ABSTRACT

ANALYZING WEBSITES FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE: ACCESSIBILITY AND MANAGEABILITY

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The nature of the internet as information provider creates the opportunity to take the diversity of their public or users into account. The variety can be implemented in the technology as well as in the content. Starting from the concept ‘script’ used by Madeleine Akrich (1992) and refined by Margo Brouns (1998) and Els Rommes (2002) in ‘genderscript’ I analyzed the user (and more detailed the gender) representation- and materialization in texts and internet tools.

The central questions in these paper are:
§ how can I analyse websites from a gender perspective without being essentialistic?
§ Do web developers catch the opportunities to diverse the internet and hypertext?
§ Have their view on the audience(s) changed? Not only from ‘passive public’ to ‘active provider/user’, but also from ‘single user’ to ‘diversity of users’? How is the reader 'hailed' by the text?

The used methodology in this research is website analysis and analysis of interviews with the editor of the websites. The possibility to distinguish web content and –usage was examined in view of a research on four Flemish women e-zines (Annet, Femistyle, Divazine and Flair). The main 'sensitizing' concepts as used in the analysis were accessibility, personification, managebility and gender representations.