External communication strategies, a new digital paradigm for social security companies

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Abstract

The world wide web special characteristics distinguish it from traditional communication environments, web sites provide a fundamentally different environment for communication activities than ordinary ones, especially for social security companies, where information have to be transformed in their present form by which security must be ensured and time and mobility reduced.

In this paper, we discuss how can digital transformation portend an evolution in the external communication strategies, and argue that in order for communication efforts to be efficient in this electronic area, and in order to facilitate this new approach, a developed digital policy is required.

Keywords

External communication, digital environment, relational websites, performance indicators.

1. Introduction

The emergence of new technologies and the improvement of new communication methods have led for companies to create new procedures within this interactive virtual environment.

Websites are considered a very important tool for creating and developing customer relationships (Dou & Krishnamurthy, 2007), they can provide personalized communication and facilitate relationship development with visitors (Voorveld, Neijens, & Smit, 2009).

Extending the participative paradigm of Web 2.0, Web 3.0 is based on networked digital technologies and users' cooperation (Agrebi & Boncori, 2016)

To reach the research target, this paper focusses on how can websites be used as an external digital communication strategy to bring performance to social security organizations?

Thus, the first element to be discussed is the performance measure of a digitizing project, using the following indicators

- **On form**, the indicators can:
  - Take the form of questions to answers serving as an alert
  - Give a quantitative assessment (number or percentage, indicators answering the quality questions (what?), The quantity (how much?), The target (who?), The location (where?) And the period of the action)
  - Give a qualitative assessment of an action (scales of objective value hence the obligation to qualify/analyse the answers)
- **In substance**, the indicators provide information on:
  - The means to arrive at the result. That means how are project activities implemented?
  - Achievement indicators, that is to say, the achievement of intermediate results
  - The result indicators. That means, whether the project objectives are achieved or not.
  - Effects indicators, that means what are the impacts of the project (positive / negative, environmental, population, etc.)?

Relational websites allow companies to develop and maintain relationships with a sizable number of new and existing customers. They contain much more information and encourage customer feedback. They allow the company to personalize the interface according to visitor needs and direct specific groups of customers to targeted offerings and services. (Geiger and Martin; 1999), and this will be the next point to be discussed.

2. The relational characteristics of a website:

The relational features of the website can be defined as the human and social aspects that govern the website and have as main role to create a certain perception of a social presence and human contact between users and the company in the virtual world (Toufaily et al., 2010). According to the writers, the characteristics of a successful website are: connectivity (Sullivan, 1999), information quality (Li et al., 2002), interactivity (Dutta & Segev, 1999; Sullivan, 1999), playfulness (Rice, 1997), and learning (Liu & Arnett, 2000).

Table 1. Website quality dimensions

Dimensions	Meanings
Connectivity	The degree of easiness for customers to contact with the specific or the relevant website
Information Quality	The degree of relevant, timely, secured, and well-designed information presented on a website
Interactivity	The degree to which dialogue can be generated between the site's owner and visitors
Playfulness	The degree to cultivate hedonic pleasure in site design
Learning	The degree to satisfy visitor's curiosity, sense of learning and expanding one's knowledge

Source: (Chiu, Hsieh & Kao, 2005)

Four relational characteristics of a website were chosen to be discussed: the quality of the communication, the social presence, the quality of the site and the virtual community.

The quality of the communication

Communication by sharing information, collecting feedback, listening and responding to customers and other partners is becoming increasingly important within e-business. The more the virtual enterprise is based on interactive relationships, the more it positively affects customer retention (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). The company

can convert visitors into purchasers or customers by ensuring easy communication and exchange of information with consumers, and by updating the website frequently.

The use of the internet improves the quality of communication and increases the amount of information shared between different stakeholders (Rao, Perry & Frazer, 2013). Thus, the internet improves the support of relational-marketing techniques, by virtue of its ability to maintain active and instant communication between the company and its target (McKenna, 1991).

Several empirical studies show that costumers communicate their negative experiences with their social environment and on the internet (Strauss, 2000), for this reason communication is important in order to increase the client's confidence and strengthen the relationship with him.

Social presence

Social interaction is an important determinant of customer retention by reducing uncertainty (Leek, Naudé & Turnbull, 2003), this is why this characteristic must be incorporated into the site of a virtual merchant.

This social interactivity is reflected in the availability and efficiency of real-time information exchange, customer feedback, and the nature of online media.

The virtual community

It is described as an online social entity which includes existing and potential customers, organized and maintained by an online retailer in order to facilitate the exchange of opinions and information on the products and services offered (Srinivasan et al, 2002)

The online company must offer the possibility of exchanging information and experiences between customers who have the same interest and this can be through dialogue sites in order to stimulate a friendly atmosphere and a sense of belonging.

Social interactions through virtual communities affects online loyalty through shared interests and social relationships that the client can build in such a community (Olivia, 1998).

The quality of the site

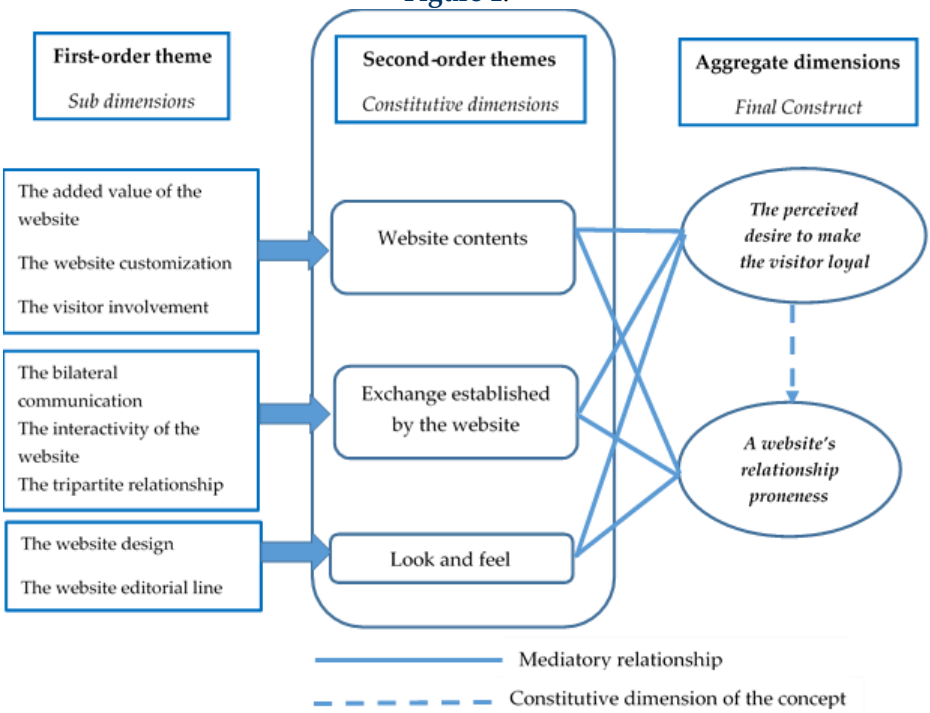
This means the characteristics of a successful website mentioned before like connectivity, interactivity, playfulness, and learning, these elements make the website more attractive which in return makes the visitors more loyal and encourage them to visit the website at least one more time.

3. Results and discussion

It is clear that organizations must interact with their environment but the nature of this interaction must be discussed, the evolution of this environment across time has changed both behaviours, internal and external one; and this is recognized as very important in formulating strategies.

The findings from this research have demonstrated that there are 3 main actors that make a website useful and bring performance to the organization, as mentioned in the figure bellow:

Figure 1.



Source: (Agrebi & Boncori, 2016)

The first element is the website's contents like the added value, its updates and visitor involvement, the second is the exchange established by the website and it includes communication, relationship and interactivity, the third one is about the website's design and its editorial line.

All these elements have aim to make the visitor loyal in order to create a good relational website. In the other hand, digitizing project can offer:

A considerable time saving

The ability to contact the organization at any time, Internet users can settle their situations on the web sparing themselves any kind of displacement, and at any time (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

Absence of attendance

Among the factors and arguments to which Internet users use websites instead of moving to the offices, we find the avoidance of the crowd inside the companies' offices.

No geographic constraints

Reduce travel difficulties for residents of far and rural areas.

However, it can also be limited by.

Confidentiality

According to (Gattiker et al., 2000) respect for privacy, confidentiality is essential to ensure trust between online organizations and users.

Lack of confidence

Internet users are very cautious about websites and develop a great reluctance towards them;

Material site access conditions

IT equipment, transfer rate, flow rate, etc. (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

4. Conclusion

(Flores & Volle,2005) confirmed that non-merchant websites have high relational potential such us corporate websites and social security ones, because they can create and/or develop relationships with different targets (i.e. investors, visitors and others) (Leichty & Esrock, 2001).

It exists two types of websites "static" and "dynamic", (Leichty & Esrock, 2001) distinguished between the two and said that a relationship denotes repeated interactions with the visitor and also the ability to use past interactions to configure future interactions.
"Tactic websites can hold interactive features, whereas other websites can offer the appearance but not the substance of interactivity" (Agrebi & Boncori, 2016).
Therefore, we suggest that a successful website must be considered as a social actor, and its relationship with its visitors must be treated as an interpersonal relationship in order to create a sense of implication and interaction between the company's website and its visitors.

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