

Year:2021, Vol:3, Issue:1, pp. 1-26



Article Type: Research

Citation: Galván-Sánchez, I., Fernández-Monroy, M., Domínguez-Falcón, C. and Galván-Ríos, E. (2021). Exploring Digital Communication in Franchising in Spain: A Website Review, Economics, Business and Organization Research, 3(1), pp. 1-26

EXPLORING DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN FRANCHISING IN SPAIN: A WEBSITE REVIEW

Inmaculada GALVÁN-SÁNCHEZ¹ Margarita FERNÁNDEZ-MONROY² Carmen DOMÍNGUEZ-FALCÓN³ Estefanía GALVÁN-RÍOS⁴

Abstract

Communication is a key success factor in the franchise network; therefore, franchisors should be aware of incorporating new technological tools that facilitate communication in this business model. Faced with this new challenge, corporate websites are a strategic tool in the communication of franchisors with their stakeholders, becoming a source of information to consumers and as a means of attracting potential franchisees. Given the interest of this issue in this business model, this paper aims to analyze the online presence of franchise systems in Spain in order to study the effectiveness of digital communication with stakeholders by analyzing their websites. From the total of 121 franchises established in Spain, based on the

¹ Prof. Dr., University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, inmaculada.galvan@ulpgc.es, ORCID: 0000-0001-7540-1675

² Prof. Dr., University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, margarita.fernandez@ulpgc.es, ORCID: 0000-0002-4259-4703

³ Prof. Dr., University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, carmen.dominguez@ulpgc.es, ORCID: 0000-0002-4593-8022

⁴ Undergraduate student, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, estefania.galvan101@alu.ulpgc.es, ORCID: 0000-0002-0542-8087

Accepted: 01.05.2021

Received: 09.03.2021

Published Online: 27.05.2021

Economics Business and Organization Research

information provided by the Spanish Franchise Association, 112 active franchises were analyzed. This study examined the websites according to three dimensions previously identified in the literature: informational, relational (comprising three categories: users, social networks and Web 2.0 applications) and usability. A content analysis was performed to evaluate the presence of the items included in those dimensions on the websites. The findings indicate that, in general, the franchise systems make use of the websites to manage their relationships with their stakeholders (e.g., franchisees, consumers). Specifically, the results show that, although the websites of the franchises operating in Spain comply with basic information and access aspects, those related to communication with users, as well as the use of Web 2.0 applications should still be developed as strategic tools for successful franchise management. Given that nowadays companies and their stakeholders dialogue mainly on the web, it is necessary to continue exploring how to develop this new virtual context of relationships. In this regard, this paper contributes by identifying different categories of the relational dimension in the communication of the franchisor with its stakeholders. This allows to detect those key aspects that the franchisor should promote in order to enhance its relationship strategy.

Keywords: Digital communication, franchising, website.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, people have changed the way they consume information, communicate and even relate to their environment. This is due to the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT), which has affected practically all social areas. Organizations have had to adapt in order to understand the new codes of the digital era, which are made up of social behavior in the use of technology and the collective participation that is typical of the democratization of conversation by users. Thus, digital communication management in companies becomes more important, since it poses a series of challenges and opportunities for managing customer relations in order to enhance brand value (Dua, 2017). According to this author, the company must properly manage the digital channels for information exchange adapted to current and potential customers using the Internet and reflecting their interest and behavior.

As a result, the Internet community is increasingly critical of business decisions and requires organizations to seek transparency in their actions (Vaccaro and Madsen, 2009). Companies and stakeholders dialogue on the Internet, making the one-way business communication system obsolete, and promoting a more dynamic information exchange that encourages a more collaborative environment. Stakeholders no longer relate to companies in a passive way, where communication was based on listening and individuals were passive subjects of the communicative process. Moreover, users require interactive communication mechanisms (Cho and Cheon, 2005), such as, for example, on-line orders, on-line problem diagnosis, interactive newsletters, instant messaging with sales representatives and chatting with other customers. However, in the context of franchising, there is a complex communication system because of the different participants in the network (e.g., franchisor, current and potential franchisees, customers). The success of franchise systems lies, among other reasons, in cooperation and participative communication, since information exchange between channel members enhances mutual trust, commitment and satisfaction (Bordonaba-Juste and Polo-Redondo, 2004; Fernández-Monroy et al., 2018). Hence, the franchise system demands an effective communication management, in which the use of new technologies helps to communicate consistently. Thus, more and more franchisors rely on various communication resources, both offline and online, to contact potential franchisees, managers and employees (Kacker and Perrigot, 2016). Hence, some franchise research has focused in the analysis of website functionality (Pénard and Perrigot, 2017; López-Fernández and Perrigot, 2018). However, sometimes the franchise has used the Internet as a mere information channel (Monserrat-Gauchi et al., 2014).

Based on the above, this study focuses on examining the effectiveness of digital communication of the franchises operating in Spain through a content analysis of their websites. Hence, it aims to identify the degree of information disclosure and interaction of the franchises with their stakeholders. To this end, the work is structured as follows: first, a review of the literature is developed; next, the methodology applied to carry out the research is described; then, the analyses applied and results obtained are presented; and finally, the main conclusions and implications of the work are shown.

2. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

The arrival of new technologies has meant a great advance for organizational communication. With the rise of the Internet, digital communication becomes an important tool that companies welcome to improve their processes, achieving a broad scenario of action, which allows them to create value for stakeholders and increase their interest (Paniagua Gallart, 2010). Therefore, internal and external communication activities are also developed in a digital context. In this line, some research highlights that social media are used as a new means of communicating and information sharing within organizations (Huang et al., 2015) and with stakeholders (Perrigot et al., 2012), enabling a more open and fluid communication context. Moreover, social networks improve the decision-making process in the organization, promoting knowledge creation and innovation (Garrigos-Simon et al., 2012; Papa et al., 2018).

One of the main advantages of digital communication is the increase in speed and efficiency when communicating and transmitting relevant information both inside and outside the company. Due to this advance the web has also evolved and has given way to the so-called Web 2.0, considered as a medium for human communication (Fuchs et al., 2010), comprising technologies, services and social networks based on a Web platform. However, the advance of technology is very fast: Web 2.0 has continued to evolve to Web 3.0, which is considered as "a system of online collaboration that enables the formation of virtual communities, co-operative knowledge, and co-operative labour" (Fuchs et al., 2010, p. 57). Hence, Web 3.0 aims to create a semantic and qualitative knowledge, based on computer engines, information processors and advanced software (Küster and Hernández, 2013). As these authors point out, the purpose of this would be to store users' preferences which, combined with the existing

data in social networks and Internet, would allow to meet more precisely the information demands and facilitate the accessibility to digital contents. All this would lead to companies having access to an essential tool for the acceptance, adoption and functionality of the information they issue with the aim of building user loyalty. In this line, research highlights the importance of web-based interactions, emphasizing the use of the participatory web as a key enabler of stakeholder engagement, because it allows to identify, understand and response to stakeholders' needs (Sivarajah et al., 2020).

In the context of Web 3.0, organizations could include artificial intelligence, such as virtual assistants, to improve the search experience for users. Thus, "intelligent machines read, understand, interrelate, and can manipulate data from cyberspace, allowing this process to be adapted by different users or firms according to their own needs" (Garrigos-Simon et al., 2012, p. 1883). Another component of Web 3.0 could be the application of 3D technology to create virtual sites where users can explore stores or interact with others. However, Web 3.0 technologies present an immature and still evolving development (Sivarajah et al., 2020). Actually, in a first review of franchise websites, it was found that these websites mostly used Web 2.0 tools. This means that Web 3.0 is in an emerging stage of development in the field of franchise websites, since this would be the basis on which the digital communication of companies is currently based.

The Web 2.0 phenomenon include the increased ubiquity of social networks, the intense interaction between firm and customer, the personalization and customization of technologies, and the relevance of user-added value –such as content development, creativity and innovation (Wirtz et al., 2010). Technologies and social software applications promote collaboration and knowledge sharing. Therefore, companies should realize that Web 2.0 affects business management, being the user learning process a key element for sustainability (Shang et al., 2011). Thus, Web 2.0 alludes to the power of the online user to create, disseminate and share content with other users. For companies, Web 2.0 services offer new channels to listen to inquiries from current and potential customers about their product and, if appropriate, create open dialogue with them. These communication technologies offer companies a great deal of content and information through comments and articles published by consumers, allowing firms to identify market trends or consumer preferences through their comments, recommendations, complaints, etc.

In the framework of digital communication, the corporate website becomes a communication tool that facilitates interaction between the company and its stakeholders. For this reason, it should not be simply a means of gaining credibility that provides nothing more than explicit general information about the company. The corporate website must also include specific information for the target public and must be a medium that allows feedback from these stakeholders, through opinions and suggestions, while providing information of interest to them, through newsletters, forums and news. In addition, Web 2.0 technologies such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication), Folksonomies, and Mashups can be used to combine knowledge and generate new knowledge for the community (Shang et al., 2011).

In addition, usability plays an essential role when evaluating human-computer relationship (Martínez-Sala et al., 2020). This concept describes the degree to which the website can be used easily and effectively, comprising the ease of understanding the system structure, the ease of use, the speed of finding what users are looking for, the perceived ease of site navigation, and the ability of users to control what they are doing and where they are (Flavián et al., 2006). Moreover, companies should take into account usability when designing their websites considering its influence on user satisfaction and future intentions to use the website (Flavián et al., 2006; Belanche et al., 2012).

In the context of franchise systems, virtual social network communities, such as Facebook or Instagram, are very interesting not only to attract customers, but also to recruit new franchisees, managers and employees for the company-owned establishments (Perrigot et al., 2012). Also, franchise websites are used as a communication tool, as well as a new distribution channel; therefore, some research has focused on analyzing their functionality (Pénard and Perrigot, 2017).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this study was the franchise system, and specifically, the information contained in the franchise websites. To identify an official registration of active franchises, the register of the Spanish Franchise Association¹ was used, recognizing a total of 121 franchises registered in Spain, although they could operate internationally. Following this

¹ The Spanish Franchise Association brings together franchisors operating in Spain who are committed to the ethical principles of the franchise system and who, therefore, undertake to comply with the standards of the European Code of Ethics for Franchising (www.franquiciadores.com).

procedure, it was possible to locate a total of 112 active franchises with a website, of which the contents would be analyzed.

Based on a review of the literature on website design and corporate communication in the franchise system, the relevant items in the study of digital communication were identified. These items were used to carry out a content analysis of the franchise websites, evaluating whether or not these items were present on the websites. This process consisted in reviewing a large amount of information to analyze the content of the franchise communication through their websites, following the procedure of Domínguez-Falcón et al. (2018).

From the literature review, the contents to be identified in the websites were defined, following a systematic process based on a coding scheme (García-Borbolla et al., 2005; Cedrola and Memmo, 2009; Perrigot et al., 2012; Díaz and Koutra, 2013; Escobar-Rodríguez and Carvajal-Trujillo, 2013; Domínguez-Falcón et al., 2018). As suggested by previous research (e.g., García-Borbolla et al., 2005), three types of information content are established in the websites in accordance with the company's business strategy: ornamental, informative and relational. Thus, these authors mention "ornamental presence on the web", which refers to corporate information (history, geographic location, email, etc.); "informational presence on the web", which refers to information directed at specific groups of users, such as current and potential clients (information on products, prices, etc.), and, finally, "relational presence on the web", which refers to content of interest to users, and which, at the same time, would allow the company to interact with them (opinions, suggestions, news, newsletters, forums, etc.). Moreover, Domínguez-Falcón et al. (2018) propose a different classification: informative dimension, comprising ornamental and informational presence on the web, and relational dimension, which includes three sub-categories linked to customers, social networks and Web 2.0 applications. In addition, as mentioned earlier, it is important to evaluate the website usability; thus, this study focused on the items suggested by Domínguez-Falcón et al. (2018).

Based on the above, this study analyzes the content of the franchise websites according to four categories: informative, relational, usability and Web 2.0 applications. All this information would be collected in a document designed for this purpose.

3. ANALYSIS

Once the form was designed to collect the information related to the different categories described, we proceeded to analyze the website content of each franchise. To do this, a value of "1" was assigned to each variable that was present and a value of "0" if the variable was not present on the website. As a summary, the aggregate results of this analysis are shown in Appendix 1.

Firstly, for every item in each dimension, an analysis is made of the number of franchises that include it on their website, in order to identify the most important items for these companies. Next, from the data collected in the form, tables were constructed reflecting the rate to which the franchises include items belonging to each dimension: informational, relational-user, relational-social network, relational-Web 2.0 and usability. Four levels were considered to qualify the rate to which each dimension is observed in the franchise websites: null, low, medium and high. To do this, the following criterion has been followed: (1) it is qualified as null when the franchise does not present any item from the corresponding category; (2) as low when the presence of items from a category is less than 33%; (3) as medium when the presence of items is between 33% and 66%, and (4) as high when it is greater than 66%.

The presence of each of the items in the informational dimension on the franchise websites was then analyzed (see Table 1). In this regard, it should be noted that all the franchises present information on the products/services offered and, except in one case, their company logo on their website. Likewise, most of the franchises include links to other pages of interest (96.4%), indicate the address of the physical store (94.64%) and incorporate information on the privacy policies (91.96%) and the terms of use (91.07%). Other items with great presence that provide corporate information are the geographical location of the physical stores (88.39%) and the data and conditions to open a franchise (86%).

ITEMS	FRAN	FRANCHISES	
	n	%	
The page presents information about the products/services available	112	100	
The page includes the logo of the franchise	111	99.11	

Table 1. Informational Dimension

The page includes links to other pages of interest	108	96.43
The page presents the address of the physical store	106	94.64
The page includes the privacy policy	103	91.96
The page includes the terms of use	102	91.07
The page presents the geographic location of the physical store	99	88.39
Information on franchise methods is available on this page	86	86.00
The page describes the history of the franchise	82	73.21
The page has e-mail	75	66.96
News about the franchise sector is offered on the page (press room)	73	65.18
The page has an area for recruitment of employees	65	58.04
The page presents information about the prices of the products/services	52	46.43
The page includes the mission of the franchise	41	36.61
The page has information about the different payment methods	30	26.79
The page presents a description of the organization of the franchise	18	16.07
There is a virtual visit to the franchise	9	8.04

As can be seen in Table 2, 50% of the companies present a high level in this category and 49% present a medium level. That is, most of the franchises communicate general information about the organization, such as the logo, history, address of the physical stores, terms of use and privacy policy. It should be noted that only one franchise does not include enough corporate information, so the website does not communicate content for customers to know about the company.

Table 2. Informational Dimension Rating

RATING	FRAN	FRANCHISES		
MIIII	n	%		
Null	0	0		
Low	1	0.89		
Medium	55	49.11		
High	56	50.00		

Secondly, the relational-users dimension of the franchise websites was analyzed. As shown in Table 3, the vast majority of websites (91.07%) have a contact form, which allows users to send suggestions and opinions, and in 86.61% there is an area for franchisees to communicate with the company directly. More than half of the franchises include blogs (67.86%) and provide promotions or offers (69.64%) on their websites. On the other hand, less than half of the pages (43.75%) have an area where customers can register. About one third of the franchises allow online purchase (35.71%) and home delivery (34.82%). However, only 17.86% of pages offer collection at the store or collection point. The low presence of areas to manage loyalty cards (16.96%) stands out.

ITEMS	FRANCHISES	
		%
Comments, opinions or suggestions can be sent through the Web (form)	102	91.07
The franchisees have an area to communicate with the company	97	86.61
Promotions are offered through the web page	78	69.64
The website contains a blog	76	67.86
The customer can sign up on the page.	49	43.75
It is possible to purchase/shop online	40	35.71
Home delivery is offered.	39	34.82
The website has a newsletter subscription	35	31.25
It is possible to place orders online (to be picked up at the franchise)	20	17.86
Customer loyalty cards can be managed through web	19	16.96

Table 3. Relational-Users Dimension

In Table 4 the classification of the rating for the relational-users dimension is highlighted. Almost half of the franchises have a medium level (47.32%), while 26.79% present a high level and 25.89% show a low level. In general, it should be noted that all the companies include some item that allows them to interact with users, so that none has a classification of "null".

RATING	FRA	FRANCHISES		
id in it.	n	%		
Null	0	0		
Low	29	25.89		
Medium	53	47.32		
High	30	26.79		

 Table 4. Relational-Users Dimension Rating

Regarding the presence of the items of the relational-social networks dimension (see Table 5), Facebook (93.75%) and Twitter (83.93%) stand out as the social networks with the greatest presence in the websites. Next are Instagram (66.07%) and YouTube (59, 82%), which are present in about two thirds of companies. LinkedIn is present in less than half of the franchises (40.18%). Finally, only in 18.75% of the franchises are present other social networks, such as Google+, and in only 15.18% is Pinterest.

ITEMS	FRANCHISES	
	n	%
There is a link to the franchise's Facebook page	105	93.75
There is a link to the franchise's Twitter page	94	83.93
There is a link to the Instagram page of the franchise	74	66.07
There is a link to the franchise's YouTube channel	67	59.82
There is a link to the franchise's LinkedIn page	45	40.18
There is a link to other social networks	21	18.75
There is a link to the Pinterest page of the franchise	17	15.18

Table 5. Relational-Social Networks Dimension

Based on the classification of the relational-social network dimension (Table 6), it can be seen that more than half of the franchises (55.36%) have a medium level of presence in social networks, almost one third (30.36%) have a high level and only 14.29% have a low level. That is, all the companies have a presence in some social network.

RATING	FRANCHISES		
	n	%	
Null	0	0	
Low	16	14.29	
Medium	62	55.36	
High	34	30.36	

Table 6. Relational-Social Networks Dimension Rating

Table 7 shows the presence of the items of the relational-web 2.0 applications dimension. The analysis identified that "mashups" are the most used applications (86.61%), the most recognized being Google Maps, to show the location of points of sale. The videocasting (53.57%) and the RSS application (55.36%) are present in a little more than half of the websites. One of the applications that has less presence is the "folksonomy" or word cloud (2.68%), which allows users to create tags to highlight content that they consider important and thus creates the word cloud. No franchise includes podcasting on its website.

Table 7.	Relational-Web	2.0 applications	Dimension
----------	-----------------------	------------------	-----------

ITEMS	FRANCHISES	
II EMIS	n	%
The page includes mashups (Google Maps, blog, YouTube, etc.).	97	86.61
The page has RSS / ATOM	62	55.36
The page includes video-casting.	60	53.57
The page includes folksonomies or classifications (social labels or word clouds)	3	2.68
The page includes <i>podcasting</i>	0	0

Then, the relational-web 2.0 applications dimension is analyzed. As shown in Table 8, nearly 75% of the franchises (74.11%) have a medium level, and less than a quarter (16.96%) have a low level. It is worth noting that 8.04% of the franchises have a null level, that is, they do not incorporate any web 2.0 application in their pages, and only one company has a high level (0.89%).

RATING	FRANC	FRANCHISES		
id fill (G	n	%		
Null	9	8.04		
Low	19	16.96		
Medium	83	74.11		
High	1	0.89		

 Table 8. Relational-Web 2.0 applications Dimension Rating

Next, the presence of items from the usability dimension was analyzed. Table 9 shows that all the franchises include a home button, as well as photographs and images to complement the text; the great majority (91.07%) have a clearly identifiable postal address, along with a contact telephone number (86.61%), and two thirds also have easily accessible e-mail (66.07%). Three quarters of the websites are frequently updated (75.89%) and 58.93% include an internal search engine. On the other hand, less than half of the websites can be viewed in other languages (42.86%), and a quarter of them have a section of frequently asked questions. 17.86% of the pages have a site map and only 8.93% have a virtual assistant.

ITEMS		FRANCHISES	
	n	%	
The page has a "home" button	112	100	
There are photographs and other images that support the text	112	100	
The postal address is clearly identified	102	91.07	
The contact phone number is easily located/identifiable	97	86.61	
The information is frequently updated	85	75.89	
The email address is clearly identified	74	66.07	
There is a search option to locate information within the web page	66	58.93	
The page is available in more than one language	48	42.86	
There is a section of frequently asked questions (F.A.Q.)	29	25.89	
There is a map of the website	20	17.86	
The page has a virtual assistant	10	8.93	

Finally, we proceeded to analyze the usability dimension (see Table 10). In this analysis, it stands out that 71.43% of the franchises have a medium level of usability and the rest

(28.57%) have a high level. That is, all the companies incorporate some item to improve the usability of their websites.

RATING	FRANCHISES						
KATINO	n	%					
Null	0	0					
Low	0	0					
Medium	80	71.43					
High	32	28.57					

Table 10. Usability Dimension Rating

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results indicate that, in general, the franchise systems make use of the websites to manage their relationships with their stakeholders (e.g., franchisees, customers). After analyzing the results of each dimension, the paper concludes that the informational dimension obtained the higher rate. It is important to stablish that the greatest number of franchises include information about the prices of products/services. In order to contribute to the digital communication, some franchises include in their websites a press room where they publish corporate news about the franchise, which may not be very useful for the customers, but it is useful when communicating to other stakeholders, such as future franchisees. On the other hand, the existence of a specific area for the recruitment of employees is important to effectively communicate the availability of vacancies for potential candidates and facilitate access to positions.

This paper contributes by identifying different subcategories of the relational dimension in the communication of the franchisor with its stakeholders, useful to enhance its relationship strategy. Regarding the relational dimension, the franchises value the interaction with the users by providing spaces through which to contact the company, for example, a blog in which the franchise can communicate useful information for all stakeholders. In addition, the contact forms provide information and means to relate to customers and receive feedback from them to improve the quality of the products/services they offer, thus developing a closer relationship. Although the websites are usually intended for customers and contain information of interest to them, the franchises take into account other stakeholders, such as franchisees, and include an area to communicate with them, something of great importance to manage almost immediately any problem that may arise. Another way in which the franchises relate to users is through their social networks, which can be accessed through the link. In addition, the websites are adapted to some extent to Web 2.0 and include tools that improve the user experience when using them. For instance, the use of videocasting allows the transmission of written information in a visual way with greater impact on users. However, it would be advisable to adapt them more to new technologies which would lead to a better digital communication. RSS are Web-based news aggregators, which are designed to enable users to read news from many sources (Shang et al., 2011). This application allows for continuous communication and for users who are interested to be informed. It also facilitates the search for information on blogs and lets users become part of the website by increasing their interaction with the company. For this reason, it would be convenient for organizations to include it in their websites and develop a digital communication adapted to the current web and in which users can participate.

The franchises design their websites considering the usability to facilitate access to information and reduce the time users spend to meet their objectives when using the website. Measures such as including a home button or photographs to illustrate the texts help this and all the franchises studied incorporate them, as it is something simple and very useful. Other aspects such as updating the information frequently, less than a year, allows for effective communication and attracts customers since it shows interest on the part of the company. In addition, by making contact information (such as a phone number or email) visible and easily located, which requires less than three clicks, it would improve communication for users to contact the company. Also, the inclusion of frequently asked questions could speed up the user's search process and avoid having to personally respond to queries that may be very common. Finally, franchises do not incorporate a virtual assistant to help users make a real-time request and thus get them to make a purchase or find the necessary information, which could reduce the time it takes users to find what they are looking for.

Actually, this study has helped to advance the knowledge of digital communication of the franchises. In this sense, it has been possible to highlight that the franchises must improve their digital communication through the Web 2.0 applications. This utility has not been widely exploited as a strategic tool by the franchises. Therefore, this study provides some practical contributions for the franchisors, since they could improve their relationships with the franchisees through digital and interactive communication on their websites. Nowadays, due

to the international health COVID-19 crisis, the digital communication becomes crucial for the strategic management, because it could be the main tool to maintain contact with franchisees and to expand the brand.

REFERENCES

- Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V. & Guinalíu, M. (2012). Website usability, consumer satisfaction and the intention to use a website: The moderating effect of perceived risk, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 19(1), 124–132. doi: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2011.11.001.
- Bordonaba-Juste, M. V. & Polo-Redondo, Y. (2004). Long-Term Relationships In Franchised Distribution Systems: Analysis Of Mutual Trust And Commitment, *International Business & Economics Research Journal*, 3(6), 1–12.
- Cedrola, E. & Memmo, S. (2009). Internet for franchising: Current use and areas of improvement-results of an empirical research, *Journal of Euromarketing*, 18(1), 5–21. doi: 10.1080/10496480902865157.
- Cho, C. H. & Cheon, H. J. (2005). Cross-cultural comparisons of interactivity on corporate web sites: The United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and South Korea, *Journal* of Advertising, 34(2), 99–115. doi: 10.1080/00913367.2005.10639195.
- Díaz, E. & Koutra, C. (2013). Evaluation of the persuasive features of hotel chains websites:
 A latent class segmentation analysis, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. Elsevier Ltd, 34(1), 338–347. doi: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2012.11.009.
- Domínguez-Falcón, C., Verano-Tacoronte, D. & Suárez-Fuentes, M. (2018). Exploring the customer orientation of Spanish pharmacy websites, *International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing*, 12(4), 447–462. doi: 10.1108/IJPHM-04-2018-0025.
- Dua, S. (2017). Digital Communication Management: The World Is Going Digital, International Journal of Recent Research Aspects, 4(3), 50–53. Available at: http://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2015/01/19/soci.
- Escobar-Rodríguez, T. & Carvajal-Trujillo, E. (2013). An evaluation of Spanish hotel websites: Informational vs. relational strategies, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. Elsevier Ltd, 33(1), 228–239. doi: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2012.08.008.

- Fernández-Monroy, M., Martín-Santana, J. D. & Galván-Sánchez, I. (2018). Building successful franchise partnerships: the importance of communication and trust, *Management Decision*, 56(5), 1051–1064.
- Flavián, C., Guinalíu, M. & Gurrea, R. (2006). The role played by perceived usability, satisfaction and consumer trust on website loyalty, *Information and Management*, 43(1), 1–14. doi: 10.1016/j.im.2005.01.002.
- Fuchs, C., Hofkirchner, W., Schafranek, M., Raffl, C., Sandoval M. & Bichler, R. (2010).
 Theoretical Foundations of the Web: Cognition, Communication, and Co-Operation.
 Towards an Understanding of Web 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, *Future Internet*, 2(1), 41–59. doi: 10.3390/fi2010041.
- García-Borbolla, A., Larrán, M. & López, R. (2005). Empirical Evidence Concerning Smes Corporate Websites: Explaining Factors, Strategies and Reporting, *The International Journal of Digital Accounting Research*, (July 2014). doi: 10.4192/1577-8517-v5_5.
- Garrigos-Simon, F. J., Lapiedra Alcamí, R. & Barberá Ribera, T. (2012). Social networks and Web 3.0: Their impact on the management and marketing of organizations, *Management Decision*, 50(10), 1880–1890. doi: 10.1108/00251741211279657.
- Huang, J., Baptista, J. & Newell, S. (2015). Communicational ambidexterity as a new capability to manage social media communication within organizations, *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 24(2), 49–64. doi: 10.1016/j.jsis.2015.03.002.
- Kacker, M. & Perrigot, R. (2016). Retailer use of a professional social media network: Insights from franchising, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 30, 222–233. doi: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2016.01.020.
- Küster, I. & Hernández, A. (2013). From Web 2.0 to Web 3.0: Antecedents and consequences of the attitude and use intention of social networking in the semantic Web, *Universia Business Review*, (37), 104–119.
- López-Fernández, B. & Perrigot, R. (2018). Using Websites to Recruit Franchisee Candidates, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 42, 80–94. doi: 10.1016/j.intmar.2018.02.003.
- Martínez-Sala, A. M., Monserrat-Gauchi, J. & Alemany-Martínez, D. (2020). User Usable Experience: A three-dimensional approach on usability in tourism websites and a model for its evaluation, *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 33(August 2019),

100579. doi: 10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100579.

- Monserrat-Gauchi, J., Quiles-Soler, C. & González-Díaz, C. (2014). Structures, systems and organizational communication processes in franchises in times of crisis: The Spanish case, *Observatorio*, 8(2), 111–122. doi: 10.15847/obsOBS822014641.
- Paniagua Gallart, C. (2010). Una historia de la comunicación de crisis en España, *Revista Icono 14*, 2, 3–24.
- Papa, A., Santoro, G., Tirabeni, L. & Monge, F. (2018). Social media as tool for facilitating knowledge creation and innovation in small and medium enterprises, *Baltic Journal of Management*, 13(3), 329–344. doi: 10.1108/BJM-04-2017-0125.
- Pénard, T. & Perrigot, R. (2017). Online search Online purchase in franchising: An empirical analysis of franchisor website functionality, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 39(August), 164–172. doi: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.08.003.
- Perrigot, R., Kacker, M., Basset G. & Cliquet, G. (2012). Antecedents of early adoption and use of social media networks for stakeholder communications: Evidence from franchising, *Journal of Small Business Management*, 50(4), 539–565.
- Shang, S. S. C., Li, E. Y., Wu, Y. L. & Hou, O. C. L. (2011). Understanding Web 2.0 service models: A knowledge-creating perspective, *Information and Management*, 48(4–5), 178–184. doi: 10.1016/j.im.2011.01.005.
- Sivarajah, U., Irani, Z., Gupta, S. & Mahroof, K. (2020). Role of big data and social media analytics for business to business sustainability: A participatory web context, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 86, 163–179. doi: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2019.04.005.
- Vaccaro, A. & Madsen, P. (2009). Corporate dynamic transparency: The new ICT-driven ethics?, *Ethics and Information Technology*, 11(2), 113–122. doi: 10.1007/s10676-009-9190-1.
- Wirtz, B. W., Schilke, O. & Ullrich, S. (2010). Strategic development of business models: Implications of the Web 2.0 for creating value on the Internet, *Long Range Planning*, 43(2–3), 272–290. doi: 10.1016/j.lrp.2010.01.005.

Appendix 1

Results of the website content analysis

	Informational		Relational-		Re	elational-	Rel	ational-	T	Usability	
FR	Informa	ational		Users	Social	Social networks		.0 Apps	Osabilit		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Fr1	10	58.8	6	60.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	6	54.55	
		2									
Fr2	11	64.7	3	30.00	2	28.57	2	40.00	5	45.45	
		1									
Fr3	15	88.2	8	80.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	4	36.36	
		4									
Fr4	15	88.2	8	80.00	4	57.14	1	20.00	8	72.73	
		4									
Fr5	14	82.3	7	70.00	5	71.43	1	20.00	7	63.64	
		5									
Fr6	12	70.5	6	60.00	7	100.00	3	60.00	5	45.45	
		9									
Fr7	11	64.7	4	40.00	3	42.86	3	60.00	7	63.64	
		1									
Fr8	10	58.8	1	10.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6	54.55	
		2									
Fr9	12	70.5	3	30.00	5	71.43	3	60.00	5	45.45	
		9									
Fr10	9	52.9	3	30.00	3	42.86	3	60.00	5	45.45	
		4									
Fr11	13		7	70.00	5	71.43	2	40.00	8	72.73	
		7		10.00							
Fr12	10	58.8	4	40.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	5	45.45	
F 10		2									
Fr13	12	70.5	7	70.00	4	57.14	1	20.00	7	63.64	
F 1 <i>t</i>		9		00.00	_		-	<i>c</i> 0.00	10	00.01	
Fr14	13	76.4	9	90.00	5	71.43	3	60.00	10	90.91	
		7									

	Inform	Informational		lational-	Re	lational-	Rel	ational-	U	sability
FR				Users	Social 1	networks	Web 2.0 Apps		C	succing
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fr15	13	76.4	8	80.00	4	57.14	1	20.00	8	72.73
		7								
Fr16	12	70.5	4	40.00	5	71.43	3	60.00	8	72.73
		9								
Fr17	11	64.7	3	30.00	3	42.86	2	40.00	8	72.73
		1								
Fr18	12	70.5	5	50.00	5	71.43	1	20.00	5	45.45
		9								
Fr19	14	82.3	9	90.00	5	71.43	2	40.00	8	72.73
		5								
Fr20	11	64.7	1	10.00	5	71.43	3	60.00	7	63.64
		1								
Fr21	12	70.5	5	50.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	7	63.64
		9								
Fr22	14	82.3	6	60.00	3	42.86	3	60.00	6	54.55
		5								
Fr23	14	82.3	7	70.00	4	57.14	1	20.00	8	72.73
		5								
Fr24	10	58.8	4	40.00	0	0.00	3	60.00	6	54.55
		2			-		-		-	
Fr25	12		3	30.00	3	42.86	2	40.00	7	63.64
1120		9	C	20100	C		-			00101
Fr26	9	52.9	4	40.00	3	42.86	2	40.00	7	63.64
1120	,	4	·	10.00	5	12.00	2	10.00	,	05.01
Fr27	14	82.3	4	40.00	4	57.14	3	60.00	7	63.64
1127	17	5	-	40.00	т	57.14	5	00.00	1	05.04
Fr28	8	47.0	3	30.00	2	28.57	2	40.00	7	63.64
1120	0	47.0 6	5	50.00	2	20.37	2	40.00	/	03.04
Fr29	8	47.0	7	70.00	3	42.86	1	20.00	9	81.82
1129	0		/	/0.00	3	42.00	1	20.00	9	01.02
E-20	11	6	0	00.00	<i>E</i>	71 42	0	0.00	~	15 15
Fr30	11	64.7	8	80.00	5	71.43	0	0.00	5	45.45

	Informational		Re	lational-	Re	elational-	Rel	ational-	Usability	
FR	mom	ational		Users	Social	networks	Web 2	.0 Apps	U	saonny
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
		1								
Fr31	12	70.5	8	80.00	6	85.71	3	60.00	6	54.55
		9								
Fr32	8	47.0	3	30.00	2	28.57	3	60.00	6	54.55
		6								
Fr33	13	76.4	5	50.00	5	71.43	2	40.00	8	72.73
		7								
Fr34	12	70.5	7	70.00	4	57.14	1	20.00	8	72.73
		9								
Fr35	8	47.0	3	30.00	2	28.57	2	40.00	6	54.55
		6								
Fr36	11	64.7	3	30.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	8	72.73
		1								
Fr37	12	70.5	5	50.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	7	63.64
		9								
Fr38	10	58.8	9	90.00	7	100.00	2	40.00	6	54.55
		2								
Fr39	10	58.8	5	50.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	5	45.45
		2								
Fr40	15	88.2	9	90.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	7	63.64
		4								
Fr41	9	52.9	1	10.00	3	42.86	2	40.00	6	54.55
		4								
Fr42	11	64.7	8	80.00	3	42.86	0	0.00	7	63.64
		1								
Fr43	9	52.9	2	20.00	3	42.86	2	40.00	8	72.73
		4								
Fr44	9	52.9	4	40.00	3	42.86	2	40.00	5	45.45
		4								
Fr45	11	64.7	4	40.00	3	42.86	1	20.00	5	45.45
		1								

	Informational		Re	lational-	Re	lational-	Rel	ational-	Usability		
FR	mom	ational		Users	Social 1	networks	Web 2	.0 Apps	U	Osubility	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Fr46	11	64.7	7	70.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	7	63.64	
		1									
Fr47	6	35.2	5	50.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	45.45	
		9									
Fr48	11	64.7	6	60.00	4	57.14	1	20.00	8	72.73	
		1									
Fr49	12	70.5	4	40.00	5	71.43	3	60.00	8	72.73	
		9									
Fr50	9	52.9	3	30.00	3	42.86	1	20.00	4	36.36	
		4									
Fr51	11	64.7	6	60.00	5	71.43	1	20.00	6	54.55	
		1									
Fr52	9	52.9	4	40.00	3	42.86	0	0.00	8	72.73	
		4									
Fr53	3	17.6	1	10.00	3	42.86	0	0.00	4	36.36	
		5									
Fr54	9	52.9	3	30.00	2	28.57	1	20.00	7	63.64	
		4									
Fr55	12	70.5	4	40.00	4	57.14	2	40.00	8	72.73	
		9									
Fr56	12	70.5	4	40.00	3	42.86	0	0.00	6	54.55	
		9									
Fr57	13	76.4	7	70.00	6	85.71	2	40.00	10	90.91	
		7									
Fr58	12	70.5	4	40.00	4	57.14	3	60.00	6	54.55	
		9									
Fr59	15	88.2	9	90.00	6	85.71	3	60.00	9	81.82	
		4									
Fr60	10	58.8	2	20.00	3	42.86	2	40.00	6	54.55	
		2									
Fr61	13	76.4	3	30.00	0	0.00	1	20.00	6	54.55	

Usability		ational-	Rela	lational-	Re	Relational-		utional	Informa	
saonny	0	0 Apps	Web 2.	networks	Social r	Users		uionai	morma	FR
%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	
								7		
45.45	5	40.00	2	71.43	5	60.00	6	70.5	12	Fr62
								9		
63.64	7	60.00	3	57.14	4	80.00	8	58.8	10	Fr63
								2		
54.55	6	60.00	3	100.00	7	40.00	4	70.5	12	Fr64
								9		
45.45	5	60.00	3	57.14	4	30.00	3	47.0	8	Fr65
								6		
63.64	7	60.00	3	42.86	3	60.00	6	58.8	10	Fr66
								2		
63.64	7	60.00	3	71.43	5	60.00	6	64.7	11	Fr67
								1		
63.64	7	40.00	2	57.14	4	40.00	4	76.4	13	Fr68
								7		
90.91	10	40.00	2	57.14	4	60.00	6	76.4	13	Fr69
								7		
72.73	8	40.00	2	85.71	6	100.00	10	82.3	14	Fr70
								5		
36.36	4	60.00	3	57.14	4	50.00	5	58.8	10	Fr71
								2		
45.45	5	60.00	3	71.43	5	20.00	2	52.9	9	Fr72
								4		
63.64	7	60.00	3	28.57	2	40.00	4	76.4	13	Fr73
								7		
72.73	8	40.00	2	71.43	5	40.00	4	76.4	13	Fr74
								7		
54.55	6	20.00	1	42.86	3	40.00	4	70.5	12	Fr75
								9		
81.82	9	40.00	2	42.86	3	80.00	8	82.3	14	Fr76
								5		

Usability		ational-	Rela	ational-	Re	Relational-		Informational		
, actively	C	Web 2.0 Apps		etworks	Social n	Users				FR
%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	
63.64	7	80.00	4	42.86	3	50.00	5	64.7	11	Fr77
								1		
54.55	6	40.00	2	57.14	4	30.00	3	58.8	10	Fr78
								2		
63.64	7	40.00	2	28.57	2	10.00	1	58.8	10	Fr79
								2		
54.55	6	40.00	2	85.71	6	80.00	8	82.3	14	Fr80
								5		
81.82	9	20.00	1	57.14	4	80.00	8	76.4	13	Fr81
								7		
72.73	8	60.00	3	57.14	4	40.00	4	64.7	11	Fr82
								1		
54.55	6	40.00	2	42.86	3	20.00	2	64.7	11	Fr83
								1		
63.64	7	40.00	2	42.86	3	40.00	4	76.4	13	Fr84
								7		
45.45	5	40.00	2	42.86	3	30.00	3	47.0	8	Fr85
								6		
63.64	7	60.00	3	57.14	4	40.00	4	76.4	13	Fr86
								7		
63.64	7	40.00	2	28.57	2	70.00	7	58.8	10	Fr87
								2		
63.64	7	40.00	2	57.14	4	90.00	9	64.7	11	Fr88
								1		
45.45	5	60.00	3	71.43	5	70.00	7	70.5	12	Fr89
								9		
72.73	8	0.00	0	57.14	4	30.00	3	82.3	14	Fr90
								5		
72.73	8	0.00	0	71.43	5	50.00	5	70.5	12	Fr91
								9		
45.45	5	60.00	3	85.71	6	30.00	3	70.5	12	Fr92

Usability		ational-	Rela	lational-	Re	Relational-		ntional	Informa	
subility	U	.0 Apps	Web 2.	etworks	Social r	Users		uionai	morm	FR
%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	-
								9		
54.55	6	20.00	1	71.43	5	40.00	4	64.7	11	Fr93
								1		
63.64	7	40.00	2	42.86	3	40.00	4	76.4	13	Fr94
								7		
63.64	7	40.00	2	42.86	3	40.00	4	76.4	13	Fr95
								7		
54.55	6	40.00	2	0.00	0	20.00	2	58.8	10	Fr96
								2		
63.64	7	60.00	3	42.86	3	40.00	4	82.3	14	Fr97
								5		
63.64	7	60.00	3	100.00	7	50.00	5	70.5	12	Fr98
								9		
45.45	5	40.00	2	14.29	1	30.00	3	64.7	11	Fr99
								1		
81.82	9	60.00	3	71.43	5	90.00	9	76.4	13	Fr100
								7		
54.55	6	40.00	2	42.86	3	40.00	4	58.8	10	Fr101
								2		
72.73	8	40.00	2	57.14	4	80.00	8	64.7	11	Fr102
								1		
63.64	7	20.00	1	57.14	4	40.00	4	64.7	11	Fr103
								1		
63.64	7	40.00	2	71.43	5	40.00	4	64.7	11	Fr104
								1		
63.64	7	40.00	2	42.86	3	50.00	5	76.4	13	Fr105
								7		
72.73	8	60.00	3	71.43	5	40.00	4	70.5	12	Fr106
								9		
81.82	9	60.00	3	57.14	4	30.00	3	76.4	13	Fr107
								7		

	Informational		Relational-		Re	lational-	Rel	ational-	Usability	
FR				Users	Social networks		Web 2.0 Apps		Osability	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fr108	10	58.8	5	50.00	2	28.57	3	60.00	5	45.45
		2								
Fr109	10	58.8	4	40.00	5	71.43	2	40.00	7	63.64
		2								
Fr110	12	70.5	4	40.00	5	71.43	2	40.00	7	63.64
		9								
Fr111	12	70.5	4	40.00	3	42.86	2	40.00	6	54.55
		9								
Fr112	11	64.7	10	100.00	2	28.57	1	20.00	8	72.73
		1								