Chapter 7
Banking Online: Design for a New Credibility

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ABSTRACT

The authors present the first results of a communicability evaluation of a set of online banking systems aimed at the new credibility of those institutions. They evaluate the strategies of interactive design, focusing on the presentation of the information on the interface. Finally, the first group of human factors is established which has affected negatively the veracity of banking information in Southern Europe in the last five years.

INTRODUCTION

One of the key elements of the institutional image of the banking bodies has been trust factor towards intangible services related to money and finances (Karat, Brodie & Karat, 2006). Now this flux of information must be available electronically to its clients, 24/7 in every day of the week. Allegedly it is a premise that is guaranteed from the banking publicity to the clientele, but in reality it is not so. The financial institutions have information processes in real time and others in batch processing – in execution of a series of programmes (also called “jobs”) on a computer without manual intervention. This is a widespread reality in this kind of institutions, since the mid 20th century. The public in general doesn’t know this reality, which is a source of constant complaints (previous to the global financial crisis), whether it is with the remote services or in the banking seats themselves. Consequently, there are processes which are carried out immediately such as the data consultation of the banking headquarters, such as the IBAN code (International Bank Account Number), SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication), etc.,

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and others which require a whole series of previous verifications such as the transfer of currency inside and outside a state. From the point of view of communicability we can establish two kinds of factors, underlying and apparent. The underlying ones are the characteristics intrinsic to the information system, such as the information in real time or in batch, whereas the apparent are those which obey to the design factors of the computer programmes (Cipolla-Ficarra, 2005). For instance, it is not normal that an experienced or inexperienced user must resort to the Google or Yahoo searcher to find quickly the IBAN or SWIFT code of the banking institution he/she is member.

The issues related to the way of operating from the computer science point of view have joined a myriad human factors of the banking staff towards their clients. The latter have practically lost their trust towards these institutions, without distinguishing whether the problems stem from the computer systems or the human factors (Cipolla-Ficarra, et al., 2011). When we talk about human factors we mean those excellent clients who have never had red numbers in their accounts and who operated in the banking offices or electronically. These clients interrelated with these institutions without any kind of inconveniences, but who have been swindled by the disingenuous publicity of the banking institutions, that is, the lack of clarity in the marketing information. In our group of adult and inexperienced users in computer science, that knowledge of the banking staff has been termed as sadism in 97% of the analyzed cases.

The current work is structured in the following way: state of the art and strategies followed for the selection of the universe of study and the users, elaboration of the instruments for the measurement of communicability, veracity and credibility of the banking information, interaction with the banking systems, compiling of the results, learned lessons, future lines of work and conclusions. The examples that are commented in the current work over the banking experiences refer to the period 2008-2012 are truthful 100% belong to cities of Southern Europe, and have been extracted from our universe of study. These have been included to contextualize the data and the presented conclusions.

**THE UNIVERSE OF STUDY: BANKS AND CLIENTS**

Our universe of study is made up by adult people, whose ages oscillate between 40-60 years, clients of banking institutions in Southern Europe. All of them have 15 years of seniority of having bank accounts in the same institution. Some of them have access to the online banking systems, but their knowledge of computer science is elementary. They use the computer for the search of information in Google, Yahoo, etc. and the reception/emission of messages mainly. The analyzed banking institutions have their local headquarters in Catalonia and Lombardy mainly although some of the examples that we will address belong to international financial groups. With these institutions our group of users interact virtually from the workplace and/or the home and in the daily life. The emotional aspects deriving from scarcely transparent business practices have been quantified through the use of techniques stemming from the social sciences and statistics (Cipolla-Ficarra, et al., 2011). Some examples of these emotional variables are the result of financial prosperity and the deceitful publicity to get the excellent clients into debt are: the former Caixa in Barcelona, now CaixaBank, in the face of the closure of a small firm due to the global financial crisis does not allow the quick transformation of the debt into a personal debt. In contrast, they have chosen to demand the whole payment of the debt, increasing in 50% the overall amount of the debt, to end after several months of disputes in a personal credit to be paid back in several years. Another example is a Lombardian institution that dedicates itself to issuing double personal loans, which are managed externally from the bank, with pensioners who cash € 600