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**Online Public Relations**

# Publics and Value Systems



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## FOREWORD

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# INTRODUCTION

*“Much of the world can now use these tools, and within a decade, most of the world will be able to. Mobile Phones, which started out as personal versions of the ordinary phones, are taking on all functions necessary to become social tools — digital messaging, the ability to send messages to groups, and critically, interoperability with the internet, the premier group-forming network (in the sense of both first and best). What is likely to happen to society with the spread of ridiculously easy group-forming? The most obvious change is that we are going to get more groups, many more groups, than ever existed before. Is this a good thing? Is the explosion of new groups pursuing new promises with new tools a gain for society? Even accepting that it is painful for many existing organizations and that it produces negative effects as well as positive ones, two arguments suggest that the changes we are living through will be beneficial.”*

Clay Shirky, in *Here Comes Everybody*

We live in an age that allows us to observe two sides of same coin: a world without the Internet and a world where its use has become a daily act. We were able to observe the evolution of technology and the effect it had on the way we communicate.

We left a scenario in which access to the Internet involved the use of a desktop computer and a telephone line, to one where we can simply use a phone for the same purpose. And today, the range of terminals include game consoles, televisions, laptops and a myriad of other devices.

But the evolution of the Internet is not limited to devices that allow us to communicate and gather information. Technology has changed a number of our daily activities such as sending letters and cards or buying products and services. Even the act of reading a Newspaper has changed. A newspaper can be read on the screen of a computer, via a phone or using a handheld gaming console. The same goes for radio and television, books, photographs and several other forms multimedia content to which we have access at anytime and anywhere. By becoming the largest and most accessible source of information<sup>1</sup>, the Internet has challenged the role of journalists and of other professionals who have information as a basis for their work. This was one of the first impacts of the Internet; it set information free making it accessible

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, we use the term "information" from an empirical standpoint, as the result of a set of Data and its interpretation which in turn can be aggregated to form Content of a message (in audio, text, images, video or any multimedia combination)

without the need for intermediaries. In the past, we had to delegate the selection and distribution of information to journalists and other professionals. But times have changed and we now have access to the same sources of information and tools to disseminate that same information as we see fit.

In a second impact, the Internet has revolutionized communication by making it possible to bring a message to thousands of people with the same ease with which we communicate with family and friends. This can be done through a series of communication platforms that do not involve the large infrastructure and the heavy cost of running a newspaper, a television or a radio station (see Shirky 2008). Thus, the Internet does not only mark the end of the scarcity of information, it also marks the end of the shortage of means of communication.

This abundance of information places a challenge on the quality of that information, because there is no control over what is published on the internet, or even mechanisms that organize that information. Unlike other forms of communication such as newspapers, the Internet does not require filtering procedures to ensure minimum quality standards, leaving that task to those who access the information. Clay Shirky explains this issue as follows:

*"Mass amateurization of publishing makes mass amateurization of filtering the forced move. Filter-then-publish, whatever its advantages, rested on a scarcity of media that is a thing of the past. The expansion of social media means that the only working system is publish-then-filter."(Shirky 2008, p. 98)*

In turn, the abundance of communication tools affect how we relate with each other, in a context where our communication has the technology as an intermediary (see Shirky 2008, Phillips and Young 2009). Shirky states,

*"We now have communication tools that are flexible enough to match our social capabilities, and we are witnessing the rise of new ways of coordinating action that take advantage of that change. (...) We are living in the middle of a remarkable increase in our ability to cooperate with one another, and to take collective action, all outside of the framework of traditional institutions and organizations. "(Shirky 2008, p. 20).*

The different forms of communication and collaboration that the Internet allows for thus result in an unprecedented ability to communicate in a more dynamic way. Communication is no longer limited to a model of "one to one", as a dialogue between two people, or even a model of "one to many", as in the case of a speech. Thanks to technology we can have communication patterns that translate into "many to many" and even "many to one" (cf. Phillips and Young

2009). If to this new dynamic we add the many ways by which we can interact online, we are in a climate that allows groups to form with incredible ease and with almost no effort involved.

In general, the activity of these groups in the internet is the search and sharing of information. These are relatively autonomous groups, where members interact with each other and with other groups, often without a hierarchical structure. And even though the activities of seeking and sharing information may translate into an opportunity to take a message to a wider audience, we must understand that the message will change as it travels through the network of relationships of different groups.

The impact of these groups in organizations is described by Phillips and Young through the concept of transparency and porosity. Transparency refers to the fact that the organization has lost the mechanisms that allow it to control the information that the outside public has access to. Porosity refers to the leakage of information, to the transparency within the organization (between departments and with the outside world) that arises as a result of the various forms of communication that employees use on a daily basis (see Phillips and Young 2009).

The landscape that we have been describing poses a series of challenges to the discipline of public relations. These challenges are not only linked to the various communication tools and to the speed with which messages are transmitted, the greatest challenge is to understand the online groups that we have been describing and what drives us to form those groups.

The study of the importance that groups have for us is an area that has been studied through various perspectives, from biology to sociology. Gathering a series of these perspectives, Quartz and Sejnowski argue that, over time, the structure of these groups has become more complex and that the happiness of individuals is tied to life in society and integration into social groups (see Quartz and Sejnowski 2002) . The behavior of seeking groups where we can feel integrated emerges as something that is part of our nature and as explained by Rokeach, human behavior is guided by our values system:

*"To say that a person 'has the value' is to say that he has an enduring belief that a particular mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence. (...) So defined, the value is a standard or criterion that serves a number of important purposes in our daily lives: it is a standard that tells us how to act or what to want, it is a standard that tells us what attitudes we should hold, it is a standard we employ to justify behavior, to morally judge, and to compare ourselves with others. Finally, the value is the standard we employ to tell us which values, attitudes, and actions of others are worth or not worth trying to influence. If you have a value and you do not want to influence*

*anyone else under the sun to have it too, the chances are it is not a value.* "(Rokeach, 1968, p. 550)

From this definition we can take with us a view of the role that values play on our behavior, influencing choices, goals and attitudes. Values thus have a central role in the formation of groups and the choice of groups to which we belong, whether they are groups of friends, associations, organizations or even countries.

No matter how great technology's impact has been, it does not change the fact that our behavior depends on our values. The Internet emerges as both a (virtual) space and a facilitator where we store information, communicate and form groups. Basically, the Internet is just an extension of our social life and the values shown in the course of our online activities are thus a path that may lead us to understand how people and groups organize themselves.

We put forward the hypothesis that it is possible to identify a values system through the analysis of online discourse, and through this values system, identify publics online. By confirming this prediction, we will have strong evidence to support the view that publics are formed around shared values.

Consequently, the ability to obtain information on publics that are present online opens the way for the practice of PR to be more informed, based on information gathered in real time.

The role of public relations has always been related to the identification of publics relevant to an organization and to the management of communication and relationships with these groups (cf. Grunig and Hunt 1984; Ledingham and Bruning 2000). We will not put into question if the advance of technology creates new publics that deserve attention from the PR discipline (Eiró-Gomes and Duarte 2004). Instead, our goal will be a step in the identification of online publics based on shared values.

Before we conduct an analysis of this issue, it is important to establish a theoretical base. We begin by discussing the Internet as a field of action and research for public relations, describing how it evolved and established concepts that allow a better understanding of its nature and how it operates. We will argue that the Internet can be defined as a set of technologies that can communicate with each other and whose structure is the basis for an ever wider range of applications.

On a second point, it is necessary to define what we understand to be the area of "online public relations". To this end, it makes sense to review some literature that seems to contain essential foundations in order to establish some important concepts, both in theory of public relations as well as in regards to online communication. To facilitate the understanding of some of the



challenges the Internet poses to organizations we will present a brief description of a campaign by Johnson & Johnson.

Thirdly, it is essential to operationalize the concept of values and values systems. In Portuguese and in English, the word "value" tends to be used to refer to something of importance in the hierarchy, ie refers to the importance that a person or organization attaches to something. But this does not mean that the concept is studied only from an economic perspective, values can also be studied in a sociological or psychological setting.

Rokeach was among the first researchers to approach the study of values and places the concept as something that is connected to our beliefs, as a standard that guides our behavior (cf. Rokeach 1968). Later, Hofstede remains close to this definition, but studies Values as part of the Culture of Human Organizations, he defines values as "broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others. Values are feelings with an arrow to it: a plus and a minus side. "(Cf. Hosted 2004 p.8). In the field of public relations, Values tend to be seen as an element that characterizes the culture of the organization and guides the behavior of individuals when they represent the organization. In a different perspective, David Phillips defines values as an element which is metaphorical in content which is imbued onto a tangible or intangible token and whose presence indicates whether a relationship exists, as long as the description of the tokens and their values is coincidental (cf. Phillips 2008). We will explore these perspectives, particularly that of Phillips as it related to the perspective of online PR that we advocate.

This first phase of conceptualisation ends with a reflection on the different activities that we carry out online, stating how these activities will be a demonstration of personal and group values. Through the review of these studies, it is argued that our online behavior is indicative of our values system, whether that behaviour is commenting on a newspaper report or blog, responding to a question, posting a set of photographs, or simply adding someone a list of public contacts. On the Internet, and in other public contexts, we tend to act in the way we want to be perceived by others, using a variety of tokens to demonstrate and display values. Given the variety of communication tools we use online, our study will focus only on online speech, so as to obtain data which includes the largest possible number of communication tools.

In a second phase, the proposed model for the identification of values systems will be put to the test using the website of the British Olympic Association. This association is the National Olympic Committee of the United Kingdom, thus being a member of the International Olympic Committee, whose aim is to ensure the participation of athletes from the United Kingdom in the Olympic Games. To be able to participate in the Games, the British Olympic Committee also has to coordinate a range of partners such as the National Sports Federations, sponsors and other organizations.

The choice of this organization for our research relates to the fact that a communication campaign for the Olympic Games of 2012 in London is being carried out, and at the same time, a system of values connoted with sport becomes easier to identify.

Our analysis begins by identifying the main semantic concepts that are present in the pages of the website <http://www.olympics.org.uk>. In a second step, we identify a sample of hyperlinks<sup>2</sup> where the address <http://www.olympics.org.uk> is present, the pages where these links are present will be examined in order to gather information on the exchange of links that takes place around the website of the British Olympic Association. To this information, which can be displayed on a chart or a text file, we call the hyperlink network. It is in the network of hyperlinks that our analysis will focus on, again identifying the main semantic concepts.

This analysis will result in a list of Internet addresses, followed by their main semantic concepts. After this data has been gathered, it will be presented in a way that allows anyone to compare the frequency of each term and whether the values systems identified is close or distant from the values system of the British Olympic Association.

All this analysis is carried out using a method of automatic analysis of online speech, as it was presented by Phillips and Amaral (2009) in a proof of concept for the identification of relationships between blogs. Slight changes were implemented in order to make this a more robust methodology, more accurate and easier to apply, however its main features remain unchanged.

Applying this methodology to websites and blogs, that by exchange of hyperlinks show themselves to be "closer" to the <http://www.olympics.org.uk> address, belonging to the official website of the British Olympic Association, we hope to get data to identify semantic concepts nearby and thus make the identification of a shared values system possible. In the event of the presence of this values system, it is important to consider how this information can be used to improve the communication campaigns undertaken by the Olympic Association.

Thus, we intend to answer the question asked in this dissertation: if it is possible to identify a values system based on the analysis of online discourse. The values system present in hyperlink network may or may not reflect the values we find in the official website of the Olympic Association. If the values are properly reflected by the websites of the network, the Olympic Association can apply a stronger focus to its communication strategy. If on the other hand the values system of the Olympic Association is not reflected in the hyperlink network, the Association may opt to change the current communication strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> An hyperlink is an element of HyperText Markup Language programming, which indicates the Unique Resource Locator (URL) of another webpage or file available on the Internet.

In the event that there is a shared value system but that it is not aligned with the objectives of the Olympic Association, it is appropriate to evaluate the online communication component of the communication strategy, adapting it to compensate for weaknesses identified in the analysis of discourse . These weaknesses may be related to factors such as lack of dialogue around a theme or simply a lack of relevant dialogue (which will be an indicator of interest). The information gathered will be useful to the implementation of communication tactics by the Olympic Association, serving as a reference point to analyze the effect of those tactics. Implementing the methodology we present in a more systematic way, it may be possible to identify emerging crises or adjust communication activities to become more efficient, always in real time.

Proving that it is possible to identify a values system would be a major step in the identification and mapping of online publics, in relation to a topic of interest or an organization, with tools that allow us to follow the dialogue of the publics identified and even to follow the publics' movement through different tools of online communication and to monitor the closeness to the organization's values system.

This leads to a new field of possibilities where we can follow the implementation of communications strategies in real time, so that over time we can detect trends for different audiences and identify which are the communication efforts with more effective results. Using this information to sketch the landscape of online communication in which the organization operates, we can identify existing relationships, opportunities for new relationships with relevant publics and even track the evolution of relationships that are already established in order to manage them and keep them strong.

Whatever the results of the empirical research conducted in this dissertation, it is important for the public relations discipline to apply efforts in the identification and mapping of online publics. These efforts should be divided into two areas, the theoretical base needed to define publics in the context of communication mediated by the Internet, and the tools and methodologies to be applied to obtain relevant data.

The theoretical basis must define what constitutes an online public, what are they and how is that members are organized. This being done, will create a basis to classify publics in accordance with the engagement between their members, some publics will be more active than others. Another important classification is the proximity to the subject or the organization in which the communication strategy has its base. From a sociological perspective, it will be possible to observe the visible internal dynamics of groups in order to understand mechanisms that influence their behavior as a whole. Focusing on individuals, it becomes possible to

understand which values each of us reflects in a public context, the Internet, and how personal values differ from the values shown by the group.

As regards to methodologies and tools, this area is rich in opportunities where we are still taking our first steps. Future projects, besides focusing on real time analysis, will represent advances in visualization of large amounts of data and allow data to be segmented and analysed with the utmost freedom. The biggest hurdle will surely be crossing the language barrier in an area where there are no borders and an organization can relate to the publics from several countries simultaneously.

# PART I

## 1. The Internet as a Field of Research and Action for PR

### 1.1 The Internet and What Constitutes It

*"(...) I did not expect the next powerful Internet community and its impact on every aspect of our society. My original vision was that the network would have the purpose of a computer-computer interaction or human-computer, but its main use has become the people-people interaction"*

Leonard Kleinrock in an interview for SIC

It is not unusual to speak of the Internet as a technology of great importance. However, it is important to reflect on what is in fact the Internet and the reasons that actually lead us to consider it as something of importance.

As Leonard Kleinrock stated, the original purpose was to build a network of computer-computer interaction as part of a project of the Defense Advanced Projects Agency (ARPA). The main result of this project was the technology of Transport Control Protocol and Internet Protocol (TCP / IP) that now serves as the basis for what we know as the Internet or as the Web.

Technologies that have become common in our day-to-day such as email and viewing Web pages are actually applications that use the TCP / IP as its base. Without these applications TCP / IP technology would be limited to the communication model presented by Shannon and Weaver, the mere transmission and reception of information. It is through the various applications that TCP / IP gains potential uses that go beyond the access to information that it was originally intended for. It is thus understandable that David Phillips and Philip Young (2009) describe the Internet as "the interconnection of millions of computers that are linked, usually by cable, satellite or wireless telemetry, in order to receive re-route and transmit data."

All of this technology constitutes the invisible component of the Internet, what we usually see and use are in fact applications like email, instant messaging in chat rooms, games and the so familiar Web pages. These are applications that allow us to actually communicate and not just access information. As Phillips and Young, we will focus on the use of the Internet as means of communication and therefore divide it into four separate areas: platforms, channels, content and context.

"Platforms" refer to devices used to access information, these devices can be personal computers, laptops, mobile phones, game consoles, televisions, electronic books or even digital picture frames from a number of other possibilities.

"Channels" or instruments are the means by which we access information, they can be blogs, websites, wikis, chat rooms or a series of other possibilities that will be described later.

When we talk of "Content" we are referring to text, sound, images and video or any combination thereof. We feel it is important to make a distinction that separates us from the proposal of Phillips and Young, between what is Data, and what constitutes "Information" and "Content". Whereas information is a set of Data that can be given meaning, Content refers to Information properly contextualized and organized. It is important to note that Content can be divided again into mere Information or Data and thus give rise to new Content.

As for "Context", quite simply it refers to the setting and circumstances in which we access the Web. Context can be a meeting at a time when it is necessary to access updated information in a short time in order respond to a question from a colleague. In another situation, a conference can be a context exceptionally rich in content. While we watch a presentation we can simultaneously access related content available on the Web and while it is referenced by the speaker.

These four elements, platforms, channels, context and content, thus form a framework that allows us to understand how the Internet works and how we use it. But the picture is only complete if we add two important features, convergence and interoperability.

The concept of "convergence" refers to platforms and their functions. This feature of convergence becomes clear when we resort to a phone to create a document, read or send an e-mail and later opt for a computer as a platform to make a voice or video call. In turn, "interoperability" is related to the way we use information and content and the ability to access the same information, regardless of platform or channel we choose to use. Interoperability is therefore a greater or lesser ability to copy text, video, sound and images in full or in part to be used in the channel or instrument that is most appropriate to our goals. As an example, digital book readers such as Amazon's Kindle, are a platform where interoperability is limited to ensure the protection of copyright and to prevent illegal copies.

In these four elements, channels appear as a much broader concept given the range of ways we have to communicate online and the speed at which new online communication tools are developed. In Public Relations literature in regards to online communication, the channels/instruments that appear mentioned most frequently are the following.

## Websites

A website has a first page that is called the Home Page and is characterized by being a set of pages in a hierarchical structure. These pages are written using HyperText Markup Language (HTML) or other equivalent programming and are linked with other pages and related content through hyperlinks (or links).

We can access a website through a web browser like Firefox, Internet Explorer or Safari, entering the address, also known as the Unique Resource Locator (URL), which is composed as follows:

`http://www.google.pt/`

HTTP refers to the protocol we want to use, in this case HyperText Transfer Protocol. After the protocol, we find the subdomain, domain and top-level domain. In this case, the subdomain is `www`, the domain is "Google" and top-level domain is "pt", belonging to Portugal. These are the essential elements for the web address to lead us to a computer that acts as Web server, with the purpose of receiving and responding to requests for Web pages.

Without any indication, this address will lead us to the home page, but we can point the Web server to a specific page or other resource, such as video files, text, audio etc. To do this we add that reference to the original URL: `http://www.google.pt/intl/pt-PT/about.html` Thus, the server will check for the folder `intl` and the folder `pt-PT`, if they exist it will continue to browse and display the file `about.html` representing an HTML page.

These URLs are the essential part of an hiperlink, and there may still be a caption or a series of statements (tags) designed to instruct search engines how to proceed. These statements may determine that a link should not be followed or that refers to content hosted on other sites, external to the one we are currently viewing.

In a simplified way, this is how a website works, but as a communication tool it is quite versatile as it may be adapted to a variety of purposes. As we will see, there are websites that due to their functions and features are placed in very different categories (blogs, wikis, social networks, etc.). In this work we will use the term Website to refer to corporate websites or any other website that does not fit in the different categories that we explain below.

## Blogs and Microblogs

A blog is a website that is characterized by how easy it is to update it with new content, these updates are articles (or posts) that appear on the main page arranged in chronological order. There is also a specific page for each of these posts, where visitors can leave comments and

follow the discussion around the post. These features make blogs specially useful to create and manage dialogue around one or more topics.

When an article/post is published, a series of automated actions are carried out in order to determine if there are links in the post, and if those links refer to posts in other blogs. If this is the case, a trackback is issued; a referencing link placed as a comment on the posts to which we are linking to. This makes it easier to follow the dialogue across a number of blogs.

Due to the ease with which we publish content on a blog, it became important to seek ways to follow what was published without the need to visit the blog address over and over again in order to ascertain whether there were new articles or new comments. The answer to this problem arose through the technology of Real Simple Syndication (RSS)<sup>3</sup>. With this technology we can subscribe to a blog or web site and automatically receive articles and other content as it is posted. RSS is then one of the best examples of interoperability by the ease with which it can be used on any platform or communication tool.

Another feature found in blogs is the Blogroll, a list of links commonly found in the sidebar of a blog, containing the names of other blogs with which the author feels some sort of affinity.

Initially, blogs were used as public journals, they served as means to communicate with family and friends in a more or less private way, using the free service from companies like Blogger<sup>4</sup>, Livejournal<sup>5</sup>, Typepad<sup>6</sup> and Wordpres<sup>7</sup>. With time and due to their versatility, blogs have been used for a variety of other purposes such as communication between students of the same class, to share ideas between professionals in the same area among other uses. From here, the emergence of corporate blogs was no surprise, such as: <http://www.ebaychatter.com/>; <http://futurebanking.bankofamerica.com/>; <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/>

Microblogs have characteristics similar to regular blogs, with the difference lying in the fact that posts are limited in size. Twitter is a prime example of microblogging, with a limit of 140 characters per update. The great advantage of micro-blogging is that it allows rea an exchange

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<sup>3</sup> RSS is a content distribution technology. An RSS file can be read by a series of devices and allows us to receive updates (on a blog or other website) automatically.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.blogger.com>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.livejournal.com>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.typepad.com>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.wordpress.com>



of information in real time, which can be used for purposes of crowdsourcing<sup>8</sup>, news alerts and other activities involving the dissemination of information.

## **Podcasts and Videocasts**

Podcasts are a more dynamic approach to traditional radio. Rather than being broadcast by radio waves, podcasts are made available on a blog or similar website and can be downloaded and listened to at any time through an MP3<sup>9</sup> player. Videocasts follow the same principle, this time for video content.

These two channels are in fact an evolution of blogging, this time focusing on audio and video content and not just in pictures and text. By making their content updates available via RSS, we can automate the task of checking for new episodes and downloading them to a video player or portable MP3 player like an iPhone or another smartphone.

For example, the program For Immediate Release by Neville Hobson and Shel Holtz (<http://forimmediaterelease.biz/>) is a Podcast on Public Relations and its role on the Web that has existed since 2005 and has nearly 500 episodes . In turn, the conference Ted Talks uses Videocasts to share presentations with all interested audiences, simply by visiting the <http://www.ted.com/talks/browse> address and subscribing to the updates.

## **Forums and newsgroups**

These channels were the first examples on how the Web enables the creation of communities and informal groups, initially through Usenet and Bulletin Board Systems. These websites allow users to publish articles to which other members can respond. They tend to be focused on an issue or topic of interest and allow them to form a community with a high degree of interaction between its members.

These discussion groups appear to have had less expression than blogs or micro-blogging, but there are 4 743 654 discussion groups housed in <http://groups.google.com/groups/> and 11 386 707 housed at [http://groups.yahoo.com /](http://groups.yahoo.com/). Even though many of these groups are inactive, the messages posted and exchanged are still available and can still be very relevant.

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<sup>8</sup> The term crowdsourcing refers to the possibility of delegating, to a group or online community, the execution of a task. A common example is publishing a question on twitter in order to receive a possible answer from someone on our network of contacts.

<sup>9</sup> Refers to a digital audio format, a file which we can listen to on an MP3 Player such as an iPod, Zune, Mobile Phone or other similar device.

Besides these two examples we find the phpBB software<sup>10</sup> which when installed on a Web server can add a discussion forum to any website.

## **Social Networks**

Online Social networks are authentic communication tools for groups, family, friends or coworkers. Whether through websites like facebook<sup>11</sup>, linkedin<sup>12</sup> or myspace<sup>13</sup>, social networks assign a profile page to each user who in turn adds his details and a list contacts who are also registered as users. The possible user interactions come in various ways, either by participating in discussion groups, commenting on profiles or through the use of applications and games. Today, some social network websites also allow users to microblog, not limiting updates to 140 characters and allowing the inclusion of photos and video.

As a channel, these online social networks are becoming increasingly dynamic. In addition to allowing content to be shared (text, image, video and audio) with a very limited group of people, social networks can be used in other websites as a means to facilitate the registration of new users, without disclosing any personal contact information.

It is interesting to see that these social networks do not just have a general nature, some are very specific. Social networks like LinkedIn and Xing are focused on managing business contacts, and Nike has even created a specific social network for those who purchase one of their products<sup>14</sup>, the Nike +. As a result of this trend we saw the rise of Ning<sup>15</sup>, a service whose purpose is to allow anyone to create a social network around any topic they see fit. One of these networks is PR Open Mic<sup>16</sup>, aimed at professionals, students and teachers in the discipline of Public Relations.

## **Virtual Worlds (including online games)**

Currently, Second Life<sup>17</sup> is the virtual world with more attention drawn to it. Second Life is a 3D world where participants interact through an avatar. An avatar is a digital representation of the

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.phpbb.com>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.facebook.com>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.linkedin.com>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.myspace.com>

<sup>14</sup> [http://nikerunning.nike.com/nikeos/p/nikeplus/en\\_US](http://nikerunning.nike.com/nikeos/p/nikeplus/en_US)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ning.com>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.propenmic.org>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.secondlife.com>

user that may or may not correspond to his image, in extreme cases; users are even represented by mythological creatures.

Second Life is a virtual world designed as a meeting place, but in turn World of Warcraft<sup>18</sup> is a virtual world meant as a stage for a game. In this context players go on quests using avatars that do not correspond to them at all, these can be elves, Gnomes, Orcs and other creatures other than humans. In this way, the participants can create multiple characters and various storylines.

But it is wrong to think that virtual worlds are limited to these digital representations in Three Dimensions. The game Travian<sup>19</sup> and community Habbo Hotel<sup>20</sup> are two examples of worlds created without resorting to this kind of technology. We can then consider a virtual world to be two different types of digital representation. In common both of these worlds seek to portray a digital world, similar or completely different from reality, either meant for games or for the interaction between people.

## **Wikis and other collaborative tools**

Wikis are particularly useful in contexts of internal communication and project management. These are websites where visitors can create pages and edit existing pages without the need for any additional knowledge. As a result, they form a very dynamic website where information is always updated as a result of the action of its visitors. There are, however, a number of other ways to collaborate online, either by sharing documents, project repositories, or other forms of interaction that aim to achieve a final result.

In his book Wikinomics, Don Tapscott (2006) describes some examples of how organizations have successfully used models of mass collaboration, often giving up intellectual property, as a way to boost their business and focus on innovation as a key element. But the best example is undoubtedly Wikipedia<sup>21</sup>, a free and open access encyclopedia whose maintenance is the responsibility of its users.

Wikipedia is used as a way to explain the concept of the Wisdom of Crowds, since as a whole it is the result of the knowledge of the "crowd" that updates and preserves it. At the same time, Wikipedia poses a challenge when it comes to the quality of information due to the difficulty in

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.worldofwarcraft.com>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.travian.pt>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.habbo.com>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.wikipedia.org>

knowing who was the user who edited the page and whether the information that was posted is accurate and factual. The best way to understand wikipedia is then by considering it the modern approach to word-of-mouth knowledge.

There are several options to create wikis; it can be done through a service such as the one provided by the company pbWorks<sup>22</sup> or by installing and using the software through a Web server. In this second option, we can add to a corporate website the same functionality that we find on Wikipedia, using the exact same software<sup>23</sup>. But beyond these options, we can create text documents, spreadsheets or presentations that are shared and edited by a small group of people. This can be done through Google Docs<sup>24</sup> or through the service provided by Zoho<sup>23</sup>.

## **Content Sharing Networks**

In this category we find sites like Digg<sup>25</sup> and Delicious<sup>26</sup>, where in addition to sharing information and content users take upon themselves the task of organizing that content so that it can be easily discovered by someone who shares the interest in the subject. In the case of Delicious, the website aims to serve as a repository for hiperlinks of our favorite websites, organized through descriptions and keywords which are called tags<sup>27</sup>. We can choose to save the addresses privately or publicly; this second option allows them to be found by other users of the service.

Digg works differently, users share news and other content on this website, so that others can vote and indicate that they found that content interesting. In this way, Digg serves as a filter that allows us access to new content that was deemed relevant by its users.

But these networks are not limited to websites, there are file-sharing networks that operate under a logic of Peer-to-Peer (P2P). In these networks, users can download any file, as long as they agree to share that file again once their transfer is complete, ie, the agreement made to have access to the file is to accept to send it to another user who also wants to download it . In this way and without the need for large resources, these P2P networks allow large amounts of information to be sent out to its users.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.pbworks.com>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.mediawiki.org>

<sup>24</sup> <http://docs.google.com>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.digg.com>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.delicious.com>

<sup>27</sup> Given that traditional taxonomies fail when applied to the Internet, we tend to resort to "tags". We can classify content with one or more tags as a way to browse similar content in a more dynamic way.

In another context, Web sites like Friendfeed<sup>28</sup> and Posterous<sup>29</sup> allow users to have a central location where they share virtually all of their online activity. These websites are aggregators in the sense that they gather in the same page the various websites that we use to share content, whether it's Delicious, Digg, Flickr, SlideShare or GoodReads among others.

## **Applications or online services**

Some websites are so specific that they fit the category of online applications. These applications can have multiple functions, but generally focus on trying to solve a single problem of everyday life or to facilitate processes. Websites like Google Docs can be considered online applications, because their function is to allow editing of documents using only a web browser<sup>30</sup>. But there are more concrete examples of online applications, such as the Remember the Milk<sup>31</sup> website whose function is to enable users to manage a list of tasks that is always available and updated, whether we use a computer or a cell phone to access or edit it. Other applications allow us to manage online calendars, address books, to edit photos as well as a variety of other uses.

When we talk about these online applications we are in fact discussing a business model that is called Software as a Service (SaaS). The user uses the software using his Internet browser, which is already installed on his computer or mobile phone, and is given free access to a number of functions. If he or she so chooses, there is an option to subscribe to all of the software through a monthly payment. In return, the user receives a guarantee that his/her information is always protected and that he/she is always using the latest version of the software.

We must accept that these categories are not airtight; some online applications have functions that allow them to serve as social networks and collaboration platforms. Either way, the trend points us towards the rise of more and more channels of online communication and to an increasing interoperability between them.

The term social media tends to be used to refer to these and other online communication channels (see chapter 1.1) that we have at our disposal to reach friends, family, coworkers or companies. These channels allow us to form groups and organizations with greater ease. Since

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.friendfeed.com>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.posterous.com>

<sup>30</sup> A program such as Firefox, Google Chrome, Safari or Internet Explorer

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.rememberthemilk.com>

communication takes place in real time, these groups have a way to act and to pursue a vision, to complete specific objectives, to influence companies and other institutions etc.

These channels, or instruments of online communication are what enable us to use the Internet in a ever greater variety of contexts, making our communication increasingly more rich and interactive. It is in this context we are now, platforms are increasingly more accessible showing an increase in the convergence of functions, while at the same time online communication tools are becoming more versatile and varied. The Web has thus become a stage for dialogue and relations whose size is growing at a rapid pace.

According to WolframAlpha<sup>32</sup> for a world population of 6.68 Billion only 1.393 Billion people use the Internet. This means that the Internet has yet to reach its full potential in terms of users. This will only happen when we surpass a series of obstacles related to the access to communication infrastructures (such as satellite links and other physical communication networks) and to the necessary platforms (computers, mobile phones and other devices to access the Internet and the web) and once we apply efforts to increase the levels of computer literacy.

In 2005, a study by the Pew Global Attitudes Survey found the rate of Internet penetration in the world whose data we can see the map of Figure 1.

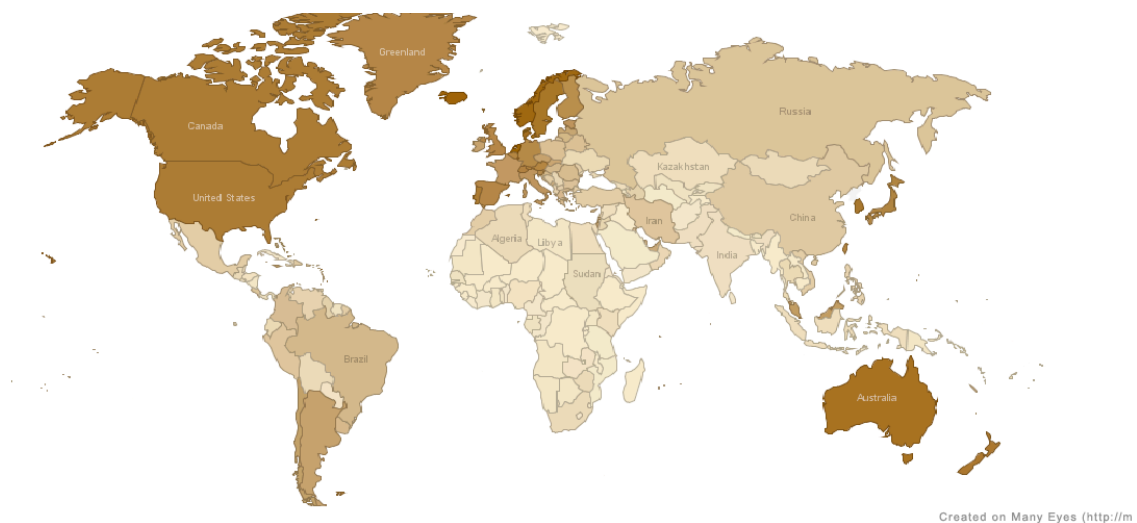


Figure 1-Rate of Internet penetration by country, depending on the results of the study by the Pew Global Attitudes Survey. Source: <http://manyeyes.alphaworks.ibm.com/manyeyes/visualizations/internet-penetration-by-country-2>

A careful analysis of the map makes it clear that the rate of Internet penetration is not uniform. While in North America, Europe and Oceania there is a noticeably higher penetration rate, the

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.wolframalpha.com/>

same does not happen in the African continent, South America and even Asia. This disparity may be due to several factors, either by lack of infrastructure, or difficulties in obtaining access platforms (given their cost or availability). But even if there is the possibility to access the Internet, this is not reflected in its use. For the Internet to be actually used there has to be some basic knowledge of computer use, which is why it is so important to raise levels of computer literacy in the world, in order to avoid a phenomenon of digital divide and information exclusion.

However, according to the Pew / Internet Institute, using the internet is not something limited to a single age group although it is dominated by the Gen Y, Gen X, Younger Boomers. Since the adults 18 to 32 years (Gen Y) comprise the largest share of users, and that the efforts to improve the usability of platforms and communication channels are ever more present, we can extrapolate that the future use of the Internet is something that will be common to most age groups.

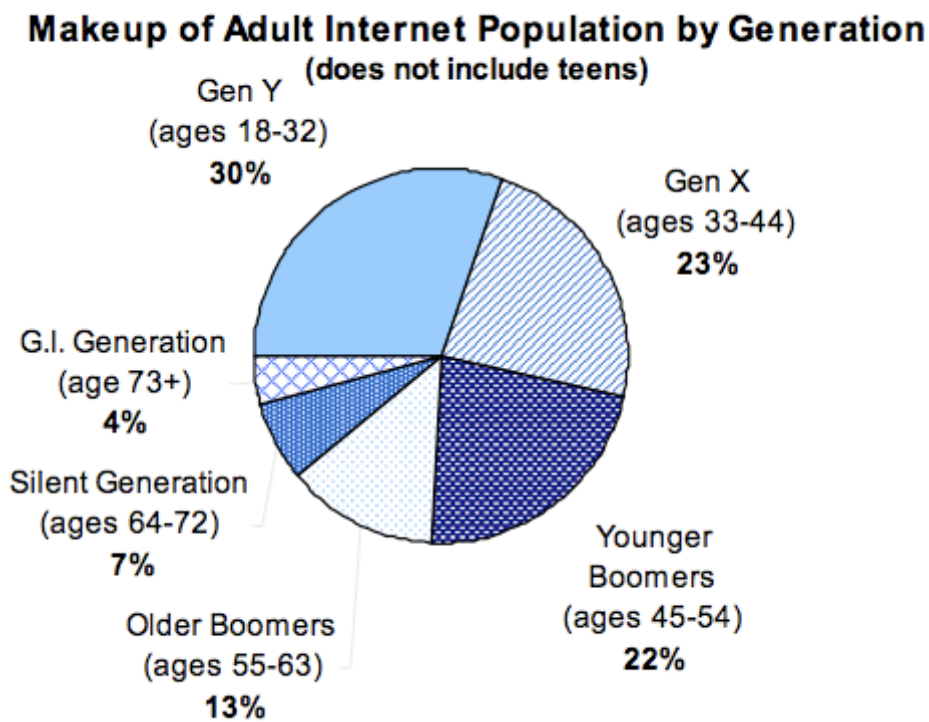


Figure 2 - Internet users divided by age groups. Source: Pew / Internet - Generations Online in 2009

To summarize, in this chapter we presented what we consider to be The Internet and described some background about how it works and on what are its elements<sup>33</sup> (Platforms, Instruments or

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<sup>33</sup> We have chosen these elements for being the ones described by Phillips and Young (2009) in an Online PR context.

Channels, Context and Content<sup>34</sup>) as a way to justify that the Internet is a stage for dialogue and relations. In an overall view, this stage is still out of the reach of 80% of the world. For this reason we can only hope that its impact on our daily lives will become ever greater.

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<sup>34</sup> The concept of "content" will imply the concept of Data and Information (see the description of these elements in the beginning of this chapter).



## 1.2 Public Relations and Public Relations Online

*"A powerful global conversation has begun. Through the Internet, people are discovering and inventing new ways to share relevant knowledge with blinding speed. As a direct result, markets are getting smarter-and getting smarter faster than most companies. "*

Doc Searls, David Weinberger and Rick Levin in *Cluetrain Manifesto* (1999)

### Public Relations

Before going to the question of what are online public relations it is important to define what we mean when we use the term "public relations" since there are a number of definitions for this discipline. Grunig and Hunt for example, define public relations as the management of communication between the organization and its stakeholders (see Grunig and Hunt 1984). In turn, the Swedish Association of Public Relations opts for a more descriptive definition:

*"(...) Public relations work manages and develops the level of confidence within an organization and therefore creates freedom of action in on-going and planned operations. Public relations work serves various interests in an organization. For the management, public relations work is a strategic and operative tool, developing the knowledge, attitude and commitment of stakeholders. For employees, it is a means of participating. Communication is also a prerequisite for a decision-making process. (...)"<sup>35</sup>*

Given the differences that arise when comparing these two definitions, it makes sense to explore some alternatives, as did Flynn, Gregory and Valin (2008) to identify the different perspectives and to build a more current definition, the result of this research can be read on *Wiki Defining Public Relations*<sup>36</sup>.

In this wiki we find a collection of key definitions, such as that proposed by Edward Bernays:

*"Public Relations is a management function which tabulates public attitudes, defines the policies, procedures and interest of an organization followed by executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance."*

The definition used by the Chartered Institute for Public Relations:

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<sup>35</sup> <http://sverigesinformationsforening.se/in-english/effective-pr.aspx>

<sup>36</sup> <http://definingpublicrelations.wikispaces.com>

*"Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics."*

And the definition proposed by Cutlip Center and Broom:

*"Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends"*

The definition of Grunig and Hunt shows to be incomplete by not mentioning with what publics the organization must communicate. Cutlip however does try to bridge this gap stating that the organization must establish a relationship with the publics who can influence the success of the organization.

In terms of evolution, it is noted that the latest definitions flee from Bernays' perspective that PR seeks to obtain acceptance by one or more audiences. This idea is closely linked to the management of communication and relations with the media, thus limiting the practice and even the effectiveness of public relations.

But to replace the acceptance of the public, we see a greater concern with the concept of corporate reputation. This is a concept to which the Reputation Institute<sup>37</sup> as dedicated much of their work and study, yet it is something that is not easy to define. Speaking of reputation is at the same time talking about the perception that the public has of a person or organization and the experience accumulated in contact with that same person or organization. Despite the difficulties in determining the concept, reputation remains an important factor to calculate the value of an organization. And as an intangible asset, the management and maintenance of reputation is usually left in charge of the Public Relations Discipline.

There are over 19 different definitions on the wiki defining public relations that span a range of fields, such as:

- *Relationship Management*
- *Reputation Management*
- *Serves Public Interest*

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.reputationinstitute.com>

- *Strategic and Tactical*
- *Managed Function*
- *Two-Way Symmetrical*
- *Evaluation of Public Opinion*
- *Gain support or influence Public Opinion*
- *Gain understanding and acceptance*
- *Public Perception (Image Building)*

At the end of the study, the authors finally present the definition that was adopted by the Canadian Public Relations Society:

*"Public relations is the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, mutual understanding, realize organizational goals, and serves the public interest."*

From the analysis of a number of different perspectives, Flynn, Gregory and Valin decide that the view that public relations is a discipline related to management of relationships is the most appropriate.

At this point it makes sense to question, which practices and skills belong to the profession of public relations. David Phillips in *Domains of PR Practice*<sup>38</sup> tried to answer this question and concluded that the profession spans a number of practices:

- *Advising Senior Management*
- *Building & maintaining a positive image amongst suppliers*
- *Business Development strategy*
- *Changing behaviors*
- *Changing Culture*
- *Communication as creation of value*
- *Community Affairs*
- *Competition & Regulation*

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<sup>38</sup> [http://netreputation.co.uk/managementclarity/phillips\\_papers.htm](http://netreputation.co.uk/managementclarity/phillips_papers.htm)

- *Consultancy*
- *Corporate Affairs*
- *Corporate Branding*
- *Corporate Policy*
- *Corporate PR*
- *CSR Network*
- *Diversity*
- *Driver of change*
- *Economic Relations*
- *Eternal Affairs*
- *Eternal Communications*
- *Financial Communications*
- *Global Brands PR Manager*
- *Government Affairs*
- *Government Relations*
- *Human Resources & Communications*
- *Influencer Relations*
- *Internal relationships*
- *International Public Relations*
- *Meeting client brief*
- *Organization Development*
- *Policy*
- *Promoting eternally mission & values*
- *Public Affairs*
- *Public Awareness*
- *Public Relations*
- *Public Safety*
- *Reputation management*

- *Social responsibility*
- *Strategic Communications*
- *Strategic Social Responsibility*
- *Strategy & Policy*

In turn, the practice of public relations requires a wide range of skills such as:

- *Aid adoption of best practices*
- *Campaigns & Projects*
- *Communicating Change*
- *Communications*
- *Conference management*
- *Corporate Communications*
- *Crisis Management*
- *e-Media*
- *Editor*
- *Employee communications*
- *Entertainment*
- *eServices Manager*
- *Events manager*
- *Exhibitions*
- *Fundraiser*
- *Information*
- *Internal communications*
- *Investor relations*
- *Issues management*
- *Mass media relations*
- *Media Monitoring*
- *Media Relations*

- *Mission Promotion*
- *Multicultural Communications*
- *Networker*
- *New Media*
- *News*
- *Press Relations*
- *Product Advocacy*
- *Public Involvement*
- *Publicity*
- *Web Content*
- *Writer / Editor*

The reason for such a broad range of definitions, practices and skills is linked to the vision of public relations as a whole discipline and not just a profession. This implies that public relations professionals must work with colleagues from a number of different fields, coordinating efforts and understanding that they are all faced with different objectives, pressures, and requirements within each of these different fields.

For the purpose of this dissertation we understand the concept of public relations in its broadest sense, as a discipline that encompasses the strategic management of communication and relationships between organizations and their different audiences / stakeholders.

However, it is important to accept that none of the definitions displayed here will be complete in itself and accept that the perspective of managing relationships does not mean turning a blind eye to all the other points of view regarding Public Relations.

As David Phillips in *The Value of Relationships* explains, these relationships that are formed with an organization and among members of an organization are an important intangible asset. Phillips (2006) explores the need to manage relationships and argues that that resource must be managed by Public Relations.

## **Online Public Relations**

As we showed in the beginning of this chapter, the Internet has become a very rich and versatile medium that is used by 20% of the world. Since Internet access is increasingly less limited

thanks to the possibility to make wirelessly calls via the 3G network<sup>39</sup> or through WiFi<sup>40</sup> technology, it no longer makes sense to create communication campaigns without some element of online communication and interaction. By themselves, these arguments are sufficient to support the need for online public relations, but the impact of the Internet is not limited to extending the range of communication instruments at our disposal.

One impact of the Internet was the end of scarcity of information. This becomes evident when a document published online is immediately accessible to millions of people with access to the Internet. In addition, either by creating a page, profiles on social networks or comments on blogs, all our online actions are a way to publish and share information. If, before the Internet, information and knowledge were limited to books and encyclopedias, today's information and knowledge can be distributed without restrictions. In part this is due to advances in usability, ie the study of interaction between humans and computers, designed to make publishing and updating information online into an act that does not require any technical expertise or training<sup>41</sup>.

This means that the Internet is the largest and most accessible source of information, but due to the speed with which we publish information online, it is impossible to categorize content and ensure the truthfulness and accuracy of what is published. Thus, the Internet calls into question the quality of information available and sometimes the credibility of the original sources of information.

To meet the challenges caused by the excess of information we saw new mechanism emerge with the purpose of gathering and organizing what is published online. The first answer comes through search engines such as Google and Yahoo, which index and provide all the information they find on a given search term, organizing it according to credibility, which in turn is determined based on an algebraic function. While useful, search engines do not meet all our needs for organizing information, or for updating that same information (in part because in most cases this task still falls to whoever manages the website). That is why we saw the rise of user groups and social networks like Digg and Delicious, which together are responsible for organizing and categorizing information they consider valuable, sharing it among themselves.

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<sup>39</sup> 3G network refers to the technology used on our mobile phones to connect wireless to a communication tower and to a satellite in order to place a video or voice call or even a data transmission.

<sup>40</sup> WiFi means Wireless Fidelity, technology used to allow wireless local area connections and to create networks within a campus or office building.

<sup>41</sup> The area of usability falls outside of the scope of this research, however it is relevant to PR practice. More information can be found at <http://www.usabilityfirst.com>

By understanding this background of communication that we came to describe, Doc Searls, David Weinberger and Rick Levine published in 1999 the Cluetrain Manifesto, which declared "Markets are conversations". According to the manifesto, this conversation or dialogue has the characteristic of being networked and devoid of both barriers such as hierarchical levels that are typical of traditional organizations. It is under this basis that the authors explain the impact that the Internet has on organizations.

*"A powerful global conversation has begun. Through the Internet, people are discovering and inventing new ways to share relevant knowledge with blinding speed. As a direct result, markets are getting smarter-and getting smarter faster than most companies. These markets are conversations. Their members communicate in language that is natural, open, honest, direct, funny and often shocking "(Searls et al. 1999)*

This perspective can be translated into the fact that publics have a communication potential which is far greater than the one that an organization can hope to generate, at least while using traditional infrastructures for internal and external communication. Simultaneously, publics are determining the agenda for online dialogue. Not having control of the public dialogue, organizations are forced to listen to it in search of opportunities of valid participation or opportunities to adapt (whether to stay in business or to obtain something valuable) (see Doc Searls et al. 1999 ).

In the field of Public Relations, David Phillips (2001) and Shel Holtz (2002) were the first authors to describe the tools for online communication and the ways they could be used for the practice of Public Relations. In a different way, both encourage participation in the online dialogue that is mentioned by the Cluetrain Manifesto.

Taken together, these three works pave the way to understand the concepts of transparency and porosity that are somehow imposed on organizations and that are on par with the existence of an online dialogue, which should be listened to by the organization and where they should seek the right to participate. According to different authors, the participation in this dialogue should be a model of communication devoid of hierarchies and that primes on transparency. We are therefore faced with a model of Two-way symmetrical communication as described by Grunig (see Grunig 1992).

These approaches put the Internet as more than a search field, as described by Gaddis, and substantiate that which is proposed by Cozier and Witmer that the public does not arise simply by the existence of issues as presented in Grunig's Stakeholder theory (cf. Heath 2004; Grunig 1992)



But despite the impact that the Cluetrain Manifesto had in how we think about online PR the view that the Web is a stage for dialogue and interaction between people, and that the concepts of participation, transparency and porosity are important was not widely accepted at first. Only when Tim O'Reilly coined the term Web 2.0 in 2005<sup>42</sup> and described the concept as a paradigm of participation and social interaction, giving the Internet features such as Openness, User Participation and Network Effects<sup>43</sup>, did we begin to see a growing interest on the Internet by communications professionals from various areas.

The term Web 2.0 was subject to several critiques, since the instruments of online communication described by David Phillips and Shel Holtz four years before had the same components of social interaction and collaboration usually associated with Web 2.0. Even Tim Berners-Lee showed to be cautious about the use of the term giving an interview to IBM in 2006.

*"DeveloperWorks: You know, with Web 2.0, a common explanation out there is Web 1.0 was about connecting computers and making information available, and Web 2 is about connecting people and Facilitating new kinds of collaboration. Is that how you see Web 2.0?"*

*Berners-Lee: Totally not. Web 1.0 was all about connecting people. It was an interactive space, and I think Web 2.0 is, of course, a piece of jargon, nobody even knows what it means. If Web 2.0 for you is blogs and wikis, then that is people to people. But that was what the Web was supposed to be all along. And in fact, you know, this Web 2.0, quote, it means using the standards which have been produced by all these people working on Web 1.0. It means using the document object model, it means for HTML and SVG, and so on. It's using HTTP, so it's building stuff using the Web standards, plus JavaScript, of course. So Web 2.0, for some people, it means moving some of the thinking client side so making it more immediate, but the idea of the Web as interaction between people is really what the Web is. That was what it was designed to be as a collaborative space where people can interact. "(DeveloperWorks Interviews: Tim Berners-Lee, 2006, August 22)<sup>44</sup>*

During the period that the term Web 2.0 was the target of interest, the question for companies was how to listen and participate in the online dialogue, while allowing greater interaction by

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.oreilley.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>

<sup>43</sup> <http://radar.oreilley.com/research/web2-report.html>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/podcast/dwi/cm-int082206txt.html>

different audiences. In the second period, we saw a greater emphasis placed around the term Social Media.

This term refers to the variety of online communication instruments (channels), especially those that allow two-way communication, between the webmaster and the visitors and even among the visitors without interference from the webmaster.

The concept of social media became so widely used that it appears there is some confusion about whether it refers to the dialogue that takes place in the channels or the channels where the dialogue takes place and proceeds. The perspective that we advocate is that social media refers to the channels/instruments used and that the dialogue exists independent through one or several instruments of online communication. Proof of this lies in the fact that when an instrument for online communication is lost for some reason, users easily move on to an alternative one.

The example most often used to demonstrate the influence of Social Media emerged by the use of blogs, due to their versatility and the fact that they make it possible to build and manage a dialogue with different audiences with great ease<sup>45</sup>. And indeed, one of the first structured responses of public relations to online communication came through a parallel between the relations with the media, moving on to building managing relationships with bloggers. In this context we have seen the development of codes of ethics and conduct<sup>46</sup>, and PR professionals adopted a stance that places bloggers at the same level as accredited journalists. But this solution brought new issues, such as understanding which blogs were relevant and how they should be compared in order to identify the most influential bloggers within the most relevant publics.

The *Groundswell*, by Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff (2005), described a series of strategies to better understand the paradigm shifts that arose with the use of social media, even including an approach to understand the demographics of Web users. Although a good starting point for understanding blogs and their audiences it still left some questions unanswered, especially as new instruments for online communication are constantly emerging and demographics of those same instruments also change over time<sup>47</sup>. This book was followed by *Naked Conversations* by Robert Scoble and Shel Israel (2005), which focused on the ability of organizations in creating a meaningful dialogue with their online audiences. At this point we were facing a tendency to practice public relations in two very close fields. On one hand, building relationships with

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<sup>45</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/BUSINESS/12/20/company.blogs/>

<sup>46</sup> <http://blog.ogilvypr.com/2007/09/creating-a-blogger-outreach-code-of-ethics-take-1/>

<sup>47</sup> <http://mashable.com/2009/05/27/facebook-baby-boomers/>

bloggers, establishing a dialogue between them and the organization, and on the other the design of corporate blogs, meant to make business communications more efficient and direct, again meant at establishing a dialogue with a range of audiences.

But the action of communication professionals also extends to optimizing content for search engines. This area is called search engine optimization (SEO)<sup>48</sup> and aims to make information as relevant as possible, so it can be indexed by search engines like Google and Yahoo and to make sure it is presented search engine result pages (SERP) that are most relevant to the organization. The techniques used in this kind of optimization are not limited to the design of Content; they involve the proper programming of online communication instruments and establishing relationships to exchange hyperlinks with other relevant websites. Thus, the Public Relations professional establishes the presence of the organization in a number of online communication channels and manages the relationships that are built as a result of that action.

The last four years were very rich in publications that have dedicated themselves to trying to understand the effect of technology on society, organizations and of course in theory and practice of public relations and other disciplines that focus on communication as their basis. From the "The Long Tail" by Chris Anderson, who among other things explains the success of Amazon, to the book "Here Comes Everybody", by Clay Shirky to the "New Rules of Marketing and Public Relations" by David Meerman Scott, there are several authors establishing best practices and working conceptual models that apply to the discipline of Public Relations.

Today, the dialogue around the challenges of public relations has focused on the need to know in which channel of communication organizations must have a concrete presence. A valid concern since we see new ways to communicate appear at a rapid pace, and where the publication and distribution of information and content occurs in real time forcing organizations to have flexible procedures and communication mechanisms.

An article in The Guardian highlights the changes that occurred in the field of social media tools<sup>49</sup>. Blogs are no longer the heart of the matter, and people's attention now focuses on the use of social networks like facebook and twitter, which have all the typical functions of networks for microblogging and sharing content. Blogs themselves do not present the same importance they enjoyed in 2005. On PR Studies, a blog written by Richard Bailey, this question is presented and blogs are described as a privileged place for dialogue:

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=35291>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2009/nov/03/social-media-facebook-twitter-on-rise-pew-survey>

*"It's ages since the year of the blog. Since then, Facebook has gained ground as a social network, YouTube has the appeal of moving images, and Twitter has all the buzz and is making headlines. So why am I so happy that blogs are boring? Just having one no longer counts, it's what you do with it that matters (like turning one into a newspaper or a magazine, or provoking an angry reaction from Ryanair) Blogs are ideal for learning, and some obscurity is helpful for this process - though it's also encouraging when a novice blogger receives a comment from Seth Godin Information overload is a problem, so fewer and more substantial posts are welcome Blogs are containers for words, but you can also put photos, videos, podcasts, news feeds, Twitter and Facebook updates into the container" (PR Studies: Blogs are boring, <http://www.prstudies.com/weblog/2009/02/blogs-are-boring.html>)*

There is a clear drive to use social networks and not blogs, but this drive does not appear to be linked to a communication strategy but rather an attempt to follow the masses of users. It is then important to find a guiding line that will allow for the management of online presence, the observation and participation in online dialogue into something more than an attempt to follow social media trends. In *Online Public Relations*, David Phillips and Phillip Young (2009) propose an answer to this challenge of instability through risk management techniques, new tools for monitoring, measurement and evaluation, and guidelines for conduct and ethics.

This need for a guiding line, a plumb-line, or a basic concept for online communication strategy is not limited to the practice of public relation, online or offline. One example was the impact which occurred in reaction to an advertising campaign from Johnson & Johnson.

As a way to communicate a new painkiller called Motrin, belonging to one of its brands, Johnson & Johnson began a campaign that used television advertising, ads in newspapers and magazines as well as making the ads available on YouTube.

What was intended as a message about the benefits of Motrin became a storm of criticism from consumers. These consumers quickly formed into an online flashmob<sup>50</sup> that criticized campaign and how it represented mothers who chose to carry their children in their arms, using cots set up for that purpose. According to the campaign, this practice was harmful and resulted in back pain, for which Motrin was a suitable analgesic.

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<sup>50</sup> "Flashmob" is a term used to refer to a group that forms in a more or less spontaneous way, without warning, simply by using online communication as a way to organize. One of the biggest flashmobs is the "World Pillow Fight Day" an open event that takes place in several cities around the world.

To organize, this flashmob turned to twitter as a communication tool and used the tag # motrinmoms. The proportion of this dialogue was so overwhelming that in less than 48 hours Johnson & Johnson was forced to withdraw the campaign, losing the investment in advertising and taking on a number of additional costs, in crisis management and in loss of reputation<sup>51</sup>. This event showed how today the Internet has become a medium that rivals with the once powerful television<sup>52</sup>.

At the same time, the reaction to the Johnson & Johnson campaign is a good example of how it is extremely easy to form groups and how these groups are capable of concerted action which is endowed with an unprecedented speed (see Shirky 2008).

In short, we are in an area where PR deals with a number of aspects of online communication. First comes the need to listen to the online dialogue to seek the right to participation, which in turn requires knowing and understanding the groups that form online.

On a second note, it is essential that public relations professionals become concerned with managing the channels of online communication and the presence of the organization in those same channels. It is important to note that an organization's online presence is not always manifested in communication channels which fall under its control. This is why it is particularly important to listen to the online dialogue and understand which groups make up that dialogue as a way to become involved in these channels, following a model of two-way symmetrical communication.

The management of online presence results in an effort to ensure access to content related to the organization and not just to the data and information that are usually scattered and de-contextualized on the web. Regarding the communication tools that the organization controls, it is essential that the online presence in those same tools will translate into a consistent and coherent communication.

Finally, given that the Internet is composed of a number of groups that act and change quite fast, it is essential to undertake a careful management of the relationships that form between the organization and online groups.

Over time, we notice that with few exceptions, the concerns of the PR discipline have shown to be the following of the main trends in online communication, without devoting time and effort to the creation of a transversal basis to the management of the various instruments for online

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2008/11/17/motrin-mothers-groundswell-by-the-numbers/>

<sup>52</sup> [http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023\\_3-10297935-93.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-10297935-93.html)

communication that would serve as the plumb-line to guide the design of communication strategies online and offline.

This phenomenon was particularly apparent when the attention of communication professionals focused on the use of blogs in 2003, to today being focused on using social networks, like Facebook, and microblogging tools, like Twitter. For each of these instruments we see new methods and metrics applied and a lack of conceptualization to guide their use in online communication campaigns and strategies.

The online groups that we have been talking about appear to be a key point to create this plumb-line. Understanding the activities that these groups carry out online, we are able to obtain clues that will allow us to follow the online dialogue, manage relationships and all other aspects of an organization's online presence in a more efficient and effective way.

To try to understand these online groups we will use the study on value systems and relate this concept with some of the activities that we as individuals carry out in an online environment.

## 2. Values and Values Systems

### 2.1 Different Approaches to the Study of "Values" and "Values Systems"

#### Values

The concept of "value" can be a confusing one as it is used in very different ways, we can speak of both moral values and symbolic values, or even use the term value as a measure of the importance of an object, product or service. The first conception of value is tied to our culture, while the second is linked to an economic perspective of values. Our objective here is to understand the groups that form among people, therefore we must have a definition of value that is aligned with the study of culture and organizations, and that allows us to understand what makes us build relationships and groups.

The starting point for the search of a definition of "value" adequate to this dissertation was an article by Steven Hitlin and Jane Allyn Piliavin published in 2004 entitled "*VALUES: Reviving a Dormant Concept*." These authors have endeavored to conduct a literature review and reaffirm the importance that the study of "values" has for sociology. In this work, have distinguished different concepts of values and presented the perspective of Schwartz & Bilsky (1987, p. 551) that there are five characteristics common to the different definitions of values:

*"According to the literature, values are (a) concepts or beliefs, (b) about desirable end states or behaviors, (c) that transcend specific situations, (d) guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and (e) are ordered by relative importance.*

*"Schwartz (1992) emphasizes that values are cognitive representations of three universal human requirements: (a) biologically based organism needs, (b) social interactional requirements for interpersonal coordination, and (c) social institutional demands for group welfare and survival. "*

Thus, values appear as something important to comprehend the interactions between individuals and their behavior when they are placed in a group.

Hitlin and Piliavin identified Kluckhohn as one of the first authors to propose a definition of values:

*"Perhaps the most influential definition of values traces back to Kluckhohn (1951, p. 395): 'The value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable, which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action. 'This definition was influential behaviorist in that time because of its focus on the potential for both action and*

*reward and because it covered individuals and groups." (cf. Hitlin and Piliavin 2004, p. 362).*

However, the study of values is mainly attributed to an author of whom we spoke earlier, Milton Rokeach, whose two major works focused on the role of values in society in general and the organization in particular: *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change* (1968), and *The Nature of Human Values* (1973).

Rokeach defines values as something that goes beyond objects or specific situations, which is related to modes of conduct or final stages of existence. He explains:

*"To say that a person 'has the value' is to say that he has an enduring belief that a particular mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence. (...) So defined, the value is a standard or criterion that serves a number of important purposes in our daily lives: it is a standard that tells us how to act or what to want, it is a standard that tells us what attitudes we should hold, it is a standard we employ to justify behavior, to morally judge, and to compare ourselves with others. Finally, the value is the standard we employ to tell us which values, attitudes, and actions of others are worth or not worth trying to influence. If you have a value and you do not want to influence anyone else under the sun to have it too, the chances are it is not a value. "(Rokeach 1968)*

On a more recent set of publications, the author that appears most associated with the study of values is Hofstede. In this author's perspective, values are central to culture and are defined as: *"broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others"* (cf. Hofstede, 2005, p. 8). Values are then feelings to which we add a positive or negative connotation, for example:

1. Good Vs Evil
2. Dirty vs. Clean
3. Pretty Ugly Vs
4. Natural vs. Non-Natural
5. Normal vs. Abnormal
6. Logical vs. Illogical
7. Rational Vs Irrational

There are other approaches to the study of values, namely the one proposed by Inglehart<sup>53</sup>, however, it is authors such as Hofstede Rokeach that present a concept of values aligned with the need to understand relationships, groups and organizations. In common, these two authors define values as a concept that somehow has a symbolic nature and that is connected to

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>



culture and human behavior. But it is the definition of values proposed by Rokeach that shows to be more complete and comprehensive for our study, without annulling the proposal and the analysis model that Hofstede suggests.

This is why we feel it is appropriate to use Rokeach's definition to study the role of values, and find out how values systems were designed to understand the organizations values in an attempt to identify the most appropriate model to the context of the 'Public Relations' discipline.

At this point, when we have a definition of values present and agreed upon, it is important to question what so far has been an assumption: that there is a relationship between the groups we form and our values. The answer to this question arises from biology and neuroscience.

By studying the link between the functioning of our brain and culture, Quartz and Sejnowski encountered evidence that established bonds and relationships as part of a biological imperative:

*"The first hints from brain studies suggest that parent-child bond, the pair bonds of romantic love, and the social bonds of friendship may all have a common root in the brain. They all activate brain systems that use the chemicals oxytocin and vasopressin arginine, endogenous opioids such as the endorphins, which mimic the action of heroin inside the brain, and dopamine. All of these brain systems can be found in nonhuman primates, but also bear in mind that in humans these systems resides inside the brain with expanded and shifted proportions." (Cf. Quartz and Sejnowski, 2004 p., 164)*

Establishing relationships and creating groups thus appears to be something that is part of our nature, it is encoded in our genes and triggers chemical reactions in our brain as a reward.

*"Far from making you an asocial animal, the chemicals inside your head propel you to stay with your family, make the company of others rewarding, and foster the bonds that underlie trust." (Cf. Quartz and Sejnowski 2004 p. 178)*

But we are not beings limited to chemical reactions, our brain possesses very sophisticated cognitive skills that allow us to be aware of a "self", of the existence of "others" and to adapt our behaviour according to different social contexts.

*"In particular, pre-frontal areas add layers of cognitive sophistication that include our self-awareness, awareness of others as persons, long-term planning, and the ability to rapidly shift behavior on the light of changing social contexts to create a*

*moral sense that may only be fully developed in humans. "(cf. Quartz and Sejnowski 2004 p. 181)*

It is due to our cognitive capacity that we are able to communicate and to create a series of symbolic roles, thus we do not limit ourselves to a single facet but we take on a great variety of social roles (or collective identities, as advocated by Quartz and Sejnowski) that allow us to define very diverse groups as "class", "team", "nations", "families" and a myriad of others. And this concept of different roles is only possible due to our ability to perceive symbolic values present in our "I" and which may or may not be reflected on "others."

Harry Reis, a psychologist who argues for the existence of a Science of Relationships, states that relations are systems that are formed as a result of what he calls "perceived partner responsiveness", ie the perception that the "other" responds and corresponds to our presence and interaction (cf. Reis 2002 Reis, Clark and Holmes 2004 Reis 2007).

It is therefore plausible that the perception of shared values guides the formation of groups and that the perception of values in different social contexts guides our behavior. Accepting this premise we are able to proceed and question what are values systems and how they can be useful in understanding different groups and organizations.

## **Values Systems**

According to Rokeach, a system of values arises when values are organized in a hierarchy, and therefore proposes a model to help understand values systems. In his model, Rokeach makes the distinction between instrumental values and terminal values.

Instrumental values refer to our belief that we must be brave, responsible and honest. Values terminals are connected to our belief in salvation, world peace, equality and inner harmony as the final stages of existence. Simply put, we can say that the instrumental values are related to our approach and values terminals are connected to what we hope to achieve by doing so.

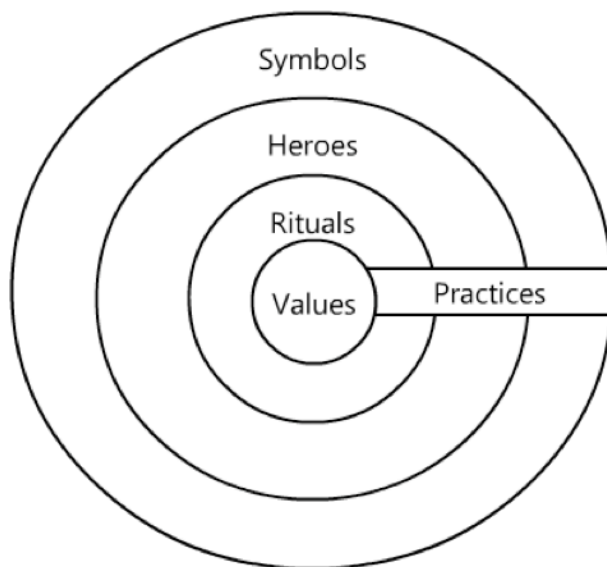
Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
A comfortable life	Ambitious
An exciting life	Broadminded
A sense of accomplishment	Capable
A world at peace	Cheerful
A world of beauty	Clean
Equality	Courageous
Family Security	Forgiving
Freedom	Helpful

Happiness	Honest
Inner Harmony	Imaginative
Mature Love	Independent
National Security	Intellectual
Pleasure	Logical
Salvation	Loving
Self-Respect	Obedient
Social recognition	Polite
True Friendship	Responsible
Wisdom	Self-controlled

Table 1 - Instrumental and terminal values (Rokeach 2008)

This model allows us to have an image of what is the values system of an individual or of a group; using questionnaires, interviews and other forms of qualitative and quantitative research.

The proposed Hofstede puts the figures as something central to the culture of the organization (whether a group of a company or a nation) and that therefore only be made by looking at three elements: Rituals, heroes and symbols.



Made with [lovelycharts.com](https://lovelycharts.com)

Figure 3 - Values, rituals, heroes and symbols as part of Culture Source: Hofstede 2004

By observing these elements, Hofstede provides five variables that shed light on the values system of an organization:

- Power Distance

- Individualism
- Masculinity
- Aversion to Uncertainty
- Guidance for short / long term

"Power distance" refers to the degree of equality that we observe; "individualism" is a reflection of the emphasis on personal achievement as opposed to the achievement of the collective; "Masculinity" as a variable refers to the male role in work, control and power; "Uncertainty Avoidance" is linked to tolerance levels for periods of uncertainty; An orientation towards "long or short term" will mean a certain level of acceptance of traditional values and change. (cf. Hofstede 2005)

These two models, from Hofstede and Rokeach, influenced the study of values systems in a number of contexts, from individual values to the study of the values system of countries<sup>54</sup>. There are however other approaches to the study of values systems, such as those proposed by Inglehart (2000), Quinn and Cameron (1999), Yoash Wiener (1988) and recently Camarinha-Matos and Macedo (2008). These proposals do not relate directly to the discipline of Public Relations, however they make it possible to obtain relevant and important information that allows us to understand organizations and the groups that we form.

Inglehart's work has focused on understanding how cultures and values evolve and how they are linked to economic and political evolution. It is therefore a values system model adequate to understand and compare patterns of consumption and effectiveness of a message according to different cultures, but it fails in providing us with clues to understand the formation of groups or how we establish relationships based on shared values (see Inglehart 2000).

In turn, Quinn and Cameron (1999) present a model for analysis that is focused on diagnosing organizations and changing organizational culture, which they call Competitive Values Framework. In this analysis model 39 indicators of corporate efficiency are applied, that translate into four types of organizations according to four axes (Flexibility and discretion, internal focus and integration, stability and control, external focus and differentiation) as we see in the diagram.

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<sup>54</sup> [http://www.geert-hofstede.com/geert\\_hofstede\\_resources.shtml](http://www.geert-hofstede.com/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml)



Figure 4 - Types of Organizations as proposed by Cameron and Quinn (1999)

Although this is an organization-centred model with structures and objectives well defined and therefore difficult to apply to other systems as those found in more informal social groups, it has relevance to help us understand how a values system can be applied in specific contexts and with clear objectives. Moreover, the types of organization that this model presents show a parallel to the values system model proposed by Hofstede.

The model shows four types of organization: Hierarchy, Market, Clan and Adhocracy. Hierarchy stands out as one of the first responses to the need for organization, and indeed they are the best answer for an organization that needs a continuous flow of input and output.

The market model emerges in organization's that face a competitive environment and that require a rapid response to change. It is based on work by Oliver Williamson, Bill Ouchi et al. This organizational structure works as a market in the sense that it is directed outwards, working through transactions between internal and external stakeholders.

The definition of Clan refers to an organization that resembles a family structure. It is characterized by the existence of shared values and a strong effort to integrate employees in the organizational culture, this structure is usually seen in paternalistic organizations. The authors give the Japanese organizations as a good example of this typology.

Adhocracy, on the other hand, results from the pressures of the information society and its demand for quick results by specialized teams. This means that the organization is dynamic and result-oriented, this typology is usually found in organizations where knowledge is the key factor which is also present in the production output.

We can easily associate a hierarchical organization with a high level of uncertainty avoidance and power distance. In its turn, the Adhocracy model has completely opposite levels of uncertainty and power distance. A Clan structure will certainly have an orientation to the collective, while a market structure will be related to an orientation for short to medium term results as a way to respond to the changing environment in which the organization operates.

Yoash Wiener is an author who proposes an alternative to the values system proposed by Rokeach while at the same time using the same definition of values and associating that definition with normative beliefs. In Wiener's perspective, a values system arises when

*"When a number of key pivotal values concerning organization-related behaviors and state-of-affairs are shared - across units and levels - by members of an organization, the central value system is said to exist." (Cf. Wiener, 1988, p. 535)*

This definition of values system strengthens our view that shared values are an important component of organizations and of the groups we form. Wiener goes on to clarify that this sharing of values can be shared in a more or less intense way.

*"As a variable organizational value systems span a continuum from weak, in which key values are not broadly and intensely shared by members, to strong, in which they are." (Cf. Wiener, 1988, p. 535)*

The value system that Wiener has proposed shows two important aspects, the focus or content of values and the origin of those values. Based on these two axes, Wiener defines his typology of values systems.

Source and Anchoring of Values		
	Organizational Tradition	Charismatic Leadership
Functional	Functional-Traditional	Functional-Charismatic
Elitist	Elitist-Traditional	Elitist-Charismatic

Figure 5 - Classification of types of value systems based on the focus and source of the data (Source: Wiener 1988)

According to Wiener, one of the applications of this value system is in maintaining the organization and its values, and proposes the following representation of processes and events that contribute to the maintenance and transmission of values.

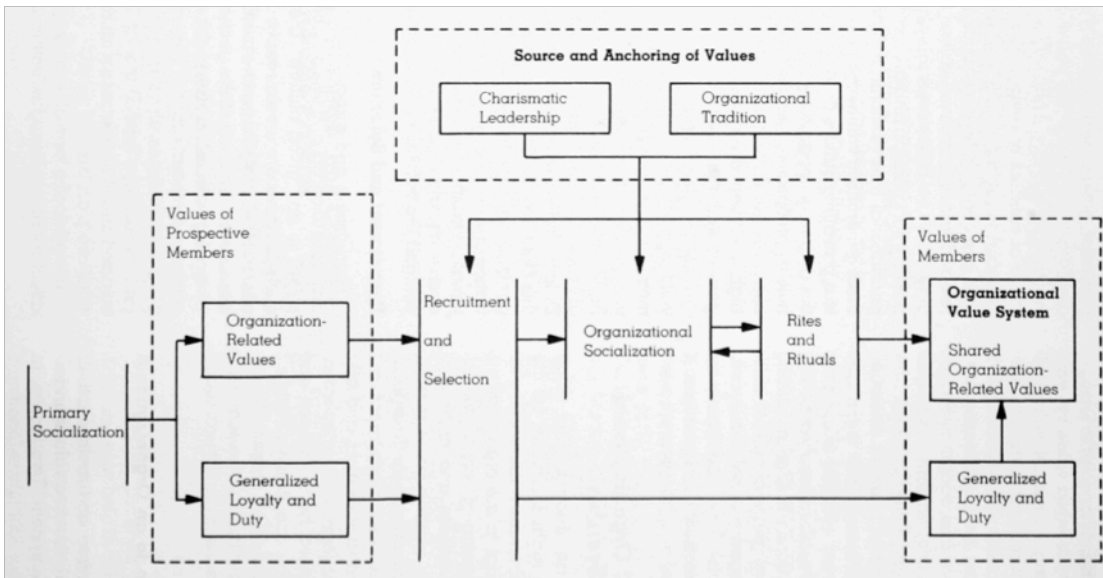


Figure 6 - A sequence of processes and events that contribute to the transmission and maintenance of the value system of an organization. (source: Wiener 1988)

The work presented by Wiener allows us to take some important notions, first, that we should take into account a greater or lesser sharing of values within the same values system, and that this degree of shared values can vary within the organization.

In turn, Camarinha-Matos and Macedo assume a different basis as a way to obtain a definition of value system that takes into account the two perspectives of the concept:

*"Value systems have been studied in two distinct disciplines: economy and psycho-sociology. Each discipline developed a different concept of Value System; social sciences consider the value system as the ordering and prioritization of the ethical and ideological values that an individual or society holds, and Economists defend the value system that describes the set of activities that add / create value among the firms." (cf. Camarinha-Matos and Macedo 2008)*

In order to achieve a values system that can be aligned to the two perspectives, the authors choose to define value as "anything that can give rise to an exchange (Piaget 1965). Also in this sense, values are not only material objects, but may also be actions, ideas, emotions, social habits, etc." (cf. Camarinha-Matos and Macedo 2008). Thus, the definition of value proposed by Rokeach that was presented earlier can still apply to the value system for collaborative networks described by Camarinha-Matos and Macedo.

In light of this definition of values, Camarinha-Matos and Macedo define values system as "a set of valuable things for an organization and a set of functions used for its evaluation according to different perspectives (cf. Camarinha-Matos and Macedo 2008) and use the diagram found on Figure 7 to describe this conceptual model.



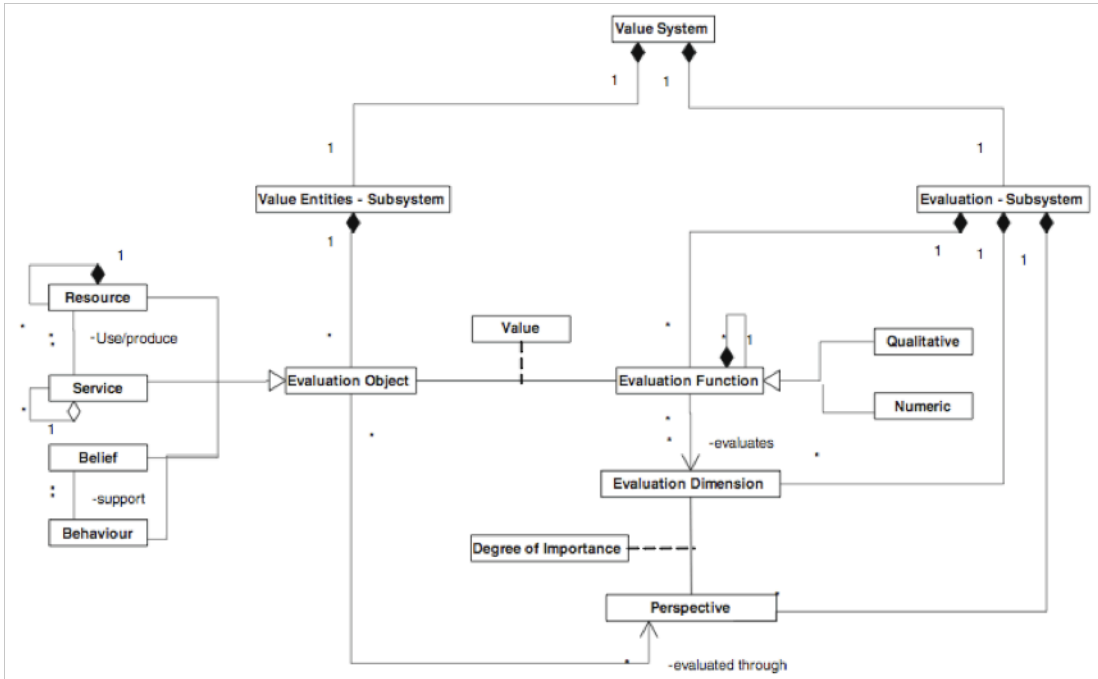


Figure 7 - Graphical representation of the conceptual model of system of values proposed by Camarinha-Matos and Macedo (2008)

In a simplified description, this value system is composed of two subsystems: *value objects subsystem* and *evaluation subsystem*; and in it a series of concepts are put into practice :

*"Definition 1 - Value is the relative worth, utility or importance of something.  
 Definition 2 - Evaluation object can be anything that is valuable for the evaluator (eg resources, processes, behaviors, relationships, beliefs, information etc..).  
 Definition 3 - or evaluator subject of evaluation is the entity that performs the evaluation. This entity can be an individual person, a social group (organization, government, virtual organization), or an instrument. Definition 4 - Evaluation is the act of judging, measuring or calculating the quality, importance, or amount of something. "(Cf. Camarinha-Matos and Macedo 2008)*

A particular object of evaluation is thus evaluated according to a certain Dimension and set of characteristics that are relevant to the individuals who make that assessment. Whether this assessment is made according to quantitative or qualitative criteria, it is made with a particular purpose in mind. In figure 8 we see a representation of an act of assessment by a broker and a possible business partner. In acts of evaluation, the subject of evaluation (in this case a potential business partner) is assessed according to different dimensions of analysis (technological competencies, social competencies, prestige). By the business partner, the same evaluation exercise will be performed can give rise to a business partnership.

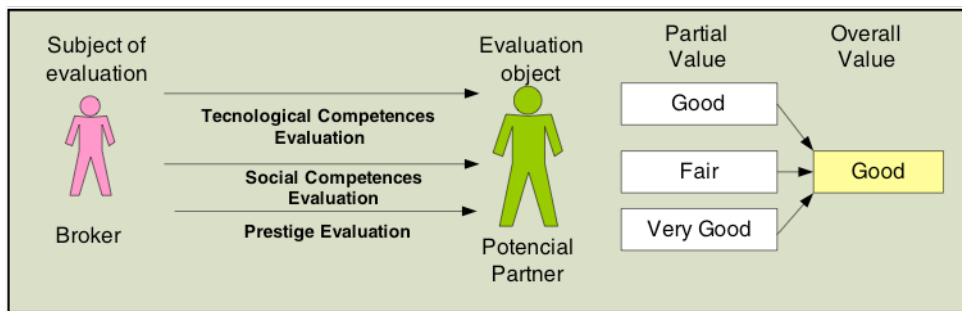


Figure 8 - Example of qualitative (source: Camarinha-Matos and Macedo 2008)

The proposed values system is particularly interesting because it is not limited to psycho-sociological perspective that we have been following and it proposes a set of concepts which can serve as a basis for the investigation of models of values systems. In particular, this value system does not focus on understanding organizations, but in understanding the collaborative relationships formed within organizations.

The various proposals that we have been examining do not focus specifically on the application of value systems to the theory and practice of Public Relations. For this reason it makes sense to continue our study so we can investigate in what ways values and values systems emerge in PR literature with regard to organizations and especially public relations as relationship management.

## 2.2 Values Systems in the Context of Public Relations

In searching through PR literature, it was possible to gain the perception that the issue of values tends to be addressed in the psycho-sociological perspective referred by Camarinha-Matos and Macedo. Within this perspective we can distinguish two distinct uses of the concept. At first, the concept of values appears listed as an important element of Corporate Identity and Brand. In a second use of the concept, values appear as a factor which helps to better understand internal and external audiences.

In *Expressive Organization* Corporate Identity is defined as "how an organization expresses and differentiates itself in relation to its stakeholders" (see Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, 2000, p. 13), so the concept can manifest itself through visual and tangible elements or as part of the strategic process, specifically through the Vision, Mission and philosophy of the company. In this definition, corporate identity is something that is constructed within the organization and communicated to different audiences and the way by which it is defined is connected to the organizational culture, making it an element composed of values (see Schultz et al. 2000 ).

This use of the concept of values also appears in the report *The Authentic Enterprise* by the Arthur W. Page Society, which highlights the importance of defining and establishing corporate values.

*"At the end of our report, we lay out four new priorities and skills for which the Chief Communications Officer must now assume the leadership role: 1. Leadership in defining and instilling company values; 2. Leadership in building and managing multi-stakeholder relationships; 3. Leadership in enabling the enterprise with "newmedia" skills and tools; and 4. Leadership in building and managing trust, in all its dimensions. "(Cf. *The Authentic Enterprise*, p. 7) <sup>55</sup>*

But values also arise associated with brands. In an article published by Chernatony and Riley we find a review of literature related to Brands, which identified 12 categories of what constitutes the concept: a legal instrument, a logo, a company, an abbreviation (shorthand), risk reduction, an identity system, an image in the minds of consumers, **a system of values**, personality, a relationship, added value, an entity in evolution (see Chernatony and Riley 1998 p. 2). In *Lovemarks*, Kevin Roberts (2005) shows the same logic when it describes the evolution of brands throughout history.

The definition Chernatony and Riley proposed that a brand can be defined as "(...) a multidimensional construct, matching the firm's functional and emotional values with the performance and psychosocial needs of consumers" (cf. Chernatony and Riley 1998 p. 1)

Kapferer in turn puts the concept of Brand as something connected to the identity of the organization.

*"For corporate brands, in particular, the organizations that they represent provide elements of truth, of inner authenticity, relevance of inner, the brand's meaning is not invented, or derived from market analysis: it is revealed. The truth of corporate brands lies within themselves. This is why the process of defining a corporate brand's identity so stresses the necessity of understanding the organization itself, its identity. In turn, understanding an organization's identity calls for distinguishing the different facets of collective identities (MOINGEON and Soenen, 2002). "(Cf. Kapferer 2002 p.176)*

In the perspective proposed by Argenti we find a more consistent view of what constitutes each of these concepts that we have been addressing in an attempt to elucidate what is values system.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.awpagesociety.com/images/uploads/2007AuthenticEnterprise.pdf>

Term	Definition	Question
<i>Identity</i>	Consists of a company's defining attributes, such as its people, products, and services.	Who are you?
<i>Corporate brand</i>	A brand that spans an entire company (which can also have disparate underlying product brands.) Conveys expectations of what the company will deliver in terms of products, services, and customer experience. Can be aspirational.	Who do you say you are and want to be?
<i>Image</i>	A reflection of an organization's identity and its corporate brand. The organization as seen from the viewpoint of <i>one constituency</i> . Depending on which constituency is involved (customers, investors, employees, etc.,) an organization can have many different images.	What do constituencies think of who you are and who you tell them you are?
<i>Reputation</i>	The collective representation of <i>multiple constituencies'</i> images of a company, built up over time and based on a company's identity programs, its performance and how constituencies have perceived its behavior.	What do all constituencies think of who you tell them you are and what you've done?

Table 2 - Definition of some key terms (source: Argenti, PA, & Druckenmiller, B. (2004). Reputation and the Corporate Brand. Corporate Reputation Review, 6 (4), 368-374. Doi: Article.)

We will not proceed with the description of these concepts according to various authors. For the purpose of this dissertation it is enough to leave us with the notion that both the Brand and the Corporate Identity or Corporate Brand are elements which are defined within the organization, and that reputation is awarded by publics and other external constituencies. Reputation, while being formed by perceptions and values that may differ from the corporate identity defined by the organization, should however be as close to it as possible.

In Excellent public relations and effective organizations, Grunig and Dozier present the concept of values in a different light, focusing on understanding the different stakeholders and formulating strategies. In this work we see mentioned two axioms of corporate strategy:

*"Corporate strategy must reflect an understanding of the values of organizational members and stakeholders; Corporate strategy must reflect an understanding of the ethical nature of strategic choice "(cf. Grunig and Dozier 2002, p. 555).*

In the same work we find several references to the need to understand publics and stakeholders of an organization, not only in regards to the identification of these constituents, but also as a way to give them a voice and to develop more effective and efficient communication programs (see Grunig and Dozier 2002).

This need to understand different audiences is still present when we talk about issues management. Ledingham and Bruning define this role as being composed of a number of functions:

*"Issues management is a continuous monitoring process that emphasizes the environment and making adjustments to feedback from both the external and the internal environments. Effective issues management involves 10 functions:*

- 1. Integrating public policy process analyzes issues and audits into the organizational leadership's strategic planning;*
- 2. Monitoring standards of organizational performance to discover the opinions and **values** hold key publics that may affect operations;*
- 3. Developing and implementing ethical codes of social organizational accountability;*
- 4. Assisting senior management in decision making, particularly in readjusting goals and operating policies vis-à-vis public opinion;*
- 5. Identifying,, defining, prioritizing, and empirically analyzing those issues of greatest operational, financial, and political significance to the organization;*
- 6. Creating multidimensional reactive and proactive institutional response plans from among the available range of issue-change strategy options;*
- 7. Establishing grassroots contact with potential cooperators (including the media);*
- 8. Communicating on those issues identified as most important to the organization and its various key publics to establish an agenda and build external support;*
- 9. Directing opinion to stall or mitigate the development and effects of undesirable legislation or regulation; and*

10. *Evaluating the impact of these efforts to determine whether objectives were achieved, direct ongoing improvements, and make further recommendations to management.* "(Cf. Ledingham and Bruning 2001, p. 97)

Besides the clear mention of values, most of the features described by these authors may benefit from a framework of analysis that includes the values expressed by each of the publics or stakeholders of the organization.

In an issues more focused on relationship management, David Phillips proposes that relationships are formed by shared values, manifested through occurrences (tokens), tangible or intangible, to which in a given utterance both parties attribute values. If there is a coincidence of these values, a relationship may then be established. At the same time, understanding the values that an individual or public show through their actions and reactions, we can create the necessary conditions to establish relationships, putting the actors in a context in which they are in the presence of a token to which they attribute the same description and the same values (cf. Phillips 2008).

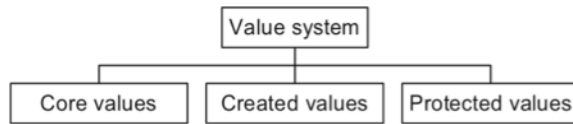
We will cover David Phillips view further on, for now and to be able to proceed, it is important to take the notion that values are also used as an element that allows us to understand publics, because of its link to culture and behavior. However this application values to obtain information present in the environment of the organization and relevant to the creation of more effective strategies is an area where we are still taking our first steps and which lies beyond the scope of this investigation.

There are however some proposals for values systems that can be applied to specific Public Relations contexts, where the concept of values is used as part of corporate identity. Wenstøp and Myrmell have a values system in which values related to culture appear side by side with values created by the organization and core values. These authors make the distinction between "*values that are created and values that are protected*" (see Wenstøp and Myrmel, 2006, p. 679) while at the same time support the concept of core values:

The difference between core values and stakeholder values is that whilst the latter usually are tangible results of the operations of the organization, core values prescribe its character or attitude - the way it is supposed to operate. The intention is to motivate aspirational values and answer the question, "what kind of organization should we be?" (...) The typical sections where core values appear are "code of conduct", "code of ethics", "corporate philanthropy", "corporate citizenship" and ethical principles such as belief (Chun, 2005). Chun has used factor analysis and identified six dimensions of organizational virtue that underlie core values:

integrity", "empathy", "warmth", "courage", "conscientiousness" and "zeal". (cf. Wenstøp and Myrmel, 2006, p. 676)

This concept of values is aligned with the notions of corporate identity and Brand and the value system proposed can be represented by the diagram in Figure 9.



**Note:** Created values are values created for the stakeholders, and protected values are protected by voluntary standards and procedures

Figure 9 - A generic values system as proposed by Wenstøp and Myrmel (source: Wenstøp and Myrmel 2006)

Applying this value system to a company would result in the diagram we see in Figure 10.

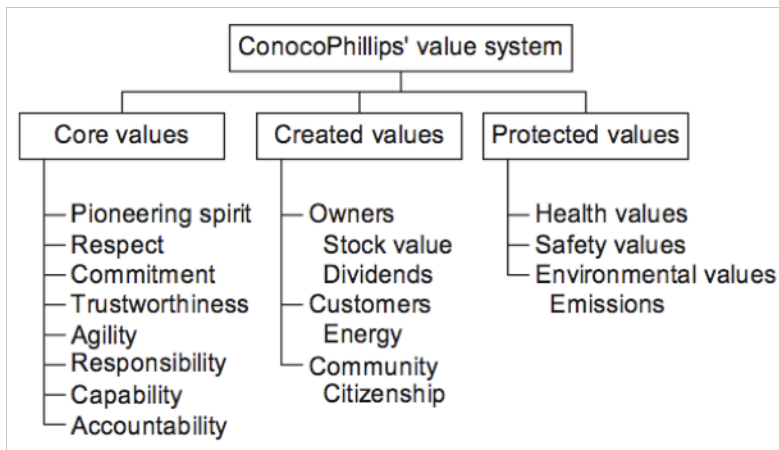


Figure 10 - Demonstration of how the values system proposed by Wenstøp and Myrmel (2006) could be applied

In a different approach, Jon Iwata presented in November 2009 the values system that IBM has developed as a way to manage its Corporate Brand. Iwata explains the need for this model and its application as follows:

*"One day soon, every employee, every retiree, every customer, every business partner, every investor and every neighbor associated with every company will be able to share an opinion about that company with everyone in the world, based on firsthand experience. **The only way we can be comfortable in that world is if every employee of the company is truly grounded in what their company***

**values and stands for.** *What are we doing about this at IBM? We have created a new discipline within my organization that puts together brand management and workforce enablement, or what we used to call internal communications. This may sound to some like external and internal messaging coming together - the brand ambassador employee. Sure, that's an aspect of it. But the centerpiece is something quite different. We call it the IBM System Brand. Picture a framework with five columns. From left to right the columns are labeled **what it means to look like IBM, to sound like IBM, to think like IBM, to perform like IBM and ultimately to be IBM** " <sup>56</sup>*

In an analysis of this model we can easily conclude that each of the five columns will contain different values that must be present for an association with IBM and its corporate identity to be made. As Iwata explains, this model of design and analysis has the advantage of aggregating both communication and human resource management.

A critique that can be made regarding this type of values systems, is that they are designed exclusively from the inside out, that is to say: designed in accordance with the organization's culture. The values systems that we have examined so far, do not always take into account other (external) values that may be crucial in the construction of corporate identity.

Similarly, it is not always taken into account that the organization is composed of publics with different values or with values which are shared to a lesser degree, as suggested by the values system proposed by Yoash Wiener which we described earlier (chapter 2.1, page 46).

In the design of these values systems, an analysis of exchange relationships present and on what makes them something of value to both parties is not always carried out. Instead, it is merely argued that an effective communication of corporate values and brand values is an important factor to maximize the value of the organization from an economic perspective.

We can only resort to these values systems as a way to understand how the organization intends to present itself to its audiences and how it intends to use the values of its culture so that there is a consistent message present in all of its corporate communication.

We thus focus our attention on a values system that strives to understand the relationships of the organization and the presence of values in these relationships. The view proposed by David Phillips (2008) for the management of relations emerges as a perspective that covers these requirements.

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<sup>56</sup> <http://www.prconversations.com/?p=623>



This author perceives the organization starting from the definition of Fontrodona that defines an organization as a nexus of contracts that are formed in an attempt to reduce transaction costs by means of Agency Relationships, adding that these contracts are not necessarily explicit or formal (Fontrodona and Sison 2006 ).

In The Nature of the Firm, Agency Theory and Shareholder Theory, Fontrodona Sison and explain that:

*"Methodologically, agency theory subscribes to individualism: its basic unit of analysis is the human being fully constituted as an individual and bereft of any social dimension. In every endeavor individual agents seek above all their own utility (utilitarianism) or pleasure (Hedonism), the satisfaction of their own desires. They form groups not to Fulfill any requirement of their proper flourishing of human beings but only to further their private interests (Contractualism). Outside of thes, agents do not subscribe to any moral imperative, they willingly engage in immoral conduct whenever convenient. Acting morally would be reasonable only if it presented a greater economic incentive in terms of utility and pleasure than the contrary. "*

From here we can extract the idea that individual values systems do not always coincide with the values systems of the organization and that the relationships built within the organization are of a different typology, based on different values.

Phillips uses this definition to propose that the organization is a nexus of relationships. These relationships can be established through a contract, which is basically a token linked to values of legal obligation, or it may occur through a token and an occurrence in which it shares the same definition of associated values.

In the path of Grunig and Hon, David Phillips suggests some aspects should be considered when we speak of "relationships". In Excellent Public Relations (L. Grunig, J. Grunig and Dozier 2002) two types of relationships are described: exchange and communal relationships. For each of them there are four possible outcomes attached: Control Mutuality, Trust, Commitment and Satisfaction. These concepts are explained in *Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations*.

*"Control Mutuality - The degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organizations and publics each have some control over the other. Trust - One party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself*

*to the other party. There are three dimensions to trust: integrity: the belief that an organization is fair and just ... dependability: the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do ... and, competence: the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do. Satisfaction - The extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs. Commitment - The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote. Two dimensions of commitment are continuance commitment, which refers to a certain line of action, and affective commitment, which is an emotional orientation. Relationship Exchange - In an exchange relationship, one party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future. Communal Relationship - In a communal relationship, both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other - even when they get nothing in return. For most public relations activities, developing communal relationships with key constituencies is much more important than conseguir would be developing exchange relationships. "*

(see Grunig and Hon 1999 Institute for Public Relations - Guidelines For Measuring Relationships in Public Relations<sup>57</sup>.)

In turn, Phillips (2008) presents some key concepts about relationships in *The Value of Relationships*.

- 1. Public relations practitioners and researchers can study the relationships phenomena distinct from the perceptions held by parties in the relationships*
- 2. The formation of relationships occurs when parties have perceptions and expectations of each other, when one or both parties need resources from the other, when one or both parties perceive mutual threats from an uncertain environment, or when there is either a legal or voluntary necessity to associate.*
- 3. Relationships consist of patterns of linkages through which the parties in them pursue their interdependent and service needs.*
- 4. Relationships are the dynamic results of the exchanges and reciprocity that manifest themselves as the relationships develop and evolve, yet they can be described at a given point in time.*

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<sup>57</sup> [http://www.instituteforpr.org/research\\_single/guidelines\\_measuring\\_relationships](http://www.instituteforpr.org/research_single/guidelines_measuring_relationships)

5. *Relationships may lead to increased dependency, loss of autonomy, goal achievement, and structured interdependence in the form of routine and institutionalized behavior.*

6. *Relationships have unique and measurable properties that are not shared with the participants and in the relationships that define the relationships being something separate from the participants.*

7. *The antecedents and consequences of relationships also have unique properties that distinguish them from the relationship.*

8. *Relationship formation and maintenance represents a process of mutual adaptation and contingent responses.*

9. *The absence of a useful definition preclude measurement of organization-public relationships and forces both scholars and practitioners alike to measure one part or another of them and make potentially invalid inferences about the relationships.*

10. *The absence of a fully explicated conceptual definition of organization-public relationships limits theory building in public relations.*

(see Phillips, The Value of Relationships 2008)<sup>58</sup>

As to what is in fact a relationship Ledingham refers to the work of Broom, Casey and Ritchey (1997).

*"Relationships consist of patterns of linkages through which the parties pursue and service their needs independent (...) Relationship formation and maintenance represents a process of mutual adaptation and contingent responses and that relationships between an organization and key publics are phenomena that can be studied as distinct from the perceptions of the relationship held either by an organization or its key publics. "(cf. Ledingham et al. 1999)*

Phillips's work makes it possible to carry out an identification of values and relationships between actors in an organization and between organizations. Similarly, the concepts presented in the claim that an organization is a nexus of relationships, leaves us with the possibility that a group of persons may constitute an organization if we are able identify relationships between them and assuming they are capable of some sort of concerted action. These are concepts that

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<sup>58</sup> A lecture about the nature of relationships in a PR context based on a paper published in the Journal of Communications Management 2006 given to Escola Superior de Comunicação Social, Lisbon, Portugal October 2008

we will try to apply in order to understand organizations and groups that form online through various online communication tools/channels/instruments.

## 3. The Demonstration of Values and Values Systems Online

### 3.1 Theoretical Model Proposed

In the course of our research it was possible to see that values are divided in two perspectives, an economic perspective and a psycho-sociological perspective. (cf. Camarinha-Matos and Macedo 2008). In an attempt to understand groups that form online, we investigated models of values systems which are used to understand organizations and the values systems that are often used in Public Relations and Corporate Communications research. In a context of public relations as relationship management, the proposals by Phillips, Camarinha-Matos and Macedo appear as the most suitable for our objectives.

For this reason we accept Phillips' definition, that an organization is a nexus of relationships and that these relationships can be identified by shared values, depending on the use and description of matching Types (tokens) and Occurrences (Phillips 2008)

For a relationship to be formed, values must then be demonstrated / communicated in order to be the object of evaluation, as described by Camarinha-Matos and Macedo and sustained through the concept of perceived partner responsiveness proposed by Harry Reis.

If the result of this evaluation is positive and conditions are appropriate, we may see an exchange or a communal relationship form, as defined by Grunig (see Grunig and Hon 1999). The nature of this relationship will depend on the values that trigger it, if those values are economical values we will be faced with an exchange relationship; if on the other hand these values show to be of a psycho-sociological nature we will be in the presence of a communal relationship.

It is not feasible to consider that a relationship will be composed only of economic or psycho-sociological values, just as it is not feasible to consider that an exchange relationship will not change into a communal relationship and vice versa. Similarly, any relationship may consist of economic and psycho-sociological values and will be stronger or weaker depending on these two types of values being aligned to a greater or lesser degree. An exchange relationship that is based purely on the price of a product or service is easily replaced, unless it is reinforced by a psycho-sociological component, a practical example comes when we analyze the practices of fair trade<sup>59</sup>, in which psycho-sociological factors become more important than price and other economical values.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk>

The values that allow for a relationship to be established may have their origin within the organization itself or be the result of another partnership. Social responsibility as a value emerges as a clear example, a company may only communicate / demonstrate the value of social responsibility according to two hypotheses:

- If the company itself to carry out corporate social responsibility with its resources and staff;
- If the business partnerships in which sponsors social institutions and create conditions to facilitate the activities of these institutions;

In the second case, the loss of a partnership means the company loses a key element to, given that social responsibility is a core value.

Following this model we can expect that a nexus of relationships, an organization or an online group, to be identified based on the identification of shared values. The identification of these value can be analyzed according to two different perspectives. In a first approach we analyze exchange relationships by identifying the economic and psycho-sociological values and how each of these values flows through the network of relationships.

In figure 11 we can see the exchange relationships exemplified by full arrows, with dashed arrows showing the path of psycho-sociological values. The organization and its suppliers share an economic value, offering goods and services at a low price, so that the exchange relationship is mutual. They also share a psycho-sociological value, of providing quality products. In relation to the Hospital, the organization provides means for the Hospital to carry out its activities more effectively through economic values (which may be financial, human resources etc.). Thus the organization can communicate / demonstrate its values of social responsibility.

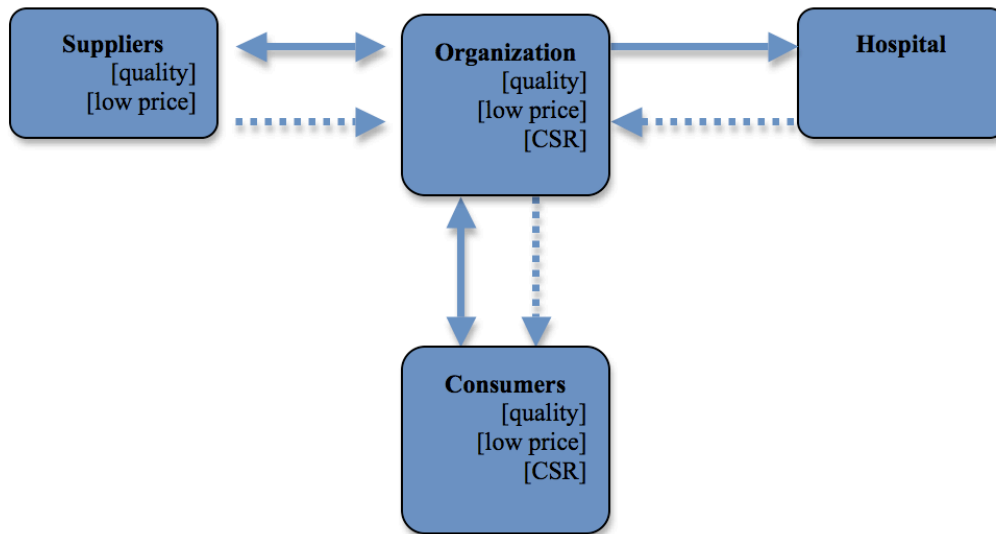


Figure 11 - A representation of exchange relationships and of the values that make those relationships possible. Full arrows demonstrate the exchange of economical values, dashed arrows show the flow of psycho-sociological values.

In this diagram it is clear that the organization itself does not have the values that consumers seek: quality, low price and corporate social responsibility. By establishing relationships, the organization obtains the means to provide consumers with a product or service that not only matches their needs, but also show the existence of coinciding psycho-sociological values.

If we are not looking at an organization with a clearly defined business activity, we can still apply this model under the presence of values and how groups are formed around these values, as shown in Figure 12. If there is a social structure and communication between individuals who share these values it is possible for this group to carry out a concerted action with specific objectives. Shared values, together with the ability to communicate and carry out concerted actions are characteristics that allow us to consider these groups to be publics.

In a context where the Internet gives us full access to information and communication tools, it is important to conduct this kind of analysis in order to identify groups and publics online.

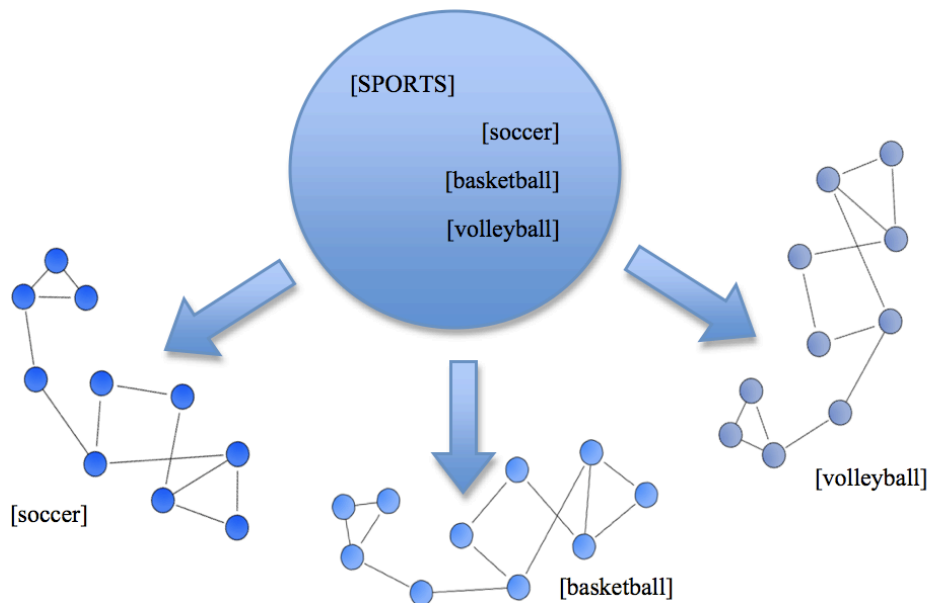


Figure 12 - Representation of communal relationships around the same category of values: sports.

In either case, the presence of values can be identified using the Hofstede model, we observe the practices of each group as a way to obtain information that allows us to assess the shared values system.

At this point we need to question how the values of each individual appear during the course of online communication, mediated by technology.

### 3.2 Main Online Communication Channels and the Demonstration of Values

The model proposed at the beginning of this chapter can only become relevant to help us understand groups or publics online if certain conditions are met. First we need to prove that we in fact express our values in our online activities and if so we need to ascertain if it is possible to identify the manifestation of these economic and psycho-sociological values in the different instruments of online communication that constitute the Internet. Finally, there has to be a way to identify a connection between individuals, whether these connections are the result of interactions or hyperlinks.

When investigating the use of online social networks by adolescents, a study by Donath and Boyd (2004) discussed how values arise and how to conditions are created to establish a relationship in these networks.



*"Seeing someone within the context of their connections provides the viewer with information about them. Social status, political beliefs, musical taste, etc., may be inferred from the company one keeps. Furthermore, knowing that someone is connected to people one already knows and trusts is one of the most basic ways of Establishing trust with a new relationship. "(Donath and Boyd 2004)*

In Boyd's Dissertation (2008) these aspects are highlighted and it is explained that creating a profile on a social network is an activity to which teens devote quite an amount of time and attention, in an attempt to reflect their identity as much as possible. Our individual and community values will be an inevitable part of that identity and will be demonstrated with a variety of tokens. These Types and their occurrences are seen in the way we describe ourselves, the colors we choose, as well as the music and photos we selected to be part of this online representation of ourselves.

During this research, Boyd concludes that the technology did change some aspects, such as the social environment in which interactions are conducted, but that despite these changes teens are still subject to the same social dynamics.

*"(...) Teens' engagement with social network sites reveals a continuation of earlier practices inflected in new ways. Teens are still engaged in complex processes of identity work to locate themselves in social worlds that are predominantly defined by school, religious organizations, family, and geography. Most are still looking to be validated by peers and to gain status in social worlds that predate the Internet. They still struggle to gain acceptance in an adult-narrated society and to have control over their lives as they come of age. At the core, for most teens, not much has changed with respect to the central dynamics of youth and the social frame in which they occur. Network sites reveals a continuation of earlier practices inflected in new ways. Teens are still engaged in complex processes of identity work to locate themselves in social worlds that are predominantly defined by school, religious organizations, family, and geography. Most are still looking to be validated by peers and to gain status in social worlds that predate the Internet. They still struggle to gain acceptance in an adult-narrated society and to have control over their lives as they come of age. At the core, for most teens, not much has changed with respect to the central dynamics of youth and the social frame in which they occur. "(Boyd 2007, p. 293)*

Boyd proves that some mechanisms and processes for socialization and identity in adolescents still exist, even if mediated by technology. Some of these processes involve the demonstration of personal values and the search for social networks of peer groups that share those values.

Boyd's work proves that teens' activity in social networks is mostly around the demonstration of personal values and interaction with social groups.

But the way by which we show values in social networks is not limited to the construction of a profile page in one or more social network websites. In a Boston Globe article<sup>60</sup> an MIT study is mentioned in which two students collected public data of a social network (in this case Facebook) and showed that it is possible to extrapolate the political and sexual orientation of the users. This information was extrapolated based on a statistical analysis and an algorithm that among other variables included friends, groups, and other information present in profiles.

We will not discuss the ethical issues that this type of analysis raises. For the purpose of this research it is sufficient that it indicates that the statement of values and attitudes may arise from the simple act of adding contacts and groups to our profiles. What happens in an almost involuntary way in the act of building a profile on a social network also happens in other online channels.

In a different setting, anthropologist Michael Wesch carried out a series of studies using participant observation<sup>61</sup>, becoming aware that users of YouTube display both individual values as well as the community's values in their use of the website and in the communication that takes place in the website. These values can be assessed through the videos that users publish and through the comments they leave on those videos.

In regards to virtual worlds, values are not displayed in the form of profile pages or blogs but through the construction of Avatars.

An Avatar can be described as a representation of who we are in this virtual world. In the gallery "Alter Ego" Robbie Cooper<sup>62</sup> shows how these representations do not always correspond to what we are but to what we wanted to be. In addition, David Phillips states in the *leverwealth* blog<sup>63</sup> that an avatar is imbued with a semiotic facet that can be useful to improve communication. Either as a mechanism that facilitates or obstructs communication, an Avatar has tokens and associated values that make it valid and relevant for an analysis. Depending on the virtual world that Avatar is present in, we can still grasp the values of groups depending on

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<sup>60</sup> [http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2009/09/20/project\\_gaydar\\_an\\_mit\\_experiment\\_raises\\_new\\_questions\\_about\\_online\\_privacy/?page=full](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2009/09/20/project_gaydar_an_mit_experiment_raises_new_questions_about_online_privacy/?page=full)

<sup>61</sup> <http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/?p=230>

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.lensculture.com/alter.html>

<sup>63</sup> <http://leverwealth.blogspot.com/2009/04/avata-hero.html>

the use of the potential of that world, whether by the relationships of partnership established, by the places he/she decides to "visit" or tasks that are carried out.

On blogs and other similar channels of communication, practices differ and with them the tokens that demonstrate values. Blogs were originally created in a response to the need to publish information efficiently and effectively, and early on they were used as if they were public journals<sup>64</sup>. Given that posts appear in a chronological order, we can easily analyze what an author chooses to publish to his blog as a way to understand the evolution of his interests and even values.

In their own right, blogs have formed the first social network in the sense that each blog has one or more authors, and there is an exchange of links with other bloggers. The network of links that is formed results in the demonstration of connections between people, which does not mean that these connections are equivalent to a relationship. Some common features that can help us realize the author's values are widgets<sup>65</sup>, templates chosen, the hyperlinks present, photographs, the subjects and topics that are covered and all "text" content that is present on the blog. What is true for blogs is shown to be applicable to a number of other online communication tools that make use of text content. These instruments can be forums, discussion groups, email exchanges or corporate websites.

In short, whether in blogs, social networks, virtual worlds or other online communication tools, there are practices that denote tokens and their values. Even though sometimes there is a discrepancy between the values shown and the actual characteristics of the subject, as we saw regarding avatars, this does not mean that the person is being dishonest or false. These are two sides of same coin.

Since our values system model cannot be confined to only some channels for online communication, we have to use tokens that are transversal to the greatest number of online tools and practices. The publication of content in the form of text appears as one of the most common practices and to be the one most easy to analyze.

On the one hand these arguments show that we demonstrate our values online, on the other they put into question what relationships are established in this online context. In Boyd's view, the relationships that teens establish online, through social networks, are in fact social connections. A contribution from Seth Godin, author of *Permission Marketing*, in Q&A session

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/oliveira-rosa-meire-diaros-publicos-mundos-privados.html>

<sup>65</sup> A widget is an element of graphical interface that displays up to date information and that allows some sort of interaction. Widgets can often be copied and placed in several websites at the same time.

for the Innerpreneur conference<sup>66</sup> came to become a good complement to Boyd's perspective. Godin said that thanks to social networks it is easier to create a link or connection, but for a real relationship to exist there is a need for more than a simple succession of bits. A friend on an online social network is not necessarily a friend for whom we alter our behavior, a friend in a social network can still be a stranger.

Within public relations we find the work of Kelleher (2006), this author advocates the need to have prior knowledge of the organization so that a relationship is formed and that the probability of forming a relationship is dependent on the credibility of this knowledge. Kelleher thus offers a definition of types of relationships: news-driven relationships, commerce-driven relationships, and issue-driven relationships.

In news-driven relationships, the role of PR is to make public information more relevant and useful to different audiences, bringing them closer to the organization.

With regard to commerce-driven relationships, the public relations professional acts and brings value to the organization by managing the channels of online commerce. Making sure that information and processes essential for the exchange take place as effectively and efficiently as possible, acting if there is a barrier. Part of this action is to organize internal publics to convey that the organization functions in a cohesive and coherent way.

Finally, Kelleher describes an issue-driven relationship. In this context we are talking about an event that raises the concerted action of one or more constituents of the Web to bring the organization to change its behavior.

Although valid, this approach to online relationships focuses on the relationships formed with an organization, leaving no space for the identification of relationships that are formed by shared interests, such as collaboration on projects or simply need to change information.

The perspective presented by David Phillips (2001) emerges as a much more comprehensive and closer reality than Kelleher's work. The author begins by arguing in favour of assessing and monitoring the online presence of an organization, including the scenario to which the organization belongs and identifying opportunities and threats as a way to carry out the management of the organization's reputation.

He states that the role of online public relations still has much to do with the creation of resources and building of partnerships. For this to happen it is necessary to participate in the various

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0h0LICu8Ks>

communication tools on behalf of the organization and always striving for transparency and trust.

In the second edition of *Online Public Relations*, Phillips and Young (2009), in regard to online relationships, argue that users use the Internet as an information source and in search for interaction. And indeed the ways we communicate and interact online are related to the ease with which we can publish content and have access to it, as we saw in the beginning of this chapter.

But there are other perspectives on what constitutes a relationship that are relevant to public relations, such as what is proposed by Don Tapscott and Clay Shirky. Both show that the changes that took place in our society as a result of communication technology have brought us to a world where new forms of collaboration and organization are possible (Tapscott 2009, Shirky 2008), with collaboration by nature being a form of relationship.

Don Tapscott in *Wikinomics* (2009) describes a world where collaboration is now possible on an unprecedented scale, in such a way that organizational boundaries have become porous and the organization is forced to new levels of transparency. It forms a system of relations that may even result in a system of management and production. An example of this comes from Shirky, who describes how wikipedia reverts vandalism attempts on its pages (Shirky 2008). Because each user can edit a wikipedia page and because there is a recording of changes made, any act of vandalism is reverted in a simple procedure which involves less effort than the original act of malicious editing.

The result of the *wiki workspace* presented by Tapscott, where collaboration is free, is a drastic change in how value is produced as well as new forms of organization: more horizontal and consist of peers. Thus we find a multiplicity of motivations to establish relationships in the individuals involved, and an organization of members based on authority and influence which are gained by collaborating with other members of the wiki workspace and by demonstrating knowledge.

But is this true for all organizations? It will depend on being a small, medium or large organization, and in this context the size is related to the scope of communication more than the number of employees or revenue. Clay Shirky explains in his book *Here Comes Everybody* that blogs can generate different patterns of online dialogue according to the size of the audience, whether it be broadcast, a loose conversation or a cohesive debate according to the blog's position in the "Power Curve".

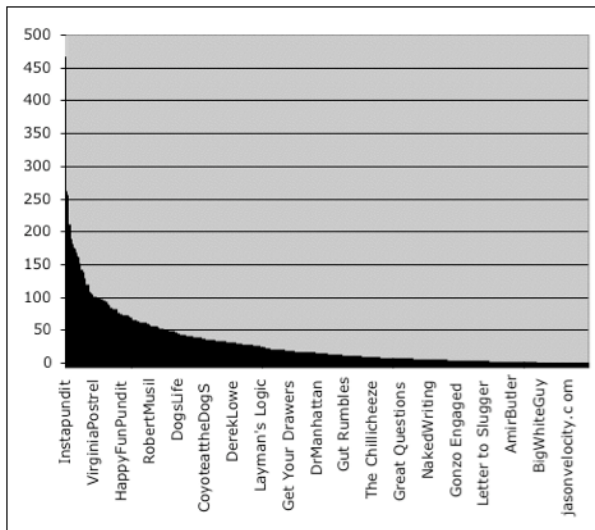


Figure 13 - Example of a "power curve" linking blogs and their inlinks. (source: [http://www.shirky.com/writings/powerlaw\\_weblog.html](http://www.shirky.com/writings/powerlaw_weblog.html))

What is true for blogs also holds true for organizations, Gladwell (2002) demonstrates this by describing how Gore Associates organizes itself by limiting their production plants to 150 employees. In this way the company encourages the creation of strong bonds between employees and allows a more fluid communication and a more flexible workflow, this happens, of course, in a context that does not rely intensively on computer-mediated communication.

It is through Gladwell that we find a theory of relationships that is proving flexible enough to adapt to a very wide range of contexts. In the book *Tipping Point* Gladwell describes three personality types: connectors, mavens and salesmen.

The author explains how these three kinds of people work and build relationships, motivating or "selling" ideas, guiding our actions based on the knowledge of experts, and how we can allow social change to occur more efficiently and effectively by aligning a communication strategy to these profiles.

By describing the work of these authors, from Boyd to Gladwell, we have the necessary arguments to consider that in the context of online communication we are in fact doing what we always did before the Internet: demonstrating values and building relationships based on those values. The variety of forms of interaction and exchange of information that the Internet allows, not forgetting the ease with which we can access the internet through a variety of platforms, makes it impossible to build a line of thought where the Internet is airtight, an element deprived of outside interaction. Instead, it makes sense that the Internet is seen as a medium that puts at our disposal elements that increase the dynamic of our interactions and communication and that is more and more a part of our daily routines and relationships with others. Thus, the motivating

factors to which we are exposed online will have a similar effect to the factors that motivate us as subjects without the Internet as a factor.

We intend to argue that this is not a matter of applying the theoretical model proposed to an online environment. In situations where we do not refer to the Internet to communicate we also demonstrate values and establish relationships based on those values, however, as the Types and Occurrences of these values manifest themselves are even more intangible, it is then more difficult to carry out the required research. The Internet emerges as a context in which Types/tokens and Occurrences of those tokens are registered for a longer period of time and where research on the demonstration of values and creating links is possible.

## **PART II**

### **4. The British Olympic Association**

#### **4.2 The Origin of the Olympics**

The Olympic Games first appeared in Greece in 776 BC, in the city of Olympia. At this point the Games were a religious festival dedicated to the gods of Olympus, especially Pelops (founder of the games) and Zeus and was held every four years.

Even at this stage the Games were an event which brought together athletes from all over Europe, from Iberia to Turkey, since it was an event open to all men who possessed the status of citizen. Married women were forbidden to attend or watch the Games, but for single women there was an alternative version of the festival, dedicated to the goddess Hera, where they were allowed to attend sporting events.

The Game's competitions included: race, long jump, shot putter, javelin, boxing, Pankration<sup>67</sup> and equestrian.

On its own, participating in the Games was a great honor and the prize was both symbolic and monetary. In fact, the amount that was offered to the winners by the city-state from which they originated was considered a fortune.

As the major event, the Games were accompanied by a treaty of truce, which was intended to allow safe travel to Olympia and insure a best event. This made the Olympics an ideal stage for the political debate, the forging of alliances and promoting of political agendas.

In 393 AD the Roman Emperor Theodosius I banned the Olympic Games as part of its efforts to spread the Christianity, thus ending a tradition that lasted for almost 12 centuries.

The Olympic Games that are held every four years are a version based on principles and values, while maintaining the name and some links to the festival that was held in honor of the gods.

#### **4.3 The Modern Olympic Games**

What we know today through the Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement is the result of the work of Pierre de Fredy, Baron de Coubertin, who in 1894 founded the International Olympic Committee and who, two years after, held the first edition of the Games.

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<sup>67</sup> Refers to a Greek martial art involving wrestling and boxing.



The interest of Pierre de Coubertin in the Olympic Games is not only reflected in sport but also in education and the advance of the human condition, hoping to make the Games an event that would promote peace and cooperation among peoples for the demonstration of healthy competition and sportsmanship. His work as a member of the International Olympic Committee allowed the creation of some basic elements, such as the Olympic Charter (Olympic Charter), the Olympic protocol, the Olympic Oath ceremony itself and the opening and closing of the Games.

However, the Olympic Games as we know take place in a different city every time and are driven by values other than those that were followed in ancient Greece. The values defended by the modern Olympic Games were established by Pierre de Coubertin and are described in the Olympic Charter.

*"Fundamental Principles of Olympism*

*1. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.*

*2. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.*

*3. The Olympic Movement is the concerted, organized, universal and permanent action, carried out under the supreme authority of the IOC, of all individuals and entities who are inspired by the values of Olympism. It covers the five continents. It reaches its peak with the bringing together of the world's athletes at the great sports festival, the Olympic Games. Its symbol is five interlaced rings.*

*4. The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play. The organization, administration and management of sport must be controlled by independent sports organizations.*

*5. Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.*

6. *Belonging to the Olympic Movement requires compliance with the Olympic Charter and recognition by the IOC. "*

As pillars of their identity, the Olympic Movement appeals to the elements described in the Olympic Charter: The Rings, the Olympic flag, the motto, the torch and Olympic Flame. The five rings represent the five continents and the colors were chosen so that it was possible to draw all the national flags. Meanwhile, the banner displays the five rings on a white background and is displayed at the Games or entities related to the Olympic Movement.

The motto "*Citius, Altius, Fortius*" translates into "faster, higher, stronger." But to understand this motto we have to compare it to the Olympic creed, which says "*The most important thing in life is not the triumph, but the fight, the essential thing is not to have won, but to have fought well.*" These two elements thus encourage athletes to give their best in competition and in the spirit of the Games.

With regard to the Olympic flame, it is lit in Olympia by the rays of the sun as a way of maintaining links between the modern version of the Games and their origin. Months before the game starts, the flame is transported in the Torch Olympic to the city where the Games will take place as a way as to raise awareness of different cultures and proclaim the start of the Games.

Together with these elements of identity, core values of the Olympic spirit are focused on Excellence, Friendship and Respect, using sport, culture and education as a means of improving the Human Being. And it is through the Olympic Games, held every four years, that the International Olympic Committee manifest and disseminates these values.

There are two versions of the Olympic Games. The Olympic Winter and Summer Olympics are clearly the version that has more prominence. The Olympic Games are held every four years and include 39 sports:

- Handball
- Athletics
- Badminton
- Basketball,
- Biathlon,
- Bobsleigh
- Boxing
- Canoeing
- Cycling,
- Curling
- Fencing
- Football,
- Gymnastics
- Equestrian,

- Hockey,
- Hockey
- Judo
- Weightlifting,
- Luge
- Wrestling
- Diving
- Swimming
- Synchronized swimming,
- Skating,
- Modern Pentathlon,
- Polo,
- Rowing
- Ski,
- Taekwondo
- Tennis,
- Archery,
- Shooting
- Triathlon
- Sailing
- Volleyball,

In each event one of the three Olympic medal are given to the first three winners, respectively gold, silver and bronze.

#### **4.4 The International Olympic Committee**

The IOC (*International Olympic Committee*, IOC) is the authority that represents the Olympic Movement and ensures the success of the Games. According to the Olympic Charter (the *Olympic Charter*), the role of the International Olympic Committee is related to a series of functions not limited to sports.

*"To encourage and support the promotion of ethics in sport as well as education of youth through sport and to dedicate its efforts to Ensuring that, in sport, the spirit of fair play prevails and violence is banned;*

*To encourage and support the organization, development and coordination of sport and sports competitions;*

*To ensure the regular celebration of the Olympic Games;*

*To Cooperate With the competent public or private organizations and authorities in the endeavor to place sport at the service of humanity and thereby to promote peace;*

*To take action in order to strengthen the unity and to protect the independence of the Olympic Movement;*

*To act against any form of discrimination affecting the Olympic Movement;*

*To encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women;*

*To lead the fight against doping in sport;*

*To encourage and support measures protecting the health of athletes;*

*To oppose any political or commercial abuse of sport and athletes;*

*To encourage and support the efforts of sports organizations and public authorities to provide for the social and professional future of athletes;*

*To encourage and support the development of sport for all;*

*To encourage and support a responsible concern for environmental issues, to promote sustainable development in sport and to require that the Olympic Games are held accordingly;*

*To promote a positive legacy from the Olympic Games to the host cities and host countries;*

*To encourage and support initiatives blending sport with culture and education;*

*To encourage and support the activities of the International Olympic Academy (IOA) and other institutions which dedicate themselves to Olympic education. "*

(<http://www.olympic.org/en/content/The-IOC/The-IOC-Institution1/>)

The International Olympic Committee guides its activities through 3 core values: excellence, friendship and respect, that are applied in six different areas: *At grassroots level*, Education and Sport, Environment, Women and Sport, Peace through Sport and Development by Sport.

### ***At grassroots level***

This defends that sport should be something accessible to everyone. When trying to join the different people all around the world, the International Olympic Committee also seeks to develop and establish programs that address the issue of social inequality. This action is especially visible in the implementation of Olympic Day, in which also the various National Olympic Committees (*National Olympic Committees*, NOC's are involved. This area of action is located within the Sport for All Commission, created by the IOC in 1983.

## **Education through Sport**

Lead by the Commission for Culture and Olympic Education, this area is reflected through an effort to develop a link between culture and the Olympic values. Through what is established by the Olympic Charter, the committee aims for world peace by bringing together several different cultures and by promoting understanding through sports.

*"The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play."*

(<http://www.olympic.org/content/The-IOC/Commissions/Culture-and-Olympic-Education/>)

## **Environment**

Built in 1995, the Commission for Sport and Environment is designed to support the IOC in promoting sustainable development. This committee also promotes the creation of similar commissions in line with the activity of each NOC.

## **Women and Sport**

Participation of Women in the Olympics was not something immediate. In fact, the first edition of the games in 1896 was not open to female participation. That is why, following the need to encourage the participation of Women in the Olympics, this committee was formed in 1995, which is responsible for making recommendations to the IOC that later translates into a program of activities followed by the Department of International Cooperation and Development.

## **Peace through Sport**

This area of action of the IOC is developed through the International Foundation of the Olympic Truce (*International Olympic Truce Foundation*). This foundation aims to encourage political leaders to act on behalf of peace, organizing conferences to discuss the issue, engage young people to promote the Olympic ideals, develop initiatives with organizations with similar goals and develop educational programs and research that focus on the Olympic Truce.

Similarly to what happened in Olympia, the foundation aims to generally create a place for dialogue, separating religious connotations or political and economic influence.

## **Development through Sport**

Through the International Relations Committee, the IOC carries out programs of Social Advocacy and supports good practice, in order to advocate the development and improvement of the human condition that is described in the Olympic Charter, which was defended by Pierre de Coubertin.

But the main activity of the IOC remains the Olympic Games and that does not mean only choosing the place and bring together the athletes, as there is a whole selection process to ensure that the best athletes will be present.

Besides the committees that have been described for each of the six areas of action, the IOC also includes the Committees of the Olympic Games organizers (*Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games*, OCOGs), National Olympic Committees (*National Olympic Committee*, NOC), International Federations Sports (*International Sports Federations*, FIs), and Affiliated and Recognized Organizations Recognized to the IOC.

In addition to its members, the IOC then includes:

### **Olympic Commissions**

- 2009 Olympic Congress
- Athletes
- Coordination Committees
- Culture and Olympic Education
- Ethics
- Assessment
- Executive
- Finance
- International relations
- Legal
- Marketing
- Medicine
- Applications
- Olympic Philately, Numismatic and Memorabilia
- Olympic Program
- Olympic Solidarity
- Press
- Radio and TV
- Sport and Environment
- Sport and Law
- Sport for All
- TV Rights and New Media
- Women and Sport

### **Organizing Games Committee**

The organizing committees are established for different cities which are selected to conduct the Games. There are currently 4 organizing committees:

- *Vancouver 2010 Organizing Committee (VANOC)*
- *London 2012 Organizing Committee (LOCOG)*
- *Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee*

## **National Olympic Committees**

They represent the Olympic values and guarantee the participation of each Country in the Olympics. In Portugal there is the Olympic Committee of Portugal, while in Britain is called the *British Olympic Association*.

In total there are 205 countries involved in the participation of the Olympic Games.

## **Federations**

The international sports federations are divided according to whether they are classified as official sports of the Games, or sports recognized by the IOC not included in the program of events of the Games.

## **Official Olympic Sports**

- Watersports
- Archery
- Athletics
- Badminton
- Basketball
- Biathlon
- Bobsleigh
- Boxing
- Canoeing
- Curling
- Cycling
- Equestrian
- Fencing
- Football
- Gymnastics
- Handball
- Hockey
- Hockey
- Judo
- Luge
- Modern Pentathlon
- Rowing
- Sailing

- Shooting
- Skating
- Ski
- Tennis
- Taekwondo
- Tennis
- Triathlon
- Volleyball
- Weightlifting
- Wrestling

### **Sport recognized by the IOC**

- Air sports
- Bandy
- Baseball
- Basque pelota
- Billiard sports
- Boules
- Bowling
- Bridge
- Chess
- Cricket
- DanceSport
- Floorball
- Golf (will be part of the 2016 program)
- Karate
- Korfball
- Lifesaving
- Motorcycle sport
- Mountaineering and Climbing
- Netball
- Orienteering
- Polo
- Powerboating
- Racquetball
- Roller sports
- Rugby union (sevens will be part of the 2016 program)
- Softball
- Sport Climbing
- Squash
- Sumo
- Surfing
- Tug of war
- Underwater sports
- Water skiing
- Wushu

### **Recognized and affiliated organizations**

Because of their activities related to the international practice of sport, there are some associations affiliated with the IOC such as:

*Court of Arbitration for Sport*



*International Committee for Fair Play*

*International Paralympic Committee*

*World Anti-Doping Agency*

*World Olympians Association*

#### **4.5 The British Olympic Association**

As we saw in the previous section, the British Olympic Association (*British Olympic Association*<sup>68</sup> BOA) is the National Olympic Committee of Great Britain.

For London to be the venue for the Games of 2012, it makes sense to analyze the relationships and values transmitted by the official website of the BOA. We could have done this analysis on the official website of the Organizing Committee (<http://www.london2012.com/>), but the BOA is shown as a more stable option, with a clear strategy for managing the relationship and the purpose of transmitting the values of the Olympic Movement. This does not enable further and similar analysis to an organizing committee or even the wider panorama of the IOC.

Despite being linked to the IOC, the BOA is an autonomous body which operates thanks to the sponsors and the funds they raise through their own effort. As other NOC's, the British Association has the participation of sports federations, sponsors, athletes and other partners.

The role of this committee is described on the website as being "*to lead the promotion of Olympism in accordance with the Olympic Charter.*" The Vision of the BOA is defined as "*A nation inspired by the Olympic dream*" and its mission is "*To transform British lives through the power of the Olympic values and the success of Team Britain*<sup>69</sup>" By 2012, it will be added to this mission the task of supporting the Organizing Committee of the 30th edition of the Summer Olympics in London.

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<sup>68</sup> <http://www.olympics.org.uk/contentpage.aspx?page=20>

<sup>69</sup> Refers to the athletes that represent the United Kingdom in the Olympic Games



Figure 14 - page of corporate brochure that summarizes the BOA strategy is being implemented

Examining these claims of the BOA and proceeding an analysis of corporate brochure available on the website, it is clear that the Olympic values are a very important element of any strategy. These are the same values that the International Olympic Committee encourages, but with a focus on the role of *Team Britain*, striving to motivate everyone's improvement as individuals and go further in the spirit of the Games.

As shown in Figure 14, the strategy of the BOA to meet its objectives is divided into three action lines: services, programs and relationships. In regard to the relations, the BOA is proposed to carry out this mission and objectives resorting to building relationships with key *stakeholders* both nationally and internationally. The management of relationships that we defend as essential in public relations makes it an extremely important component to carry out this strategy.

In addition to promoting the values of Olympism, the objectives of the BOA are to create conditions for improving the success of its athletes, while developing the Olympic sporting across the country. This is done by carrying out programs and services properly aligned with the objectives of the Association.

On the official website there are listed a series of programs and services that are currently underway.

*Performance Lifestyle* - Program designed to help athletes balance all aspects of your life with the practice of sport.

*Olympic Passport Scheme* - allows the athletes to have access to sport clubs and national sites at a reduced price and provides a number of other benefits.

*Athlete Medical Scheme* - Provides medical insurance to more than 1500 athletes, ensuring they have access to the best medical support possible

*Planning for Success Workshops* - Through this program, the British athletes can benefit from advice and experience of Olympic athletes in setting goals and manage their Olympic journey.

*BritishOlympians.com* - This is a network of British athletes that are available for commercial events including dinners and motivational lectures.

*British Olympic Foundation* - reflects the philanthropic side of the BOA.

*Arena DMC* - It is a training center in Cyprus, used by *Team Britain*.

Another important activity of BOA, mirrored on the website, is the encouragement of education of the Olympic values, supporting a number of initiatives that bring together information on the Games and the British participation.

What makes the BOA a good subject of research is its undeniable need to build, maintain and manage relationships as a means of obtaining resources (through sponsorships and partnerships) and trying to fulfil its mission (to ally themselves with sports federations and athletes). And if, in the past, the media was their only means of communicating with the public at large, today the Internet allows instant communication with a range of audiences. It seems even possible that to direct communication to specific groups with their own characteristics and interests.

#### **4.6 The Website Of the British Olympic Association**

The Olympic Association website can be accessed through the address <http://www.olympics.org.uk/> and according to Google it has more than 26 900 pages. Currently, the website presents the map of Figure 15 which is divided in 9 sections.

These sections are divided by different versions of the Games, summer, winter and Youth Olympic Festival (*Youth Games*), by the institutional information of BOA and *Team Britain*. The remaining sections reflect the interests of BOA on specific audiences: Teachers, Students, athletes and journalists.

These sections guide the visitor according to the information that each public tends to look for, according to the Associations' information, however there are areas where the participation of visitors is. This website is shown as an element of communication that is relatively static and that does not fit to be a stage for dialogue.

<p><b>Summer Games</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find a sport</li> <li>Past Games</li> <li>Future Games</li> <li>Gallery</li> <li>News</li> </ul>	<p><b>Winter Games</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find a sport</li> <li>Past Games</li> <li>Future Games</li> <li>Gallery</li> <li>News</li> </ul>	<p><b>Youth Games</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About Olympic Youth Festivals</li> <li>Future Summer Festivals</li> <li>Future Winter Festivals</li> <li>Past Summer Festivals</li> <li>Past Winter Festivals</li> <li>Australian Youth Olympic Festival</li> <li>Youth Olympic Games</li> </ul>
<p><b>BOA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role of the BOA</li> <li>National Olympic Committee</li> <li>London 2012</li> <li>Olympic Factsheets</li> <li>BOA Services</li> <li>Events</li> <li>FTSE - BOA Initiative</li> <li>Olympians Club</li> <li>Legal Information</li> <li>Make a Donation</li> <li>Publications</li> <li>Vacancies</li> <li>British Olympic Medical Institute</li> </ul>	<p><b>Team GB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About Team GB</li> <li>Athlete Profiles</li> <li>Photo Gallery</li> <li>Videos</li> <li>Olympic Gold Video</li> <li>Podcasts</li> <li>Downloads</li> <li>Statistics</li> <li>News</li> </ul>	<p><b>Athletes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction</li> <li>Passport Scheme</li> <li>Passport Scheme Benefits</li> <li>Medical Scheme</li> <li>Advice for Athletes</li> <li>BritishOlympians.com</li> <li>Olympic Solidarity</li> <li>Performance Lifestyle</li> <li>Planning for Success</li> <li>British Athletes' Commission</li> <li>UK Sport</li> <li>Olympic Images</li> </ul>
<p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Room Home</li> <li>Olympic Day in School</li> <li>What's on?</li> <li>Education Pack</li> <li>Downloads</li> <li>Teachers' Talkback</li> <li>Links</li> <li>Contact Us</li> <li>Take me to the Fact File</li> </ul>	<p><b>Students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fact File Home</li> <li>Olympic Fact Sheets</li> <li>British Olympic Movement</li> <li>The Paralympic Movement</li> <li>Future Games</li> <li>Contact Us</li> <li>Take me to the Staff Room</li> </ul>	<p><b>Media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Latest News</li> <li>Events Calendar</li> <li>Team GB Profiles</li> <li>Team GB Video</li> <li>Olympic Gallery</li> <li>Olympic Accreditation</li> <li>Olympic Images</li> <li>Features Archive</li> <li>Podcast Archive</li> <li>Sign Up To News Alert</li> </ul>
<p><b>Terms &amp; Conditions</b></p> <p><b>Privacy Policy</b></p> <p><b>Links</b></p> <p><b>Access Keys</b></p> <p><b>Contact Us</b></p>		

Figure 15 - Site map <http://www.olympics.org.uk>

However, the online presence of the BOA is not limited to the website, there are also links to an official website for *Team Britain* on Facebook<sup>70</sup> which has 13 thousand fans, a channel on YouTube<sup>71</sup> where there are 123 videos and a profile on twitter<sup>72</sup> where 891 people follow the regular updates. However, these channels focus on the provision of *Team Britain* and not exactly the BOA.

According to the software available at <http://validator.w3.org/mobile/> BOA does not have a website that is accessible by mobile devices such as mobile phones. Likewise, an update of the website was performed, with 56 errors through the validation software available in HTML <http://validator.w3.org/>. The BOA's website also does not show have any element of accessibility for groups with special needs, such as blind.

In a more general analysis, it is safe to say that the youth are treated like na important public for the strategy of the BOA, as proven by the information brochure as the structure of the website. However, this website does not have functions and features that will create a dialogue, since you cannot interact with other visitors or organization (except e-mail exchange with the organization). This website appears only as a repository of information, yet it is important to note that the BOA has enough content, like information about the games and the Association and photographs and videos of *Team Britain* and the Games.

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<sup>70</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Team-GB>

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/user/teamGBtv>

<sup>72</sup> [http://twitter.com/Team\\_GB](http://twitter.com/Team_GB)

## 5. The Methodology of Automatic Discourse Analysis

We want to know if it is possible to identify the values transmitted by a website, and if it is possible to identify the values present on websites that are relatively close. To carry out this task we need a series of software tools.

In order to determine our field research we need a tool to examine the exchange of links and to build a graph representing the network that these links form. We obtain this information through the software **URLnet**<sup>73</sup> together with **Pajek**<sup>74</sup>.

The analysis of discourse will be an important element to obtain information on which are the most important concepts present in discourse. This will be achieved through software of **automatic latent semantic analysis** that will be described further on.

If using these tools we are able obtain information on the values system present online, it will be possible to determine if the values of the British Olympic Committee, expressed the official website, are being reflected by other online constituents and if those constituents<sup>75</sup> qualify as an online public.

### 5.1 URLnet

URLnet is a library of commands programmed in python<sup>76</sup> that facilitates the creation of *webcrawlers*<sup>77</sup> URLnet's objective is to generate a text file with information on the exchange of links between websites, that file can then be read using a software for network analysis, specifically by Pajek and GUESS as we will describe later.

To understand how URLnet works, we must keep in mind the concept of *inlinks* and *outlinks*. The links of a website can be described as *inlinks*, or *outlinks* taking into account their destination. By using the term *outlinks* we are referring to all the links that point to a file or a page away from the site we are visiting. *Inlinks*, are links that point to the website or to the page we are visiting.

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<sup>73</sup> URLnet is a software library that makes it possible to analyse the exchange of hyperlinks. More information can be found on <http://code.google.com/p/urlnet-python-library/>

<sup>74</sup> Pajek is a popular software designed for large network analysis. More information can be found at <http://pajek.imfm.si/doku.php>

<sup>75</sup> In this context, "constituents" refer to blogs, microblogs, online newspapers, e-zines, websites from other organizations etc.

<sup>76</sup> Python is a computer programming language that can be used on Linux, Unix, Mac OS X, or Windows.

<sup>77</sup> A webcrawler is a computer program that follows hyperlinks and indexes information along the way. That information can be the webpage's content or any other data.

URLnet's function is to search through a list of Internet addresses (*Unique Resource Locators* or URLs) and follow the internal links (indicating pages of the current website) and the *outlinks* (*links* that indicate resources in other pages or websites) in order to generate a file with the representation of the network. This file can then be read and analyzed using Pajek.

In our study, the initial list of addresses was created taking into account *inlinks* to the website of the British Olympic Association. In order to obtain the list of *inlinks*, we used a tool provided by Yahoo! named Yahoo Site Explorer<sup>78</sup>, which allows anyone to collect a sample of 1000 URLs of pages that have links to the website that we want to analyze.

At this stage it is important to note that the URLnet is not a tool devoid of its obstacles. It makes no distinction according to the position of the link on the page. Nor is it possible to analyze links that are in javascript code, even when the function of that javascript<sup>79</sup> code is to produce dynamic HTML. At the same time, it does not identify the *nofollow* property<sup>80</sup>, whose purpose is to signal the search engines not to follow a link.

When analyzing the *inlinks* from the BOA's website, URLnet returns a text file that contains a listing of websites that, by the exchange of links can be considered as being close to the address <http://www.olympic.org.uk>.

## 5.2 Pajek

Pajek is a software to analyze larger networks and that uses text files to store information about network elements and links between them. Once URLnet finishes processing, it returns a text file that can be interpreted and analyzed using Pajek.

The choice of the Pajek software comes for the simple reason that it has been possible to find more information relating to its use, both through official documentation as through a community of very active users, and because it is distributed free of charge.

It is with this software that we will create a graph representing the exchange of links that occur around a website, thus forming what we call "hyperlink network". Thanks to this network graph, it will be possible to delimit the field of analysis and proceed to the identification of the values present in the vertices that we know are relatively close to the BOA website.

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<sup>78</sup> <http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com>

<sup>79</sup> Javascript is a programming language that works together with HTML to produce dynamic content, such as retrieving updated information.

<sup>80</sup> An hyperlink can be given a set of properties, one of those is the "nofollow" tag which signals to search engines that that link is not relevant enough to be followed and indexed in the context of the current webpage.

Pajek's capabilities can go further, making it possible to determine which is the vertice of the network that has more *inlinks* or what is the set of vertices where the exchange of links is greater. However, for the purpose of this research it will be used only to delimit the field of analysis.

### 5.3 Extraction of data

All these tools return results in text files, in URLnet the resulting file is meant to be read by Pajek. It became apparent that for the purpose of this research it would be necessary to work with this text file in order to extract data from it.

To automate this task and ensure that we collected all URLs of the hyperlink network pointing to the first page of each site, we used the following command line in a Mac OS X 10.4.11 environment:

```
grep \"*\" filename-pajek.paj | cut-d ' "-f02 | sort | sed 's / ^ / \\ / \\ / \\ / g' | cat | awk-F" / " '(print"
http : / / "$ 3) ' | uniq > filename-output.txt
```

The resulting file of this sequence of commands can still be worked to extract more data, for example to extract every URL that indicates to belong to a blog. In practice, this means extracting all the addresses that contain terms such as Wordpress, Blogspot or Typepad. For this operation we used the following command line:

```
grep 'blog \ | wordpress \ | blogspot \ | typepad' filename.txt > output-file.txt
```

It is worth mentioning that this operation does not identify all the blogs in the network, since many may be using other hosting services or have chosen to use a domain name that does not contain any of the search terms used.

This data mining is carried out so that we can apply the automatic latent semantic analysis to other sites on the hyperlink network, and not just to *inlinks* that we obtain through Yahoo Site Explorer.

### 5.4 Automatic Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA)

As for the latent semantic analysis engine, it is a software developed by Girish Lakshminarayana, head of R & D for the Times Group India.

This semantic analysis engine is available to be used by anyone at the address: <http://www.netreputation.co.uk/summariser/getconcepts.php>. As a tool, the semantic analysis engine works by receiving a list of addresses to be analysed. This tool then proceeds to visit the



different websites converts each HTML page to a text version to which a semantic analysis will be applied in order to extract the main concepts.

The latent semantic analysis engine works by collecting the text, placing the words in their respective categories and carrying out a statistical analysis that normalizes the frequency of words and presents the key concepts as follows:

<http://www.brunoamaral.eu>, portuguese translation, google searches, final thoughts, google, new strategy, new direction, public relations, dialogue, blogging, discipline, insight, slower pace, challenges, domain name,

This comma-separated format is simple to understand: the first element indicates the URL analyzed and all of the following elements indicate the key concepts identified.

Although it automates what would be the most time consuming component of this methodology, this tool is not devoid of limitations. Besides not being made any distinction between content that is in the header, body or footer of the page, it was created in order to analyze text in English. If the LSA engine is used to analyse a website written in a language other than English, it will still provide results, however we cannot give these results the same level of precision and credibility.

## **5.5 TagCrowd**

The result generated by the latent semantic analysis engine can be copied to an Excel file to be easier to analyse. However, to obtain a more complete picture of the data we rely on the website <http://www.TagCrowd.com>

The function of this website is very simple, it allows the visitor to fill out a form indicating text that he/she wants to analyze. This text is parsed, and depending on the frequency of words, a graphical representation is generated where each word has a size related to the number of times the word occurs in the text. We can see an example of representation in Figure 15.



Figure 15 - Example of how tagcrowd website provides information on the frequency of words in a given text

## 6. Presentation And Analysis Of Results

The starting point for this empirical research is the official website of the BOA located at [www.olympics.org.uk](http://www.olympics.org.uk)<sup>81</sup>. In order to have a point of comparison, URL data was collected from a total of 350 webpages of this website, thus matching all the pages that can be visited up to two levels, ie, all pages that can be visited with two clicks.

The automatic LSA was applied to these webpages with results being represented in the concept cloud Figure 16.



Figure 16 - semantic concepts present in the website [olympics.org.uk](http://olympics.org.uk) generated through the website [tagcrowd.com](http://tagcrowd.com)

The next step involved identifying websites that have links pointing to the address [olympics.org.uk](http://olympics.org.uk). This information was obtained through Yahoo Site Explorer that showed that there are over 20 000 individual pages with hyperlinks to the [olympics.org.uk](http://olympics.org.uk) and allowed us to

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<sup>81</sup> All the Data used was retrieved during September 2009

harvest of the first 1000 links. As many belonged to the same domain name<sup>82</sup>, the sample was filtered so as not to indicate repeated domains. The final list can be found in Annex 1.

By applying the latent semantic analysis tool to this list, and then analyzing the results obtained from tagcrowd it was possible to obtain the representation of concepts in Figure 17.

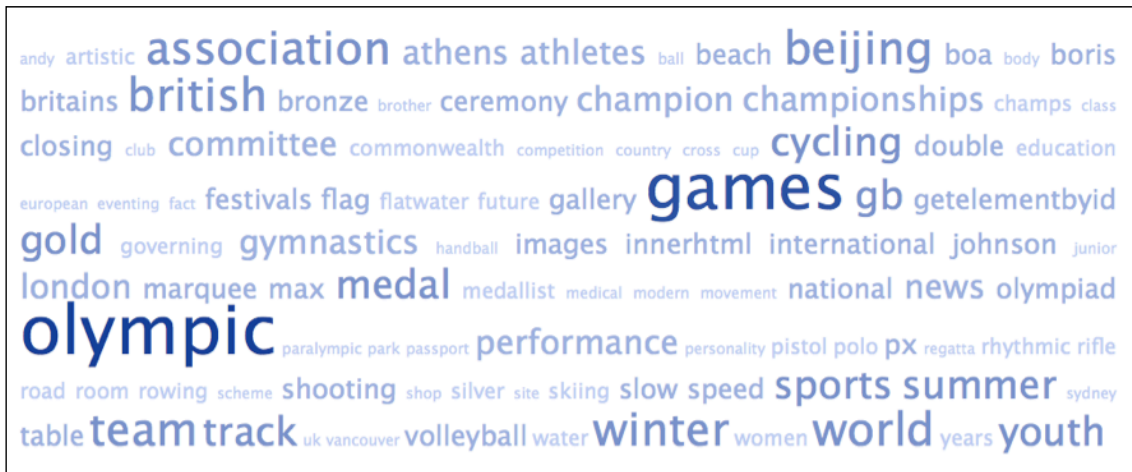


Figure 17 - Key Concepts Semantic identified in the analysis of the inlinks website olympics.org.uk

To understand the size of the hyperlink network, the list of *inlinks* withdrawn from Yahoo Site Explorer was processed through URLnet and the file that was generated as a result viewed through Pajek to generate figure 18.

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<sup>82</sup> A domain name is the first part of a URL after the protocol (http), such as google.com

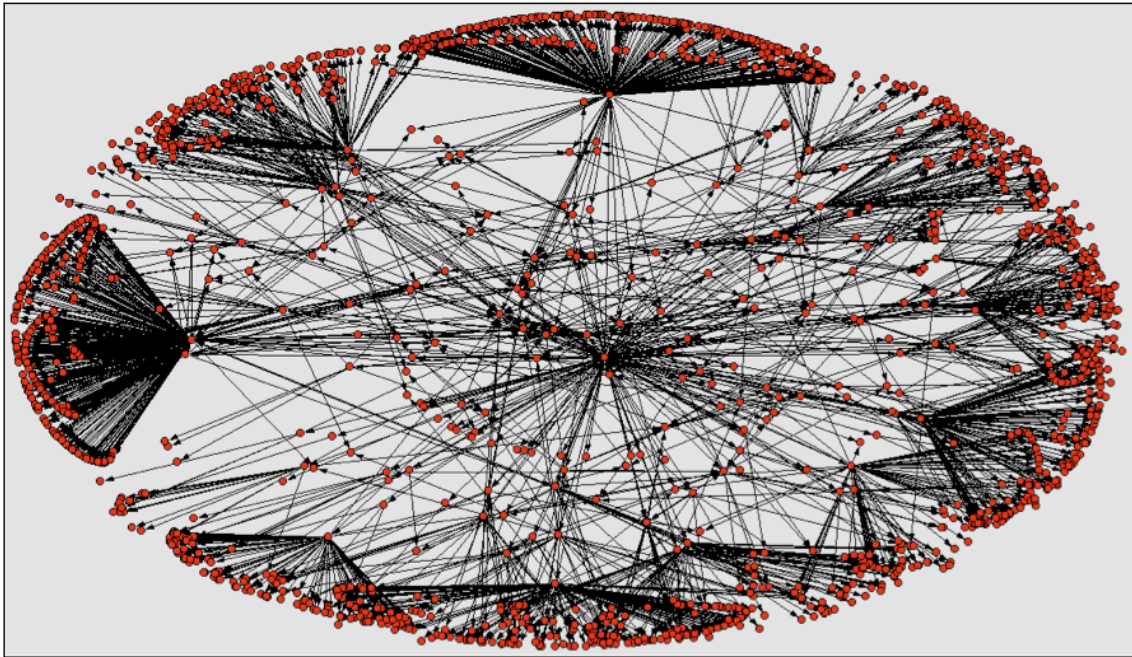


Figure 18 - hyperlink network found around the website [www.olympics.org.uk](http://www.olympics.org.uk). Each vertex in the graph represents a domain.

Using the text file that generated the graph of the hyperlink network, and using the data extraction methods described earlier, it was possible to identify a total of 198 *blogs* whose latent semantic analysis generated the concept cloud in Figure 19.



Figure 19 - semantic concepts extracted from the blogs on the network of links from olympics.org.uk

The resulting concept cloud also shows that the list of URLs contained blogs written in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Since the latent semantic analysis engine was developed to analyze text in the English language, the 198 blogs were filtered to include only those written in English. This left us with 72 addresses and resulted in the cloud of concepts of Figure 20.



Figure 20 - Key semantic concepts identified in the English-language blogs that belong to the network of links identified around the website www.olympics.org.uk

In order to obtain a comparative overview of these three elements table 3 was created, which presents the words resulting from the semantic analysis and their frequency. The concepts that arise more often, and are present in more than one column, are marked with orange.

Olympics.org.uk		Inlinks		English blogs in the network	
Concepts	Frequency	Concepts	Frequency	Concepts	Frequency
olympic	263	news	14	google	7
games	184	london	12	volleyball	7
world	62	olympics	11	community	5
beijing	50	sports	9	el	5
team	44	games	8	world	5
athens	43	world	8	british	4

medal	37	fire	7	of	4
gold	31	volleyball	7	design	4
champion	26	bbc	6	media	4
championships	26	library	6	news	4
sydney	21	National	6	weather	4
silver	15	team	6	airways	3
british	14	web	6	alpha	3
news	14	british	5	beach	3
winter	14	department	5	blog	3
youth	14	football	5	book	3
gb	13	member	5	culture	3
class	12	radio	5	features	3
cycling	12	school	5	flight	3
performance	12	south	5	john	3
track	12	america	4	them	3
association	11	business	4	luxury	3
cup	11	championships	4	maraton	3
rowing	11	college	4	member	3
commonwealth	10	curling	4	olympic	3
double	10	gymnastics	4	parents	3
gallery	10	health	4	politics	3
junior	10	management	4	potato	3
london	10	medal	4	records	3
sailing	10	media	4	river	3
sports	10	medical	4	staff	3
regatta	9	personal	4	tools	3
athlete	8	search	4	truth	3
bronze	8	station	4	web	3
event	8	beach	3	brain	2
sarah	8	center	3	brown	2
summer	8	community	3	League	2
honors	7	craft	3	croydon	2
list	7	decimal	3	life	2
medalist	7	digital	3	manos	2
school	7	fencing	3	mobile	2
sprint	7	injury	3	onions	2
table	7	money	3	plan	2
champs	6	ncaa	3	promoting	2
club	6	network	3	schroder	2
park	6	operative	3	fri	2
scull	6	phone	3	topic	2
years	6	rowing	3	uses	2
britains	5	system	3	versions	2
getElementById	5	women	3	women	2

Table 3 - Results of the latent semantic analysis presented by frequency of words

## 7. What These Results Mean For The Olympic Association

This methodology represents an innovative approach to the assessment and monitoring of online communication strategies. However, because it is so recent, it does offer us some challenges. A major challenge is the fact that there is still no way to visualize the data that allows us to know what is the position of the concepts along the hyperlink network. With respect to the hyperlinks network itself, the information collected by URLnet generates networks with thousands of vertices and their connections, thus making it hard to read.

However, for the first time we have access to a range of raw data, specifically the hyperlink network and the results of the latent semantic analysis, which is valuable for the practice of online public relations. The network of links allows us to get a sense of the exchange of links and the size of the network that forms around the website of the BOA. Looking at the hyperlink network, with the possibility of segmenting it based on online communication channels, we obtain information about the semantic concepts that are frequently used in discourse and thus have clues about the values and values systems demonstrated in each website.

In this network of hyperlinks, the *inlinks* are the ones that show to be closer to the website of the BOA, both by the proximity in the hyperlink network as due to the coincidence of semantic concepts. This suggests that a relationship exists between the entities that compose the group of inlinks and the BOA. Some of the websites that make up the list of *inlinks* are actually online newspapers, and it is to be expected that the website of the Association is used as a source of information.

Segmenting the network of links to only include blogs written in English showed a minor coincidence of semantic concepts. However the coincidence of values is still present and, by skimming through the homepages, it was possible to associate these blogs with publics relevant to the BOA. Blogs on the network of links around the site of the Olympic association include opinions on sustainable development, sport and science, anti-doping activities, specific sports (curling, soccer and other sports), education (usually blogs edited by parents where they speak of education of their children and the role of sports in that education), and a series of blogs where we can read the opinion of individuals as they feel that they may be affected by the Games in London. Other blogs showed still be owned by amateur athletes and are edited either in their own name or under the name of a team.

Our research was also able to identify a series of *blogs* written in Spanish and Portuguese. In an analysis of some it was also observed that many of these *blogs* have a profile related to sports. For example, the blog <http://kmsupersonico.blogspot.com/> describes itself as



follows: "*Supersónicos es un grupo de atletas amateurs, que se ha unido con el deseo de compartir una misma pasión, correr distancias de fondo.*" . It is therefore a team of amateur athletes to express their values and describe their path as a team through the blog.

It is important to mention that we conducted the analysis of *blogs* without taking into account its position within the network and as a result, we can not determine whether this variable affects the results of Latent Semantic Analysis. However initial experiments using the Pajek proved that it is possible to generate clusters or partitions of the network as the Internet address belongs to a *blogging* service (in this case *wordpress*, *typepad* or *blogspot*).

As a public, online newspapers are one element that is quite present in the list of *inlinks* collected for the initial analysis. This may explain the closeness of concepts that we see among the list of *inlinks* and the official website of the Olympic association (see Table 3).

On another point, by analyzing blogs found and the structure of *olympics.org.uk* we easily come to the conclusion that the profiles of audiences that we have identified are not reflected in the structure of the website.

Our proposal is that the BOA should carry out further analysis of the public that surround the website, and consider if these publics prove to be relevant to their goals, it may wish to establish programs, services or processes to build relationships with these publics.

By choosing this route, it is possible to create a framework for observation of these publics in order to follow the evolution of the concepts they convey, as they move away or closer to the relevant concepts of the Olympic Movement. A wider observation framework would allow the BOA to monitor the real-time evolution of concepts in the online dialogue (which is transmitted through one or several means -channels or instruments - of online communication).

The careful observation of these online publics, who act and organize themselves in real time, can allow the BOA to establish communication campaigns to be implemented and monitored in real time, thus maximizing the return on this effort.

As for the online communication tools that the BOA has been using, the YouTube channel, the microblogging page on *twitter.com* and the facebook page, this methodology can be re-applied and adapted as necessary as a way to obtain information on the publics who use these instruments to interact with the Association or with *Team Britain*.

Using the methodology described and gathering information from other metrics for measuring and monitoring, we can have a much clearer perception of the effectiveness of communication tools that are available to the Olympic Association. This efficiency is reflected in the ease with

which relationships are established with specific publics through the sharing of values and in Data that tells us what values are most appropriate to establish relationships with each public.

Thus it is still possible to map the different audiences that manifest themselves online, map out a profile depending on the online discourse and make a connection between the publics and the objective of the British Olympic Association to spread the values of Olympism. One application of this methodology may be to observe the online dialogue for a particular topic, as is illustrated in Figure 22. In the figure 22 we see the cloud of concepts around a search for "olympic games" in order to obtain a picture in real time about what is being published online.

In the graph, the concepts most often encountered are present with large letters, while the newer concepts emerge with lighter colors. In this case, the words clearly show the nomination of Rio de Janeiro as the city chosen to host the Summer Games in 2016 despite Obama's intervention to have the Games hosted in Chicago.

This kind of general observation panel allows the BOA to manage issues and agenda in a way that is more suited to the landscape in which the BOA is placed and to the dialogue that is taking place online.



Figure 22 - "Reputation Wall", where we can see the concepts that appear involved in discussing the Olympic Games. Available at <http://reputationwall.appspot.com/?sid=58001>

## CONCLUSIONS

We began this dissertation with the aim of discovering whether it is possible - through the analysis of online discourse - to identify and map online publics based on the identification of values systems.

The conceptual model that was proposed is based on work by Camarinha-Matos and Macedo, and David Phillips. These authors served as a basis for defining a methodology for the identification of values and online publics. Through this methodology it was possible to identify a set of semantic concepts, which in the context of each instrument of communication used are a reflection of the values of the author. These semantic concepts can be grouped and arranged in order to represent an individual's or a group's values system, we did in Figure 21 and Table 3.

With the information collected it was possible to determine what are the concepts in the website of the BOA and how they reflect on websites which are closer. Continuing the analysis, it became possible to identify profiles of publics that may be relevant to the objectives of the BOA, to disseminate the values associated with the Olympic Movement. This information can be used for a variety of purposes, whether the identification and mapping of online publics, building relationships, and measurement and monitoring of communication strategies.

In a strategic management perspective, the methodology we have presented serves as a tool to analyze the environment of which the BOA is a part of, knowing which publics surround the BOA online and what values are expressed in their speech. This makes it possible to identify the values that the Association is demonstrating on the official website and look for ways to improve the expression of values the organization actually intends to demonstrate, showing those expressed by the online publics and looking to maximize the values that are more aligned with the Olympic Movement.

Knowing the online publics and their agenda in real time, it becomes possible to deploy communication tactics aimed at maintaining or even repositioning the relationships of the Olympic Association with its publics. Using the monitoring of online dialogue, the Association may also anticipate and manage crisis situations, or more delicate issues that manifest themselves in the agenda of online publics.

For communication actions that the Association may one day carry out, this new methodology appears as a useful tool to track results in real time and adapt the corporate discourse in real time, to ensure the success of such initiatives. Regarding the hosting of the Olympic Games this means that the British Association can act to respond to the interests and feelings of publics

immediately, without being limited to a timeline agreed in advance by the communication office and other departments that are not able to predict the agendas of different publics.

For being so new, this methodology still has to be the subject of much development. The first step will involve automating the analysis process, since it is a repetitive task that consumes most of the time. But automation has to be carried out in case-by-case basis, identifying objectives and according to them to establish a process of collecting addresses for analysis and to define what information is most relevant. For example, if we want to analyze the impact of a website or a communication tool, then *inlinks* are the best form to create a basis for analysis, but on the other hand, if we want to follow the dialogue that appears in online newspapers it is necessary to collect the addresses on a specific search and ensure that the URLs collected indicate the full news article.

The automation process can only be considered complete when there is a standardized format for storing all the information collected. Thus making it possible to use any tools to interpret the data and visualize it in the way that is most appropriate to the objectives of the moment.

For the latent semantic analysis there is also room for improvement. For example, the latent semantic analysis engine does not make any prior identification of online communication tools present in each URL. This means that forums, blogs and other communication tools are analyzed in a similar way and this may influence the quality of semantic analysis. A blog should not be analysed in the same way as a forum or a social network, in an ideal setting the latent semantic analysis would adapt itself to the communication instrument automatically thus conducting a more precise analysis. Another question relates to the need to prioritize concepts through other factors other than mere frequency.

With the advancement of this and other techniques of discourse analysis, we can identify the expressions of pleasure or displeasure (sentiment analysis) about an organization, brand or product monitoring proactively hypothetical opportunities or threats.

Still in regard to discourse analysis, it should focus on the precise location of hyperlinks, taking into account its context and relevance. This was not done due to limitations of the technology used, and instead the first page of each address was examined. The latest versions of URLnet try to resolve this issue by allowing us to index only addresses that have a particular search term. We did not resort to this option because our objectives were to collect the largest amount of data that could be analyzed.

Some initial experiments have proved that we can show the position of blogs in the graph of the hyperlink network, based on the characteristics of the internet addresses. In practice, this meant

marking with a different color all addresses containing the following terms: "wordpress", "blogspot" or "typepad" which are blog hosting services. But not all addresses have an indication of the communication channel they represent. Obtaining this information could indicate the existence of a group focused on online blogs, microblogging, or other similar communication channel.

The visualization of the information collected by this methodology is an important step. Since we are talking about an unprecedented amount of information, which requires an effective and efficient way of being interpreted, we need to find new ways of presenting readable results. Where possible, the display of information should include the position of the different websites in the hyperlink network and provide data about the evolution of each semantic concept over time. In figure 22 we can see an example of visualization, the most recent semantic concepts related to the Olympic Games come with lighter colors which darkens over time. This kind of view makes it possible to identify emerging concepts immediately, which will be larger and lighter in color.

Another strength of this methodology is the possibility to use any source to assemble the basis for the initial analysis. In this case we used the *inlinks* and the identification of the network of hyperlinks around the website of the British Olympic Association. In a modified version, we can collect the basis for analysis with search results or a predefined list of addresses. An interesting approach would be to build the basis of analysis from URLs shared by different people, but referring to a similar theme. There is no guarantee that this kind of analysis will return results relevant to an organization or communication campaign, however it would be a step to better understand the behavior of sharing URLs.

In a practical example, we can create an online presentation of dialogue around a subject with search results that are collected and processed in real time. This is what we see in Figure 22. Thus we have a way to follow issues related to a particular search and identify emerging issues as they are indexed by search engines.

In the *Communication Monitor 2009*, it is expected that in 2012 the most important communication mechanisms to reach different audiences are the instruments and online communication tools that we have been talking about. This information is particularly important to create tools and sound methods for online evaluation and monitoring. For this reason, developing the methodology we have presented through all of these areas will undoubtedly translate into a large number of practical applications for the practice of public relations, both in terms of its implementation and management of tactics such as with regard to the identification and mapping of public as a means of guiding corporate communication strategy. The

development of this conceptual model and this methodology is thus a priority for public relations professionals.

Currently, the tools to evaluate and monitor communication efforts focus primarily on metrics for the corporate website, such as page views, visitors, number of pages per visitor and concrete actions that are undertaken by the visitor, such as sending an email or purchasing a product. Some of the tools present in the market, like Radian6<sup>83</sup>, allow us to go further and analyze the dialogue but do not leave room to observe the forming of publics in real time. In common, there is a tendency from PR professionals to seek metrics and evaluation and monitoring methods that go beyond the number of visitors and number of pages viewed.

When we apply online communication tactics, the challenge is usually to obtain metrics that do not just show the scope of the effectiveness but also the involvement by the publics. The results from online discourse analysis can be a metrics present in all communication tactics applied, as it relates to human behavior and is an indicator of involvement being therefore useful in monitoring and evaluation of these campaigns.

Public Relations needs tools and methodologies which focus on producing real time information, that are based on behavior, and that can be applied to any online communication tool/instrument/channel (whether they be social networks, forums, blogs and microblogging). To meet this challenge, the methodology presented uses two axes that cut across the various forms of online communication, the exchange of links and the presence of semantic concepts in the text.

Exchanging links is an important indicator for two reasons, first it is related to a conscious behavior and demonstrates that there may be a relationship between the content we are looking at and the reference of the hyperlink. This is because the hyperlink is not just a connection, the authors attribute positive and negative connotations to a hyperlink when they make it part of a text, also, when a blogger decides to add an hyperlink in the sidebar to another blogger's blog, it is done as a sign of appreciation, a 'hat tip' gesture.

Using latent semantic analysis, we are in fact summarizing the dialogue expressed online and creating a database that can be analyzed in several ways. In order to make data easier to interpret, we chose to apply an analysis of word frequency to the results, as in this text we are dealing with a standardized corpus for analysis. The frequency of different concepts was demonstrated through the concept cloud that the website tagcrowd.com allows us to create.

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<sup>83</sup> <http://www.radian6.com>

Another possibility, for which we could not find software, would be to overlay the result of latent semantic analysis to the hyperlink network.

In the broader picture of the PR discipline, this approach represents an advance in online Assessment and Monitoring. Today's techniques for evaluation and monitoring tend to focus on the corporate website and on the various communication channels in order to obtain information about the online presence (how the organization appears in various channels/instruments of online communication) and on how it interacts with and is perceived by the different audiences. There is still no methodology that proves to be agnostic in regards to organizational analysis, the identification of its public and monitoring of its communication.

The proposal of this work allows the online assessment to be carried out in a way which is not limited to the corporate website and to the online presence of the organization. Instead, it is a step forward in identifying publics and relationships outside of the boundaries of the organization. But for the achievement of communication objectives we need to be able to obtain information about their characteristics and the characteristics of the dialogue in which they are involved. It is not enough to identify publics, we must take a step towards understanding them.

For this information to be applied at a strategic level, not just in the deployment of communication tactics, we must create new mechanisms and foundations that allow for it to be included in strategic planning. For this to happen, it is important that the information obtained with the methodology presented to be interpreted taking into account other sources of information such as trends in Internet use, characteristics of the publics identified, positive or negative perceptions regarding the organization etc..

This additional information may also include the creation of profiles for each Public, creating a framework where we see the position of each profile relative to the organization, based on the distance of both values systems.

The great advantage of these observation panels is the fact that the analysis of the dialogue is a qualitative metric that applies at both at the level of tactics and of strategy. In a scenario in which the Internet provides us with an increasing variety of communication tools and sources of information it is important to research methods that show this flexibility and to identify and understand the relationships that form online.

We must therefore put the emphasis on what this type of research means for public relations as a discipline and not just as a profession. For the first time we have the tools and processes that allow us to identify and map online publics on the basis of values systems, thus indicating that publics do not come together around *issues* but according to shared values.

These online publics communicate with each other and assign characteristics and values to organizations, regardless of the corporate identity that the organization strives to promote. It will therefore be necessary to adapt some procedures that already exist, so that communication activities can be planned around consistent values from the standpoint of the publics and of the organization itself.

Corporate online communication should therefore be much more proactive than it shows to be so far, including in regards to the definition and expression of corporate identity. We dare even say that, in some cases, the values expressed by online publics can have a determinant influence on the definition and redefinition of corporate identity. For all these reasons and due to the impact of the Internet, organizations have lost the monopoly of corporate communication.

We are then faced with a new paradigm of communication and public relations where there is a new area to explore and where research on the nature of publics and on understanding the visible aspects of those publics.

We have proved that there are conceptual models which can be applied, tools capable of analyzing the online discourse and that this research has a number of practical applications. It now remains for researchers and public relations professionals to take the lead in investigating the nature of online publics.



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