

DEAD OR ALIVE: WHY A WEBSITE MEANS SO MUCH TO A BUSINESS?

In the effort to argue about the importance of websites for business, I would like to bring to table a topic that we all love, movies, particularly the case of Netflix. How does it relate to the topic? A lot, you'll find out. Movies, an evolution of performative arts, are one of the most important cultural phenomena's in the contemporary world. That comes with a history...the performative arts industry can be tracked from the dances and ancestral rituals to the post production of the most sophisticated contemporary science fiction films. The methods to get the content of these cultural productions have been varied and have been adjusted to the corresponding historical contexts. It is no surprise that business have emerged organically to provide viewers with the content that is available and that is consumed effectively. In the case of films, one of the historical distribution options has been through rent. Traditional stores where movies were acquired physically for a limited number of days were an important source of access to them. On this dynamic grew companies that dominated the market solidly as Blockbuster. But this success would not be eternal, the arrival of digital culture was like an earthquake to the film and audiovisual production industry and that is where Netflix found its niche, in the articulation between **consumer needs and evolution to visionary practices**. The key was adapting to the new predominant social dynamics and behaviors. These practices did not arise by special effects like in Star Wars movie, Netflix went through a series of steps, some more turbulent than others to achieve landing in the galaxy of "innovation". How Netflix disturbed the industry? What opportunities did they see? What had to change? In what context? What do we learn? These are some questions that might bring clues in order to answer why a website means so much to a business?

Netflix creator had the idea of building what its now his empire, when he forgot to return a movie, and got charged for the extra days (Shih, Kaufman & Spinola, 2009). He converted a personal problem to an opportunity, identifying that I could also be shared problem with a lot of people. He managed to find a niche, collaborating with potential investors, thinking about the future, constantly changing. Netflix is a company that had a vision of the needs of people and **knew how to market along with technological changes**, focusing on connectivity, immediacy and the possibilities that this provides in a social context where these aspects are valued. Renting movies already existed, Netflix did not invent the wheel, but rather changed the handlebars to the way that suited them. Netflix did not crash on the curve of cultural change, it knew how to drive through the road of digital technologies development. Nor was it launched to compete directly with blockbuster but adapted its structure to the route by which the large classic rental truck could

not pass. Blockbuster people underestimated Netflix by seeing it as a service provider for a particular niche, they did not respond to the threat it represented because they did not see them as direct competition. When Blockbuster noticed and finally decided to venture into the digital world, it was too late. Even with an aggressive campaign, Blockbuster did not prevail. Netflix made a career thanks to an extra charge, and at the moment Netflix is winning.

This, I believe, is a great example on how **technology and content driven to the audiences is essential in the running of a business**. In a digital, globalized context is not as simple as matching product with audience, because multiple factors are played here. A webpage would help bring success to the company, but it's not only because it's visible for audiences, because on the other hand the brand can also be lost sea of stuff that are available online. I believe it is important because it gives a sense of **connectivity, a way to reach for someone, to get answers, to engage**. For the company is a great way to **build branding, to have an identity and most of all presence and a service driven to the people**.

This can apply to all countries because the internet is a global phenomenon. Look for example eBay or Amazon, huge companies that move through the digital cables. That being said, it is also important to analyze the context in a market study. As a part of the United States, Puerto Rico, where I live, has a set of statistics that might be different from other states like Alaska or New York. In Puerto Rico there's 3.05m of people use the internet, this is 83% of the Puerto Rican population, from those 1.90 million are active on social networks (Hootsuite.com). Also, according to a study presented by the Association of Sales and Marketing Executives of Puerto Rico -a company that studies business and media trends- in 2013 the population of 12 years onwards in PR had 57% of Internet use (Galenus, 2018). If you combine this with the fact that 89% of smartphone users in Central America and the Caribbean conduct online searches before purchasing a product or service, you'll notice that having presence online is very important. Other statistics suggest that 82% of internet traffic in 2020 will come from videos, and that 9 out of 10 users in Puerto Rico use YouTube as the favorite page for videos (Canales, 2018). Therefore, it is important to recognize that not only a webpage is important but also, the way that people use the internet because that will make or break the traffic to the webpage.

We cannot forget that **we live in a visual culture** (Mirzoeff, 2003), that raises a series of questions about why to emphasize the visual as a central aspect of our historical moment. The human has always possessed the sense of vision, visual technologies have been present throughout history, art has been a great document of such practices, archeology has given lectures on the importance that representations have had in past ages, why raise then the modern era as a visual? How to distinguish between visual culture and non-visual culture if not by comparison of epochs? We could think that the historical rupture is located in a turn around the ways of seeing (Berger, 1972), a rupture closely related to the invention of photography and the proliferation of digital technologies. Looking is a change in the logics of the various ways in which we approach the space of the visual, how we process stimuli, but above all, how we attribute meaning to the various representations, both material and mental, of looking.

Mirzoeff (2003) mentions that visual culture is shaped as a hegemonic paradigm in the contemporary era, by an apparent tendency to visualize things that are not visual in

themselves. For example, there are sounds that refer us to a visual imaginary, the beep that represents death in a hospital machine, makes us think of the image of the screen with the horizontal line, a visual representation of death, standardized, codified and disseminated in mass. All these representations come from an imaginary that has been shaped in the exercise of socialization, made viable by the photographic image, the video, the cinema. The **webpages must be conscious of the symbolic elements that can make their business succeed**. At the same time Mirzoeff (2003) states that "visual culture is interested in visual events in which the consumer searches for information, meaning or pleasure connected with visual technology" (p.19). By visual technology we can understand what it means to use any tool that allows thought to be structured in the logic of the visual, this includes digital screens and all their implications, photographs, objects, houses, roads, construction of spaces, shapes, figures, colors, movement, emptiness, quantity, any type of representation that can be visualized materially or mentally. Imagine navigating through a webpage that its not only a catalog of items but its rather structured in the visual's logic of the contemporary ways of thinking? It would surely make a difference between a cool business and a boring one, a difference between an isolated business and a connected one, a difference between being successful or just a crash.

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