THE IMPACT OF USING KNOWLEDGE DYNAMICS IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS WITH CUSTOMERS

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Abstract

Knowledge is an integrated part of our lives. Companies' communication processes with consumers must focus on transferring and exchanging knowledge between the business and its consumers. This study evaluates the impact of rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge in communication processes regarding the relationship with consumers such as CEOs, marketing managers, and sales managers. The increasingly frequent use of digital technologies in communication has created a switch in consumer communication. New technologies have shown the importance of using knowledge in communication strategies and the need to include the dynamics of knowledge in the messages sent to consumers. Each person possesses and uses rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge. For each of our consumers, a proper balance exists that they need to engage in an action or make a decision. The study demonstrates the importance of rational knowledge in the decision-making process and underlines its importance for each category of consumers under investigation. Furthermore, the study reinforces a well-established premise in the literature: the importance of emotional and spiritual knowledge in establishing long-term and trustworthy relationships between consumers and businesses. The study makes a significant contribution from a theoretical point of view, providing concrete data that highlights the need to use the dynamics of knowledge in communication and the effects of its application in the relationship with consumers. From a practical point of view, the study offers companies a starting point in adapting communication with the consumer categories involved in the study.

Keywords

communication; customers; emotional knowledge; knowledge; knowledge dynamics; rational knowledge; spiritual knowledge;

Introduction

The recent development of the business environment, the pressure of increasing product and service complexity, and the pressure of global competition forced companies to find new and more innovative ways to attract and influence their customers and to create and deliver value. Today, companies place more and more emphasis on digital communication with customers, whether discussing email marketing, social media, or communication groups on WhatsApp or other platforms. Most points of intersection between the company and its customers in the communication process are digital. This complicates the communication process and involves the adaptation of new systems to allow the transmission of messages of interest to customers. In this context, companies that use knowledge resources to formulate messages transmitted to customers, whether talking about written

messages, text, images, or video, can significantly impact their consumers and generate better engagement rates.

Research on the use of digital communications platforms in knowledge sharing and transfer research is still at an early stage of development. However, using digital platforms for knowledge sharing has been progressively developed and received increasing attention over the past few years (Behringer & Sassenberg, 2015). However, there are limited efforts made to apply the knowledge dynamic in digital communication and the impact that rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge transmitted through the flow of messages has on consumer communication.

Thus, this paper aims to measure the impact of using emotional, spiritual, and rational knowledge in communication with three types of content consumers (CEOs/General Managers, Marketing Managers, and Sales Managers). Thus, we aim to highlight which message typology generates an active response oriented towards knowledge sharing from consumers to each company. The primary purpose of this paper is to provide concrete responses to the following research questions: (1) What is the impact of using each knowledge, rational, emotional, and spiritual, in communication with consumers in the categories of CEOs/general managers, marketing managers, and sales managers? (2) Is there an exact balance between using rational, emotional, or spiritual knowledge in communicating with consumers?

To develop the present paper, we systematically reviewed the specialized literature to clarify the terms used in the study and to reveal the most important studies related to the subject. First, we reviewed the literature on knowledge dynamics and the importance of digital platforms as a knowledge transfer mechanism. For the data collection, I conducted a series of 15 in-depth interviews. I selected the people related to the interest group, analyzed their characteristics at work, and tested their response options for different messages.

Literature review

In the knowledge economy era, knowledge is regarded as the most essential asset in the organization (Brown et al., 2007). Aiming to acquire knowledge and dominate the market, numerous enterprises have carried out knowledge management practices in succession. Each person possesses a set of knowledge, and personal knowledge results from a balance between emotional, spiritual, and rational knowledge. Essentially, this balance translates into each individual's knowledge, motivations, and attitudes (Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2020; Bratianu, 2023).

The digitalization of communication processes has generated a change in the perspective of adapting messages and the way of communication. Interpersonal elements become essential to create connections between consumers and businesses. These elements stand out as a catalyst for the objectives and values common to the members of a group or organization, facilitating co-integration (Vătămănescu et al., 2018). The use of digital tools in communication with consumers can generate user empowerment. The emergence and use of these means in business strategies have changed the relationship between consumers and companies, allowing consumers to publicly express their opinions, objections, and assessments regarding the services and products that the company provides. Social media platforms serve as new customer-

centric tools and a preferred setting for interactions between individuals, groups, and organizations (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kannan & Li, 2017). Guesalaga (2016) states that social media is a critical innovation driver pushing businesses to join the bandwagon. The exponential growth in the adoption of these platforms represents a new opportunity for companies in terms of innovation, valuable information, and knowledge related to customers' requirements, complaints, and experiences shared on their social network pages and to leverage them from a knowledge-management perspective (Bharati et al., 2015). Social media knowledge is a form of experience accumulation that enables businesses to spot opportunities, mistakes, and threats (Zhang et al., 2015). Since consumer connection and relationship management are now at the heart of a new competitive conflict, marketing tactics have significantly transitioned (Christofi et al., 2018). This underlines the importance of adopting new strategies to improve consumer communication and relations.

The knowledge field is grounded in metaphorical thinking (Bratianu & Andriessen, 2008). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) use the iceberg metaphor to explain tacit and explicit knowledge. To address the constraints associated with linearity, tangibility, and knowledge dynamics, Bratianu and Andriessen (2008) introduced the metaphor of "knowledge as energy." According to Bratianu and Bejinaru (2019), there are three main fields of knowledge: rational knowledge, emotional knowledge, and spiritual knowledge and knowledge dynamics is defined as a variation of knowledge at individual, group, or organizational levels within a given context (Bratianu, 2017; Bratianu & Andriessen, 2008).

Everyone can transform from one field to another. Emotions generate new thoughts, and thoughts can generate new emotions. Most of the time, these knowledge transformations are done unconsciously, which is why it is tough to recognize them, but these changes represent knowledge dynamics. Daniel Kahneman (2011) shows very clearly the existence of some premises in the realization of rational-emotional transformation processes: *"Thinking is incorporated; think with your body, not just your brain"* (p.52). Thus, a well-written message can generate an emotion, and an emotional photo can generate an action. Kahneman (2011) also explains how an idea can trigger an action. In other words, rational knowledge is transformed into emotional knowledge capable of generating actions in our bodies and minds. Rational knowledge results from the rational thinking process expressed with ideas and qualitative and quantitative data (Bratianu, 2015; Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2020; Kahneman, 2013). Rational knowledge is seen as the most used type of knowledge in organizational practices because communications are based on explicit knowledge, and documents are written using explicit knowledge. Therefore, the decisional process and business and management practices are based on rational knowledge (Cegarra-Sanchez et al., 2022; Bratianu et al., 2023; Vătămănescu, Bratianu et al., 2023). Emotional knowledge directly relates to each person's emotional state, feelings, and perceptions. Emotional knowledge is expressed with body reactions, not in words. Written messages, storytelling, pictures, and videos can generate an emotional state and an emotional reaction. Emotional knowledge is essential in transferring tacit knowledge and is a critical element of the socialization process. This type of knowledge is also the most used in developing customer knowledge management (Chua & Banerjee, 2013). Spiritual knowledge is based on people's perceptions of life, values, and morals (Barret, 2010). This type of knowledge is constructed by values from our culture, family, religion, community, and beliefs we learn in life. Spiritual knowledge is used

when businesses adopt CSR policies but is also of the utmost importance in creating long-term relationships between business partners. (Cegarra-Sanchez et al., 2022; Bratianu et al., 2023, Bratianu, 2015).

How a company engages, and the knowledge it shares with its customers through communication holds significant importance. It serves as a valuable means to transfer knowledge, collect new data, and foster strategic insights for crafting innovative products and services. Furthermore, it enables a more dynamic and personalized approach. Knowledge itself is an integration of rational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Bratianu, 2015). It stands as a resource that propels successful business strategies for sustainable development. Businesses must be able to decode data to extract relevant knowledge, including rational, spiritual, and emotional components, and include knowledge dynamics in communication with customers.

Knowledge dynamics influence consumer reactions to the types of messages conveyed in the communication flow, as well as the quality of related interactions and the knowledge that can be gathered due to the communication flow addressed to consumers. An organization's communications are a form of social knowledge exchange that features opposing motives to cooperate and compete against each other. How the message is constructed can convey a specific type of knowledge, which, depending on the characteristics and personal experiences, consumers perceive differently and generate different responses or actions. The consumer's response generates new knowledge for the company, which can generate new business, product, and promotion strategies based on easy consumer knowledge management.

Methodology

To determine how knowledge dynamics is applied in the flow of messages sent to customers and to answer the research question, we conducted 15 qualitative interviews with five marketing managers, 5 CEOs, and five sales managers of Romanian companies. The interviews allowed for the in-depth exploration of their interest in the messages received from the companies they collaborate with and what type of message has an impact on generating a new course of action, making a good impression, or making an immediate decision. To analyze how emotional, spiritual, and rational concerns influence their decisions regarding their daily activities, we asked concrete questions oriented toward work directions, and at the end of the interview, we set some clear directions for the messages they want to receive.

To ensure the quality and timeliness of the data obtained from the interviews, we created a profile of the interviewed person. So, in Table 1, you can see the eligibility criteria for the respondents of this study.

Table 1: Eligibility criteria of the interviewed persons Criteria
(Source: Authors' own research results)

Sex:	Male/female
Age:	Not less than 29 years old
Studies:	Higher education
Professional status:	Is currently employed
Job title	Sales manager/ Marketing manager/ CEO

The interviews took place over the phone and Zoom, lasting around 30 minutes. Open-ended questions were used in semi-structured, topic-driven, conversational interviews to allow participants to share their experiences openly.

Interview structure and analysis method

Before starting the interview, the purpose and objective of the research were explained to the interviewees. Thus, we oriented their answers toward the present study's most important directions and dictions. The questions from the interview were divided into two categories to facilitate the subsequent analysis of the results and to reach all the relevant points for validating the initial hypotheses.

The first category is represented by the control questions, Table 1, which allows us to place the respondent in one of the three mentioned categories. The second category of questions refers to interview questions, Table 2, related to the literature findings.

Table 2: Question, Categories, and Literature Relevance
(Source: Authors' own research results)

No	Question	Literature relevance
1	How would you characterize yourself as a person in the business environment? What qualities do you emphasize most in work relationships?	Bratianu and Bejinaru, 2020; Bratianu, 2017;
2	What is essential for you to convey a message received from a business partner/collaborator/customer?	Kahneman, 2011;
3	What makes you respond or react to a message from a business partner?	Kietzmann et al., 2011;
4	What does a message need to contain to get you to make an immediate decision?	Baron, 2000; Drucker, 1993
5	Is it essential for you that the message contains data, figures, and additional explanations, or do you prefer storytelling, experience-related messages, or another type?	Räisänen and Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010; Nilmanat, 2011
6	What grabs your attention more easily and prompts you to have a response? A well-formulated text, a suggestive image, a video?	Baron, 2000;
7	What messages are boring to you, and you ignore them or do not immediately notice them?	Räisänen and Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010;
8	What style of communication causes you to get closer to your interlocutor?	Cegarra-Sanchez et al., 2022; Bratianu, et al. 2023; Barret, R. 2010.
9	Is intuition important for you in the process of decision-making?	Bratianu and Bejinaru 2020; Damasio, 2010
10	What three main things should anyone who wants to communicate with you using digital sources know?	Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010

Results and discussion

Socialization and dialogue are essential to sharing knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The literature reveals that communication through digital platforms permits the participants to exchange a higher flux of knowledge (Souto, 2015). Businesses should know what communication strategies to use to facilitate customer knowledge exchange. They should have communication skills that can induce consumer's willingness to participate in the knowledge exchange process (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Businesses must adapt their strategies to knowledge dynamics to use knowledge-oriented messages and create a constant flux of sharing knowledge between the company and its consumers.

The first category of respondents, comprising CEOs and General Managers, exhibited distinct qualities, including being highly motivated, ambitious, and resolute. They emphasized their constraints regarding time and resources and highlighted their unwavering dedication to understanding the implications of their decisions. Overall, they tended to be exceptionally well-organized and displayed a strong penchant for interpersonal relationships. As a result of the interviews, we identified that in matters related to work, business, and communications with partners or clients, this consumer category prefers communication based on accurate data and avoids stories and additional clarifications. This type of consumer is dominated by rational thinking; for them, it is necessary to have a reason, a set of data, and proof to make a decision (Cegarra-Sanchez et al., 2022; Bratianu et al., 2023; Bratianu, 2023).

A decision is the choice of a course of action concerning a particular goal (Baron, 2000). It entails deciding on various options that could solve a specific issue. Making decisions is central to what managers do daily, guiding how they think through and respond to the many problems facing their organizations (Drucker, 1993). This category of consumers is willing to ask for additional clarifications or data through messages if the message promotes an exciting subject. Moreover, they are prone to give negative answers or avoid a decision if the messages force them to decide on the spot. They prefer to postpone a decision to collect the necessary data and information to calculate the decision's impact on business or business strategy. This category of consumers' rational knowledge is much more advisable to use in written communication. They prefer to receive messages that include a plan with steps or a list to follow to capitalize on all the benefits of the products or services offered. They prefer graphics and well-structured tables when discussing images that support the written message. In terms of creating an impression through a written message, they prefer friendly messages but a formal addressing structure oriented towards the advantages of using your product or services.

Emotional knowledge is less necessary for creating a first impression in communication with this category, but it must not be missing. They are intuitive people attracted by suggestive images, but they must be included in communication secondary to rational knowledge. CEOs approach problems by looking for reliable, long-term solutions. Achieving the right equilibrium between intuitive insights and well-founded knowledge is crucial for their decision-making. They establish solid, trusting connections with suppliers who share their values, ethics, and principles.

Employing emotional and spiritual knowledge is pivotal in nurturing these relationships and strengthening their business connections.

The second category of respondents, Marketing Managers, characterized themselves as energetic, creative people who quickly adapt to situations. Regarding written communication, the participants stressed their preference for messages that incorporate well-crafted and stylish visuals and images to convey the intended message, as they are more likely to capture their attention and elicit a response. The implication of video, graphics, and image elements facilitates tacit knowledge sharing, and this category seems more oriented toward capturing and sharing tacit knowledge (Räisänen & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010).

Being jovial, they prefer a communication that expresses a distinctive tone and conveys a state, an emotion. Starting a message with a joke can be essential in opening communication with them. Given their nature and characteristics, the transmission of emotional knowledge must constantly capture attention through written messages and increase the degree of interaction with them. They prefer messages written in friendly, casual language without formal addresses and accept using abbreviations. They are drawn to exciting and interesting stories and storytelling. Even if this category of consumers is more drawn by emotional knowledge, implying feelings and emotions expressed in different body and mind reactions, this type of knowledge can transform into rational knowledge that implies a decision or a concrete action (Bratianu, 2017). When we talk about promoting a product or service, the focus in communication must be on the result, data, and concrete information without exerting pressure to make a decision. They are intuitive and energetic people who emphasize the first instinct but are unwilling to make an immediate decision. Emotional knowledge refers to the fact that regarding the perception of problems and problem-solving skills and the implementation of viable solutions, it requires a personal appreciation and passing through one's emotional filter (Bratianu, 2017).

For communication strategy to generate a positive response, avoid overwhelming them with excessive information or an abundance of rational knowledge all at once. For this category, it is essential that communication shares material with individuals' own experiences. This means they are willing to share and capture tacit knowledge but also need explicit knowledge as support (Haldin-Herrgard, 2000; Joia & Lemos, 2010). They are communicative, requiring them to focus the discussion on their needs and motivations. Individuals in this category are readily enthusiastic and place substantial importance on novel, pioneering concepts. If you can get them interested enough in you and your story, they will want to hear about it and talk more with you face-to-face. They love creative stories. They enjoy discovering or creating new solutions that have not been tried before and engage in collaborative brainstorming with others. Communication with this type of consumer must focus on emotional and spiritual knowledge that positively impacts them. However, when we talk about the decision-making process, they need a proper amount of rational knowledge. Even if they were prone to be impressed by messages that told a story and conveyed an emotion, especially those accompanied by graphic support, suggestive images, and videos. However, when deciding, they emphasize concrete data and are interested in the results offered by the product or service promoted for them. They are intuitive people and focus on this side when making decisions, so a message involving spiritual knowledge is often of interest to them and creates the right impact, especially if it

aligns with their values, beliefs, desires, needs, and goals. They are enthusiastic about assisting others and establishing new business relationships. However, the majority of their business relationships are based on mutual moral principles and shared values. They are anchored in environmental and social issues.

The third category of consumers, Sales Managers, are characterized as dynamic, spontaneous, visionary, and optimistic. This category of consumer messages must include a proper balance between emotion, values, and reasons (Cegarra-Sanchez et al., 2022) combined into a comprehensive, short, and concrete message. They are people of communication, but this causes them to be selective. Mainly, the messages sent to them must be focused on the overall picture, contain enough relevant data, and be supported by a story behind it. They are focused on their goals and their vision. Communication with them must be visionary, show they can achieve their goals, be inspirational, and include only the essential details. They are attracted to short, engaging, and inspirational stories. They are not interested in learning routine things. This fact makes them lose their motivation. They are more likely to respond to messages centered on elements of interest to them and are interested in emerging changes, innovations, and values expressed in communication.

Among all the categories examined in this study, this group necessitates messages that strike a harmonious balance between emotional, spiritual, and rational knowledge. The messages must communicate sufficient concrete data but simultaneously be inspirational, present value for them, and fit into their cultural and work values (Rollero & de Piccoli, 2010). As for the message's wording, they are not particularly interested in how they are addressed, formal or informal. However, they prefer natural, clean, direct language and focus on their needs. Communication with them must be focused on high-level summaries rather than deep-diving on specific questions. They get bored quickly when they have to read a longer message. The messages must be engaging enough to capture their attention and generate a response from them. Visual elements used in communication should bring variety to maintain conversation engagement, but it's essential that they truly contribute to the message. If they don't, interest may decline. They are bold and prone to make quick decisions if they are sufficiently inspired and engaged in the messages they receive. They have an approach to problems that involve the desire for quick and effective solutions, are willing to test new things, accept new ideas, and motivate others to act. They rely on intuition to make decisions regarding problem-solving solutions (Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2020; Damasio, 2010). They have a high degree of risk tolerance, readily accepting to be one of the first adopters of a new technology or to become someone's customer even before a company becomes a huge success. This is interesting for them and gives them a new dose of energy.

Conclusions

The study allows the drawing of some important conclusions regarding the involvement of knowledge dynamics, rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge in the messages sent to consumers in the three categories. The present study reveals that the communication process needs to be adapted for each type of consumer with a proper balance of rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge. This balance depends on customer needs, personality profiles, job-related values, and morals. Emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge are revealed in the process of establishing good

and long-term relations with consumers. Among all the categories, the study's results indicate that rational knowledge is the most important in the decision-making process. To implement customer knowledge management and determine whether customers included in this category share knowledge, the messages must include emotional and spiritual knowledge. Marketing and sales managers are more willing to transfer tacit knowledge, and CEOs/general managers are more focused on rational knowledge. However, for each person included in the study, the response to emotional, spiritual, and rational knowledge is different, although they use all types of knowledge in communication.

Theoretically, the current study signifies a novel advancement in applying knowledge dynamics and incorporating rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge within communication strategies directed at consumers. The empirical examination has underscored that enterprises should tailor their communication processes to the individual consumer by striking the right blend and equilibrium of rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge. This tailored approach is essential to foster heightened consumer engagement, cultivate stronger relationships between businesses and consumers, and ultimately elicit prompt and purposeful actions from consumers.

The primary limitation of this study stems from the relatively limited number of interviews conducted, which consisted of only five participants within each consumer category. To enhance the quality and depth validation of this research, it is imperative to apply the study to a more extensive sample size and potentially incorporate an additional questionnaire to corroborate the findings. The second limitation of this study pertains to the relatively narrow scope of consumer categories involved, namely CEOs/general managers, marketing managers, and sales managers. To maximize the practical applicability of the study for businesses, it is essential to include a larger category of consumers in the study. This will provide a more comprehensive utility of the study from a practical point of view.

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