

Social e-Atmospherics in Practice (or not): A French and Turkish Web Designers' Perspectives

Christophe Bisson, Kadir Has University, Faculty of Arts and Science, Istanbul, Turkey
cbisson@khas.edu.tr / +90 212 533 65 32

Ronan De Kervenoal, Sabanci University, Faculty of Management, Istanbul, Turkey and
Aston Business school, UK
dekervenoael@sabanciuniv.edu / +90 (216) 483-9704

D.Selcen O. Aykac, Özyeğin University, Istanbul, Turkey.
Selcen.Aykac@ozyegin.edu.tr / +90 216 559 20 00

8th International Marketing Trends, Paris January 16-17th 2009

Abstract

Little is known about the development of social e-atmospherics. And yet, e-atmospherics have motivated an emerging body of research which reports that both better layouts and 'recognized' atmospherics encourage consumers to modify their shopping habits. While the literature has analyzed mainly the functional (design) aspect of e-atmospherics, little has been done in terms of linking its characteristics' to social (co-) creation. This paper attempts to redress the imbalance by exploring the anatomy from a website designer perspective of the social dimension of design in relation to e-atmospherics, which includes factors such as the aesthetic design of space and the influence of visual cues as a socially constructed meaning. We identify the challenges that web designers as social agents, who interact within intangible social reference sets, restricted by social standards, value, beliefs, status and duties, face daily within their work. We aim to review the current understanding of the importance and voluntary integration of social cues displayed by web designers from a mature market and an emerging market, and provides an analysis based recommendation towards the development of an integrated e-social atmospheric framework. Results report exploratory findings from questionnaires with 10 French and 16 Turkish web designers. These allow us to re-interpret the web designers' reality regarding social e-atmospherics. We contend that by comprehending (before any consumer/client input) social capital, daily micro practices, habits and routine of designers, a deeper understanding of social e-atmospherics possible functions in the future will be unpacked.

Keywords: E-shopping, e-atmospherics, web design, cultural capital, web content.

Introduction

The main problem for many websites still remains the range and type of audiences involved. Each stakeholder has a particular aim and strategy as well as a pre-defined level of experiences with ICT and most importantly his/her own set of *histories*. As a consequence of the intense online competition, it is expected that designers will want to differentiate themselves and their work by including and drawing from their social capital experiences and norms to create sites that are clearly original, organically accepted by the majority of their stakeholders as well as reflecting the cultural dynamism and diversity of that group. In our context, a website designer is defined as a person, professional or amateur, who is involved in the decision making while creating or managing a website. Website designers are supposed to be experienced in the ‘art of website design’. Their services vary, but will include some or all of the following: discussing and analyzing client requirements, planning site structure, layout, “look and feel”, navigation, digital photography, designing and creating web graphics and animations, designing and building web pages, website testing, programming for interactive websites, search engine optimization and registration, website hosting and domain name setup, website maintenance or training clients to do it themselves, and website promotion. Equally significant are website *developers*, generally more technical than website designers. Although their skills do overlap, developers tend to specialize more in programming for interactive websites. This led to website designer to “*continually weigh how visual elements affect audience perceptions and uses of online information. Such factors can be complex when designing materials for a particular group[...] designers must now think in terms of global audiences*” (Del Galdo, 1996, p82; Nielsen 1996, p1). While pluralism of social experiences are clearly apparent regarding website designers, clients and consumers’ approaches to social cues diversities, it however seems that ‘one size fit all’ type of sites are the most common. In fact great effort are mainly made to correct deterministic website mistakes including, phony front door, squandered vertical space, high clunk quotient, slow text, no helping hand, fuzzy identity, information overload, weird navigation and to expose buried treasure. All are geared at improving productivity, effectiveness and efficiency. Despite the growing presence and usage of Website’s analytic software, designers while improving the overall buying process have still to ground their experiences into the social imagery of the stakeholders. Nowhere is it more apparent than the way traditional explanations for such homogeneity are provided. Common reasoning is often related to technological rhetoric and constraints. However, today advancement in ICT and the lowering in costs have for the majority excluded this type of explanation. This led us to argue that a secondary set of social inertia is often at the root of the problem. For example website design schools and in general technical education is still too often geared towards practical efficiency and deterministic aspect such as search engine optimization, navigation and graphic design optimization. In addition, breaking from the traditional rules is a difficult exercise. While we see website designers more like ‘artists’ with the inherent risk of shocking or being misunderstood, clients seems to have a much more risk-averse strategies, hence less original approaches, based on benchmarking and a set of objective website analytics that are clearly understood by other functions within the firm (e.g. accounting). As in advertising setting, regardless of the product and brand categories, the more memorable campaigns and experiences have often been recognized as the best campaigns. Moreover, it is important to notice that not all website designers will actively respond to the same way to these broad changes. As individual agents, they are located in a specific environment, both at individual level and within broader social groups.

This paper deals with an important aspect of marketers’ online strategy, namely the potential for developing enhanced socially grounded websites. It debates that increased differentiation and organic engagement with the channel would provide greater loyalty and sustainability allowing website owners not only to sale or display items but also to engage more holistically with their stakeholders. The current lack of inherited online social capital practices may deter many potential users and lead many website to be perceived as commodity with little value added and too often driven by stock availability, delivery slot and price. Practice is define as practitioner that include the whole range of stakeholders, practices that are what stakeholders ‘do’ and how they act and praxi representing the timing and intensity. The socialization

influences of e-cultural capital, through the examination of day-to-day designers' practices seem to be an overlooked issue in the e-marketing and e-retailing literature. This paper aims to address this imbalance by providing an exploratory review of designer state of mind and approach. As a way to illustrate our perspective, the paper discusses the results of an exploratory questionnaire with 10 French web designers (as professionals from a mature market) and 16 Turkish web designers (as professionals from an emerging market).

The following section defines social capital within web design to build a rich foundation in laying out the motivations for our research. The third section originates from this theoretical framework and provides a new lens through which online social capital could be interpreted and linked to experiences. The fourth section describes our methodology. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion outlining a number of theoretical opportunities, and avenues for future research to develop a theoretical bridge towards the next generation of website geographies.

Defining social capital within website design

A socially grounded website is one that presents and reflects in its components (written, colors and sounds), through direct allusion and presence or through metaphors, the actual past and present circumstances and cues reflecting a particular society and its sub-communities. These are further located within a local context and space where stakeholders are evolving in. Socially grounded websites are aiming at quicker and more sustainable relationships with stakeholders. However, agreements regarding the meaning and usage of certain historical or social symbols vary among stakeholders making the exercise a difficult one. This is reflected for example in the usage of politically correct terminology, technical wording, usage of slang, local dialects, abbreviations, spelling conventions and structure of the language. Or regarding the colors side of design the local influence required to 'fit'. These are also visible in the formatting through the location and types of traditional polite signs display including dates, times and names location. In terms of possible audio impact, beyond translation and choice of celebrity/local presenters certain tones, rhythms have different meaning in different circumstances.

Fit is often described along the closely related notion of culture within often multicultural setting. We define culture in a broad sense with its usual characterization including the degree in which groups and populations share attributes, value, beliefs and behavior (Matsumoto, 1994). Culture and social practice have clear implication regarding internet design and settings. Various studies have demonstrated the cultural and social effect in areas such as marketing (Tian and Emery, 2002), consumer trust (Jarvenpaa et al 1999), internet diffusion (Ferle et al, 2002) and website development (Kang and Corbitt, 2001; Sun, 2001). Another important step and indeed the catalyst in the growth and development of socially grounded website lies in the usage of socially recognized e-atmospherics. Atmospherics are defined as "*the conscious designing of space to create certain buyer effects*" (Kotler 1973, p. 50). E-atmospherics have motivated an emerging body of research (Dailey 2004; Eroglu, Machleit, and Davis 2001) which reports that both virtual store layouts and atmospherics encourage consumers to modify their shopping habits (Burke 2002; Vrechopoulos, Papamichail, and Doukidis 2002). If the literature has analyzed mainly the functional aspect of e-atmospherics, little has been done in terms of linking its characteristics' to social capital cues and their appropriate representations (Hui, Dube, and Chebat 1997; Spangenberg, Crowley, and Henderson 1996). In a traditional commerce setting, atmospherics for examples are linked to lighting, decompression zone, folding or not of the garments, fast forwards hard flooring, level of staff services, initial window display and overall layout (grid, maze, freedom) and are used by marketers to manipulate and increase purchases opportunities including impulse, link offers, and complementary accessories (Rook and Fisher, 1995). In an online environment, traditional e-atmospherics involve design to optimize navigation, search, check out process, product/service description, basket management to enhance site stickiness, to encourage final decision to purchase and to promote positive post-purchase feelings (Yen et al 2007). These are, for the leading companies, nowadays often supported by other less conventional

emerging activities such as blogs, wikis, RSS, social bookmarking and podcasting. It has been difficult for most consumers to clearly identify the different aspects (timing, intensity, phases etc) of the experience as they often lack 'inherited mundane e-cultural capital' and reference point compared to traditional shopping channels (Bourdieu 1986; De Certeau 1984). In addition, most consumers have not been able to prioritize cues within the shopping practice as a reflection of unknown appropriate interaction procedures. The mundane aspect of website activities (shopping, browsing, informational) and its cultural capital are continuously being (re-) created at each visit. Website experiential elements that include concepts such as convenience, information architecture, site navigation, customer services, interaction with company personnel, customization and network effect have been well researched (Constantinides 2004) but again mainly from a deterministic process oriented perspective. Today, other designs elements are emerging including the architecture of the information, familiarity of metaphors, transparency of terminology, ease of access, and level to which the site is customer centric (Egger, 2001; Agarwal and Venkatesh, 2002; Fogg et al., 1999, 202; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Nielsen, 2001).

Questions and themes such as the one developed by the Online Publishers Association 2007 in their latest OPA survey seem to reflect a change in trends with most stakeholders requiring more from the sites they visit. These include reflection themes such as:

Touch me and expand my view

- This site makes me think things in a new ways
- It inspires me in my own life
- This site stimulate my thinking about a lot of different topics
- This site makes me a more interesting person
- Some stories touch me deep down

Comment with Others

- I am as interested in input from other users as I am in the regular content of the site
- Overall the visitors to this site are pretty knowledgeable about topic covered
- I would like to meet other people that regularly visit this site
- This site does a good job of getting its visitors to contribute or provide feedback

Worth saving and sharing

- I often save articles on this site to keep and go back to
- I like to send things I see on this site to other people
- I will often email articles to myself so I can keep them for further references
- People will call or email to tell me to check out something on this site
- I usually like to discuss this site with someone else as I read through it

Following Milliman and Fugate's (1993), and Eroglu *et al.*'s (2001) works, we focus on the anatomy of social dimension in relation to e-atmospherics, which includes factors such as the social aesthetic in the design of space, the influence of social visual cues, the interpretation of shopping as a social activity and meaning of appropriate interactivity. As described in Blyte (2000) differences in language, symbolic meaning, and the aesthetics of products and promotional activities and associated materials can have an immediate and direct effect on the outcome of any effort to communicate. Family, work, politics, religion, and communication technologies provide reference points to people, and differences in them can often alter the meaning of the messages.

Interpreting and linking social capital with practice and experiences

As in any business setting, it is important to try to identify experiences that have the highest impact in encouraging usage and fit within the company strategy and objectives. Results from the OPA survey have shown the emerging importance of categories such as entertain and absorb me, try to persuade me (important in political context), looks out for people like me,

make me smarter, turn me on by the ads, be a regular part of my day, my personal time out, helps improve me, my guilty pleasure, a way to fill my time, gives me something to talk about, and worries me for example. These categories are clearly showing the emergence of a new set of characteristics that will need to be taken into account by website designers. These categories represent a new type of demand and requirements that often cannot be controlled or learned within the traditional educational setting but require the use and leverage of existing as well as emerging local and global social networks. From this perspective, we argue that the client's requirements are justified and motivated by their own social networks rather than the traditional restrictions of the brand or products only and will need to be explained to designers.

Design and social experiences do not exist in isolation. Both are acquired and learned within specific settings organized and influenced both by external societal forces and internal individual dynamics and identity development. The geographical environment allows physical cultural attributes including architecture, local plants and wildlife, natural and adapted colors, symbols, signs, images, sounds, and scents to be efficiently utilized (Barber and Badre, 1998). Thinking and acting styles are different. These differences are making the richness or lack of it that will encourage or discourage usage. Styles, specificities, differentiation are an exercise developed over time and a conduit for emotion and artistic expression. Multiple personalities and different issues and opinions are then made available. The intertwining of *histories* and design rules or functions need to be expressed openly rather than expecting correct or appropriate interpretation directly. This is readily recognized by designers (but not always put in real practice) as a well-designed user interface improves the performance and appeal of the web, helping to convert "tourists" or "browsers" to "residents" and "customers" (Marcus and Gould, 2000). E-shopping behavior has already been recognized in the literature as influenced by two types of social influences including normative social influence (conforming to norms and expectations) and informational social influence (being the readiness to accept, evaluate and believe information displayed online) and the emergence of new realities (Song and Zahedi, 2005; George, 2004; Spears et al 2002)

Reflecting on this social symbolism highlights more than a specified number of categories or cues that are recognized and interpreted by users during the e-service encounter (Szymanski and Hise 2000; Park, Iyer, and Smith 1989; Park and Hastak 1994; Sautter, Hyman, and Lukosius 2004). Indeed, there has been a marked increase in the importance and scope attached to social symbolism over the last ten years. With the emergence of a global world including virtual new worlds, a new set of references, both global and local, to interpret and relate to existing social fabric, norms and standards have to be created, shaped and accepted through new practices and usage. New e-social histories, experiences and strategies are constantly emerging. A significant difference with traditional environment is the lack of a clearly dominant model and the constant development of plural experiences. The social process is a never ending task. It is easy to overlook the fact that new learning and knowledge acquisition (effort) are required to be able to understand new emerging practices and day to day activities resulting from the engagement with the channel. Nowhere is it more apparent that the new ritual including 'posture' or general behavior towards new technological gadgets including RSS, podcasting and MMS. An important step in the growth of social symbolism is the acquisition and manner of access through education, media and social network. Social symbolism is therefore an emerging framework to assess technology congruence with humanity and a practice that transcends a single technology or a single sector. Visual and design culture especially in our context "*is just not another aspect of everyday life, but is everyday life*" (Mirzoeff 1998, p.3). In societies prone to information overload, it is now a modern tendency to visualize existence including sensual immediacy and importance of impact at first sight (Bryson, Holly, and Moxey 1994; Jenks 1995). Visual polycentrism, as '*not on a spatial or primary point of origins or on a finite list of centers but rather on a systematic principle of differentiation, relationally and linkage*' (Shohat and Stam 1998), should be promoted rather than homogenous standardization and one-size-fit-all model. Web designers seem to fail in making the difference between the signifier, that which is seen, and the signified, that which is meant.

Up to this point we have discussed the various aspects in which social symbolism is emerging

and will impact designer view of their function in practice. However, not all designers and firms will actively respond in the same way to these challenges. Some actors may try to protect their position and established routine. One key issue is making sure all stakeholders are actively convinced that the evolution and changes are necessary and positives.

While technology in itself will not cause a site to be successful, designers have yet to make explicit use of their effort and understanding of social cues within their overall e-strategies. In addition, the above characteristics, challenges and opportunities of including social symbolism in website design having a repercussion for the wider strategy and practice of the channel requiring all stakeholders to reach an overarching holistic strategic vision.

Methodology

An exploratory e-questionnaire was designed to collect current data on designers' perception of social practice atmospheric inclusion in website design. Four major sections incorporating demographics, general client / type of site design background, specific traditional design experiences, and Hofstede (1984) cultural distance scale were covered. The two first major sections are the topic of the table 1 (See appendix). The first eight questions of this table followed traditional questionnaire regarding demographics and background. The table 2 (see appendix) deals with the specific of traditional design. The questions are stemming from De Kervenoael, Aykac and Bisson, (2008), Hofstede (1984) and Spool et al, (1999). Finally a set of questions are related to the research of Foremski, (2000) who pointed out that *"designers tend to forget that most visitors to their sites still sue low modem connections and may not be able to support animations. Clever e-businesses offer an option to the user as to whether they want to browse their website with or without downloading software to make the site more interactive and animated, which avoids irritating people who imply want to retrieve relevant information and quickly."* A total of 28 questions- responses were asked. Advertisement about the e-survey was posted on bulletin boards, popular forums and blogs which have discussion sections for website designers between the 15 and 30 of July 2008. Translation from English was performed using back to back translation with flexibility to reflect the meaning of the statement in a manner that will be understood by all both in French and Turkish. Respondents were self selected. Internet Protocols were checked to ensure that no respondents answered more than once the survey. A total of 10 valid surveys in France and 16 in Turkey were analyzed. Each respondent was given the option to develop further his/her answers in a pop up box. The aggregation of the answers are given in percentage except few times where they may had the possibility to give several answers for the same question; in that case, the result is the absolute number. Tendencies and reflections are reported in the result section. Discussion is then turning towards social experience practices and how this framework could help in understanding and designing better sites. At this point the paper becomes more theoretical.

Results

The results obtained from the e-questionnaire showed clear trends. Table 1 presents the respondent demographics. As can be seen and was expected website designers are reasonably young, and educated. In both sample the majority have a reasonable amount of experience that should have allowed them to reflect on their situation. In both countries, designers do not seem to offer a clear technologically oriented perspective to design and execution. They do not portray themselves as using any artistic or journalistic approach to any design or issue. The difference between the website structure (page, frame etc) and the content creation was made very clear. Designers in general felt that their position was only restricted to frame creation with a minimal practical input on content. They did not perceive themselves as having any artistic, aesthetic or fashionable creativity input obligation. While the usage of a certain type of social network exists, it is often restricted to technical capabilities regarding ICT bottleneck or innovation details rather than product or brand imagery. Secondly, client

seems to have the greatest power and may be too often the last word. Each task has been commoditized in a business contract-Cahier des Charges with the delivery of a standard product / design. The lack of intermediaries or marketing input was also quite evident especially for small firms or independent designers. Thirdly, clients seem to have been unable or unwilling to discuss more philosophical aspects of the design. At this point a commercial time constraint and budget may play an important role. The convenience aspect of the relationship, in a context of multiple clients was also noted as important in today's busy life. It was felt that the traditional approach to the brand or product had not be re-defined online efficiently by many clients that were just migrating content from printed documents (e.g. strategic plan, advertising) with minimal changes. Many potential heralded by the e-channel being immediately forfeited. Even for international clients, it seems that the constant information feeding and request created by the e-environment was still difficult to cope with (interactive site response time and response expectation and updating). Fourthly, it seems quite clear that a language divide exist between the clients and designers. As an example the theme of security from a practical perspective may be represented within the design by a locker. Few designers will think of promoting third party certification (visa, cybernanny, SSL) or pointing the users towards a clear arbitration policy or/and guarantee strategy or even the use of HttpS as a secure area if not mentioned in the original working document. In both countries, our respondents were not able to answer on clear themes or social symbols that are regularly integrated in web design regarding culture, history, religion and political environments. In addition, while most designers in France seem to work on multi-brands sites and try to create a logical link between them, in Turkey, it was acknowledged that each brand requires its own unique marketing strategy regarding segmentation, targeting and positioning. It is important to notice, at this point, that Turkey lacks the type of mega national traditional brand very present in France with established logo, color, and design. Designers, in France, were more sensitive to clients' specifications, hence did not seem willing to display a holistic marketing approach. The often smaller sites designed in Turkey may have forced designers to have a more macro approach of the businesses they represented. Turkish designers may have access to more leverage in an environment where clients have less structured demands, e-knowledge and expectations. However, this did not mean a less professional technical approach in the Turkish case.

Lastly, certain amounts of cultural imperialism seem to appear from the French designers where a homogenous approaches to design is taken regardless of the site being local or global. While specificities are acknowledged (Anglo-Saxon systems' prefer more advance graphics) they are not necessarily delivered. This does not seem to be reflected in Turkey where modernism and traditional vision of businesses model are mixed all with the latest available technologies. Regarding Hofstede's (1984) dimensions, the questionnaire format was clearly showing its limitations in our environment. The four dimensions (High vs. Low context, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Individualism vs. collectivism and Power distance) explored were not yet perceived to be relevant for the designers. While they understood that website design was changing they were not ready to cope with more psychological and social dimensions. Yet, in an example quoted in Fletcher (2006) it was demonstrated that in the case of High vs. Low context, "*high context cultures where much of the meaning is implicit in the context of the communication, more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that the website graphics, layout and typefaces are selected with an eye to appealing to the ethnic group inhabiting the culture. In low context cultures this is not as important and the emphasis should be on ensuring the text is culturally sensitive to the ethnic group*" p 270.

Further discussion and conclusion: Integrating the exploratory results and practice

Following the practice perspective, our reasoning takes us to theoretical directions that can be traced back to the work of John Dewey, as recently underscored by Musolf (2001, p 280):

"Humans are not passive reactors to 'objectively given' stimuli but are, instead active interpreters of the symbolic nature of stimuli. Objects, communication and interaction are infused with culturally derived symbolic meaning."

This viewpoint brings into play the pluralism of *co-participants* that interact within the e-channel processes and the website designers industry/products. A multiplicity of *histories*, stories and trajectories can be expected to co-exist. Stakeholders' practices with e-design can be expected to vary widely. Motives can be at odds with one another, particularly within the decision making process when off line and online information and discussion are integrated. It seems relevant to incorporate an explanation for the interaction with other Medias, trends and fashion, operational practices and other social, spatial and cultural issues. From the above theoretical framing, the practice of website design and consumption must also be understood in terms of the panoply of micro participation and everyday human activity; the many intra-, inter- and extra-website linkages, networks and relationships; together with the discursively constituted contexts which make the usage of website design process happen. Only then does it become clearer how "*discursive practices provide linguistic, cognitive and symbolic resources*" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, 9) for interacting with, connecting to, and integrating into the practice of website design.

At this point it may be important to distinguish between individual motives and dominant discourse used for mass dissemination of information. Minor voices and other legitimate issues and claims need to be investigated.

Given the contested process of online cultural capital building and the wide range of e-atmospherics, reflections imply that the current designers' strategy using a one-size-fits-all model may quickly reached its limits in certain environment but not in all culture. The traditional debates over standardization vs differentiation and global vs local are re-appearing. As traditionally argued by Levitt (1983) "*standardization is a desirable aim in view of resulting economies of scale and convergence of tastes as a consequence of globalization*" "*Cultural mistakes have become common on internet sites with the posting of wrong currencies and using phrases that when translated convey a hilarious or offensive meaning*" (Fletcher, 2006, p260). While 'glocalisation' is often advocated as the compromised answer, it has yet to lead to a sustainable e-commerce model accepted by all. We challenge that a new generation of experiential / relational / social websites should be designed. These ought to include more subjective, qualitative, local social norms of information delivery towards creating e-social knowledge. This will enable designers to form and engage with socially constructed new online groups and practices. Two aspects including content origin formation and social experiences are particularly relevant. The type, order and relevance of the socially driven information, i.e. practice, are pertinent. Other research such as Luna and Peracchio (2000) have also demonstrated that website should "*include both content and have a structure that is consistent with the symbols, rituals, heroes and values of likely visitors to the site*".

Website design, consumption and experiences need to be co-constructed and co-branded by all the stakeholders. This will lead to a fundamental recast of the online human social dimension that should translate into better websites. Furthermore, According to Song and Zahedi (2005) "*Web-design elements related to external interpersonal sources (such as expert comments and customer ratings) impact Web customers' external normative belief, which in turn have a highly significant impact on external subjective norm, hence playing an important role in the social-interaction aspect of e-commerce*" p 1231. This led us to a further series of questions including:

What social experiences people have when using a website? How do their experiences impact the site usage? How can we use socially grounded experiences to increase site usage? How different cultural expectations affect perceptions of visual information and communication

Technological development and construction of meanings cannot be separated. These emerging digital micro-social practices are re-defining e-social communication management and administration. Consecutively, an evolution of the communication process providing matched or 'real' user congruence within the pluralism of the e-channel need to be assembled in a non-deterministic fashion. The online environment creates its own justification / reasoning based on its emerging social models that encourage specific behavior. Active

marketers' engagement at micro strategic practice level, incorporated within the mundane aspect of website design should provide a more appropriate filtering of social priority cues.

This discussion makes a three fold contribution to the literature. First and foremost, it provides the additional lens of practice for understanding website design. At the basic level, we argue for a certain level of social momentum, where complex sets of emotional and intellectual attributes allow users' actions and reactions to be fully integrated and build upon. This is quickly followed and associated with other parties to form e-social groups' in-between time and more functional activities linked to the design process. Our contribution recognizes the complicity of e-social capital and technology in every day assembly of the online content.

Second, role of each online actor is re-dimensionalised in terms of co-creation. Website design is seen as an activity driven by the value added which underpins the online business models rather than promoting another marketing tactic to push user consumption. This should be seen as an extension of the existing infrastructure, as it decreases the complexity of implementation and management. Content and user intellectual investment remain critical. Lastly, in contrast to most research, we have attempted to conceptualize the system *in situ*. The channel currently seems to have been high jacked by a minority of stakeholders and a re-distribution of power is necessary. To capture the real opportunities, lower skepticism and newly-fostered alliances are needed. While the first round of the battle has been won by technologists; as the channel is being recognized and engaged with, the second sustainability / profitability round has to be socially-driven and will only be possible by the development of sociality and mundane features, the creation of a true sense of well being and respect between the actors practices.

This is a significant step towards a better understanding of online consumer behavior and the emerging representations of cyber cultural capital necessary for the channel to achieve sustainability. Indeed, the locus of powers ought to be shifting from clients to designers and consumers. In our context, users' social requirement have outpaced technology adaptation rate.

Future research direction

Our second stage will consist of in depth phone interviews with web designers in both countries. In addition to the questions already mentioned in the text, other areas will cover themes such as how do designers go to learn about cultural diversity in a global technical world? What evolutions have designers notice in clients demand regarding cultural pluralism of their users? How is design becoming more segmented? What are the different niches and trends or fashions?

References

- Agarwal, R. and Venkatesh, V. (2002), "Assessing a firm's web presence: A heuristic evaluation procedure for measurement of usability". *Information Management research*, 13(2), 168-121.
- Barber, W. and Badre, A. (1998), "Culturability: The merging of culture and usability" in proceedings of the 4th Conference on Human factors and the web (Basking Ridge NJ), June.
- Blyte, J. (2000), "Marketing communications". Pearson education, England.
- Bourdieu, P (1986), "La distinction, Critique Sociale du Jugement", Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.
- Bryson, N., M. Holly, and K. Moxey (1994), "Visual culture: Images and interpretations", Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press.
- Burke, R.R. (2002), "Technology and customer interface: What consumers want in the physical and virtual store," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30 (4), 411-32.
- Constantinides, Efthymios (2004), "Influencing the online consumer's behavior: the Web experience," *Internet Research*, 14 (2), 111-26.
- Dailey, Lynn (2004), "Navigational web atmospherics: Explaining the influence of restrictive navigation cues," *Journal of Business Research*, 57 (7), 795-803.
- De Certeau, M. (1984), "The Practice of Everyday Life". Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- De kervenoal R., Aykac S., Bisson C., 2008, "The influence of social E-Atmospherics in practice: A website content analysis perspective", Proceedings of the 7th International Congress, Marketing Trend, Venice, January 17-19.
- Del Galdo, Elisa M. (1996), "Culture and design". *International user interfaces*". Ed. Elisa .del Galdo and Jakob Nielsen. New-York: Wiley, 74-87.
- Egger, F.N. (2001), "Affective design of e-commerce user interfaces: How to maximize perceived trustworthiness". In proceedings of the International Conference on Affective human factors design.
- Eroglu, Sevgin A., Karen A. Machleit, and Lenita M. Davis (2001), "Atmospheric qualities of online retailing: A conceptual model and implications," *Journal of Business Research*, 54 (2), 177-84.
- Ferle C., Edwards S., Mizuno Y. (2002), "Internet diffusion in Japan: cultural consideration". *Journal of Advertising research*, pp 65-79.
- Fletcher, R. (2006), "The impact of culture on website content, design and structure. An international and a multicultural perspective". *J. of Communication Management*. Vol. 10, No 3, pp 259-273.
- Fogg, B.J, Soohoo, C., and Danielson, D. (1999), "How people evaluate a we site's credibility?". Persuasive technology lab, Stanford University.
- Foremski, T. (2000), "Website design", *The Financial Times*.
- George J.F. (2004), "The theory of planned behavior and Internet purchasing", *Internet ressource*. 14(3), 198-212.
- Hoffman, D.L. and Novak, T. P. (1996), "Marketing in hypermedia computer-mediated environments: conceptual foundations". *Journal of Marketing*, 50-68.
- Hofstede, G.H. (1984), "Culture's consequences: international differences in work-related values". Beverly Hills, CA: Sage publications.
- Hui, M.K., L. Dube, and J.C. Chebat (1997), "The impact of music on consumers' reactions to waiting for services," *Journal of Retailing*, 73 (Winter), 87-104.
- Jarvenpaa, S.L., Tractinski, N., Saarinen, L., and Vitale, M. (1999), "Consumer trust in an Internet store : a cross-cultural validation". *Journal of computer mediated communication*, 5 (2).
- Jarzabkowski P. (2005) "Strategy as Practice: an Activity-Based Approach" London: Sage.
- Jenks, C. (1995), "Visual Culture", London: Routledge.
- Kang K.S, Korbitt B. (2001), " Effectiveness of graphical components in website e-commerce application: A cultural perspective." *The Electronic Journal Systems in developing countries*.
- Kotler, Philip (1973), "Atmospherics as a Marketing Tool," *Journal of Retailing*, 49 (4), 48.
- Levitt, T (1983). "The globalization of markets", *Harvard Business Review*. May/June.

Luna, D. and Peracchio, L.A (2000), "*The effect of culture and language on web site navigation: a cognitive framework*", Proceedings of the eCommerce and Global business forum, Andersen consulting institute for strategic change, Santa Cruz, May.

Marcus, A. and Gould, E.W. (2000), "*Cultural dimensions and global web user interface design. Interactions*". 33-46.

Matsumoto, D. (1994), "*Psychology from a cultural perspective*". CA:Brookes/Cole.

Milliman, R.E. and D.L. Fugate (1993), "*Atmospherics as an emerging influence in the design of exchange environments*," Journal of Marketing, 3 (Spring/Summer), 66-74.

Mirzoeff, N. (1998), "*The visual culture reader*", London: Routledge.

Musolf, G. (2001). "John Dewey's Social Psychology and Neopragmatism: Theoretical Foundations of Human Agency and Social Reconstruction", The Social Science Journal, 38, pp. 277-296.

Nielsen, Jakob. (1996) , "*International usability engineering*". International user interfaces. Ed. Elisa .del Galdo and Jakob Nielsen. New-York: Wiley, 1-13.

Nielsen, J. (2001), "*Designing for web usability*". Indianapolis, IN: New Riders Publications.

Online Publishers Association (2007), "*Forum for the Future*", from the proceedings of the Global Online Media Conference, The Landmark, London, March 7-9, 2007.

Park, C. W., E. S. Iyer, and D. C. Smith (1989), "*The Effects of Situational Factors on In-Store Grocery Shopping Behavior: The Role of Store Environment and Time Available for Shopping*," Journal of Consumer Research, 15 (4), 422-33.

Park, J. W. and M. Hastak (1994), "*Memory-based Product Judgments: Effects of Involvement at Encoding and Retrieval*," Journal of Consumer Research, 21 (2), 534-47.

Rook, Dennis W. and Robert J. Fisher (1995), "*Normative Influences on Impulsive Buying Behavior*", Journal of Consumer Research, 22 (3), 305-13.

Sautter, P., M.R. Hyman, and V. Lukosius (2004), "*E-tail atmospherics: a critique of the literature and model extension*", Journal of Electronic Commerce Research, 5 (1), 14-24.

Shohat, E and R Stam (1998), "*Narrativizing visual culture, towards a polycentric aesthetics*," in The Visual Culture Reader, ed. N Mirzoeff, London: Routledge.

Song, J., F. Zahedi (2005), "*A theoretical approach to web design in e-commerce: a belief reinforcement model*". Management science; 51, 8; ABI/INFORM Global, p 1219, August.

Spangenberg, E.R., A.E. Crowley, and P.W. Henderson (1996), "*Improving the store environment: do olfactory cues affect evaluations and behaviors?*," Journal of Marketing, 60 (April), 67-80.

Spears R.T., Postmes M. Lea, A. Wolbert (2002), "*When are net ewffects gross product? The power of influence and the influence of power in computer-mediated communication*" Journal of social issues 58(1), 91-107.

Spool, J. Scanlan, T., Schroeder, W., Snyder, C. and De Angels, T. (1999), "*Website usability: A designers guide*", Morgan Kauffmann Publishers, New-York, NY.

Sun, H. (2001), "*Building a culturally competent corporate website: an exploratory study of cultural markers in multilingual web design*". In proceedings of SICDOC, October 21-24, pp 95-102.

Szymanski, D. M. and R. T. Hise (2000), "*e-Satisfaction: An Initial Examination*," Journal of Retailing, 76 (3), 309-22.

Tian, R.G. and Emery, C. (2002), "*Cross-cultural issues in Internet marketing*." The Journal of American Academy of Business, pp217-224.

Vrechopoulos, A.P., G. Papamichail, and G.I. Doukidis (2002), "*Identifying patterns in internet retail store layouts*," in Financial engineering, e-commerce and supply chain, Vol. 70, ed. P. Pardalos and V. Tsitsiringos: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Yen, C-H., Hsu, M-H., Ju, T.L. & Chang, C-M., (2007), "*Knowledge sharing behaviour in virtual communities: the relationship between trust, self-efficacy and outcome expectations*". International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, 65, 153-169

Table 1: Demographic and respondents background information

	France (10 respondents)	Turkey (16 respondents)
1. Gender	90 % male	100% male
2. Age	18-25: 20% 26-35: 60% 36-45: 20%	18-25: 31,3% 26-35: 56,3% 36-45: 12,5%
3. Level of education	- High school: none - Undergraduate: 40% - Masters: 60%	- High school: 6.3 % - Undergraduate: 56.3% - Masters: 37.5%
4. What is your education?	- School of web designers: 10% - IT: 40% - autodidact (scientific, social sciences, engineering, etc) : 50%	- School of web designers: 6.3% - IT: 75% - autodidact (scientific, social sciences, engineering, etc) : 18.8%
5. How long have you been designing websites?	- 0-1 Year: none - 1-3 Year(s): 20% - More than 3 years: 80%	- 0-1 Year: 12.5% - 1-3 Year(s): 31.3% - More than 3 years: 56.3%
6. Which type of company do you work for?	- Your own company: 30% - Small Medium Enterprise: 20% - Multinational: 50% - Non Profit Organization: 10%	- Your own company: 37.5% - Small Medium Enterprise: 18.7% - Multinational: 43.8% - Non Profit Organization: 6.3%
7. What type of customers do you have?	- Small Medium Enterprise: 10% - Multinational: 50% - Diverse: 30%	- Small Medium Enterprise: 37.5% - Multinational: 18.7% - Diverse: 37.5%
8. Do you design website for:	- Local users: 10% - Regional users (ME, MENA, Eastern Europe, Europe): 20% - World web users: 70%	- Local users: 37.5% - Regional users (ME, MENA, Eastern Europe, Europe): 25% - World web users: 37.5%
9. What are the usual ways you use to make the users to interact with the website?	- Chat: 2 - e-mail : 6 - FAQ: 6 - Skype: 0 - Phone: 4 - Avatars: 2 - Newsgroup: 0 - Others: web page to contact: 4	- Chat: 0 - e-mail: 13 - FAQ: 6 - Skype: 3 - Phone: 7 - Avatars: 3 - Newsgroup: 2 - Others: web page to contact: 1
10. Do you include loyalty tools in your website development?	- Never: 2 - Ability to open an account: 4 - Prize winning competition: 2 - Private club: 2 - Others: RSS, 4	- Never: 3 - Ability to open an account: 10 - Prize winning competition: 6 - Private club: 3 - Others: 1
11. In your website, the language is:	- Local for local website: 10% - Has different options for international website: 90%	- Local for local website: 40% - Has different options for international website: 60%
12. Do you provide to the users the ability to promote the website?	- Yes: 80% - No: 20%	- Yes: 68.8% - No: 31.2%

Table 2: specific traditional design experiences

	France (10 respondents)	Turkey (16 respondents)
1. Do you include the sound in your website development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I never use the sound: 3 - Technological sound (e.g. bip): 2 - Human voice: 2 - Music: 5 - Sounds from the nature: 0 - Other: work with sound engineers: 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I never use the sound: 13 - Technological sound (e.g. bip): 1 - Human voice: 1 - Music: 4 - Sounds from the nature: 0 - Other: work with sound engineers: 1
2. How do you allocate the space in one website:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normal: 75% - Full: 12.5% - Empty: 12.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normal: 50% - Full: 12.5% - Empty: 37.5%
3. Where do you locate the menu bar on the website?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I never use: none - Left: 20% - Right: 10% - Top: 60% - Bottom: 10% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I never use: none - Left: 50% - Right: 0% - Top: 50% - Bottom: none
4. Do you use dynamic movement/small clip?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes: 70% - No: 30% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes: 62.5% - No: 37.5%
5. Do you use flash?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I never use: none - Yes, but users have others options to visit the website: 80% - Yes and users can Access the website only by using flash: 20% - Other: none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I never use: 25% - Yes, but users have others options to visit the website: 62.5% - Yes and users can Access the website only by using flash: 12.5% - Other: none
6. While developing the website, the search engine is:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Never included: 30% - Top: 60% - Bottom: none - Middle of page: 10% - Other: none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Never included: 25% - Top: 75% - Bottom: none - Middle of page: none - Other: none
7. What are your criteria to choose on the website:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Color scheme: According to what the customer wants, respect of the brand chart, maximum contrast. - Graphics / photos / image: According to what the customer wants, esthetic. - Text scheme: According to what the customer wants, esthetic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Color scheme : respect of the corporate identity, simple, chosen to emphasize the brand and the product - Graphics / photos / image: small size, easy to download, according to the text. - Text scheme: short, simple, easy to understand. People are not patient on the web.
8. When the website is a commercial one; do you put the price at the first sight?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes: 80% - No: 20 % 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes: 75% - No: 25%
9. Do you let the possibility for the web users to personalize the website?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes: 20% - No: 80% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes: 68.7% - No: 31.3%