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Public Relations in Digital Transformation: An Analysis of Yeşim Güçdemir's Work

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ABSTRACT

In her 2024 publication Digital Transformation and Public Relations, "Yeşim Güçdemir" addresses digitalization in the context of public relations and comprehensively conveys to the reader how digitalization has brought about changes in public relations. According to Güçdemir, digital transformation has irreversibly affected communication and, consequently, social relations. While transforming society, digital transformation has also brought about significant changes in almost every sector. Güçdemir examines the effects of digital transformation on public relations practices and its contributions to communication in the context of artificial intelligence and social media, supporting these effects with current examples. This critique evaluates the contributions of the work to the literature on digitalization and public relations. Another objective of the critique is to evaluate how the advantages and disadvantages of digital transformation for public relations are presented to the reader.

Keyworld: Public Relations, Digital Transformation, Social Media, Artificial Intelligence.

Dijital Dönüşümde Halkla İlişkiler: Yeşim Güçdemir'in Çalışmasına Yönelik Bir İnceleme

Makale Türü

Kitap Eleştirisi

Süreç

ÖZET

"Yeşim Güçdemir", 2024 yılında yayımladığı Dijital Dönüşüm ve Halkla İlişkiler eserinde dijitalleşmeyi halkla ilişkiler bağlamında ele almaktadır ve dijitalleşmenin halkla ilişkilerde nasıl değişimlere sebep olduğunu okuyucuya kapsamlı bir şekilde aktarmaktadır. Güçdemir'e göre dijital dönüşüm iletişimi, dolayısıyla da toplumsal ilişkileri geri dönülmez şekilde etkilemiştir. Dijital dönüşüm toplumu değiştirirken hemen hemen her sektörde de belli başlı değişimler yaşatmıştır. Güçdemir, dijital dönüşümün halkla ilişkiler uygulamaları üzerindeki etkilerini ve dijital dönüşümün iletişime olan katkılarını yapay zekâ ve sosyal medya bağlamında ele almış ve bu etkileri güncel örneklerle desteklemiştir. Yapılan bu kritikte, eserim dijitalleşme ve halkla ilişkiler kapsamında literatüre sunduğu katkıları değerlendirilmiştir. Dijital dönüşümün halkla ilişkilere sağladığı avantajların ve dezavantajların okuyucuya nasıl sunulduğunu değerlendirmek kritiğin bir diğer amacıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Halkla İlişkiler, Dijital Dönüşüm, Sosyal Medya, Yapay Zekâ.

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With digitalization, the transition from traditional mass communication tools to the internet and wireless communication has accelerated. This rapid change in information and communication technologies has also initiated a process of economic, social, and cultural transformation. As digitalization has taken hold of social life, virtuality has become an integral part of people's real lives, giving rise to a new culture based on multidimensional communication and digital information processing (Castells, 2010). Yeşim Güçdemir, who examines digitalization with current examples and in the context of public relations, comprehensively addresses the changes that have taken place in public relations with digitalization in this work. Published in 2024, the book details the changes in communication processes brought about by digitalization and how organizations and stakeholders should use this technology in their strategies, both theoretically and through examples. According to Güçdemir, digital transformation has inevitably changed communication, interaction, and therefore social relationships. The proliferation of social media has fundamentally changed the basis of education, information management, and social norms in society. Considering these changes, digital transformation has had a profound impact on various aspects of society. Data-driven approaches must be adopted in teaching methods and people's decisions (Güçdemir, 2024). The critique assesses how the work contributes to the literature in the context of digitalization and public relations and how the advantages and disadvantages of digital transformation for public relations are conveyed to the reader. Güçdemir conveys the contributions of digital technologies in the context of public relations and the crises that may occur through current examples. This critique also aims to evaluate whether the examples discussed by the author could be addressed with a broader sample.

Güçdemir discusses the effects of digital transformation on public relations practices; the effects of digital transformation on communication technologies; the contributions of artificial intelligence and social media to communication; and the level of public relations practices brought about by digital transformation in three main sections. Just as digitization affects individuals, it also affects societies and is part of social transformation. Therefore, this transformation, which affects societies and individuals, will also affect relationships between people, as Güçdemir states, and communication will be taken to another level with this interaction (Güçdemir, 2024).

In the first chapter, titled "Digital Transformation: The Evolution and Impact of Communication Technologies" (pp. 1-37), the author examines how globalization has eliminated the distance between people and societies and how social media has evolved as a result of these transcended boundaries. New communication technologies and new media technologies are reaching every level of society due to the elimination of distance between people. Digital transformation has been reflected in different sectors of the business world and has changed people's behavior patterns. The digitization of communication has also transformed the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of society.

Digital transformation has created an artificial environment, and as a result of this artificial environment, a virtual socio-cultural environment has emerged. Digital technologies have caused inequality on a social scale. This is because the prestige of labor has declined, and workers with lower qualifications have entered the workforce under better conditions. Every transformation has negative effects, but it also has benefits that advance society. At this point, in particular, the organizational dimension of digital transformation is an opportunity that institutions must seize. The book emphasizes that it is possible to improve working conditions and change working environments with new digital technologies. The author states that if working conditions are adapted to technology, employees will support their work environments with more creative ideas. Today, digital transformation is taking place in almost every sector. This transformation has become an indispensable choice for both the private sector and public institutions.

The author discusses how various companies have developed digital transformation strategies in recent years to survive in a competitive environment. One brand that has successfully implemented these strategies is Netflix, which has rapidly adapted to digital transformation and effectively changed movie viewing habits. Another application that efficiently uses digital technologies is Airbnb, which has developed a user-focused application by changing traditional norms. Amazon, on the other hand, has used AI-powered recommendations enabled by digital technologies to create a separate communication strategy for almost every customer.

Güçdemir concludes the first chapter of the book with the concept of social media, perhaps the most heavily influenced by digital technologies. One of the applications where digital technologies find their direct place is digital platforms. According to Güçdemir, digital platforms have changed communication forms, enabling users to express themselves and communicate directly with other users. As a result, social media interacts with many broad areas such as organizational communication, entrepreneurship, education, creativity, and

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participatory culture. The author assesses that the concept of personal branding has also emerged and is increasingly growing through social media. This is one of the advantages of social media. On the other hand, according to Güçdemir, there are also negative uses of social media. Social media platforms, which have many negative consequences ranging from cyberbullying to crises, are inevitable challenges of today's digitalization. According to Güçdemir, the ways to overcome these problems include strategies such as conscious social media use, security measures, and media literacy.

The second chapter of the book (pp. 39-75) is titled "Big Data and Artificial Intelligence: Communication from the Perspective of Filter Bubbles and Echo Chambers." In this chapter, the author states that digital transformation and the concept of big data have accelerated all economic and political regulations in a powerful and unpredictable way. In the future, big data and algorithms will become faster and smarter. Today, big data has found its place in almost every area of daily life and is used by technology companies. Thanks to digital transformation, some companies are growing, while others are unable to survive and are being defeated by digital transformation. In recent years, the use of artificial intelligence has been observed to increase in the growth of industries. Artificial intelligence has enabled the reproduction of many interactions, including those between people, through machines. Communication that does not require human interaction is referred to as the "Internet of Things" or "IoT." Although technological developments and devices have beneficial aspects, they also pose threats to privacy and personal life. Access to information is faster and easier than ever before, especially on social media platforms. The fact that anyone can access any information they want leads to disinformation in society. Social media has changed interpersonal communication, giving rise to concepts such as "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers." The author evaluates how filter bubbles and echo chambers transform interpersonal relationships in this section. Thanks to filter bubbles, individuals can access information that appeals to their personal preferences in the algorithm. Echo chambers, on the other hand, cause users with similar thoughts to meet in the same algorithm. Güçdemir states that these two concepts cause disinformation and, consequently, manipulation on the internet.

Echo chambers and filter bubbles are two interconnected concepts. It is a fact that these concepts cause problems in the digital age. Censorship imposed by governments or other regulators and the restriction of access through echo chambers limit users' access to information. In a political and economic context, echo chambers can

also cause users to become polarized. Individuals who are fed from the same source will ultimately only accept their own truths. Closely monitoring these two phenomena and tracking their effects on social media will enable the creation of effective strategies to prevent disinformation. Güçdemir emphasizes the need to develop strategies to eliminate the negative effects of filter bubbles and echo chambers.

The final section of the book (pp. 77-161) is titled "The Impact of Digital Transformation on Public Relations Processes and Practices." In this section, the author examines how digital transformation has changed public relations strategies and illustrates the transition from traditional to digital methods with examples. As in every sector, technological developments have intensified competition in the public relations sector. At the same time, technological innovations have paved the way for potential crises. These crises include the management of social media platforms, the potential for crises to spread rapidly, and ethical issues. In this communication environment, closely following technological developments plays an important role in shaping the future of public relations in order to be successful.

Güçdemir states that with the development of digital platforms, communication has shifted from being one-way to becoming interactive and collaborative. Receiving instant feedback through social media tools is an important opportunity for organizations and brands. Artificial intelligence has become an even more important and effective field, especially with the development of social media. The future shape of public relations is closely linked to the use of artificial intelligence. The use of artificial intelligence in public relations will further improve and transform practitioners' opportunities for interaction. However, there are also various concerns regarding artificial intelligence. The use of such technologies raises ethical issues. Ethical problems are seen as an issue in public relations, just as they are in every other sector.

The author states that public relations practitioners can communicate directly with their stakeholders thanks to social media platforms. It has become easier and less costly to follow target audiences and develop strategies tailored to their preferences. Thanks to social media, public relations strategies meet the target audience on a more intimate level. Direct relationships can be established with brands at any time, and this interaction is continuous. By using social media effectively, brands can control what content users see and how they see it. This will also increase brand awareness among users. On the other hand, social media strategies do not aim to reach the entire world. Developing strategies tailored to the

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defined target audience is more important for public relations practitioners. Target audience segmentation through digital platforms facilitates reaching the intended target audience.

Although public relations strategies are implemented in a planned and smooth manner, crises are inevitable for organizations and brands. With the advancement of digital technologies, crises have moved to the digital realm and spread rapidly. While social media is also seen as an opportunity for crisis communication, the rapid spread of misinformation and crises requires careful strategic planning.

Digital media now has a greater impact on public relations than traditional media. Güçdemir states that public relations must be mediatized, but that this process must be controlled with proper guidance. When examining the social media platforms actively used today, it is evident that they are indispensable for public relations practices. The impact of digital media on public relations practices is not limited to communication activities alone. Social media enables effective reputation management, and this process is being successfully maintained. At the same time, social media shapes the relationships between organizations and their stakeholders.

The widespread use of social media alongside digital transformation has enabled consumers to participate in social media brand communities. Brands can directly reach brand owners with consumers' wants and needs. Brand communities established on social media include the brand, products, and other consumers. Güçdemir can easily identify what matters to customers through the brand communities established by the "Starbucks" and "Sephora" brands. Through such activities, brands can always keep their interactions with users alive. All these digital interaction processes also affect the measurement and evaluation processes of public relations applications.

When conducting public relations campaigns on social media, it is important to recognize that social media is a constantly evolving medium. Organizations use the analysis of social media content and data to accurately understand and segment their target audiences. Accordingly, brands create content tailored to their target audience and promote this content. Identifying users' interests and the time they spend on social media enables the creation of content that is most suitable for the target audience. Güçdemir provides examples of content strategies in his source to better analyze the topic. The "Spotify Wrapped" application is the first example discussed by the author in this regard. Enabling users to share personalized playlists has encouraged them to voluntarily share the brand on social media. McDonald's Canada's "McDonald's

goes on a Great Canadian Taste Adventure" campaign has also established a strong bond with customers by providing a platform where they can find answers to all their questions. "Google Web Stories" has enabled users to create videos by producing content. Güçdemir uses these examples to illustrate how users connect with brands by creating their own content.

Storytelling has always been important in public relations practices throughout history. Storytelling is a powerful tool in public relations. It enables organizations to build deeper relationships with their target audiences. Transmedia storytelling is a narrative style in which the same story is told across multiple platforms, with other platforms feeding into the main story. With digital transformation, the digitization of content has enabled public relations practitioners to try innovative approaches.

With the strengthening of digital transformations, public relations has undergone a significant transformation, and artificial intelligence technologies are actively used in public relations processes. Today's public relations can easily segment its target audience and produce appropriate content for them with the influence of artificial intelligence. While this provides great convenience, the existence of ethical issues also requires public relations practitioners to adopt a planned and controlled public relations strategy process. In this regard, Güçdemir argues that it is necessary to take a critical approach to the problems arising from the increasing impact of artificial intelligence.

Güçdemir concludes his work under the title "Public Relations of the Future," offering assessments on how public relations will evolve in the future under the influence of digital transformation. The rise of digital communication enables public relations to easily achieve both local and global goals. The field of public relations has undergone a major transformation with digitalization today, and this transformation will continue in the coming years. This requires mastery of technological developments to be a successful communicator. As in every field, technology will further increase the power of competition in the field of public relations. The problems arising from competition also bring with them a complex process. As the media develops, public relations practices must also keep pace with technological innovations.

Güçdemir's book "Public Relations in Digital Transformation," which examines the position of public relations in digital transformation, offers different and important contributions to the literature by addressing the changes brought about by digitalization in public relations from a holistic perspective. The author conveys that digital

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platforms have changed human relationships and eliminated boundaries due to the impact of digital transformation. The study supports the transformation in public relations with numerous examples, ranging from social media communities to the use of artificial intelligence, and explains how today's public relations practices have changed. Furthermore, the fact that the examples provided are current and offer clear information on the subject makes it an explanatory resource for readers. Finally, Güçdemir's assessments of the future of public relations are in line with the book's purpose and offer a forward-looking evaluation.

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