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**Website Traffic in Information Centric Settings
through Knowledge Management Lens**

Harikrishnan R S[1]

Anindita Paul[2]

[1]PhD Scholar, Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode, IIMK Campus PO, Kunnamangalam, Kozhikode, Kerala 673 570, India

[2]Associate Professor, Information Systems Area, Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode, IIMK Campus PO, Kunnamangalam, Kozhikode, Kerala 673 570, India; Email - apaul@iimk.ac.in, Phone Number - 0495-2809122

Website Traffic in Information Centric Settings through Knowledge Management Lens

Harikrishnan R S, and Anindita Paul
Indian institute of management Kozhikode

ABSTRACT

Prior research has provided valuable insights on the factors driving website traffic in information centric settings. Rapid advancement of ICT, internet and search engine features in the past decade drives the need to revisit the literature of website traffic. In this study, we do an extensive literature review to identify new constructs that extend the existing theoretical framework. We further conceptualize website as a knowledge portal and how the critical success factors of knowledge portals drive website traffic. Finally, we identify how websites as knowledge portals drive traffic by considering a case study of the website, Quora. Essential constructs of website traffic like credibility, interactivity, quality, accessibility and relevance are identified. The advancement of technology and search engines led to the expansion of the constructs credibility and interactivity using appropriate anchors and identifying motivation as a moderator. The major contribution of this research is to develop an integrative theoretical framework to study website traffic in information centric settings.
Keywords: Website Traffic, Knowledge Management, Internet use, Quora

Background

The number of world users of the internet has grown over the last 30 years. The number of users were 16 million in 1995 accounting for 0.4 percent of the world population. It has grown to 5473 million in 2022 accounting for 69 percent in 2022. Internet has spread to serve millions of users for a multitude of purposes. The internet expansion is accompanied by the increase in the number of web sites and web pages over the years. Low investment is needed to create websites. This led to prolific increase in the number of websites. Given the large number of websites and the associated heavy competition for popularity, it is important for website designers to make their website optimal and visible. Website traffic is the important measure of visibility. Online visibility plays a major role in driving Internet traffic. Web surfers are provided with increasing number of alternatives and choices when it comes to accessing information (Drèze & Zufryden, 2004). The visibility is the extent to which the user comes across a website in search engine results. The websites are designed to serve a variety of goals.

The broad purposes of a website are selling products and services, exchanging information, gaining knowledge, communicating with each other and having fun. Information or knowledge sharing is identified as the most important component and core function of all websites and no website can exist without making people aware about their deliverables. In this paper, we establish the relationship between the attributes of an effective knowledge portal and website traffic. We validate it by considering Quora website for study.

Methodology

The important factors influencing the website traffic are identified from the regression results in (Wolk & Theysohn, 2007). They are credibility, relevance, accessibility, quality and interactivity. The expansion of internet in the recent decade serves as the primary motivation to revisit the existing literature of factors driving website traffic in the information centric settings. The existing theoretical framework is established by including context specific determinants of the identified constructs. The framework is then validated by analyzing the website traffic through knowledge management lens.

Preliminary Findings

The literature on effectiveness of knowledge portals identifies the different factors like Comprehensive coverage, Navigability, Credibility, Collaboration, Dynamism, Organization and categorization.

Existing literature identifies website traffic in online environment. (van der Heijden, 2003) uses TAM model to explain individual acceptance of usage of websites. This paper introduces a new construct, perceived visual attractiveness as an extension to existing TAM model to study website usage and acceptance. (Tarafdar & Zhang, 2016) posits that the performance of the website depends on its traffic. Reach and loyalty are identified as important factors. The paper identifies the anchors for reach and loyalty. Information content, usability, ease-of-navigation and security are significant predictors of Reach. Ease-of-navigation, customization, security and availability are determinants of Loyalty.

The internet is flooded with information. Each and every day new contents are getting added. The measure of credibility has gained importance in the recent decade due to prolific increase in the number of websites. The importance of this construct is understood by its ability to discriminate between authentic and invalid information in online environment (Urban et al.,

1998). The website designers should focus on this dimension when building their website. Low credibility leads to low traffic (Pan et al., 2002) in websites. This results in low brand image and sales (Phelps et al., 2001; Yoon, 2002);. There is a need to expand the credibility dimension to account for recent advancement in technology and existing competition in internet.

Internet is an abundant source of information about any topic of interest. Many websites show up in the search results whenever a keyword is typed in google. This indicates that websites compete for a keyword. The quality of information offering for a given keyword is identified as the important construct influencing website traffic (Wolk & Theysohn, 2007). At organizational level, the information quality attracts customers to buy its products and services. At individual level, the information quality helps in creating awareness to the public about a particular entity.

The advancement of Internet in past decade has led to identification of determinants for the constructs: interactivity and credibility. New website features are given importance by search engines due prolific increase in the usage of internet and advancement of ICT technologies. The emergence of Covid-19 has resulted in increased dependence of daily work life on Internet and ICT technologies (Capucine, 2020). Interactivity has increased in work from home settings. The existing literature identifies the new determinants but lacks an integrative framework to understand website traffic in information centric settings. The existing literature ignores moderating roles in their studies.

To increase the visibility of the website, the content creators attempt to manipulate and stuff the website with important keywords. Search engines identify this activity and blacklist the websites which are involved in manipulating activities (Yung, 2011). Manipulation by website designers or content creators seriously impacts trustworthiness and credibility of the website. New challenges arise for the website users in their day-to-day activities. The websites must address this concern of users in a dynamic manner. (Hughes, 2018) stresses the importance of dynamism as the essential feature of credibility. Static websites do not evolve with time. Dynamic websites constantly learn through feedback obtained from the changing user environment. The quick and authentic response to the dynamic issues faced by the user in day-to-day life is posted through discussion forums and threads. These forums and threads are seen by future users facing the same issue. Dynamism increases the positive perception of a website. The transparency of the website is the measure of extent to which the website is willing to share authentic information to its users. Disclosures about the organization, individuals,

owners, firm level decisions, financial performance and announcements increases credibility of the organization. Another dimension of transparency are testimonies. Testimonies are shared experiences of the past users about information quality, products and services. The testimonies increase the user awareness and credibility of the website.

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Research Office
Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode
IIMK Campus P. O.,
Kozhikode, Kerala, India,
PIN - 673 570
Phone: +91-495-2809238
Email: research@iimk.ac.in
Web: https://iimk.ac.in/publications