

## **WEBSITE USAGE IN DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS – AN ANALYSIS OF IT COMPANIES IN TURKEY**

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### **—Abstract —**

Digital public relations, which can be defined as the use of Internet-enabled tools such as social media management, social bookmarking and sharing, search engine optimization (SEO), creating and distributing online press releases, blogs, forums, news sites, corporate web pages, etc. are an indispensable field for companies and brands. In this research, it is aimed to analyze the content of corporate web sites used as a digital public relations tool. In this study, we take "Turkey's Top 500 IT Companies" survey and analysed the content of newly established companies.

Our study reveals that new all IT companies have a website. In technical side, they provide most of the criterias but they are insufficient in content side. In total, almost half of the companies are under 50% coverage rate. When all of the categories were calculated, 51.8% of the criteria were met and 9 companies (53%) received a score above this rate.

**Key Words:** *Digital public relations, corporate web site, IT Management*

**JEL Classification:** M15

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet, which was previously used only for the transmission of information in the military field, began to become popular in the 1990's and gained popularity especially after 1995 (John Naughton, 2016), creating a new environment for public relations practices.

The Internet was used as a one-way communication tool with websites initially focused on public relations activities. In this sense, the function of the Internet, as traditional media, mostly occurred from the organizations to publicize the public.

Nowadays, technology gives firms the opportunity to use the Internet to establish and maintain public relations. A successful and preferred website is generally a user-friendly and user-oriented site with high usability in both interactive and functional aspects. (Lee & Koubek, 2010, p. 330)

Web 2.0, which is accepted as a new era of the Web and called as social media in terms of its technical aspect, is the basic quality of the period that users have become content producers. In this environment, where everyone produces and shares all kinds of content and everyone develops mutual communication and relationship with everyone, social interaction has brought important opportunities in terms of public relations.

Public relations in the traditional roles of public relations, stakeholder relations, corporate culture, identity and image. The communication activities carried out by the institutions with the target groups through public relations are carried out in order to increase the awareness with the corporate awareness as well as the products and services. Through public relations, the target audience can also be empathized with the institution. In this context, while public relations contributes to advertising and marketing activities, on the other hand, it tries to establish long-term relations with its target groups by carrying out the necessary studies on the identity, culture and reputation of the institution (Philips and Young, 2009: 58). Now, institutions should reach the target groups with the freedom to receive information through this new communication technology and provide information on their corporate structures, products and services through the websites of Internet's tools and applications (Metin and Altunok, 2002: 93).

In addition, through web sites, organizations perform promotional activities independent of time and place, and also contribute to the process of developing mutual understanding with their target audiences by taking advantage of the feedback feature of websites. With this tool, organizations can carry out various activities in order to recognize their target groups and to introduce themselves to their target groups (Tarhan, 2007: 81-82).

The subject of this study is usage of IT companies' websites in the Turkey as a digital public relations tool. Along with the developing communication technology, changing marketing communication has required companies to use their websites at a level and level that can effectively interact with their target audience. In this context, the websites of IT companies established in last 3 years have been analyzed by content analysis method and a comparative analysis has been made.

It is important to get the data to be obtained with this study:

- To determine the status of the existing web pages of the related companies,
- Pointing out the convenience of Internet technology in developing relations with companies' target groups,
- To address the shortcomings in this area by pointing out the areas where internet technology facilities cannot be used adequately.

The main objectives and benefits of using the Internet as a public relations tool can be listed as follows (Sayimer 2006: 164, Biber 2000: 64):

- Access to various cameras simultaneously and quickly.
- Easier to be monitored and measured.
- Possibility to simultaneously transmit all necessary information to the press.
- Ability to learn the opinions, requests and expectations of the target audience related to products or services in a short time due to the interactive environment.
- Ability to deliver new developments related to any product or service to the target audience
- Ability to educate and inform the target audience at a lower cost and shorter time.

- Ability to provide information about competitors
- Ability to monitor visibility in the media
- The ability to do research on customers and the agenda
- Ability to communicate with colleagues via newsgroups

### **1.1. Website and Properties**

There are many features that should be considered for easy use of a website. These features may vary according to the target groups of the sites. In order to make the content published on the websites meaningful and usable, it can be said that it should be short, easy to review and aim-oriented, and users should have a simple and easy to understand language (Morkoç and Doğan, 2014). Fang & Holsapple (2007) says that the major function of a website is to serve as a platform for companies and for users to gain information.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 513), organizations should design interesting websites to carry out their online marketing activities or where consumers can routinely visit and receive information. From this point of view, the creation of web pages is based on two basic purposes, and the websites are basically structured in two ways depending on the purpose and content:

- Corporate web pages
- Marketing web pages

Corporate web pages, which are the most basic form of website, are designed to create goodwill and feedback from customers. Corporate websites are designed for users or customers to access various information, find answers to their questions, or establish close customer relationships, and create enthusiasm and interest in users and customers related to the organization or brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012:513).

In order to have a mutual communication, the company has open communication channels, as well as analysing the various requests and evaluations from the target groups, evaluating and responding to them. It should be ensured that the questions or requests that are answered individually are compatible with the company's policy. Organizations should visit their sites from time to time in order to evaluate their web sites and critically review the information such as whether the information on the site communicates the information and messages that the

organization wants to give, whether the information given is current. (Okay and Okay 2005: 514).

The average adult spends 5.9 hours per day with digital media, up from 3 hours a day in 2009, according to Mary Meeker's 2018 Internet Trends Report (Tech Addiction By, 2018). People are spending more time in front of screens today. So, effects of existence in digital world are increasing.

Website is easy accessible, easy-to-install and inexpensive public relations tool and using this tool is useful for companies. Usability of this tool is important and these properties are increasing interactivity.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

As a sample of research, it is used the last built 13 corporate web sites from the research by IT500 Organization Services in Turkey. (Türkiye Bilişim Sektörünün, 2017) Companies are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Companies and Their Web Sites**

Company Name	Web Site
ATACEL	<a href="http://www.atacel.com">www.atacel.com</a>
ESTE BİLİŞİM	<a href="http://www.estebilisim.com">www.estebilisim.com</a>
MICRO FOCUS (8)	<a href="http://www.microfocus.com">www.microfocus.com</a>
HORİZON BİLİŞİM	<a href="http://www.horizonbilisim.com">www.horizonbilisim.com</a>
PM TEKNOLOJİ	<a href="http://www.pmteknoloji.com">www.pmteknoloji.com</a>
NGTECH	<a href="http://www.ngtech.com.tr">www.ngtech.com.tr</a>
YAPI KREDİ TEKNOLOJİ	<a href="http://www.ykteknoloji.com.tr">www.ykteknoloji.com.tr</a>
MULTİNET TEKNOLOJİ	<a href="http://www.multinet.com.tr">www.multinet.com.tr</a>
ARCHITECHT BİLİŞİM	<a href="http://www.architech.com">www.architech.com</a>
İNERA BİLİŞİM	<a href="http://www.inera.com.tr">www.inera.com.tr</a>
KLOİA	<a href="http://www.kloia.com">www.kloia.com</a>
FİZ BİLİŞİM	<a href="http://www.fiz.com.tr">www.fiz.com.tr</a>
EGİS BİLİŞİM	<a href="http://www.egisbilisim.com.tr">www.egisbilisim.com.tr</a>
ASOS BİLİŞİM	<a href="http://www.assosbilisim.com">www.assosbilisim.com</a>
FİO BİLİŞİM	<a href="http://www.fio.com.tr">www.fio.com.tr</a>
EPLATFORM	<a href="http://www.eplatform.com.tr">www.eplatform.com.tr</a>
TEAMPRO	<a href="http://www.teampro.com.tr">www.teampro.com.tr</a>

In this study, content analysis method which is one of the qualitative research methods was used. The main purpose of content analysis is to reach the concepts and relations that can explain the collected data. The data gathered for this purpose should be conceptualized first, then it should be rationally arranged according to the concepts that emerged and the themes explaining the data should be determined accordingly (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013: 259). Falkingham and Reeves (1998) also stated that content analysis is a new method for evaluating the mass of publications.

For this purpose, the following aspects of the web sites of the companies established in the last 3 years have been analysed: general information about the company, relations with the media, publications accessible from the website, access to the web site for other communication activities, features for the use of the website and finally the integration of the company's website with social media tools.

In content analysis, it is necessary to divide the content into a number of categories, to identify certain coding units in order to examine the content. The categorization process, which is the essence of content analysis, is of great importance and the research becomes meaningful at this stage (Yıldırım, 2015; 138).

## **2.1.Content Analysis Criterias**

While analyzing content, all literature was reviewed and one criteria table was built. While generating criterias Ozturk and Ayma (2007) "Public Relations Uses Web Pages" determined by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry studies in Turkey's top 100 companies of which they use to examine and analyze web pages and websites of the table which were developed to determine the purpose of public relations some changes were utilized. For example, Google+ platform is not used anymore. Google announced that its service was closed. (Extremetech, 2018) In addition, company mission and vision are accepted even if there is no title but content contains the mission and vision.

Criteria are:

- Company Information

- About Company
- Services/Products Of Company
- References Of Company
- Corporate Identity
  - Logo
  - Company Name
  - Vision
  - Mission
- Company Advertising & Publish
  - Online Magazine/Newspaper
  - Image Gallery
  - Advertorial Video
  - News
- Communication
  - Multi-language
  - Search bar
  - E-newsletter
  - Contact Mail
  - Contact Phone
  - Contact Address
- Social Media Tools
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Youtube/Vimeo
  - Instagram
  - Linkedin

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this research, 6 different table was built according to categories. In the following tables, 'Yes' means criteria exists, 'No' means criteria doesn't exist.

First of them is company information. This category consists of 'About Company', 'Services/Products' and 'References'. Services/Products criteria are taken in same category because some companies working in service sector, some companies are working in product sector.

**Table 2: Company Information**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes / Percentage</b>	<b>No / Percentage</b>	<b>Total / Percentage</b>
About Company	12/70%	5/30%	17 / 100%
Services / Products	16/94%	1/6%	17 / 100%
References	10/59%	7/41%	17 / 100%

About sections are visited by first visitors in order to take basic information about company. That’s why, it is important for first impression. In analysis, 70% (n=13) of websites have about section inside.

Services or products are important area in corporate web sites. It was observed that, 94% (n=16) of companies have services or product page.

References are companies which the company working with or the works which was done before. 59% (n=10) of web sites have a references page.

**Table 3: Corporate Identity**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/ Percentage</b>	<b>No/ Percentage</b>	<b>Total/ Percentage</b>
Logo	17 / %100	0 / %0	17 / %100
Name	17 / %100	0 / %0	17 / %100
Vision	9 / %53	8 / %47	17 / %100
Mission	9 / %53	8 / %47	17 / %100

Table 4 is about Identity of Company. This category consists of ‘Logo’, ‘Name’, ‘Vision’ and ‘Mission’.

Having a corporate identity is important for companies. Because, Constantin (2008) says that “Vision and mission are two distinct concepts reflecting different existential time frames. Vision is an idealistic projection of the company in an undefined future, in a mature and successful position. Vision is not a dream and not a fantasy. It is an idealistic projection of what the company might be and might achieve. However, the roots of this projected image should be well defined in the present business dynamics of the company.”

100% (n=17) of companies have logo and name in their websites. 53% (n=9) of them have mission and vision sentence.



**Table 4: Company Advertising & Publish**

Criteria	Yes/ Percentage	No/ Percentage	Total/ Percentage
Online Mag. Brochure	1 / %5,9	16 / %94,1	17 / %100
Image gallery	0 / %0	17 / %100	17 / %100
Advertorial Videos	3 / 17,6	14 / %82,4	17 / %100
News About Company	4 / %23,5	13 / %76,5	17 / %100

6% (n=1) companies has online brochure/magazine in their websites. 0% (n=0) of company has image gallery. 17,6% (n=3) companies have advertorial video. 24% (n=4) companies have news about company section.

**Table 5: Communication and Accesibility**

Criteria	Yes/ Percentage	No/ Percentage	Total/ Percentage
Multi-language	5 / %29,4	12 / %71,6	17 / %100
Search bar inside	2 / %11,8	15 / 88,2	17 / %100
Newsletter subscription	4 / %23,5	13 / %76,5	17 / %100
Contact mail	15 / %88,2	2 / %11,8	17 / %100
Contact phone	17 / %100	0 / %0	17 / %100
Contact address	17 / %100	0 / %100	17 / %100

Multilingual web sites are important to reach everyone. If person doesn't know Turkish, he/she could select English at least. It was observed from Table 5, 29% (n=5) companies have multilingual web site. 12% (n=2) of companies have search bar inside web site. Search bar is important to reach requested information easily. Newsletter subscription is used to inform clients about news, new products, new services etc. 24% (n=4) of companies have newsletter subscription form.

All websites have contact phone and address information. 12% (n=2) of companies' web sites have not contact mail information but they have inline contact form instead of mail info.

**Table 6: Social Media Tools**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/ Percentage</b>	<b>No/ Percentage</b>	<b>Total/ Percentage</b>
Facebook	9 / %53	8 / %47	17 / %100
Instagram	4 / %23,5	13 / %76,5	17 / %100
Twitter	8 / %47	9 / %53	17 / %100
LinkedIn	9 / %53	8 / %47	17 / %100
Youtube Vimeo etc.	7 / %41	10 / %59	17 / %100

**Table 7: Companies and Total Counts**

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
ATACEL	5	22	%28
ESTE BİLİŞİM	16	22	%73
MICRO FOCUS (8)	15	22	%68
HORİZON BİLİŞİM	8	22	%36
PM TEKNOLOJİ	15	22	%68
NGTECH	12	22	%55
YAPI KREDİ TEKNOLOJİ	8	22	%36
MULTİNET TEKNOLOJİ	18	22	%82
ARCHITECHT BİLİŞİM	8	22	%36
İNERA BİLİŞİM	9	22	%41
KLOİA	7	22	%32
FİZ BİLİŞİM	14	22	%67
EGİS BİLİŞİM	6	22	%27
ASOS BİLİŞİM	13	22	%59
FİO BİLİŞİM	8	22	%36
EPLATFORM	18	22	%82
TEAMPRO	15	22	%68
<b>Average</b>	11,4	22	%51,8

While analyzing social media links, the links were controlled they are active or not. If web site has social media button but doesn't link to corporate social media page, it wasn't counted as 'Yes'. In this research, it was examined for the social media accounts which is referenced from the web site. The fact that whether the company has social media account or not was not checked.

53% (n=9) companies use Facebook and LinkedIn social media page. 47% (n=8) companies are using Twitter and 41% (n=7) companies are using video sharing platform like Youtube, Vimeo etc.

Instagram usage is lower than other social media usage. 24% (n=4) companies are using Instagram account.

Research within the scope of the web pages of Turkey's newly established IT companies were investigated. The fact that the web pages are open to the outside of the institutions, informing the relevant people and providing the necessary information about the company presents them as part of the organization's communication activities. In this sense, web pages also serve as part of public relations activities. In this context, the elements foreseen to hold a web page in terms of public relations were analyzed through the web pages of the companies.

As company information, it was observed that 70% (n=13) of websites have about section inside. 94% (n=16) have services or products section. 59% (n=10) have references section. It was reviewed that, 8 company provides all company information. Ratio of providing all criteria is 47%.

As company identity, all companies have logo and name in their websites. 53% (n=9) have mission and vision information. 8 company provides all company identity information. Ratio of providing all criteria is 47%.

As company publish, just 1 company has online brochure or magazine. Noone has image gallery. Just 3 of 17 have advertorial video in their website. 4 of 17 have company news section. There is no company which has all criterias. In contrast, 11 of 17 don't provide all four criteria.

As communication and accessibility, just 5 of 17 (%29,4) have multi-lingual web site. Just 2 of 17 has search bar inside. 4 of 17 have newsletter subscription area. Contact phone and address exists in all company websites. Contact mail exists in 15 of 17 companies. There is no company which has all criterias.

As social media tools, 9 of 17 have facebook account. Just 4 of 17 have instagram account. 8 of 17 have twitter account. 9 of 17 have linkedin account. 7 of 17 have youtube or vimeo account. 4 of 17 provides all criterias.

As total, Multinet Technology and EPlatform has 18 yes answer of 22 criterias. Atacel has the lowest rate with just providing 5 criteria. Criteria average of all companies is 11,4. 9 company (%53) are above average.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the content analysis, the corporate websites of the newly established IT companies were examined. The study subjects are grouped under 5 categories.

The first is the ‘Company Information’ category. ‘About Us’ page is one of the criteria in this category. This page is very important for someone who wants to take information about the company for the first time. Very of web sites have this criteria. All web sites except for 1 site, ‘Products’ or ‘Services’ page is available. Few of web sites were given information on ‘References’ page. When it was reviewed throughout the category, Almost half of web sites were found to have all these criterias. The ratio of existing all criterias in this category is almost three quarters.

The second category is named as ‘Corporate Identity’. The ratio of the ‘Vision’ sentence describing the future expectations of the company, ‘Mission’ describes the position and self-determination of the company. Almost half of companies have mission and vision sentences. All sites contain logo and company name information. The ratio of existing all criterias in this category is almost three quarters.

The third category is named ‘Corporate Publication’. Online Brochure/Newspaper /Magazine publication exists in only 1 site. The image gallery has not been seen on any site. Only minority of companies publishes a corporate promotional film on their web site. Company announcements were placed by a few of company on their website. It was reviewed that there is no company which provides all criterias. The ratio of existing all criterias in this category is almost half of one quarters.

The fourth category is named 'Communication and Accessibility'. If customer wants to reach a company, he/she uses the contact page. As everyone's preferred communication style may be different, having all communication paths increases accessibility of the company. Besides, language option is important for surfing of foreign language visitors. Almost one third of web site has multiple language option. The ratio of existing 'Search Bar' criteria is less than half of one quarter. 'E-Mail Subscription' criteria is used by the companies for customer loyalty. This feature is placed by one third of all websites. While the contact phone number and address are available on all sites, the e-posta address is placed by most of websites. There is no company website which has all criterias. The ratio of existing throughout this category is almost more than half of all websites.

The fifth category is named 'Social Media'. Social media today plays an important role in reaching customers and taking feedback from them. 'Facebook' account was linked by almost half of all companies. 'Instagram' criteria was provided by nearly one third of reviewed websites. 'Twitter' account was provided by nearly half of websites. Professional job web 'Linkedin' account is provided by almost half of websites. 'Youtube or Vimeo' video content platform account is provided by the less than half of companies. One third of companies provide all social media criterias.

Multinet Technology and E-Platform provides majority of all criterias. On the other hand, Atacell provides almost one third of all criterias.

When all of the categories is calculated, 51.8% of the criteria were met by all companies and a little more than half of all companies receive a score above this rate.

The average corporate criterion was very low. If companies attract a corporate promotional film and publish it on the website, customers will know the company better, and they will be able to watch the film instead of reading long texts. In addition, the absence of an Image Gallery may effect the company in negative way. It was reviewed from the findings, usage ratio of visual materials is too low. The more visual material is used in its website, the more informative company will be.

Website is easy to access, easy to install, inexpensive and very useful digital public relations tool. As a result of research, the companies don't use their corporate websites very effectively. If they use this tool in full capacity, they can be more successful and they can earn more customers.

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