

Organizing the Content and Building the Relationship in Digital Communication

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Abstract: *Through their nature, people are inclined to seek human interaction and to have social connections. There are many types of communication, but they all require interaction, which leads to the communication being categorised in only two greater categories, intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. Kory Floyd (2013:48) defines interpersonal communication as “the communication that arises between two persons, in the context of their relationship, and evolving, it helps them negotiate and define their relationship”. Because of the need of people to interact and build social connections, technology has developed so much that the social interactions begin to know a new way through which they can be achieved, social media and the different platforms dedicated to this phenomenon are increasingly spreading and developing due to the large use by the people. Nowadays, almost every person who has access to the internet has an account and uses at least one social media platform. Comparing both the traditional media and the social media, we can conclude that, in the traditional way, the user or the recipient of the content was merely a receptor, and the communication happened unidirectionally, from the sender of the message to its recipient, without any interaction of any kind between the two. Now, due to social media, communication has a greater degree of interaction, the*

sender of the message and the producer of the content which is later delivered to the receiver can engage with its audience and can interact with them. Momoc (2014:26) renders a definition of social media, claiming that “social media refers both to the social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and to the content-oriented networks like YouTube or Flickr”. Because people seek interaction, social media come in and provide it for them in such a way that physical distance or any other barriers are removed. Moreover, besides social media, the blog has developed, which allows people to share thoughts and experiences with the followers. One of the most addressed topics concerning blogs is travel. According to Raluca Tudor (2013): “travellers use blogs for communicating their experiences, for offering objective evaluations and subjective opinions about the characteristics of visited destinations. They use social networks to increase the visibility of their blogs in the virtual space. Travel blogs represent a cheap and accessible information source about a travel destination, and bloggers participate in producing and broadcasting the tourist destination image in the virtual space. Analysing travel blogs and their constitutive elements, our main goal is to observe what kind of relationship is created between the author of the blog and the readers of the articles posted on it.

Keywords: *communication, relationship, social media, travel blog.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the need for communication and interaction is increasingly growing. This leads to many technological developments which allow the communication and render any physical barriers such as distance to the minimum. Social media allow people to connect and stay connected all over the world, regardless of their culture, language or even distance. If one has access to the internet, s/he can be connected with anyone, anytime.

Travel blogs have a different approach, meaning that they allow people to read and cultivate themselves about a certain travel destination without being necessary to visit that specific location. This way, anyone who desires to go on a vacation or to travel to a specific

destination, can just simply search for that destination and read and get informed about any details concerning the flight to that destination, the resorts and hotels s/he can stay in, the main attractions s/he can visit while being there and many more other pieces of information regarding the said destination.

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the main elements and characteristics of travel blogs in order to underline the role that the blog and its constitutive elements play in establishing a relationship between the author of the articles posted on the blog and the readers and the followers of that blog or article.

2. Research method

2.1. Comparative analysis

For my analysis, I have consulted a series of specialised articles and books concerning visual and written message, traditional and electronic texts, digital and interpersonal communication, as well as social media and how to create and develop a successful and popular blog. I call this analysis a comparative analysis, not because I compare two blogs between them, but because I compare one blog to the recommendations and to the characteristics studied in the theoretical part of the paper.

Considering all the specialised resources consulted and all the information learnt during this process, I was able to develop an analysis grid with the following parameters:

- **name of the blog:** if it is chosen in such a way as to be suggestive and interesting for the users;
- **target audience:** who are the users targeted by the content of the blog, what social environment do they come from;
- **type of information:** subjective or objective information, with persuasive or informative purpose;

- **style of communication:** in what manner the author of the message addresses the readers, if it is formal, informal or colloquial;
- **sender – receiver relation:** depending on the style of communication, the relation between the sender and the receiver of the message, meaning the author of the article and the reader can have a close, friendly and personal relation, or a distant, reserved and impersonal one;
- **frequency of posts:** how regularly the new updates and articles are posted on the blog;
- **type of images:** if there are images included within the blog and what kind of images are posted;
- **quality of images:** if the images are clear and well taken, if they have a good quality or resolution, if the colours or the luminosity of the images are/is good;
- **relation text – image:** if the image comes to support and emphasise the text or if it contradicts and denies what is written within the article;
- **organisation of content:** what kind of elements are emphasised within the blog, if it contains menus and categories in which the articles are classified;
- **accessibility and ease of navigation:** if the blog is intuitive and the information can be easily found or if the blog is confusing, hard to navigate and to find a certain information;
- **possibility to share and promote the blog:** which are the means by which a user can share and thus, promote the blog on his/her personal social media profiles;
- **possibility to connect on social media:** if the blog contains associated social media profiles and pages which can be used to promote the blog, to notify the followers about any updates concerning the blog, etc.

3. Results

In this section of my paper, I will present the conclusions I have reached while analysing one travel blog.

For the starting point of the analysis, I will focus on the travel blog *Valiza cu călătorii* (roughly translated and referred to as *Travel suitcase* throughout the rest of this paper) and I will compare the blog, its constitutive elements and the visual elements it contains to the theoretical information I have studied and which helped me develop the analysis grid. This blog is a personal blog owned by Cristina Stoica.

The first element in for the analysis was the name. According to Bădău (2011: 45), the name of the blog needs to be well-chosen as to attract visitors, to persuade them into accessing the blog and to incite their interest to read the content. It also needs to contain keywords related to the domain, in this case the travel domain, in order to be well-indexed by the search engines. What I can conclude about the name *Travel suitcase* is that it is a well-chosen name, it is both interesting and attractive to the users, but that it also contains keywords such as *travel* or *suitcase*, both related to the domain of travelling. Both these aspects lead the blog to gain popularity, to be often accessed, and also to appear in the first results in a search engine, leading it to gain more followers this way.

Another element in our analysis referred to the target audience of the blog. Bădău (2011:38) claims that it is very important for the content creator of the blog to consider the target audience, the people you are addressing the message to, their age or their social background. While analysing this blog, we have reached to the conclusion that *Travel suitcase* is mainly targeted to a younger audience, to viewers aged 25-35, followers that do not have many responsibilities that may interfere with a trip or a vacation.

Bădău (2011: 39) suggests that, when creating a blog, the blogger needs to think about the type of content to be posted on the blog, how

frequent will the content be posted or updated, if the content will include images, if the language will be formal or informal.

About this, the next point on my grid concerns the type and the quality of the information posted on the blog. In my analysis, I have concluded that the information posted by the blogger is both subjective and objective. Concerning the subjective information, this refers to impressions and experiences from the vacations, recommendations and advice concerning destinations, and likes and dislikes about certain trips. As for the objective information, this consists mainly of information about geographic location of a destination, main touristic attractions in the area, local cuisine or currency, accommodation or flight recommendations. This information serves a greater purpose, which is to persuade the readers into travelling, into desiring to see and have the experiences that the blogger has seen. As far as the quality of the information is concerned, I have concluded that the information posted on the blog is authentic, verifiable and trustworthy, being very helpful to any person who wants to be informed about a certain destination, prior to visiting it.

Concerning the communication style of the blogger and the relation s/he is creating with the readers, I have reached the conclusion that s/he tries to be really friendly, using an informal, quite colloquial language and words, thus creating a very personal and close relation with the reader.

It is very important that the blogs stay connected to the viewers and remain in their attention so that they do not forget about the blog and stop following it. In order to achieve this, I have observed that it is very important to post regularly. In my analysis, I have concluded that the blog *Travel suitcase* posts regularly, uploading 2 or 3 articles per month. This way the blog can stay in the viewers' attention, leading them to access it more often and keeping them engaged.

Another important aspect to be analysed is that of the images. A travelling blog depends very much on the images; these are its main purpose. Joannés (2009: 181) suggests that images must be "the best for

the blog”, the most representative. Moreover, the images cannot be displayed randomly on the website; they must be close to the text they are completing. During the study and the analysis of the *Travel Suitcase* blog, I have come to the conclusion that the images are numerous, very qualitative, most likely taken with a professional camera and maybe by a professional photographer and that they are representative for a travelling blog, containing images of the destination, tourist attractions, even images containing the human factor, meaning images of the blogger enjoying the vacation. These images have the purpose of supporting the textual information, of creating a visual context in which the reader of the article can place the information s/he reads about.

Another important aspect in this analysis concerns the organisation of the content. Bădău (2011: 47) specifically states that a blog should include distinct menus and categories to facilitate the navigation of the blog and of the articles by the readers, and that the articles should contain tags in order to be more specifically indexed by the search engines. Moreover, the blog should include buttons for liking or sharing the content in order to give the readers the possibility to promote the blog, leading the blog to obtain more visibility on social networks.

Concerning the organisation of the *Travel suitcase* blog, I have noticed that it contains a main menu, having 7 distinct categories, which contain the articles related to the main subject of that specific category. It also has a very creative design and it is easy to navigate, offering the viewer the possibility to search for keywords in a search bar available.

Moreover, the blog contains specific designated buttons that the viewer can click on, allowing him/her to like and share the content and the blog, and connecting him/her to the additional social media profiles available on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

In conclusion, the *Travel suitcase* blog is a well-created and properly promoted blog, having an inspiring and good name,

containing numerous and qualitative images and very well-organised design and content. As for the improvements, this blog could really help a new visitor by setting up an archive where s/he could find all the articles available on the blog. Moreover, it could be friendlier to the users accessing the blog from different devices, such as a tablet or a phone. The reason for this is that there are many images among the parts of text, and comparative to the landscape orientation of the laptop or the computer, the portrait orientation of the phone will oblige the user to scroll very much in order to reach the text information, which can be unpleasant. Also, the button for the Instagram page does not work, it leads to an inexistent page, and the blogger should either remove it or update the address, in case this was changed, causing that button to malfunction.

4. Conclusions

I would like to conclude by saying that this experience and this research have allowed me to acknowledge the importance of the interpersonal relation between the author of the blog and the reader; it is building a platform for the success of the blog.

In this respect, I must say that there are certain elements, such as ease of access, attractive design, quality images that can lead to the user's fidelity and to building and maintaining a long-term relation with them. On the contrary, the elements that make the navigation and the access hard, a boring and simple design, bad quality images or even lack of images can lead to the abandonment of the lecture and to the cease of following the blog by the user.

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