The Virtual World and Marketing

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Edited by

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FOREWORD

A virtual world (virtual reality), terminologically, refers to an electronic environment that visually mimics physical spaces where people can interact with virtual actors and virtual objects. The virtual world is an artificial environment, a computer-based online community that individuals design and share a custom-built, simulated world. The virtual world is a kind of digital reality–a way of using technology to create environments designed for expressly human interaction. The virtual world realities can be designed precisely for human interaction for very specific reasons to create experiences not otherwise possible. Then it can be said that VW can do and serve you everything that is impossible in the real world.

The virtual world has a vital importance today that it had been mentioned as the "next big thing" over the past few decades. The world is reshaping the effect of virtual developments. The development is seen in not only technological areas, but also in the economic and social environment. First, it was thought that the virtual world with the games would create a new economy. The growth of online games was faster than predicted. Many economists thought that the virtual economy would not be the real economy; it would be a fake economy besides the real one. Economic interactions in the virtual world have easily matched the business environment. VW has become widespread in education, health and many industrial application technologies in recent years, and everybody has noticed that the virtual world is an important indicator of the real world when they saw how it connected to the real economy.

This book's main scope is to get deep insights into the virtual world and marketing association or synergy. The virtual world is the centre of all kinds of businesses like marketing. Here, the twelve papers are presented to capture a different view of virtual world and its relationship with marketing.

"Analysis of Virtual Ego in The Virtual World" explains virtual ego concept, development, and clarifies the virtual ego and online persona.

"Services in The Virtual World" points out the importance of the virtual services, and clarifies virtual services in different application domains to create future innovations in this area.

"Avatars as The Virtual World's Personality" defines avatars as virtual world personalities and evaluates personality traits of online shoppers then explains the relationship between avatars and self-concept.

"The Concept of Ethics in Virtual World: How Innocent is Virtual Markets, Or Else, is There Ethical Violations?" points out the ethical problems that consumers face such as privacy and confidence when doing shopping in the virtual environment.

"Potentials of IoT As a Marketing Tool: Opportunities vs. Challenges" explores the potential implications of IoT in marketing, and clarifies the substantial benefits, as well as risks of IoT for both companies and customers.

"Brand Communication in Social Media Marketing" clarifies the principle of brand communication in the social media marketing and evaluates brand communications in social media platforms.

"Value Co-Creation in Omni-Channel Retailing: Reframing the Service-Dominant Logic Perspective" explains the theoretical understanding of the omni-channel retailing from SDL (Service-dominant logic) via digital technologies.

"Virtual Experiential Marketing in The Virtual World," gives information about virtual experiential marketing, and explains its dimensions and applications.

"The Development of Virtual Reality Market" includes information on the current structure of the VR market and predictions for its future.

"A New Strategy in Marketing Products and Services: Semantic Web (Web 3.0)" explains the historical developments of the Web, semantic web technology and its relationship with marketing.

"The Dark Side of Online Consumer Behaviour" aims to improve readers' understanding of the dark side of online consumer behaviour and gives a general overview of online compulsive, impulsive, addictive buying, and online gambling addiction.

"How to Capture the Virtual World's Online Brand Loyalists" explains what e-commerce businesses should do to create customer loyalty, and points out the ways to attract the online consumers.

We do hope this book will be a contribution to the knowledge of marketing students, researchers and practitioners of marketers and business people at large.

The Editor

Chapter One

Analysis of Virtual Ego in the Virtual World

Aysel Erçiş and Bahar Türk

Introduction

The ever-growing development of information and communication technologies has made the internet an indispensable part of everyday life. The internet, which responds to the need of mankind to access, use and share information, preaches a huge virtual world. Interactive structure allows individuals to self-define and socialize, and all social activities of the individual in the real world are carried to the virtual world. The lack of time-space limitation in the virtual world and the fact that individuals have a certain degree of freedom increase participation. The ever-changing nature of life's flow and the issues that are being addressed are sometimes the elements that make the virtual world attractive (Kim et al., 2012)

These developments form the basis for radical changes in all areas of life. In particular, the way individuals communicate with the environment and the world is changing, and virtual communication channels are at the center of this change. This change is deeply influencing the life styles, habits, socialization processes and relationships of the individual as well as being effective in every area of life (Gross, 2009).

In order to satisfy certain emotions that the individual feels lacking, he or she is heading to the virtual world, searching for new environments in this world where he will not feel lonely and will strengthen his relationships. The important point here is; that individuals can impersonate different identities in a virtual environment/online and outside/offline. The virtual world, which has a very dynamic structure in which individuals indirectly recognize each other, allows for such identity changes. One of the common expectations and concepts that are interpreted as the result of this interaction, which is formed as a result of communication established with other constructs in the current process, is 'ego'. The ego is a concept

that is influenced by changing conditions, reshaping and non-stationary, and defines who the person is. The ego that is rebuilt in the process of socialization of the individual is affected by the position and role of the person in the society (Rhee, 2009).

Since virtual environments offer individuals the opportunity to become content producers; Thanks to new phenomena created such as Virtual reality, virtual social places, and virtual groups, identities can become an extension of the virtual world (Castells, 2007). This situation reveals the concept of 'virtual ego' which has a great influence on the individual. Because the individual spends a lot of time and energy in interacting with people in the virtual environment, even if they are physically alone on front of the computer. In the process of interaction, individuals knowingly or unknowingly create an online identity or virtual environment for themselves (Naseh, 2016). Through this, the individuals who are socialized in the virtual world will be able to live the functions of the ego; beginning to feel, think and imagine (Rhee, 2009). Individuals living in this reality they have created interact with each other; they can shape many things from the virtual world to how they should perceive their surroundings and how to create an identity to be accepted it in the virtual world (Satchell and Foth, 2008). Individuals attempting to influence the perception of themselves are trying to control the perceptions of their identities by developing different tactics of identity presentation (Barsness et al., 2005).

On the other hand, there are criticisms about the virtual world. It is suggested that the virtual world causes massive standardization, weakens emotions and impoverishes the human soul. It is the other criticism that the individual is isolate and alienate. As a result, the virtual world reduces the relationship to the immediate surroundings while providing convenience for the individual by distancing them away (Kumar et al., 2010). Despite all these contradictions, the virtual world and acquisitions in this world can shape the real behavior of individuals. Therefore, these concepts help us to understand the meaning of the world we live in.

Virtual ego involving concepts

Internet users use many online concepts with different meanings. For this reason, as the activities performed in the virtual world become more varied, the meaning and interpretations of these terms also differ. There are some concepts related to the "virtual ego" developing in the virtual world. These concepts facilitate the understanding and interpretation of the

virtual ego (Cartwright, 1994). The first two are 'online identity' and 'online addiction'.

Online identity is information that individuals define for themselves in the virtual environment (Marshall and Tompsett, 2005) or for online privacy (Milne et al., 2004). In the context of a virtual community, online identity is expressed as a social identity that identifies the individual's distinctive features (Benson et al., 2017; Tajfel and Turner, 2004). Apart from these, it is possible to perceive it as a response given to the question of how to define and who he is in communicating in the virtual world (Van Kokswijk, 2008). Therefore, the concept of online identity can be interpreted in different ways depending on the situation and its use.

Individuals can create temporary online identities for themselves in virtual environments, and these identities can emerge on one day and then disappear suddenly (Naseh, 2016). Sometimes it integrates with the online identity that the individual creates and reflects it in his identity outside the virtual environment (Georgieva, 2011). In this way, it is possible to say that individuals can integrate virtual and real life (Van Kokswijk, 2008). Suler (2000) research has shown that identities created in the virtual environment can be reflected differently in individuals' lives. Some of these scenarios are to tell the real life to the people who communicate in the virtual environment, to talk about their virtual life to their friends in real life, to physically meet with friends in virtual environment and to individualize in virtual environment. The versatility of the identity of the creator makes it easy for individuals to change their identities and behaviors in different virtual environments (Hogg et al., 1995, Tyler and Blader, 2003).

If online is addictive; the time spent by the individual in the online environment is the problematic use of online applications by not controlling it in a way that negatively affects daily life or by developing behavioral addiction (Young, 2004). In the case of online addiction, the individual spends more time on the online environment, the time outside the environment loses importance for the individual, and even when this environment is deprived, emotional reactions such as tension, nervousness and restlessness emerge and business, social and family life may deteriorate (Young, 2004; Kuss and Griffiths, 2011).

When talking about online addiction, it should not be forgotten how much time individuals spend in online environments with such identities (Chou et al., 2005). Especially in the age of information where the internet is a necessity, it is possible to define each individual as dependent upon considering the time spent in the virtual world (Whang et al., 2003). Studies show that as time spent on online counseling increases,

dependence increases (Chou et al., 2000). In addition, it is stated that, if there is no concern about online addiction, it may even be therapeutic for individuals who have misformed social networking personalities (Campbell et al., 2006; Hardie and Tee, 2007).

Two other concepts related to virtual ego are 'Cyber-bullying' and 'Cyber Space'. Cyberbullying is a repetitive and time-consuming aggressive action or behavior in individuals or groups of individuals who cannot fully defend themselves in the virtual environment (Smith et al., 2008). In other words, the systematic misuse of the power generated by the use of information and communication technologies (Slonje et al., 2013). The existence of three criteria, namely intention, repetition and power imbalance, is mentioned in the case of the cyberbullying (Slonje et al., 2012; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008). It is necessary for the individual to exhibit harmful intentions in behaviors displayed in the virtual environment. In other words, although unwanted behavior occurs, if the individual does not intend to hurt others, this cyber is not perceived as bullying. Besides, it is possible that behavior has a repetitive pattern in order to win the character of bullying. It is necessary to carry out and repeat the process of using the written language of a barbarian and to cover a long period of time (Corcoran et al., 2015). Individuals can be exposed to many different people's hardships. For this reason, individuals who spend most of their time in virtual circles today are exposed to a lot of cyberbullying from physical bullying (Ortega et al., 2009; Patchin and Hinduja, 2010; Pieschl et al., 2013). The power imbalance is due to the fact that the source of the typhus is not known exactly who is in the virtual world. Anonymous writings are the simplest of these (Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008; Pieschl et al., 2013).

It is seen that 'cyber space' concept, which does not exactly meet the word meaning, is often used together with virtual environment and virtual world expressions (Cartwright, 1994). Cyber-wording, which expresses the form of communication, has also started to be used for the internet-created environment over time (Van Kokswijk, 2007). Even if both the concepts of virtual world and cyber world used for the Internet are accepted as true; it is necessary to distinguish between cyberspace in terms of the way the internet is communicated and cyberspace in terms of the environment it creates (Jones, 1997). Besides, it seems that the concepts of cyber space and virtual world are used instead of each other. But virtual word is almost the same as something, but it comes to the meaning of false. Therefore, the virtual world reflects an area that is very similar to the real world we live in, but not real (Adams, 1997; Crampton, 2010).

Virtual ego, online identity and online persona

Online identity is expressed as the social identity that internet users create in the virtual world (De Cremer and Van Vugt, 1999). Although the concepts of online identity and social identity are used synonymously, online identity is considered as a special kind of social identity in the field of information and communication technologies (Lewis and Fabos, 2005). It is also seen that the social identity theory is used to describe the behavior of users (Davison, 2012). Social identity and online identity can vary in some dimensions within the virtual world. While social identity is concerned with divergence, online identity is concerned with individualization as well as divergence (Grimaldo et al., 2010; Davison, 2012).

Social identity consists of three elements, separation, identification and comparison (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015). These elements are managed separately and individually. Online identity comes out in three different meanings; Self-conscious awareness of inner perceptions, and self-awareness (Harrison and Thomas, 2009). The fact that online identity has multiple meanings is due to the different identification of each meaning. The first identity means that the individual uses the virtual world as a tool that separates himself from the others. Second, the identity of the individual is unknown to anyone (Belzen, 2010). This identity is also called self (Schwartz et al., 2000). The last identity expresses self-consciousness in the social context, thus covering both the first and second meaning (Abrams and Brown, 1989).

The human soul is conscious and unconscious. The ego defines one's conscious mind structure. Also ego; Expresses a conscious state that contains functions of intuition, sense, thought and feeling and is unknown to others (Rhee, 2009). The concept of ego became popular especially at the beginning of 1990s. However, studies on the concept can be seen in previous researches (Loevinger and Wessler, 1970; Rhee, 2009). The concept of ego, which is a subject of much work nowadays, is usually investigated in connection with impulse control, self-concept, character development, cognitive anxiety and interpersonal interaction (Rhee et al., 2010).

The 'character/persona', as suggested by Carl G. Jung (1953), refers to the character or mask on which the player is cast for this role, in the case of a role played on the basis of the act. At the same time, it describes the attitude of the individual depending on the needs of daily life (Barbour et al., 2014). Persona means reconciliation between the individual and the society as to how a person should appear or should be. In the virtual world,

the individual uses the character to represent the user profile (Toth and Subramanium, 2003). In other words, the persona is the character or personality that the individual presents to others (Toth et al., 2011).

In the real world, an individual's identity has both ego and persona elements. The persona reflects a phenomenon that mediates between the individual ego and other people. While people define other individuals only through their characters; Persona deals with the ego and character phenomena that reveal the true identity of the individual. It is possible to summarize in Figure 1-1 how the concepts of "virtual ego" and "online persona" have a flow in the virtual world and in the real world.
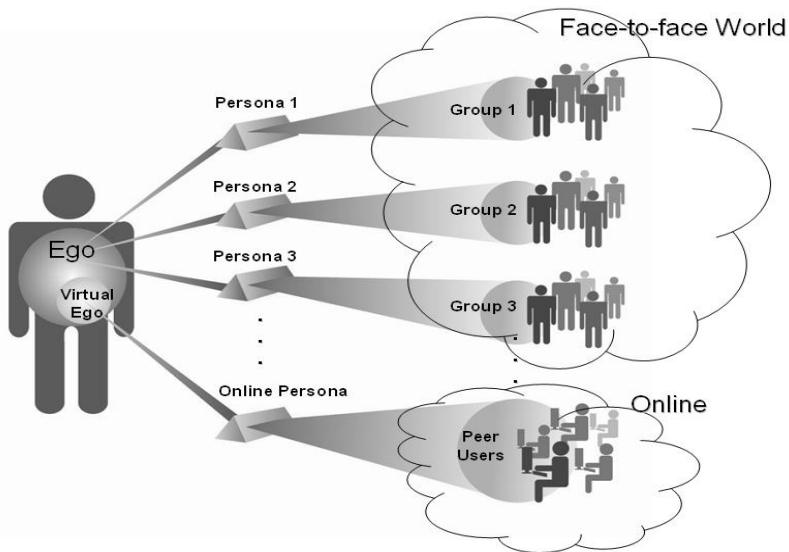
Figure 1-1. Virtual Ego and Online Persona
Adapted from Rhee (2009)

In order to define online identity besides all these, it is not enough to address only ego and persona concepts. The first reason for this is that it is difficult to handle the concept of ego in the same direction as online identity. Because the individual's offline identity evolves through self-consciousness (Hongladarom, 2011). Also in the real world the ego starts to develop from birth (Hartmann, 1956); the virtual ego finds its beginnings in the process of character / persona creation and develops through the use of your identity. Contrary to all the online identity;

(Wolfendale, 2007; Nowak and Rauh, 2005), such as the creation of a virtual identity or avatar (a graphical image that someone chooses to represent himself in the virtual environment).

Another reason is that in the real world the character / persona is connected to the relationship between ego and environment; it is much more virtual ego-dependent than online persona (Rhee et al., 2010; Lingam and Aripin, 2016). Because in the real world character / persona is shaped to find a balance between individuality and the expectations of others. So the characters are connected to the real world and real society. On the contrary, if the individual believes that real identity is not realized in the online environment, he may not develop a separate character / persona for the online communities in which he / she is included (Ridings and Gefen, 2004). This shows that online persona may not be connected to online societies. The third reason is that while the individual has a high self-awareness in the real world, his awareness of online identity can be at different levels (Wesch, 2009).

It is possible to express in this light that virtual ego is a special type of true ego and that it is separated from it. The virtual ego exists only in online environment and does not show itself in the real world. Similarly, online persona describes a mask that an individual wears while interacting only with a specific group of people in an online environment.

Development of virtual ego

Virtual ego is a comprehensive concept that helps people in the virtual world know about power, development and change, along with online persona. It is seen that the concept of virtual ego has been synthesized in many different disciplines and has been subject to research (Fox and Roberts, 1999; Jones, 2000; Leszczyna, 2005).

Some research shows that the absence of social presence in online communities increases the frequency of hostile interaction behaviors such as malicious submission, incitement, and angry response (Burnett and Buerkle, 2000). The sense of social presence or social existence in short are defined as, the feeling of being with other people in a social environment (McLellan, 1999) the individual feels himself / herself in a social sense (Leh, 2001) or the degree of self-representation in the virtual environment (Garrison et al., 2001).

It is much easier to explain how the virtual ego improves hostile behaviors when there is no sense of social existence (Bystrom et al., 1999; Robertson and Despa, 2002). What is important here is how social perception perceives virtual ego and online person. In the real world, an

individual with a fuzzy ego can have a much stronger virtual ego in the virtual world (Milgram and Colquhoun, 1999). In addition, the virtual ego, which assumes the mediator role of behavior patterns, facilitates the understanding of hostile behaviors and contradictory structures in online communities (Lange, 2005; Lingam and Aripin, 2016).

Another issue is 'avatars' (Nowak and Rauh, 2005), which we have described above as a virtual identity or a graphical image chosen by a person to represent himself in the virtual environment. In the real world, avatar-user linkage is not established by other people and users make high spending to build avatars (Talamo and Ligorio, 2001). At this point, the virtual ego comes into play again. The function of being linked to the reality of the ego balances the individual's inner world with the external reality (Weisberg et al., 2013). If the individual lacks this function of virtual ego, it has a problem in separating reality from the fantasy world (Sharon and Woolley, 2004). Likewise, the individual cannot distinguish between his internal constructs and virtual reality (Sharon and Woolley, 2004; Sadock et al., 2009). However, very few people have to make this distinction. The resemblance of Virtual ego to internal edits makes the individual inclined to create a second person/alter ego in the online environment (Lofgren and Fefferman, 2007).

As can be understood from this information, the 'virtual ego' is formed in the mind of the person. However, as seen above, it is not possible for the "virtual ego" to exist independently of the true ego (Arnaboldi et al., 2012). Furthermore, the virtual ego is a subset of the true ego and is associated with online identity. At the same time, the true ego begins to develop from the birth of the individual and develops within the cognitive process (Georgieva, 2011). The virtual ego, on the other hand, begins with the creation of online identities and is only present within the virtual world. Therefore, the evolution and functions of the virtual ego differ from the true ego (La Gala et al., 2012). In addition, the individual uses it to create real egos, online identities, or avatars (Nowak and Rauh, 2005). The greater the developmental and functional gap between the virtual ego and the reality, the more plausible the virtual ego becomes (Cartwright, 1994; Kokswijk, 2008).

It is not possible to completely separate the real ego with the identity created by virtual ego. Because virtual experiences and virtual behaviors arise from the integration of virtual egos with real ego elements (Kokswijk, 2008). Moreover, the development of virtual egos is supported not only by the trust, autonomy, entrepreneurship and competence possessed in the real world, but also by online trust, online autonomy, online initiative and online capabilities (Shanahan and Pychyl, 2007). The

online elements are developing through the creation of the online identity of the individual. Hence, each individual's own identity of the decomposer online supports the development of a virtual ego (Rhee et al., 2012).

Conclusion

While revolutionizing the way people interact, the internet has initially been used for information gathering and dissemination, but nowadays it has become a platform for individuals to express their emotions and thoughts, to set up virtual friend networks. Web-based applications on this platform have been influential in changing the way users perceive the internet and the virtual environment and how they are used (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002).

Until the Internet is a fundamental part of our everyday life, the social structure of our family and colleagues has become a phenomenon provided by the online environment (Feng et al., 2004). Individuals who create new identities in the virtual world have begun to create their own personal space and shape their virtual environments besides searching for the most suitable environment for their creatures. Individuals are using these environments to socialize with others, share their ideas and try to have fun (Keenan and Shiri, 2009).

The main object is to increase the number of members of many applications used in the virtual world (Ciffolilli, 2003). To this end, individuals are trying to provide an environment where they feel they belong. Often, individuals form new identities to align themselves with their membership, manage their profiles with extreme caution, and try to reach other communication groups (De Cremer and Van Vugt, 1999; Ren et al., 2007). Thus, the time individuals spend on the internet and how much they enjoy varies depending on their meeting with the appropriate environment. In this process, the ego offers the possibility to adapt to the outside world in order to continue the life of the individual. The ego is, at the core of human consciousness and psychology, undoubtedly an all-encompassing phenomenon (Hartmann, 1964). However, the ego is characterized by its function and these functions vary from person to person. In this context, individuals who live almost two separate lives offline and online and need to distinguish between offline and online life (Naseh, 2016).

Virtual ego is a comprehensive concept that not only helps to understand this difference but also provides a new perspective to understand and explain online behavior (Kokswijk, 2008). Virtual ego shapes the identity development of individuals in online communities

established by interconnected members of lifestyles sharing emotion and similarity. The virtual ego allows the individual to identify himself/herself as a different person from the others, and at the same time helps the individual to establish a connection with the people and groups he/she is communicating with. In addition, by eliminating space, time and physical limitations through the internet, it enables the understanding of the desired identity and experience life and the sharing process.

Another situation that reveals the importance of Virtual ego is that networks created in the online environment help individuals build identity, just as it is in the real world. For this reason, virtual environments have an extremely powerful effect on the individual's virtual ego development. It is also true in the virtual world as well as in the true world that identity theoreticians say that your identity is plural, not singular (Stryker and Burke, 2000). Because the question of who I am in the virtual environment, as well as who I should be must be the answer to the question. In this respect, the behaviors that are important in the development of the virtual ego are relevant to the position and roles of the individual in the online social structure. Hence, if the individual places himself in the virtual community and assumes appropriate role relations with others with that role, it means that various identities are adopted (Wellman et al., 2002). The individual is able to organize his online and offline identities in different ways. That is, the individual can create a balance or hierarchy between the real world and the virtual world. However, due to the role-balance approach, the individual roles should be balanced in a way that equally loyal. If you cannot achieve this, that is, if you cannot establish a balance between real and virtual roles, there will be conflicts between the roles and the individual will be away from the healthy mood (Graham 2000). In summary, the virtual ego reveals that the individual possesses in the flow of interaction in the virtual world.

Given the breadth of the user base in the virtual environment, few individuals with real life behaviors autonomous and more conscientious, yet immature and impulsive in the online environment, can develop positive behaviors by controlling online trends (Benson et al., 2017; Herring et al., 2004).

On the other hand, building a large user network, developing and maintaining this network is the main goal of online businesses and online communities. What is critical is that the same enterprises or communities can be damaged by only a few unfriendly behaviors (Sillence, 2005). For this reason, it is possible to see that virtual aggressions, which are not fully developed yet, are hostile and destructive in the virtual world. In this context, virtual ego and online persona can form the basis for future work

in order to develop understanding of the dynamics of web based social networks, and to facilitate growth and stability.

It is also useful to identify psychological variables that affect the behavior of online users. But as businesses adopt psychological theories and online strategies, applicability must also be taken into account. Many web investors or developers start their businesses with the assumption that the perceptions, thoughts, and online behavior of individuals are similar to those in the real world. However, if the individual becomes a different person when he/she enters the virtual world, the theories should be changed as well as business strategies. For this reason, the development of the virtual identities of individuals who can think and act differently than they are in the real world is important. Even more important is to understand and interpret the virtual ego that affects this development.

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