Evaluating website quality: Five studies on user-focused evaluation methods

The benefits of evaluating websites among potential users are widely acknowledged. There are several methods that can be used to evaluate the websites' quality from a user's perspective. In current practice, many evaluations are executed with inadequate methods that lack research-based validation. This thesis aims to gain more insight into evaluation methodology and to contribute to a higher standard of website evaluation in practice.

The studies in this thesis consist of research on three user-focused evaluation methods, which were studied within the context of municipal websites. Two methods evaluate the websites' quality by measuring the users' opinions: the 'Website Evaluation Questionnaire' (WEQ), and the 'user page review' method which involves participants to review website pages. The third method, the think-aloud method, measures website quality during participants' task performance.

We studied two variants of this method combined with eye tracking: the concurrent think-aloud method (CTA), which involves participants who verbalize their thoughts while performing tasks; and the retrospective think-aloud method (RTA) with participants who verbalize their thoughts afterwards while watching a recording of their performance.