need to consider some strategic decisions before marketing on the Web. This includes analysing customers' culture which will result in buying behaviour variation. Chaston (2001) asked marketers to carefully monitor their customers' culture which determines their attitudes, values and preferences. He identified colour and language as two main variables of any culture. Similarly, Sterne (1999) suggested adapting language and colours on Web to imply meanings within different cultures. It is clear that language has received a great deal of attention in the literature as an important variable of customers' culture. However, Sheth et al. (2001) argued that cultural barriers still remain even with local language translation of Web pages. He stated that Web translation is not enough when adapting a local interface. Marketers need to go beyond that to avoid cultural barriers on the Web. This can be done by visiting foreign countries to analyse customers' values and attitudes that may affect their buying behaviour (Sheth et al., 2001). Considering different cultural variables of targeted customers will affect different marketing strategies such as positioning, message delivering and differentiation strategies (Chaffey et al., 2006).

It is clear that the marketing literature respects culture and considers it as an important variable for international marketing. Marketing literature still considers culture as the most challenging aspect when targeting international consumers. Textbooks take a lot of trouble trying to explain how culture is important to determine the effective marketing strategy. However, it is not clear how marketers can incorporate culture to form the appropriate marketing strategy. Textbooks do not offer an appropriate tool or basis to handle different cultural variables. The only solution provided through the literature is using the existing cultural frameworks such as those of Hofstede, Hall and Schwartz. All these frameworks face some problems and challenges as mentioned earlier in this section. Compared to the existing cultural frameworks, the E-CAF addresses this issue

by capturing the unique cultural variables affecting online consumers' behaviour. The E-CAF provides a useful tool for assessing existing online marketing strategies and refining them to pick the most suitable one. This includes branding, communication, message delivering and designing online strategies as shown in Table 5.1. Chapter 6 will discuss in detail how the E-CAF is used to provide both international travel marketers and local Egyptian travel marketers with applicable online marketing strategies for targeting the Egyptian travel consumers. In addition, chapter 6 will evaluate the usefulness of the applied strategies using travel marketers' expert reviews.

Theoretical categories	Applicable online marketing strategies
Emotional vs. functionality role	❖ Focus on building a strong relationship with customers ❖ Adopt soft and friendly selling approaches ❖ Focus on an emotional brand association such as love, humour and warmth ❖ Supports individual interactions, sense of group involvement and friendship formation
Family and group vs. individual role	❖ Focus on group and family members' favour for communicating and promoting your product/service ❖ Communication message should be shaped to reach customers as being part of larger groups
High risk vs. low risk concern	❖ Maintain customer-oriented content. On travel, provide a range of customer-oriented information such as car rental information, destination attraction information, destination background information, famous food, flight details, hotel vacancy dates, hotel location and distance details, transportation information and important people pictures ❖ Follow a logical and consistent structure of information viewing ❖ Maintain a reliable view of information; allow users to view and evaluate different ranges of product/service to select the suitable one ❖ Maintain customized email offers as an approach for adapting a good E-CRM ❖ Enhance your interface with store locator and online booking features to facilitate your trading transactions ❖ Adapt a price comparison service on Web interfaces ❖ Maintain a message that reflects early trip planning aspects

Dependency vs. independence role	❖ Associate your brand with favourable perception, social acceptance, social approval, opinion and recommendation from friends and social groups ❖ Associate your brand with the idea of depending on product/service quality assurance and high level of experience ❖ Emphasis on user reviews and testimonials, which can be done through different techniques such as: • Maintain a dependent strategy where customers can just depend on you and follow your guides as an experienced source, for example on a travel site they need to be provided with structured programmes for spending their vacation at each destination • Avoid individual or independent expressions such as 'plan your own trip'
Image context vs. lexical content role	❖ Maintain online aesthetically dominant strategy, where the main emphasis is given to the look and feel of the Web interfaces. Heavy use of multimedia and animations ❖ Maintain an online visual marketing strategy by using visual themes such as video, pictures and virtual tours instead of text ❖ Avoid using large amounts of text for your message
Oral communication vs. written communication	❖ Maintain an oral communication with customers such as telephone contact and one-to-one live interaction with an expert advisor ❖ Maintain online word-of-mouth strategies for message communication and feedback gathering. Users can refer, recommend or suggest interests to friends ❖ Avoid forms for gathering the customers' feedback

Table 5.1 - Applied online strategies for Egyptian travel consumers

5.2 Evaluating competitor travel sites

Setting an effective online strategy should be based on a good understanding of the industry competitors. It is even more important to think about competition in an open world such as the Internet (Porter, 2008). Porter stated that it is very difficult to gain competitive advantage over the Internet. Companies need to review what other competitors are doing to position themselves or at least do similar things to their competitors. Thus, it would be useful to provide companies with a basic tool for

reviewing what their competitors are doing.

Based on Jordan (1998), specifying Web domains and the cultural background of real users are the basics of an effective Web competitive evaluation tool. He argued that users' cultural background can be gained through users' observations and asking users about their Web domain experience. According to Jordan, considering the previous factors would make it possible to effectively evaluate Web site usability. One of the Web usability evaluation methods suggested by Jordan is doing a checklist for evaluating competitor sites. The E-CAF categories are used to provide checklists that can be used by both international travel marketers and Egyptian travel marketers to perform a competitive analysis for Egyptian local travel interfaces. Using these checklists, chapter 7 will explore three cases of Egyptian local travel sites. These checklists are shown in Table 5.2.

Theoretical categories	Checklists for evaluating existing travel sites
High risk vs. low risk concern	• **Navigation device checklist:** ✓ Site map is the preferable method for reducing the risk associated with navigating new sites (Spool et al., 1999) ✓ Depend on horizontal navigation bars and avoid vertical ones • **Navigation tactics checklist:** ✓ Use a simple search engine (Spool et al., 1999) ✓ Use FAQs for navigating the required information (Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2005) • **Navigation effort checklist:** ✓ Filter valuable information options (Nielsen, 2000) ✓ Locate useful information at the top of the page to make it easy accessible within the user's glance (Galitz, 2002) ✓ Use grouping tabs which show a single tab to represent a group of smaller pieces of information (Nielsen, 2000) ✓ Use sorting option tabs for personalizing the displayed information ✓ Use varied functional tabs within a single page to allow users to perform more than one function on the same page • **Links checklist** ✓ Avoiding ambiguous terms in link titles (Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2005) ✓ Use clearly descriptive link titles to avoid any cuts or abbreviations in link titles such as 'click here for more information' (Horton, 2006)

	✓ Avoid similar sounding link titles ✓ Use coloured underlined text as a style to indicate only links ✓ Users are mentally expecting links to open in new pages; do not use links that open in the same page. ✓ Depend on page body links (Nielsen, 2000) • **Pages scrolling checklist** ✓ Use short pages which does not require much scrolling (Galitz, 2002) ✓ Avoid long scrolling required to determine or view the page content (Galitz, 2002) • **Web page symbols** ✓ Depend on question mark to indicate further clarification of unclear page content ✓ Use printing symbols to indicate the applicability of printing important page content ✓ Clear trading symbols such as phone booking number and store locator finder
Emotional vs. functionality role	✓ Apply friendly, group relation themes, symbols and words (Reisinger and Turner, 1999) ✓ Give your interface a warm, friendly look (Reisinger and Turner, 1999) ✓ Inspire users by the ease of direct contact with customers ✓ Make company contact details visible all the time ✓ Facilitate consumer-to-consumer interactive communication through social guest books, message boards and member to member email.
Family and group vs. individual role	✓ Ensure consistency and harmony for the content and information on each page ✓ Adapt group and family symbols and themes (Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2005) ✓ Depend on outbound links which facilitate connecting users to local sites with useful information (Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2005)
Dependency vs. independence role	✓ Use dependent words and themes • **User reviews and testimonials** ✓ Allow viewing of user service/product reviews ✓ Show experienced user evaluation of the site service ✓ Use applicability of connecting friends through social networks to gain their advice and support

Image vs. lexical context role	• **Interface general aesthetics** ✓ Do not depend on a lot of text to represent information (Singh, Zaho and Hu, 2005) ✓ Visualise information through attractive images ✓ Depend on a colour coding technique to identify different related page content and links ✓ Depend on larger link sizes ✓ Depend on associative graphical links (Nielsen, 2000) ✓ Depend on animated graphics to attract users (Rayport and Jaworski, 2001) ✓ Apply some visually rich media tools such as virtual tours, audio and video to visualise information • **Text checklist** ✓ Maintain a good contrast between text and page background ✓ Design pages that accommodate different text styles ✓ Depend on a text colour coding technique to identify different pages with a different text colour (Galitz, 2002) • **Colour checklist** ✓ Depend on warmer colours through your Web interfaces ✓ Ensure a good contrasting colour combination through Web pages ✓ Be consistent in the colour combination used through Web pages (Galitz, 2002)
Oral communication vs. written communication	✓ Apply some online communication tools such as: ✓ Live chat with an expert ✓ Customers free call service ✓ 'Call me' service ✓ Oral video guides to describe different information ✓ Online video contact with customers ✓ Avoid direct feedback forms to be filled in by users (Kacen and Lee, 2002) ✓ Depend on online social communities for gathering users' feedback

Table 5.2 - Travel site evaluation checklist

5.3 Developing questions for generating travel site design requirements

Web design process starts with analysing and specifying the different features of the

site. This is what Oldach (2000) called Web design information gathering stage. At this stage Web designers need to communicate with their clients to gather all the necessary information in order to understand the clients' requirements. Birnberg (2008) warned designers who fail to start with understanding their clients' priorities. He mentioned that designers need to keep in mind that they are not the owner of the project. They are just helping their clients to build a site that should match their ways of business operation. Therefore, designers need to collect information that includes their clients' methods of operation (Birnberg, 2008), business and marketing strategy (Chaffey et al., 2006), communication tools and competitive information (Oldach, 2000). In order to collect these information Web designers need to interview their clients to gain the basis for their expected design (Oldach, 2000). Clients are usually not sure what information designers need to know to provide them with their expected Web site. Oldach argued that clients' interviews help them to be more objective to express needs and expectations. Similarly, Gulid (2003) mentioned that a perfect way of collecting design information is using a list of clients' questions. These questions provide clients with the basis to best present and promote their design requirements and expectations.

From the previous literature review, it is clear that there is a need for a list of questions at the initial stage of the design process; where Web designers need to collect their clients' design requirements. However, the literature focused mainly on what information designers may need to collect; there was no attempt to offer a tool that helps designers to collect the required information. The E-CAF serves as a tool that provides designers with a list of questions, which serves as a tool to gather the necessary information for the site design. As mentioned through the literature, this information includes marketing strategy, ways of operations and communication tools. Table 5.3 shows a list of questions that each E-CAF category can offer to serve in gathering the site design information. Ch 8 will evaluate the usefulness of those questions using professional Web designers' reviews.

Categories	Questions
High risk vs. low risk concern	▪ What type of information do you want to view on your travel site? ▪ Do you suggest a specific structure or flow for the travel information? ▪ Do you suggest specific tools for facilitating your trading transactions? ▪ Do you suggest specific navigation devices for your travel site? ▪ Do you suggest specific navigation tools for minimizing the navigation effort? ▪ What type of navigation bars do you prefer: horizontal or vertical? ▪ Is there any information or links you want to make permanently visible on the entire travel site pages? ▪ What content do you want users to see first on travel site? ▪ List the important customer service options you need on your travel site ▪ Do you need short or long scrolling for your travel site pages?
Emotional vs. functionality	▪ List any important words you want users to associate with your travel agency brand/image ▪ Give us some information about what your offline promotional message looks like. Are you planning to continue with the same promotional message online? ▪ What is the dominant appeal you want to give your travel site? This may be a friendly appeal or a more functional and formal one. ▪ Do you suggest specific tools for maintaining online relations with your travel consumers? ▪ Do you think user interactions is an important aspect to consider on your site? Explain your answer.

Family and group vs. individual role	▪ Are there is any pictures, themes or symbols you want to use for your travel site? ▪ Are you planning to use any external links on your travel site? If yes, list sites you want to link with your pages. ▪ Do you suggest a specific content organisation for page harmony?
Dependency vs. independence	▪ Do you want to avoid any expressions or words on your travel site? ▪ What best describes your targeted travel users: dependent or independent users? Describe suggested strategies for each type of user. ▪ List any suggested tools for achieving customer-to-customer interactivity.
Image vs. lexical context role	▪ Are you interested in developing your travel site with rich media such as video, audio or virtual tours? ▪ Do you have any graphics for your travel site? ▪ Would you like to use any animated graphic or text? ▪ Are there any colours you had in your mind to incorporate into your travel site pages? ▪ Do you have idea about the colour contrast you want maintain on your travel site pages? ▪ Are you planning to depend more on written text or visual page content? ▪ Are there any text styles you want to use for your travel site pages? ▪ What technique you suggest for identifying different travel site pages? ▪ Are you interested in using graphical links on your travel site? ▪ What size do you suggest for your page body links?
Oral communication vs. written communication	▪ What tools do you want to use for communicating with your customers? ▪ What tools do you want to use for gathering your customers' feedback?

Table 5.3 - Travel site design generating questions

5.4 Summary

This chapter discusses how the E-CAF serves as a useful tool to adapt local Web interfaces such as a travel interface for Egyptian consumers. This includes using the E-CAF to provide international travel marketers and Egyptian marketers with suitable online strategies for targeting Egyptian online consumers, checklists that can be used to evaluate competitive travel sites and providing designers with a list of questions that can help them to generate their clients' travel site design requirements. Chapters 6 to 8 will discuss the E-CAF evaluation using the methods mentioned in sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.

6. The E-CAF in action – Developing online travel marketing strategies

6.1 Overview

The first part of this chapter discusses how the E-CAF can be used as a tool for building online marketing strategies. As shown in Table 5.1, this is done through using the E-CAF to build suitable online marketing strategies for targeting Egyptian travel consumers as an example. Each E-CAF category is reviewed and used to assess specific consumers' cultural values that help marketers to understand the targeted travel consumers' behaviour.

The second section of this chapter reviews the suggested online strategies and discusses the extent to which the E-CAF can be used as a tool for building effective online marketing strategies for travel consumers. Travel marketers' expert review is used as an approach for evaluating the E-CAF. This part of the chapter discusses the applicability and reliability of the provided strategies as evaluated by the experts. In addition, this evaluation aims to assess to what extent the suggested strategies for targeting Egyptian consumers are reliable to how the experts perceive the Egyptian travel consumers' behaviour.

6.2 The E-CAF as a tool for building online marketing strategies

The following section discusses the way each cultural category of the E-CAF is used to build suitable online marketing strategies for travel consumers. This includes reviewing the strategies adopted for the Egyptian travel consumers listed in Table 5.1.

6.2.1 High risk vs. low risk concern

One of the most important factors that needs to be considered by marketers is the customers' risk concern level. Risk concern highly affects consumers' decision making. This affect is more identifiable through online communication media. Some customers still perceive online media to be more risky than offline media channels. This is even more apparent for services with a high risk nature such as travel services. Buhalis and Laws (2001) argued that travel services are highly associated with both emotional and financial risk. Risk concern varies depending on each customer's values and cultural background. Thus, marketers need to understand how each group of targeted consumers perceive risk level differently. Mitchell (1999) pointed out that marketing communication, positioning and targeting consumers are highly influenced by

understanding the level of risk perceived by targeted consumers.

For example, Egyptian consumers are found to perceive a high level of risk concern associated with the online travel service. Therefore, marketers need to consider adopting different strategies to reduce that level of risk concern. Fill (2005) mentioned that one method customers use to reduce their perceived risk is acquiring information. Thus, marketers should consider providing customers with the necessary information. This is even more important for high information-intensive services such as travel services. Huang (2005) argued that the travel industry is surrounded by a wide range of information. Egyptian local travel interfaces should be adapted to provide such information. This includes car rental information, destination attractions, famous food, hotel location and distance information, transportation and flight details information.

Another factor that helps to minimise travel consumers' risk concern is enhancing the interface usability. Researchers such as Welie (2001) and Evers (2001) realised that interface usability problems can be eliminated by understanding the users' mental model. This understanding results in reducing the "user's error", which minimizes the users' risk concern (Marcus and Gould, 2000). This means that Egyptian local travel interfaces need to be adapted to reduce the level of risk concern perceived by Egyptian consumers. This can be done by adopting an information view that is compatible with the Egyptian user's mental model. Following a logical, consistent and reliable view of information that allows users to evaluate a different range of service is found to reduce the travel interface errors perceived by Egyptian users.

Brand loyalty is mentioned by Fill (2005) as an important factor that helps marketers to reduce the level of risk perceived by consumers. Enhancing customer relations is found to be an important strategy for maintaining brand loyalty. This is even more important when dealing with customers who value relations, such as Egyptian consumers. Thus, marketers should consider using E-CRM approaches such as customized email offers and online personal contacts to build brand loyalty that contributes in reducing the level of risk perceived by Egyptian consumers.

The financial risk is one of the important types of risk perceived by consumers (Fill, 2005). This type of risk is very important for travel services, which are perceived as among the more expensive services. Most customers perceive travel services to be highly priced (Burger, 1997). Both marketers and customers are benefiting from new media such as Web interfaces in identifying competitors' prices. Therefore, marketers can minimise the level of risk concern perceived by Egyptian consumers by adapting a

local travel interface with a price comparison service.

Marketers can adapt their travel interface using tools such as an online booking service and a store locator to reduce the level of risk perceived by the consumers. High risk concern consumers, such as Egyptian consumers, still perceive online travel services to be more risky than offline services. Therefore, adapting a travel interface using tools such as online phone booking and a store locator provides customers with the necessary physical contact that helps to reduce the risk they perceive.

In fact, marketers should respect the level of risk perceived by consumers. In the travel service, high risk concern consumers, such as Egyptian consumers, usually face the risk associated with the travel service through early planning and booking. Thus, marketers should understand and respect these concerns by reflecting it in an early trip planning strategy.

6.2.2 Emotional vs. functionality role

This category helps marketers to identify a suitable promotional and communication message to reach their targeted uses. Marketers are facing many concerns selecting effective message communication strategies. One concern is related to the interface's general content appeal. Rayport and Jaworski (2001) distinguished between two broad types of appeal for interface content: emotional appeal and cognitive appeal. Marketers have to choose the best interface appeal for communicating their message effectively to users. In order to do so, marketers need to know their targeted users, their culture and values.

This category serves as one of the main cultural values that needs to be considered for selecting suitably appealing interface content. Some users, such as Egyptian consumers, value emotions and relations. Therefore, marketers need to consider adapting an appealing emotional interface for Egyptian consumers. The emotional appeal of the Egyptian travel interface can be adapted by enabling an emotional relation between the users. Dormann and Chisalita (2002) stressed the importance of enabling good users' relations when adapting a university interface for users who value emotions. In addition, the emotional appeal of the Egyptian travel interface can be adapted using a soft selling approach on their Web interfaces. This can be done by using welcoming words, demonstrating helpfulness and stressing friendly customer treatment using words and images. On the other hand, marketers need to adapt a cognitive interface appealing for users with more functional concerns. Cognitive interface appeal can be reached using a hard selling approach, where the main focus is on product or service functionality and

reliability aspects.

The second concern facing marketers is building effective online branding. Chaffey et al., (2006) and Fill (2005) identify two main approaches for brand building: the rational and the emotional approach. Again, the emotional vs. functionality category can help marketers to select the best approach for brand building and association. For example, marketers need to focus on emotional brand association when targeting users who value emotions and relations, such as Egyptian consumers. This means stressing values such love, humour and warmth to enable users to build positive brand association. On the other side, marketers should adapt a rational brand association strategy for users who mainly build a positive brand association based on product or service functional aspects and performance rather than emotions.

One of the biggest concerns of all marketers is how to encourage users and customers to return to their sites. This can be achieved by focusing on users' engagement. Therefore, marketers need to know how to engage different users. Rayport and Jaworski (2001) identified the role of community in raising a strong sense of users' involvement. Based on Rayport and Jaworski (2001), this will contribute in attracting users back to Web interfaces. They identified different elements of communities for maintaining the users' sense of belonging. These are cohesion, effectiveness, help, relationships, language and self-regulation. The research result revealed that Egyptian consumers value cohesion and relationships as significant elements of the interface community. Egyptian users respect a sense of group belonging, interactions and friendship. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) considered online communities and social media as vital tools for marketing online travel services. They stated that travel marketers should enhance their marketing effort through adopting social media tools such as allowing consumers to post and share videos, comments and personal experience. In fact, the social presence increases the richness of the Web as a communication medium (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This can be done through adapting a local travel interface with online community tools that enhance the users' interaction. Considering the Web community that supports those elements will contribute in encouraging users back to the site.

Finally, marketers need to consider building online relations with targeted users. This is an important issue, especially for users who value relations, such as Egyptian consumers. Chaffey et al., (2006) mentioned different approaches for building effective online customer relations. These are customer identification, differentiation, interaction and online communication. For example, when targeting Egyptian consumers,

marketers need to maintain online communication dialogue for building good relations. Egyptian consumers find it very important to engage in a strong emotional relation. This will maintain a long-term relation with users resulting in emotional loyalty.

6.2.3 Family and group vs. individual role

Marketers need to carefully understand customers' values to define the suitable strategy for each targeted customer. This category helps marketers to understand family vs. individual values embraced by each targeted customer. Fill (2005) identified the family as an important element of the customers' culture that needs to be considered for marketing globally. Fill (2005) argued that family values are found to be an important variable that affects the decision of some consumers. Therefore, "the impact and importance of various decision-makers need to be recognized and the central creative idea needs to be up to date and sensitive to the family units" (Fill, 2005, p.820). The family values received increased interest among researchers such as Zhang and Gelb (1996) who assessed the influence of family values on consumers' behaviour. They noticed that ads emphasising the individual benefits are more suitable and persuasive in cultures who value individual benefits, such as the USA. On the other hand, ads with family and group benefits are more persuasive within cultures who value the family role, such as Korea.

The family and group values are considered one of the significant factors affecting consumers' decision making. From that perspective, Childers and Rao (1992) and Ford, et al. (1995) examined the influence of family and group values on consumer decision making. Childers and Rao's study revealed that family and group concern have a different influence across cultures. Consumers with strong family values are expected to be highly influenced by family and group choices. Pride and Ferrell (2010) stated that the influence of family choices over consumers' decision making varies according to the product category. High involvement products that are surrounded by more risk, such as vacations, are expected to be highly influenced by a large number of group and family members' choices.

The research result revealed that Egyptian consumers' decision making is highly influenced by the extended family choices. Consequently, marketers need to adopt a communication message that respects the family role in consumers' decisions. Therefore, an effective communication message targeting Egyptian consumers should focus on family member preferences, connections and reaching the customers as being part of a larger group.

6.2.4 Dependency vs. independence role

Bornstein (1993) argued that usually persons who view themselves as powerless and view others as more powerful are more likely to have dependent behaviour. Consumers with a dependent culture usually value the service received from an experienced source. This usually exists within high power distance cultures, who perceive a high difference in power and human inequality (Hofstede, 2001). Another important factor that shapes consumers' dependent culture is valuing relationships. Bendapudi and Berry (1997) argued that the dependent nature is expected for people that respect and value relationships. Therefore, it can be argued that consumers with high power distance culture and emotional culture, such as Egyptian consumers, expect to have a dependent culture.

The research results revealed that the dependent consumers' culture is considered an important factor in shaping consumers' behaviour. Therefore, marketers need to respect and consider the dependence nature of some cultures. This can be done by maintaining a dependent strategy that allows customers to follow guides, instructions and suggested thoughts. For example, Egyptian local travel interfaces should be adapted to provide a suggested list of programmes and ideas for spending vacations. In addition, the travel interface for dependent consumers should be adapted to appreciate their dependent culture. For example, this can be done by avoiding any independent expressions such as "plan your own trip".

- *Emphasis on user reviews and testimonials*

In fact, Bendapudi and Berry (1997) argued that the dependent nature is highly affected by whom the person trusts. Therefore, marketers should understand whom their customers are highly trusting and are cognitively depending on for their experience. For example, in a high collectivism culture, such as Egyptian culture, consumers are expected to be highly trusting of family and friends' recommendations. Understanding the nature of these consumers' culture can benefit marketers in building a good branding trust strategy. Therefore, marketers can adapt their branding strategies by associating their brand with the social acceptance gained through family and friends' recommendations. Well known social networking sites, such as Facebook, are shown to be an effective tool that supports marketers in the creation of trustable brand communities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, Egyptian consumers highly trust the experienced source due to their high power distance culture. In addition, marketers can gain the dependent consumers' trust through associating their brand with a high

level of experience assurance.

In contrast, consumers with independent cultures usually expect to value and trust their independent experience. Thus, marketers should adapt their strategies to incorporate this independent nature by focusing on the importance of consumers' personal choices and trials. For example, the travel interface can be adapted to allow the consumers to mainly depend on planning their own trips. In addition, marketers would benefit from associating their brand with the unique personal experience.

6.2.5 Image context vs. lexical content role

This category helps marketers to determine a suitable look and feel of their Web design. Rayport and Jaworski (2001) referred to two main approaches for context design. These are aesthetically and functionality dominant. An integration approach can be achieved by combining the aesthetic and function approach. Users vary in their preferences: some users, such as Egyptian consumers, give more attention to visual images. Those users depend on images and videos to process information on Web interfaces. Large amounts of text are ignored by those users and prevent them from using the Web site. Therefore, marketers need to adopt an aesthetic approach for Egyptian local travel interfaces. This means depending on multimedia, animation, visual images and videos instead of text to communicate messages on the Web. Marketers need to be careful about the amount of text used on the local travel interface of those users.

Other users depend more on lexical Web content to review product or service information. Those users give less attention to visual themes on the site; they care more about detailed information. In this case marketers should depend on the functional approach for context design. Users who give attention to images and others who care about lexical content of the site represent the two extremes. Other users may fall in between these two extremes. In this case marketers can approach those users using an integrated approach. This means applying a balance between the appeal of visual image content and lexical content of the site.

6.2.6 Oral communication vs. written communication

Multicultural communication is considered one of the biggest concerns when marketing globally (Bonnye et al., 2007). Marketers need to carefully understand the unique cultural background of each targeted customer. They argued that the lack of the awareness of culture uniqueness is the worst enemy for building an effective multicultural communication.

This category helps international marketers to decide about the suitable communicational strategies for targeting a specific group of customers. This involves selecting a communication strategy with the minimal source of noise to ensure effective message decoding. Bonnye et al. (2007) identified two general communicational strategies: written and oral. Online users, such as Egyptian consumers, are more able to decode messages transmitted through less formal and indirect approaches that include human elements. Those consumers can be effectively reached through online oral communication tools. Online communication is identified by Bonnye et al. (2007) as the most personal and informal form of communication.

An example is Egyptian consumers who can be targeted using online communication tools that include personal interaction such as using online chat services and providing a telephone contact on the travel interface. In contrast, written communication strategies can be used for consumers who are more able to decode direct, formal and explicit messages. Consumers who prefer less formal, indirect and less explicit communicational strategies, such as oral communication, are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth behaviour. This is confirmed by Bonnye et al. (2007), who argued that written communication is the most explicit form of communication. Therefore, marketers can benefit from adopting online word-of-mouth strategies when targeting those customers. An effective form of online word-of-mouth communication is viral marketing (Chaffey et al., 2006). For example, marketers can benefit from using friend recommendation links for each trip offer when adapting a local Egyptian travel interface. This offers a rapid transmission of the communication message to a large audience (Godin, 2001).

Finally, the oral communication vs. written communication category helps marketers to decide about the most effective way of gathering the users' feedback. Fill (2005) identified different methods for collecting customer feedback. These are personal selling, questioning, signing a form or raising objections. Egyptian consumers who prefer informal and personal communication forms are more likely to use informal ways for providing feedback. In addition, high uncertainty avoidance cultures are less likely to use formal ways in providing their feedback (De Luque and Sommer, 2000). Therefore, marketers would benefit from using personal ways of collecting the Egyptian travel consumers' feedback. In contrast, formal feedback methods, such as questionnaires are more suitable for consumers who prefer formal and explicit communication methods.

6.3 Expert reviews and online marketing strategies

In order to evaluate the online marketing strategies listed in chapter 5, three Egyptian travel agencies have been consulted: Golden Tours, Mass Travel and Onyx Tours. The three agencies have got a number of branches around Egypt, such as in Cairo, Alexandria and Tanta. The first agency (Golden Tours) is a family business, established in 1974 by the first female travel agency owner in Egypt. The agency is a specialist in organising Hajj, Umrah and international trips to Egyptian and Middle Eastern consumers. The second agency (Mass Travel) is one of the biggest travel agencies in Egypt, established in 1984. It offers travel services to both Egyptian and international consumers. The last agency is Onyx Tours, which operates locally to service Egyptian consumers. It offers a wide range of Hajj and Umrah services to Egyptian consumers. The three companies are a good representative of Egyptian travel agencies that offer a varied range of domestic and international travel services to both Egyptian and international consumers.

One marketing representative (M1, M2 and M3), responsible for building offline and online marketing campaigns, is interviewed from each travel agency. M1, M2 and M3 were selected from the Cairo branch at Mass Travel and the Tanta branch at Golden Tours and Onyx Tours respectively. This was done through semi-structured interviews, aiming to assess the reliability and applicability of the suggested strategies as an effective tool for targeting Egyptian consumers. In addition, the interviewers were asked to assess to what extent the suggested strategies are compatible with the way they perceive Egyptian consumers.

6.3.1 High risk vs. low risk concern

The consulted travel marketers agreed that Egyptian consumers need to be informed about every single aspect of the trip. Therefore, they found it very important to maintain Web pages that ensure customer-oriented content. They agreed that the customer-oriented information strategy is not only applicable online. It does extend to offline strategies, For example, the travel agencies carefully designed their trip brochures to contain all the necessary information required by Egyptian consumers. For example, M2 stated that “for Egyptian consumers we always need to repeat all the required information. They keep asking about the trip details until the last moment. It is essential to provide them with a printed document that contains all the required information. Online we allow our Egyptian customers to print all the information they need. Providing our Egyptian consumers with the essential information is not only limited

online. This strategy is also important for offline marketing, especially for Egyptian consumers. For example, when designing our brochures we make sure to provide them with all the required trip information".

Following a certain logic in structuring the information was found to be important for consumers with high risk concern, such as Egyptian consumers. M1 and M3 mentioned that based on the customer service team analysis, Egyptian consumers have a high level of concern regarding their trips. One approach that was found to be useful in minimizing these concerns is giving them information in an organised logical structure. For example, M1 stated that "Our customer service team keep informing us that Egyptian consumers are always requesting them to structure the trip information in a logical organisation. Based on the customer service team analysis, this way of organising the information helps Egyptian consumers to perceive the information easily and make them more comfortable". From that perspective, M2 argued that the information logical structure strategy can be justified through the way they usually perceive Egyptian consumers' behaviour. He stated that: "oh what you are saying here about the logical structure of information is really explaining the way Egyptian consumers request the trip information. They usually ask our customer service team to start with listing the available locations, then mention each location attraction, organised programme, what the trip package includes and what it excludes".

The consulted interviewers agreed that some of the suggested strategies are not only suitable for Egyptian travel consumers, but for all travel consumers. In addition these strategies are not only applicable online, but also important to be considered for offline channels. These strategies are "maintaining a reliable view of information; allow users to view and evaluate different ranges of product/service to select the suitable one" and "adapt a price comparison service on the travel interface". For example, M1 mentioned that "allowing users to evaluate a range of our services through a price comparison view is very important especially for the travel service. This helps to reduce the high risk concern associated with that kind of service, not only for Egyptian consumers but for all travel consumers". Similarly, M2 stated that: "For a high risk service such as the travel service, it very important to allow consumers to compare a range of services carefully through price comparison. Nowadays consumers spend a long time online to compare and select the cheapest trip. However, I think it is very important to enable consumers to do this comparison even through offline channels. For example, this is considered on our brochures; it is designed to offer consumers a reliable view that helps them to

evaluate the available service and easily compare prices through tables".

For building a good E-CRM, the interviewers complained that using customized email offers is not a good approach for Egyptian consumers. M1 and M2 confirmed that Egyptian consumers need to be engaged in a personal relation. For example, M1 stated that "I think it is not a good idea to build strong relations with Egyptian consumers using customized email offers. One approach we are using to build strong relations with Egyptian consumers online is allowing users to contact a specific person for each online offer we get. This means that users can check the online offer they like and check the personal contact number for calling the specialist. This enables us to build a strong e-personal relation with Egyptian consumers through online channels"

M1, M2 and M3 agreed that Egyptian consumers still have concerns about booking online without assistance. They stated that many Egyptian consumers still doubt the safety of online booking. Based on the consulted interviewees using a store locator and phone booking are important tools for Egyptian consumers. For example, M3 mentioned that "many Egyptian consumers do not prefer to book online; usually they prefer to book through the phone or at a local branch. This may be due to the concerns some of Egyptian consumers still have about booking online. Therefore, it is very important to provide them online with tools such as phone booking and searching a store branch for facilitating the booking process".

Early booking and planning has been respected by the travel agencies when dealing with Egyptian consumers. M1, M2 and M3 agreed that one of the things they should consider when dealing with Egyptian consumers is respecting the risk concerns they have about the travel service. They agreed that most Egyptian consumers would like to plan their trip as early as possible. Therefore, usually a list of the season trips should prepared and made available as early as possible.

In general, the consulted travel marketers agreed that the Egyptian consumer is one of the consumers that has high risk concerns regarding a service such as the travel. Therefore, they confirmed that these risk concerns should be respected and minimized by adopting the suggested strategies.

6.3.2 Emotional vs. functionality role

M1, M2 and M3 agreed that Egyptian consumers are usually directed by their emotions. This can easily be recognised through the high level of loyalty toward a specific agency. They noticed that Egyptian consumers search for an agency to deal with over the long

run. This is due to the high level of respecting and valuing personal relations. Therefore, they stressed the fact that building a strong personal relation is the easiest way to reach Egyptian consumers. For example, M1 stated that "Egyptian consumers would like to deal with the same agency over the long run. We got consumers who came and asked for a specific person they are usually dealt with. Building strong relations with Egyptian consumers is one of the most successful strategies for the success of any business. They really respect, value and personal relations; therefore I think by building strong relations with Egyptian consumers you can get a large number of loyal customers"

In addition, M1 referred to the importance of the emotional brand associating by focusing on his agency strategy that associates the idea of respecting the personal relations with the agency values. He mentioned that "we understand that Egyptian consumers are directed by their emotions. Therefore, our strategy focuses on associating the agency goals with the idea of obtaining long run customers. This is clear on our online value statement, which is "our customers and business partners recognise the value we provide and rewarded Mass Travel with their long-lasting cooperation and support, resulting in fruitful relationships and repeated business".

A friendly approach is identified by the consulted travel marketer as a suitable strategy for consumers that are usually directed by their emotions such as Egyptian consumers. For example, M3 confirmed that "Egyptian consumers are highly directed by their emotions; therefore, it is important to touch their feelings. This can be done by using friendly strategies such as welcoming the new customers. This also helps to build strong relations with our customers" Similarly, M1 mentioned that "I think each customer can be reached through a specific key; I can certainly say that the key for targeting Egyptian consumers is being friendly with an aim to build a strong and long lasting relation with them". In addition, M1 referred to the importance of the friendly relationship strategies for reaching Egyptian consumers through online and offline channels. He stated that "usually we design our Web site and even our offline channels such as the brochures to start with friendly and welcoming words to our customers. This is a good strategy for reaching most of our Egyptian customers".

In general, the consulted travel marketers agreed that Egyptian consumers' behaviour is highly directed by their emotions. Therefore, they agreed that this type of behaviour should be considered for building suitable strategies for targeting Egyptian consumers in both online and offline channels.

6.3.3 Family and group vs. individual role

The interviewers agreed that based on their experience Egyptian consumers can be attracted by focusing on our trips family friendliness. For example, M3 said that "as you know, Egyptians respect family; they love to travel with their family members. Therefore, we understand that Egyptian consumers can be easily attracted by focusing on the attraction of a specific trip to their kids". Similarly, M2 mentioned that Egyptian consumers usually seek and request group trips. She stated that "Most Egyptian consumers asked to join group trips; they usually enjoy and feel safe with group and family members".

M1 commented on the second suggested strategy, which is "the communication message should be shaped to reach customers as being part of a larger group by saying "I think that this strategy justifies what we are doing when promoting our trips to Egyptian consumers in both online and offline channels. Usually we find it useful to attract Egyptian consumers by focusing on the benefit that our trips offer to each family member. Sometimes our customers are not planning to take a trip, but they can easily change their minds if offered a trip with a tailored programme for kids".

In general, Egyptian consumers are perceived by the consulted travel marketers to respect family and group values. Therefore, they agreed that these values should be considered as a useful tool when promoting travel services to Egyptian consumers through online and offline channels.

6.3.4 Dependency vs. independence role

M1, M2 and M3 find it very useful and realistic to describe Egyptian consumers as dependent consumers. They stated that Egyptian consumers always depend on family members, friends and expertise opinions and recommendations. In addition, they referred to the dependent nature of Egyptian consumers to the high risk concerns about the travel service. For example, M1 said: "A dependent consumer! Oh, it is a good description of the Egyptian consumer; where did you get it from? I think as you just said, Egyptian consumers can be described as highly dependent consumers. This is justifying how we try hard to promote our trips to Egyptian consumers. We usually design specific brochures for them that contain a list of prepared or ready-made trip packages. Egyptian consumers always need continuous assistance in preparing their trip. This assistance should continue after preparing the trip package. Personally, I think that this may be due to the high risk concern they have about the travel service. Besides, continuous assistance contributes in enhancing strong personal relations, which are

required by Egyptian consumers". Similarly, M3 mentioned that "Egyptian consumers are highly dependent on friends and family recommendation. Therefore, we find it useful to mention the highly recommended trips of each week. This helps them to make their decisions based on planning a highly sociable trip".

M1, M2 and M3 agreed that the independent expressions such as "plan your own trip" contradict the dependent nature of Egyptian consumers. For example, M2 stated that "It will be a very bad strategy to leave a consumer who heavily depends on you, such as Egyptian consumers, to plan their own trip. This may be useful with another type of consumer, who prefers to take their own choices independently. As I said before, Egyptian consumers always need guidance and assistance due to the high risk concerns they have regarding the travel service. They keep asking us what you think; what do you recommend to be better for me?"

It is clear that the dependent vs. independent cultural category provides marketers with a reasonable justification for the way they perceive consumer behaviour across cultures. The consumers' dependent vs. independent cultural concept was new to the marketing experts. For example, M1 assured affirmed that an original concept such as dependency can be used to describe Egyptian consumers' behaviour. He found it a very useful and valuable concept to justify the unique strategies used to promote the travel service to Egyptian consumers.

6.3.5 Image context vs. lexical content role

M1, M2 and M3 stated that one of the thing that attracts emotionally directed consumers, such as Egyptian consumers, on any Web interface is photos, colours and animations. They affirmed that many of the Egyptian local sites are heavily dependent on multimedia and animation to attract customers. The consulted travel marketers referred to photos and multimedia as important tools for describing the travel service. M1 considered these tools even more important for Egyptian consumers. He stated that "using photos and multimedia is very important for the travel service. Much as we are servicing both Egyptian and international consumers well, Egyptian consumers are known to be much more emotionally directed; I think this may be the reason behind building a campaign for our Egyptian consumers that heavily depends on photos for describing a different range of trips. For example, we usually aim to design brochures that contain a large number of photos when targeting Egyptian consumers. In contrast, when we are targeting international consumers fewer photos are used and more emphasis is given to writing down more details about each trip. This strategy can be

followed similarly online. However, we are still using one version of the Web site, which is aimed at both our Egyptian and international consumers. In fact, recently I suggested using a different version of the Web site for our Egyptian and international consumers".

M2 stressed the usefulness of the visual strategy for targeting Egyptian consumers. She mentioned that "Based on my experience with Egyptian consumers, visual tools such as pictures or videos are found to be very useful for describing different trips. They usually get bored from reading a large amount of text; instead they keep asking about pictures to see or a video to watch. These really work easily in attracting Egyptian consumers and making the process of trip description more enjoyable".

In general, the interviewers agreed on the importance of visual tools for the travel service. These tools are found to be more useful for Egyptian consumers, who usually depend on these tools for gathering information about each trip.

6.3.6 Oral communication vs. written communication

M1, M2 and M3 agreed on the importance of oral communication tools such as phone contact in reaching Egyptian consumers. They mentioned that Egyptian consumers like to engage in an oral conversation with the customer service staff. In addition, M1, M2 and M3 argued that the both the offline and online oral communication tools contribute in building strong relations with the consumers, which is very important to Egyptian consumers' preference. Moreover, they affirmed that oral communication tools help to reduce Egyptian consumers' risk concern associated with the travel service.

For example, M2 stated that "we really care about providing all of our customers with a telephone contact on both the Web site or in our brochures. This is especially important for Egyptian consumers; as I told you before Egyptian consumers' loyalty can be easily achieved through building friendly relations. Oral communication tools, especially the telephone, help us to build strong relations with our Egyptian consumers. Besides, Egyptian consumers find it very important to engage in a conversation with an expert. This helps to reduce their risk concerns and make them much more comfortable about their trip".

Based on the consulted travel marketers, Egyptian consumers are highly trusting of a service or product that is recommended by their family members and friends. Therefore, they agreed on the importance of word-of-mouth strategies in targeting Egyptian consumers. For example, M1 mentioned that "We know that Egyptian consumers

always trust what their family members and friends say about any service or product. That is why we design Egyptian consumers' brochures to include a trip description using our existing customers' expressions and real experience. This is also very important to consider online; that is why I said before that we are seriously thinking about using an Egyptian local version of our Web pages" Similarly, M3 found it very useful to use word-of-mouth tools such as "recommend to a friend" for targeting Egyptian consumers. She stated that "using tools such as "recommend to a friend" is very useful, especially for Egyptian consumers. They are always keen to let their family and friends know about positive or negative experience. Therefore, using such word-of-mouth tools will contribute in promoting many of our trips easily. I would highly recommend using such a tool on our Web interfaces"

M1 is interested about the last oral communication strategy, which is "avoid formal forms for gathering the customers' feedback". He stated that "recently, this is what I advised to do with our Egyptian consumers. I noticed that many of our Egyptian consumers did not like to fill out any formal surveys to describe their experience. I understand the role of personal and friendly relations when dealing with Egyptian consumers. That is why we recently collected service feedback from Egyptian consumers through informal friendly discussion with one of our customer service departments".

In general, the consulted travel marketers agreed on the role oral communication plays in reducing the reducing the risk concerns of Egyptian consumers. Besides, they agreed that oral communication supports the emotional nature of Egyptian consumers by facilitating the establishment of personal relations.

6.4 E-CAF evaluation: travel marketers' expert reviews and E-CAF's valuable implications

Section 6.3 discusses the travel marketers' expert reviews as an approach for evaluating the E-CAF. This contributes in reviewing the valuable implications of the E-CAF as perceived by travel marketers. The experts agreed that the E-CAF can be used as a useful tool in profiling Egyptian consumers' behaviour. For example, M2 was wondering at the end of the interview about how the researcher could accurately describe Egyptian consumers' behaviour. This was clear when she asked "how did you establish the suitable strategic point for targeting Egyptian consumers? The important thing about these strategic points is that they are based on a good understanding of

Egyptian consumers' behaviour".

More importantly, the E-CAF cultural categories provide the travel marketers with a deep insight with which to profile different consumers' behaviour. This is done through establishing a few relations between the E-CAF cultural categories that help to describe different consumers' behaviour. The first relation identified by the travel marketing experts is the one that exists between the high risk vs. low risk concern and the dependency vs. independence role categories. They suggested that the high dependency culture can be described through high risk concern. This means that consumers with high risk concern culture are expected to have highly dependent behaviour.

The second relation exists between the high risk vs. low risk concern and the oral communication vs. written category. The consulted experts argued that consumers with higher risk concern are more likely to prefer oral communication tools. They stated that oral communication tools can be used when targeting consumers with higher risk concern culture. Based on the consulted marketer experts, the oral communication tools are found to minimise the risk concern associated with the travel service.

The third relation is found between the emotional vs. functionality role and the oral communication vs. written communication categories. The marketer experts argued that consumers with high emotional culture are expected to prefer oral communication tools. Based on their opinion, the oral communication tools are useful when targeting consumers with highly emotional culture. This is due to the opportunity the oral communication tools allow in establishing customers' friendly and strong relations, which is important when targeting consumers with high emotional culture.

The final relation is identified between the emotional vs. functionality role and the image context vs. lexical content role categories. The consulted travel marketing experts argued that customers with highly emotional values are expected to be more interested in the image context. Therefore, customers with high emotional culture can be easily targeted through image context. Based on the consulted experts' experience, this is due to the role image context plays in attracting customers with high emotional values.

The previous relations provide marketers with a new insight for understanding and profiling different consumers' behaviour. This allows the travel marketing experts, such as M1, to identify suitable online marketing strategies for building a local Egyptian version of their Web interfaces. In addition, the relations provided by the E-CAF are found to be useful in building offline strategies for targeting different consumers based on a good understanding of their behaviour. Table 6.1 recaps the contribution and

benefits of each E-CAF category as well as the contribution of the overall E-CAF categories as perceived by the marketing experts.

E-CAF categories	Contribution
High risk vs. low risk concern	• Provide the travel marketers with some suggested strategies that are applicable for all travel consumers not only Egyptian consumers. Examples of these strategies are the strategies provided by the high risk vs. low risk concern, such as information reliability view and adopting a price comparison service on the travel interface. • The high risk vs. low risk concern suggested strategies help marketers to respect and minimise the risk concern of high risk concern travel consumers such as Egyptian consumers.
Emotional vs. functionality role	• Provide travel marketers with suggested strategies to maintain and ensure the strong personal relations that are required for targeting Egyptian consumers through both offline and online channels.
Family and group vs. individual role	• Focusing on family and group interest provides marketers with valuable strategies for promoting travel services to Egyptian consumers through both offline and online channels.
Image context vs. lexical content role	• Image-based design and text-based design provide marketers with a useful tool for designing offline and online campaigns for targeting varied consumers across cultures. • Help marketers to justify and understand the difference that exists between varied image and text campaign designs.
Oral communication vs. written communication	• Oral communication strategies are identified by travel marketing experts as a useful tool to maintain strong consumer relations. • Word-of-mouth strategies are perceived by travel marketers as useful strategies for promoting the travel service to Egyptian consumers.

Dependency vs. independence role	• The dependency concept offers a new concept that helps marketers to understand and justify Egyptian consumer's behaviour. • Provide marketers with an original concept that helps them to understand and describe consumer behaviour across cultures. • Introducing the dependency concept to the consumer behaviour field guides marketers to build suitable strategies for targeting consumers across varied cultures.
The overall E-CAF categories.	• Travel marketing expert reviews demonstrated the E-CAF as an effective tool for profiling consumers' behaviour. • The E-CAF offers new insights that help marketers to establish some of the required relations for mapping the targeted consumers' behaviour. • Using the E-CAF, marketers can determine suitable online and offline strategies for a group of targeted consumers. • Identify the need for building a local travel interface for Egyptian consumers. • Determine suitable strategies for building a local travel interface for Egyptian consumers.

Table 6.1 - The E-CAF contributions as perceived by the marketing expert

6.5 Summary

This chapter focused on the possibility of using the E-CAF as an applicable tool for assigning suitable strategies for targeting travel consumers. Assigning suitable strategies for Egyptian travel consumers is discussed as an example. Those strategies are reviewed by the travel marketing experts to assess the reliability and applicability of the E-CAF as a marketing tool for identifying suitable strategies.

7. The E-CAF in action – Evaluating the Egyptian travel interfaces

7.1 Overview

In chapter 2 of this thesis it has been argued that there is a need for a framework that captures the cultural variable of the online travel consumers to be used for adapting the local travel interfaces. Chapters 3 and 4 discussed the development of the E-CAF, and chapter 5 discussed several methods for using the E-CAF. The first method is presented in Chapter 6 as it discusses how the E-CAF can be used for adapting suitable online strategies for marketing travel services to Egyptian consumers.

This chapter will discuss the second method for using the E-CAF. This is introduced previously in chapter 5 by showing how the E-CAF can be used to provide a list of checklists that can be used to explore the Egyptian local travel interface. These checklists are presented in Table 5.2. This chapter will apply these checklists to explore three different local Egyptian sites representing three online travel services. These are international travel agent (Thomas Cook), an airline (BA) and a local travel agent that services Egyptian consumers. These sites were examined for this thesis in November 2010.

7.2 Exploring Thomas Cook Egypt

Thomas Cook was chosen as representative of a famous international travel agent, that has recently gained popularity among Egyptian consumers. It is one of the rare international agents that has opened a branch in Cairo and adapted a local site for Egyptian consumers. Samples of their page screens are shown in Figures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

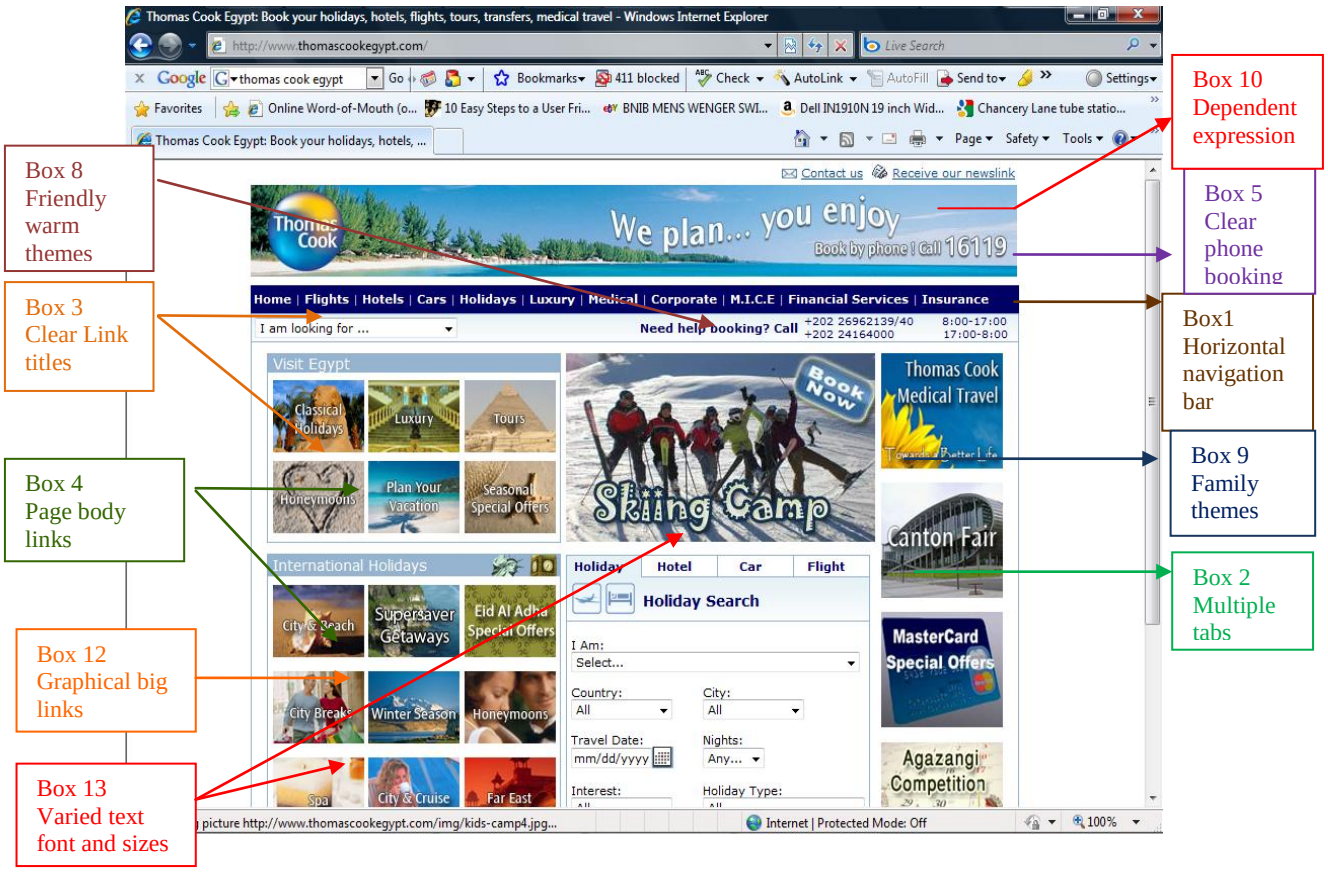


Figure 7.1 – Thomas Cook Egypt – Screen 1

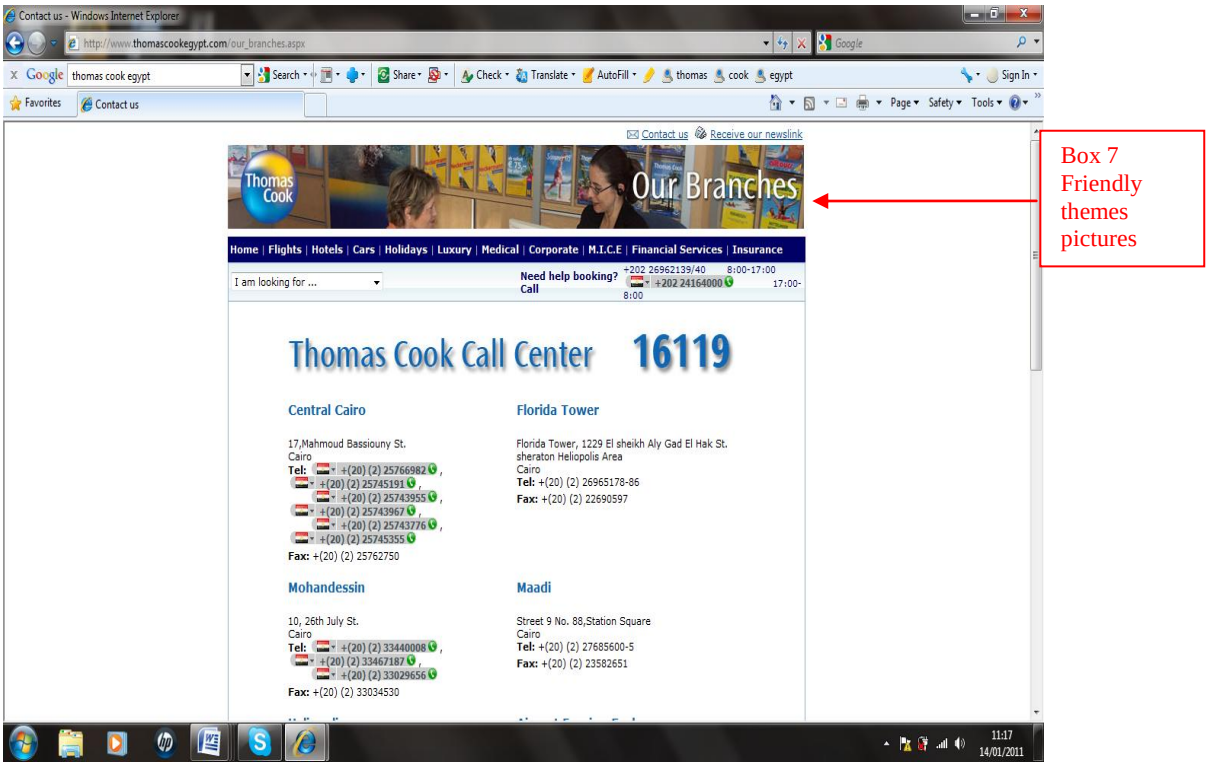


Figure 7.2 – Thomas Cook Egypt – Screen 2

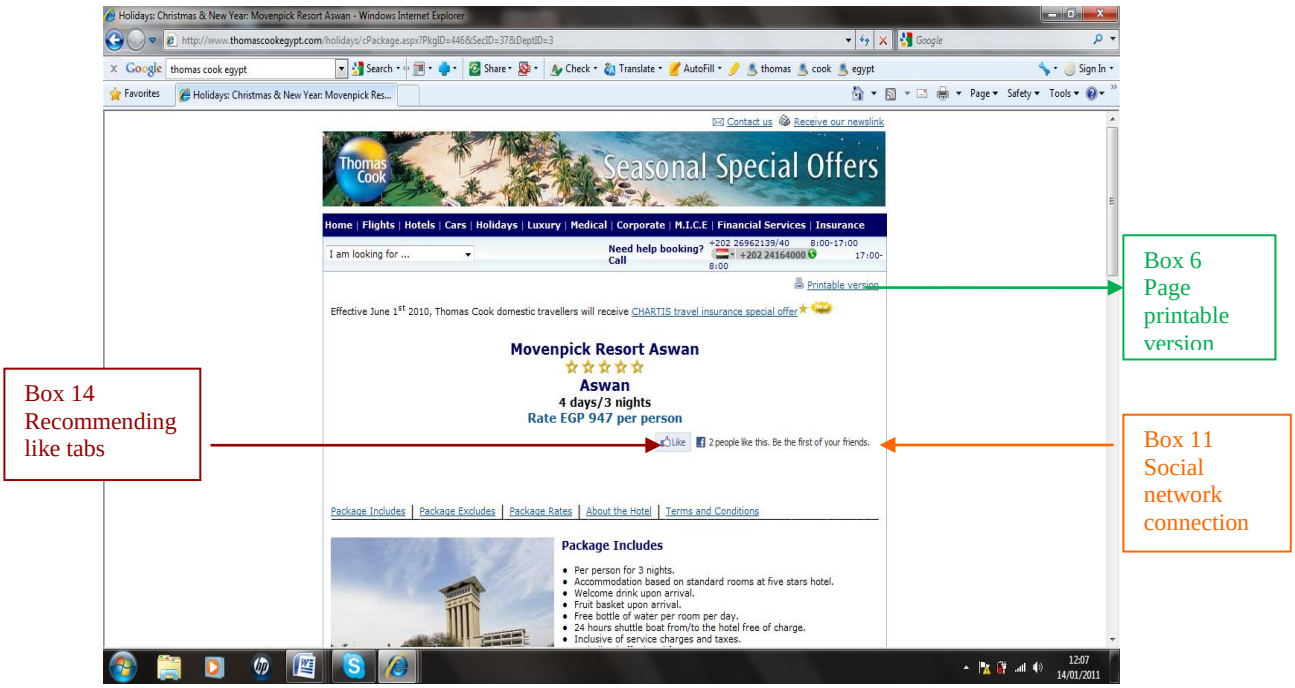


Figure 7.3 – Thomas Cook Egypt – Screen 3

7.2.1 High risk vs. low risk concern

A. Assessment

❖ *Navigation device*

Thomas Cook depends on some navigation devices for Egyptian consumers as follows:

- Horizontal navigation bars for increasing Web usability and reducing the risk encountered by new visitors as shown in Box 1 Screen 1.
- Site map link located at the bottom of the page

❖ *Navigation tactics*

- The site is poor in using navigation supporting tactics such as a quick search engine and FAQs for exploring the required destination information.

❖ *Navigation effort*

Thomas Cook minimizes the navigation effort encountered by Egyptian consumers as follows:

- By locating all of the important information and frequently accessed links at the top of the page. This makes all of the necessary information easily accessible within the first glance, with no effort necessary to find most of the required information or links.
- Additional tactics are used on the site for reducing the navigation effort allowing users to filter their trip search based on a specified budget. Moreover, the site

adopts multiple tabs within a single page for performing varied searching options as shown in Box 2 Screen 1. This ensures accessing varied options quickly with fewer clicks and less pages.

- Thomas Cook adopts clear interface bars without hidden submenus.

❖ *Links*

- As shown in Box 3 Screen 1, the site uses very clear link titles with no abbreviations or ambiguous terms. This enhances the Web usability and reduces the users' risk concerns.
- The site uses unique link titles to indicate the content under each link and avoid any similar sound link titles.
- Most of the home page links aim to open in a new window which is mentally expected by the users from that culture. However, the site uses within page links to view different trip package information.
- All of the site links are easily accessible within the page body as shown in Box 4 Screen 1.

❖ *Page scrolling*

Thomas Cook adapts their pages scrolling for Egyptian consumers as follows:

- The site uses short page scrolling; no long scrolling required for determining or viewing the whole page content.

❖ *Web page symbols*

- The site does a good job in facilitating trading transactions. A shown in Box 5 Screen 1, the site provides a clear phone booking number located at the top of the page in a large font.
- As shown in Box 6 Screen 3, the site uses a printable version symbol to allow users to have a printable document for different travelling or package information.

B. Recommendation

❖ *Navigation tactics*

Thomas Cook can improve their Egyptian local interface navigation tactics through the following:

✓ Using a simple search engine

✓ Using FAQs for navigating the required information.

❖ *Navigation effort*

Thomas Cook can adapt their Egyptian local interface to minimise the navigation effort through the following:

✓ Locating useful links at the top of the pages such as:

1. Travel tips and site map links are located at the bottom of the page. This does not make it easily recognized by users. The travel tips link should be located at the top of the page due to the useful information it contains about safety travelling tips and a destination guide.
2. Similarly, the site map link should be easily located within the users' visual field to quickly explore the site content.
3. Our branches link is located at the bottom of the page. This makes it easily missed by the users. Identifying the travel agent's physical branches is important information, which should be located at the top of the page.

❖ *Links*

Thomas Cook can adapt their Egyptian local interface links through the following:

✓ Avoiding links that open in the same page such as the one provided for trip package information. Within page links are mentally unexpected by the Egyptian users. Researchers such as Welie (2001) and Evers (2001) realised that the interface usability problems can be eliminated by understanding the users' mental model. The users' mental understanding results in reducing the "users' error", which increases the users' risk concerns (Marcus and Gould, 2000). This can be done by adapting Egyptian consumers' page links to open in a separated page.

7.2.2 Emotional vs. functionality role

A. Assessment

- There are no welcoming words on the site home page. The site does not even show some group relation themes such as a customer agent smiling, welcoming users or servicing a group of customers in a friendly way.
- A warmer appeal is adapted on their branches page. As shown in Box 7 Screen 2, the page shows friendly and helpful treatment of customers at the physical branches.
- The site enables a direct contact with customers. This is clear through the customer phone number access supported with warm and helpful themes

such as "need help booking?" as shown in Box 8 Screen 1 on the home page.

- The site is poor in encouraging users' communication.

B. Recommendation

For the Egyptian consumer, the site can be emotionally adapted through applying more welcoming words, strong group relation and smiling pictures on the home page. Additionally, the customer service phone number should be visible on all the pages not only the home page. This reflects their willingness to build a strong relation with their customers. Finally, the emotional appeal of the Egyptian local site can be improved by allowing users' contact. This can be done using a message board or guest book to view user experience and users contact.

7.2.3 Family and group vs. individual role

A. Assessment

- The site is adapted for a high level of information consistency and harmony. This gives the site page a good consistent look by ensuring that all the viewed information is related to a single required destination.
- The site maintains a home page picture that views groups of tourists as shown in Box 9 Screen 1.
- The site uses outbound links to facilitate the users' connection to local sites with useful travel guide information.

B. Recommendations

The family and group look are not well structured within this site. They are contradicting the family and group appeal by using a site banner that shows an empty beach picture. More consistent group and family themes need to be adopted for the Egyptian local site.

7.2.4 Dependency vs. independence role

A. Assessment

- The site uses good dependent expressions such as "we plan.. you enjoy" as shown in Box 10 Screen 1. This is supporting the dependent nature of the targeted users.

❖ *User reviews and testimonials*

- As shown in Box 11 Screen 3, the site considers the users' connection to social networks such as Facebook. This supports the site users, who are characterized by a high level of independence while taking buying decisions.

B. Recommendation

❖ *User reviews and testimonials*

Thomas Cook can adapt their Egyptian local interface links through the following:

✓ The site ignores customer-to-customer interactive features that support the dependent nature of Egyptian users. This can be enhanced by allowing the users to view other tourists' reviews or to see an experienced evaluation of the offered service.

7.2.5 Image lexical context role

A. Assessment

❖ *Interface general aesthetics*

- The home page does not depend on much text to represent different text or information.
- All the information is visualized through images to gain the users' attention.
- Different package information is viewed in an unattractive way, where a lot of text is used to describe the package information.
- The text information is not supported by a different range of varied pictures to view each destination and its main attractions
- The entire home page horizontal navigation bar comprises one colour
- The site depends on a good size graphical representation of most of the links as shown in Box 12 Screen 1. Most of the images are colourful and attractive.
- The site is very poor in visual media, such as video, audio and virtual tools.

❖ *Text*

- The text used by the site reflects a good interface image context. As shown in Box 13 Screen 1, a different range of text fonts and sizes are used. Besides, a good contrast between text and background is maintained.

❖ *Interface colour*

- The site depends on a consistent combination of blue colours.

B. Recommendations

❖ *Interface general aesthetics*

✓ The site will benefit from using colour coding on their navigation bar to identify each link and its related content.

✓ The site follows a static view around the pages. There is a need to consider adding a more animation effect for attracting Egyptian users.

- ❖ *Text*
- ✓ Using more than one text colour will be more attractive for Egyptian users.
- ❖ *Colour*
- ✓ In general, the site colours need to be warmer. A yellow or red colour can be combined with the applied blue colour to give the site a warmer feeling.

7.2.6 Oral communication vs. written communication

A. Assessment

- The site has a clear customer service contact number on the top of their home page.
- The site uses a good word-of-mouth communication tool. As shown in Box 14 Screen 3, the site allows users to connect through Facebook to like or dislike interested offers and recommend them to their friends.

B. Recommendations

The site needs to be enriched with oral communication tools such as live chat with an expert or a free call service. Different package and travel information presented on the site can be communicated effectively if it is viewed using videos done by a customer representative.

7.3 Exploring British Airways Egyptian local site

British Airways is one of the few airline sites that have varied adapted local home pages for consumers from different countries. Most of the other airline sites use a similar home page for consumers from different countries. Therefore, British Airways represents an interesting case for examining how they adapt their local home pages. Examples of their screens are shown in Figures 7.4 and 7.5.

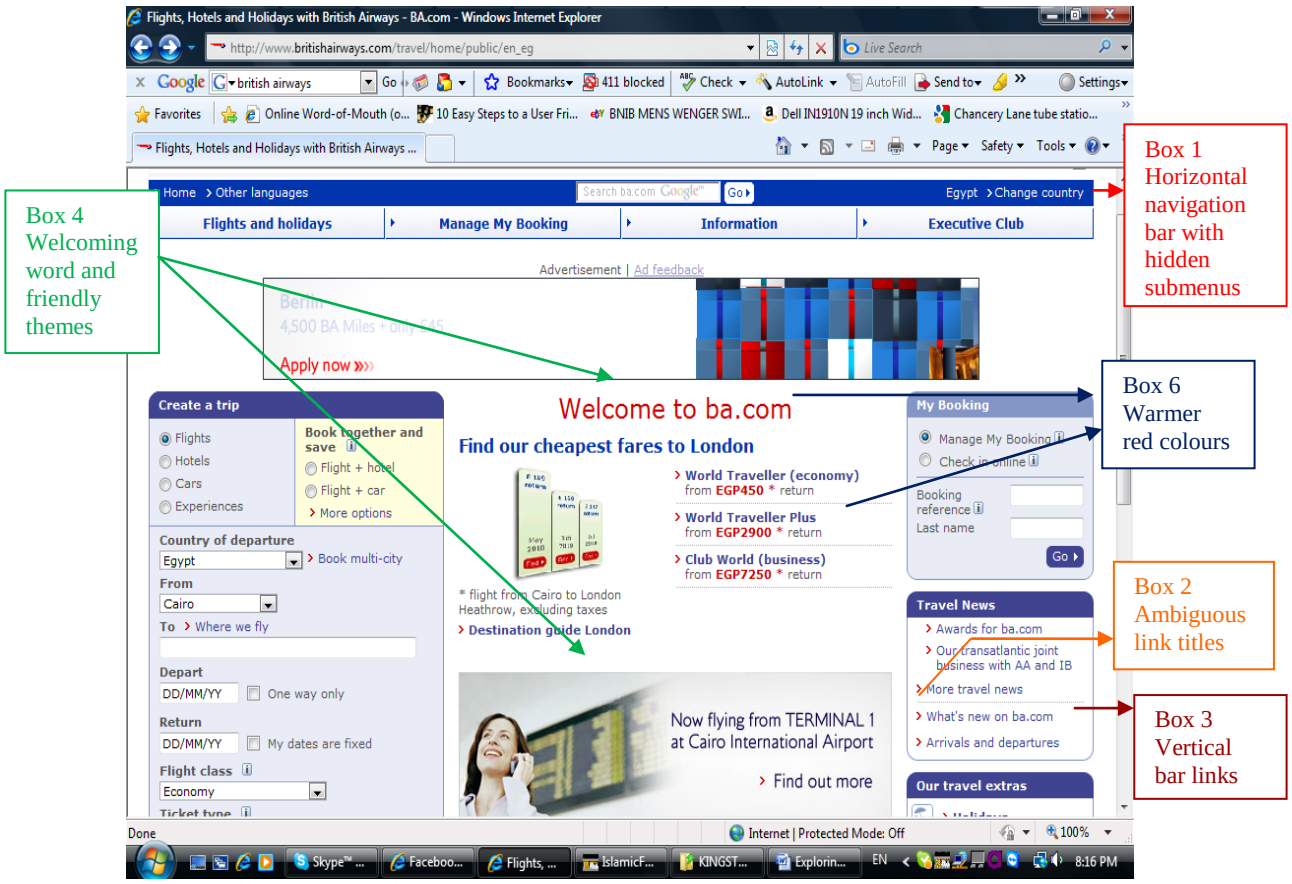


Figure 7.4 – British Airways Egypt local site – Screen 1

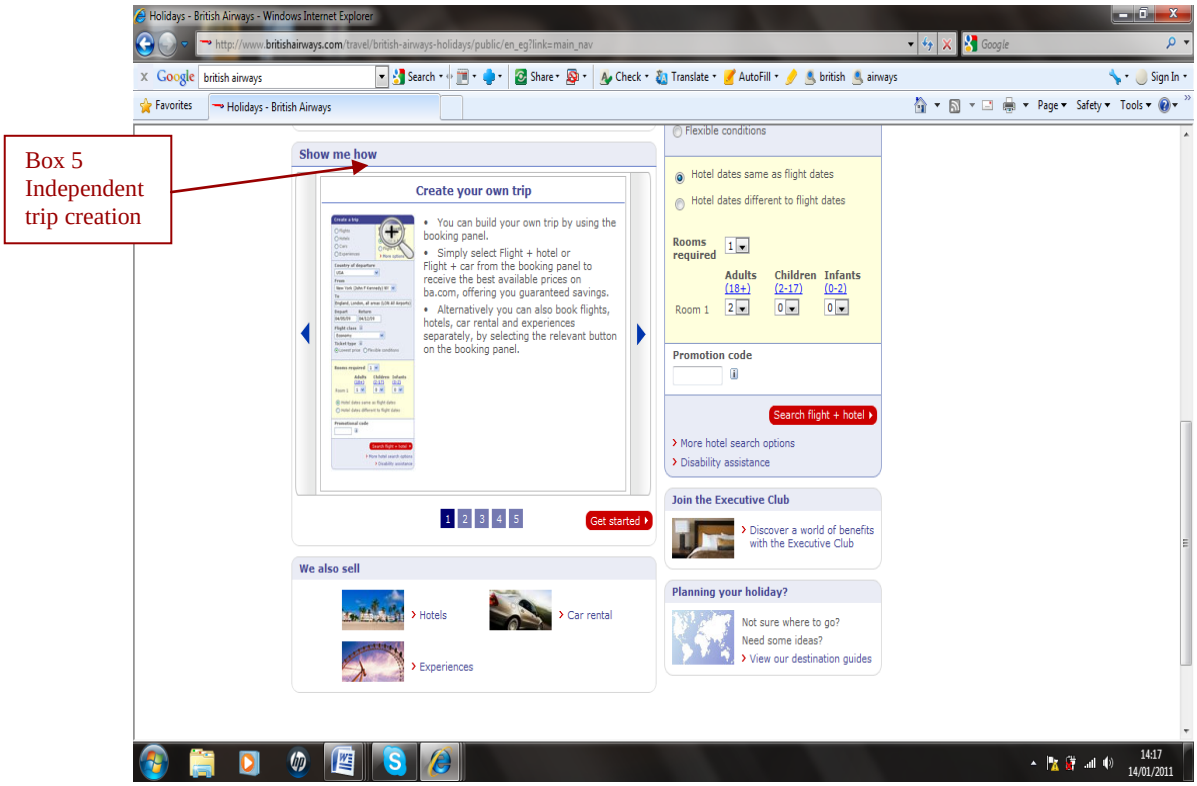


Figure 7.5 – British Airways Egypt local site – Screen 2

7.3.1 High risk vs. low risk concern

A. Assessment

❖ *Navigation device*

British Airways depends on certain navigation devices for Egyptian consumers as follows:

- The site depends on a horizontal navigation bar for exploring the site content. However, the navigation bar consists of many hidden submenus as shown in Box 1 Screen 1.
- The site benefits from using a site index link. However, this link is located at the bottom of the page, which may be missed by the users

❖ *Navigation tactics*

British Airways depends on certain navigation tactics for Egyptian consumers as follows:

- FAQs are used as a main aspect of reducing the risk associated with unknowns.
- The site benefits from using a simple search engine and site index for quick access to the required information.

❖ *Navigation effort*

British Airways minimizes the navigation effort encountered by Egyptian consumers as follows:

- Most of the important and frequently accessed information is located at the top of the page.
- The site depends on many filters in their search such as price and flight class allowing users to get the best result that suits their needs.
- The site allows different searching options within the same page such as hotels, cars and experience to minimise the number of pages accessed by users.

❖ *Links*

- As shown in Box 2 Screen 1, some links reflect ambiguity such as “now flying from Terminal 1 at Cairo International Airport ... find out more”.
- The site depends on similar sounding link titles such as holidays and experience. Holidays involve trying to enjoy a new experience. Therefore, the two links may be quite similar to Egyptian users and tends to confuse them.
- All site links are set up to open in a new window which suits Egyptian users’ mental expectations toward Web interfaces.

❖ *Page scrolling*

- British Airways maintains a short page scrolling.
- *Web page symbols*
- British Airways ensures a clear information description on their site by using the symbol. The site may benefit from using a print sign for pages that contain detailed information such as destination guides pages.

B. Recommendations

❖ *Navigation device*

British Airways can improve their Egyptian local interface navigation device through the following:

✓ Considering the importance of the site index for locating information, it should be located at the top of the page. It should be easily accessed by the users at first glance without page scrolling.

✓ From the analysis of the British Airways site it is clear that there are some main links; these are holidays, hotels, car rental and experience, instead of placing those links within a vertical bar called "our travel extras" as shown in Box 3 Screen 1.

❖ ***Navigation tactics***

British Airways can improve their Egyptian local interface navigation tactics through the following:

✓ FAQs is one of the most important icons that should be within the site visible menu.

❖ ***Navigation effort***

British Airways can adapt their Egyptian local interface to minimise the navigation effort through the following:

✓ A clearer navigation menu with permanently visible icons should be adapted. This can be done by applying menu bars with the most important and frequently used icons.

❖ *Links*

British Airways can adapt their Egyptian local interface links through the following:

✓ British Airways should avoid using ambiguous terms such as find out more.

✓ British Airways should maintain clearer link titles and avoid ambiguous terms.

✓ British Airways should maintain a unique link title for each link. British

Airways uses the experience link for the attraction pre-booking service. Alternatively, the booking attraction title can be used to maintain a clearer link and avoid confusion with the holidays link.

- ✓ Clear page body links can be adopted for each link to avoid users' long page scrolling.
- ❖ *Web page symbols*

British Airways can adapt their Egyptian local interface symbols through the following:

- ✓ The site should facilitate trading transactions by providing quick access to the online booking service on their home page.
- ✓ British Airways should consider placing a store locator link for a quick access to their local physical branches. Providing Egyptian users with physical branch information is more likely to reduce their uncertainty concerns.

7.3.2 Emotional vs. functionality role

A. Assessment

- Although British Airways uses English on their site, they still effectively maintain a warmer appeal on their Egyptian local interface. As shown in Box 4 Screen 1, the site uses a welcoming word in a big warm red font together with pictures that reflect friendly smiling themes.
- British Airways are trying to maintain good relations with their customers through their executive clubs.

B. Recommendations

- ✓ British Airways may enhance the Egyptian interface's friendly, warm look by adding a direct contact number to customer service support and making it visible on all site pages.
- ✓ British Airways should consider facilitating the consumer interactive features for Egyptian users. This may be in the form of a message board or guest book to share their contact details and describe their experience with British Airways.

7.3.3 Family and group vs. individual role

A. Assessment

- British Airways ensures a high level of consistency and harmony for the information presented on their site. By clicking on a specific destination, the users view relevant information about the selected destination. No extra information interrupts users.

A. Recommendations

- ✓ British Airways need to enhance the family and group look of their Egyptian local interface. This can be done by using some pictures and themes that reflect families travelling with British Airways.
- ✓ Additional themes and pictures can be used to reflect the special treatment of each family member such as children and elderly people when flying with British Airways.
- ✓ Group orientation may be maintained by using some outbound links allowing users to access local sites for useful information.

7.3.4 Dependency vs. independence role

A. Assessment

- The Egyptian local site of British Airways reflects a high level of independence. It seems that although they are aiming at Egyptian consumers, the site still maintains the independent English culture. For example, on their holidays page the main focus is on how users can create their own trip as shown in Box 5 Screen 2. Users can still have the option of "do not know where to go"; in that case users can access the British Airways destination guides. But having a look at the two options it is clear how the site emphasizes creating users' own trips. Creating users' own trips is presented on a larger space of the page with an extra description compared to the other option of does not know where to go. Furthermore, if the user chooses the second option of do not know where to go and accesses the British Airways guides, not much help and support are given. This may be ideas or advice about the best place to go or suggestions from British Airways.

B. Recommendation

The Egyptian local interface needs to support the dependent nature of Egyptian consumers following the recommended guides below.

- ✓ The Egyptian local interface should be supported by an expert view and advice on how to do so instead of leaving them to plan their own trip.
- ❖ *User reviews and testimonials*
- ✓ British Airways may support their users while taking a buying decision by enabling them to review experienced users' British Airways services review.
- ✓ British Airways may also ensure connecting users through social networks to gain their friends' advice regarding the service provided by British Airways.

7.3.5 Image context vs. lexical content role

A. Assessment

❖ *Interface general aesthetics*

- British Airways depends on a lot of text to describe information.
- British Airways' Egyptian local home page views many text links without graphical representation.
- British Airways destination guide pages show a lot of text to describe each destination.
- British Airways site depends on static content and pictures.

❖ *Text*

- British Airways' Egyptian local interface maintains a good contrast between text and background.
- British Airways' Egyptian local interface maintains a good use of different text styles and a warm red colour is used as shown in Box 6 Screen 1.

❖ *Colour*

- In general, the British Airways Egyptian local interface colours are cold, such as blue and white.

B. Recommendations

❖ *Interface general aesthetics*

✓ British Airways' site needs to adapt an image context version for their Egyptian local site.

✓ British Airways may consider adopting a bigger graphical link in the main page body to attract Egyptian users.

✓ British Airways may consider supporting text with more images to describe each destination.

✓ British Airways' Egyptian local interface should be supported by rich media to visualise each destination using virtual tours and videos.

✓ British Airways needs to consider adding some animation effects and graphics for attracting Egyptian consumers.

❖ *Text*

✓ British Airways' Egyptian local home page bar can be designed to have different colours for identifying different links and their related page content.

❖ *Colour*

✓ British Airways' Egyptian local interface should be enriched with a warmer combination of colours such as red and yellow for their local Egyptian site.

7.3.6 Oral communication vs. written communication

A. Assessment

- The site heavily depends on written communication such as email contact and email forms for customer complaints.
- The telephone contact details are located at the end of the British Airways home page.
- By viewing the British Airways contact page it is clear that the email service is located at the top of the contact page. British Airways started by providing a different email contact, questions and answers regarding different concerns.

B. Recommendations

- ✓ British Airways may consider reordering the contact page details of the Egyptian local interface to stress oral telephone communication.
- ✓ British Airways may enrich their Egyptian local interface with other oral communication tools such as a chat service.
- ✓ British Airways may replace the written destination information with videos used to describe each destination on their Egyptian local interface.
- ✓ For collecting users' feedback, British Airways may depend on word-of-mouth tools instead of formal email forms. This can be maintained through a recommend to a friend link or expressing interests through online social networks.

7.4 Exploring Alforsan Tours

Alforsan Tours is one of the most famous local travel agents for Egyptian consumers. It provides a range of international, internal and religious tours to their consumers. Therefore, it represents a good example for how the Egyptian local agents develop their sites. Examples of their site page screens are shown in Figures 7.6, 7.7, 7.8 and 7.9.

Figure 7.6 – Alforsan Tours – Screen 1

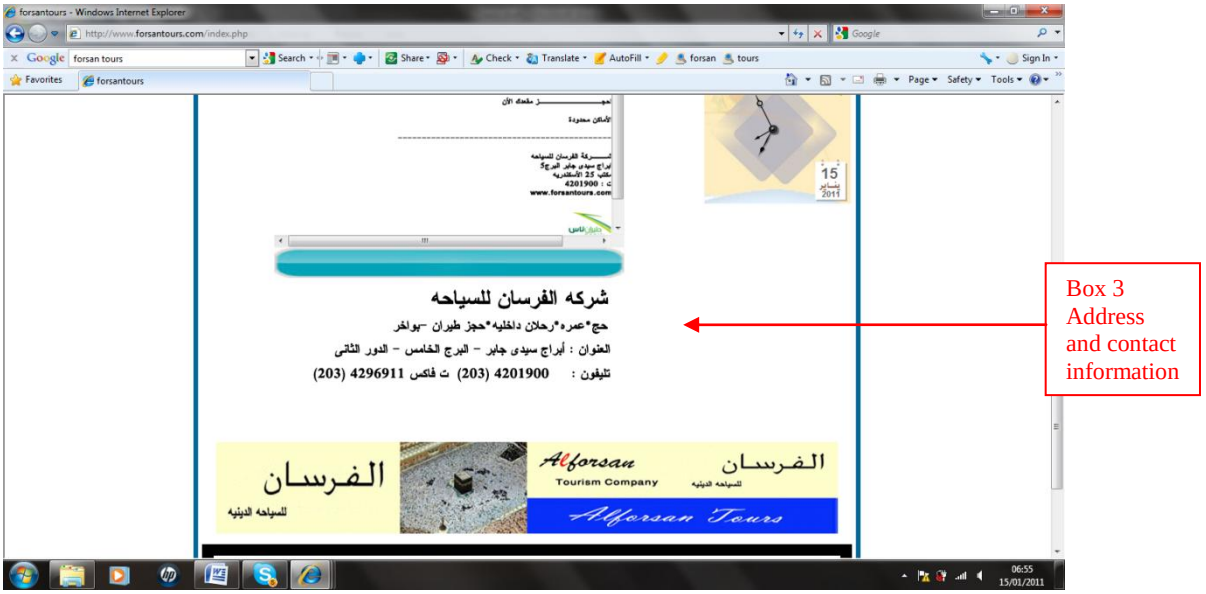


Figure 7.7 – Alforsan Tours – Screen 2

Figure 7.8 – Alforsan Tours – Screen 3

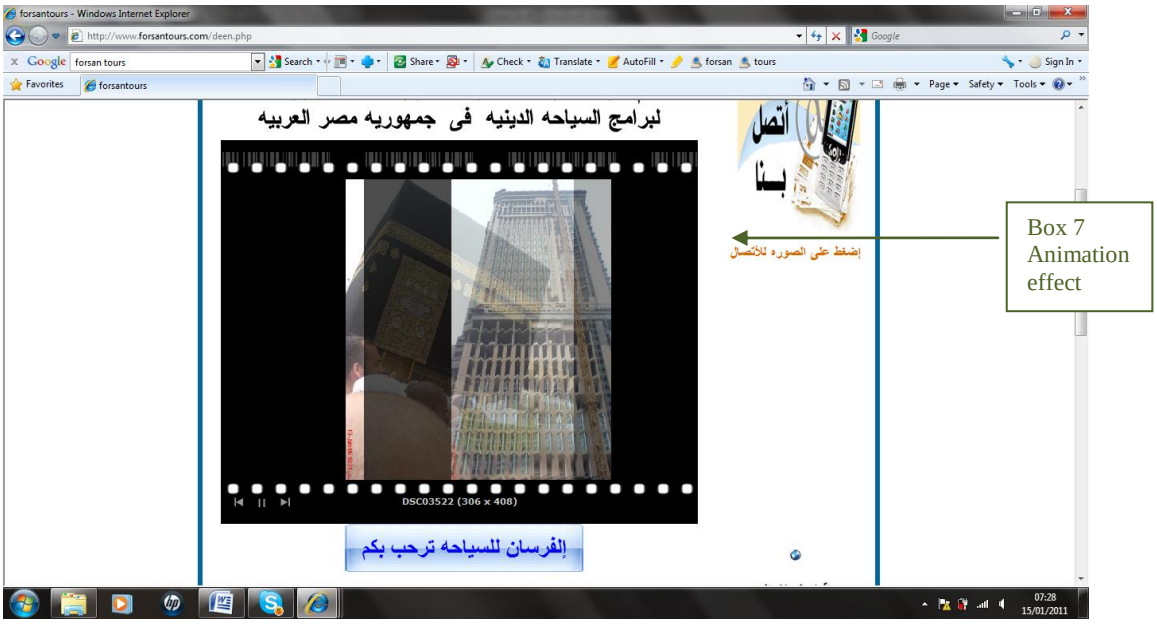


Figure 7.9 – Alforsan Tours – Screen 4

7.4.1 High risk vs. low risk concern

A. Assessment

❖ *Navigation device*

Alforsan Tours depends on the following navigation devices

- The site depends on a horizontal navigation bar for exploring their main service as shown in Box 1 Screen 1.

❖ *Navigation tactics*

Alforsan Tours depends on the following navigation tactics:

- Site map
- Simple search engine
- FAQs

❖ *Navigation effort*

Alforsan Tours minimizes their interface navigation effort through the following:

- The navigation bar contains only permanently visible links with no hidden sub-links.
- All of the important information is easily located at the top of the pages.

❖ *Links*

- The site link is achievable through very clear, logic, and familiar titles to view the different services offered by the agent. For example, some link titles such as internal tourism, international tourism and religious tourism are used to explore the travel agent service.
- As shown in Box 2 Screen 1, the site graphical link is just a very clear, obvious representative image such as the mobile phone used for the contact link.
- There are no similar sounds or ambiguous links titles.
- Alsorsan Tours avoids any abbreviations for the link titles.
- All the links open in a new window for exploring different services required by users.

❖ *Page scrolling*

- Alforsan Tours adapts short pages to locate much of the information with no effort.

❖ *Web page symbols*

- Alforsan Tours maintains very clear information on their site; there is no need to use questions symbols for further information clarification.
- Users are allowed to get a printable version of all the trip programmes and package details.
- As shown in Box 3 Screen 3, Alforsan Tours tries to facilitate the trading transactions on their site by providing their local branch address together with a phone contact on their home page. However, this information is located at the bottom of the home page. Due to the importance of that information, it would be

better to locate it on the top of the page.

B. Recommendations

❖ *Navigation device*

Alforsan Tours can improve their interface navigation device through the following:

✓ Using a site map to help users explore their interface.

❖ *Navigation effort*

Alforsan Tours can minimise their interface navigational effort through the following:

✓ Allowing users to personalise the viewed information using different options.

✓ Viewing information using tabs to organise related pieces of information.

7.4.2 Emotional vs. functionality role

A. Assessment

- The site is enriched with a good emotional appeal. Box 4 Screen 1 pointed to the warm and friendly welcoming words emphasised by Alforsan Tours. These words are "Since 25 years we have been keen to satisfy our customers' desires. This is done by offering our customers all the possible ways to relax and enjoy their trips. In addition, our religious trips allow customers to reach the highest possible spiritualistic feeling".
- The soft words are supported with soft background music to enhance the warm emotional appeal of their site. Soft, friendly, warm words together with the soft background music to give the site the perfect emotional environment that suits Egyptian consumers.
- The site tries to facilitate the consumers' interactive communication by showing how many users are online, where they are from and how many visitors accessed the site on a particular day.

B. Recommendations

✓ The consumer interactivity can be enhanced by adding applications such as a guest book or users' message board, allowing users to share and express their individual experience with the travel agent and the service provided.

7.4.3 Family and group vs. individual role

A. Assessment

- The site ensures a high consistency and harmony for the information viewed on one page. A separate page is maintained to view each trip schedule and details.
- As a local Egyptian travel agent their site reflects family and group themes. As

shown in Box 5 Screen 1, the site home page shows a picture of people performing the hajj obligation.

- Group themes and pictures are used on the internal tourism page; which shows Alexandria beach and streets full of life.

B. Recommendations

✓ The site may still need to depend on some outbound links that express useful information about the hajj performance rules and the common mistakes to be avoided.

7.4.4 Dependency vs. independence role

A. Assessment

- The site reflects independent thoughts and expressions. On their home page users can click on links to view ready-planned programmes.
- The site uses independent expressions on their pages such as we prepared good programmes for you, just click to view.

B. Recommendations

✓ The site needs to emotionally support their users. This can be achieved by showing different programme reviews of tours.

❖ *User reviews and testimonials*

✓ Allowing users to connect with friends through social networks to gain their advice and support.

7.4.5 Image context vs. lexical content role

A. Assessment

❖ *Interface general aesthetics*

- The site maintains a good image context; not much text is used.
- The site depends on more pictures to represent different information.
- As shown in Box 6 Screen 4, attractive pictures are used to view different places to visit in Egypt for internal trips.
- Larger link sizes are used on the site home page and their religious tourism page. On the religious tourism page, links are viewed in big table cells.
- Animation effects are added to pictures used on the site for attracting users. As shown in Box 7 Screen 5, the site does not maintain a static view of their pages; different pictures are displayed using animation effects.
- More animation effects are used to display the links on the home page navigation bar.

- The site uses rich media tools such as panorama to view the range of available destinations.

❖ *Text*

- The site maintains good contracts between text and site background.
- As shown in Box 8 Screen 1, different text styles are used with warmer red colours to enhance the attractive look of the site.

❖ *Colour*

- The site uses warmer colours combination such as red, yellow and orange with the main blue colour. This enhances the warmer look of the site.

B. Recommendations

❖ *Interface general aesthetics*

✓ The Alforsan Tours site can be adapted to use different colours for the horizontal bar links to identify different pages with different content. This will help to enhance the image context applied on their interface.

7.4.6 Oral communication vs. written communication

A. Assessment

- The site mainly depends on the telephone to communicate with their customers. A clear telephone contact together with the agent address is shown on their home page.

B. Recommendations

✓ More oral communication tools such as online chat need to be added to facilitate communicating with consumers.

✓ The site needs to consider using visual communication tools such as videos. One example can be a video that describes the hajj service and their different range of internal trips.

✓ Different word-of-mouth communications tools need to be applied such as recommend the site or a certain trip to a friend using email or social networks.

7.5 Patterns and issues

Although the three sites explored above relate to different travel services with different languages applied, they still share similarities in the way they have been adapted for Egyptian consumers. They offer users a clear metaphor that helps to minimise the risk concern of the Egyptian users. This is emphasised by Marcus and Gould (2000), who mentioned that culture with high uncertainty avoidance should be provided with a clear

and simple metaphor with limited choices. As expressed by Marcus and Gould, this can be done by using "navigation schemes intended to prevent users from being lost". This was shown by the research participants who express concerns about navigating the travel sites using submenus and hidden icons. However, it was surprising that the international sites (BA and Thomas Cook) adopt more tools to reduce the Egyptian users' navigational effort compared to the Arabic language site of the Egyptian agent. These tools include allowing users to filter their search based on a specific budget and offering users multiple searching options within the same page.

From the exploration of the three sites it was revealed that they share the need for adopting oral communicational tools, such as online chat service and a destination video guide. In addition, the dependency culture of the Egyptian travel consumers needs to be considered on the three sites. Despite the fact that the Alforsan Tours site considers the dependency culture of Egyptian consumers by offering prepared planned packages compared to BA and Thomas Cook, Alforsan Tours needs to make some effort in adapting their site to incorporate the dependency culture of Egyptian travellers. This can be done by depending on social networks and expert reviews to help users gain advice and support. However, Alforsan Tours strongly adapt their interface to maintain the image context and the emotional appeal compared to BA and Thomas Cook. This is probably due to the fact that Alforsan Tours is designed by an Egyptian Web design company, who share a similar culture to the consumers.

From the analysis of the three sites, it is revealed that the Web interfaces are no longer just a matter of language modification (Würtz, 2006). This is clear from the shared issues between the two international sites (BA and Thomas Cook), who use English and the local Egyptian site, which uses Arabic. They are all adapted to reach a clear simple metaphor regarding of the used language. Besides, they all share the need to incorporate an oral communication tool to effectively reach Egyptian consumers. This due to the fact that travel sites copy each other regardless of their targeted users' culture. Moreover, English language sites, such as BA and Thomas Cook, are successfully adapted for high risk concern consumers by reducing the users' navigational effort compared to the Arabic language Egyptian local site. In addition, while the BA site and Alforsan Tours utilizes different languages, both sites are successfully adapted with good emotional words for enhancing the emotional appeal of the local Egyptian page. In fact, the emotional wording in both English and Arabic are still similarly attractive for Egyptian consumers. Therefore, it can be argued that Web interfaces should be localised

based on the users' or the targeted group's cultural background regardless of the language.

7.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the second approach used to evaluate the usefulness of the E-CAF. The chapter explored three travel sites representing three different travel services. This is done by using the checklists provided in chapter 5. The exploration is done to analyse the extent to which the Egyptian local sites are well adapted for Egyptian consumers. The end of this exploration revealed that travel sites' adaption is no longer just a matter of adapting a local language. Effective travel interface adaption can be reached by adopting the targeted users' culture regardless of the site language. Thus, site language cannot be simply considered as the only factor used to maintain a local travel interface. The E-CAF provides a good basis for incorporating the cultural variables that can be used for adapting a local travel interface.

8. Evaluating the designers' travel interface generating questions

8.1 Overview

Chapter 5 introduced three different methods for using the E-CAF. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the first two methods. This chapter is an overview of the third method of evaluating the E-CAF, which is evaluating the travel site design generating questions listed in chapter 5 using experts review analysis. The chapter aims to discuss the usefulness of the design generating questions as a tool for generating the clients' requirements. In order to do so, the chapter starts with evaluating each group of questions individually. This is followed by generally reviewing the design questions' usefulness as perceived by the experts.

8.2 Expert reviews and the design generating questions

Three Egyptian professional Web design companies have been consulted to evaluate the design generating questions listed in chapter 5. These are Dream Soft Company, IBM Designers' Group Company and KambaHost Company. The first agency is located at Tanta; it is a growing company established in 1991. This company mainly offers services to the Egyptian local market and is currently aiming to extend their market globally. The second company is IBM designers' group, which is located at Tanat and offers designing services globally to both international and Arabic speaking clients. The final company is located at Alexandria; the company provides a wide range of designing services to Arabic speaking clients. The three companies are representative of Egyptian Web designing companies who offer a wide range of designing services to Egyptian, Arabic speakers and International clients.

One representative (D1, D2 and D3), who is responsible for collecting the clients' designing requirements, is interviewed from each company. The person who is responsible for gathering the clients' requirement is called the instruction designer specialist by the designing companies. D1, D2 and D3 instruction designers are recommended to the researcher by the Dream Soft, IBM Designers' Group and KambaHost managers respectively. This was done through semi-structured interviews aiming to review the process of clients' requirement analysis and to discover whether the established design generating questions are useful in this process.

8.2.1 High risk vs. Low risk concern

The consulted instruction designers agreed that the high risk concern questions are

useful in generating the clients' requirements if classified into direct and indirect questions. Examples of indirect questions are "Do you suggest specific navigation devices for your travel site?", "Do you suggest specific navigation tools for minimizing the navigation effort?", "What type of navigation bars do you prefer, horizontal or vertical?" and "Do you need short or long scrolling for your travel site pages?" D1 stated that "these questions contain professional terms such as navigation, scrolling and vertical or horizontal bars. All of these terms are difficult, especially for clients who have been engaged in the design process for the first time".

D1, D2 and D3 argued that the previous questions can be simplified if asked indirectly through viewing examples of competitors' sites or viewing examples of suggested similar domains. For example, D2 stated that "one way of acquiring answers for questions with professional expressions is asking clients to list two or three preferred competitors' sites and focusing on what they prefer exactly in each site. Asking clients' to list what exactly they prefer about each competitor's site helps us to make the process of generating answers of questions that contains professional terms easier and simpler. In that way, we indirectly know what navigation devices or page scrolling length each client prefers without involving them in dealing with professional terms, which they usually do not understand". Similarly, D3 argued that "usually in those types of professional questions we prefer to show our clients examples of suggested similar domains sites and direct their attention to the navigational devices used by different sites to select what suits them. This makes the process simple for our clients and helps us to get clearer answers for questions that contain unclear professional terms".

D1, D2 and D3 argued that other examples of questions that can be asked indirectly are "Is there any information or links you want to make permanently visible on the entire travel site?" and "What content do you want users to catch first on the travel site?" D3 argued that answers for these types of questions can be gained indirectly through working with the client on a site draft. D3 stated that "after preparing a primarily site draft for the client, we discuss issues such as reordering the site content to make something more visible and whether they prefer to keep specific information permanently visible on all site pages". Similarly, D2 stated that "usually these questions are not asked directly; we work with our clients on a preliminary draft to rearrange the site contents. Working on a draft helps to gain clear answers about the pages' content arrangement". D1 confirms this by saying that "clients cannot easily identify page content location without viewing a site draft".

Examples of directly asked questions are "What type of information do you want to view on your travel site?", "Do you suggest a specific structure for the travel information?" and "Do you suggest specific tools for facilitating your trading transactions?". D1 stated that "these questions should be asked directly to our clients. I cannot gain the answers obtained from these questions except by asking them directly". This is confirmed by D2 and D3 who argued that these questions are examples of the necessary questions that should be asked directly to clients through the requirement analysis stage.

In general D1, D2 and D3 find it useful to use the high risk concern vs. low risk concern questions at the stage of generating the clients' requirements after classifying them into two types of question. These are directly gained answers through directly asked questions and indirectly gained answers through different ways such as viewing competitors' sites, viewing similar domains or working on a preliminary site draft.

8.2.2 Emotional vs. functionality

Emotional vs. functionality questions have been generally realised by the instruction as an important tool for generating useful information from clients before engaging in the design process. For example, D1 stated that "the questions related to the offline promotional message, branding and online communication with users are very helpful tools for generating important information at an earlier stage of the requirement analysis". The importance of emotional vs. functionality questions has been confirmed by D2 who argued that "I think that it is very important to start with asking clients about what their offline message looks like and how they prefer to interact with their online users. Personally I think that obtaining that type of information will guide me through the design process".

More specifically, D1, D2 and D3 agreed that they prefer to reorder emotional vs. functionality questions to start with "Give us some information about what your offline promotional message looks like. Are you planning to continue with the same promotional message online?" Additionally, they prefer to ask their clients to give them some examples of their offline promotional message instead of about your offline promotional message. For example, D1 argued that "Asking about clients' offline promotional message is a very important question to start with. I prefer to ask my clients to show me examples of their offline message instead of giving me information about their offline message".

Moreover, D1, D2 and D3 agreed that asking their clients to show them examples of

their offline message can help to avoid more detailed questions such as "list any important words you want your users to associate with your travel agency brand" and "what is the dominant appeal you want to give your travel site?" For example, D2 stated that "information gained through questions such as list any important words you want your users to associate with your brand and what is the dominant appeal you want to give your site can be obtained indirectly by asking clients to show me examples of their offline promotional messages".

Interaction questions such as "Do you suggest specific tools for maintaining online relations with your travel consumers?" and "Do you think users' interaction is an important aspect to consider on your site?" are considered by the instruction designer as vital questions in the requirement analysis stage. For example, D3 stated that "these two interaction questions are very important and should be asked early in the requirement analysis. Clients should be asked directly how they prefer to interact with their users and whether they like to allow users' interaction on their site before engaging in the design process".

In general, D1, D2 and D3 find it very useful to see an example of the clients' offline promotional message during the requirement analysis stage. In fact this is considered as a vital step for reaching a successful Web site design.

8.2.3 Family and group vs. individual role

Family and group questions such as "Are you planning to use any external links on your travel site? If yes, list sites you want to link with your pages" and "Do you suggest a specific content organisation for page harmony?" provides the instruction with an effective tool that saves time and effort during the design process. For example, D2 stated that "asking clients to suggest a specific content organisation is really a good question that helps to save time and effort during the design process. Usually clients commented on the content organisation while showing them the preliminary draft; therefore it will be a good idea to ask them during the requirement gathering stage if they suggest a specific content organisation". Similarly, D3 argued that "asking clients about the content organisation at the requirement analysis stage gives me a good idea that helps to save a lot of time required for reorganising the site content to reach a final agreed site design".

Asking about any external links clients would like to link with their site pages received a similar interest by the instruction designers. D3 stated that "it is really a good idea to ask clients to list any sites they would like to link to their site during the requirement

analysis stage. This provides me with early information that helps me during the design process". On the other hand, D1 and D2 argued that they are used to requesting that their clients list external links required on their site before engaging in the design process.

D1, D2 and D3 confirm that they use the question which asks clients whether there are any pictures, themes or symbols they want to use on their site at the requirement analysis stage. They argued that they usually ask their clients to show them any specific pictures, themes or logos they would like to include on their site pages.

Generally, the instruction designers agreed that the family and group question provides them with a basis for collecting vital information that is required during the requirement analysis stage. This provides the instruction designers with early information that saves time and effort at a later stage of the Web designing process.

8.2.4 Dependency vs. independence

The first dependency vs. independence question that asks about any words or expressions to be avoided on the site did not receive any interest by the instruction designers. They argued that this kind of question cannot be asked directly to clients during the requirement analysis stage. Instead, they usually work on a preliminary draft with their clients to remove or add any word or expressions they like. For example, D1 stated that "It is very difficult to ask our client directly if they like to avoid any words or expressions on their site. This is because they usually do not know if they would like to avoid or add any word or expression unless working on a real preliminary draft. This makes things clearer for us and for our clients".

The instruction designers are interested in the dependency vs. independence question that asks the clients to describe their targeted users; dependent or independent and to describe suggested strategies for each type of user. D1, D2 and D3 argued that this type of question is very useful during the requirement analysis stage in helping clients to define their targeted users. Based on the expert reviews, defining the clients' targeted users and the suitable strategies for reaching them stand as important information required early at the requirement analysis stage to achieve a satisfied Web design. For example, D2 stated that "Asking clients to define whether their targeted users are dependent or independent will be a very important question during the requirement analysis stage. As described by most of our clients, their users need to be guided all the time or, as termed by you (the researcher), dependent users. Therefore, I personally think that this question will provide our clients with a good chance to define their

targeted users and what strategies they may suggest for attracting them". This is confirmed by D3, who commented on the same question by saying that "This question can be set as an effective tool for defining each clients' targeted users".

Moreover, the interviewed instruction designers agreed that they usually use a similar question to the one that asks to "List suggested tools for achieving customer-to-customer interactivity" during the requirement analysis stage. They argued that they always ask their clients whether they would like their users to interact and if they suggest specific tools for this interaction. Based on them this information can be easily gathered from clients by showing them some interaction tools used by other competitor site to select from.

8.2.5 Image vs. lexical context role

The instruction designers have confirmed that the image vs. lexical context questions are one of the most commonly used types of questions during the requirement analysis stage. D1, D2 and D3 agreed that examples of the commonly used questions are "Are you interested in developing your travel site with rich media such as video, audio or virtual tours?", "Do you have any graphics for your travel site?" and "Would you like to use any animated graphics or text?" For example, D1 stated that "these questions are commonly used for collecting the clients' requirements. Many people mistakenly think that a Web site is just a matter of graphics, media and animations. Therefore, most of our clients are interested in that kind of question. In addition, these questions are very helpful when starting with the design process to meet the clients' expectations". Similarly, D3 stated that "Graphics, animation and media questions are the core of the requirement analysis stage. They are easily answered by our clients and help to guide us during the design process stage".

However, the instruction designers argued that not all the provided questions can be asked as they are directly to the clients. Examples of these questions are asking about colours, colours contrast, using text or visual pages content and text styles. D1, D2 and D3 agreed that clients cannot easily decide about issues such as colours and text style without showing them examples to pick from. For example, D2 argued that "It is very difficult to ask clients directly about what colour they like or what text style they like; simply because clients cannot decide about these issues unless you show them real examples. Usually I pick some sites and ask my clients to select the colour, text style and probably what colour contrast they prefer". On the other hand, D3 stated that asking clients about these issues depends on whether the client has been involved in the

process of site design for the first time or not. Clients who are involved in the Web site design for the first time cannot decide easily about site colours and text styles. Those clients need to be guided by showing them real site examples to select from. On the other hand, clients who have previous experience in Web site design can easily determine what they are expecting about Web site colour, text and visual content without dealing with Web site templates.

D1, D2 and D3 complained about using questions that contains professional expressions such as "Are you interested in using graphical links on your travel site?" and "What size do you suggest for your page body links?" They argued that terms such as "body links" and "graphical links" are professional terms that cannot be easily understood by the clients. For example, D1 stated that "using professional expressions such as body links or graphical links are difficult for the client to understand. Perhaps asking about these issues can be simplified by showing the client templates of different link types to select what suits them. This makes things easier for our clients". D2 confirms this by saying that "I do not expect clients to understand professional terms such as different link types; therefore I usually show them templates to select from".

In general, the instruction designers agreed that the image vs. lexical context questions, whether asked directly or through using template examples, are useful during the requirements analysis stage. This is due to the importance of the information gained through these questions for the design process stage.

8.2.6 Oral communication vs. written communication

Instruction designers agreed that the communication questions provide an effective tool for gathering information about how each client prefers to operate and communicate with users online. For example, D1 stated that "communication details are very complicated on Web sites; clients have different preferences for communicating with their users. Asking clients about what tools they want to use when communicating with users early during the requirement analysis stage helps to gain some of the necessary information required to start the Web design". Similarly D2 argued that "I would really use questions such as what tools you want to use for communication with users? This question is necessary for gathering important information required during the requirement analysis stage".

In addition, the instruction designers find it useful to use questions such as "what tools do you want to use for gathering customers' feedback?" D3 stated that "Web sites provide a two-way communication tool; this helps clients to interact with their users

directly. Clients would like to gather their users' feedback to improve their service. Each client operates differently and would like to use different ways for gathering their users' feedback. Therefore, I think that this question is important when collecting the clients' requirements for reaching a satisfied design that matches how each client operates".

8.3 E-CAF evaluation: Web designers' expert reviews and E-CAF valuable implications

This section reviews the valuable implications of the E-CAF as perceived by the instruction designer. The E-CAF provides the instruction designers with new insights for handling and managing the process of gathering the clients' design requirements. This process is facilitated by the E-CAF that contributes in guiding the instruction designers to determine the best method of gathering the clients' requirements. These methods can vary from asking clients direct questions to offering competitors' examples and templates to select the most appropriate one. In general, the instruction designers confirmed that using the questions provided by the E-CAF offers new ideas about when and how to ask specific questions to the clients. This offers a deeper understanding and better management of the requirement gathering stage.

The instruction designers stated that they usually do not use a formal document for collecting the clients' requirements. However, they think that using the design generating questions as a formal document during the requirement analysis stage helps to report each client's design requirements. Each group of questions helps to report different clients' requirements regarding Web design. For example, emotional vs. functionality questions help to report information about the client promotional message and branding. The dependency vs. independence questions can be used as a tool for defining each client's targeted users and the best strategies for reaching them. Reporting each client's online communication strategies can be achieved using oral communication vs. written communication questions. The remaining group of questions, which are high risk vs. low risk concern, family and group vs. individual role and image vs. lexical context role can be used to report different designing aspects such as links, scrolling, navigation, Web colours and Web content organisation.

In addition to the requirement analysis stage, the design generating questions are identified to be useful at a later stage of the design process. This is when the instruction designers have to submit a report, which includes each client's design requirements, to

the designers' team. Using the design questions helps to report answers that contain detailed aspects of the client's design requirements. This report helps to guide the design team to establish each client's preliminary site draft. Table 8.1 recaps the contribution and benefits provided by each E-CAF category as well as the contribution of the overall E-CAF categories as perceived by the Web designing experts.

E-CAF categories	Contribution
High risk vs. low risk concern	• The high risk vs. low risk concern questions provides Web designers with important information regarding the required Web site functionality aspects such as scrolling, Web page structure, navigation tools and devices.
Emotional vs. functionality role	• The emotional vs. functionality questions contribute to gathering information about the clients' promotional message, branding and suggested interaction tools.
Family and group vs. individual role	• The family and group vs. individual role questions provide the designers with an effective tool for gathering information about page organisation and harmony. This provides designers with early information that saves time and effort during the design process.
Image context vs. lexical content role	• The image context vs. lexical content provides designers with some of the questions to gain the clients' interest, and therefore help to easily engage clients in the designing process.
Oral communication vs. written communication	• The oral communication vs. written communication questions provide Web designers with a useful tool for gathering information about the clients' preferred communication tools for interacting with users.
Dependency vs. independence role	• The dependency vs. independence question provide Web designers with the necessary tools required for encouraging the clients to define their targeted users and the suggested strategies for effectively reaching them. • The dependency vs. independence questions provide Web designers with vital information that is required for saving time and effort during the design process.

The overall E-CAF categories.	• The E-CAF questions guide the Web designers to identify the best method of gathering the clients' design requirements and therefore facilitate the requirement analysis process for both Web designers and clients. • The E-CAF helps the Web designers to gain a deeper understanding of the requirement analysis stage. • The E-CAF questions were identified as a vital tool for reporting the clients' design requirements. • The E-CAF questions contribute in reporting answers that can be submitted to the designers' team for identifying each client's requirements.

Table 8.1 - The E-CAF contribution as perceived by the Web designers' experts

8.4 Summary

This chapter reviews the usefulness of the design generating questions as perceived by the experts. They agreed that the design generating questions are useful during the requirement analysis stage. The questions offered by the E-CAF provided the instruction designers with a new insight and deeper understanding of the requirement gathering stage. This provides them with a useful tool to determine when and how to ask the clients about their design requirements. Determining the best method of gathering the clients' requirements helps to facilitate the requirement analysis stage for both designers and clients. This results in effectively gathering the clients' designing requirements and therefore facilitates the whole designing process.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Overview

This chapter starts with summarizing the stages of research development. It will then consider the key research findings in the light of the main cultural dimensions of the E-CAF. This will be followed by discussing the E-CAF evaluation based on the framework's theoretical and practical contributions. Finally, the chapter ends by reviewing the E-CAF cross-cultural, cross-sectors implications, its main limitations and by suggesting future research directions.

9.2 Research summary

It has been identified that the Internet as a medium has the ability to reach customers globally. This raises a debate between researchers about whether to globalise or consider the consumers' culture on such a global medium. This debate resulted in two Web design approaches: Web interfaces internationalization and localisation. Researchers such as Schlegelmilch and Rudolf (1998) and Jhonston and Johal (1999) have defended the idea of Web internationalization. They stated that the Internet is a global medium that has broken all cultural constraints, and therefore it can be argued that online consumers across cultures share similar values and beliefs.

On the other hand, Quelch and Klein (1996) have warned about the perception of the Internet as a global medium, and stress considering customers' cultural issues when marketing on such a global medium. Singh, Zaho and Hu (2003) identified the Web as quite a culturally sensitive medium. Similarly, Luna et al. (2002) confirmed that Web localisation contributes in decreasing the cognitive effort encountered by Web users. This positions Web localisation as an effective Web designing approach.

Researchers used two approaches to handle the users' cultural values on Web interfaces. The first approach is using the existing cultural models, such as those of Hofstede, Hall and Schwartz, to analyse the cultural adaption of local Web interfaces. Researchers such as Gong, Li and Stump (2007) and Singh et al. (2008) used only Hofstede's model to prove that Internet users are highly affected by their cultural background, which should be considered by marketers. Other researchers prefer to use other cultural models, such as Hall's and Schwartz's, combined with Hofstede's model to investigate the cultural effect on Web interfaces. For example, Heremeking (2005) assessed the cultural effect on Internet consumption behaviour using Hofstede's and Hall's context model.

The second approach for handling the cultural effect on Web interfaces depends on some of the interface elements such as language and colour to examine the varied preferences across cultures. This is done by Gibb and Matthaiakis (2006), who mainly used language as the basic element for constructing a Web localisation framework. Other researchers, such as Barber and Barber (1998), prefer to use colours as an indicator of cultural difference among local interfaces. Despite the importance of language and colour as an element to study culture and local Web interfaces, they cannot be considered as the only dimensions of culture. Culture is a very complex concept with a variety of dimensions.

While the first approach undertaken by Web localisation research overemphasises the cultural behaviour issues, the second approach mainly focuses on symbolic elements of Web interfaces such as colour and language. An effective Web localisation approach is defined by Singh and Pereira (2005) as one that considers three levels of cultural adaption on Web interfaces, which are perception, symbolism and behaviour. This definition clarifies the gap between the two previous Web localisation approaches existing in the literature. Therefore, there is a need for a Web localisation framework that combines Singh and Pereira's three levels of cultural adaption. There are two main attempts to overcome this limitation in the literature, and thus close the gap between the two previous Web localisation research approaches.

The first attempt was provided by Marcus and Gould (2000), who constructed the Web localisation framework using the three levels of cultural adaption provided by Singh and Pereira. Marcus and Gould assess Hofstede's model to assess the cultural impact on five of the user interface components: metaphor, mental model, navigation, interaction and interface appearance. The second attempt is Singh, Zaho and Hu's (2003) Web localisation framework; they raise the need for considering more than a cultural model to incorporate cultural behaviour on the Internet. They adapt Hall's and Hofstede's model to build a Web interfaces cultural adaption framework. Despite the fact that the previous Web localisation frameworks provide valuable guidelines for adapting a local travel interface, they still mainly depend on the existing cultural models, such as Hofstede's and Hall's, to investigate cultural behaviour on the Web interfaces. These cultural models are not mainly built to capture the cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour. Hofstede's cultural model is built to assess cultural values within the working environment (Soares et al., 2007). Therefore, it can be argued that a model such as Hofstede's is not applicable for investigating the cultural values of the online

consumers behaviour that are required for adapting an effective local Web interface. Similar inapplicability applied to both Schwartz's and Hall's cultural models. Schwartz's model simply identifies general cultural dimensions based on the analysis of different nations across various countries; while Hall's work handles the cultural values influencing communication patterns. This makes the previous cultural models unable to handle the cultural variables influencing online consumers' behaviour, and raises the need for a framework that incorporates the cultural behaviour of Internet users. Thus, this framework is more applicable for adapting local Web interfaces.

Travel services is one of the domains that have been ignored through Web localisation research. Tourism services is seen as a highly relevant sector for this research. This is due to the Internet marketing applicability of travel services. Burger (1997) argued that the travel services are applicable to Internet marketing due to their unique nature. This includes being an informational intensive product, high priced, having high involvement, heterogeneity and being a high risk product. Another reason for selecting the travel domain for this research is the cultural sensitivity of the services. Resisinger and Turner (1999) stated that travel services is an activity where the main focus is on the customer instead of the product itself. This type of service deals with a variety of international consumers with diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition, researchers such as Hsieh and Tsai (2008) and Resisinger and Turner (1999) raised the fact that the quality expectation toward a service such as travel is mainly driven from the cultural background of the consumers.

The previous arguments raised the importance of considering the consumers' culture within a sector such as travel services. Therefore, marketers need to consider consumers' culture for adapting an effective travel interface. In order to do so, there is a need for a framework that incorporates the cultural behaviour of the online consumers within a culturally sensitive domain such as travel services. It has been previously argued that the existing cultural frameworks, such as Hofstede's and Hall's, are inapplicable for incorporating the cultural behaviour of the online consumers. Therefore, the researcher faces a challenge of how to construct such a framework.

Chapter 3 addresses the method of constructing such a framework. The chapter justifies the appropriateness of the interpretive philosophy due to the explanatory nature of the research that seeks a critical understanding of the cultural perceptions and beliefs affecting online consumers' behaviour. After reviewing the possible methods of building the research framework, grounded theory is selected as the most suitable

method. This is due to the suitability of grounded theory to researchers who are interested in generating findings or theories grounded in the data (Shaw, 2003). In addition, grounded theory is useful in the phase of conceptual development and theory building (Dooley, 2002). Grounded theory is considered as a successful method in HCI research (Lazar et al., 2010), cultural research (Sen et al., 2007), consumer experience (Goulding, 2002) and tourist behaviour research (Martin and Woodside, 2008).

Chapter 4 reviews the process of establishing the research framework using grounded theory open and axial coding principles. Four data sets were reviewed and resulted in open and axial codes. The fourth data set revealed reaching the data saturation required by the grounded theory methodology. This ends with identifying and defining the main theoretical cultural categories that construct the research framework. This framework is called the electronic cultural adaption framework or E-CAF. Chapter 5 reviews the possible methods of using the E-CAF by travel marketers and Web designers.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 discuss E-CAF evaluation. Chapter 6 reviews the way of using the E-CAF to develop suitable online marketing strategies for the targeted online travel consumers, such as Egyptian consumers. These strategies have been evaluated using three travel marketing expert reviews. The E-CAF has been identified by travel marketers as a suitable tool for profiling travel consumers and identifying their cultural needs and expectations. Chapter 7 discusses the suitability of the E-CAF in providing a checklist that can be used for evaluating existing travel sites. The checklist has been evaluated by assessing the adaption of three local Egyptian travel sites. This assessment resulted in providing some recommendations that help in improving the adaption of the local travel interfaces.

Finally, chapter 8 discusses the suitability of the E-CAF for providing Web designers with a list of questions that helps them in generating the clients' design requirements. This has been evaluated using three Web designers' expert reviews. The E-CAF has been considered by the Web designers as a useful tool in directing and guiding the Web designers to select the appropriate method of gathering the clients' requirements. This can be done through some competitor site examples or through using direct questions to clients. In addition, the E-CAF contributes in documenting the client requirements and constructing a preliminary design draft based on each client's design requirements.

9.3 Achieving the research objectives

This thesis started with setting three main research objectives, described in chapter 1. In

this section the researcher discusses how each of these objectives is accomplished.

First objective: ***To develop a suitable framework for Web interface adaption and more specifically, for tourism interfaces***

This objective was achieved by constructing the E-CAF as discussed in chapter 4. The framework reveals the common cultural dimensions affecting online consumers' behaviour. This provides a suitable framework for adapting local Web interfaces such as the travel interface compared with the existing cultural models, which do not address the unique cultural values influencing online consumers' behaviour. Therefore, the E-CAF stands as an applicable framework for adapting local Web interfaces.

Second Objective: ***To provide cultural adaptation guidelines for an effective adaption of the travel interface as a communication tool***

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 contribute towards achieving this objective. The three chapters use the E-CAF to provide cultural guidelines for effective adaption of the travel interface as a communication tool. Chapter 6 discusses how the E-CAF can guide travel marketers to select the most appropriate online strategies for an effective adaption of travel interfaces. Chapter 7 discusses how the E-CAF provides an evaluation checklist that can be used by the travel marketer for reviewing and comparing the cultural adaption of the existing travel interfaces. This helps to provide the travel marketers with applicable recommendations to achieve effective adaption of their local travel interfaces. Finally, chapter 8 reviews how the E-CAF can offer the Web designers a list of questions that guides them in generating their clients' designing requirements. This enables the Web designers to build an effective local Web interfaces.

Third objective: ***Facilitate the research in cross-cultural interface areas by providing cross-cultural Web localisation researchers with an empirical framework to follow in their studies.***

This objective is achieved by constructing a framework, the E-CAF that offers the researchers who are interested in the field of Web localisation across cultures with a framework that is based on an empirical observation of the consumers' online behaviour. This helps to reveal the most common cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour. In addition, the E-CAF is used to construct the E-CAL that stands as a useful methodology for interested researchers to compare and contrast the differences and similarities of cultural values across cultures.

9.4 Research key findings

The main aim of this thesis is to construct a framework that captures the cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour. This was done by identifying the common cultural categories influencing the online behaviour of travel domain consumers. The research revealed some of the common cultural categories that are shown to affect the online behaviour of travel domain consumers, and thus construct the E-CAF.

The first category is high risk concern vs. low risk concern, which is one of the interface localisation significant factors mentioned through the literature. For example, Reisinger and Turner (1999) used Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension to justify the increased need within a specific cultural group for accurate and reliable trip information. In addition to accurate and reliable information, Marcus and Gould (2000) claimed that Web interfaces should be adapted based on a familiar users' mental model and clearer metaphor to minimise the risk concern of the targeted cultural group. This is confirmed by Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) who stated that clearer metaphor is an important aspect of Web localisation for high uncertainty avoidance cultures. They clarified that clearer metaphor can be achieved through guided navigation to minimize the users' risk concern. Singh, Zaho and Hu determined some general factors that can be considered for Web localisation to minimise the risk concern across high uncertainty avoidance cultures. These are using FAQs, providing customer service support and providing users with local store contacting details.

The research result revealed that Egyptian travel consumers can be considered as an example of high risk concern consumers. This is expressed through their demand for accurate information and reliable information, metaphor clarity and metaphor usability that can be defined as having a familiar users' mental model and considering general risk avoidance factors. However, different level of risk concern has been revealed between the research participants. The first participant group, who had lived their whole life in Egypt, expressed a higher level of risk concern compared to the second group of participants, who were Egyptians currently living in the UK. This is expressed through the demand of the first participant group to use phone booking, compared to the second group who are willing to book online. This can be due to the exposition of the second group to the UK culture, which is characterised by a low uncertainty avoidance culture.

The second category provided by the E-CAF is emotional vs. functionality role. This category describes cultures who value the emotional appeal vs. the functional and informational appeal of Web interfaces. Reisinger and Turner's (1999) study revealed

that some travel consumers who are characterized by a feminine culture show interest in building warm and friendly relations. Similarly, Sigala and Sakellaridis (2004) realised that some consumers highly value the emotional appeal of Web interfaces compared to the functional appeal. The research result indicated that Egyptian consumers highly value the emotional appeal of Web interfaces. The research participants are interested in encouraging emotional and customer relations on Web interfaces.

Family and group vs. individual role is revealed as the third category of the E-CAF. This category describes the individual decisions that can be adjusted based on family and group interest vs. individually taken decisions. The group belonging vs. individual interest is previously described by Hofstede's collectivism vs. individualism dimension. This dimension is investigated by some researchers such as Yates and Lee (1996), who noticed that consumers with group favour cultures adjust their behaviour to the group interest instead of following a cognitive way of thinking. The research data analysis revealed that Egyptian consumers value the group interest. This is clear through their preference of family themes and group harmony on Web interfaces.

The fourth category of E-CAF is dependency vs. independence. The category describes cultures with dependent personality by which personal decisions need to be confirmed by others for personal security vs. culture with independent personality by which personal decisions are based on self-experience and trust. Kirby (2000) stated that the dependent nature of some cultures can be put down to the educational system. The research result revealed that Egyptian consumers express cognitive and emotional dependency. The cognitive dependency of thoughts referred to the disability of consumers with a specific culture to express and develop individual ideas and thoughts. Researchers such as De Luque and Sommer (2000) mentioned that consumers with high uncertainty avoidance culture are expected to express cognitive dependency of thought. Emotional dependency is defined by Rentzel (1990) as believing others' presence is a significant requirement for personal safety and security. Both emotional and cognitive dependency need to be considered for adapting local Web interfaces for consumers with high dependent cultures. In fact, the dependency vs. independence category is one of the significant findings of the E-CAF. Despite that the dependency vs. independence concept has been previously introduced to the social and clinical psychology fields (Bornstein, 1993); it is new to cultural understanding of online consumers' behaviour. It is identified as one of the vital factors affecting online consumers' behaviour.

The fifth category of the E-CAF is image vs. lexical content role. This category

describes the amount of interactive images and media vs. text on a local Web interface. From that perspective, Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) used Hall's context model to justify the aesthetic Web interfaces adaption for consumers belonging to high context culture. On the other hand, Singh, Zaho and Hu suggested a textual and informational adaption of Web interfaces targeting consumers from low context cultures. Similarly, Rayport and Jaworski (2001) distinguish between aesthetics and functional Web site orientation as two approaches for designing Web interfaces. This study revealed that Egyptian consumers value the image interface context. This is clarified through concern about the aesthetic aspect of Web interfaces and their demand on image and videos for processing travel site information.

The final E-CAF category is oral communication vs. written communication. This describes cultures that mainly depend on oral communication tools vs. cultures that prefer written communication tools. This is identified by previous researchers such as Yasin and Yavas (2007), who used Hall's context model to describe the preference of oral communication tools and spoken words within consumers belonging to high context culture. Those consumers are more likely expect to engage in word-of-mouth behaviour (Kacen and Lee, 2002). The research data analysis identifies Egyptian consumers as among the consumers who value oral communicational tools. This is clear through their preference for spoken words and their engagement in word-of-mouth behaviour on travel Web interfaces.

The first five categories are shown to overlap with the cultural dimensions of some of the existing cultural frameworks, such as Hofstede's and Hall's. For example, the high risk concern vs. low risk concern, emotional vs. functionality role and family and group vs. individual role overlap with Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance, masculine vs. feminine and collectivism vs. individualistic dimensions respectively. Similarly, Hall's context model has investigated the role of oral communication vs. written communication as well as aesthetic cultural preferences. Despite this overlap the E-CAF cultural categories provide the required deep insight to understand and capture the cultural values of online consumers' behaviour. Thus, the E-CAF cultural categories stands as a suitable tool for adapting local Web interfaces such as the travel interface compared to the cultural dimensions provide by the existing cultural frameworks.

In addition, one of the research key findings is the dependency vs. independence cultural category provided by the E-CAF. This cultural category represents a unique cultural dimension of the E-CAF compared to the existing cultural models. The

dependency vs. independence role importance revealed through its contribution in justifying the strategies used by the travel marketers to promote their trips to Egyptian consumers. This E-CAF cultural category provides the travel marketers with a deep understanding of Egyptian travel consumers' behaviour. Moreover, the dependency vs. independence role is found to be useful in justifying some of the adaption techniques using the existing local travel interfaces. Furthermore, the E-CAF dependency category helps to provide Web designers with some of the questions required for encouraging the clients to define their targeted users, which contributes in designing an effective local interface that satisfies the clients' designing requirements.

9.5 Evaluating the E-CAF

Section 3.7 of this thesis views the possible criteria of evaluating the E-CAF and how it might be a useful tool for adapting local Web interfaces such as travel interfaces. This section will look at how the E-CAF satisfies each criterion.

9.5.1 The approach taken to build the E-CAF

The criterion for evaluating the E-CAF was, "is the approach taken to build the framework clearly demonstrated?" This was satisfied through chapter 3, which clearly discusses the appropriate methodology for constructing the framework. This was based on reviewing the framework construction requirements and selecting the best methodology that satisfies these requirements and enables the framework construction. Grounded theory is reviewed and demonstrated as the appropriate method for the framework construction. This demonstration clearly identified the possible approaches for data analysis and processing within the grounded theory methodology. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) abductive approach is selected as the best approach for analysing the research data due to the importance of theoretical sensitivity for building the E-CAF. Moreover, chapter 3 reviews the concept of theoretical sampling within the grounded theory and the how data saturation can be achieved. Data saturation is clearly justified as a vital requirement in building the E-CAF.

9.5.2 Recognition of the users' cultural values while being both consumers and users of the travel interface

The second criterion for evaluating the E-CAF was "Does the framework recognise the cultural values of the users while being travel consumers and users of the travel interface?" The demonstration provided in chapter 3 clearly viewed that the undertaken methodology approaches incorporate data from participants while being users and

consumers of the online travel service. This was done through encouraging the participants to engage in using some of the travel sites for searching and planning a suggested trip. In addition, the participants were asked to verbalise and discuss their experience of being both users and consumers of the online travel sector. This helps construct the E-CAF, a framework that captures the unique cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour.

9.5.3 Exploring and demonstrating the cultural values affecting the online behaviour of the Egyptian travel domain consumers

The third criterion for evaluating the E-CAF was "Does the E-CAF demonstrate the common values shaping the online consumers' behaviour for a specific culture such as Egyptian culture?" Chapter 4 clearly demonstrated the four stages of developing the E-CAF categories. This is done through emphasising the data analysis process to view the open and axial codes resulting from each data set until reaching data saturation at the fourth data set. By reaching data saturation the E-CAF six categories are revealed. Each E-CAF category is clearly discussed to reveal the cultural values affecting the online behaviour of Egyptian travel domain consumers. After the demonstration of the E-CAF categories, chapter 4 ends with comparing and contrasting the cultural categories of the E-CAF and the existing cultural frameworks such as Hofstede's and Hall's. Despite the overlaps that exist between some of the E-CAF and the existing cultural framework, the E-CAF categories provide the required depth to capture the cultural values of the online behaviour of the Egyptian travel domain consumers.

9.5.4 Providing the travel marketers with a structure to select the appropriate online strategies

The fourth criterion for evaluating the E-CAF was "Does the E-CAF provide travel marketers with a structure to select the appropriate online strategies for targeting a specific group of consumers such as Egyptian consumers?" Section 6.2 clearly explained how the travel marketers can use each of the E-CAF categories as a tool for refining and choosing suitable online strategies. The explanation is done through using Egyptian consumers as a demonstration example. A summary of the suggested strategies for targeting the online Egyptian consumers are listed earlier in Table 5.1. In general, chapter 6 explains how the E-CAF reviews the necessary online consumers' cultural values, which can guide the travel marketers when targeting consumers across cultures.

9.5.5 E-CAF as a valuable tool for travel marketers working in the field

The fifth criterion of evaluating the E-CAF was "Does the framework stand as a valuable tool to the travel marketers working in the field?" Section 6.3 evaluates the usefulness of the E-CAF, and whether it can be considered as a valuable tool for travel marketers. Each of three Egyptian travel agencies is consulted. Sections 6.3.1 to 6.3.6 review the online strategies suggested by each E-CAF category as perceived by the travel marketing experts. The E-CAF is used by the experts to construct a specific relation between the E-CAF categories. This provides them with a new insight and deeper understanding of the cultural values affecting the consumers' behaviour. In general, the experts agreed that the E-CAF works as a valuable tool for profiling the consumers' behaviour across cultures. Table 6.1 summarizes the contribution of the individual E-CAF categories as well as the contribution of the overall E-CAF categories as perceived by the marketing experts.

9.5.6 Providing marketers with a comparative analysis structure to evaluate the existing travel interfaces

The sixth criterion of evaluating the E-CAF was "Does the framework provide marketers with a comparative analysis structure to evaluate the existing travel interfaces?" Chapter 7 explains how the E-CAF checklist shown in Table 5.2 can be used to evaluate some of the existing travel interfaces. Three Egyptian travel interfaces (Thomas Cook Egypt, British Airways Egyptian local page and Alforsan Tours) are evaluated as demonstration examples. Each E-CAF category checklist is used to assess the adaption of the selected travel interfaces as well as providing the travel interfaces with a list of recommendations that help them to improve the adaption of their local interfaces.

9.5.7 Providing designers with a list of questions to facilitate the clients' requirement analysis stage

The seventh criterion of evaluating the E-CAF was "Can the E-CAF provide designers with a list of questions that helps in generating the clients' requirements?" The literature review in chapter 5 revealed that using a list of questions is the perfect way of gathering the clients' requirements. Guild (2003) stated that the best way for collecting the clients' design information is through using a list of clients' questions. However, the literature does not provide a specific tool that contributes in helping the designers to collect the design information from clients. Table 5.3 shows that the E-CAF categories can be used to list some of the questions that can help the Web designers during the

requirement analysis stage. The usefulness of these questions was reviewed and evaluated later in chapter 8 by the Web designers working in the field.

9.5.8 The E-CAF as a valuable tool for the Web designers working in the field

The final criterion of evaluating the E-CAF was "Does the framework stand as a valuable tool for the Web designers working in the field?" Chapter 8 evaluates the usefulness and the contribution of the E-CAF to the Web designers during the requirement analysis stage. This chapter reviews the contribution of the questions provided by each E-CAF category as a tool for gathering the clients' design requirements. An instruction designer who is responsible for gathering the clients' requirements is consulted. The consulted experts are working at three different Egyptian Web designing companies. The E-CAF provides the experts with a new insight that helps them to easily determine when and how to collect the clients' requirements. This provides the designers with a deeper understanding and better management of the requirement analysis stage. In addition, the experts agreed that the questions provided by the E-CAF stand as a useful tool for documenting the clients' requirements. Having a document that determines each client requirement facilitates the connection between the instruction designers and the other designing team. Table 8.1 summarizes the contribution of the individual E-CAF categories as well as the contribution of the overall E-CAF categories as perceived by the Web design experts.

9.6 The E-CAF contributions

This section reviews the E-CAF evaluation based on its theoretical and practical contributions. This includes issues such as how the E-CAF addressed the challenges and limitations of the existing theoretical cultural frameworks as well as the E-CAF contributions to some of the relevant fields such as travel marketers and Web designers.

9.6.1 E-CAF theoretical contributions

In fact, the theoretical contribution of the E-CAF can be summarized by the following:

- *The E-CAF cultural dimensions are driven from an analysis and observation of the consumers' behaviour.*

One of the most applied existing cultural models throughout the literature is Hofstede's and Hall's model. These cultural tools are not focused on dealing with online consumer behaviour. As mentioned earlier in section 2.10, Hofstede's model is established based on the analysis of working values, and Hall's model is constructed to capture the values

that may affect communication patterns across cultures. This makes models such as Hofstede's and Hall's unable to capture the values affecting online consumers' behaviour across cultures.

One approach to this challenge is suggested by Meamber and Venkatesh (2000), who stress the uniqueness of consumer behaviour. This is what is termed ethnoconsumerism by Meamber and Venkatesh (2000). The ethnoconsumerism approach considers starting by identifying each cultural native category. According to Meamber and Venkatesh (2000), this can be done through fieldwork to develop data and textual materials. These data should be analysed using some suggested methods such as ethnography and grounded theory to reveal the unique cultural categories that describe the online consumers' behaviour across varied cultural groups. This will help to reach a better understanding of the cultural variables affecting online consumers' behaviour for a specific product or service across cultures. Meamber and Venkatesh stated that the revealed cultural categories can be used for the formation of consumption theory. The E-CAF adapts Meamber and Venkatesh's approach to address the challenge of the previous cultural frameworks. This is done by analysing and observing online consumers' behaviour to determine the most influential cultural values across cultures. The grounded theory methodology is used to reveal the common cultural categories that are shown to most affect consumers' behaviour. This adds to the existing cultural theories a new cultural understanding of online consumer behaviour.

- *The E-CAF captures the unique cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour.*

Hofstede's, Hall's and Schwartz's models are still the main models used within Web localisation research. Marcus and Gould (2000) used Hofstede's model to build a framework that provides guidelines for adapting local Web interfaces. Similarly, Singh, Zah and Hu's (2005) framework incorporated Hofstede's and Hall's cultural models to construct a framework that can be used for adapting a local interface. As mentioned earlier in section 2.9, both models provide useful guidelines for maintaining local Web interfaces. However, these frameworks depend on cultural models, which are not primarily built to capture the cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour. This means that the previous theoretical cultural frameworks do not recognise the unique cultural values that may interfere in determining online consumer's behaviour. This raises doubts about the applicability of those models in adapting local Web interfaces.

The E-CAF addresses that issue by capturing the unique cultural variables of the consumers while being online users of travel sites. The E-CAF is established from data grounded in the observations and experiences of the travel site users. This helps to identify the unique cultural variables of online consumers' behaviour patterns, which contributes in enhancing online branding, online brand loyalty and online purchase intension. In summary, the research enriches the fields of online marketing and online consumer behaviour by providing an appropriate cultural theoretical base for adapting online services/products for consumers with varied cultural backgrounds.

9.6.2 E-CAF methodological contribution

The E-CAF is used to construct the E-CAL methodological tool which can be used for contrasting and comparing countries with varied cultural background. This tool was effectively used as a cultural visualization tool among postgraduate students in a lecture given by the researcher at the University of Portsmouth in April 2011. The E-CAL is offered to the student to help them to visualise their country's culture. This visualization offers several lines that represent different countries with different cultures. These lines help the student to easily contrast and compare the cultural differences that exist across various countries. Thus, the E-CAL offered cross-cultural researchers with a useful tool that helps them to visualise countries' cultures as well as easily reviewing the cultural differences and similarities among different countries.

9.6.3 E-CAF practical contributions

- ***Contribution to travel marketers***

The E-CAF provides travel marketers with a useful tool for building online marketing strategies as well as evaluating competitor travel sites.

A. <u>Building online marketing strategies</u>

Despite the importance of cultural issues for international marketing, the literature failed to provide marketers with an appropriate tool for handling the cultural issues of international consumers. Marketers are struggling to refine and select the appropriate online strategies for targeting a group of consumers. The process of selecting the appropriate strategies should be based on a careful understanding of the consumers' cultural background and expectations.

The E-CAF provides travel marketers with a number of cultural categories that allows them to deeply understand travel consumers' behaviour. In addition, the E-CAF offers a new insight that enables important relations between the E-CAF cultural categories to

be revealed. These relations provide travel marketers with the required tools for profiling online travel consumers' behaviour. The effective profiling of consumers' behaviour allows travel marketers to understand online travel consumers' cultural needs and expectations. This facilitates building effective online marketing strategies required for targeting online travel consumers from different cultural backgrounds.

B. Evaluating the competitive travel sites

Existing online cultural adaption frameworks such as Marcus and Gould (2000) and Singh, Zaho and Hu (2005) provide general guidelines for adapting and evaluating local Web interfaces. However, the guidelines provided by Marcus and Gould and Singh, Zaho and Hu are driven from the cultural dimensions of the existing cultural models such as Hofstede's, Schwartz's and Hall's to evaluate the adaption of the local Web interfaces. The argument has been raised previously that these models are not mainly built to capture the cultural values influencing online consumers' behaviour, which is important to consider for adapting local Web interfaces.

The E-CAF addresses that issue and provides a checklist that can be used for evaluating the adaption of local travel interfaces. This checklist is driven from the cultural values that are shown to be shaping online consumers' behaviour. Thus, the E-CAF provides travel marketers with the appropriate tools for evaluating the adaption of their local travel sites as well as competitor travel sites. This evaluation will provide the travel marketer with new insights and recommendations for adapting an effective local travel interface.

- ***Contribution to Web designers***

The first stage of Web design is communicating with the clients to collect any design requirements. This stage is called the design information gathering stage; Web designers need to carefully analyse their clients' design requirements during that stage. Despite, the importance of that stage in designing an effective Web interface that satisfies the clients' requirements, the literature does not provide any tool that helps the designers to collect the design requirement information during the design information gathering stage.

The E-CAF addresses that issue by providing designers with a list of questions that help them in handling the collection of the clients' design requirements. The design generating questions provided by the E-CAF provide the Web designers with a deeper understanding of the design information gathering stage. This understanding allows the

designers to identify possible ways of collecting the clients' design requirements. The questions list serves as a useful tool that guides Web designers to identify information that needs to be collected through examples as well as other information that needs to be collected through direct questions to the clients.

The designing information gathered through examples as well as through direct questions helps to construct a formal document for each client's designing requirement. Constructing such a document is essential for facilitating and guiding the establishment of the client's preliminary site draft by the designers' team. This facilitates the way of performing the designing process effectively with minimum time and effort.

9.7 Reflections on the E-CAF

This section will discuss some issues related to the E-CAF such as E-CAF cross-cultural and cross-domain implications as well as the E-CAF limitations and recommendations for future research.

9.7.1 The E-CAF cross-culture, cross-sector implications

Despite the fact that the E-CAF is established from capturing the cultural values affecting the behaviour of Egyptian online travel consumers, the experience gained from this analysis can inspire the cross-cultural Web designers' researchers to understand the cultural values affecting varied online consumers' behaviour across different domains. Moreover, this motivates researchers who are interested in the cultural adaption of Web interfaces to overcome the existing cultural frameworks limitations and probe deeply to investigate the unique cultural values influencing online consumers' behaviour.

The E-CAF cross-culture and cross-sector implications can be discussed in the following points:

- As shown in chapter 6, the E-CAF has been evaluated using the opinion of travel marketing experts who are working with both Egyptian consumers as well as international consumers. Despite the fact that they are dealing with different consumers from different cultural groups, they agreed that the E-CAF is a useful tool in profiling consumers' behaviour, and thus determining consumers' cultural needs and expectations. This guides the travel marketers in picking and refining suitable online strategies for targeting consumers across varied cultural contexts.
- As shown in chapter 7, the experience gained from the E-CAF checklist used to

evaluate some of the existing Egyptian local travel interfaces can inspire the localisation of further domains. The checklist provides further Web localisation research with inspiration and ideas regarding the assessment and evaluation of further Web domains. This evaluation guides Web localisation research in providing recommendations for effective Web localisation across domains.

- As shown in chapter 8, the designing generating questions developed by the E-CAF have been evaluated using Web designers' expert reviews. In fact, the Web designers are not only responsible for designing travel site for clients, they are working in Web design companies who are specialists in designing different ranges of domains as well as serving international clients. However, they agreed on considering the E-CAF as a useful tool in providing a list of questions that can be used for documenting and providing a design draft for varied domains.

9.7.2 The E-CAF limitations and future research recommendations

The construction of the E-CAF depends on analysing Egyptian online travel consumers. It is recommended that development of the E-CAF be expanded using further participants from different cultural groups. The E-CAF captures the cultural values affecting the online behaviour of travel domain consumers. The cultural values affecting online consumers' behaviour across different domains may reveal further cultural categories. These limitations open the door for further research in the following recommended directions:

- ***Enhance and expand the power of the E-CAF***

Further research can expand the development of the E-CAF. This research is just a step in identifying the cultural values that influence online consumers' behaviour. This influence was revealed through assessing Egyptian consumers' behaviour within the travel domain. The nature of travel consumption behaviour may be different across countries with varied cultures. Therefore, one direction for further research would be to replicate this study within different cultural contexts to examine to what extent similar cultural values shape the consumers' behaviour within the travel domain. Another direction would be to assess any additional cultural categories that can be revealed when analysing online consumers' behaviour of varied cultural groups across various domains. These future research directions will contribute in providing a deeper insight into the unique cultural variables that mainly influence online consumers' behaviour. This will help to expand and enhance the power of the E-CAF as a cultural tool for analysing online consumers' behaviour across cultures.

- ***Enhance and expand the power of the E-CAL***

This research introduced the E-CAL as a useful tool in visualizing the cultural context within a specific country as well as comparing and contrasting varied cultures across countries. In fact, the E-CAL provides a new insight evaluating and assessing the cultural context across different countries. Further cross-cultural research would benefit from assessing the E-CAL ability to visualise cultures across different countries. Another future research direction might be identifying to what extent the E-CAL can help to reveal the cultural context within a specific country that can be used to determine the expected online consumer behaviour within this cultural group. This will contribute in expanding the power of the E-CAL through the cross-cultural research as well as demonstrating it as a useful tool to the researchers who are interested in this field.

- ***In depth study of the E-CAF cultural categories***

The research has emphasised the high risk concern, family role, dependency role, emotional role, image role and oral communication cultural dimensions as common cultural values affecting the online behaviour of Egyptian consumers. These cultural categories have been discussed thoroughly in this research and it has been shown how each of them can affect the online behaviour of the travel domain consumers. Future research needs to study and investigate the further cultural categories of the E-CAF, such as low risk concern, independent role, functional role, lexical context role and written communication cultural dimensions. This can be done by analysing varied cultural groups with different values compared to Egyptian consumers, and assessing how each cultural category may have a different influence on the online behaviour of the travel domain consumers. Studies can be replicated to assess the investigated E-CAF cultural dimensions across different domains and reveal how each of those cultural categories contributes in shaping the online consumers' behaviour across different domains.

- ***Further investigation of the dependency dimension within the consumer behaviour field.***

The research introduced one of the new significant cultural categories as a significant factor in understanding the cultural values of online consumers' behaviour. This cultural category was revealed as one of the cultural variables affecting consumers' behaviour within the travel domain. However, this cultural dimension is recommended for further study to assess how it may affect online consumers' behaviour across varied shopping

domains. In fact, this cultural category needs more investigation to expand and reveal its possible powers within the marketing and consumer behaviour field. This will reveal how the dependency vs. independence nature of consumers across cultures can determine the consumer behaviour within different sectors. In addition, further studies need to reveal the effect of independent culture on the online behaviour of travel domain consumers as well as online consumers' behaviour across varied domains.

9.8 Final thoughts

This research is a call to marketers not to forget that although the Internet is a global media, cultural barriers still exist among online consumers. Marketers' unfamiliarity with the cultural values of the targeted online consumers restricts some of the medium's powers such as global accessibility and interactivity. On the other hand, operating within a familiar cultural setting is essential to enhance the Internet's power as a communication tool, an information channel and an interactive medium. Users' cultural values affect information preferences, online consumers' behaviour and the ways consumers use the media to interact and communicate with a company or other users. Effective use of the medium depends on the extent to which the marketers can understand and incorporate different information viewing styles, communication styles and interaction styles across cultures.

In fact, the effective enhancement of the Internet's power is based on the marketers' ability to improve the cultural presence of online consumers. This can be done through adapting Web interfaces that boost the users' feeling of being present in a similar cultural belief system. Having such Web interfaces can facilitate using the Internet as an effective medium for marketing products or services. Thus, marketers would benefit from tools, such as the E-CAF, that recognise and incorporate online consumer's culture.

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Appendix A: Open coding of first data set

Open codes	Examples
Car rental information	"I should check car rent information before I travel" (P5)
Destination attraction information	"This is very annoying, how come a tourist site does not present a list of different destinations and attractions on their page? They should be easily accessible at first glance" (P2) Other participants were disappointed for being unable to check the main attractions at each destination. (P1, P3)
Famous food	Participants were very keen to search for each destination's famous food. (P1, and P5)
Flight details	"I usually search for flight information, which are the flight duration, prices and direct flights"(P4)
Hotel vacancy dates	Participants complained that the hotel vacancy dates are not clear on the site. (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5)
Hotel location and distance details	"I wish the site to display information about hotel location i.e. how far is the hotel from the main attractions and shopping area" (P3) "This site shows useful information such as the hotel surrounded area information; this easily clarify the distance between the hotel and the surrounded area"(P4) "I think the site misses important information; the site needs to consider adding useful information such as hotel location details to view how close the hotel to some of the main attraction and city centre" (P5)
Transportation information	"Despite the importance of transportation information, it is completely missed on this site" (P3) "The travel site should help me to organize and plan my trip. This includes the ability to have clear idea about each possible ways of transportation at each destination such as bus, taxi or train and cost of each" (P5)

Less textual information	"Unfortunately, this site has a large amount of text; I will never read all of that information. Why not replace that text with some more attractive pictures to view the destination" (P3) Participants argued that it is very annoying to have large amount of text on a travelling site. (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5)
Coloured links	"All the links should be clearly accessible. This can be done by adopting different coloured links for the most important information" (P5)
Colours combination	"usually depending on a combination of different colours are more attractive on any web site" (P1) "I think on a web site you need to see more attractive colour combinations" (P2)
High contrast colours	I loved the contrast they did between white and blue. It is very nice to depend on high contrast colour on web interface to make things easily identifiable" (P1) "The site need to consider using high contrast colours as a way for clearer information presentation" (P4)
Represent destination through images and videos	"As I said before the site is not attractive at all; Websites are usually more attractive when they use pictures and videos to view each destination. This makes the site more attractive and enjoyable to browse" (P3)
Varied coloured text	"Nice coloured text" (P1) "text with varied colours are easier to identify on a web site" (P3)
Varied font styles	"Fonts with different size, style are clear" (P3, P5 and P7)

Warmer interface colours	"The pink colour used on this site is very bright; it annoyed me while I am browsing the site. The site should adapt warmer colours that are comfortable for eyes such as yellow or red" (P2) "I like the colours used by the site; they used a good combination of yellow and orange, these colours are really attractive and much comfortable to the eyes" (P4) "On a web site, warmer colours such as yellow, orange and red are more attractive" (P3 and P5)
Bigger link size	"I liked the way they organize this site pages as it depend on bigger picture links, which is located at the main page body" (P4) "The site should depend on bigger links to make it more realizable" (P5)
Evaluating rank of service quality	Participants were very keen to check the quality ranking of hotels. (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5)
Focusing on service uniqueness to select the suitable one	"it is very nice that they allow you to view each hotel's unique service to make the best choice, you can compare all and select the one that suits you" (P3) "The site views clear details about each hotel's unique services and whether it is suitable for children or not" (P5)
Friendly introduction	Many offers and deals are located on the home page; I think it is better if they start with a little bit about themselves as an introduction"(P5) "It is better to start with more general and friendly words" (P1)
Soft subjective selling impressions	"The site used hard words such as 'explore your trip', find 'your perfect trip'. I suggest using a softer word such as enjoy your trip, find your amazing trip" (P1) "The site is depending on nice expressions such as 'dream of your next trip'. This is very nice and imaginary" (P3) "Very rough site, depending on rough statements such as 40% discount, hot deals, best offers". (P5)

Avoiding cognitive involvement such as expressing improvement thoughts	P5 complained about "help us to improve link". He said "I will never access this link; why they should involve customers in that issue? They should not bother any of their customers with that issue. They should have a specific department that helps them to improve instead of depending on their customers"
Facilitating user contact	"It is better to interact with actual tourists asking for their own experience" (P3) "It will be a good idea if the travel site allows me to contact other customers. This is important for gaining other customers advice and benefit from their own experience. In fact, this is a good way of interacting with others" (P4)
Memorable photos and videos sharing	"Allow users to share their memorable photos and videos" (P3) "It is really good to share videos and pictures with other tourists. It is a very warm and friendly way of interacting with others" (P5)
Sharing destination comments and views	"I think that allowing users to share their own comments and experience provides a very useful information regarding each destination"
Family holidays	"I love doing everything with my family such as shopping or going to beach. I really enjoy being with my family; travelling alone is very boring" (P4) "Love family holidays" (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5)
Viewing family members attraction	"I will be interested in checking the different family attractions to make sure that I selected a destination that suits every single member of the family" (P3) Participants wishes if they can find information about attraction that is suitable for each member of the family, for example special kids attractions, shopping places. (P2, P4, P5)
Family trip planning	P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5 prefer to share trip planning with their family members

Focus on tradition and culture images	"…..pictures that reflect each destination's history, people culture and tradition" (P5) "I like to view destinations with a closer culture and tradition to Arabs" (P3 and P4)
Family themes and pictures	"I love pictures of a beach surrounded by buildings and people, they look warm and lovely. It is nice to be with people. I noticed that a lot of tourist sites prefer to place an empty beach picture! The empty beach pictures are unattractive; they reflect a remote place. I would not be interested at all to visit such a place" (P2) "Beach pictures full of group of tourist are more attractive" (P1, P3 and P5)
Using tabs for organising similar pieces of information	""the site provides well organised hotel information; they use different tabs to show different relevant information such as hotel location, map and pictures" (P5)
Exploring windows in new pages	P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5 find it much easier to explore new pages in new windows.
Simple search engine	"Searching is very complex, many things need to be identified for performing the searching process. I prefer the typical simple search engine" (P4) Participants complain about the lack of simple search engines on the travel interfaces. (P3, and P5)
Single page varied tasks using multiple tabs	"The site also allowed me to perform many tasks in the same page. This means I can view the destination attraction and search for the best suitable hotel in the same page; this saves time and effort, you do not have to access many pages for performing multiple functions or viewing varied information" (P4) Participants were glad to use multiple tabs to perform many tasks at the same page. (P2, and P3)
Exploring information by destination	Participants depend on a specific path to search the travel interfaces. They explore the travel interface information using the required destination. (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5)

Using familiar link styles	Participants complain that some words are written in different colors, which mislead them to think they are links when they are not (P1, P5)
Information consistency and harmony	"One thing the site should care about is trying to ensure that all the information viewed on one page is related. This site views a wide range of information regarding different destinations within one page. This makes me a bit confused. Harmony is one of the important aspects I care about while working on designing a good university site" (P5) Participants complain about viewing unrelated destination information on one page (P3, P4)
Internal links to local sites	"The site may add some links that guide me to detailed information about the required destination" (P2) "This link is very useful; the site should provide similar links that guide users to each destination's official sites. These links can be accessed to gather all the required information about each destination and its main attractions" (P3)
Depending on experienced tourist review	"I like to check other tourist reviews and comments regarding each destination's attractions. I usually depend on these comments to evaluate and assess the most suitable places for me to visit"(P4)
Confirming site experience dependency	Before depending on any online travel agent, I need to confirm their level of experience, reliability and whether I can depend on them to arrange my trip" (P3)
Experienced suggested thoughts and planned programmes	P5 gets annoyed when he cannot find any planned programmes to spend a week at Istanbul. He said "travel agents should offer planned programmes at each destination; organized plans about where to go each day and what to visit exactly. They are the experienced ones and they should offer me ideas about where to go based on this experience.
Experienced gift ideas	"I search the travel site for some suggested ideas about the best things to buy as a gift from each country" (P1)

Avoiding synonymous links	P2: was confused between “city breaks” and “holidays” links. He said “these two link titles have a quite similar meaning, this is a little bit confusing, based on my opinion both of them are describing holidays” P5 was confused between “holiday” and “summer holidays” links. He said “both of these link titles are quite similar and may lead to similar information”
Clearly descriptive link tiles	“Look with me at this site home page, the link is saying “summer vacation discounts,” but how much is the discount? Is this discount offered for all the destinations? The site mentions 40% discount, but is that discount on a package trip or only if you are booking a flight and hotel? The link titles are not clear at all” (P1) “some sites tend to confuse you, as you keep accessing many links to find what you want, the link title is not describing the real information under that link” (P4)
Home page body links	All the links should be clearly accessible. This can be done by adapting big links for the most important information. These links can be easily accessible if located at the home page main body”(P2) “Usually links located at the centre of the home page is easily recognized and makes the site browsing easier” (P3 and P5)
Short screen scrolling	“When I need to scroll the page down this means that the information is outside my field of vision” (P2) “Scrolling the page down is annoying me; especially on the site’s home page. I want all the required information to be within my field of vision” (P3)
Horizontal information viewing	Participants complain about using horizontal menus and bars on travel interfaces. (P4 and P5)
Chat with advisor	P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5 prefer to use online chat service with an advisor for any queries.

Oral guide	P3, P4 and P5 stated that it will be a good idea to use an agent video that describes destination information instead of depending on written information.
Oral confidence	“Speaking with a real person is more trustable" (P2, P3, P4 and P5)
Choosing the appropriate timing for email offers	“Timing is very important for receiving offers; not all times are suitable for receiving trip offers, so if you can choose the best time it will be great. In that case I think it will be interesting to register with this site” (P3)
Comparative price tools	“it is very important to have price comparison tools on any travel site” (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5)
Offering clearly described and organised package	“A package trip is great if it is well planned, organized and clarified for you” (P4)
Providing clear access to customer support	P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5 agree that on any Website, it is very important to have a quick and easy access to customer support and help.
Avoiding registration request for new visitors	“I should get familiar with the site first and if I find it useful sure I will register. Otherwise I will have to deal with many bulk mails which are annoying” (P3) “I always get annoyed from sites that require registration to start my search” (P2, P4 and P5)
Booking security assurance information	“An important issue is providing users with information regarding secure booking protection” (P3, P4, and P5)
Depending on pictures for easier mental processing	“Pictures are easy to deal with instead of depending on boring text. Usually much text information is missed, but for pictures each single detail is easily recognizable and you rarely forget it” (P3) “Details in pictures are usually easier to remember compared to text details” (P5)

Picture based link to indicate functionality	"Text links titles are sometimes misleading; the title is not always clearly describing the information found under each link. On the other hand, image links allow a clear presentation of the link content, it is usually easier to identify and follow" (P5) "Picture links are usually quicker to identify and an easier tool for web site browsing" (P3 and P4)
Visual confidence	" I usually believe and trust what I see, not what I read" (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5)

Appendix B: Open coding of second data set

Open codes	Example
Avoiding direct feedback evaluation questions	"I think they should consider that they will never get their customers' real opinion or experience by directly asking them to fill out a survey or by writing their comments" (P9) "I usually ignore questions that ask users to evaluate the service, these are very annoying" (P7)
Avoiding independent expressions	"The site used bad link titles such as 'plan your trip'; this means hard effort needs to be done while I need to enjoy and relax. Instead, the site can adapt other link titles such as 'here are enjoyable suggested activities or attraction for your trip" (P6) The user was annoyed about "create your own trip from Cairo to Istanbul" link title. He said "This title is very annoying; why I should be creating my own trip independently?" (P8)
Avoiding submenus and hidden icons	"I usually do not like any hidden icons; I prefer everything to be in front of my eyes. This makes everything clear and easily accessible without getting lost on the site due to hidden icons" (P7) "…The bars should not have any hidden submenus. It is difficult to deal with hidden submenus; you cannot easily view all the available menus at a glance" (P10)
Consistent colours combination	"Travel sites can be more attractive when they apply different consistent colour. This helps you to easily identify and browse information on web site" (P9)
Contrast between text and background	"The site should ensure a high contrast between the colour used to write the text and the page background. For example, the site I accessed through Google has a black background with a white text, which is good" (P7)
Customer call service	A good travel site should have customer service contact number (P6, P7, P8, P9 and P10)

Depending on animation	"The site is not attractive at all; they need more pictures with some audio and flashing animation. This will make the site more attractive and enjoyable while using it" (P6) "I think the site may need to consider a more attractive way of viewing pictures such as a slide show instead of depending on static pictures, which are not attractive at all" (P8)
Depending on videos for easier mental processing	"Usually spoken words are easier to understand compared to solid text" (P7) "You can easily capture information if you hear it" (P5, P8)
Depending on virtual tours for easier mental processing	"Virtual tours really help to develop a better image of the destination compared to text description" (P10)
Destination background information	A good travel site should provide users with detailed background information about different destinations. (P5, P7, P8 and P10)
Expressing opinions through friends' recommendations and indirect expressions	"Usually people in our community prefer to share any negative experience to their family and friends trying to make them avoid having a similar one" (P10) "This is a very nice offer; I may use the above link to text that page to a friend" (P8)
Family trip precautions	"It will be very useful to provide users who are travelling with their families with a specific precautions" (P6) "family trip precautions is very useful information provided on this travelling site" (P9)
Identifying countries with similar Arab culture	P6, P7, P8 and P10 like to view destinations with closer culture and tradition to Arabs.
Important people pictures	"It is very interesting that the site includes a link to view the most famous people in Italy" (P10) "I will be very interested to know about the famous people at the destination I am willing to visit" (P8)
Personal direct contact with customers	"It is very important to have contact with a real person" (P7) "For a travel service it is essential to ensure personal and direct contact with customer service" (P9)

Personalized email offers	"If I am able to personalise my email offer content based on the countries I wish to go to, those emails will be useful for me. I will like to receive and read those emails" (P10)
Phone summary email evidence	"Sometimes the instructions given over phone are not clear or I may miss something; therefore I think it will be useful to have an email copy of all the information given over the phone" (P7) "After having a word with the customer service, it will be very useful to have an email copy of any given instructions. This will help to remember all the given information and refer to them if necessary" (P9)
Short trip offers	P5, P7 and P10 prefer to search for shot trip offers
Store locator	"It is very important for any travel interface to show information about local branches" (P6, P7, P8 and P9)
Site map for predictable interface content	"The site needs to consider providing a link for the site map; a site map is easier to locate information and saves much time" (P10) "Site map helps to guide you to the required information through the site. In this way you are expecting specific information under each link" (P7)
Social networks for gaining family and friends acceptance and advice	"Using social networks allows users to connect with their friends, ask them about their best trips and their recommended destinations or even their opinion about a certain destination" (P6)
FAQs	"This site lacks a clear access to FAQs on the home page" (P8, P9 and P10)
Varied information sorting options	P7 and P10 were glad to be able to sort the travel site information based on lowest price or hotel stars
Assessing family suitability	"It is very good to know if the hotel you are selecting is suitable for children. For example, do they have some entertainment for the children? The site offers very useful information to let you know if the hotel is recommended for couples, families with young children, teenagers or possibly older people" (P10)

Appendix C: Open coding of third data set

Open codes	Example
Depending on site evaluation provided by experienced existing users	P11 complained that he cannot read any customer reviews that evaluate the service quality provided by the travel site. He said "this is the first time I used this site, so at least I should be able to review how the existing experienced customers judge the service provided by the travel site. Why do they not offer a clear link to access this information?" "It would be helpful if the site provided me with some existing customer comments to evaluate the site's service quality" (P14)
Focus on advance trip plan	"Last second deal is not a good link title for a travel site. Usually for travelling, I cannot leave things until the last second, everything need to be planned in advance; it is very risky to keep things for the last minute"(P13)
Important information printing option	"I would like to print a guide copy for all the information regarding hotel location, destination, transportation and trip programme" (P12) "I usually prefer to print all my trip guidance to take it with me" (P12, P14 and P15)
Personalized information filtering tools	"One of the good things on this site is limiting the viewed information based on specific set of searching criteria. For example, you can have different specific hotel list views based on each personal preference" (P11)
Phone booking	"Travel sites should have online phone booking service" (P12, P14 and P15
Question mark to indicate further clarification of unclear information	"It is not clear at all what they meant by the trip supplement added cost. They even did not place a question mark for help, which should be placed beside any unclear information for further clarification. I think they should consider that issue to make the information cost clearer" (P14)

Appendix D: Open coding of fourth data set

Open Codes	Examples
Less textual information	"It is difficult to deal with large amount of text on web interface" (P16, P17, P18, P19 and P20) "travel sites that depend large amount of text are boring" (P17, P19)
Assessing family suitability	"I think it is very important to search for destinations with the most suitable attractions and activities for all the family members" (P18) I like the way this site allowed me to search the most suitable hotel for families with children" (P20)
Avoiding independent expressions	P 16 commented on "best places to go in Paris" link. He said "This link is very useful compared to links offered by other travelling sites, such as "plan your own trip", which leave the users lost"
Avoiding synonymous links	P18 gets confused between two links, which are "city breaks" and "destinations". He thought that the two link titles are referring to similar functions. "The site has more than one link that seems to perform the same function or lead to similar information; this was misleading and time consuming" (P20)
Oral confidence	"Speaking with a real person is more trustable" (P16, P18, P19 and P20)
Avoiding submenus and hidden icons	"All the site information should be clear within my field of vision. This can be done by avoiding submenus" (P18) "All the information should be within my field of vision; no hidden menus…" (P20)
Car rental information	"It is very important to find information about car rental" (P16, P17 and P19)

Comparative price tools	" It will be very helpful if on a travel site I can compare the prices of different offers and package" (P16) "It is very important to compare the prices for different destination offers" (P17 and P19)
Depending on pictures for easier mental processing	"Pictures allow you to identify things more clearly and quickly compared to text" (P17, P18 and P20)
Depending on animation	"The site needs more attractive features such as flashing pictures or slide show pictures for attractive destinations" (P16)
Destination attraction information	"The site did not show or mention the most attractive places to visit in Spain. Is there is any specific link I can use to view the main attractions and activities in Spain?" (P18) "I really wish if I can find a list of the available attractions at each destination. I would expect to find this type information on any travel site" (P19)
Destination background information	"On a travel site it is very important to review quick information about each destination" (P17)
Exploring different windows in new pages	"it is easier to explore new information in new pages" (P16 and P19)
Family holidays	"Holidays are nothing without family members" (P17) " I love family trips" (P16, P18, P19 and P20)
Family trip planning	"It is nice to share trip ideas with your family members" (P16, P19 and P20)
FAQs	"I usually depend on frequently asked questions for answering most of my queries" (P16)
Flight details	"The site allows me to successfully view the flight information; this includes covering all the required details such as direct or stop flights and prices " (P19)
Friendly introduction	"There are a lot of offers and deals located on the site home page; I think it is better if they started with friendlier introduction and welcoming words dedicated to their new customers" (P17) "This travel site has a tough introduction using 'best deals' and 'discounted offers'. The site needs to use warmer introduction to welcome new visitors" (P18)

Hotel vacancy dates	"Travel site should provide list of the available hotels at each destination and the vacancy dates at each hotel" (P16)
Hotel location and distance details	"I like to view the hotel location and see how far the hotel from the main attractions and shopping area" (P17)
Important information printing	"It will be very useful if the site has a printing option that allow users to print destination map to locate important attractions and shopping areas" (P16) "I usually prefer to have a hard copy of all the important information and keep it as a guide for my trip" (P17)
Store locator	P18 uses store locator link to search for local offices at Cairo "I would possibly search for the local offices if I am willing to book" (P20)
Internal links to local sites	This site is very useful, it has national links for each destination, the links contain local information about each destination" (P17) P19 was glad to find an internal official link that guides her to the main attractions in Turkey.
Oral guide	"It will be a very good idea if the travelling sites depend on audio or video guides to introduce top destinations " (P18) "…..may be short video to introduce each destination unique attractions; this will be more interesting" (P20)
Picture based link to indicate functionality	"Using pictures to refer to page icons and links is an easy way to explore the site" (P16) "…..may be more picture links can be applied for locating the site information" (P19)
Providing clear access to customer support	The customer support link is far away at the top of the page; It is not easily recognizable. I think it should located at the main page body to make it easily accessible to users" (P18) "There should be a clear access to customer support and help at the site home page" (P20)

Represent destination through images and videos	I absolutely love pictures and videos; it is very good way for viewing different destinations" (P16) "I can always say that text may follow pictures not the opposite. The pictures are usually enough for me, I do not need to read much text. Usually I am expecting to see no less than 10 pictures for each individual destination" (P18)
Short trip offers	P16, P17, P18, P19 and P20 prefer to search for short trip offers
Using tabs for organising similar pieces of information	"The trip package information is well organised; it is viewed under different tabs showing hotels, flights, accommodation and accommodation pictures" (P20)
Simple search engine	P16 and P18 complained that the site does not have a simple search engine at the top of the home page.
Using soft subjective impressions	"'Learn how to pay' sounds like a professional expression, as if you are dealing with an economist expert. It is better to user friendly words such as learn how to 'enjoy your holiday'" (P18)
Exploring information by destination	Participants depend on a specific path to search the travel interfaces. They explore the travel interface information using the required destination. (P16, P17, P18, P19 and P20)
Horizontal information viewing	"All the links on this site are viewed in a horizontal order which is easier for me to deal with compared to the vertical one. Vertical link order requires much scrolling and makes it difficult to realize the entire link bar easily" (P16)
Booking security assurance	"Before booking I would like view booking security information or how the site providers ensure users' security while booking" (P19)
Phone booking	"Travel sites should have an online phone booking service" (P16, P17, P18, P19 and P20)
Family trip precautions	This site contains very useful information by listing some of the important precautions if you are travelling with your family" (P17)
Visual confidence	"I usually trust videos and pictures more than written text" (P18 and P19)

Warmer interface colour	"The colours used by this site are too cold, I think colours need to hotter and attractive" (P17) This colours make me feel sleepy, more fresh colours need to be adapted such as red, orange and yellow" (P20)
Social networks for gaining family and friends acceptance and advice	"It is fantastic that you can sign using your facebook account to gain trip advice from friends, I always ask for friends' advice and experience" (P19)
Short screen scrolling	"The information which was located at the bottom of the page was completely missed by me. Information needs to be within my field of vision" (P16 and P19)
Information consistency and harmony	"Although I selected Corfu as my preferred destination, I still can see some of the top hotels around the world. The way of viewing information is quite confusing me, as it is not related to each other or to my search" (P18)
Depending on experienced tourist review	"It is very difficult and risky to make a trip decision on your own. Usually depending on experienced tourist guide will support me to make the right decision" (P16)
Experienced suggested thoughts and planned programmes	"This site offers useful selections of suggested places to visit in Paris, as well as well planned programmes. It is very nice to be guided by an experienced person" (P20)

Appendix E: Examples of open coding

Sample coding of excerpts from observation and interview of (P13)

Observation excerpts	Open code(s)
The user keeps viewing the site homepage without scrolling the page down. She complained that the required information does not exist. Afterward, she discovered that she has to scroll the page to view the required information. She immediately said “I should not need to scroll the page down for finding such necessary information”. “I prefer to see all the required information within my field of vision ”	Short page scrolling
The user was annoyed because she has to scroll the page down to find some of the required information. She commented “limited choices available on the first glance, I think horizontal information organization would help to catch information more easily and quicker”	Short screen scrolling Horizontal information viewing
The user complained “How come a web site does not have a search engine box for a quick access to the required information?”	Simple search engine
The user is glad to find a clear enquiry service.	Providing clear access to customer support
The participant pointed at ‘Last second deal’ link and said “this is not a good link title for a travel site. Usually for travelling, I cannot leave things until the last second, everything need to be planned in advance; it is very risky to keep things for the last minute”	Focus on advance trip plan
The user complained that the hotels’ vacancy dates are not clear.	Hotel vacancy dates
The user clicked on a specific line which is written in underlined red text. She was surprised when she discovered that this line is not a link.	Familiar link styles

The user was unable to find any information regarding the hotels surrounding area. She said "The hotel's surrounding areas are not clear. I want to know the distance between the hotel and main city centre, main attractions and entertainments locations"	Hotel location and distance details
The user complained that some words are written in different colors and underlined. This misleads here to believe that they are links.	Using familiar link styles
The user is glade about the way of organising information on Website. She said "information is well structured and organised under tabs based on price, accommodation and destination guide. This is an easy way to view the required information"	Using tabs for organising similar pieces of information
The user gets annoyed when she is directed immediately to the booking service, as soon as she clicked on desired destination links. She commented "I was expecting to start my search with list of the available different destinations to select from"	Exploring information by destination

Interview excerpts	Open code(s)
(What the types of holiday do you prefer?) "I prefer family holidays. Usually we plan to travel in the school breaks, where all family can enjoy a vacation"	Family holidays
(Do you prefer short or long holidays?) "I prefer short holidays. It is much cheaper"	Short trip offers

(Briefly summarize the information you look for on the travel site?) "I look for the most attractive places to visit at each destination" "I also searched for the available hotels and the ranking of each hotel; the rank will reflect the service level, cleaning service and quality of the provided service". "I also want to know how far the hotel to the available attractions, museums, children parks and city centre"	Destination attraction information Evaluating rank of service quality Hotel location and distance details
(What is the most valuable information you found on the travel site regarding your selected destination?) I think that the site has not got enough information especially regarding the hotel's surrounding area"	Hotel location and distance details
(Do you find it easy to navigate the information on the travel site?) "Ya, the information are well structured in an easy way. As you can see all the related information is structured using tabs based on price, accommodation and destination information. This is an easy way to navigate the available information"	Using tabs for organising similar pieces of information

(Do you usually plan your trip individually or with other members of your family? Why) "I usually plan any trip with my family members; this allows me to check for different family preferences. For example what my children and husband prefer for their holiday" "We need to select the destination all together; all family members need to agree on the selected destination. I need to be sure that every member of the family is going to enjoy" "Oh ya, some important information is missing on this site, such as reviewing the suitable activities and the attractions available at each destination for different family members; for example, men, women, children, teenagers and elderly people"	Family trip planning Assessing family suitability
(Do you ever think of taking a package trip? Why) "It depends if the package is clearly identified and organised" The user thinks that package trip is not always a good decision unless it is clearly identified and organised, otherwise it will be risky.	Offering clearly described and organised package
(Briefly summarize the stage you undertaken for searching your trip) "At the beginning, I always started by selecting my destination from the available list. Secondly, I search the main destination's attractions. Thirdly, I search for the available hotels, and finally I check the airlines reservations"	Exploring information by destination
(Do you find it important to check the opinion of family, friends or other tourist reviews and experience to judge which destination you should choice. Why) "Of course I would like to check other tourist, family and friends' actual experience. In fact, I cannot depend on my own choices or decisions. I prefer to depend on more experienced people, which are trustable"	Depending on experienced tourist review

(When you access a new travel site do you care about checking the agent market position or status first? Why) "Yes of course, I really care about the experience level of the travel agent; I can only depend on more experienced travel agents. They need to show me to what extent I can depend on them" "It will also a good idea if they start with a lovely introduction that welcomes new customers and shows the special services offered by them"	Confirming site experience dependency Friendly introduction
(Do you usually sign with online travel agents newsletters for receiving further information about new destinations? Why) "No, I do not like to do so; actually I hate sites that insist on asking new visitors to register" "I keep receiving a lot of junk emails; usually all the travelling offers I receive come at the wrong time. For example, usually I receive travelling offers during winter time. It will be great if I can choice the appropriate time for receiving my trip offers"	Avoiding registration request for new visitors Choosing the appropriate timing for email offers
Should travel interfaces show some important places that represent the country's history? "I love pictures that reflect history, tradition and culture. History is one of the most important attractions in any destination; it reflects each country's culture"	Focus on tradition and culture images

(Can you judge the travel site interactivity and entertainment features (audio, videos ...) "Very bad; there are not enough images and videos to view each destination. Using images and videos is the most attractive way to represent each destination" "The site is using large amount of text, which is boring" " I usually trust what I see" "Besides, pictures are clearer and tangible than text; you can easily remember picture details compared to text description; you can say that pictures are easily processed"	Represent destination through images and videos Less textual information Visual confidence Depending on pictures for easier mental processing
(What do you think about the colours and images used in the travel site you accessed? Why) "I like the red colour used by the site, It is very warm, but I think it will be better if it is combined with other different colours. Usually one colour seems to be unattractive"	Warmer interface colours Colour combinations
(Going back to the site you accessed, please have a quick look into the pictures located at the home page. Is there is any specific picture you like? Why. Based on your opinion Can you provide a brief description for what the picture stands for) "I like pictures of people enjoying their time on beach; it usually stands for destination popularity and attractive places to visit compared to unattractive empty beach pictures"	Group and family themes
Do you usually use the same travel site each time you undertake a trip? Why "No, I prefer to check other travel sites' offers and prices; that is why I like travel sites that offer price comparative tools to select the cheapest trip offer"	Comparative price tools