The influence of social E-Atmospherics *in practice:*

A website content analysis perspective

Ronan de Kervenoael, Sabanci University, Faculty of Management, Istanbul, Turkey and Aston Business School, UK
dekervenoael@sabanciuniv.edu / 90 (216) 483-9704

D. Selcen O. Aykac, Sabanci University, Faculty of Management, Istanbul, Turkey
selcenaykac@sabanciuniv.edu / 90 (216) 483-9675

Christophe Bisson, Bogazici University, Faculty of Management and Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey
christophe.bisson@laposte.net / 90 (216) 5782 700

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Abstract

E-atmospherics have been often analyzed in terms of functional features, leaving its characteristics' link to social capital co-creation as a fertile research area. Prior research have demonstrated the capacity of e-atmospherics' at modifying shopping habits towards deeper engagement. Little is known on how processes and cues emerging from the social aspects of lifestyle influence purchasing behavior. The anatomy of social dimension and ICT is the focus of this research, where attention is devoted to unpack the meanings and type of online mundane social capital creation. Taking a cross-product/services approach to better investigate social construction impact, our approach also involves both an emerging and a mature market where exploratory content analysis of landing page are done on Turkish and French web sites, respectively. We contend that by comprehending social capital, daily micro practices, habits and routine, a better and deeper understanding on e-atmospherics incumbent and potential effects on its multi-national e-customer will be acquired.

Keywords: E-shopping, cultural capital, web content, e-atmospherics.

Introduction

Since the turn of the millennium, e-tailing has experienced a rapid growth for certain categories, while others have failed to attract consumers. As market entry barriers have lowered due to the technological advancement three main types of web sites have emerged, namely multi-brand warehouse, mono brand specialist and showroom sites. With an increasing amount of world wide competitors, segmentation, targeting and positioning have become crucial. While the traditional web experiential elements analyzed through web

analytic software have helped e-tailers to improve the buying process, little has still been accomplished in terms of grounding experiences into the social imagery of users. While many sites seem to be growing, it has also been shown that after the initial rush created by the innovators and early adopters a certain leveling effect to attract new users seems to have taken place. It seems that the acquisition of prospective users has encountered great difficulties. One of the reasons advocated has been due to the lack or real adaptation of the brick and mortar model towards a brick and click model, we advocate that basic cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics have been overlooked. The advanced reasons for this oversight have often been a result of the technological constraints. In today's environment, with the emergence of Internet 2 and virtual online life, the demonstrated increased possibilities of ICT and the ever advancing understanding of users, different styles need to be developed in order to ensure sustainability and consumer loyalty. In this context, a multi-disciplinary social approach of e-atmospheric has become an emergent field of research. Technology driven strategies seem to have imposed a particular form of web site design, often reinforced by search engine algorithm that privileged quantity over quality. These approaches ignored largely the users as individual agents, located in specific environment, both at individual level and within broader social groups.

This paper focuses on an important aspect of marketers' online strategy, namely the potential for developing enhanced socially grounded e-atmospherics. It argues that increased differentiation and organic engagement with the channel would, hence, be possible. The current lack of inherited online social practices seems to deter many potential users. The socialization influences of e-cultural capital, through the examination of day-to-day practices seem only to be an underrated issue in the e-marketing and e-retailing literature. This paper seeks to address this balance by providing an exploratory review of some social e-atmospherics. As a way to illustrate our perspective, the paper reviews nineteen web site categories' landing page in two culturally different markets.

E-atmospherics have motivated an emerging body of research (Dailey 2004; Eroglu, Machleit, and Davis 2001) which report that both virtual store layouts and atmospherics encourage consumers to modify their shopping habits (Burke 2002; Vrechopoulos, Papamichail, and Doukidis 2002). While the literature has analyzed mainly the functional aspect of e-atmospherics, little has been done in terms of linking its characteristics' to social capital (co-) creation (Hui, Dube, and Chebat 1997; Spangenberg, Crowley, and Henderson 1996). Following Milliman and Fugate's (1993), and Eroglu *et al.*'s (2001) works, we focus on the anatomy of social dimension in relation to e-atmospherics, which include factors such as the aesthetic design of space, the influence of visual cues, interpretation of shopping as a social activity and meaning of appropriate interactivity. We argue that consumers are social agents which interact within intangible reference sets, restricted by social standards, value, beliefs, status and duties. In other words, we aim to review the current social cues displayed by various types' e-tailers and provide an analysis based recommendation towards the development of an integrated e-social atmospheric framework.

The following section provides background on e-atmospherics and web content analysis to build a rich foundation in laying out the motivations for our research. The third section originates from these theoretical bases and provides a new lens through which online social capital could be interpreted. The fourth section describes our methodology. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion outlining a number of theoretical opportunities, and avenues for future research to develop a theoretical bridge towards the next generation of web site geographies.

Initial theorization background

Atmospherics has been defined as "*the conscious designing of space to create certain buyer effects*" (Kotler 1973, p. 50). In a traditional commerce setting, marketers manipulate store atmospherics to increase purchases opportunities including impulse, link offers, and complementary accessories (Rook and Fisher 1995). In an online environment atmospherics involve the creation, shaping and evolution of web sites design to enhance site stickiness, to encourage final decision to purchase and to promote positive post-purchase feelings. Social e-atmospherics are presented as a whole stimulus package to improve the buying experience as opposed to the traditional e-atmospherics which only focused on processes and utilitarian outcome. It has been difficult for most consumers to clearly identify the different aspects (timing, intensity, phases etc) of the experience as they often lack 'inherited mundane e-cultural capital' and reference point compared to traditional shopping channels (Bourdieu 1986; De Certeau 1984). In addition, most consumers have not been able to prioritize cues within the shopping practice as a reflection of unknown appropriate interaction procedures. The mundane aspect of shopping online and its cultural capital are continuously being (re-) created at each visit. Web experiential elements that include concepts such as convenience, information architecture, site navigation, customer services, interaction with company personnel, customization and network effect have been well researched (Constantinides 2004) but mainly from a deterministic process oriented perspective.

Following McKinney's (2004) study, thirty six standard variables are used to conduct a content analysis of existing department, specialty, and discount store Internet shopping sites. The variables are categorized as external variables, interior variables, layout and design, point-of-purchase and customer service (Turley and Milliman 2000). Regarding specifically e-shopping external variables refer to links that are included on internet shopping sites' homepages (e.g. company information, departments/brand listings), links designed to access a particular department (e.g. men's, women's) and/or brand (e.g. L'Oreal) within an internet shopping site are referred to as internal variables. The second aspect, informativeness is defined as the depth of information and tends to predict consumer evaluations of website design, including attitude toward the site, satisfaction with the site, and loyalty intentions (Chen and Wells 1999; Szymanski and Hise 2000; Wolfinbarger and Gilly 2003).The third general aspect, ambiance and design variables are aimed at improving the overall appearance of the site. Finally, all the options to interact with the online seller are considered important. This encompasses issues of personalization, or the ability to give individualized attention to users (Bitner 1992; Brown and Swartz 1989). Table 1 presents an illustrative summary of these variables.

Table 1: Traditional web site content analysis factors

External variables:
Ability to subscribe to email promotions/mailing list, Access to partners/alliances, Availability of security and privacy information,
Store locator/finder, if company has stores, Site map, Departments/brand listings, Information on return, Special offers/coupons, Loyalty program, Ability to add the website as favorite via a link, Ability to optimize the configuration, Links to other websites of the company, Ability to earn money via the use of the website, Communication events, Language Option or links to their international websites

Internal variables
Ability to shop by merchandise departments, Shop by brand name, Shop by special sizes (e.g. small, big and tall), Detailed description of product, Size charts/fit guides, Listing of product best-sellers, Listing of upcoming products, Listing of products to be discovered, Listing of new products, Listing of some products which are looked by other customers at the moment, Ability to choose the best service according to the needs of the customer, Space for professionals, Information about the composition of the products, Information about the know-how.

Ambiance factors and design variables
Color scheme, Graphics/photos/images, Text, Allocation of space, Placement of information including text and images, Sound.

Point-of-purchase
Price(s) of merchandise or service, Ability to pay by different means

Customer services
Help service/toll-free number, Express checkout for frequent shoppers, Gift wrap/decorative box options, multiple shipping options (e.g. ground, priority, express), Ability to open an account, Gift suggestions and/or gift registry, Ability to pay with gift card/certificate.

Social dimension
Newsgroup, Chat, E-mail, FAQ, Ease of use (Easy, Normal, Difficult), Speed (High, Normal, Low), Avatars

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However, it is still difficult to divide deterministic technological influence of the online experience (process) from the traditional more social aspect of shopping (hedonistic motives). Most e-tailers have yet to make explicit use of their effort and understanding of social cues within their overall e-strategies. Fewer even seem to be ready to use social aesthetic as a sustainable differentiation tool and prefer the standard a-cultural, a-gender, a-political and mass produced standard. They seem to ignore the evolution in the overall Internet consumer base.

Eroglu et al. (2001) have been at the forefront in proposing a framework for examining the influence of atmospherics qualities from an e-shopper behavior perspective. They assumed that many atmospheric variables studied in physical stores (e.g., visible presence of others, scents, textures, temperatures) were not relevant to e-tailing. If the temperature, odor and texture can't directly impact e-shoppers, what are the other factors that allow for immediate familiarity, legitimization of action and decision, recognition of appropriate taste, understanding of overall behavior and prompts? E-retailers have to understand and manage new set of dispersed practices as a basic condition to the acquisition of consumer participation and engagement over the long term beyond the traditional early adopters. Attributes that soften social resistance to the channel need to be included in marketers' strategies. The current e-atmospherics processes seem to transgress norms and believe of many within the society. While the lack of growth in many categories has been observed little has been done from a social perspective to attempt to remediate the situation. Compared to traditional e-

atmospherics models, we posit that social vividness, interactivity, and symbolism must be taken into account.

Social vividness and interactivity

Vividness is often described as the richness of environmental information presented to human senses (Shih 1998; Steur 1992). From a deterministic perspective in our context, media vividness is a function of two dimensions: (1) depth, which is the resolution or fidelity of sensory of information, and (2) breadth, which is the number of sensory dimensions concurrently activated (Shih 1998; Steur 1992). Regarding the breadth of sensory factors, as for virtual settings, the range of ambient conditions is often said to be constrained by current technology, hence, only rudimentary visual and auditory stimuli are now used. From this perspective vividness as a basis refers to how easily recalled and convincing something is. The more vivid a web site is, the higher the probability is to have a browsing followed by a purchase decision. From our perspective social vividness represents further shopping attributes enjoyment. Shopping is often more about sharing (e.g. lifestyle, taste, preferences) and exposing (self, status, believes, wealth). In other words, social vividness represent all cues and processes that prevent 'isolation feeling' and allow display of specific characteristics that are though desirable by user during and after the online experience. It has often be said that shopping online is an a-social activity because it does not usually involve groups of users (created online or derived from the offline world) and individual seem to close themselves from their surrounding environment. Social vividness depends on the level representation of information understanding and the level of conceptualization of the information provided (Kraaijenbrink and Wijnhoven 2006). We posit that advancements in technology can provide much better e-atmospherics and then be a great vector of social vividness. Shopping online is surely going to be a more social activity compared to physical shopping. Shoppers will be able to meet virtually thousands of people at the same time and from all around the world. The social vividness concept is current only supported by broad macro imagery of the site particular product category at best and too often only through few static photographs.

Interactivity is from a deterministic perspective defined as the susceptibility and responsiveness of computer-mediated environments to user control (Ariely 2000; Klein 2003; Steur 1992). In order for the user of computer-mediated communications to feel a sense of interactivity, the speed of the feedback must approach instantaneity; in general, the more vivid the medium, the slower the speed of interaction (Shih 1998). Opportunity for enhanced interactivity, regardless of realization, may yield perceptions of greater navigational ease and enhance pleasure derived from online experiences (Childers et al. 2001). A balance must be then found to ensure vividness and interactivity. In addition, users are located in space both real and virtual. Telepresence can be used to describe the extent to which consumers feel their existence in the virtual space (Shih 1998). Studies in virtual reality have experimentally demonstrated that there is a strong positive correlation between the sensation of telepresence and the presence of both visual and auditory scores (Hendrix and Barfield 1996; Slater, Martin, and Steed 1994). In general, the more users are able to interact with the medium and through the medium, the more likely they will feel a sense of telepresence (Shih 1998). Basic social interactivity has also been linked to the presence or absence of cues movement on screen, changes and artifact that attract attention , input possibilities to modify, stop some of the offered interactions (re-design options). User center design also includes direct social inclusion of a greater variety of users with disabilities (Font size, color change, sound level), help functions directly related to skill level and access type and options such as language.

From an advance 'in practice' perspective social interactivity is represented through the extent in which user are situated and become truly part of the virtual environment. The roles of users online are multifaceted. The usual three level of interactivity including non-interactive, reactive features and truly interactive cues that are mainly related to previous visit knowledge and experience cues offered by e-tailers. Personalization levels and access to past information with or without full control become relevant. Interaction can be active by participating or entering a conversation or passive by reflecting on others comments and debates. The corner stone of this concept is the possibilities or not to effectively build a shopping memory of experiences and influence at a macro level the site development and the development of a shared online cultural capital.

Social symbolism
Symbolism and signs are often critical to the success of shopping experiences. Signs can be helpful in different ways. They can help for example to ease the navigation, make the online surfer confident about the security and the privacy. In a study of e-satisfaction, (Szymanski and Hise 2000) found that convenience, site design and financial security are dominant factors in determining consumer satisfaction. Users tend to ignore irrelevant or difficult to understand information hence prefer familiar environments that are easily navigated, memorized, and comprehended (Park, Iyer, and Smith 1989; Park and Hastak 1994). The more the navigation and the pages view are fluid, the less price sensitive the visitors should become. Certification and rating services, such as eTrust, Verisign and Bizrate, use graphic brand marks to indicate their stamp of approval on certified sites (Sautter, Hyman, and Lukosius 2004) to diminish user resistance.

Social symbolism goes beyond a prescriptive set of categories that are reassuring and guiding users. The three main functions of symbolism that are constitution of the social fabric, conservation of appropriate norms and standards and transformation both between culture and as a dynamic setting mechanisms are just emerging online. These need to be complemented by the three accepted form of symbolism namely symbolic representing, symbolic affecting and symbolic recollecting. In our case consumption of shopping symbolism has an impact on self perception and is an active component of user's modern lifestyle development. Social symbolism as a whole represents an accumulation of social capital, from already existing stock. From a pragmatic perspective social symbolism is part of the social process creation hence requiring investment in co-creation of meanings by all stakeholders. This goes from the creation of appropriate 'posture' or general behavior to censorship of sites' atmospherics. Symbols are by no mean autonomous but manipulate the thinking and comprehension as instruments of social relations. They are greatly influenced by taste, preferences and self relativism. Under these conditions the acquisition and manner of access (education) becomes relevant. Theory on consumer orientation, pre-disposition factors (credit card, broadband), appreciation of realistic expectations, legitimization of the social function of e-shopping, apprehension of conspicuous consumption methods become pertinent. From a practical perspective, colors' symbolism has a great influence in the overall graphic design and content design, common connotations are associated to specific colors but these meanings are not necessarily homogeneous across cultures. These only depict the tip of the iceberg regarding the emergence of visual culture. Visual culture especially in our context "is just not another aspect of everyday life, but *is* everyday life" (Mirzoeff 1998, p.3). In societies prone to information overload, it is now a modern tendency to visualize existence including sensual immediacy and importance of impact at first sight (Bryson, Holly, and Moxey 1994; Jenks 1995). The impact has been proven and is illustrated in many areas such as medicine with

visualization of within the body, military and smart bomb 'green image' technology or charity appeal portraying children in famine areas. It has now been established that visual culture is often at the center in producing, shaping and developing meanings, establishing and maintaining aesthetics values, gender stereotypes and power relations within and between cultures (Rogoff 1998). Online human experience and social capital are now more visual and visualized than ever before. We challenge as many have done before the hegemony of textual and linguistic models as the basis of most web content analysis. Social symbolism should be the decisive tool to assess the renewal or transformation of social relations. We argue for a relativist model of cultural analysis where set, fixed standards of meaning are re-contextualized towards a dynamic continuous model of (re) production of meanings appropriate to decode the online shopping experience. An example is highlighted in the portrayal of political, historical reconciliation event through the official articulation of historical commemoration often associated with guilt and compulsory public memory through visual moments and artifact. The neo-European normative culture of reference should in an online global system not supersede 'other' cultures. Visual polycentrism, as '*not on a spatial or primary point of origins or on a finite list of centers but rather on a systematic principle of differentiation, relationality and linkage*' (Shohat and Stam 1998), should be promoted rather than homogenous standardization and one-size-fit-all model. Web designers seem to fail in making the difference between the signifier, that which is seen, and the signified, that which is meant.

We also content that the field of e-atmospherics needs to widen its horizon beyond visual culture. Another interesting lens could be to investigate user frustration and discomfort (Harrington 2005). Many of the factors derived from rational emotive behavior therapy (Ellis 1979; Ellis 1979.) are indeed grounded in user wider social capital stock. This scale includes factors such as discomfort intolerance, entitlement, emotional intolerance, achievement, gratification and fairness. Another perspective could be to look in more detail at impulse buying driving factors (Parboteeah 2005). Acceptance or rejection of the practice is grounded in the possible social justification and legitimization of such often irrational and unconscious behavior (Rook and Fisher 1995). Scales include social factors such as perceive value understanding, mood (negative and positive), trust, flattery, self image and general view on impulsivity. Another social field under utilized will be to examine deeper the impact of consumer orientation in perceiving and engaging with atmospherics types (Kendall and Sproles 1990). These studies used concepts such as perfectionism/high quality, price value, novelty fashion, recreational, impulsiveness, confusion from over choice and habitual and brand loyal consciousness. Yet again the emerging field of anti-choice (Hogg 1998), anti constellation and boycott should also lead to a better understanding of deeper motivation in engaging or not with a channel and its attraction triggers' atmospherics.

Methodology

In this exploratory study only two aspects of social atmospherics were selected to be reviewed. As an emerging research area, a range of websites were selected following specific characteristics. As described in Table 2, basic marketing segmentation criteria were used to select site categories. The first category includes 'food' providers as an illustration of staple good that requires regular re-purchase and visit. Products tend to be spoiled easily and in general require a certain feel and touch not available online. In addition, strong preferences inherited from practice seem to shape the shopping process offline. We content, in that case that e-social capital and practices are even more crucial to sustain consumers' interest. The

second site category represents the archetype e-product including books, music and their digital equivalent. Here the channel seems to be particularly tailored and require only minimum skills adaptation from consumers. In addition, as opposed to the first category, these products are often for individual consumption rather than involving the full household. The third category represents an example of high involvement product where the channel should again require extra effort to convince consumers. Cosmetics were chosen as they are also directed towards a group that is often deemed as a minority online (women). While the internet do not seem to have a gender, individual site, through their visualization of lifestyle, discourse and tone often have or should/could have one. The fourth category represents a new popular form of service e-travel arrangement. While these services were not originally predicted to have great success, it has proven to be engaged with by the masses. The issue of demographic segmentation seems particularly acute with a very diverse audience including many different requirements (old, young, black, white). The fifth category represents a service that, contrary to fourth, requires further skills and trust in the channel and is often reserved to more mature users. Banking services are indeed very private and personal. Again, old social practices such as legislation are having a greater impact and could be/ should be expected to be strongly present as a differentiation strategy. In addition, growth strategies aimed at low skill low/new e-user need to be implemented. Consumers do not migrate online just because they are told by their bank manager! The last category represents a service where the e-tailer is present in both countries offering very similar services but where inherited understanding of the sector (insurance) varies tremendously between a mature market and an emerging one. The mono brand site followed the same reasoning when available in the country. In the case of cosmetics it was not possible to find a mono-brand web site in Turkey due to the lack of long standing national cosmetic industry. In addition, it was concluded after communication with industry experts that banking and insurance sectors do not warrant the separation between the mono and multi-brand web sites all being mono.

Table 2: Web Site Selected As Illustration Of Social E-Atmospherics Varying Impact

e-Business	FRANCE	TURKEY
Staple good (i.e., e-grocery)	www.ooshop.com www.fauchon.fr	www.kangurum.com.tr www.gulluoglubaklava.com.tr
Bread & Butter of Internet (i.e., Book/CD)	www.amazon.fr www.laffont.fr	www.ideefixe.com www.iskulturyayinlari.com.tr
High involvement product (i.e., cosmetics)	www.armenza.com www.yves-rocher.fr	www.tekinacar.com.tr
Low service involvement product (i.e., travel agent)	www.voyages-sncf.com www.clubmed.fr	www.tatil.com www.saklikoy.com.tr
High service involvement product (i.e., bank)	www.ingdirect.fr	www.garanti.com.tr
Available in both countries	www.axa.fr	www.axaoyak.com.tr

Purposeful sampling was used in this study to reflect the chosen segmentation and variety sought. For the purpose of this study, we chose to analyze only the homepages of the web sites as it gives the first impression which is the most important (Ho and Wu 1999). Our research remained purely qualitative and involved the judgment of the three authors (2 French male and one Turkish female all living in Turkey for a substantial amount of time) as well as communication with industry experts in both countries.

For the analysis we preferred to use the traditional manual coding in that having the data coded by a computer programme did not fit our methodological strategy at the outset of the study. In an attempt to discover the initial proposition that would guide subsequent fieldwork, we printed and tested each web site landing page facilities several times and tried to code the data under general categories. It was important to construct a 'case record' (Stenhouse 1980) for each individual site. We aimed to get an in-depth understanding of social aspect of services provided, and for this purpose researchers needed to get familiar with each case. In this endeavour, the methodology of 'case study' research, as understood in educational research (Stake 1995) was a heuristic tool that made possible our immersion in each site. After the detailed analysis 'between case' (Huberman and Miles 1994), we started the thematic analysis 'within cases' using 'framework analysis' and 'grounded theory'. Secondly, we identified the key issues in the data (our own observations) and tried to compare them with more abstract concepts in the literature in order to construct a final thematic framework for analysis. Thirdly, we started the indexing process in which the thematic framework was systematically applied to the data. We constructed a table for each category and classify the data. Fourthly, we built a picture of the data as a whole, and finally did the mapping and interpretation. Once all the data was coded we made the appropriate links and interpretation. The final analysis followed procedures of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Using the general categories and subcategories assigned to the data we tried to make the best possible connections to interpret the data as a whole and produce the most acceptable account.

Results and discussion

Tables 3 & 4 summarize the exploratory content analysis of the landing pages for French and Turkish mono and multiband websites. The aims are two folds. On the one hand to get a snap shot comparison between mono and multiband. The second function aims at developing new variables that will illustrate better the concept of social symbolism. As can be seen many traditional variables such as ability to optimize configuration, ability to add the website to favorite via a link etc (see Mc Kinney 2004) were disregarded as not appropriate in the our context. In addition variables such as color, text, and graphic were not reported in the table as these variables require more than a yes/no answer. However, new variables such as lifestyle, national heritage, celebrity/brand endorsement, sub culture cues were introduced.

Only the highest levels of abstractions are presented. The first lens applied to our three social factors (vividness, symbolism and interactivity) was between mono-brand and multi-brand. First of all, we scanned the main marketing messages that multi-brand landing page contains. The multiband sites yielded a first message regarding the importance of prices. This was closely followed by an impression of information/category overload. In other words, sites made for an average mass audience, which have fully commoditized the overall experience. Purchase performance, process efficiency (understood here as convenience) and optimization (time saving) seem to be the main goals. As seen in Table 3 and Table 4 most of the external and internal variables reported in Table 1 are indeed present. This mechanical approach did not transmit any social oriented cues towards a business model that encompasses loyalty, re-purchase, or re-visit as center concept, but instead presented a 'quick' sales orientation. The experience during visit was designed to be simple, coherent, convenient and utilitarian. The landing pages we analyzed were mainly text based, where visual iconic messages had been used seldom. Photographs were only providing basic representation of products/services without any aesthetic or artistic agenda. They were often representation of macro categories, e.g., a tomato photo, hence were not accompanied by descriptive of any type. These sites

seemed also to lack any referent to historical, cultural, social, artistic, aesthetic, political, religious, gender, location, place, code, norms, and standards beyond basic commercial necessities. In the case of tomato, origin, type, shape and taste could be provided transforming it into a premium product rather than a commodity. In other words, cues related to lifestyle seemed to have been ignored and related profit had been forgiven. A one model fits all, which was based on Western cultural and technical efficiency seemed to have emerged. This model was reinforced by the search engine algorithm that value number of visit over any qualitative, personal, and art variables. Following this logic most of the visitors may never be enticed to visit certain pages of the site (e.g. policy).

Looking at social vividness and interactivity in particular, minor representations vary from specific public temporal events (Christmas, academic calendar, Easter, sports events) to items that other visitors are currently viewing. Other social sharing elements have been found to include provision of services targeting new visitors (i.e., introduction to the site), historical background, news/announcements and newsletter subscription. However, none of the samples we analyzed included all of the social vividness and interactivity characteristics at once. A specific effort had to be made for identifying any of these factors as they were not designed to be prominent feature of the site. Social symbolism in multi-brand web sites was only representing macro societal standards respecting what is politically corrects (language, font, overall layout). No actual life-style imaginary beyond traditional family, neither culture specific cues nor from ICT global cultural capital or from location based inherited capitals, have been identified. Only color scheme can be said to respect the appropriate cultural perceptions, by using neutral colors or the common connotation.

Secondly, analyzing mono brand sites, it is evident that inherited social capital cultural acquisition and consumption of meaning mainly through visual means was center to the experience. Few key products were on display, in view of creating the right attention and atmosphere for enjoying the consumption of the site as much as the products and services on offer. In these experience based sites, price did not appear on the landing page. Products and services were treated as part of a lifestyle building process. They were presented as individual, unique, away from the instant disposable mass-produced competition. The landing pages had been found to be not cluttered and included fewer amount of more specific information. In addition, each information cue was designed to reinforce the overall message of quality in the given product category. While allowing each user its own decoding and personal interpretation of meaning, these sites provided us with the stereotypical, expected visual concepts as well as details depending on the users' knowledge of the particular category. Sound and little introduction as a small video animation were also present. The sites were aiming at encouraging the imagery of the product through further thinking from users, encouraged action and navigation as positive exploration rather than convenience searching and try to relate to the user based on a long term relationship and exchange rather than quick sale.

Table 3: Exploratory Content Analysis of French mono/multi-brand web site sample

	FRANCE									
External variables	ooshop.com	fauchon.fr	amazon.fr	laffont.fr	armenza.com	yves-rocher.fr	voyages-sncf.com	clubmed.fr	ingdirect.fr	axa.fr
Ability to subscribe to email promotions/mailing list	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Access to partners/alliances	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Availability of security and privacy information	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Store locator/finder, if company has stores	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes
Site map	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Customer service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Departments/brand listings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Information on return	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special offers/coupons	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Loyalty program	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Ability to earn money via the use of the website	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Internal variables										
Fits one page, no need to scroll down	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Shop by brand name	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A
Detailed description of product	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Listing of product best-sellers	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	No
Listing of new products	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Listing of products to be discovered	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Ability to choose the best service according to the needs of the customer	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Space for professionals	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Ambiance factors and design variables										
Dynamic movement/Small clip	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall allocation of space; Clutter:No/ Non-clutter:Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Sound	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Price(s) of merchandise or service	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Ability to pay by different means	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	N/A
Express checkout	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	N/A
Ability to open an account	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gift suggestions and/or gift registry	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Social dimension										
Newsgroup	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Chat	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
E-mail	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FAQ	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Avatars	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
National Symbols	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Cultural Heritage	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Language options	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Sub-culture cues	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lifestyle	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Endorsement	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Prize Winning Competition	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Private Club (gold/platinum)	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
…										
…										

Table 4: Exploratory Content Analysis of Turkish mono/multi-brand web site sample

External variables	kangurum.com.tr	gulluoglubaklava.com.tr	ideefixe.com	iskulturyayinlari.com.tr	tekinacar.com.tr	tatil.com	saklikoy.com.tr	garanti.com.tr	axaoyak.com.tr
Ability to subscribe to email promotions/mailing list	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Access to partners/alliances	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes
Availability of security and privacy information	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Store locator/finder, if company has stores	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A	No	Yes	No
Site map	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Customer service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Departments/brand listings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Information on return	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	N/A	No
Special offers/coupons	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Loyalty program	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Ability to earn money thanks to the use of the website	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No
Internal variables									
Fits one page, no need to scroll down	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Shop by brand name	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	Yes
Detailed description of product	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Listing of product best-sellers	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Listing of new products	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Listing of products to be discovered	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Ability to choose the best service according to the needs of the customer	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Space for professionals	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ambiance factors and design variables									
Dynamic movement/Small clip	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overall allocation of space; Clutter:No/ Non-clutter:Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Sound	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Price(s) of merchandise or service	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Ability to pay by different means	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Express checkout	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Ability to open an account	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Gift suggestions and/or gift registry	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Social dimension									
Newsgroup	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Chat	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
E-mail	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
FAQ	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Avatars	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
National Symbols	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Cultural Heritage	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Language options	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sub-culture cues	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lifestyle	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Endorsement	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Prize Winning Competition	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Private Club (gold/platinum)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
…									
…									

Mono-brand sites seemed to use art and aesthetic, taking a certain risk to could alienate certain users. Attention to details and specific product related cues aimed at advanced users or loyal users were present. Time seem to be slowed down by a clearer layout that do not encourage the sale process only. Intellectual ownership of many products or services were also rightfully linked to the original author/creator. A certain level of indirect personalization and relation was then established. Key differentiation strategy was created against immediate competition as well as mass warehouse e-tailers. While not creating a counter culture, they are in fact developing an inclusive online social cultural capital, which was co-created by all stakeholders. This in turn allows an organic progression of the channel engagement that should lead to sustainable growth and profit while limiting me-too sites and price war. What is today too often perceived as elitist is in fact the foundation of tomorrow's mass online culture.

Conclusion:

Currently on the mainly deterministic scale stated in Table 1, very few of the so called social dimensions seemed to be present on the landing page. Socialization and sociality go beyond ticking boxes. An intangible atmosphere mainly linked to visual aesthetic and the subtle use of language and details attached to certain norms, standards, value and beliefs need to be highlighted and composed like music to form meanings that are recognized by users. User training and education to identify such cues remain crucial yet underrepresented by most marketers' strategies. A certain sustainable expertise and passion for products/services seemed to be communicated by mono-brand sites. The design of e-atmospherics combined, with textual, linguistic and visual passion tend to create and re-create the illusion of a virtual journey at each visit. As described in Figure 1 a new global approach to web site content analysis based on social symbolism need to emerge to complete the current methods. As new e-cultural capital is created, the meanings of e-consumption are changing for the various user groups. While some multi brand sites have achieved success through volume they only represent a small amount of sites (albeit often the most well known brands). Users are however often becoming with repeat usage of the medium more educated about what to expect and more demanding regarding the overall experience. Not all online consumptions require a quick sale process only. For the first time in history, the global instant and permanent access to the Internet has come to create unique problems to e-tailers beyond their traditional business expertise. The channel now requires web sites to consider culture in a dynamic setting both locally and globally.

E-tailers need to put in place mechanisms that will allow the development of a certain level of e-social cultural capital not to be elitist or for the masses only. This in turn will allow a virtuous circle to develop whereby users feel integrated and part of emerging communities rendering possible the development of loyalty programs and allowing appropriate growth of the channel. While these mono-brand web sites could be perceived by average user as elitist, we contend that main reasons for such opinions may be due to lack of experience and encouragement towards appreciating web sites as fully parts of social online capital building. Offline users seem to attach great importance to where they shop; a similar trend should apply online. This is indeed encouraged by the ease of access to comparison search engine and the wide array of retailers available for any given products. It seems that the meaning of e-competition should also be seen through the lens of social symbolism as a filter between providers. Cultural polycentrism becomes an important possible differentiating variable. Cultural polycentrism is defined as a principle of organization around several political, social

trends with an explicit effort made towards openness to other cultures, opinions and ways of life. We contend that landing page should explicitly reflect intercultural actions and correlations that are interpreted not only with the background of their creator own cultural experiences, but where the independence of other cultures and sub-culture are recognized and appreciated and when cultural values are relativized and seen in the whole context.
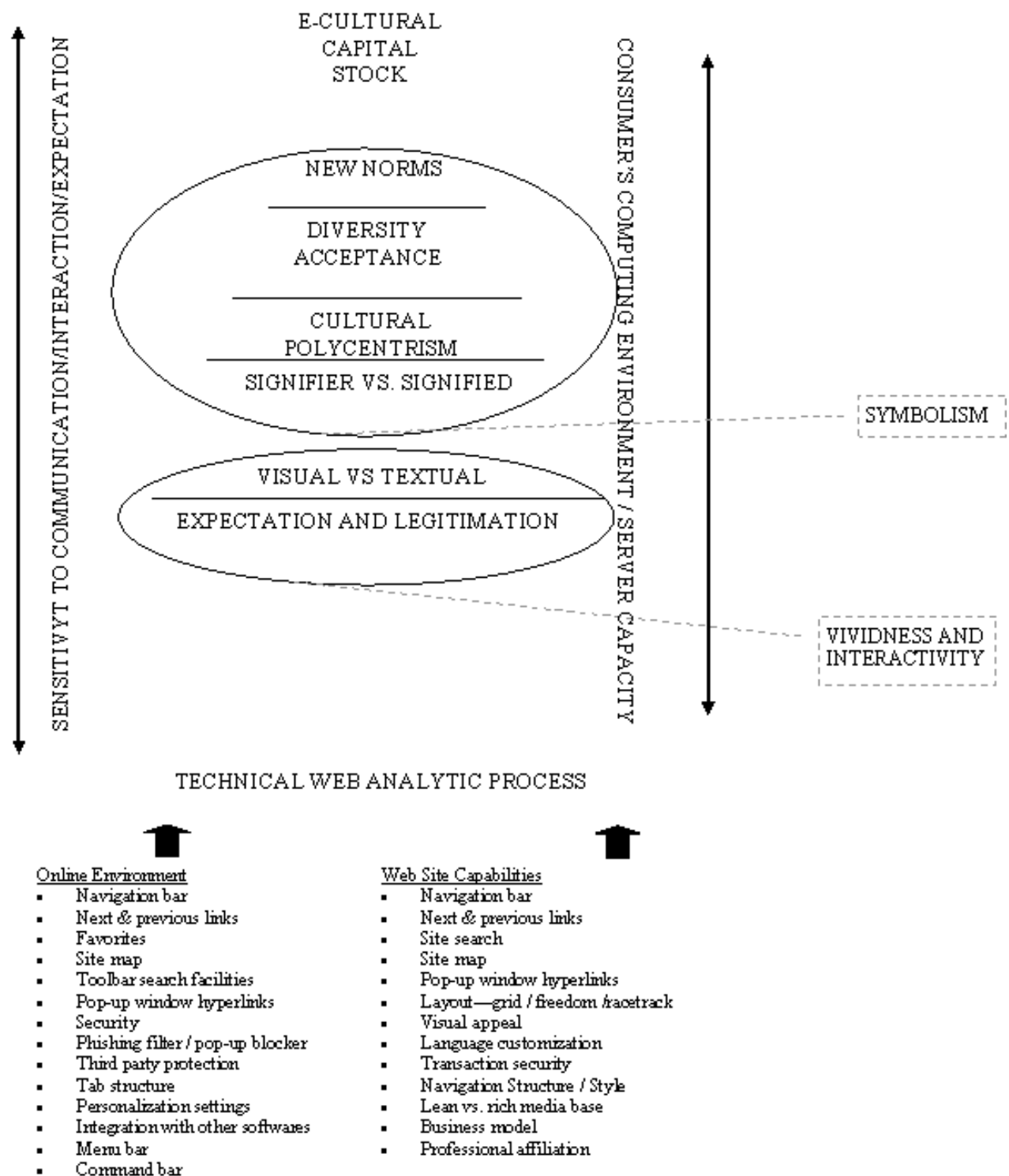
Following the line of though although differences between France and Turkey may have looked interesting from a theoretical perspective, it seems that the Internet with its leap frogging of technological cycle has created a truly democratic social capital creation environment. While products/services remained different, i.e., insurance and banking sector, it was not due to technological reasons but market needs and legislations. For example, the cultural capital stock within the society allowing for awareness, understanding or acceptance of specific services is only emerging for some industries. In addition, some web sites such as www.garantibank.com.tr in Turkey have won more awards than many. This recognized the ability for any site in Turkey to be better or as good as any site at least from a classical web content analysis perspective. Yet, the social symbolism differences are still minimally represented also both Turkey and France have a strong nationalist fiber inbuilt within the general societal practices (traditional/modern/religious). In addition, while the definition of an *'ICT's lifestyle'* is still ongoing for many users in Turkey and is reflected by a certain digital divide in France, we expect the current lack of mono-brand sites in certain categories will be addressed in the future with the emergence of strong national mono-brand e-tailers.

Different types of products and services should lead to different atmospherics being presented. Yet little evidence are present using classical web analytic that this tool is really appropriate for developing a sustainable strategy in terms of differentiation, positioning and targeting of specific audiences. This deterministic approach to technology often forgets that users are located within a specific social environment that greatly influences the outcome of transactions.

While encouragement of global e-commerce standards has lead to a greater trust and engagement with the channel, the synergies and efficiency of the channel will only be realized fully if the minutia of day to day social practices and capital are taken into account in the process. We argue that a new generation of website needs to be design where marketers truly leverage the opportunities and challenges of sustainable differentiation through advanced relevant social cues display.

Figure 1: Unfolding Online Social Cultural Capital in Practice

E-CULTURAL
CAPITAL
STOCK

SENSITIVYT TO COMMUNICATION/INTERACTION/EXPECTATION

CONSUMER'S COMPUTING ENVIRONMENT / SERVER CAPACITY

NEW NORMS

DIVERSITY
ACCEPTANCE

CULTURAL
POLYCENTRISM

SIGNIFIER VS. SIGNIFIED

VISUAL VS TEXTUAL

EXPECTATION AND LEGITIMATION

SYMBOLISM

VIVIDNESS AND
INTERACTIVITY

TECHNICAL WEB ANALYTIC PROCESS

Online Environment
- Navigation bar
- Next & previous links
- Favorites
- Site map
- Toolbar search facilities
- Pop-up window hyperlinks
- Security
- Phishing filter / pop-up blocker
- Third party protection
- Tab structure
- Personalization settings
- Integration with other softwares
- Menu bar
- Command bar

Web Site Capabilities
- Navigation bar
- Next & previous links
- Site search
- Site map
- Pop-up window hyperlinks
- Layout—grid / freedom /racetrack
- Visual appeal
- Language customization
- Transaction security
- Navigation Structure / Style
- Lean vs. rich media base
- Business model
- Professional affiliation

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