

The Blog, a Company Promotion Tool

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Abstract: *In the paper „Blog, a company promotion tool” we aim to study the blog as a form of corporate communication with a role in promoting the company`s image. By the emergence of Web Reality 2.0., companies have sought to diversify and improve their corporate communication, in order to deliver messages with a strong impact on their audience, to create interaction techniques, to evaluate performances through digital media but, most importantly, they have sought to build a community of consumers for both services and / or company products, as well as digital information consumers. In this paper, we are bringing into discussion, first of all, several comparisons between different types of company blogs, in order to observe the communication objectives, the type of content, the frequency of posts, the authors, the pages, the categories, the tags, the followers` opinions, the interaction with the followers. Secondly, we are highlighting a quantitative analysis by creating an online questionnaire addressed to managers/public relations representatives, HR departments, marketing, PR, management, leaders/directors of an organization, suggesting a personalized blog idea for service promotion and / or the company`s products if the company does not already have a blog and closely analyzing the results, the changes occurred assuming that the company already has a blog. Therefore, I consider this to be a present-day topic, a paper highlighting the communication techniques used in the blogosphere, with the role of increasing the efficiency of company promotion and creating consumer communities.*

Keywords: *blog, company, digital media, Web Reality 2.0.*

1. Introduction

The main objective of the paper is to draw attention over the main types, elements and features of company blogs, which are designed to bring about changes in corporate communication but also to increase followers` fidelity, therefore, to ultimately build a community of digital information and / or goods, services consumers. The mentioned field is constantly growing, and the number of users is also steadily increasing. Therefore, this paper is based on the hypothesis that people spend a lot of time in the virtual environment, wanting to be part of a community, and are putting their trust into companies that are present online, interacting more with them and involving themselves in the activities that the companies are launching and promoting, first online, then offline.

2. Research method

2.1. Comparative analysis

The object of the research involves two product blogs, two image blogs and two CEO blogs, from different fields, using an analysis table. In this analysis, I will pursue the communication objectives, the type of content, the frequency of posts, the authors, the obtained pages, the categories, the tags, the followers` opinions, the interaction with the followers.

Following the analysis of the four categories of company blogs, I will highlight:

- the frequency of posts;
- the level of interaction;
- the presence and usefulness of the categories;
- the presence and usefulness of tags;
- the accessibility towards social networks;
- the approached communication style;
- the approached type of content;

- the promotion of products and / or services, through aggressive campaigns or public interest messages;
- the language and importance of addressing the public;
- the welcome page.

This way, I will perform a comparative analysis of company blogs, in order to identify the most important elements, the common points, but also those points that differentiate them, to highlight the importance and usefulness of the blog, as a promotional tool for the company. Some of the analyzed blogs, following the Webstock 2016 contest and the activities carried out over the years, were rewarded with gold, silver and bronze medals (<http://ctrl-d.ro/inspiratie/webstock-2016-in-rezumato/>, <http://refresh.ro/2013/04/blog-de-companie-top-bloguri-corporate-in-romania/>, accessed on 17.11.2016).

2.2. Quantitative analysis

I will use the questionnaire, as an investigative tool. I intent to create a questionnaire with a few short questions (10-15), which I will address to managers or public relations/promotion representatives from HR departments, marketing, PR, management, leaders/directors of organisations. On one hand, I am following companies that do not have a blog, at the moment, by offering them a personalized proposal, and on the other hand, I am following the answers of those companies that already have a blog, in order to observe the changes that occurred once the blog was created, the advantages and disadvantages.

Following the analysis of the two categories of companies, but also relying on the research of the blogs, referred to in point 1, for those which do not have a blog, I will propose an idea of a personalised blog for promoting services and / or company products, based on the needs and requirements of people surveyed and on the results obtained from companies that are already using a blog.

MAGAZINUL F64	TUTORIALE
INCEPATORI	
ENTUZIASTI	
AVANSATI	

3. Results

The next example is a comparative analysis of two product blogs which are focused on the presentation and the usage, the features, the benefits and the product advantages and disadvantages. The analyzed blogs are F64 (<http://blog.f64.ro/>) and Photosetup (<http://www.photosetup.ro/blog/>). The two are part of the photo-video field. The blogs present materials that aim to support customers and followers who want to purchase such a device, who are art lovers, who have the hobby of photography or film, who are interested in being part of a community of this type.

This analysis is designed to highlight both the advantages and disadvantages of a corporate product blog by highlighting the content, the user interaction, the posting frequency, the language usage, the menu, the categories, the tags, the social networks accessibility buttons. The comparison between the two product blogs is based on the aforementioned forecasted points during the months of January, February and March, this year.

The F64 blog features a menu of pages, categories, subcategories, dedicated buttons for social networks and a search button:



The pages are *Review, Editorial, News, Events, Information F64, Contact*, and the categories are *F64 Shop, Tutorials, Competitions, Courses F64, Exhibitions, Just Married*. The subcategories are *Beginners, Advanced, Enthusiasts*.

The secondary menu emphasizes the most commented articles, the newsletter service and the

YOUTUBE F64

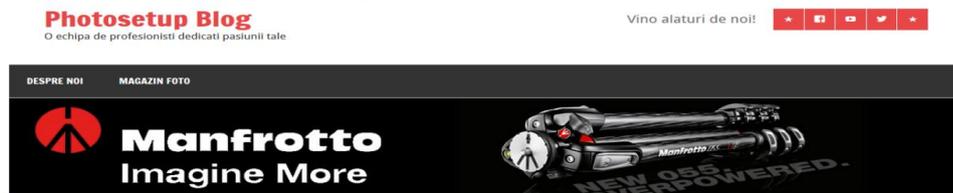


Urmareste F64 pe Youtube >

organization`s interaction with its users, through social networks and Youtube:

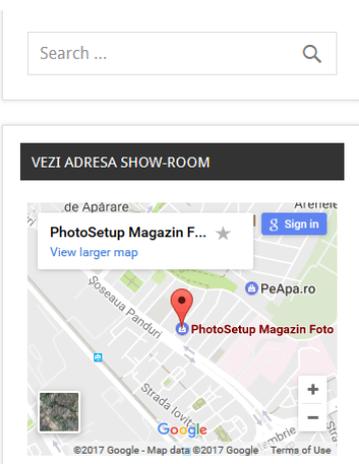


The PhotoSetup blog includes a main menu consisting of pages, buttons dedicated to social networks:

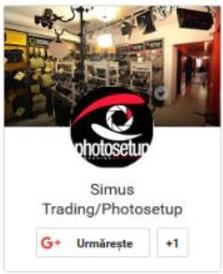


The pages are *About us*, *Photo Shop*. It also contains a secondary menu with recent posts, archive, a search button, map, tags (keywords), categories, Google+ Channel.

In January, the *F64* blog contained 12 articles written by 5 different authors (Alex Frușina, Alexandra Crisbasan, Exposure Association, user F64, Sabrina Cornovac), 7 blog user comments, written content, picture, informal language with a feature presentation of the photo-video devices, in a friendly manner („Do you know that saying „it is the early bird that catches the worm”? Dragoș has dedicated a whole album to the blizzard, on Facebook, which can be seen [here](#), we just made a selection.”, <http://blog.f64.ro/2017/01/13/top-fotografii-de-iarna-din-6-ianuarie-si-pana-in-prezent/#comments>, accessed on 10.03.2017).



VINO SI PE GOOGLE+



Simus Trading/Photosetup

Urmăreste +1

CAUTA IN ARHIVA

Cauta in arhiva

CATEGORII

- o Accesorii aparate foto (40)
- o Accesorii iPhone (2)
- o Accesorii pentru studiouri foto (37)
- o Aparate foto (3)
- o Blitz-uri (36)
- o Capete Panoramice Manfrotto (4)
- o Evenimente (79)
- o Expeditii fotografice (20)
- o Filtre foto (11)
- o Genti si rucsacuri foto (63)
- o Genti si rucsacuri office (5)
- o Ghid utilizare Modelatoare de lumina (9)
- o Gitzo (6)
- o Lectii de fotografie (24)
- o Lumina continua pentru fotografia de portret si produs (8)
- o Obiective foto (28)
- o Premii (9)
- o Profil de fotograf (29)
- o Promotii (13)
- o Review (62)
- o Sfaturi utile (111)
- o Testari echipamente (73)
- o Testari echipamente foto (69)
- o Trepiede foto (54)
- o Uncategorized (19)
- o Workshop foto (29)

COMENTARIILE RECENTE

- o Photosetup on Test teren: Manfrotto Off Road Hiker 30L
- o Gheorghe Cresta on Test teren: Manfrotto Off Road Hiker 30L
- o Alin STANCU on Sigma SD1 Merrill, un DSLR de exceptie
- o Toma on User-Review Sigma Art 24mm f/1.4 DG HSM Canon
- o CatalinD on Un portret dupa orele de scoala

CAUTA DUPA CUVINTELE CHEIE

accesorii foto aparate foto aventura B+W blenda blitz cabana canon capete foto panoramice Dan Dinu echipamente foto expeditie Filtre foto foto fotografie geanta genti Gitzo hensel kata lectii fotografice manfrotto munte national

POSTARI RECENTE

- o Sigma lanseaza 4 noi obiective
- o Seria noua de monopiede video fluide, comparatii
- o Mini studio pentru fotografia de ...placere, acasa
- o Cum a fost la Lastolite Day
- o Primele impresii despre Sigma 85mm f/1.4 ART

In February there are written 11 articles, 3 authors (Alex Frușina, Sabrina Cornovac, user F64), 9 comments, written content, picture, video, informal language with the same type of feature presentation of the photo-video devices („Something that comes in handy here, are the wide objectives because all the focusing errors will be even more highlighted, showing you where you are wrong...”, <http://blog.f64.ro/2017/02/09/6-sfaturi-pentru-a-invinge-lenea-in-fotografie/>, accessed on 10.03.2017). In March, there are 8 articles written by 5 authors (Exposure Association, user F64, Cristian Munteanu, Alexandra Crisbasan, Andreea Tănase), 5 comments, written content, picture, and the news is the live blogging, the language continued to be informal, presenting the photo-video devices („The keyword is the verb „to experiment”, but we can also talk about a few standard settings.“, <http://blog.f64.ro/2017/03/01/compozitii-de-strada-cu-timp-lung-de-expunere/>, accessed on 10.03.2017). The promotion of products and / or services is done through messages of public interest and not through aggressive campaigns.

Regarding the *Photosetup* blog, in January and March, there are no articles written and in February there are 3 articles posted, which gathered a total of 10 likes from Facebook, no comments, one author (a user from the *Photosetup* team), written content, picture, video, informal language („We tried to get to the middle of the problem a little, and look at it from a photographer`s perspective, who wants maximum quality with minimum investment”, <http://www.photosetup.ro/blog/mini-studio-pentru-fotografia-de-placere/>, accessed on 10.03.2017). This time, as well as before, the promotion of products and / or services is done through messages of public interest.

As a result of the above, the analysis table is represented as such:

Variable		F64	Photosetup
Accessibility social networks	Yes	x	x
	No		
Newsletter	Yes	x	
	No		x
Content type	Text	x	x
	Picture	x	x
	Video	x	x
	Live blogging	x	
Posts frequency	Regular	x	
	Irregular		x
Authors		Alex Frușina, Alexandra Crisbasan, Exposure Associatio, user F64, Andreea Tănase, Sabrina Cornovac, Cristian Munteanu	User Photosetup
Useful pages	Information about the company		x
	Contact	x	
	Products/services	x	x

Categories	Displayed	x	x
	Not displayed		
Tags	Yes	x	x
	No		
Interaction with the followers	Yes	x	
	Rarely		x
	No		
Language	Formal		
	Informal	x	x
Image promotion	Aggressive		
	Public interest messages	x	x
Product promotion	Aggressive		
	Public interest messages	x	x

The conclusion of the comparative analysis is as follows:

- a regular frequency of posts increases the number of users and their loyalty, and they can become buyers of various products;
- the newsletter allows user subscription and offers them the opportunity to be the first ones informed on the new blog posts;
- the content type variation brings in more users and increases the organization's notoriety;
- live blogging brings in a plus of creativity and a higher interaction level with its followers, allowing the two parts to communicate effectively during the transmission;
- more authors mean a broader range of shared ideas, and at the same time, transparency, an aspect which offers users confidence, the latter knowing exactly who is the person behind the different articles;
- displaying a complete menu of categories and pages provides the visitor with a concrete look at what's on the blog, so that they can easily access the page / category they are interested in;
- the presence of tags, so called keywords, favor a quick search of the desired information, but is also a good point for the Google search

engine, that highlights the articles / posts with the most used tags, in the first items;

- the more frequent the interaction with the followers, the greater the chances to create a users community, turning users into customers and assuring the existing customers` loialty;
- informal language brings the organization closer to their target audience, the latter using, through their comments, a friendly language, as well;
- promoting the image of the company and its products and services through public interest messages and not in an aggressive manner conveys to the public the idea that the blog is built for the needs and necessities of the pursuers, in order to use the product correctly.

Therefore, the F64 product blog is a blog that focuses on interaction, on what customers need to know, it adapts to their needs, and involves them very much in the blog content. In fact, through the frequency of posts, newsletter, live blogging, varied content, article creators' autonomy increases the awareness of the organization and provides the public with confidence and transparency. On the other hand, the Photosetup blog has its disadvantages in what the posts` frequency is concerned, the content is not quite varied, the authors` names are not revealed, but instead, are under the umbrella of the Photosetup user. As a result, the blog loses a lot in user interaction and manages to draw attention only through social media buttons, the followers expressing their appreciations only in this manner.

To conclude, the F64 blog is an example of a successful product blog that has created a community of users, maintains their loyalty and attracts customers, enjoys notoriety and confidence from the target audience and beyond.

4. Expert sources consulted

The topic addressed in this paper is part of the digital media field, highlighting how a company can use the blog as a promotional tool, thus building a digital consumer information community, a community

present in the virtual environment that seeks to interact and to be urged to action. Referring to these aspects, the bibliographic sources I have used are mainly electronic sources (mainly business blogs), but I have also used printed books. I started this research in mid-November.

Horia Mihai Bădău (2011:26) refers to Tim O`Reilly, from O`Reilly Media 2003, who called the concept of Web 2.0 as „the evolution of the Internet from a warehouse of information and communication technologies (represented by websites), [...] to a symmetrical communication space [...]. It is a historical shift from unidirectional communication [...] to bi- and multidirectional communication, in which, for example, the information producer provides a platform to which many users adhere to produce and exchange information between themselves - from user to user [...]. All of them are producers and readers of information.” (Bădău, 2011:26).

With this evolution, the company has become both the emitter of the message and the receiver. The blog has made this possible. Jorn Barger created the term weblog in 1997. It merged the terms of web and log, but today is used the term blog, being chosen in 2004 by Merriam Webster Dictionary as „The Word of 2004” (<http://www.edumark.ase.ro/RePEc/rmko/54/3.pdf>, accessed on 19.11.2016). In 2011, corporate blogs accounted for 8% of the blogosphere, the entrepreneurs bloggers accounting for 13% of the blogosphere and most of the covered topics were in areas such as technology and business environment (<http://technorati.com/state-of-the-blogosphere-2011/>, accessed on 19.11.2016). First, the company issues the message, and the public is the receiver and vice versa. Thus, the idea of a „social brand” was created - which, according to Alina Negruțiu, represents „a registered trademark that engages in the relationship with consumers, that spends time listening and responding appropriately to their needs. The intent of a social brand is to initiate dialogue, to maintain the conversation, to exchange views and values.” (<http://marketingportal.manager.ro/articole/tipssitricks-43/ce-inseamna-un-social-brand-1969.html>, accessed on 20.11.2016).

Depending on their purpose, Cornelius Puschmann points out that there are four types of company blogs: the image blog, the product blog, the employee blog and the CEO blog or manager blog (Puschmann, 2010:93). The product blog focuses on how to use the product, the image blog aims to promote a positive image of the company inside the community, the employee blog highlights their initiatives, the opinion they have about the company they work at, keeping in mind the confidentiality and legal frameworks of the company, and the CEO blogs show the objectives and mission of the organization, the interaction with the public not being in the front line, this time (Puschmann, 2010:94-99).

Therefore, organizations that use the blog as a promotion tool are actually engaged in a dialogue with their audience, and the topics that are addressed highlight and target the public's interest, rather than the company's interest. Thus, blogs are no longer seen as an online journal, but as a very useful promotion tool.

5. Conclusion

Based on the theoretical elements from the sources I consulted, I conducted a comparative study between two product blogs, F64 and the Photosetup, that are part of the photo-video field, observing closely the usefulness of a company's blog and the importance of using it as a promotional tool, which is much more different than a blog, with a personal journal function.

In the dissertation paper, I will, on the one hand, compare, through the same analysis table, two image blogs, two CEO blogs and two employee blogs. On the other hand, we will create a questionnaire meant to identify companies' needs and the usefulness of the company blog. The questionnaire will be applied online and the results will be interpreted in the application part. Based on the results of blogging research, the results of the questionnaires, we will make a blog proposal that we will send to a company.

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