

THE POTENTIAL OF CONTENT MARKETING SHOWN THROUGH WEB PLATFORMS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract: Social networks as means of mass communication enable consumers to actively use, socialize, follow, interpret and share media content and forms for the purpose of information, shopping, entertainment and education. Companies that do not brand themselves and do not communicate with their users through social networks in the right way, inevitably lose the battle with their competition. Pressed by the drastic market movements and changes, a large part of the companies in North Macedonia engage in this kind of market competition, social networks are flooded with contents of brands of all possible products and services, therefore it is more important than ever to create a personalized and a closer relationship with customers, which will create a competitive advantage. For that, it is extremely important to know the buyers well, to understand their needs, desires, passions, doubts, interests, habits, strengths and weaknesses. Digital platforms offer extremely functional sales tools with which brands can effectively reach their target audience on social networks. Audiences should be offered relevant content with values they can identify with, but also solve some of their potential problems. The underutilization of marketing content has been researched on a selected example of web platforms on social networks, as well as the techniques that are best used in order to maximize sales potential. With the help of collected and processed primary and secondary data, the impact of marketing content was determined through a selected example through the use of social networks and portals.

Keywords: Social networks, marketing content, digital platforms, target audience, content marketing, potentials.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is aimed at researching and analyzing marketing content that offers added value to buyers and plays an important role in building brand awareness of a product or service, as well as in building long-lasting and deep relationships with all the most important market participants., with special emphasis on the potential of content marketing strategies that are practiced on social networks in the Republic of North Macedonia (Силјаноска, 2024). Social networks, in addition to becoming channels for mass communication, have also become mainstream media channels, and the biggest contribution to this is the mass culture of using smartphones (Силјаноска, Петреска, & Тасковски, 2024). The new digital media represent a structural change in the way of communication, which results in changes in the communication process itself. The modern digital media audience has access to the largest number of media contents precisely through the new media, with social networks playing a dominant role in those new communication processes. Web 2.0 and the innovative application of the use of smart phones have forever changed the way of communication and acceptance of information for consumers (Силјаноска Т. , 2024).

The aim and purpose of this paper is to analyze the contemporary media audience, i.e. the users of digital content as consumers/consumers of digital forms of media content in order to create active groups of fans and friends who will like, comment and share media content and thus contribute to the strengthening and greater visibility of the brand on social networks. Given the fact that market conditions and requirements are continuously and rapidly changing, they themselves must be very innovative and skilled in adapting communications to target consumer groups (Hausman & Siekpe, 2019). The main goal of marketers is to create quality media content through social media with one purpose, which is good positioning in the minds of consumers, potential or future buyers, as well as increasing sales as the main motive and goal of communication (Pulizzi & Barret, 2009).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Content marketing or digital content marketing is the most widely practiced marketing and communication tool used by electronic channels to predict, recognize and satisfy the needs for specific content intended for a target audience in the digital environment.

John Deere, the pioneer of content marketing in America and founder of the “Content Marketing Institute” - CMI says “Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach that focuses on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content in order to attract the attention and retain a clearly defined audience and, ultimately, this marketing has stimulated and driven the profitable actions of buyers” (Aghdaie, Piraman, & Fathi, 2011).

Content marketing initially functions by providing consumers with brand awareness, in the conversion phase in CRM and in customer service. It is not a sector, it is not a team, it is not a function, but a philosophy, a culture and a worldview. It is a new frontier that awaits us in a world where attention is the hardest thing to buy, but it still needs to be earned (Aghdaie, Piraman, & Fathi, 2011). Brands have realized that digital communication channels have taken over the role of traditional mass media (Силјаноска, Петреска, & Тасковски, 2024). Therefore, it is necessary for companies to adapt their communication to the target public to these modern users (Василев & Ефремовски, 2018). However, as digital media and their communication channels have developed, the digital media audience has also developed in parallel with them (Силјаноска Т. , Извлекување на знаење и негова интеграција во системот за електронска трговија, 2024). Today, consumers are educated and well aware of their rights. They want feedback or advice immediately, in real time. Competition is fierce and brands need to seriously consider how to create their competitive advantage (Siljanoska, Taskovski, Gjorgjiev, & Marinovski, 2023). For this reason, the role and significance of content marketing today is enormous.

Given the changes and challenges, in 2020, the Marketing Profs Content Marketing Institute, sponsored by Sitecore, conducted a survey to assess marketers’ activities and their responses to the pandemic in the short term, as well as their plans for 2021/2022. The survey showed how effectively content marketing is being used to achieve goals related to brand awareness and audience education, but the opportunity for deeper effects is being missed. The three most prominent marketing goals achieved in the last 12 months were (Baltes, 2022):

- creating brand awareness (86%),
- educating the audience (79%), and
- building value and trust (75%).

“In social media marketing, content is built to fit the context of the chosen social platforms: short messages in the range of 140 characters for Twitter, contests, quizzes and games for Facebook, and others. With this type of marketing, brands model their behavior within the behavior of individuals who are users of those networks. On the other hand, in content marketing, websites support long-form written content. Brands can share blog posts, videos, iconography, e-books and similar forms of multimedia content” (Cheung, 2019).

Content marketing communication mainly refers to communication via online platforms that are ideal for storytelling - developing a good story about the brand. The purpose of storytelling is to meet business goals related to conversion, customer acquisition or retention, brand visibility and value by increasing sales (Силјаноска Т. , 2024).

It is impossible to implement strategies and campaigns in digital marketing without continuous optimization. Optimization of marketing content is important for achieving greater effectiveness of all strategies and campaigns. The greatest effectiveness is achieved by using SMART goals, which refer to management tools that in their abbreviation contain specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely goals (Силјаноска, Петреска, & Тасковски, 2024). According to this technique, goals must be specific and need to be precisely and unambiguously defined and must clearly indicate what exactly is wanted to happen. The specificity of the goal itself must provide answers to four basic questions: what, why, how, for whom.

Marketing content optimization in digital marketing refers to the optimization of website content and SEO activities (Search engine optimization) that optimize keywords that are important for optimizing social media campaigns (Силјаноска Т. , 2024). The digital environment offers a range of software tools that marketers use to better understand the behavior, desires and needs of consumers and users of digital content. One of the main goals of every company is to have a good position on Google search engines, and this means positioning on the first page of Google according to significant and key words. The Google algorithm sorts and identifies the quality of content on the Internet precisely according to keywords, but also according to the quality and relevance of the content that is delivered. For companies to position themselves more successfully and outsmart the Google algorithm, it is of utmost importance to use the Google Analytic tool. This tool is a system within the Google Marketing Platform brand, i.e. software for analytics and analysis of data collected with the Google algorithm, segmenting the data so that platform users will understand the preferences of their customers and have the opportunity to offer them better user experiences (Силјаноска Т. , 2024). Google service Google Analytic 4, abbreviated GA4. GA4 is the

App+Web version (a version for applications and websites that Google released in 2019 in beta form). The greater the insight into your potential customers, the greater the opportunity to more effectively convey messages to those for whom they are intended. The Facebook Audience Insights tool is also based on this logic, which is designed to help marketing experts learn as much as possible about their audience, including aggregate information on geographic and demographic data, purchasing behavior, and the like (Силјаноска Т. , 2024).

Content strategy is directly related to the business goals of the company, and the development of these strategies is used as a primary means of achieving the ultimate goals. These strategies primarily answer the questions: who will read the created content, who is the target audience, what problem does it solve, what makes the company's offering unique, what differentiates it or offers greater value compared to the competition, what content formats should the communication be focused on, what channels will be published, how to manage the composition and publication of the content.

A very important part of digital content marketing is the ability to measure key performance indicators (KPI). A key performance indicator (KPI) is a measure of data that helps measure progress before setting goals and thus provides quantified success scales from the activities that companies implement. In the context of digital marketing, KPI is a value that marketing experts use to measure and monitor the success of marketing campaigns. Example: CPC (Cost Per Click) - cost per click, CPM (Cost Per 1000 impressions) - cost per 1000 ad impressions, CTR (Click Through Rate) - percentage of users who click on the ad compared to the number of users who have seen it and others (Hausman & Siekpe, 2019).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research problem concerns the insufficient utilization of the potential of content marketing on a selected example of social networks, the techniques used in order to obtain the most relevant data.

The basic goal and intention of the research is, with the help of collected and processed primary and secondary data, to determine the impact of marketing content through a selected example through the use of social networks and portals.

The main research objectives are:

- to determine and define the forms of content marketing and
- to determine the content and strategies of advertising and promotion of content marketing.

The subject of research is the media audience of certain portals that deal with advertising, as well as the problem that arises, which is the insufficient involvement of the audience (consumers) on the social networks Facebook and Instagram. The portals unite the offers of companies under different slogans, and some of them read "Everything for you, for your family and for your home".

Typically, such portals have women as their audience, aged 25 to 55 (some research says that this is about 68%), as well as men who are of the same age (32% in total) and mostly from larger cities throughout the Republic of Macedonia.

The task of the research conducted in this paper is to analyze the behavior of users of the content on these portals, as well as their reactions to media content, in order to improve the potential of this type of marketing. The aim is to detect the most suitable ways of branding and to determine with what type of communication an attempt will be made to position brands in the minds of consumers, which would create an emotional connection through the marketing content.

The primary goal of the research is to understand the value of the representation of the Macedonian media audience and to see whether they are in line with the values that are promoted, which messages and appeals motivate them to like (react), share or comment on media content.

Key research questions from which hypotheses will be derived are:

- What type of content (values) do companies want to position their products or services with;
- What type of content is relevant to the target consumer;
- What type of content can be used to achieve the goals of social media promotion;
- How can marketing content be optimized for consumers to respond more effectively to published content;
- Do they demand quality content and what does quality content mean to them?
- What type of content solves their problems.

Hypothesis H1: Digital content marketing is an activity related to the creation, communication, distribution and exchange of digital content that has value for buyers, clients, business partners, companies and their products.

Hypothesis H2: The content of posts on portals and relevant social networks has an impact on building and maintaining customer relationships.

Hypothesis H3: In building relationships with consumers, it is necessary to create content in line with their lifestyles and values.

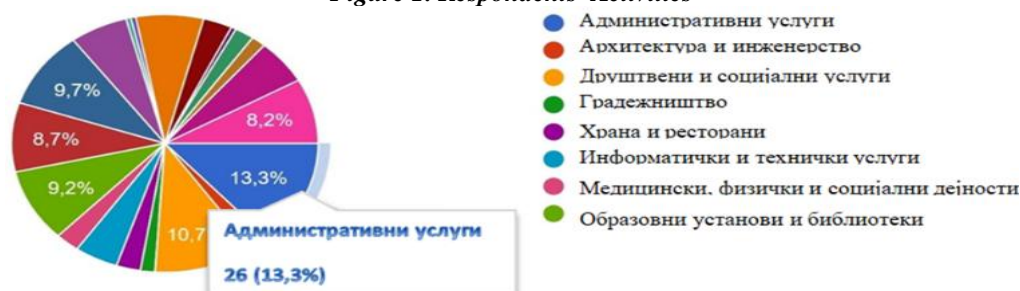
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The scientific method used to collect primary data in the research conducted for this paper was the survey, and the respondents approached it anonymously. The sample of respondents was random, and the questionnaire was available online on the social network Facebook in the period from 25.6.2024 to 09.7.2024 and included a total of 188 respondents. A total of 27 closed-ended questions were structured in the questionnaire.

The survey questionnaire was divided into 4 parts, with the first part (1-7) having 7 questions that related to the collection of demographic data, general characteristics and preferences of the respondents when consuming online content. The second part of the research was aimed at proving hypothesis 1, i.e. how and in what way digital content has value for buyers, clients, partners and the company for its brands, and this part included questions from 8 to 12, or rather 5 questions. The third part of the survey (13-22) addressed questions related to building and maintaining relationships with users and customers and were related to proving H2. This part of the survey had 10 questions, while the fourth part (23-27) addressed H3 and the attempt to determine the lifestyles, values and motivational goals of the respondents and consisted of 5 questions. Throughout the survey, as previously mentioned, closed questions were used with answers “yes / no / I don’t think so / I’m not sure / I haven’t thought of it” as well as the Likert scale (1-5) which is most commonly used to measure attitudes and which included 10 questions in the survey.

In the first part of the research, demographic data, general characteristics and preferences of the respondents were collected when consuming internet content, so that the majority of the respondents were aged 41 to 50 years (37.3%), of the total number of respondents 84.5% were women and 15.5% were men, the majority of the respondents, or more precisely 30.2%, have completed secondary education, and of the total number of respondents 13.3% have administrative services as a profession (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Respondents' Activities



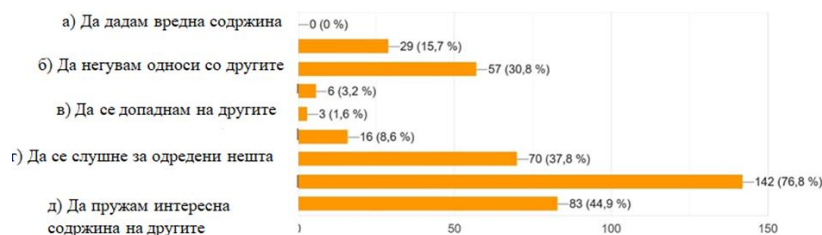
Source: prepared on the basis of survey

Regarding relationship status, 55.3% of respondents are married, the results show that respondents with all offered categories of lifestyle content were most interested in travel (3.38%).

Of the total 188 respondents who had the opportunity to give multiple answers about which digital content they use most often (ordered from most used to least), the answers are (Figure 2):

- for information seeking - 173 or 92.3%;
- for purchasing products - 70 or 37.4%;
- for entertainment - 87 or 46.5%;
- for education - 118 or 63.1%;
- for socializing and spending time - 105 or 56.1%;
- for researching opinions and opportunities to comment on certain topics - 32 or 17.1%.

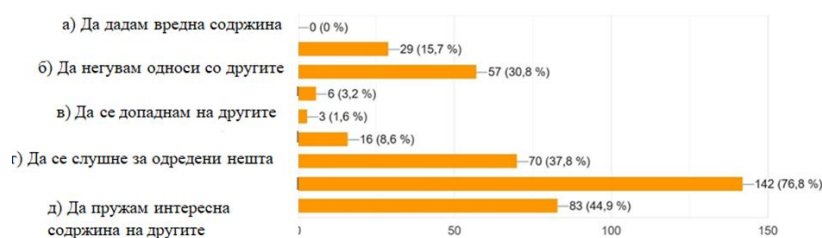
Figure 2. Purposes for which digital content is used



Source: prepared on the basis of survey

Most respondents benefit from educational and interesting content that is interesting for their career (3.08%), when they need to solve a problem, respondents mostly refer to searching for online posts 3.77%, and use hashtags the least 1.85%. According to respondents, the greatest value of digital content is 24/7 access to information (4.11%), and the least discussion and debates (3.25%). The survey showed that 67.4% of respondents believe that digital content offers greater value to users than traditional media, and out of a total of 185 respondents who had the opportunity to provide multiple responses, 142 respondents or 76.8% responded that they share content because they want to provide access to some important content, 83 (44.9%) define themselves through it, 29 (15.7%) want to stay connected with others, 57 (30.8%) want their friends to admire the photos or stories they post, six (3.2%) want others to like them and be accepted, three (1.6%) responded that they are part of a group, 16 (8.6%) for reasons that they feel more involved in the world, 70 or 37.8% want others to hear about things that are important to them (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Why do you share the most digital content on your Facebook profile?



Source: prepared on the basis of survey

4.04% of respondents mostly follow pages that have interesting and useful content, and at least 2.20%, out of a total of 185 responses, 48.6% believe that the name of the page influences their decision to follow that page, 50% of respondents believe that the visual appearance of the page is important for following it, 66.5% search for experiences of other users. Most respondents (3.91%) are guided by the real display of a product / service, and least by influencers who are similar to them (1.73%). Buyers value additional information about size, quantity, etc. the most (4.16%), and least the ability to share directly on social networks (3.05%). The majority of respondents (82.5%) know about a loyalty program, 47.5% of them participate in such programs, 69.9% do not use the ability to search via hashtag.

To the question: Think about the following values and motivational goals, and rate the extent to which you identify with them (1 - I do not identify at all, 5 - I completely identify), in order to prove or reject hypothesis 3, the table shows the descriptive statistics of this question and this time the data is sorted from largest to smallest.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for H3

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat./ Stat. error	Stat.	Stat.
Possibility	188	4,00	1,00	5,00	3,81/.7796		
Independence	188	4,00	2,00	5,00	3,80/.7685		
Universalism	188	4,00	1,00	5,00	3,73/.7738		
Achievements	188	4,00	1,00	5,00	3,28/.7429		
Conformism	188	4,00	1,00	5,00	3,50/.7655		
Hedonism	188	4,00	1,00	5,00	3,21/.7697		
Incentive	188	4,00	1,00	5,00	3,18/.7685		
Security	188	4,00	1,00	5,00	2,96/.5974		
Tradition	188	3,00	1,00	5,00	2,85/.5874		
Power	188	2,00	1,00	5,00	2,05/.5411		
Valid N	188						

Source: authors' calculation

Respondents rated possibility the highest (3.81%), and power the lowest (2.05%). The research also showed that the highest rated content was content that solved some of the respondents' problems (4.17%), and the lowest rated content that entertained them (3.92%). For the respondents, relevant and quality content is content that has verified and relevant sources (4.36%), and they consider content created by famous people to be irrelevant (2.03%). 74.7% of the respondents care about the quality of the content, 70.6% of them will not follow a Facebook page on which they notice a frequency of posts with grammatical errors, 85.5% share positive content on their Facebook profile.

5. CONCLUSION

When we talk about content marketing, or content marketing, the key word to keep in mind is “value”. The value that we offer and give to buyers through this type of marketing is the differential difference between content marketing and advertising. Content marketing strategies are the main goal in creating content that end consumers themselves seek and do not avoid.

The analysis of the research results showed that the profile of respondents who participated in the research is mostly women aged 30-50, most of them have secondary education, followed by a university degree, then a master's degree. The professional activities of the respondents are administrative services, and 64.7% of them are married. As part of the demographic analysis, the personal preferences of the respondents in using internet content through the lifestyle categories were examined. It also turned out that they are most interested in travel, then recreation, family, cooking, health, etc.

Regarding the hypotheses: through questions that were related to proving hypothesis 1 about how digital content marketing has value for buyers, the respondents confirmed the stated hypothesis. In order to make an attempt to prove hypothesis 2, the values of the respondents were measured, i.e. to what extent they represent certain values when consuming marketing content and what are their attitudes about the key elements of the content (content and visual), but also the technical characteristics of the portal, the website / web commerce - in the research this hypothesis was also proven. In order to prove hypothesis 3, it was necessary to define the value systems of the respondents, so according to statistical processing, the mean values of the questions also confirmed hypothesis 3 with small deviations from the standard deviation of the arithmetic mean, a fact that speaks in favor of the hypothesis.

In the context of the development and further promotion of the portals, the research showed that marketing strategies should be adapted to communications according to the preferences and interests of the respondents, but through targeted advertising targeting a younger audience of 20 to 30 years old who is ready to use other formats of marketing content. In campaigns, it is necessary to adjust strategies and goals according to the balancing of relationships that will be defined in advance and adjusted to the buyer's personality and all key indicators that were shown in this research.

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