COMPUTER MEDIATED CHARITY: ISRAELI NONPROFIT USE OF WEB 1.0 AND WEB 2.0 ONLINE DIALOGIC ELEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The low costs and simplicity of online dialogic elements offered by the Internet and WWW make them especially important for nonprofit associations (Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Heath, 1998). Since research points to a gap between the dialogic potential of the organizational Web site and its actual implementation, the current study aims to explore whether nonprofit associations use Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 dialogic elements in order to engage in two-way communications with their publics and whether they are responsive to online queries. A content analysis of 600 Israeli nonprofit associations' Web sites and a field test revealed that although most nonprofit associations used various Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 dialogic elements and responded to an online query, more than half of them did not enable any form of two-way communication or did not have an Internet presence at all.

KEY-WORDS: Web 1.0, Web 2.0, Nonprofit associations, Israel, Dialogic elements

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the Internet and the World Wide Web opened up new opportunities for businesses and nonprofit associations to interact and build relationships with various publics (Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Heath, 1998). Organizations worldwide recognized the advantages of the Internet as a means to gather and spread organizational information and to maintain contact with other local and international organizations, as well as with publics. At first, various Web 1.0 elements such as e-mail, contact forms, toll free telephone numbers and alike added to traditional communication a new element that was faster, cheaper, more direct, and uncensored and, moreover, that enabled online relationship-building through dialogic potentials and capabilities (Coombs, 2001; Spataro, 1998).

In the last decade new Web 2.0 and social media elements, such as blogs, wikis, forums, and social networks, enabled information-sharing and discussions among publics and within organizations through the integration of technology, telecommunications and social interactions. These elements both promoted and humanized two-way communication by enabling companies to conduct two-way conversations with customers and by allowing customers to talk back (Gillin, 2007; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Lim & Yang, 2006; Meerman, 2009; Scoble & Israel, 2006). The online elements were important both to businesses and nonprofit associations since both organizational types needed to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders in order to survive (Coombs, 2001; Mazzini, 2004; Smith & Ferguson, 2001). Furthermore, they needed these elements in order to get out their messages and grab the attention of various publics such as members, clients, volunteers, the media, customers and donors (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Mazzini, 2004).

The low costs and simplicity of online dialogic elements made them important especially for nonprofit associations. These associations which usually had limited resources could use the Internet in order to reach out to publics and potential members and to organize members and friends in order to promote an issue or influence organizational actions. In addition they could use the Internet to make their voices heard on issues that previously did not receive media attention or were censored, to level the field with corporations, to engage in a genuine dialogue with publics and to contact and inform stakeholders around the world without any regard to the group's size, power, or financial ability (Heath, 1998; Kent et al., 2003; Marken, 1995; Mazzini, 2004).

Nevertheless, research points to a gap between the dialogic potential of the Internet and its actual utilization by nonprofit associations. Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) found that "while most activist organizations meet the technical and design aspects required for dialogic relationship building on the Web, they are not yet fully engaging their publics in two-way communication" (p. 263). In a later study, Kent, Taylor, and White (2003) noted that both membership and watchdog environmental organizations did not make much of an effort to foster a genuine dialogue with their publics. Naudé, Froneman, and Atwood (2004) found that public relations practitioners in South African NGOs did not use the interactive features of the medium to their fullest potential. They noted that out of 2,500 NGOs that appeared in a directory, only 50 had Web sites; and those that were analyzed did not view relationship-building and mutual understanding as the purpose of their public relations efforts. In addition, these organizations neither gave the Web site high priority nor considered it a necessity, since some of them were struggling to survive.

Kang and Norton (2004) found that nonprofit organizations in the United States did not use the Web effectively to contact audiences and build relationships. They noted that although more than 85% of the organizations sampled provided an e-mail address in their Web sites, less than 10% included interactive features, such as discussion forums, chat rooms, online polls, and online surveys. A study of 75 Israeli nonprofit associations also revealed that the nonprofit associations did not utilize the interactive potential of the Internet and did not see the organizational Web site as a strategic tool that can be used as a means for achieving organizational goals (Zarkawy & Blit Cohen, 2008).

In summarizing, existing research revealed that nonprofit associations failed to adequately utilize the online medium's interactive features for dialogic/interactive communication and relationship-building with their publics. The current study's aim is to explore whether Israeli nonprofit associations use various Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 dialogic elements in order to invite publics to engage in two-way communication with them. Since the inclusion of interactive features in an organizational Web site is like a promise that creates an expectation among its audience that they will receive a response (Leichty & Esrock, 2001) the second part of this study explores whether Israeli nonprofit associations actually respond to an online query sent to them by a public's member.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

This study focuses on one of the dialogic relationship building principles set forth by Kent and Taylor (1998) and Taylor, Kent and White (2001). This principle is the "dialogic loop" or "dialogic element" that is defined in this study as *Any means that allows for two-way communication*, or in Kent and Taylor's words: "allows publics to query organizations and, more importantly, it offers organizations the opportunity to respond to questions, concerns and problems" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 326).

Referring to O'Reilly's (2005) distinction between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 elements, the dialogic elements in this study were divided among Web 1.0 dialogic elements that were defines as: *elements that do not allow users to add content to the Web site* (such as e-mail addresses of representatives, toll-free phone numbers and online surveys) and Web 2.0 dialogic elements that *allow users to add content* to the Web site (such as blogs, social networks, wikis and photo sharing).

The following research questions were asked:
RQ1: What types of dialogic elements, and how many, are present in nonprofit associations' Web sites?
RQ2: Do nonprofit associations actually respond to an online query sent to them by a public's member?

H1: Based on previous research (Kent et al., 2003; Mazzini, 2004; Taylor et al., 2001) it was hypothesized that nonprofit associations will use both types of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 dialogic elements. Based on a dictionary definition of 'non profit' as "not making or intended to make a profit" (*AskOxford.com: Nonprofit*, 2009) it was hypothesized that nonprofit associations will use mainly Web 2.0 elements (such as forums, chat rooms, blogs and social networks) since these elements were more 'discursive' and enabled interaction around a common cause or field of interest.

H2: Based on previous studies it was hypothesizes that most nonprofit associations will not respond to an online query sent to them by a public member (Kang & Norton, 2004; Kent et al., 2003; Mazzini, 2004; Naude et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2001; Zarkawy & Blit Cohen, 2008).

3. METHOD

A content analysis of 600 Israeli nonprofit associations' Web sites was conducted in order to reveal their dialogic elements. In the absence of an official and validated directory of Israeli nonprofit associations, an alternative sampling frame was constructed. (Lipsicas, May 3, 2007; Zarkawy & Blit Cohen, 2008). Sources and address collections based on several partial lists were collected: The Israeli Yellow Pages (www.d.co.il); The Registrar of the Israeli Nonprofit Associations, (http://www.justice.gov.il/MOJHeb/RashamAmutot/); Giving Wisely (a nonprofits directory) (http://www.givingwisely.org.il/) Makom Meyuchad (a directory for families with disabled children) (http://makom-m.cet.ac.il/pages/homepage.asp) and a directory of The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (http://www.moia.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/F2D5EB59-0013-4366-8F4F-E2ADEAC1DC19/0/ogdan.pdf).

According to the Registrar of the Israeli nonprofit associations, during 2009 there were in Israel approximately 25,000 registered nonprofit associations (The Registrar of the Israeli Nonprofit Associations, 2009). Since the Registrar did not provide a free access to the nonprofit associations' list we aggregated all the names from the various sources into one sampling frame of 6049 associations (approximately 24% of the nonprofit associations' population in Israel). The result was an alphabetically ordered sampling frame consisting of nonprofit associations from various fields (such as education, religion, culture, sport, immigrant absorption, environment and philanthropy). Since the sampling frame contained duplications of various types (such as duplicate names, branches of the same organization, name variations, etc.) the data were 'cleaned' and each organization was assigned a single number (Babbie, 1989). Thus, the sampling frame was ready to be sampled.

The next step was to draw a simple random sample of 600 nonprofit associations that had at least one dialogic element enabling two-way online communication. Although the original intention was to sample 600 nonprofit associations that owned a Web site, an analysis of the sampling frame revealed that many nonprofit associations did not own a Web site at all and were hosted by various directories or portals. Hence, the sample consisted of *nonprofit associations that owned a Web site or had at least one online dialogic element*.

Since the sampling method was a simple random sample while using a table of random numbers (Babbie, 1989, pp. A27-A28) it was necessary to over sample to meet the sampling criteria. Thus, 1876 nonprofit associations had to be sampled in order to complete a sample of 600 nonprofit associations that had an online communication access.

In order to conduct the content analysis various definitions had to be made: The nominal definition of the dialogic elements was: *any means that allows for two-way communication*. The operational definition of dialogic elements consisted of 13 variables:

A. E-mail address and/or a form in order to contact the organization (including getting a price quote- but not a purchase)
B. Any means to send donations including purchasing a product as a donation
C. Any means for volunteering
D. Opt-in/opt-out, e-mail, or other online device to voluntarily join or be removed from a mailing list , a customer/membership club or to sign up to the Web site
E. Provision of a toll-free telephone number and/or a short form option for dialing (for example: *2244)
F. On-line purchase mechanism (ordering/paying is required) (but not including purchasing as a donation)
G. On-line surveys and/or voting on issues
H. User generated text (comments, recommendations, talkbacks, message boards, etc.) but not forums or chat rooms
I. Blog (on the Web site itself or a link to an external Web site that hosts this blog)
J. Social network (or a link to the business's/association's page in an external social network)
K. User generated podcast (audio), vidcast (video) or photo sharing.
L. Wiki and/or micro blogging (for example "twitter")
M. Forum and/or chat room

The coding process was dichotomous while for each existing dialogic element the nonprofit received 1 point. The 'sum' column summed up the points; thus, the more elements a Web site contained, the higher its total score was.

The second part of the study asked: Do nonprofit associations actually respond to an online query sent by a public member. In order to answer this question a field test was conducted. The field test included a request for information that was sent to the nonprofit associations by a public's member. The researcher provided her name and phone number but provided no other details. Hence, the nonprofit associations could not know if the message sender was a potential volunteer, member, a donor or else. The request for information was as follows: "Hello, My name is XXX (the name of the researcher), I saw your e-mail address on the Internet and I would like to know about you more. How can I receive additional information? Thanks, XXX (the name of the researcher)". The researcher used the same name in all the messages but the e-mail addresses varied in order to be able to detect the sources of the responses and potential "junk" mail. In addition, although all the messages contained an e-mail address, a phone number was provided only when it was obligatory, in order to encourage the nonprofit associations to respond by e-mail.

The request was sent to the 600 nonprofit associations by e-mail or contact form. Nonprofit associations that did not have an e-mail or a contact form were replaced with other nonprofits that had at least one of these elements. All communication with respondents was conducted in Hebrew. The responses were coded and analyzed two months after the messages were sent.

4. RELIABILITY

Since the coding scheme used in this study is novel and has not been used elsewhere before, it was necessary to pretest it in order to verify its reliability and validity (Babbie, 1989; Krippendorff, 1980). In addition, since three independent coders (and not the researcher) conducted the content analysis, it was necessary to verify their inter-coder reliability.

The coding process was conducted in three stages:
1. Training- three independent coders were trained for a period of four months in implementing the codebook to a random sample of 100 nonprofits.
2. Reliability- when the practice stage has been exhausted, reliability of the coding process was tested for each of the variables coded. In order to verify inter-coder reliability, a total of 60 Web sites, which make up 10% of the entire sample, were coded by all coders. Reliability between coders was determined using two complementing criteria: Krippendorff's Alpha index measure, which is considered the strictest criteria for determining reliability between coders, was computed for all variables. Coding is considered reliable when Alpha>0.67. Variables which did not exceed that threshold, were either excluded entirely from the codebook and results, or checked again, using Holsti's correlation coefficient, considered reliable when Holsti's>0.9. To sum up, all variables included in the results reported below achieved reliability levels of either Krippendorff's Alpha>0.67, or Holsti's correlations coefficient>0.92.
3. Coding of the remaining 540 sampled Web sites.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Nonprofit associations that were excluded from the sample

The aim of this study was to analyze what types of dialogic elements were present in nonprofit associations' Web sites. After building a sampling frame of 6049 nonprofit associations, a simple random sample of 600 nonprofit associations with a direct online access, was conducted. In order to be able to complete the sample, 1876 nonprofit associations had to be sampled. Most nonprofit associations were excluded from the sample because they did not have any online contact ability: 31.13%, (n=584) did not have any element for a direct online communication and 22% (n=414) did not have an Internet presence at all. In sum more than half (53.13%, n=998) of the 1876 sampled nonprofits could not be reached directly online.

In addition, of the 600 nonprofit associations included in the sample, only 80.97% (n= 485) associations owned a Web site while 19.03% (n=114) of the sampled nonprofit associations had only an e-mail address hosted by an online directory, portal or another organization's Web site.

The 600 nonprofit associations that were included in the sample were from the fields of culture and leisure (14.1%), education (16.9%), religion (5.7%), welfare (11.2%), other (33.6%) or a combination of several fields (18.5%). This distribution corresponds to reports in another study in which 80 percent of the Israeli nonprofit organizations were found to belong to the fields of welfare, education, culture & leisure, religion and philanthropy (A quick glance on the Israeli third-sector [Hebrew], 2005). The vast majority of Web sites (94.2%, n=564) were in Hebrew, 5.7% (n=34) were in English and 0.2% (n=1) were 'other'.

Nevertheless, many Hebrew Web sites had additional versions in other languages as well while 45.39% (n=256) included also an English version, 5.49% (n=31) a Russian version, 4.43% (n=25) an Arabic version and smaller percentages included French, German or Spanish versions.

5.2 Dialogic elements

A content analysis was used in order to answer the first research question: What types of dialogic elements, and how many, are present in nonprofit associations' Web sites.

Category	Dialogic elements	Nonprofit associations
A (N=591)	Email and/or contact form	95.9% (567)
B (N=591)	Donations	33.3% (197)
C (N=591)	Volunteering	16.9% (100)
D (N=591)	Mailing list, customer/membership club	42.1% (249)
E (N=591)	Toll-free telephone	6.8% (40)
F (N=589)	Online purchase	3.6% (21)
G (N=591)	Surveys and/or voting	7.1% (42)
H (N=591)	User generated text	13.4% (79)
I (N=590)	Blog	3.6% (21)
J (N=591)	Social networks	2.7% (16)
K (N=591)	Podcast/vidcast/photo sharing	1.2% (7)
L (N=590)	Wiki and/or micro blogging	0.5% (3)
M (N=591)	Forum and/or chat room	24.0% (142)

TABLE 1 - Dialogic elements used by nonprofit associations (percentage)

As can be seen from Table 1 the nonprofit associations included various types of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 dialogic elements in their Web sites in order to engage in two way communications with their publics. The most common

element was element A (e-mail and/or contact form). The vast majority of nonprofit associations (95.9%) used this element. The second most popular element was element D (mailing list and/or customer/membership club and/or signing up for a Web site). 42.1% of the nonprofit associations had this functionality.

In addition, a paired samples t-test revealed that Web 1.0 dialogic elements were present in significantly more cases than Web 2.0 elements (Table 2):

Web 1.0 elements	Web 2.0 elements	t
N=587	N=587	df= 586
M=1.55	M=0.45	31.71***
Sd=0.73	Sd=0.74	

***$p<.001$

TABLE 2 - A comparison between the presence of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 Dialogic elements

Table 3 reports how many dialogic elements in average were used by the nonprofit associations:

Dialogic elements	Nonprofit associations (N=587)
0 elements	0.9% (5)
1 element	31.2% (183)
2 elements	24.7% (145)
3 elements	19.4% (114)
4 elements	13.5% (79)
5 elements	6.3% (37)
6 elements	2.7% (16)
7 elements	1.0% (6)
8 elements	0.3% (2)
Mean	**2.50**
Median	**2.00**
Mode	**1**
Std. Deviation	**1.486**

TABLE 3 - Average usage of dialogic elements (percentage)

Although almost one third of the nonprofit associations used only one dialogic element, 57.6% used 2 to 4 elements and a small percentage also used 5 elements or more. Evidence for this was found also in the Mean (2.5) and the Median (2) that pointed towards a usage of more than one element. A comparison with 600 Israeli businesses revealed that more than half (57.8%, n=339) of the businesses used only one dialogic element, 34.7% (n=203) used 2 to 4 elements and a very small percentage used 5 elements or more. The Mean (1.61) and the Median (1) of the businesses also pointed to a lower usage rate of dialogic elements among businesses compared to nonprofit associations (Avidar, 2009a).

To summarize research question 1, as hypothesized nonprofit associations used all types of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 dialogic elements, while the e-mail/contact form was the most popular element. Nevertheless, contrary to the hypothesis, the nonprofits used significantly more Web 1.0 elements than Web 2.0 elements. In addition, the majority of nonprofit associations used only one dialogic element, although more than half of the nonprofits used 2 to 4 elements, which is a higher rate of usage compared to businesses.

Research question 2 asked whether nonprofit associations actually respond to an online query sent to them by a public member. A field test was conducted in order to answer this question. The results showed that after sending

one message of 600 nonprofit associations 61.5% (n=369) responded, 29.9% (n=179) did not respond and 8.6% (n=52) of the messages bounced back.

Hence, H2 was rejected since most nonprofit associations did respond to an online query sent to them by a public member.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We studied the types of dialogic elements used by nonprofit associations in order to engage in two way communication with their constituent publics. 600 Israeli nonprofit associations that enabled online two-way communication were sampled, based on 1876 nonprofit associations drawn from a sampling frame of 6049 nonprofit associations. More than half of the sampled nonprofit associations (53.13%) were excluded from the sample because they had no online dialogic elements. Furthermore, 19.03% of the nonprofits that were included in the sample did not have a Web site, but only an e-mail address that was hosted by an online directory, a portal or another organization's Web site. In addition 29.9% of the nonprofits that received a request for information from a public's member did not respond and 8.6% of the messages bounced back as a result of technical problems.

These findings indicate that a large percentage of nonprofit associations still do not understand the importance of having an online presence in the Internet. Furthermore, they do not acknowledge the significance of an organizational Web site that can empower them, increase the effectiveness of their communications by being more visible and more widely heard, and enable them to contact various publics more easily (Coombs, 1998). While not using any social media elements, such as blogs, forums or social networks, and not responding to online queries, these nonprofits miss the opportunity to develop a two-way open, direct conversation with members of their publics while using "conversational human voice", candid speech and a conversational style (Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

Most Web sites in this analysis were in Hebrew. This is not surprising in light of Zarkawy & Blit Cohen (2008) findings. In this study, 80.6% of the Israeli nonprofit associations stated that the Israeli public and organizations were their main target audiences. Nevertheless, many nonprofit associations added to their Web sites additional versions in other languages, mostly English versions. These findings might suggest that nonprofit associations think of various stakeholders abroad (such as donors and organizations) as one of their target audiences. Similarly, Zarkawy & Blit Cohen (2008) found that 26.4% of the nonprofit associations stated that publics and organizations abroad were the main target of their Web sites. Since the nonprofit associations included in their Web sites also Arabic and Russian versions we might also suggest that the linguistic choices had also a social aspect, in order to make the Web sites accessible to the parts of the Israeli society that speak only Arabic or Russian.

As for the dialogic elements used by nonprofit associations, more Web 1.0 elements than Web 2.0 elements were used. A paired samples t-test found these differences significant. A potential explanation for this might be that the Web 2.0 elements are still newcomers in Israel (Avidar, 2009b) and the nonprofit associations' managers and workers still have to learn how to use them, and to adjust their usage to the resources and technical skills available in their organizations (Kent & Taylor, 2002; White & Raman, 1999). The most common dialogic element was the e-mail address/contact form and the second most popular element was the mailing list/customer/membership club. This finding corresponds with the findings of a proprietary market research project among 104 Israeli nonprofit associations that found that 60 percent of the nonprofits used their Web sites mainly for information dissemination among donors, mailing lists, volunteers and members (Mapping the field of Information Technology and computerization in the third sector [Hebrew], 2008). According to population ecology theory and institutional theory (Hatch, 1997), organizations compete for publics from the same resource pool, while the environment makes the choice which organizations will succeed and which will fail (Mazzini, 2004). Hence, the mailing list and the customer/membership club provide an opportunity to develop an ongoing relationship with members of the 'resource pool'.

Surprisingly, only relatively few nonprofit associations included in their Web sites any means for volunteering (16.9%) or providing donations (33.3%). These findings correspond with Zarkawy and Blith Cohen's (2008) findings that only a small percentage of their sample of 72 Israeli nonprofit associations stated that the main target of their Web site was fundraising (1.4%) or volunteer-recruitment (2.8%). These findings also correspond with the proprietary market research study among 104 Israeli nonprofit associations in which only a few nonprofits stated

that their Web sites' main target was fundraising (34%) or volunteers' recruitment (13%) (Mapping the field of Information Technology and computerization in the third sector [Hebrew], 2008). Hence, the nonprofit associations' usage of the Internet is not sufficiently target-oriented since they fail to utilize the Internet's potential for resource recruitment although they need these resources in order to survive.

The final and most surprising finding was that the nonprofit associations were divided into two groups: The first group consisted of more than 50 percent of the sampled nonprofit associations that could not be reached directly online or did not have an Internet presence at all. It seems that these nonprofit associations did not acknowledge yet the importance of online presence and a genuine dialogue with their stakeholders. The second group consisted of nonprofit associations that already owned a Web site or other online elements; they used various types of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 dialogic elements (although not in high rates yet) and responded to an online query. The existence of the second group indicated that the nonprofit associations have a dialogic and interactive potential but the first group reminded us that the road to a genuine dialogue was still long.

To summarize, we found that while nonprofits are likely to respond to email contacts, Web-based internet connections of constituents to nonprofits are not as prevalent as possible, and they are not as sophisticated as they could and should be. Many nonprofits are hard to reach, and even harder to interact with. Not all dialogic elements that could be harnessed to support contact between nonprofits and their stakeholders are in fact deployed. The findings here provide a descriptive benchmark against which future improvements can be charted, and along which development lanes can be made.

Acknowledgments

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