

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TOP 1000 TURKISH COMPANY WEB SITES: MARKETING MIX PRACTICES

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—Abstract —

The usage of the Internet has offered new advanced business transactions and models for the world economy. Insufficient utilization of Web sites for marketing mix strategies in a developing country like Turkey, still depicts the need for further and detailed analyses to guide the companies and institutions for their efforts to improve marketing activities through the new medium which is becoming an inevitable necessity for the new business models in the twenty first century. The aim of the study is to analyze the practices of marketing mix tools on Turkish web sites of the top 1000 companies presented in the survey reports by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ICI) 2010. This study reveals that the use of Internet in marketing mix strategies is inadequate and some companies do not utilize all opportunities due to the lack of effective corporate web sites.

Key Words: *Marketing Mix, Content Analysis, Web Sites*

JEL Classification: M31

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet presents a fundamentally different environment for international marketing and new paradigms will have to be developed to take account of internationalization processes in an electronic age. This will require the launch of a major new research initiative to improve our understanding of Internet-enabled international marketing.

Quelch and Klein (1996) argue that the Internet will revolutionize the dynamics of international commerce. The most important development, in this respect, has been the explosion of international marketing activity on the Internet and the associated emergence of the global information superhighway (Hamill, 1997: 300).

2. THE INTERNET AND THE MARKETING MIX

The Internet as a marketing medium has been rapidly gaining importance as companies try to attract the target customers through their corporate web sites and gain competitive advantage in recent years. In developing countries, such as Turkey, traditional marketing mix elements are still used. It seems quite reasonable that, Turkish companies will be enforced to use the web tool to gain competitive advantage in global markets, integrated with the traditional marketing tools.

2.1. The Internet Usage Profile of Turkish Companies

The survey report on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) made by Turkish Statistical Institute notes that by January 2010, 90.9% of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed used the Internet. This rate was 98.4% of enterprises with 250 or more employees, while enterprises with 50-249 employees was 96.9% and enterprises with 10-49 employees was 89.7%. 88.8% of enterprises had Internet access by January 2009. Proportion of the enterprises that use computer increased from 90.7% in 2009 to 92.3% in 2010. By January 2010, 90.9% of enterprises used broadband connection to access the Internet. DSL (ADSL, etc.) was most widely-used broadband connection type with 87.3% among all enterprises. 78.1% of enterprises used the Internet for conducting banking and financial services and 28.3% of that for training and education in January 2010. By January 2010, 57.8% of enterprises with Internet access had website. 78.4% of enterprises that have websites provided access to their product catalogues and

price lists on their web sites, 33.5% of that provided a privacy policy statement, a privacy seal or certification related to website safety and 28.1% of that presented advertisement of open job positions or online job application on their websites in January 2010. According to the survey results 15.0% of enterprises sent orders via computer networks while 8.4% of enterprises received orders via computer networks in 2009. 10.1% of enterprises uses digital signature and 21.9% of enterprises has ICT security policy in January 2010 (TUIK, 2011).

According to the new Turkish Commercial Code (TCC) that will be in force after mid 2012 every capital stock company has been obligated to create a website, and if the company already has a website, to allocate a part thereof for information society services. All data that is relevant to the company and in which shareholders, minorities, creditors and stakeholders have interest, documents and notices regarding General Assembly Meetings, financial statements and merger and division balance sheets, audit reports, valuation reports, offers for exercising pre-emptive right, announcements related to liquidation, announcements related to action for cancellation and the other similar information should be published on the website.

2.2. The Role of Internet in Reshaping of Marketing Mix

In 1960, Jerome McCarthy introduced the marketing mix - widely referred as the 4 Ps of Product, Price, Place and Promotion. Until now, it still plays an important role in formulating and implementing marketing strategy. It is useful to reduce all the variables in the marketing mix to four basic ones (Perreault et. al., 2011: 35-37). Kent (1986) refers to the Four Ps of the marketing mix as “the holy quadruplet...of the marketing faith...written in tablets of stone”. According to Grönroos (1994) marketing in practice has to a large extent been turned into managing this toolbox.

According to Heinen (1996) the Internet will be more than simply a marketplace for conducting transactions; it is evolving into a new medium for communicating and interacting with customers and thus will affect the roles that marketing professionals play in their businesses. Thus, managers face two critical challenges: first, to recognize the full potential of the marketspace and to choose the best means to make money in this new arena (Rayport et. al., 1994: 145). Conventional marketing mix is widely expected to simultaneously undergo revisions and modifications in order to enable e-marketers to formulate more effective strategies and plan more efficient tactics under circumstances posed in the Internet (Yazdanifard et. al., 2009: 527).

Kotler and Keller (2006) define a product as anything that can be offered to a market to satisfy a want or need. Products that are marketed include physical goods, services, experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organizations, information, and ideas. The Internet has several implications on the product aspect of the mix i.e. varying the core product, options for changing the extended products, conducting research online, velocity of new product development and velocity of new product diffusion (Chaffey *et al.* 2006: 217-222). Products, therefore, become more and more individually tailored to the customers' needs. Some pure-play (online only) retailers offer products which are not available through alternative outlets; thus successes have been claimed for a variety of different types of product, both physical goods (e.g. books, CDs, wine, etc.) and services (e.g. direct banking, insurance, travel, etc.). Others, such as supermarkets, offer Internet shopping (the product) which embraces individual grocery items, all of which are product offerings in their own right (Harridge-March, 2004: 302).

Price is the most flexible element compared to other three elements of the marketing mix, since it can be changed quickly to adapt to the market's demand. Till the Internet is used for communication and promotional activities, pricing does not seem to be a major problem. But as soon as marketers start thinking of selling through the Internet, they have to determine the answers to a number of questions. The most critical of these questions is whether they should retain the same price as in the physical world or to increase or decrease, which may to a certain extent, depends on the change in the offering also (Verma *et al.* 2003: 137). For the price aspect of the mix, increased price transparency and its implications on differential pricing, downward pressure on price (including commoditisation), new pricing approaches (including dynamic pricing and auctions) and alternative pricing structure or policies should be considered (Chaffey *et al.* 2006: 231- 237).

The place element of the marketing mix refers to how the product is distributed to customers. Typically, for offline channels, the aim of place is to maximise the reach of distribution to achieve widespread availability of products while minimising the costs of inventory, transport and storage. In an online context, thanks to ease of navigating from one site to another through the humble hyperlink, the scope of 'Place' is less clear (Chaffey *et al.* 2006: 231- 237). Allen and Fjermestad (2001) argue that due to the size of its marketplace, the Internet will have the most profound effect on place in the marketing mix. E-commerce puts the purchase decision where a connection to the Internet exists. One of the

biggest implications for marketing theory and practice is the shift from a non virtual market-place to a market-space (Lockett and Blackman, 2001: 49).

Promotion is communicating information between the seller and potential buyer or others in the channel to influence attitudes and behaviours (Perreault et. al., 2011: 36). Promotion has been replaced with online communication. This mix is vividly not comprehensive, adequate and vigour enough for planning Internet marketing (Yazdanifard et. al., 2009: 531). The Internet can be used to review new ways of applying each of elements of communications mix such as advertising, sales promotions, public relations and direct marketing; assess how the Internet can be used at different stages of the buying process; and assist in different stages of customers relationship management from customer acquisition to retention (Chaffey, 2006: 243 - 245).

3. THE STUDY

The study aims to analyze the practices of marketing mix tools on Turkish web sites of the top 1000 companies presented in the survey reports by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ICI) 2010. The other aim is to compare the web sites of top 1000 companies according to the major devisions within the context of International Standard Industrial Classification of all economic activities (ISIC , Rev.2). The companies from various industries are ranked depending on their net production-based sales. Majority of the companies (98.5 %) are private-owned. The gross value of production prices generated by first top 500 and second top 500 companies comprises consecutively 8.6 % and 0.9 % of GDP in 2009. The classifications of the top 1000 companies are represented in Table 1. Due to the lack of web sites and loading problems, particularly in case of a site being under construction, totally 781 company web sites are analyzed.

Table 1: Classification of Top 1000 Companies by ISIC, Rev.2

	N	Valid N	No web sites/access problems %
Mining and Quarrying	25	20	2.6
Manufacture of Food, Beverages and Tobacco	209	160	20.5
Textile, Wearing Apparel and Leather Industries	170	131	16.8
Manufacture of Wood and Wood Products	25	23	2.9
Manufacture of Paper and Paper Products; Printing and Publishing	35	29	3.7
Manufacture of Chemicals and Chemical Petroleum, Coal, Rubber and Plastic Products	145	108	13.8

Manufacture of Non-Metallic Mineral Products	74	55	7.0
Basic Metal Industries	111	91	11.7
Manufacture of Fabricated Metal Products, Machinery and Equipment, Professional and Scientific Measuring and Controlling Equipment	103	82	10.5
Manufacture of Transport Equipment	75	60	7.7
Other Manufacturing Industries	8	6	0.8
Manufacture of Electricity	20	16	2.0
Total	1000	781	100

In the study, content analysis is used to analyze Turkish web sites of the top 1000 companies presented in the survey reports by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ICI) 2010. Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use in order to provide new insights and increase a researcher's understanding of a particular phenomena (Krippendorff, 2004:18) Within this context, a coding sheet was developed. It consists of 4 broad categories of marketing mix elements shown in Table 2.

Table 2 : Content Examined in Top 1000 Company Web Site

Content	Categories
Product	Product Categories, Product Specifications, Product Photos, Product Campaign, Information About Product Guarantee, Information About Product Insurance, Product Catalogue, Information About The Company's Other Brands, Products Awards, Information About New Product, Order Form
Price	Price List, Price List in Foreign Currency, Payment Alternatives, Price Campaign, Spot Price Campaign, Partner Financial Institutions (banks etc.)
Place	Access For Dealers, B2B Connect, Branch Office, Distributers, Distribution Points
Promotion	Social Responsibility Projects, Sponsorship Activities, Participatin in Fairs and Exhibitions, T Ads, Video, Catalogue, News, Media Release, Games, Press Bulletins, Sales Campaign, Photo Gallery, Contest, Gift Items, Joint Sales Campaign, FAQ, References.

The coding instrument is originally prepared in Turkish and then translated into English. The quality of the translation is examined by two native speaker academicians. In the study university students were hired as coder and trained about the definitions of the variables in three sessions. Finally, the coders were asked to determine the presence of the variables in top 1000 companies. The coding process is ended in November 2010. The authors have identified components using the previous code sheets which are tested for instrument

reliability (Liu et. al, 1997; Ghose, Wenyu, 1998; Perry, Bodkin, 2000; Cheung ve Haung, 2002; Yeung, Lu, 2004; Usta, 2007; Virtsonis Harridge-March, 2008).

4. RESULTS

The results will be discussed in two parts. Statistics related to each marketing mix elements are presented and followed by the overall Web site characteristics of selected sectors which represent the majority of the companies in the reports (i.e. Manufacture of Food, Beverages (160 companies), Textile, Wearing Apparel and Leather sectors (131 companies), Manufacture of Chemicals and Chemical Petroleum, Coal, Rubber and Plastic Products (108 companies), Basic Metal sectors (91 companies), Manufacture of Fabricated Metal Products, Machinery and Equipment, Professional and Scientific Measuring and Controlling Equipment (82 companies)).

The results are summarized below and detailed analyses within each marketing mix elements are presented in Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6. In Table 3, 11 components are included in product practices. Among the websites of the firms, 74.3 % provide information about product categories and 69% give product specifications and 68.5 % displays products photos.

Table 3 : Findings Related To Product Practices

	Yes	No	Yes Percentage To Total
Product Categories	580	132	74.3
Product Specifications	539	189	69
Product Photos	535	183	68.5
Product Catalogue	396	299	50.7
Information About The Company's Other Brands	228	487	29.2
Products Awards	212	529	27.1
Information About New Product	193	520	24.7
Information About Product Guarantee	186	499	23.8
Product Campaign	94	654	12
Information About Product Insurance (Transportation)	93	622	11.9
Order Form	74	693	9.5

In Table 4, the price practices on firm websites are shown with following percentages in each category where information about price list has the highest percentage with 11.9.

Table 4 : Findings Related To Price Practices

	Yes	No	Yes Percentage To Total
Price List	93	682	11.9
Partner Financial Institutions (Banks, etc.)	57	709	7.3
Payment Alternatives	56	716	7.2
Price Campaign	54	717	6.9
Price List in Foreign Currency	35	743	4.5
Spot Price Campaign	15	760	1.9

The last element of the marketing mix is the place practices where branch office has the highest percentage with 46.6%.

Table 5 : Findings Related To Place Practices

	Yes	No	Yes Percentage To Total
Branch Offices	364	366	46.6
Distribution Points	209	498	26.8
Access For Dealers	144	619	18.4
Partner Distributors	98	645	12.5
B2B Access	79	685	10.1

Table 6 shows the promotion practices of the web sites. It's shown that majority of the companies (61.7 %) announce the news related to their operations and 44.6 % have a photo gallery application.

Table 6 : Findings Related To Promotion Practices

	Yes	No	Yes Percentage To Total
News	482	250	61.7
Photo Gallery	348	324	44.6
Promotional Catalog	307	387	39.3
Media Relations	297	443	38
Social Responsibility Projects	250	470	32
Videos	226	522	28.9
References	192	524	24.6
Participation in Fairs and Exhibitions	149	594	19
Sales Campaigns	141	584	18.1
Sponsorship Activities	130	624	16.6
FAQ	127	639	16.3
TV Ads	119	648	15.2
Contest	103	655	13.2
Press Bulletin	78	685	10
Joint Sales Campaigns	57	675	7.3
Gift Items	31	743	4
Games	21	756	2.7

Manufacture of Food, Beverages and Tobacco Sector

Majority of the companies in this sector offer their products to the final consumers through retailers. Unilever, Philsa, Coca-cola, Efes Beer, Banvit, Süttaş, Tat Canned Food, JTI Tobacco, Keskinöglü, Ülker, Pınar, Yörsan and Şölen Chocolate are some of the companies ranked in top 50 of this sector marketing thousands of various types of products in retail market. Due to the nature of this sector web practice of the companies offer more information related to marketing mix elements. Product categories (73.1 %), product photos (68.8 %) and product specifications (56.9 %) are frequently depicted. Within the price category, frequently displayed components are partner financial institutions (8.1 %), price list (7.5 %) and price campaigns (5.6 %). The reason for these low averages stem from the number of products offered for sale and different pricing strategies of the retailers. In the promotion category information about branch offices (49.4 %) and distribution points (33.7 %) are the leading components followed by the access options for the dealers (25 %). The reason for these is probably the requirement to get in touch with the intermediaries used in distribution channels. 17 components are included in the promotion category. The economic and marketing activities of the companies forming the sector enforces companies to be more consumer-oriented, thus informational and instructional videos (40 %), social responsibility projects (33.1%) and TV ads (32 %) act as the most frequently displayed components in the web sites.

Textile, Wearing Apparel and Leather Sector

Likewise the Manufacture of Food, Beverages and Tobacco Sector, this sector involves some of Turkey's most famous companies such as Sanko, Zorluteks, Yeşim Textile, Hey Textile, Merinos Carpet, Hugo-Boss, Sarar, Altınyıldız, Özdilek Textile, Tariş, Roteks and Desa Leather. Many companies in this sector are subcontractors of famous global chain stores and also among the leading exporters of Turkey. As these companies involve in global business operations, they give information related to their products. Within the product practices, product category (70.2 %), product photos (63.4 %) and product specifications (56.4 %) are frequently displayed in their web sites. Due to being subcontractors and exporters, the pricing strategies are based on negotiations among the companies. So that, the information related to the prices are insufficient. For instance, only 3.8 % of companies have price lists in various foreign currencies, 8.4 % of the companies present payment alternatives for purchases and 9.2 % of companies have price campaigns.

Branch offices (48.1 %), distribution points (26.7 %) and distributors (13 %) are presented in their web sites within the distribution category. Due to the international operations, finding new markets is supposed to be a critical strategy for these companies. Thus, within the promotion practices news (48.1%), promotional catalogue (47.3 %) and photo gallery (42 %) are mostly depicted.

Manufacture of Chemicals and Chemical Petroleum, Coal, Rubber and Plastic Sector

This sector involves mostly industrial companies such as Tüpraş, Petkim, Abdi İbrahim, Bayer, Novartis, Pfizer, Akdeniz Chemistry and Bak Packaging. B2B operations enforce these companies to display their product categories (76.9 %), product specifications (72.2 %) and product photos (70.4 %) via their web sites for their business customers. Within the price practices partner financial institutions (11.1 %), price list (9.3 %), price list in foreign currency and payment alternatives (8.3 %) constitute the leading components. Among the place activities on firm websites the leading categories are branch offices (52.8 %), distribution points (51.9) and distributors (27.8 %).

In this sector, websites provide informational news (83.3 %), press bulletins (52.3%) and photo gallery (48.1 %). The main reason for this is the dominance of B2B operations.

Basic Metal Sector

Almost none of the companies in this sector offers their products to final consumers. Ereğli Demir Çelik, İskenderun Demir Çelik, İzmir Demir Çelik, Borusan Mannesmann, Kardemir are among the leading companies in this category. In this sector, likewise Manufacture of Chemicals and Chemical Petroleum, Coal, Rubber and Plastic Sector where the dominance of B2B operations may obviously observed, companies display their product specifications (84.6 %), product categories (82.4%) and product photos (74.7 %) via their web sites for their business customers. The prominent price components on firm websites are price list (11 %), partner financial institutions (6.6 %) and price comparison (5.5%). Within the place category, information about branch offices (45.1 %), distributors (23.1 %) and B2B access (13.2 %) are the major components. Although the operations are on B2B basis, the low percentage of companies using e-business infrastructure can be revealed from the analysis. The promotion category includes information about company (62.6 %), photo gallery (46.2 %) and promotional catalogs (48.4 %) as major components.

Manufacture of Fabricated Metal Products, Machinery and Equipment, Professional and Scientific Measuring and Controlling Equipment Sector

The companies in this sector are composed of both B2B and B2C companies such as Arçelik, Vestel, Bocsh, Siemens, Indesit, Schneider, Nortel Networks Netaş, Genpower, Kumtel, Viko, Alarko Carrier, Klimasan and Norm Cıvata.

Many companies in this sector have international trade relations, partnerships and some of them are the subsidiaries of global companies. So, this situation results with high web usage for marketing. This can be clearly be seen with high percentages for the components related to product: product categories (92.7%), product specifications (91.5 %) and product photos (86.6 %). Within the price category price list (29.3 %), price campaign (13.4 %) and payment alternatives (13.4 %) constitute the leading components. Frequently displayed components in place category are information about branch offices (67.1 %), information about distributors (51.2%) and access for dealers (26.8 %). Promotion category includes information about company (75.6 %), photo gallery (63.4 %) and media relations (48.8 %).

5. CONCLUSION

In this study Turkish web sites of the top 1000 companies are examined and evaluated for the practices of marketing mix tools. The study appears as an original and comprehensive study including this kind of a wide range of companies from various sectors in Turkish economy. The development of Internet usage in business and marketing operations is becoming a vital tool for gaining competitive advantage in both domestic and global markets.

Noticable number of companies in the top 1000 list engage in international trade relations and global business. Some of the companies are joint ventures while the noticeable number of foreign companies take part in the list. It was found that, the web practices of the companies varies depending on their sectors and business operations. The companies still see the Internet and the web as means for informing their customers about their companies and products. The prices and price related components are not clearly depicted on web pages. The companies dealing with retail marketing activities tend to use the web to enhance their customer relations. The B2B oriented companies do not utilize the web effectively for their operations. The effective use of web sites should be increased as a support for the competitiveness of the companies.

The new Turkish Commercial Code that will be in force after mid 2012 and every capital stock company will be obligated to have a website, so this study is expected to provide a basis for further studies for the marketing practitioners of the companies and act as a guide for managers in designing and effectively using their web pages and Internet for their business and marketing strategies.

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