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Strategic Planning Perspectives to Support Value Chain Management in Tourism Sector (The Case of Kazbegi Municipality)

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Abstract: The article shows the results of the field research in one of the most popular tourist destinations in Georgia, Kazbegi municipality. More specifically, the research assessed (1) movement of population, goods, services and other flows related to tourism sector; (2) tourist resources of the municipality; (3) characteristics of population and business sector concentration. The paper states that in order to achieve more rapid development of the municipality the following strategic policy approaches should be implemented: (1) arranging infrastructure by orienting to the centers of the municipality. For the development of the real economy sectors in the municipality it is necessary to establish functional centers, such as "agricultural", "forestry", "urbanized", "processing production" and others. These sectors should become part of the value chain of tourism sector and create additional services and variety of experiences for tourists; (2) strengthen the connection between Gudauri and Stepantsminda during the summer season to reduce the seasonality of the resorts; (3) Connect "core areas" with the centers of nearby territorial units. Those villages should become a source of creative tourist activities, fresh organic products, experiences on farm, culinary master classes on local cuisine, etc.

Key words: Tourism sector, management, core centers, planning

JEL: O20, Z32, Z39]

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Introduction

Companies decide where to start or develop their business activities considering many factors that ultimately determine profitability. The profitability of economic activity for certain sectors largely depends on the availability of raw materials and the minimization of costs during the sale of final products. In such a case, the high value/price of the final product compared to the raw material gives the business entity an incentive to make a decision in favor of proximity to the sales markets. As a result, there is a tendency to concentrate economic activity in densely populated areas. The limitation of resources and demand, low access to services in rural areas, increase the price of starting a business in such places, creating incentives to settle in the city, as a result of which populated cities gradually grow and develop. This trend is an important challenge for promoting equal development of territorial units. The problem is especially relevant in the highland regions, where the population lives seasonally and their main source of income is the tourism sector. In such territorial units, there is an acute problem of business diversification and population migration from non-tourist areas. In response to the problem, it is critically important for policy makers to properly plan to promote the inclusion of all settlements in the process of value creation in the field of tourism, to redistribute their roles and functions, and to create more connections between settlements as well as between suppliers of tourism products and services.

Value chain connects the raw material producers, middlemen, processing enterprises, sales markets, service providers and different parties, whose activities promote competitiveness of one another at marketplace and its maintenance through introduction of innovations in the processes of value chain. Value chain management is the instrument of strategic business analysis and planning that is used for coordination of the value chain components and resources. Effective management of value chain directly affects profitability of the involved stakeholders and satisfaction of consumers (Keshelashvili, 2018). The local and central government stakeholders should be focused on supporting development on value chain in tourism sector through involvement of central and peripheral settlements.

Methodology

The research objective was to show the perspectives of strategic planning and the opportunities for various settlements to benefit from the tourism sector by developing the value chain, using the results of the qualitative research conducted in Kazbegi municipality. In order to achieve

the objective various research methods were implemented: analysis, synthesis and comparison methods; “case study”, quantitative (questionnaire survey) and qualitative research tools (semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group meetings).

In order to evaluate the existing economic relations between the settlements, as well as the directions of movement of population, goods, services and other flows, and to identify development opportunities in Kazbegi municipality, we conducted a quantitative and qualitative field research. In the process of the research, the opinions and assessments of the local population and business entities were studied. Representatives of local self-government and non-governmental organizations, representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, various government departments and agencies involved in the tourism development policy, industry experts, etc. were interviewed.

Results and Discussion

In order to analyze these processes, we studied Kazbegi municipality. We evaluated (1) the direction of movement of population, goods, services and other flows; (2) municipal resources; (3) characteristics of population and business sector concentration.

Kazbegi Municipality is located in the extreme northern part of Georgia. In total, there are 47 villages in Kazbegi municipality, however, more than half of them are not inhabited by permanent residents. In some villages, the population returns only during the summer season. The municipality occupies a strategic place, close to the Russian Federation in terms of conducting trade and tourist flows. Vladikavkaz is only 45 kilometers away from Stepantsminda.

The main large employers of the population are: local self-government bodies and state organizations providing public services. In the municipality, we find large, small and medium-sized hotels, cafes, bars and restaurants, shops, small-sized, often family-owned firms providing tourist services.

The main part of business entities registered in Kazbegi municipality operates in the territory of Stepantsminda and Gudauri, which is caused by high tourist activity in these territorial units. In addition to business entities involved in the tourism sector, trade businesses are also distinguished by their concentration in central areas. This is due to the number of local residents along with tourists: highly populated areas generate high demand, and opening trade facilities seasonally is profitable whereas in less populated areas opening such places is unprofitable.

Kazbegi municipality has a distinct advantage of being close to the capital. The highest demand from the tourists in the capital is for Kazbegi tours, which should reflect the economic situation of the local population. A concentration of incomes and standard of living of local people are as concentrated as business entities. Residents of settlements located nearby but not in tourist centers are less involved in the process of receiving benefits from the tourism activities.

On-site research showed that the most populated areas of the municipality are located near the central road and have access to connect with other populated areas. It is possible to connect two main touristic towns (Stepantsminda and Gudauri) in such a way that other settlements are also involved in economic activities. As a result, the settlements nearby the road from Stepantsminda to Gudauri will benefit.

34 business sector representatives and 71 local people were interviewed with the questionnaire. Among other relevant topics, the questions aimed to identify the degree of cooperation between the local population and the business sector.

The field study in the municipality showed:

- Despite the fact that touristic sightseeing are scattered all over the municipality, tourists mostly use hotels in Stepantsminda and Gudauri as a place to spend the night. Residents of other settlements receive very little benefit from the development of tourism in the municipality and their involvement in the sector is also very low. 78% of the surveyed population who do not live in tourist centers indicated that they did not benefit from the development of tourism at all.
- The population that returns seasonally to Kazbegi municipality spends the off-season in the capital. A certain part of the population moves to Stepantsminda township for temporary residence, but there are more frequent cases of population moving to the capital.
- Main business facilities in the municipality (hotels, shops and stores, café-restaurants, etc.) mainly buy their products from outside the municipality, in most cases from the capital through distribution. This tendency applies to agricultural products as well, since farmers cannot provide them with proof of standards and proper financial papers.

30% of the population stated that they have the opportunity to buy the necessary food products in the same settlement where they live, for the 56% of the respondents, the main place of purchase is another settlement, but within the municipality. 62% of the interviewed representatives of the

business sector noted that the capital is the main place to purchase the products they need. In some cases, they purchase products themselves, and in most cases (hotels and restaurants), distributors supply from Tbilisi. The region itself cannot provide the supply of raw materials to the Kazbegi municipality in appropriate quantities and under acceptable conditions. Only 12% of the surveyed business sector representatives would purchase a product within the region, in the case of the same settlement where the business operates, this number is even lower and is only 6%. Thus, the movement of commodity flows to the municipality is more typical from the capital in the direction of the municipal centers and less typical within the municipality or from other centers of the region to the municipal centers.

The main part of the population that is involved in the production of agricultural products has expressed the willingness to reduce agricultural activity and be engaged more in tourism sector.

Their main desires were to set up a family guesthouses, and provide the most common tourist services (transportation, guide), open bakeries, etc. Such a desire was expressed not only by the part of the population that has difficulty selling locally made products, but also by those who are more or less able to sell what they produce. There are some cases when the owner of the guesthouse has a farm and provides tourists local products, mainly agricultural ones, but the share of such product in the whole amount of goods they use daily in most cases does not exceed 20%, if that.

Less than 6% of the surveyed locals involved in agricultural activities stated that they sell their products to HoReCa sector. It is expected that this number will further decrease along with the decrease in the number of the population involved in agricultural activities. The desire of the population to switch to the tourism sector is clearly revealed, because they consider this sector more profitable and less time and labour-intensive. Therefore, production activities will be replaced with tourism oriented services. Without a targeted policy and right intensives, the result will be too high competition between the service providers of the main tourism services, decreased prices, increased flow of goods between the capital and municipal centers. Merchandise flows have mainly one-way direction and move from the capital in the direction of the municipality centers.

The low level of business cooperation between local businesses and residents is due to many reasons. The representatives of the interviewed business sector expressed their desire to cooperate with the locals and offer tourists locally produced products. However, this process is hindered by various factors. Among them, the most important factor were: (1) to provide sufficient financial and standardisation documents; (2) unstable supply and difficulties to maintain the same quality. Under the

influence of these factors and other small farm related difficulties, the local population involved in the production of agricultural products is not a favorable supplier for the large business sector. Therefore, active involvement of policy makers on the local and central government level is crucial.

- Both tourist centers of Kazbegi municipality are characterized by seasonality and less developed connections with each other. Stepantsminda town is crowded with tourists during the summer season, whereas number of tourists in winter season is quite low. Gudauri Resort is overcrowded during the ski season in winter time that creates opportunities for Stepantsminda and nearby settlements; however the capital still turned out to be more convenient place for most tourists to spend the night at. The capital, unlike Stepantsminda, offers them better infrastructure, a variety of leisure and entertainment activity options, a social environment where they can meet new people and explore culture. The proximity of the Gudauri resort to the capital is the challenge for Stepantsminda town that should be addressed by creating unique cultural experience locally. During the summer, almost nothing happens here, why would tourists come only for the snow-covered mountains?" There is no way to have evening entertainment in winter, not even in summer. In winter, snowy, muddy and sometimes icy roads make the place even more uncomfortable for tourists. Summer is the only season here," said the owner of the family guest-house from Stepantsminda. In order for Stepantsminda to take advantage of its proximity to Gudauri during the winter season, it should focus on offering special cultural products and services in addition to overnight accommodation and transportation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Limited resources and agglomeration effect show that in order to achieve rapid development, it is necessary to focus on creating core centers and support connections between such centers and other surrounding settlements. In order to achieve rapid and sustainable growth at the municipality the following points should be addressed by the local and central policy makers:

- Setting up the infrastructure by focusing on the centers of the municipality and establishing functional areas: During the planning phase of projects implemented by local self-

government and non-governmental organizations, it is necessary to cooperate with each other and give priority to those projects that will have a noticeable impact on the improvement of the investment environment of the municipality. Central and local state institutions are concentrated in Stepantsminda town. Local ski resort is Gudauri. For the development of the real economy in the municipality, it is necessary to establish other functional centers, for example: "agricultural", "forestry", "urbanized", "processing production" etc. Functional centers may be more specialized, for example, "milk and dairy products manufacturing", "mineral water manufacturing", "concentrated with construction business", "medical-recreational service provider" and others. The separation of such functional centers will contribute to both the diversity of economic activities and the emergence of an agglomeration effect, which over time will attract relevant investments to the entire territory of the municipality.

- Connecting Gudauri with Stepantsminda town during the summer season in order to reduce the seasonality of the resort. Gudauri has the potential to offer tourists various tours in the direction of Stepantsminda and its surrounding area. Such tours can be: bicycle tours, local culinary tour, farm tours, daily fitness exercises with different views and others. The same way, Stepantsminda has an ability to offer local gastro, cultural, pilgrimage, educational, recreational etc. experience during the winter season. The establishment of a theme park or other tourist infrastructure between Stepantsminda town and Gudauri resort would help to connect these two centers together and involve the surrounding settlements in the field of tourism.
- Promotion of tourism activities during the winter season in Stepantsminda towns. First of all, it is necessary to arrange the road infrastructure in the town so that tourists can walk around comfortably and safely. The development of the Stepantsminda town center is one of the foundations for the growth of both the population and the activity of tourists in the town. In addition to offering stunning views, town residents should create more various entertainment and recreational activities that will encourage longer durations of tourists' trips. Some possible ideas for such activities are: sledding (including

dog sledding), snow bike tours, organized transportation to Gudauri resort providing appropriate equipment and lunch packages, hiking tours, etc. Building connection between the centers of the municipality during the winter season requires the development of proper infrastructure to enable the transportation of tourists by using different snow transports.

The benefits generated by the development of the centers will have an impact on other areas as well, such as Truso Valley, Sno, Juta, Gweleti, Khada Valley and their surrounding settlements. In order to connect the territorial units, it is necessary to promote cooperation between the locals and business entities, develop appropriate infrastructure and promote migration more in the direction of the municipality centers than to the capital. This can be achieved only by increased demand for labour force in the centers of the municipality and established stability of employment opportunities throughout the year. The town of Gudauri is already characterized by the process of urbanization, which has been started for years due to the high demand for real estate in the resort. In Stepantsminda town, this process is relatively slow. Alongside the urbanization process, it is necessary to take into account the cultural characteristics and touristic attractiveness of newly built real estate.

Thus, the development potential of the municipality is foreseen by fostering establishment of core centers and functional areas, strengthen connection between them and with other settlements. In order to support engagement of other villages in tourism sector, they have ability to provide various cultural, entertainments, leisure, sport services and become part of the value chain. Local farmers have ability to collaborate with each other and establish production, marketing or service cooperatives, in order to become more stable and desired partners for local HoReCa sector.

The above mentioned approach will provide an opportunity for relatively rapid growth and reduction of the seasonality of the population's income. Replacing the local policy vision of "doing at least something in every settlement" with a focus on building strong municipal centers will have better effect on every settlement. The local economy can benefit from specialization and attract investments by establishment of functional areas.

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International and National Prospects for the Location And Development of It Startups in Ukraine

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Abstract: The article analyzes the factors of placement and growth of the number and capitalization of Ukrainian startups, primarily in the IT sector, and identifies their prospects. In the last 2-3 years alone, at least 10 of them have been included in the list of world leaders and have raised billions of dollars in capital. Among the reasons for this growth are favorable legislation and the general environment for IT business and government support for IT; active development of the digital economy in the field of government and service administration; extremely qualified personnel and well-known scientific schools; the presence of leading research centers and fairly favorable socio-economic conditions in monetary terms compared to other countries. The author also identifies possible threats and risks of introducing startups. Prospects for their development in the national and international dimensions are substantiated, taking into account trends in market competition and the use of the latest management concepts.

Key words: startups, information technology (IT), artificial intelligence, digital state, e-commerce, digital administration, digital economy

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Introduction

The basis for the formation and development of the digital economy is the creation and dissemination of technical and technological modes (technological systems) of the 5th and 6th orders and the introduction of fundamentally new, revolutionary content of innovations (nanotechnology, digitization, genetic modification, etc.) that change the usual conditions of human life. In all countries of the world, these processes are carried out in different ways and have different shares in the structure of the national economy. For example, while in the United States, industries and activities of higher-order technological systems account for 60% (5th order) and 5% (6th order) of the economy, in Ukraine, respectively, they account for only 5% and 0.1%.

This carries significant risks of being thrown to the margins of scientific and technological progress, despite the existence of many years of experience in developing and implementing innovations and innovative production, world-renowned scientific schools and research and educational institutions. Therefore, the focus, rapid spread, and successful operation in the 2020s of IT startups in Ukraine with a tendency to increase capitalization despite the risks of war is relevant and comprehensive.

It should be noted that the problems and prospects of innovation activity have been the subject of research by many domestic scholars and economists for a considerable period of time. They concern various mechanisms and directions of development and implementation of innovations, their management and economic evaluation of their effectiveness. Among the forms of implementation, special attention is paid to the traditional ones, such as business plans, innovation and investment-innovation projects. Less studied from an economic perspective are startups. This requires in-depth research and actualizes the chosen topic of study.

The purpose of the article is to identify the factors of accelerated and large-scale development of startups in Ukraine, especially in the field of information technology (IT), to assess the current state of implementation with clarification of competitive advantages and risks, and to identify further trends, prospects and sources of growth. Achieving the goal was based on setting and achieving relevant objectives and applying modern methods of scientific cognition: systemic and structural analysis and synthesis, financial and economic calculations and forecasts, determining ratings and trends.

Results and discussion

A startup is broadly defined as a newly established company that builds its business on the basis of innovations or innovative technologies; it may not even be officially registered; it has not entered the market but plans to enter it and has limited resources (S. Blank, E. Rees, P. Graham, P. Thiel). Some scholars hold the view of a startup as a cultural phenomenon where all employees feel like friendly members - like-minded people of a single team who profess common values, but where each participant is valuable and significant.

There is no universal methodology for evaluating startups. For example, when creating startup ratings, the following indicators are often used: age of the company; number of employees; profits and growth; level of innovation (international or local), potential and growth prospects. They also identify the stages and peculiarities of launch and development; sources and types of financing - seed, angel and venture capital investments. In Ukraine, despite the insufficient implementation of advanced technological devices and the war, digital technologies are characterized by a high level of development and use. The Diia, Digital State, and digital online banking applications, in terms of their level of implementation, mass use, and accessibility, place the country among the leading countries in Europe and the world in terms of digital development.

The innovativeness of the domestic economy is confirmed by the development of startups and their dynamics. Thus, from 2020 to 2022, the value of Ukrainian startups increased 3.3 times and reached €23.3 billion. One of the most informative analytical reviews of the state of the domestic IT sector, the Tech Ecosystem Overview project of the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, indicates that 1700 product and 533 service companies operate in Ukraine, 1233 of which are located in Kyiv. According to the Deal Book of Ukraine report by AVentures Capital, more than \$571 million was invested in Ukrainian startups in 2020. Compared to the previous year, the amount of investments raised in the early stages of financing exceeded the 2019 figures by 3.0 times, and the number of deals with young projects increased by 6.0 times.

This real "boom" in startups is obviously explained by the existence of special competitive advantages in Ukraine in general and Kyiv in particular for the development of IT business. A study by RA Capital (London) and UNIT.City Innovation Park in cooperation with the Ukrainian Startup Fund, based on a survey of the founders of 60 such projects, revealed the following: more than 90% of respondents are confident that the Ukrainian ecosystem is the best place for startups to develop. That's why all development teams live in Ukraine, and 82% of the founders do. In total, 36% of respondents named the high qualification of personnel; high quality of the Ukrainian startup ecosystem (33%); significant government and institutional support; and moderate and even low operating costs as reasons for such a favorable assessment.

In other similar analytical reports by international companies, the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, is positioned as an important city. Kyiv is positioned as an important European and global center for software, data, marketing, and sales startups. In recent years, Kyiv has been among the leading cities for startup location. Other cities that are centers of startup entrepreneurship are Odesa, Lviv, and Kharkiv. In 2021, Ukraine was ranked 34th in the world among 150 countries participating in the ranking by the number of startup projects. At the same time, such a technically and technologically advanced country with a recognized innovative economy as South Korea was behind.

Among the companies that received the largest investments, GitLab stands out as a developer tool (its shares are traded on the American stock

exchange). The company has reached a market capitalization of \$11 billion in just 7 years since its founding in 2014. Grammarly, a platform for analyzing English-language texts, has become not only a "unicorn" with a pre-public valuation of \$1 billion, but also a "ten-horn", i.e. the pre-public valuation has already exceeded \$10 billion. Other winners of the Ukrainian startup market that received investments of \$100 million to \$1 million in 2021 include platforms for improving business efficiency based on artificial intelligence; for improving document management; for finding tutors; for organizing cybersecurity; for scanning a person's body from a photo; for image processing; for designers; for analyzing the financial condition of a business; a startup that develops a service for organizing online events; and a startup that develops smart crutch attachments.

To this list should be added the domestic marketplace company Rozetka. Its significance has gone beyond the startup. The company has announced plans to create its own payment system; it has entered the Uzbek market; it has plans to go public, i.e., to conduct an initial public offering. Ajax Systems, a security system developer, announced this direction of development even earlier. Thus, the favorable conditions of the business environment in the IT sector; favorable institutions; creative innovative ideas, high professional training of specialists and outstanding traditions of domestic scientific schools have become the key to the success of these and other startups.

Thus, young domestic entrepreneurs are proving that even in a very difficult economic situation, in the face of war and danger to life due to daily russian shelling of the country's cities and villages, they are able to create effective, globally important startups in the field of IT, artificial intelligence, and the digital economy. At the same time, the prospects of the domestic startup market and the domestic startup ecosystem are far from being exhausted. The total number of startups looking for investors exceeds 20,000 on specialized resources. However, not all of them receive funding. For example, a well-known Ukrainian investor and venture capitalist, Andriy Kolodyuk, points to significant problems with their financing.

On average, one venture fund reviews from 0.5 to several thousand startups per year. Out of this number, only 2, if the fund is at an early stage of development, or 5-7 startups, if the fund has experience, are provided with funding. This is confirmed by the example of his fund. Over the 7 years of its existence, the fund he heads has reviewed proposals from more than 3,000 startups, but has concluded deals with only 25, or less than 1% of all startups.

However, despite such severe warnings, over the past 5 years (as of May 30, 2023), Ukraine has produced many unicorns, i.e. companies with a capitalization of more than \$1 billion, in its IT ecosystem.

A large number of Western companies, which do not even have Ukrainians among their founders, opened their offices here before the war or even hired entire Ukrainian development teams. Over the past 5 quarters, 200 deals totaling \$881 million have been made. Most of them were grants that supported young startups in the early stages of development. Among other things, the merits of the domestic community of

IT entrepreneurs and investors, primarily united by common ideas in the Ukrainian Venture Capital and Private Equity Association (UVCA), should be noted here. The already quoted chairman of its supervisory board, founder and managing partner of the well-known investment fund Aventures Capital, A. Kolodyuk, points out: "Ukraine is already more than a trillion euros of investment opportunities" (mind: publications, investments, technologies - interview with Andriy Kolodyuk by Yevhen Shpytko, May 30, 2023, online).

It should be noted that the Venture Capital and Private Equity Association has more than 50 members. In order to improve investment and implement innovations and investment ideas on its platform, an investment club has been launched and is functioning effectively. This is due to the peculiarities of venture capital investments and the venture capital market. Unlike the real sector, they are much less dependent on the government, the general investment climate and pessimistic investor sentiment, and the huge outflow of investment in the real sector. Currently, in terms of both volume and number of transactions, 2/3 of them are provided by international investors and 1/3 by domestic investors.

Since domestic venture capital was less powerful and represented earlier, this is already a pretty good indicator and trend. Moreover, almost half of our investors invest outside of Ukraine, which indicates a gradual involvement in the global market. Previously, investors used to follow the Silicon Valley rule or invest in companies whose offices could be reached by car in 6 hours, but the global Covid epidemic has changed communications and priorities. Now, the factor of location, distance, and geography has lost its crucial importance. This makes it possible to attract international investors and for domestic funds to invest in startups in other countries.

Before Russia's attack, Ukraine was an ideal place for startups. This is evidenced by its 34th to 31st place in global rankings by number of startups. Currently, the startup market is difficult to assess. This is due to the fact that a significant number of investment deals are concluded unofficially, due to the reluctance of participants to disclose information. Another feature of domestic startups is their young age: 74% have been operating on the market for less than 3 years; 87% have been operating for less than 5 years. Also, 20% of projects have only one founder; 37% - two people; 25% - three. The number of employees, in addition to the founders, ranges from 3 to 6 people aged 26 to 46.

Even under martial law, startup projects in Ukraine are functioning. Of course, as for the entire people of Ukraine, this is happening in the face of security risks to life, property, and technological operations. A significant number of them had to be outsourced. Some servers from the East and Center were moved to the West of the country and abroad. A significant number of employees were also relocated. Due to Russian missile attacks on infrastructure, especially energy, there have been interruptions in electricity, water, heating, and the Internet. But most of the employees and founders and investors have stayed and are working and fighting for the freedom of their country.

It should also be added that the areas of implementation of startups' innovative ideas are important. These include artificial intelligence, augmented reality, blockchain, cybersecurity, defense, medicine, education, finance and banking, robotics, software, e-commerce, business documentation and organization, manufacturing and agriculture, travel, and administration. It is predicted that the widespread introduction of innovations in all spheres of life will allow people to significantly reduce the level of employment in heavy or routine labor, freeing up time for self-development, culture and education.

Conclusion

Practitioners of venture capital investment point out that the availability of finance and startups are interrelated phenomena. The more startups there are, the more money there is, and vice versa. In addition, a large number of startups allows for faster development of the culture in their ecosystem; sharing of experience at seminars and workshops; transfer of knowledge, important contacts, etc. Another problem in Ukraine is that Ukrainian startups create high-quality creative products but do not know how to sell them. So, the art of selling is no less important than developing. Otherwise, this leads to a significant level of risk for startups at the implementation stage.

Therefore, the experience of Israel, where they know how to sell not even a product, but only an idea, should be illustrative and worthy of emulation. Domestic startups are extremely talented and creative in their development, but they do not understand the market and the needs of specific consumers. This also has a bad effect on sales and motivation to work without being rewarded with profits. There is also an investment failure in Ukraine in the chain of "idea - first investment". Therefore, the creation and operation of a state investment fund in Ukraine is aimed at solving this problem. It has partially taken on the role of a seed investor and accelerator to reduce and prevent the shortage of funds.

In addition to this important area, the development of entrepreneurial culture, sales culture and business process ethics in general; improvement of institutional support for intellectual property, rights, innovative developments, intangible assets; and increased information support for domestic startups at the international level are of great importance for the prospects of developing the domestic startup sector and improving the domestic IT ecosystem.

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Capitalism 4.0”, the “Programmed Economy”, and the Changes in Planning

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Abstract: The study focuses on the programmed economy, specifically exploring the algorithmization of planning. A politico-economic approach is applied, highlighting the interconnectedness of technology, economics, and politics. The objective is to demonstrate that digitization enables not only strategic but also more specific, short-term planning. This transformative process is already being adopted by major companies with economies surpassing those of entire countries. Historically, planning posed significant challenges, but the analysis of "big data" now renders the "invisible hand of the market" visible and more manageable.

Key words: Capitalism 4.0, programmed economy, planning, big data, algorithms

JEL: C55, O21, P11, P21

Introduction

This study adopts a politico-economic approach, interconnecting technology, economics, and politics as crucial factors influencing economic planning. By examining historical debates and planning endeavors across various technological stages, the study seeks to trace the evolution leading to the current era, where the pervasive digitalization of processes generates new technological tools for planning.

A central concept explored is the notion of a "programmed economy," representing a paradigm shift from traditional planning methodologies. Unlike conventional planning, which relies on human management with inherent limitations in comprehending vast market dynamics, a programmed economy is facilitated by artificial intelligence and machines. Through extensive data analysis using relevant algorithms, these entities acquire the intelligence necessary for real-time economic management, enabling predictions in production, exchange, distribution, and consumption.

While debates on planning have roots in early utopian socialist thought and later among the Fabians, the true "calculation debate" emerged post-World War I, particularly in discussions surrounding planning possibilities within socialist economies. The contemporary relevance of this debate is heightened as the prominence of data and algorithms grows,

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reigniting the question of the feasibility of planning. Notably, this paradigm shift is already evident in major corporations, whose economic output and influence surpasses those of many nations.

The primary thesis of the present study posits that as the state becomes increasingly algorithmized, such algorithmization will emerge as a fundamental characteristic of politics. The envisioned "super-intelligence" inherent in this algorithmic governance is deemed essential for effective economic planning in the evolving landscape.

1. The Concept of the "Programmed Economy"

Since the onset of the global economic crisis in 2008, a cascading series of crises has permeated various social subsystems, manifesting in economic, political, health, geopolitical, climate, refugee, social, paradigmatic, technological, and demographic dimensions. These crises, evolving from occasional deviations to persistent systemic elements, have prompted diverse perspectives on addressing them, including the notions of "Capitalism 4.0" and the "Programmed Economy."

The concept of "Capitalism 4.0" is articulated by thinkers such as Anatole Kaletsky. He contends that the aftermath of the 2008 crisis has instilled a widespread sense of the end of an era, signaling the disintegration of previously stable societies. The rise of populist figures and movements indicates an underlying necessity for a new revolution in economic thinking. In the context of transformative shifts in economic thought and politics, Kaletsky envisions "Capitalism 4.0," a stage characterized by the acknowledgment that both markets and governments can make critical mistakes, necessitating a reevaluation of the boundaries between economics and politics (Kaletsky, 2013, p. 11).

Another trajectory for the transformation of the politico-economic system is encapsulated in the concept of the "Programmed Economy," introduced by Gartner in 2014, a prominent global research and consulting company in information technologies. Gartner posits that ongoing technological advancements are paving the way for the emergence of a "programmed economy." This represents a novel form of an intelligent economic system, organizing the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Enabled by the increasing digitalization, organizations—both private and governmental—can collect, store, and process data through relevant algorithms, giving rise to novel concepts such as "smart property," "smart contracts," "dynamic digital individuals," "smart business models," and distributed autonomous organizations. The transformation will necessitate new legal and social structures, urging companies and governments to prepare for comprehensive changes in all facets of their interactions with society (Gartner, 2015). Through the analysis of extensive data sets, the "programmed economy" is expected to facilitate real-time management of various processes, anticipate potential event trajectories, and enable faster and more informed decision-making.

2. The Calculation Debate

The aftermath of the First World War marked a notable increase in the role of the state, showcasing its capability to purposefully and systematically manage the economy. This shift in dynamics led to the emergence of the "debate on calculation" in the 1920s, initiated by Ludwig von Mises and Otto Neurath, and later continued by Friedrich von Hayek and Oskar Lange.

Mises and Hayek, positioned on one side of the debate, contended that socialism was inherently inefficient due to state ownership of the means of production. According to their argument, the state lacked the capacity to rationally determine prices for capital goods, rendering planning institutions ineffective compared to the free market. They asserted that the sheer volume of information required to anticipate the diverse needs of millions of consumers made comprehensive planning unattainable.

On the opposing side were planning proponents like Otto Neurath and Oskar Lange. They highlighted the inherent flaws of the market system, emphasizing its inability to achieve balance and tendency to generate crises, exploitation, and increasing inequalities. Neurath, drawing from his experience in organizing Austrian government planning during the First World War, countered Mises, asserting that not only was planning possible but also desirable. Neurath envisioned the creation of a systematic approach to calculation and planning.

In 1965, Oskar Lange furthered these ideas in his work "The Computer and the Market," proposing that technological advancements would soon enable the resolution of essential calculations needed for central planning. He envisioned a system of calculation and planning supporting market socialism, where collectives collectively own property and plan for the long term. However, consumer goods distribution would be determined by market forces—supply and demand. In his 1970 book, "Introduction to Economic Cybernetics," Lange continued to explore the potential of using computers and cybernetics for planning. Applying principles of automatic control theory, he focused on the management of the economy, particularly within the context of a socialist economy (Lange, 1970).

3. "Capitalism 2.0" and the Rise of Planning

In the 1930s, the ideas put forth by Mises and Hayek failed to gain sufficient attention or become mainstream due to the tumultuous global conditions—severe economic crises, wartime self-closure, escalating militarization, and the outbreak of World War II. Governments worldwide responded by strengthening their roles, implementing controls over wages, prices, rents, dividends, and taxes, not only to attract workers but also to mobilize soldiers during wartime.

This period coincided with the unfolding of the Second Industrial Revolution, which A. Kaletsky refers to as "Capitalism 2.0." During this era, the state's role, centralization, and planning sharply increased, primarily driven by the imperative of mobilizing vast armies for wartime efforts. Within the U.S. government, the "National Resources Planning Board" was established. German economist K. Landauer, who had emigrated during

the war, published "Theory of National Economic Planning," advancing the ideas of indicative planning (Landauer, 1944).

Strong regulation characterized Western economies during and after the war, emphasizing the search for balance between supply and demand. States focused on infrastructure projects and strategic objectives as part of various forms of strategic and indicative planning. In indicative planning, state institutions formulate goals and means for economic policy and potential trajectories of economic development. Economic indicators, such as unemployment rates, inflation, wages, investment, budget deficits, and interest rates, were used to reduce uncertainty in market and mixed economies. Indicative planning found active application in countries like France, Germany, and Japan, known for their "policy of dirigisme," enhancing the sustainability of market mechanisms. Governments directed the economy by investing in entities aligned with these indicators.

In the East, notably during the 1930s and beyond, the Soviet model of state socialism emerged, characterized by a centralized directive planning model. The state and mass communist parties, along with their workplace party organizations, played pivotal roles in predominantly rural societies undergoing the Second Industrial Revolution. Despite lacking the technological advancements of the First Industrial Revolution, they implemented planned economies, aiming to catch up with developed capitalist nations. Mass mobilization and centralized organization facilitated strategies like the "five-year plan in shortened terms."

4. **"Capitalism 3.0" and the Rise of the Market**

The crisis and stagflation in developed Western countries during the 1970s spurred the development of technologies associated with the Third Industrial Revolution, aligning with Anatole Kaletsky's characterization of this era as "Capitalism 3.0." During this period, concepts emerged that delegated an increasing array of functions to the market, asserting that the state posed more problems than solutions to market imbalances. The ideas of Milton Friedman, Friedrich von Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises gained prominence, influencing policies that emphasized strengthening the role of the market, as exemplified by the administrations of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Mises and Hayek, once considered heterodox figures, became central to the new neoclassical economics, which departed from Keynesianism and placed greater emphasis on the market and market prices. In 1974, Hayek was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics, underscoring the pivotal role of his ideas during the Third Industrial Revolution. This period witnessed a decline in reliance on state regulation, as the market assumed many functions previously performed by the state.

The collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s led to a widespread rejection of planning, perceived as an anachronism and a relic of the past. The realization crystallized that:

- The sheer multitude of products, numbering in the hundreds of thousands or even millions, made it impractical for central directive planning to anticipate and manage them all.

- In economies where innovation and the creation of new technologies held increasing importance as competitive advantages, predicting their emergence and impact in a specific timeframe became challenging.
- In the context of a globalized market with millions of companies and numerous factors beyond state control, making accurate predictions proved impossible.

Planning was largely supplanted by development strategies, programs, strategic planning setting broad directional indicators, or decisions based on specific situations and leading economic and social development indices. Programmatic approaches, program-target planning, strategic planning, and strategic management emerged, yet these were at best forms of indicative planning. While these approaches found greater traction within companies, they grappled with the risks of competition, rapid change, disruptive technologies, and the potential for venture capital and startups to undermine their established expectations and positions.

5. "Capitalism 4.0" and the "Programmed Economy"

The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution since 2008 and the shift to "Capitalism 4.0" are closely tied to the remarkable capabilities to collect and process vast amounts of data in real-time, facilitated by data technologies and artificial intelligence. This development echoes the discussions of the historical "calculation debate," and the prevailing expectation is that centralized calculation is now feasible, paving the way for planning and regulation. The application of artificial intelligence in new modeling forms enables predictions of the behavior of entire cities, regions, and countries (Lawton, 2019). This phenomenon is prominently exemplified by major technology companies that, through real-time data collection and processing from hundreds of millions of users, regulate various aspects of their platforms, tailor products or services, and offer personalized information.

Large technology corporations exemplify these trends by leveraging real-time data created by millions of users to regulate and customize their offerings. On average, every American adult spends four hours a day on their phones, generating digital footprints that empower companies like Amazon to predict purchasing behavior, Facebook to analyze mental states, and Google to understand interests and preferences. Algorithms then decipher and analyze personal values, beliefs, and ideologies (Aurik, 2019). Human needs are no longer solely within the realm of personal privacy but have become the domain of companies capable of predicting and influencing individual choices, thus guiding what products to produce and offer.

The prevailing expectation is that if the state evolves into a fully integrated, sensor-based digital system, centralized "calculation" will become possible, potentially leading to the replacement of market mechanisms by algorithms. This conceptualization emphasizes that planning could eliminate market imperfections without relying on free

market prices as the feedback mechanism, as advocated by the Austrian School in the 1920s-30s. The utilization of "big data," its processing, and subsequent applications are seen as potential substitutes for prices. The mechanisms inherent in networked digital feedback systems offer effective monitoring of dynamic consumer expectations, demand, supply, and the value of products in real-time. This allows for tracking and monitoring various processes that traditional market price signals may not capture (Joseph, 2017, pp. 280-281).

5.1. *The "Big Data" Revolution and the Potential Revival of the Planned Economy*

In the era of big data, artificial intelligence, personalized consumption, and the emergence of "prosumerism" facilitated by 3D printers, the question of planning in a world where algorithms can collect and process data from millions and billions of users is gaining prominence. An article in the Financial Times titled "The Big Data revolution can revive the planned economy" asserts that big data serves as a foundation for effective management decisions, bridging the informational gap between planned and market economies. Central planning practitioners now have tools at their disposal to make rational decisions with the aid of the "internet of things" and algorithmically processed information. This data has the potential to substitute the price mechanism in regulating supply and demand.

Online platform monopolies are likened to central planning institutions, leading to the proposition that it would be more "legitimate and rational" for the state to transform into a "super-monopoly platform." Acting as an airport directing traffic driven by the market, the state, in this analogy, manages capacity, establishes standards and security requirements, addresses environmental concerns, oversees the movement of goods, and serves relevant operators, passengers, and sellers. The use of "big data" is envisioned as a means to achieve a more rational distribution of resources across various sectors, ultimately enhancing overall management efficiency (Thornhill, 2017).

5.2. *"The People's Republic of Walmart"*

In 2019, Leigh Phillips and Michael Rozworski published "The People's Republic of Walmart: How the World's Biggest Corporations Are Laying the Foundation for Socialism." The book explores the example of economic planning within giant corporations, particularly focusing on Walmart. Challenging the classical arguments of Mises and Hayek, the authors argue that, with today's technology, planning for millions of products and services involving numerous variables in supply chains and non-price information is not only possible but highly effective.

Walmart utilizes a software program called HANA, fueled by data from 245 million users, generating approximately 1 million transactions every hour. This data includes inputs from 17,500 suppliers, internal company activities, and external factors impacting business, such as weather conditions, sentiments in social networks, and economic indicators. The AI-driven "Intelligent Retail Lab" processes information at an

astonishing speed, equivalent to downloading 27,000 hours of music in one second (Rosen, 2019).

Walmart, as the world's largest private employer and boasting an economy that, if considered a country, would rival Switzerland, represents a unique form of a precisely planned economy. Despite its enormous scale, the company operates with a new type of centrally planned economy, adjusting plans in real time. Walmart's annual profit surpasses the GDP of several countries, yet it operates without relying on market prices. Instead, it focuses on exponentially increasing data about people's preferences and resource usage, enabling large-scale planning without market mediation. This centrally planned economy involves managers directing subordinates on tasks and goals, deviating from the spontaneity of a traditional market economy.

Analysts attribute Walmart's success to its leadership in adopting innovations such as constant product renewal, comprehensive supply chain management, computerization, trust, openness, and information transparency (Phillips and Rozworski, 2019). This case study challenges traditional notions about the viability and effectiveness of planning in large-scale economic systems.

5.3. We Already Live in a Planned Economy

Laurie Macfarlane highlights a crucial observation: "We already live in a planned economy - we just have to take the wheel." In the digital economies of today, significant portions of the private sector are not governed by markets but rather by central planning. Global corporations like Walmart and Amazon, economies larger than most countries, seemingly epitomize free-market capitalism. However, they function as some of today's most successful planned economies, meticulously organized and coordinated hierarchically. These corporations allocate internal resources through planning mechanisms.

The key question arises: How can society transition to a model where these vast economic entities are not owned by a minority but are instead assets of the entire society? In an era marked by escalating environmental and social challenges, the need for an ecologically sustainable economy, poverty elimination, reduced inequality, and improved health and education systems is more pressing than ever. The belief persists that there are objective possibilities for transitioning to a planned society, which works for everyone (Macfarlane, 2019).

5.4. Amazon is looking more and more like a nation-state

The utilization of data and algorithms for comprehensive analysis has become a standard practice among large corporations, effectively "programming" their operations. A noteworthy instance of this trend is the launch of the "Amazon Go" retail chain in February 2018 in the United States. These fully automated stores, situated in New York, Seattle, Chicago, and San Francisco, enable customers to make purchases without the assistance of traditional salespeople. Instead, sensors and digital connections are employed to monitor countless economic interactions, intricately linked with supply chains and consumer behavior (Coldewey, 2018).

It's noteworthy that analyses have surfaced, emphasizing that "Amazon is looking more and more like a nation-state." The company has established its own extensive global data collection system, surpassing the intelligence capabilities of numerous countries. Moreover, Amazon collaborates with various police departments to exchange information. Constantly diversifying its activities and bolstering profits, Amazon, which initially began as a bookstore, has expanded into pharmaceutical services, insurance and payment services, small business loans, and the development and sale of "smart offices" and other innovative devices with a potential market value in the trillions of dollars. All these ventures are managed through its cloud services.

Amazon's acquisition of promising startups across various sectors and its expansion efforts, such as imposing taxes on producers using its platform in France, demonstrate that it is more than just a monopoly; it resembles a version of a state. Amazon exhibits typical state functions such as taxation, information gathering, and coercive tools (Ongweso, 2019). What sets it apart from traditional states is the absence of market relations within its framework; it exercises control and strategically processes vast amounts of data, meticulously planning and programming its actions.

A survey reveals that 69 out of the world's 100 largest economies are owned by corporations, while 31 belong to countries. Interestingly, over a third of global trade involves intra-corporate transactions rather than transactions between nation-states (Niyazov, 2019). A substantial portion of these transactions occurs at so-called transfer prices, which means they do not adhere to market-based pricing.

The economic impact of corporations becomes evident when comparing their profits to the GDP of various countries. For instance, in 2017, Spotify's profits exceeded the GDP of Mauritania, Netflix's surpassed Malta's GDP, Tesla's exceeded Albania's GDP, and so forth (Moynihan and Belinchon, 2018). Additionally, corporations are heavily involved in space programs, launching more satellites near Earth than entire countries. They monopolize the latest advancements in artificial intelligence, utilizing it to efficiently manage their resources.

In contrast to traditional countries engaged in wars and reliant on oil, corporations prioritize big data, algorithmically processed through artificial intelligence, as their primary tool for planning and development. This shift underscores the transformative role of technology in shaping the global economic landscape.

These trends have become inherent in a significant portion of today's global companies, enabling them to establish monopoly positions in various fields. In this context, a considerable part of the Western economy is effectively centrally planned. The prominent digital companies not only demonstrate the possibility of large-scale central planning but also the fact that it is already in operation and proving effective.

During the Second Industrial Revolution, states employed diverse planning approaches—directively under state socialism and indicatively in developed Western countries. Today, however, significant planning is undertaken by major companies, with states playing a comparatively

diminished role. This is particularly evident in the large American digital technology giants, known as MAFIA-G (Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, IBM, Amazon, and Google), as well as the three Chinese technology giants collectively referred to as BAT (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent). These entities possess the personal data of the majority of the global population, exerting substantial influence on political parties and the behavior of millions of individuals. Their capabilities surpass those of the majority of countries.

Take, for example, a company like "Apple" with 240 billion dollars in cash on its balance sheet; it could launch an investment program twice the size of the renowned Marshall Plan initiated by the USA in post-World War II Europe. These developments have spurred the notion that new forms of non-market socialism, rooted in digital technologies, are emerging. In this specific form of socialism, economic planning for essential goods occurs without the need for markets, money, and prices, facilitated by computers and the data they collect and process (Cockshott and Cottrell, 1993).

Conclusion

The contemporary challenge lies in the fact that "big data" today are predominantly controlled by global monopolies, leveraging them to optimize a growing array of activities and generate profits. However, in doing so, these entities are also exploiting the data of billions of individuals, giving rise to socio-economic and political conflicts. In a manner reminiscent of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there is a resurgence of ideas advocating for replacing private monopolies with state-controlled entities and forming a socialist society. This prompts the consideration of substituting private monopolies, which exploit user data for profits, with a state monopoly that utilizes this data for the benefit of society as a whole.

The global technology giants, holding significant power in today's market system, have already limited or bypassed traditional market dependencies. Their existence within the market system is increasingly reliant on big data and algorithms rather than traditional market forces. Consequently, while previous state planning in the Soviet Union and the early People's Republic of China faltered due to information inadequacies, artificial intelligence now processes massive amounts of data, allowing us to unveil the "invisible hand of the market."

This sets the stage for the potential emergence of a new theory and model for the development of a planned economy. Such a model is seen as a corrective measure for the imbalances and crises observed across all subsystems and levels of the politico-economic system—be it global, national, regional, or even personal. The lingering question, however, is whether data and algorithms can facilitate planning not only within a country (if we consider a company as a country) but also on a regional and global scale, necessitating coordination between nations. Perhaps this could be achievable within the framework of a global socialist society, aligning with the initial Marxist idea of socialism as a universalist theory guiding the whole of humanity, albeit at different paces, toward a common

historical direction, originating from the most developed capitalist countries and eventually encompassing the entire globe.

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Comparative Analysis of European Union Consumers' Online Shopping in the Context of Digitalization

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Abstract: The current research focuses on the online shopping of European consumers, which is significantly affected by digital changes. Advances in digital technologies, generating additional organizational and structural value, are an irrevocable part of the trends changing economic systems at national, regional and international levels. The main goal of the development is to interpret conceptual judgments and empirical results regarding the change in online shopping of consumers from the 27-member states of the European Union and, through the use of econometric methods, to account for the impact of certain economic and demographic variables. In this way, a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in the online shopping of the research respondents is proposed. To achieve the goal, a hierarchical cluster analysis is performed with the capabilities of the IBM software product SPSS Statistics. The formation of distinct clusters of European countries regarding online shopping, measured by a total of six variables, is based on data released by the European statistical office Eurostat in 2012 and 2022. The obtained research results allow hierarchical grouping and highlighting of differences between clusters from the countries studied regarding the development of the online shopping process. The results of the research can serve as a starting point for future decisions for the development of online shopping at the European level, with a focus on the increasing rates of digitalization.

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Introduction

Online shopping is becoming an indispensable feature of the digital economy, having a positive impact on the overall process of economic growth. The significance of this type of shopping predetermines numerous studies in the specialized literature related to different aspects, outlining both the concept of electronic commerce (Laudon & Traver, 2021); (Bai & Li, 2022); (Kalakota & Whinston, 1997), as well as the nature of the transactions carried out (Chen, et al., 2022); (Tang & Lin, 2019). In-depth and thought-provoking research is conducted, revealing interpretations and judgments about e-commerce with a focus on key conceptual ideas and the latest empirical data on companies such as Amazon, Google, eBay, Pinterest, Twitter, Snapchat. The given examples from economic practice illustrate how e-commerce changes business models and leads to digital transformations in the global economy.

Previous studies have considered the importance of online shopping and digitalization for consumers, deriving research perspectives: first, on the collection of data about goods and services (Yang & Cho, 1999), second, on the implementation of online shopping by consumers (Degeratu, et al., 2002), and third, on combining and reconciliation of the mentioned two perspectives (Hill & Beatty, 2011); (Pan, et al., 2010). As confirmed by H. Alturkestani, online shopping is defined as the efforts made by consumers, through digital technologies – especially the Internet, in search of information about goods and services, as well as making purchase transactions (Alturkestani, 2004). With the development and use of the Internet over the past two decades, online shopping, as a form of e-commerce, creates and expands the opportunities for consumers to use digital channels in search of goods and services.

The main objective of the present study is to interpret conceptual judgments and empirical results regarding the change in online shopping of consumers from the 27-member states of the European Union and, through the use of econometric methods, to account for the impact of certain economic and demographic variables.

The study of the online shopping of European consumers allows to delineate the emerging similarities and differences between the groups of countries of the European Union. In parallel with this, the obtained results have a reflection on the assessment of the possibilities of individual countries to achieve the goals of Europe in the field of digital technologies for 2030.

When analyzing the possibilities for online shopping, access to the Internet is one of the mandatory conditions. In accordance with their demographic and economic characteristics, individuals, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, enterprises offering goods and services online,

make connections and relationships regarding the implementation of online shopping. For this reason, within the framework of the presented research, certain variables are introduced, amounting to a total of six, as follows: last online purchase: in the 12 months; internet use by individuals; share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – %; enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) – % of enterprises; level of internet access – households; individuals with high formal education, from 16 to 74 years. In keeping with the objective of the manuscript, the variables thus selected help to group the 27-member states of the European Union into relevant clusters, as well as to reach relevant research results.

The comprehensiveness of the process of online shopping and its implementation at the European level requires the following main limitations to be introduced when developing the research framework: search for support in the development of the theory of electronic commerce and online shopping in digital conditions; dominance of certain variables measuring the development process of online shopping.

The present paper is structured in five paragraphs, namely: after the introduction, a review of the literature on the development of online shopping and digital changes in consumer choice is presented; the following third paragraph is devoted to the research methodology that is characteristic of econometric methods related to cluster analysis; the fourth paragraph contains an empirical study focusing on European consumers' online shopping, measured by a total of six variables. The values determined in this way consider the economic and demographic characteristics of the studied users to a corresponding degree. The geographical focus of the research includes the 27-member states of the European Union. A discussion containing interpretations and comparisons with results from other researchers is also included within the fourth paragraph. The last paragraph presents conclusions indicating the theoretical and practical significance of the research.

Literature review

Online shopping continues to develop its potential and economic importance in the context of digital development. Manufacturers and retailers worldwide are using digital progress to attract consumers' attention with high-tech developments and strategies for greater flexibility in shopping, and the impression consumers receive of the business, brand, access to products and the organization of payments indirectly effects on the amount of income.

Digital technologies provide sustainability in a competitive environment. Companies investing in digitalization of processes more easily obtain the status of global partners, which increases their potential. A testament to the role that digital technologies are playing is their wider implementation in business during COVID-19, to neutralize the negative consequences of the epidemic. On the other hand, COVID-19 is proving to be a stimulus for the development of e-commerce, which is gaining an ever-increasing share of consumers' trust and significantly changing their shopping habits.

There are points of view that consider that the growth of electronic commerce depends exclusively on the adequate protection of the rights of online users, which should be set as a main task for the policies of the European Union (Cortés, 2011). Other authors unite around the idea of combining the ways of conducting a competitive struggle, which, according to them, is a sure way to achieve strategic success (Borisova, et al., 2020). The cited authors adhere to the position that the higher competitiveness and positive attitude of consumers derives from the accumulation of diverse and innovative information technologies in business, such as: virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), internet of things (IOT), artificial intelligence (AI) and big data (Big Data). Researcher D. Danchev summarizes that the impact on user experiences absolutely requires a combination of traditional and new technological solutions (Данчев, 2023).

The very complex of digital technologies and opportunities for reprogramming business models is associated with digital transformation, which changes not only the internal corporate environment, but also improves relations with users, their experiences and contacts with the environment (Bednarčíková & Repiská, 2021). Digital transformation is a priority for the European Union. Given the new demands and preferences of consumers, the focus of companies is shifting to online sales, and the improvement of the offered products and services is done through the comprehensive integration of digital technologies in all aspects of business. In modern studies related to the development of e-commerce in the European Union, significant imbalances are found in the share of enterprises and their turnover from online sales, one of the main reasons being the level of digital development, which is differentiated within the European Union (Иванова, 2023). There is an unequal pace of digital transformation in the corporate environment of individual European Union member countries, as well as a disproportionate digital intensity in European enterprises with different capacities (Marinov, 2023).

It is of particular interest to trace how digitalization is changing consumer choice and promoting online shopping for European consumers. Over the past decade, the European Union has reported a 20% increase in the number of consumers who buy goods through digital platforms (Eurostat, 2023). The reasons for the increased interest in online shopping platforms are different – from the lack of spatial and time constraints for selection to price benefits and logistical conveniences. The fact is that younger consumers are usually the ones who look for deals through digital devices, while older ones more often find it difficult to order and purchase goods and services over the Internet.

The propensity to shop online in European Union countries is different and depends on a number of factors that are often of research interest. Of great benefit to the success of e-commerce is the effective analysis of the determinants that accelerate its development, as well as what actions are still needed to maintain the right direction to reach the desired dynamic levels (Baubonienė & Gulevičiūtė, 2015). The marketing strategies of retail companies are highly dependent on the correct reading of the peculiarities between individual markets – for example, Europe and

Asia, where there are significant differences in demographics, cultural heritage, methods that consumers use to pay, e-commerce platforms, etc. (Siregar, 2023).

According to A. Huterska and R. Huterski the consumer choice of online purchases in the European Union is influenced by economic and social as well as technological factors (Huterska & Huterski, 2022). In such studies, the research approach assesses the impact that information and communication technologies have on online clothing shopping by European Union consumers through an econometric model incorporating economic and demographic factors (Petrova, et al., 2023). There are authors who attempt to establish the factors limiting online shopping, bearing in mind the different conditions and practices among consumers from the various member countries of the European Union (Božić & Botrić, 2018).

In the specialized literature, there are more and more arguments about online shopping and the benefits it provides for both producers and consumers. Numerous studies in this direction show that companies adopt a user-oriented approach that prioritizes users first in their organizational strategies (Shah & Murthi, 2021). At the same time, consumers generate benefits from the online experience and prefer to shop online. They are more effectively engaged at every touch point in the online shopping lifecycle (Gimpel & Röglinger, 2015). In this way, the level of user satisfaction increases and the range of purchase and sales channels is expanded (Dawson, 2001). According to N. Duch-Brown, L. Grzybowski, A. Romahn and F. Verboven online sales are more convenient and attractive for consumers than for manufacturers and the profits generated for them (Duch-Brown, et al., 2017). In a study of C. Ranganathan and S. Ganapathy points out that online shopping allows for more secure and better purchasing decisions by consumers who are primarily guided by the informational content (interface) and the attractiveness of the website as they seek to obtain the best deals (Ranganathan & Ganapathy, 2002). As they confirm in their productions T. Yu and G. Wu, online shopping is a market concept that provides more satisfaction to modern consumers looking for practicality and flexibility (Yu & Wu, 2007). Another group of researchers including P. Butler and J. Pepper, concludes that online purchases are characterized by exponential growth, which is a consequence of the provision of a greater choice of goods and services, easier consumer access, as well as opportunities for parallel comparison of disparate information on prices and other characteristics (Butler & Peppard, 1998).

It should be borne in mind that the effective implementation of online shopping requires continuous enrichment with new concepts, logic and mechanisms that are in line with the ongoing evolution of information and communication technologies and digital transformation (De Luca, et al., 2021). Researchers F. Pascucci, E. Savelli and G. Gistri adheres to the position that in today's dynamic conditions, digital technologies are imperative for markets and society, and digital transformation becomes a key tool, ensuring a continuous cycle of data processing and exchange, through which a unified and integrated information assurance is realized in

online the sales. The cited authors confirm that digital transformation can improve responsiveness to consumer demands in online shopping by promoting and new ways of managing the strategic and operational aspects of marketing processes (Pascucci, et al., 2023). In their studies, H. Gimpel and M. Röglinger argues that digital transformation leads to the reconfiguration of business models to more effectively engage digital consumers (Gimpel & Röglinger, 2015). The statement of J. Reis, M. Amorim, N. Melão and P. Matos also deserves attention that the use of innovative digital technologies enables major business improvements in online sales and affects all aspects of consumer shopping (Reis, et al., 2018).

Studies confirm that modern consumption patterns in Europe are undergoing changes and transformations. Prospects for consumers require a transformation of consumption models (Petrova, et al., 2023). In this direction, the need to rethink the market approach and the offered value, to change the organizational processes and structures, as well as to renew or reorganize the online sales process, is growing. Undoubtedly, advances in digital technologies lead to a change in consumer behavior, but the reverse thesis that consumer preferences and the increased use of digital technologies influence the development of online shopping is also extremely important.

Methodology

The presented research is based on data released by the European Statistical Office – Eurostat, which were obtained, collected and summarized through a survey technique that is applied annually by national statistical institutes according to a methodology that considers the use of information and communication technologies by households and by natural persons in the order of the observed digital goals of the European Union for 2030.

In the analysis and measurement of online shopping done by individuals in an online environment at the level of the 27-member states of the European Union, the following six variables are used: last online purchase: in the 12 months; internet use by individuals share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – %; enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) – % of enterprises; level of internet access – households; individuals with high formal education, from 16 to 74 years. The set of variables listed helps to account to an appropriate degree for the economic and demographic characteristics of the survey respondents.

When using the capabilities of the IBM software product SPSS Statistics The methodological sequence of the study includes the implementation of a hierarchical cluster analysis based on the determined quantitative characteristics. Based on a preliminary measurement of the distances between the clusters using the seven methods included in the cited software product, reaches the selection of the relatively best solution and the Between – groups method is adopted and applied linkage. The analysis is aimed at determining the correlations between the development of the main analyzed variable – percentage of online purchases by

individuals, and the other defined variables, the characteristics of which are evaluated on the basis of data for 2012 and 2022.

The fact that the values of the correlation coefficients between the variables reveal significant variations becomes a reason for adopting the hierarchical cluster analysis for two main moments of time that limit the analyzed period. In this analytical aspect, the similarities and differences between the assessed 27-member states of the European Union in terms of changes in online shopping are established. The choice of hierarchical cluster analysis is justified by the presence of significant differences regarding the development of the variables included in the analysis. This type of analysis is one of the main methods for finding relatively homogeneous clusters, which are based on the measured characteristics of the observed European consumers.

Results and discussion

The implementation of hierarchical clustering using the capabilities of the IBM software product SPSS Statistics allows generating a total of three numbers of clusters formed by the studied 27-member states of the European Union. The determination is based on the selection of the optimal distance between the studied units from the point of view of the purpose of the present study.

In the first year of the analyzed period – 2012, with the help of the applied method from the given software product, three groups of countries are generated: cluster № 1 "Leading countries with the best results in online shopping", cluster № 2 "Countries with good results in online shopping" and cluster № 3 "Countries with lower results in online shopping": see Table 1.

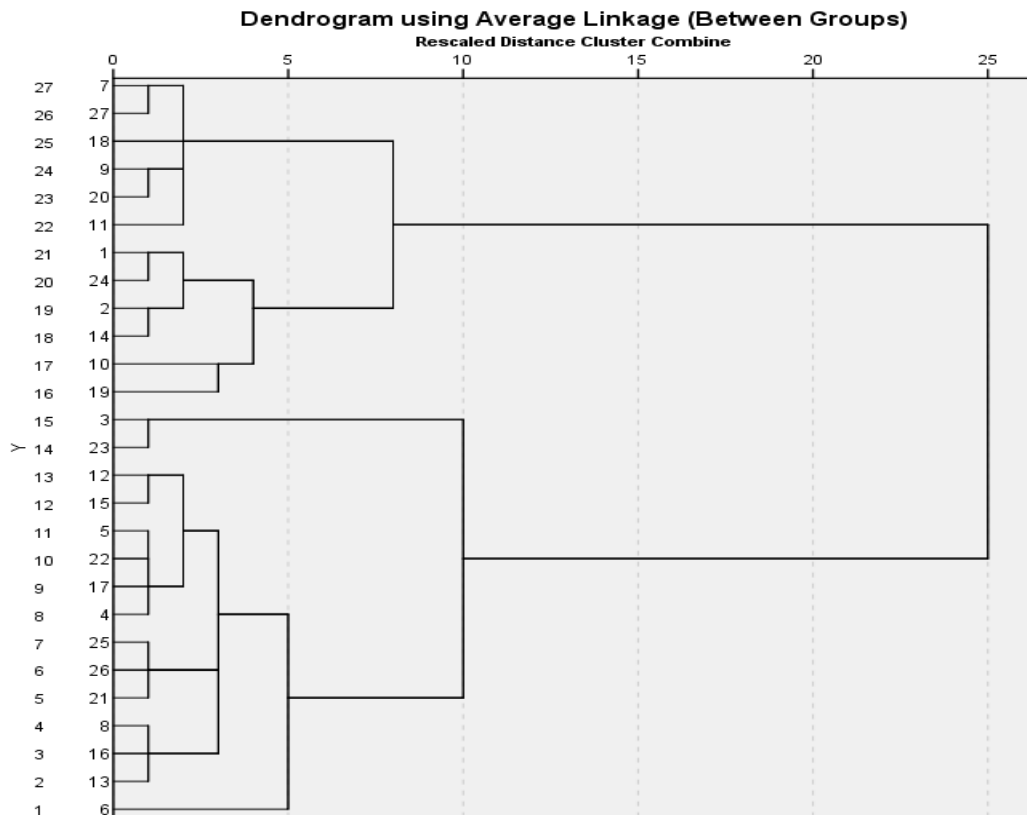
Table 1: Clustering of the 27-member states of the European Union according to the degree of development of online shopping by individuals in 2012.

Cluster name	Countries
Cluster № 1 " Leading countries with the best results in online shopping "	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden
Cluster № 2 " Countries with good results in online shopping "	Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain
Cluster № 3 " Countries with lower scores in online shopping "	Romania, Bulgaria

Source: Eurostat. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>;
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00028/default/table?lang=en>.

Following the analyzes carried out based on the data for the six variables, allows the formation in 2012 of three clusters,

characterized by statistically significant differences in terms of the online purchases of the surveyed respondents from individual countries. The dendrogram for the generated clusters is visualized by the following Figure 1.



Source: Eurostat. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>;
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00028/default/table?lang=en>.

Figure 1: Dendrogram to generate clusters of the 27 EU Member States based on 2012 online shopping data.

Testing of the six defined variables whose values are involved in determining the clusters shows that they all have statistical significance, which is confirmed by the data in Table 2.

Table 2: Determining the participation of the variables in the distribution of the 27-member states of the European Union by clusters in 2012.

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Last online purchase: in the 12 months, 2012 * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	8789,863	2	4394,931	56,156	0,000
	Within Groups		1878,301	24	78,263		
	Total		10668,164	26			
Internet use by individuals * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	3255,553	2	1627,777	29,327	0,000
	Within Groups		1332,089	24	55,504		
	Total		4587,642	26			
Share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – % * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	336,910	2	168,455	7,170	0,004
	Within Groups		563,857	24	23,494		
	Total		900,767	26			
Enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) – % of enterprises * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	416,007	2	208,003	6,210	0,007
	Within Groups		803,901	24	33,496		
	Total		1219,907	26			
Level of internet access – households * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	3039,201	2	1519,600	38,069	0,000
	Within Groups		958,018	24	39,917		
	Total		3997,219	26			
Individuals – high formal education * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	8086,660	2	4043,330	56,681	0,000
	Within Groups		1712,032	24	71,335		
	Total		9798,692	26			

Source: Eurostat. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>;
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00028/default/table?lang=en>.

The data from Table 2 are used to determine whether the specific variable value, in this case a quantitative sign, takes part in the distribution of the units by individual clusters. The level of significance of the six specific signs (Sig.) is less than the chosen risk of error ($\alpha = 0.05$), which is a reason to assume that these features have discriminating power and therefore can be included in the analysis. Results showing that all significance levels were less than 0.05 were taken to indicate that the selected quantitative traits sufficiently well discriminated the three clusters.

The following Table 3 shows the number of member states of the European Union that belong to the individual clusters when considering the average values reported for individual variables.

Table 3: Determining the number of the 27-member states of the European Union belonging to individual clusters in 2012.

Report							
Average Linkage (Between Groups)		Last online purchase : in the 12 months, 2012	Internet use by individuals	Share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce - %	Enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) - % of enterprises	Level of internet access - households	Individuals - high formal education, from 16 to 74 years
1	Mean	57,9050	83,9050	16,1917	18,1500	84,4033	64,0642
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12
	Std. Deviation	11,75589	8,01208	3,68078	5,78831	6,86094	10,31075
2	Mean	25,1400	65,8200	11,4231	12,3385	66,0577	33,4615
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13
	Std. Deviation	5,40285	7,11712	5,87156	6,02101	6,02882	6,66844
3	Mean	7,2650	48,8900	3,4500	4,6000	52,3450	13,3500
	N	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Std. Deviation	2,79307	4,25678	1,06066	0,56569	2,01525	2,99813
Total	Mean	38,3781	72,6037	12,9519	14,3481	73,1956	45,5730
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27
	Std. Deviation	20,25621	13,28336	5,88599	6,84978	12,39916	19,41321

Source: Eurostat. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>;
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00028/default/table?lang=en>.

As the data in Table 3 shows, in 2012, with the highest average values, shaded darker, by all accounts is the cluster named "Leader countries with the best results in online shopping", whose number is 12 countries and includes: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden, i.e. these are countries geographically located mainly in Western Europe and Northern Europe. The estimated averages report the highest levels regarding: last online purchase: in the 12 months; internet use by individuals; share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – %; enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) – % of enterprises; level of internet access – households; individuals with high formal education, from 16 to 74 years. Within the formed cluster, the highest average value – with a value of 84.4033, is taken by the variable "level of internet access – households", followed by the variable "internet use by individuals" – with a value of 83.9050 and the variable "individuals – high formal education, from 16 to 74 years" – with an average value of 64.0642.

The comparative analysis shows that next in terms of reported average values, colored lighter, is the "Countries with good results in online shopping" cluster, numbering 13 countries, mostly from Southern Europe, Western Europe and Central Europe. This cluster includes the following countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain.

According to the obtained results, the last cluster, with the lowest average values for all indicators, colored in the lightest color, is the one that includes the countries of Romania and Bulgaria, located in South-Eastern Europe. The reported lowest average value from the two countries related to the reached level of online shopping takes the value of 3.4500 and refers to the variable – "share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – %". In analytical terms, this value is about 3.75 times below the European Union average of 12.9519. Therefore, there is a significant untapped potential for the digital transformation of the business environment and the activity of enterprises from South-Eastern Europe to reach the level sought in this direction.

The continuation of the hierarchical cluster analysis and its targeting to 2022 allows to establish the manifest changes in the generated three clusters and the displacements that have occurred among the countries, as visualized by means of Table 4.

Table 4: Clustering of the 27-member states of the European Union by the degree of development of online shopping by individuals in 2022.

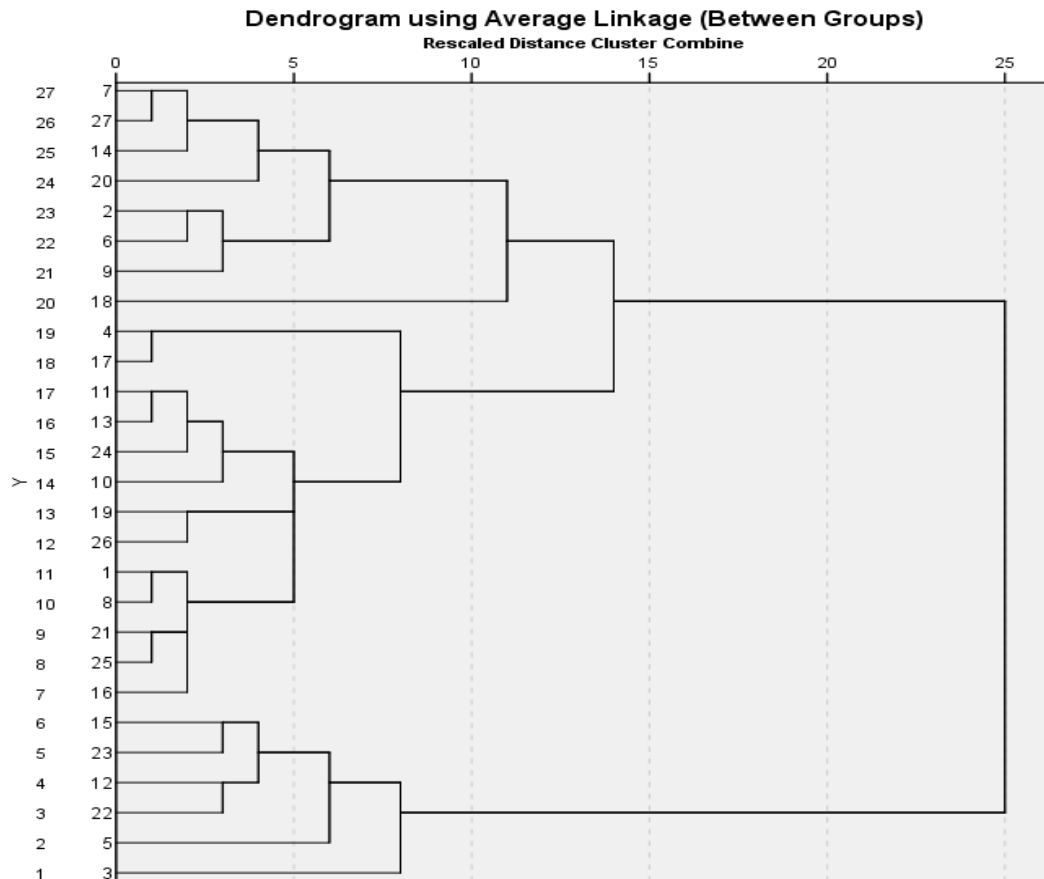
Cluster name	Countries
Cluster № 1 "Leading countries with the best results in online shopping"	Belgium, Denmark, Czechia, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden
Cluster № 2 "Countries with good results in online shopping"	Croatia, Estonia, Germany, France, Austria, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Slovakia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain
Cluster № 3 "Countries with lower scores in online shopping"	Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal

Source: Eurostat. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>;
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00028/default/table?lang=en>.

According to the data shown in Table 4, in 2022 the number of countries in the first cluster, according to the level of online shopping, is reduced to 8 countries. The established number is 1.50 times lower than in 2012, when it totaled 12 countries. The comparative analysis of the data reported in 2012 and 2022 allows to state that significant changes occur in this group, as follows: Czechia changes its position and moves to the highest in the clustering. The countries – Austria, Germany, France, Malta and Slovakia, lower their position and move to the cluster of countries with

good results in online shopping. Four countries – Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Portugal, join the third cluster of countries with lower results in shopping type surveys.

The following Figure 2 visualizes the dendrogram for the three clusters generated in 2022.



Source: Eurostat. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>;
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00028/default/table?lang=en>.

Figure 2: Dendrogram for generating clusters of the 27-member states of the European Union based on data on online shopping in 2022.

Corresponding testing of the participation of the six variables in determining the clusters shows that they all have statistical significance, which is confirmed by the data in the following Table 5.

Table 5: Determining the contribution of variables in the distribution of the 27-member states of the European Union by clusters in 2022.

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Last online purchase * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	3678,252	2	1839,126	49,723	0,000
	Within Groups		887,703	24	36,988		
	Total		4565,956	26			
Internet use by individuals * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	431,562	2	215,781	23,044	0,000
	Within Groups		224,731	24	9,364		
	Total		656,293	26			
Share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – % * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	890,589	2	445,295	24,907	0,000
	Within Groups		429,071	24	17,878		
	Total		1319,661	26			
Enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) – % of enterprises * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	533,824	2	266,912	5,428	0,011
	Within Groups		1180,183	24	49,174		
	Total		1714,007	26			
Level of internet access – households * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	132,125	2	66,062	9,387	0,001
	Within Groups		168,898	24	7,037		
	Total		301,023	26			
Individuals – high formal education * Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Between Groups	(Combined)	1156,601	2	578,300	25,139	0,000
	Within Groups		552,107	24	23,004		
	Total		1708,707	26			

Source: Eurostat. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>;
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00028/default/table?lang=en>.

As can be seen from the data in Table 5, all variables take part in the distribution of units by clusters. It is found that the level of significance of the six specific signs (Sig.) is less than the chosen risk of error ($\alpha = 0.05$). This is a reason to assume that the features determined in the present study have a discriminating ability and therefore can be included in the subsequent analysis. The obtained results show that all the significance levels are less than 0.05, which confirms that the selected quantitative signs distinguish the three clusters sufficiently well.

According to the data in the following Table 6, the number of member states of the European Union that are grouped and included in the composition of the individual clusters is shown, considering the average values of the determined variables in 2022.

Table 6: Determining the number of the 27-member states of the European Union belonging to individual clusters in 2022.

Report							
Average Linkage (Between Groups)		Last online purchase	Internet use by individuals	Share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce - %	Enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) - % of enterprises	Level of internet access - households	Individuals - high formal education, from 16 to 74 years
1	Mean	82,3700	95,6313	26,2875	27,6000	95,3225	92,7900
	N	8	8	8	8	8	8
	Std. Deviation	5,24076	2,51199	4,34032	9,16141	2,34759	3,58799
2	Mean	67,4192	89,8869	16,3692	21,6692	91,6638	85,7831
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13
	Std. Deviation	6,45510	3,19661	3,50794	6,55850	2,64254	4,52631
3	Mean	49,6417	84,4950	10,8500	15,1500	89,3017	74,4617
	N	6	6	6	6	6	6
	Std. Deviation	6,25179	3,40413	5,46873	3,91139	3,05035	6,57482
Total	Mean	67,8985	90,3907	18,0815	21,9778	92,2230	85,3433
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27
	Std. Deviation	13,25193	5,02415	7,12434	8,11932	3,40262	8,10676

Source: Eurostat. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>;
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tin00028/default/table?lang=en>.

In 2022, according to the data shown by Table 6, with the highest average values, which are colored darker, for all the evaluated signs is the first cluster – "Leading countries with the best results in online shopping". The number of countries assigned to this cluster amounts to 8 countries and includes: Belgium, Denmark, Czechia, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden. Geographically, six of the listed countries belong to Northern Europe, one to Western Europe, and one to Central Europe. In the cluster thus created, the highest average value is taken by the variable "internet use by individuals" – with a value of 95.6313, followed by the variable "level of internet access – households" – with a value of 95.3225 and the variable "individuals – high formal education, from 16 to 74 years" – with an average value of 92.7900.

Through the capabilities of the applied hierarchical clustering method, it is found that in 2022, in the next position according to the reported average values, colored lighter, is the cluster "Countries with good results in online shopping". The formed cluster covers a total of 13 countries, mostly from Central Europe and North-Eastern Europe. This

cluster includes the following countries: Croatia, Estonia, Germany, France, Austria, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Slovakia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Spain.

In 2022, according to the results obtained, the last cluster, with the lowest average values, colored in the lightest, for all the evaluated signs, is the one that includes 6 countries – Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, i.e. countries from South-East Europe and South-West Europe. From the reported data, it is found that the lowest average value among these countries, regarding the reached level of online shopping, amounts to 10.8500 and is associated with the variable – "share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – %". The analytical comparison shows that in 2022 the evaluated variable exceeds by more than 3.14 times the accepted value in 2012, but at the same time its value is 1.67 times below the average value for the European Union, amounting to 18.0815.

The data visualized by means of Table 3 and Table 6 allow significant generalizations to be made related to the average values reached at the European Union level regarding the evolutionary development of the online shopping process. The analysis of the changes that have occurred in the total of six variables studied is the basis for the formulation of more important assessments. In 2022, compared to 2012, an increase in the average values of the studied variables is reported, as follows: by more than 1.77 times, the average value of the variable "last online purchase: in the 12 months"; by more than 1.24 times the average value of the variable "internet use by individuals"; by about 1.40 times the average value of the variable "share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – %"; the average value of the variable "enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) – % of enterprises" increased by 1.53 times; the average value of the variable "level of internet access – households" increases by nearly 1.26; the average value of the variable "individuals with high formal education, from 16 to 74 years" increases by about 1.87 times. From the thus reported changes in the average values of the variables studied at the level of the European Union, it is established that the highest result of increase is achieved with the variable "individuals with high formal education, from 16 to 74 years", followed by the value of the variable "last online purchase: in the 12 months". Relatively, with lower growth rates, the values of the variable "internet use by individuals" and of the magnified variable "level of internet access – households". The reported results reflect the changes that have occurred, including in the digital direction, of the economic and demographic characteristics of the surveyed users from the 27-member states of the European Union.

The results thus achieved in the analyzed years 2012 and 2022 are grounds for formulating the opinion that the leading countries – Belgium, Denmark, Czechia, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden – report and achieve a high level of development in online shopping among consumers from the 27-member states of the European Union. The countries forming the cluster with good results in online shopping reach relatively high levels on the measured variables. South-

Eastern European countries need to follow Europe's 2030 digital goals and adapt to them at a faster pace.

The results obtained in the context of the present study allow to interpret the evolutionary development of online shopping among consumers from the 27-member states of the European Union. This process is studied and measured through the prism of certain variable quantities, considering: last online purchase: in the 12 months; internet use by individuals; share of enterprises' turnover on e-commerce – %; enterprises having received orders online (at least 1%) – % of enterprises; level of internet access – households; individuals with high formal education, from 16 to 74 years. The change in the identified variables reflects to a significant extent the changes in the economic and demographic characteristics of the studied European consumers.

The comparative analysis of the countries of the European Union regarding the reached level of online shopping is of practical utility in relation to the set digital goals for 2030. In the outlined problem area, results published by other researchers in their studies are of interest. For example, a joint development of a group of authors, including J. Andrei, L. Chivu, V. Sima, I. Gheorghe, D. Nancu and M. Duica, is devoted to the study of digital convergence in the European Union in terms of Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) (Andrei, et al., 2022). The cited authors take the position that the role of economic development is likely to be decisive in resolving the differences between the Member States of the European Union regarding the progress of digital transformation at the level of the business environment and individual individuals. Another group of researchers, including A. Karczmarczyk, J. Wątrobski, J. Jankowska and E. Ziembac, argue that the adoption of information and communication technologies is decisive for digital transformations at the level of individual sectors of the economy, and also at society level (Karczmarczyka, et al., 2019).

By their very nature, the studies and benchmarking of the 27-member states of the European Union regarding consumer digitalization and online shopping highlight the increasingly important issue of the complexity of the challenges of adapting to technological innovation. The evaluation of emerging trends and changes is significant for business companies, as they should design and construct digital infrastructures, adopt their effective business solutions and make forecasts for market supply of goods and services.

The results of this research highlight the importance of the selected variables needed to analyze and evaluate the online shopping of consumers from European Union member states. Understanding these variables, as well as the changes occurring in their values, allows individual countries to maintain the position reached (for example, by the leading countries) or to direct and concentrate more investments to achieve a higher level on one or more variables, so that they can move to a higher group or cluster in the hierarchy.

Conclusions

The development of online shopping creates a need for studies at different levels – individuals, business companies, national, regional and international organizations and institutions. The practical utility of these studies is in identifying the variables or factors that influence consumer behavior, as well as in the search for correlations between the demand and supply of online goods and services.

In this sense, in the present development, the access and use of the Internet by individuals, their educational level, the level of access to the Internet by households, the online purchases made, as well as the relative share of the turnover of the enterprises from e-commerce and the online orders received by the enterprises are perceived as part of the key variables on the basis of which the degree or stage of development of online shopping of consumers from the 27-member states of the European Union can be identified.

On the basis of the cluster study, the similarities and differences between the assessed countries in terms of online shopping carried out in 2012 and 2022 are established. The application of the hierarchical cluster analysis method on six selected variables is the basis for distinguishing three relatively homogeneous clusters with relevant characteristics in relation to the online shopping carried out by users. The comparative analysis of the results makes it possible to highlight that while in 2012 the leading countries in online shopping mainly included those from Western Europe and Northern Europe, in 2022 certain changes took place, leading to an advantageous position of the Northern countries Europe. At the next hierarchical level in terms of the researched online shopping are the countries, most of which are from Central Europe. With relatively lower results in online shopping, compared to the average values for the European Union on all variables, are the countries located in South-Eastern Europe. In the last group of countries, there is significant untapped potential for digital transformation at various levels – business environment, society and individuals. This kind of transformation would generate additional organizational and structural value for their economies.

The reported results are largely a reflection of the changes and transformations that have occurred, including in the digital direction, of the economic and demographic characteristics of the studied European consumers. Not all member states of the European Union have the same opportunities for the development and growth of online shopping. A correlation should be sought between the established differences between European countries in terms of the studied process and the rates of development of their economies. A significant part of the disparities in digital development and changes in online shopping between the 27-member states of the European Union arises from differences in economic development rates. Overall, economic and demographic variables will continue to be significant factors driving the development of online shopping, leading to the need for further research on these issues.

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Digital Transformation – Challenges and Benefits for Bulgarian Companies

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Abstract: The Covid pandemic has hastened the pace of implementing digital technologies in Bulgarian companies, and digitization has emerged as an important priority for business. The goal of this study, which is based on a literature review and empirical research, is to identify the challenges to digital transformation as well as the benefits that firms expect from implementing this process. According to the findings of the research, Bulgarian businesses, despite the lack of a clear digital strategy, are aware of both the business opportunities and benefits that digitization brings them, as well as the difficulties and problems accompanying digital transformation.

Key words: Covid pandemic, digitization, digital transformation, obstacles, benefits

JEL: L86, M15, O32

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Introduction

The development of information technology changes people's way of life in multiple aspects of their work, education, and leisure time. More and more activities are being facilitated by technology or completed entirely online. Technological tools are gradually making their way into business organizations, with the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating and intensifying this tendency. As a result, traditional business processes are being transformed, and new business models based on digital products and services are forming. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements, the concepts of Digitalization and Digital Transformation have emerged as a pivotal force reshaping the landscape of businesses worldwide. Digital transformation has incontestable benefits as well as significant challenges. Every technological breakthrough has historically been accompanied by major social and institutional transformations. This is especially true for Bulgarian businesses, which must be digitized and transformed considering the difficult socioeconomic and geopolitical environment in which our country sees itself. Regardless, it is becoming increasingly vital for Bulgarian companies to plan the digital transformation in a timely, efficient, and appropriate manner to acquire flexibility and maintain market competitiveness. As companies globally strive to navigate the digital frontier, our attention in the current report turns to the specific challenges and benefits that Bulgarian companies encounter in their pursuit of digital transformation.

The goal of this study is to identify the key obstacles to digital transformation as well as the benefits that Bulgarian firms expect from implementing this process.

In this regard, we have set ourselves several tasks:

1. To define digitalization and digital transformation concepts in the context of technological innovations in business organizations.
2. To outline the main benefits and challenges of company digital transformation.
3. To analyze the level of digitalization in Bulgarian organizations.

Considering the many specifics and peculiarities of digital transformation and the processes associated with it, our research is limited to a survey of the opinions of Bulgarian enterprises in two main areas: the expected benefits of digitization and digital transformation and the obstacles to its implementation.

Literature review

In the contemporary business environment, Digitization, Digitalization, and Digital Transformation emerge as indispensable catalysts driving organizational evolution. Although they are frequently used synonymously, they have distinct meanings and require different approaches to definition, making it difficult to distinguish between them and preventing precise conceptualization.

Digitization is the technical process of converting analog data to digital format (Gorenšek & Kohont, 2019) as well as the shift from analog to digital technologies (Mikalef & Parmiggiani, 2022). The term is used to describe some procedures, including the production of digital products and the application of digital technology in the course of creating new technological processes (Gradillas & Thomas, 2023), and is a technological framework for digital transformation (Rachinger, et al., 2018).

Digitalization, on the other hand, is described as the process of gathering, generating, and analyzing data in order to produce added value through digital innovation (Cappa, et al., 2021). It aims to develop new digital products by using digital technologies in the innovation process (Lanzolla, et al., 2021). In a global aspect, digitalization is defined as the transformation of the socioeconomic environment through the adoption, use, and utilization of information and communication technology (Gradillas & Thomas, 2023). Digitalization improves the relationship between the company and its customers, adding value to the economy (Reis, et al., 2020) as well as transforming society into an information one (Gong & Ribiere, 2021). The fundamental distinction between the two concepts is in the context in which they are utilized, with digitalization being defined in a broader social and institutional context.

In a broader sense, **digital transformation** refers to the process of integrating digital technology into traditional business processes within the context of the digital economy (Ziyadin, et al., 2020). At the organizational level, digital transformation changes existing business processes, generates new revenues, and reveals opportunities to create business value (Gorenšek & Kohont, 2019), through strategic utilization of critical resources and capabilities (Gong & Ribiere, 2021). Its primary purpose is to improve business operations by combining information, computer, and communication technologies (Mikalef & Parmiggiani, 2022). Successful digitalization and digital transformation are complicated and long-term procedures that would be impossible to achieve without the deployment of a digital strategy focused on improving user experiences, optimizing organizational processes, and incorporating new business models (Matt, et al., 2015).

In the digital age, digital transformation is an essential component of business strategy. The benefits of this process are undeniable and substantial, but it is accompanied by many risks and challenges that firms must encounter.

Numerous authors have conducted extensive research to determine the **main benefits** of digital transformation for business organizations. We can highlight some of the most important benefits of business digitalization by analyzing their ideas and opinions. (Jadertriveiler, et al., 2019), (Frendiana & Soediantono, 2022), (Mikalef & Parmiggiani, 2022), (Gong & Ribiere, 2021), (Kraus, et al., 2022), (Schwertner, 2017):

- **implementing new business models** based on innovation, such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things, in order to produce smart, personalized, and

interconnected products and services that correspond to expanding customer needs;

- **improved planning and management of the business** by providing comprehensive and real-time access to data, automating processes, facilitating decision-making through big data analysis and artificial intelligence, and supporting effective communication and collaboration across departments;

- **reduce costs** by optimizing operations, automating regular activities, storing data in the cloud, and implementing intelligent technologies such as machine learning and robotics;

- **increasing revenue and profit** through the integration of modern technology, individualized approaches to clients, and effective operations management, which leads to enhanced resource efficiency and an improvement in the quality of goods and services given;

- **economic growth** as a result of improved efficiency, increased innovation potential, penetration of new markets with new products and services, better resource management, etc.;

- **reduced ecological footprint** by introducing efficient and sustainable technologies;

- **improved customer engagement** is achieved through the implementation of personalized and multi-channel interactions, the collection and analysis of customer data to anticipate their wants and expectations, the offering of customized goods and services, and the optimization of customer processes, all of which contribute to **increased customer value**;

- implementation of new technologies, resulting in the development of an **innovative company culture**;

- **improved flexibility and adaptability** to market changes;

- **increasing competitiveness** as a result of more flexible and efficient business processes, rapid implementation of innovations, more accurate adaptation to customer needs, optimization of decision-making solutions, and creation of new digital products and services that meet modern market requirements.

The widespread implementation of digital transformation in Bulgarian firms is constrained by **risks and challenges**, despite the benefits that have been shown. By analyzing the viewpoints of multiple authors and interpreting them in the context of Bulgarian reality, we may pay attention to the following (Jadertrierveler, et al., 2019), (Weerasinghe & Nirere, 2022), (Moore & Pratt, 2021), (Kraus, et al., 2022), (Schwertner, 2017):

- **data security** is an essential challenge for digital transformation as the introduction of new technologies and digital processes produces an increased volume and variety of data that

requires careful management, protection against cyber-attacks, access management, and compliance with privacy regulations;

- **insufficient maturity and capacity** of existing technologies, as well as **difficult integration** with newly developed ones;
- **lack of trained personnel** to deal with complex innovative technologies;
- a **substantial amount of investment** in digital transformation, which is difficult to justify by organization management due to the initiative's **unclear benefits**;
- the **lack of standardization, certification**, and a clear **regulatory framework** for implementing the digital transformation, etc.

Methodology

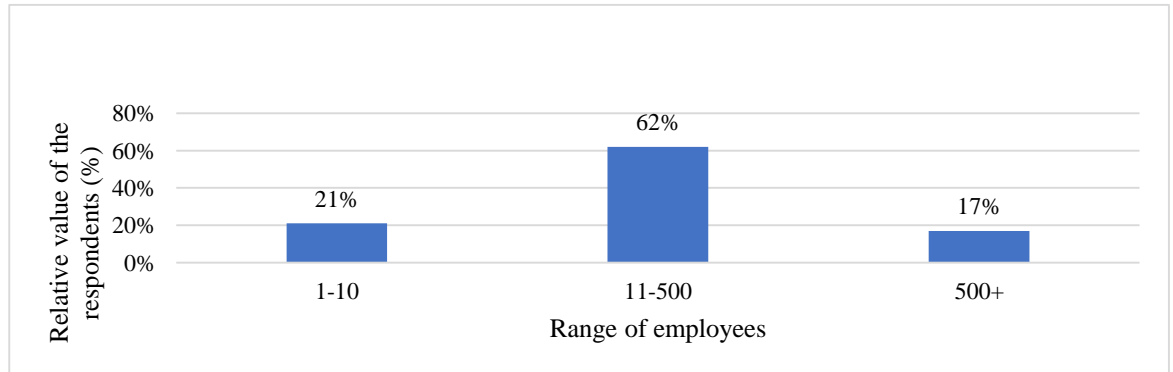
As the methodological basis of this report, we used 2 methods: first, a systematic literature review of the publications on the topic and, second, an empirical study of the state of digitalization and its prospects among the leading companies in Bulgaria.

In the first stage we took the following actions in applying the systematic literature review (Kitchenham, 2004) of the publications on the subject: 1) we conducted a comprehensive search for articles on Research Gate, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Scopus, and other reputable sources of scientific literature; 2) we determined publications that were relevant to the research problem; 3) we conducted a detailed analysis of the selected publications, utilizing them as a foundation for obtaining conclusions; 4) using a structured approach, we categorized the selected publications systematically, determining summaries and reaching conclusions.

In order to outline a more realistic and detailed picture of the state, expectations, benefits, and challenges to the digital transformation of the Bulgarian business, an empirical study was conducted among the leading companies in our country. A questionnaire with the following structure was created for this purpose: Introduction; Objectives of the study; General information about respondents; Pandemic and digitalization; Digitalization – trends, technologies, challenges; Summary. The questionnaire includes a total of 20 questions (19 closed questions and 1 open), which cover a wide range of topics related to digitalization and its significance for the future of Bulgarian business. The survey was carried out online by The German-Bulgarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce (GBCIC) and Siemens Bulgaria in the period 15.06.2021 - 15.07.2021. The questionnaire was sent out to 500 companies (Bulgarian and foreign, operating in Bulgaria, including GBCIC members and partners, Siemens Bulgaria customers, partners, and suppliers, etc.), and 60 companies (12%) returned entirely completed surveys.

Results and discussion

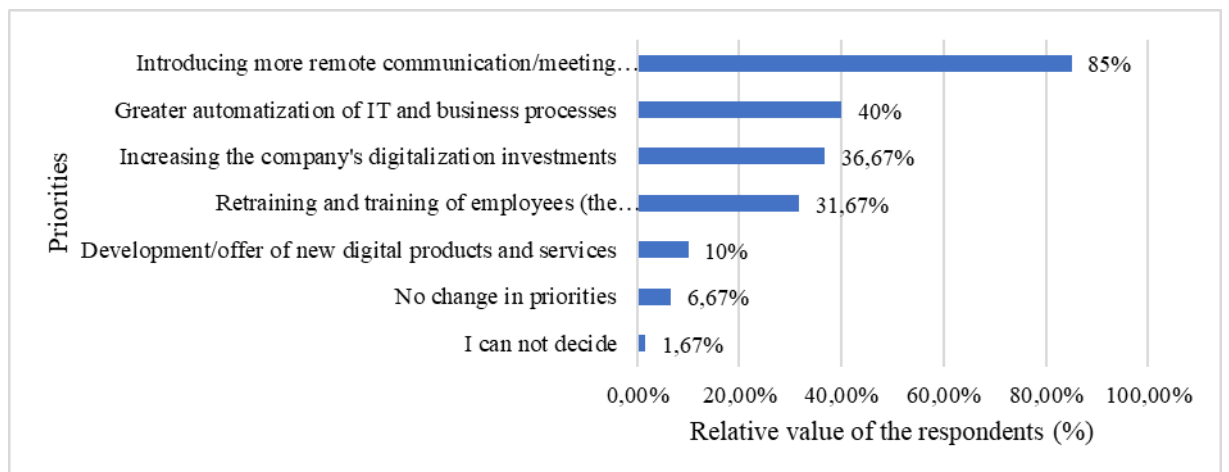
Companies that responded to the questionnaire represented a wide range of industries, with the largest share coming from the sectors "Consulting Services" (13.33%), "Manufacturing" (10.00%), "Transport" (10.00%), "Information technology and software" (8.33%), "Mechanical engineering" (8.33%), "Medicine and medical technology" (8.33%), "Wholesale and retail trade" (8.33%), and others. They are of different size groups, with a predominant share of medium and large companies (Figure 1).



Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 1: Size structure of the companies

The Covid pandemic has changed people's lives and the way business organizations function. For the vast majority of companies (88.14%), the most serious effect of the pandemic is an increase in remote work, and for more than half of them (52.54%), the process of entering and using digital technologies is accelerating. The pandemic has changed the mindset of Bulgarian businesses, and for 70.00% of companies, digitalization is becoming an increasingly important priority. In the field of digital transformation, the introduction of remote communication technologies, the increase of investments for digitalization, the development of new IT skills, the automation of IT and business processes, etc., come to the fore. (Figure 2).



Source: Authors' calculations

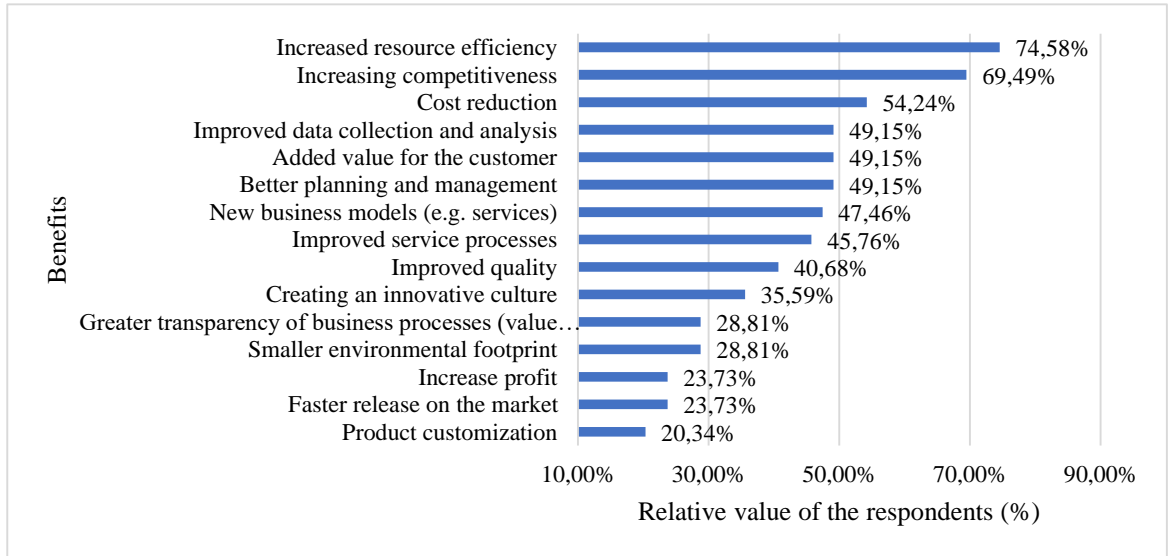
Figure 2: Priorities in the field of digitalization as a result of the pandemic

The prioritization of digitalization is also confirmed by companies' intentions to invest in digital transformation technologies. Almost half (46.67%) of them plan to increase their investments in digital transformation technologies and only 1.67% - to decrease them, which means that digitalization is becoming increasingly important for Bulgarian businesses. The good results of the measures taken during the pandemic in the field of digitalization encourage companies to continue their implementation even after its end. This applies to the greatest extent to maintaining remote working mode (63.33%), holding more digital meetings (71.67%), increasing paperless processes (63.33%), and increasing cloud-based internal services and processes (46.67%).

At the same time, it should be noted that a very small part (11.80%) of the respondents have a comprehensive digital strategy and positive results from digitalization can only be achieved if the digital strategy is incorporated into the overall business strategy of the company. As a rule, Bulgarian business is short-term or, at best, medium-term oriented, and this fully applies to plans for its digitalization – only 1.75% have a long-term digital strategy, and 9 out of 10 companies plan their actions in the field of digitalization in the short term.

Digitalization is not an end in itself but an effective means to achieve better business results both in the short term and in the long term. For example, it contributes to the improvement of communication between employees in the company, to increase their efficiency, to optimize costs, improves customer relations, helps to better serve them, provides access to more customers, provides new marketing opportunities, contributes to the construction of a positive image in online environments and wider recognition of the business, has a favorable influence on the process of creating products/services, etc. Therefore, it is not surprising that the benefits of digitalization expected by the studied companies, as well as its

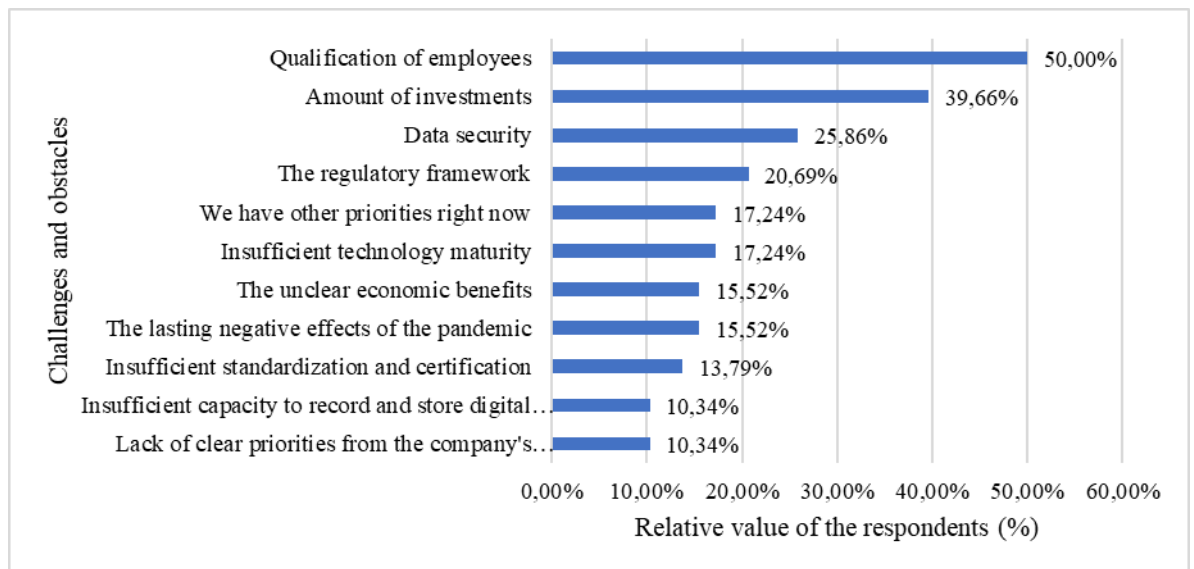
specific impact on the business and the company itself, are too numerous and diverse (Figure 3).



Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 3: Expected benefits from digitalization

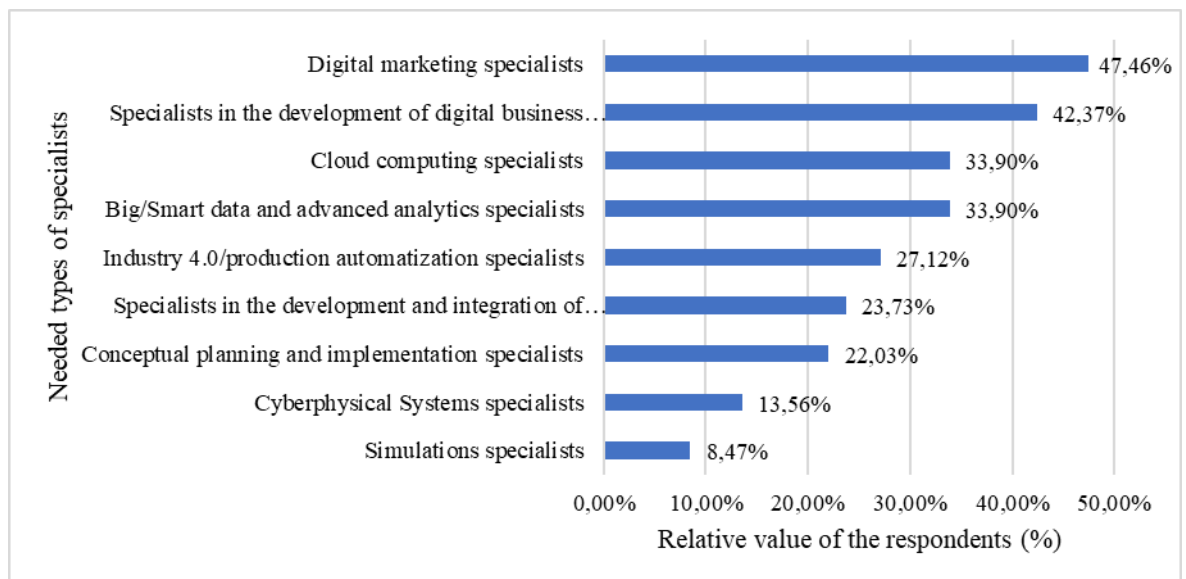
Businesses expect the introduction of digital technologies to lead primarily to more efficient management of resources (74.58%), increasing the company's competitiveness (69.49%) and reducing costs (54.24%). In addition, in response to another survey question, 41.67% of companies answered that the digitalization of work processes leads to an increase in labor productivity.



Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 4: Challenges and obstacles to using digital technologies and processes

Regardless of the benefits (realized and/or expected), the introduction and use of digital technologies and processes face numerous difficulties and challenges. The successful management of digital transformation and the achievement of the aforementioned benefits of digitalization of processes in companies requires taking into account the unfavorable influence of a number of factors, as well as overcoming quite a few obstacles. Digitalization can be hampered by the lack of sufficiently technically prepared people, the neglect of the issue of training employees in the field of digital technologies, the low level of digital culture in the company, the fear of leaking online information with all the negative consequences for the business, the lack of information about the benefits of digitalization, the lack of funds to finance the digitalization process, etc. According to the surveyed companies, the main obstacles to using more digital technologies are the qualification of employees (a problem for every second company), the amount of investment required for digital transformation (39.66%), and data security (25.86%). In order to implement digital technologies in the future, almost half of the companies (49.15%) need better knowledge of future market trends and requirements, additional employee training (47.46%), and integration of digitalization as a process (45.76%).



Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 5: Need for specialists in the field of digitalization of technologies and processes

According to the study results, the most significant obstacle to the adoption and usage of digital technology and processes is a lack of skilled people with the requisite digital capabilities. The rapid growth of digital marketing in recent years has led to an increased demand for specialists in this field. Almost half of the surveyed companies (47.46%) feel a need for digital marketing specialists. Companies also have a significant need for specialists in the development of digital business models and services (42.37%), cloud technologies (33.90%), and Big/Smart data and advanced analytics specialists (33.90%). Finding specialists with the necessary digital skills in the Bulgarian labor market is difficult, but it will allow the realization of the benefits expected by businesses from digitalization and the implementation of new digital technologies in the areas that, according to the companies, have the greatest potential for development – optimization of resources (time, personnel, development), development of new business models/services, automation of production, improvement of interaction with customers and suppliers, improvement of communication with and between company employees, etc.

Conclusion

The current study's results, however limited in its scope, indicate that digitalization is not an unfamiliar concept for Bulgarian businesses. Bulgarian companies are aware of the opportunities that digitalization provides for optimizing the utilization of resources, automating production, improving interaction with customers and suppliers, and enhancing communication within and among company employees, as well as the challenges and obstacles to implementing and using digital technologies and processes. The business has a clear vision of what type of digitalization specialists it will need in the near future. The study reveals the main directions in which companies should work in the future in the field of digitalization: developing a long-term digital strategy integrated into the company's general strategy, increasing investments in new digital technologies and processes, as well as digital training of personnel with an emphasis on the skill acquisition in the areas of digital marketing, cloud technologies, and the development of digital business models and services.

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The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Transforming the Tourism Market

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Darina Zvetanova²

Abstract: The tourism stands on the brink of a new era shaped by Artificial Intelligence (AI). This paper delves into the multifaceted influence of AI on tourism, examining its implications for personalization, operational efficiency, and sustainable tourism practices. By scrutinizing recent academic contributions and case studies, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of AI's current and potential impact on the tourism sector.

Key words: Artificial Intelligence, tourism, market, Sustainable tourism

JEL: A11; A13; M2; M3; L83

Introduction

The Tourism industry, a critical driver of global economic growth, is undergoing a radical transformation propelled by the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI). As a multi-faceted sector that encompasses travel, accommodation, and a plethora of other customer-oriented services, tourism is inherently data-rich and thus stands to gain significantly from AI's core capabilities (Gretzel et al., 2018). The implications of AI in tourism extend from enhancing customer service to streamlining operations, and from crafting personalized travel experiences to promoting sustainable tourism practices.

In an industry that thrives on the satisfaction and personalization of consumer experiences, AI's ability to analyze large sets of data and discern patterns has enabled the delivery of bespoke travel recommendations and itineraries, reflective of the nuanced preferences of tourists (Li et al., 2018). Moreover, the integration of AI-driven technologies such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and machine learning algorithms has not only simplified the booking and planning process but has also redefined customer

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engagement, providing round-the-clock assistance and insights driven by predictive analytics (Xiang et al., 2017).

Operational efficiency, a cornerstone for success in the highly competitive tourism market, has also been bolstered by AI through optimized resource allocation and cost management. AI's predictive capabilities facilitate better forecasting of tourism market trends, allowing businesses to adjust their strategies in real-time, thus avoiding overbooking and understaffing issues (Noone & Robson, 2014). In addition, AI-powered systems aid in maintaining competitive pricing, improving revenue management, and ensuring that tourism operations are agile and responsive to the dynamic market conditions.

Furthermore, as global attention shifts towards sustainable and environmentally responsible travel, AI has emerged as a tool for promoting sustainable tourism. Through the analysis of data patterns and the automation of resource management, AI assists in reducing waste, managing energy use in smart hotels, and aids in the implementation of eco-friendly practices without compromising guest experiences (Koo et al., 2016).

Despite these advancements, the infusion of AI in tourism is not without its challenges. The industry faces issues related to privacy, data security, and the ethical use of AI. Moreover, the potential for job displacement due to automation and the need for skilled labor to manage AI technologies presents a dual challenge of workforce transformation and training within the sector (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019).

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the role of AI in tourism, highlighting its potential to revolutionize the sector while acknowledging the complexities and challenges it brings. Through examining the current state of AI applications in tourism and projecting its future trajectory, this paper seeks to offer academic insights and practical implications for stakeholders in the tourism industry poised at the cusp of the AI revolution..

Literature review

The impact of AI on personalizing the customer experience in tourism has been widely studied. Tussyadiah (2020) examines how AI-powered recommendation systems alter consumer behavior by presenting tailored options. This research aligns with Gretzel et al. (2015), who highlight the potential of AI to curate bespoke itineraries based on personal preferences and past behavior.

Operational efficiency through AI is another area of significant interest. Li et al. (2019) delve into the use of AI in optimizing hotel revenue

management, arguing that predictive analytics can enhance pricing strategies and occupancy forecasting. This is echoed by Ivanov and Webster (2017), who explore the use of AI in automating hotel operations, demonstrating substantial gains in cost reduction and resource allocation.

Sustainable tourism is an emerging field where AI is having an increasing impact. Ko et al. (2018) discuss the deployment of AI in managing energy consumption in hotels, while Filimonau and Krivcova (2020) analyze AI's role in reducing food waste in the hospitality industry. These studies suggest that AI not only has the potential to drive sustainability in tourism but also to revolutionize the sector's approach to environmental stewardship.

The ethical considerations of AI in tourism are complex and are the focus of several studies. Tussyadiah et al. (2019) provide an overview of the ethical issues surrounding privacy and AI, emphasizing the need for transparency in AI systems. Furthermore, the implications of AI on employment in tourism are critically assessed by Kaushal and Srivastava (2021), who caution about the potential displacement of jobs while also recognizing the opportunities for new job creation.

Lastly, the overall potential of AI in tourism is synthesized in the works of Buhalis and Sinarta (2019), who suggest that AI is a key driver for innovation and competitive advantage in tourism. They assert that AI has reshaped the landscape of the industry, presenting both opportunities and challenges for practitioners. Personalization in Tourism through AI

Personalization in Tourism through AI

The age of mass marketing is waning in the face of a new era where personalized customer experiences are paramount, especially in the tourism market. At the heart of this transformation lies the power of AI to collect, analyze, and act upon vast amounts of data, enabling unprecedented levels of customization (Li et al., 2018). This segment examines how AI's data-driven insights are crafting individualized experiences that cater to the unique preferences of each traveler.

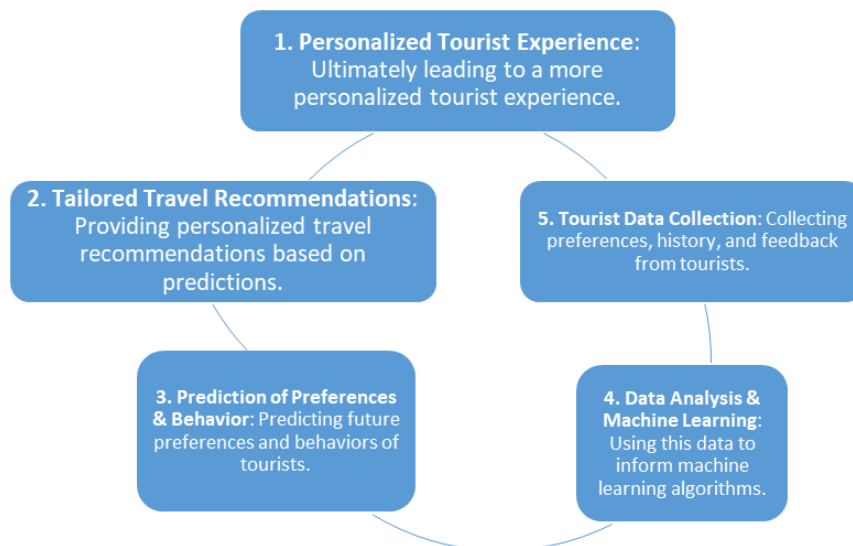
AI algorithms have the capability to sift through large datasets that include previous bookings, online browsing behaviors, and feedback to create detailed traveler profiles. With these profiles, AI can offer highly tailored recommendations for destinations, hotels, activities, and even food venues that align with the traveler's tastes and past behavior (Gretzel et al., 2018). The sophisticated use of machine learning allows these systems to continuously learn from the user's interactions, further refining the personalization over time.

In leveraging this personalization, chatbots and virtual assistants play a pivotal role. Equipped with natural language processing, they can understand and respond to user inquiries with a high degree of relevance and personal touch (Xiang et al., 2017). For instance, a chatbot can assist a user in selecting a travel package by asking questions about preferences and providing recommendations that feel individually curated. These AI systems can handle a wide range of tasks from answering queries about local customs to suggesting packing lists based on the weather forecast of the destination.

Moreover, AI enables the creation of dynamic packaging of travel services, where flight bookings, accommodations, and activities are bundled in real time to offer a complete and customized travel solution (Xiang et al., 2017). This not only saves time for the traveler but also often leads to cost savings as AI systems can identify the best combinations of services at the most competitive prices.

The integration of AI in personalization extends to on-trip experiences as well. In destinations, AI-powered mobile applications can serve as personal tour guides, adapting the sightseeing itinerary based on real-time feedback and the tourist's location, interests, and time constraints. The AI systems behind these applications can also provide contextual information on sights, translate foreign languages in real time, and even offer cultural tips to enhance the travel experience.

Here is algorithm a sample of AI-driven personalization in tourism:



Source: Author Figure

Figure 1: Flowchart of AI-driven personalization in tourism

However, the benefits of AI in personalization must be weighed against the concerns regarding data privacy and security. The extensive data required to feed AI systems raises legitimate fears over the misuse of personal information (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019). As such, the tourism industry must implement robust data governance practices to ensure that the personalization AI offers does not come at the cost of consumer privacy.

The potential of AI to personalize the travel experience is profound, offering tailor-made itineraries that were once the exclusive domain of luxury travel services to the broader market. This democratization of personalized travel, if harnessed responsibly, can lead to a deeper and more satisfying tourism experience, bolstering the industry's growth. With ongoing advancements in AI, the future promises even more sophisticated levels of customization, further blurring the lines between technology and human touch in the journey of travel.

Methodology

Operational Efficiency Boosted by AI

The deployment of AI in the tourism market has dramatically reshaped operational efficiencies, yielding robust benefits in resource management, cost reduction, and customer satisfaction. AI's capacity to analyze complex data and predict outcomes with high accuracy underpins this operational transformation.

Resource Management Optimization:

AI-driven algorithms excel in forecasting demand, which is crucial for the tourism sector's dynamic and seasonally influenced market. By predicting peak travel times, hotels can optimize room pricing, while airlines can manage seat availability to maximize revenue (Ivanov & Webster, 2017). AI systems go beyond simple historical analysis; they incorporate a wide array of variables from global economic indicators to social media trends, providing a nuanced demand forecast. This ability to anticipate and adapt to market demands ensures that businesses maintain service quality while operating at optimal capacity, reducing the risk of both overbooking and underutilization.

Cost Reduction:

Cost reduction through AI is achieved by automating routine tasks, which traditionally consume considerable human labor and time. For instance, AI-powered systems handle customer inquiries, bookings, and check-ins, reducing the staffing requirements and minimizing the potential for human

error (Noone & Robson, 2014). Moreover, AI can manage energy use in hotel rooms through smart thermostats and lighting systems, leading to significant savings on utility costs. Predictive maintenance powered by AI also aids in reducing the costs associated with equipment failure and downtime by alerting staff to potential issues before they escalate.

Enhanced Customer Service:

AI enhances customer service by providing personalized assistance and resolving issues promptly. For example, AI chatbots can manage multiple customer interactions simultaneously, ensuring immediate response times, which greatly improves customer satisfaction (Xiang et al., 2017). Additionally, AI systems can analyze customer feedback and online reviews to identify areas for improvement, enabling businesses to swiftly address service issues and adapt to changing customer preferences.

Challenges in Implementation:

Despite these efficiencies, implementing AI in tourism operations is not without challenges. There is a significant upfront cost in developing or acquiring AI technology, and the ongoing need for maintenance and updates requires sustained investment. Furthermore, there is a human factor to consider; the workforce needs to be trained to work alongside AI systems, and there may be resistance to change from employees accustomed to traditional methods of operation (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019).

Moreover, the tourism industry must address concerns regarding the ethical use of AI. There is a risk of AI decision-making processes being opaque, leading to a lack of accountability in cases of failure or bias in service provision. Establishing transparent AI operations and ensuring ethical programming are essential to maintain trust among both customers and employees.

The integration of AI into tourism operations presents an opportunity to dramatically increase efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance the customer experience. As AI technology continues to evolve, it will likely introduce new avenues for operational improvements within the industry. The challenge for tourism businesses is to navigate the implementation of AI in a manner that respects ethical considerations and aligns with long-term strategic goals, ensuring that AI remains a powerful tool for service excellence and operational success.

Sustainable Tourism and AI

Sustainable tourism has become a global imperative as the travel industry grapples with its environmental impact. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

stands at the forefront of this movement, offering innovative solutions to foster eco-friendly practices while enhancing the tourist experience.

Energy and Resource Management:

AI significantly contributes to energy conservation within the tourism sector, particularly in hotel management. Smart hotel rooms equipped with AI technology can adjust lighting, heating, and air conditioning based on occupancy, reducing energy consumption without compromising guest comfort (Koo et al., 2016). Additionally, AI systems can manage water usage, minimizing waste while ensuring that resources are used efficiently.

Waste Reduction and Management:

AI has the potential to revolutionize waste management in tourism. Through machine learning algorithms, waste disposal processes can be optimized by identifying patterns in waste generation, thereby facilitating more effective recycling and reduction strategies. For example, AI can predict food waste volumes in hotels and restaurants, allowing for better portion control and menu planning to minimize unnecessary waste (Koo et al., 2016).

Conservation and Wildlife Protection:

In natural and wildlife tourism, AI is used to monitor and protect ecosystems. AI-driven drones and sensor networks can track wildlife, providing data that helps in combating poaching and studying animal behaviors with minimal human intrusion. Furthermore, AI-enabled platforms assist in the enforcement of fishing regulations and the monitoring of protected areas, ensuring that tourism activities do not adversely affect the local fauna (Koo et al., 2016).

Sustainable Tourism Planning:

AI aids in sustainable tourism planning by analyzing large datasets on tourist behaviors and environmental impact. This analysis can inform policymakers and stakeholders, allowing for the development of sustainable tourism policies and practices. AI can model the potential impacts of tourism-related development, helping planners to make decisions that balance economic benefits with environmental conservation.

Challenges in Balancing Technology and Sustainability:

While AI offers solutions for sustainable tourism, its deployment is not without challenges. The environmental cost of powering AI technologies is a concern; thus, the industry must strive for energy-efficient AI systems. There is also the need to consider the full lifecycle of AI hardware, ensuring that devices are produced and disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner.

AI's contribution to sustainable tourism is significant, offering tools for energy and waste management, conservation efforts, and informed

policy-making. As AI technologies become more advanced and widespread, their role in driving sustainable practices within the tourism industry will likely expand. For AI to be a true ally in sustainability, it must be utilized in a manner that is consistent with the principles of ecological responsibility and aligned with global sustainability goals. Embracing AI's potential will enable the tourism industry to meet the dual objectives of providing memorable experiences for tourists and preserving the natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Results and discussion

Ethical Considerations and AI in Tourism

As AI systems become more integrated into the tourism industry, ethical considerations have moved to the forefront of the discourse. The application of AI in tourism raises several ethical issues that must be addressed to maintain public trust and ensure the responsible development of technology.

Privacy Concerns:

With the increasing personalization of services in tourism, AI systems collect and process vast amounts of personal data. The ethical handling of this data is paramount. There are concerns about how this data is stored, used, and shared, as well as the potential for surveillance and data breaches (Gretzel et al., 2018). Ensuring data privacy and security requires robust frameworks that protect personal information in compliance with regulations like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union.

Bias and Discrimination:

AI systems are only as unbiased as the data they are trained on. There is a risk that AI, particularly in decision-making roles, can perpetuate and even amplify biases present in the training data. This can lead to discrimination in service provision, with AI potentially offering different prices, accommodations, or services based on gender, ethnicity, or nationality (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019). It is critical that AI systems in tourism are designed and audited for fairness to prevent discriminatory practices.

Employment and the Workforce:

The implementation of AI in tourism has implications for employment within the industry. While AI can increase efficiency and reduce costs, there is concern over job displacement as machines replace human workers in certain roles. This raises ethical questions about the responsibility of businesses to their employees and the need to balance technological advancement with job security. It is also essential to consider the reskilling

and upskilling of the workforce to work alongside AI technologies (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019).

Transparency and Accountability:

AI decision-making processes can often be a 'black box', with algorithms making decisions that are not easily understood by humans. This lack of transparency can be problematic, particularly when decisions have significant impacts on tourists' experiences or business operations. The tourism industry must strive for AI transparency, enabling stakeholders to understand how AI systems make decisions. Along with transparency, there must be accountability; when AI systems make errors, there should be clear mechanisms for redress and improvement (Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019).

The ethical considerations of AI in tourism are complex and multifaceted, encompassing privacy, bias, workforce impacts, and the need for transparency and accountability. Addressing these issues is not just a technical challenge but a societal imperative to ensure that the integration of AI in tourism aligns with broader social values and ethical norms. The industry must engage with these challenges proactively, developing ethical guidelines and practices that ensure AI is used to enhance the tourism experience without compromising individual rights or social equity. As AI technology continues to evolve, ongoing dialogue and collaboration among industry stakeholders, ethicists, and policymakers will be crucial in navigating the ethical landscape of AI in tourism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the tourism market has profound implications for the evolution of travel, hospitality, and the overall tourist experience. As this paper has explored, AI has the capacity to transform customer service through smart interactions, enhance operational efficiencies, bolster personalized travel experiences, support sustainable tourism practices, and raise significant ethical considerations.

The confluence of AI with tourism heralds a future where travel is more accessible, tailored, and efficient. The personalization of tourist experiences through AI not only meets the growing demand for customized travel but also fosters deeper engagement with destinations and cultures. Operational efficiencies achieved by AI not only drive cost savings for businesses but also lead to enhanced customer satisfaction by streamlining services and reducing wait times.

Importantly, AI's role in promoting sustainable tourism practices addresses the urgent need for responsible travel that prioritizes

environmental conservation and social equity. By optimizing resource management, aiding in conservation efforts, and facilitating eco-friendly decision-making, AI can help the industry align with global sustainability goals.

However, the benefits of AI must be tempered with a careful consideration of the ethical challenges it presents. Issues surrounding privacy, data security, bias, employment, and transparency must be rigorously addressed. The tourism industry must adopt a principled approach to AI, upholding high ethical standards to maintain public trust and ensure that AI serves the greater good.

The journey ahead for AI in tourism is one of immense potential punctuated by significant challenges. It requires a collaborative effort among technologists, industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to navigate the complexities of AI integration. It is through this collaboration that the tourism industry can harness the full power of AI to not only reimagine the tourist experience but also to do so with a commitment to ethical practices and sustainable development. As we stand on the cusp of this new era, the tourism industry must be proactive in steering the AI revolution in a direction that upholds its values and promises a brighter future for all participants in the realm of travel.

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A Study on Digital Marketing in Emerging Market

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Abstract: In the digital age, the marketing landscape is undergoing a significant upheaval as several new trends change how companies interact with their target markets. The three main features of social marketing, influence marketing, and omnichannel marketing are the topic of this research study, which examines the dynamic growth of digital marketing as a growing trend. The study examines the crucial part social media platforms play in influencing modern marketing tactics in social marketing. It examines how companies use social media to engage, communicate, and forge bonds with clients in an increasingly interconnected world. Influencers and content producers significantly influence customer behaviors, making influence marketing an intriguing subset of digital marketing. The mechanics of influencer marketing campaigns, their efficacy in reaching specialized customers, and the ethical issues that emerge in this developing industry are all covered in the article. The potential of omnichannel marketing, another crucial element of the digital marketing landscape, to provide seamless and coherent customer experiences across many channels is under close examination. The study emphasizes the value of combining offline and online touch points to streamline the consumer journey and boost brand loyalty. This research paper offers a thorough knowledge of how Social Marketing, Influence Marketing, and omnichannel Marketing are driving the evolution of digital marketing through an extensive study of recent literature, industry trends, and case studies. It highlights how crucial these developments are strategically for helping organizations stay relevant. Engage their target consumers successfully and traverse the challenging emerging market digital ecology. Keeping up with these trends is crucial for companies looking to prosper in the digital era as the digital marketing landscape continues to change.

Key words: Social media Marketing, Influence Marketing, and omnichannel Marketing

Introduction

The quick development of digital marketing techniques has changed how companies interact with their customers in the global marketplace.

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Amidst this shift, emerging economies have become hubs for marketers looking for unexplored customer bases and development prospects. With an emphasis on social media marketing, influencer marketing, and omnichannel marketing, this study aims to explore the complex field of digital marketing in emerging markets.

Traditional marketing paradigms have been demolished by the rise of the digital era, forcing companies to review their approaches in light of rapidly evolving customer behavior and technology breakthroughs. Emerging markets offer a dynamic platform for digital marketing research because of their distinct cultural landscapes, varied consumer demographics, and rapidly increasing digital adoption rates (Smith & Jones, 2018; Kapoor et al., 2020).

Understanding the intricacies of digital marketing in emerging markets is crucial as businesses increasingly shift toward digital platforms to engage with customers. Three critical elements of modern digital strategies are social media marketing, influencer marketing, and omnichannel marketing, all of which add to the complex web of customer engagement and brand promotion (Brown & Smith, 2016; Li & Wang, 2017; Watson & McCarthy, 2015).

Literature Review

Digital Markets: Adoption and Impact

In emerging markets, adopting digital technology is a significant force for change. Due to rising internet penetration and mobile device usage, these markets offer a ripe environment for digital marketing initiatives (Smith & Yang, 2016). A 2018 study by Mishra and Shah found that emerging markets have a digital landscape characterized by a heavy reliance on mobile devices, opening up new channels for marketers to reach customers.

Obstacles in Developing Markets

Digital marketing in emerging markets presents specific challenges despite the potential benefits. The implementation of digital campaigns is impeded by infrastructure limitations, such as irregular power supplies and restricted internet connectivity (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2017). Another difficulty is cultural diversity, which necessitates that marketers modify their approaches to fit the regional environment (Wang & Kim, 2019).

Consumer Behavior in Developing Economies

Comprehending the behavior of consumers is essential to accomplishing digital marketing campaigns. Li and Chang's (2020) research highlights how social media influences consumer choices in developing economies. Social media platforms significantly affect consumer preferences in these markets by acting as valuable avenues for product recommendations and discovery.

Place-Based Learning and Cultural Awareness

Localization is essential to digital marketing content success in emerging markets (Singh & Lee, 2018). Cultural quirks significantly impact how customers perceive and interact with brands, so customized approaches that appeal to local sensibilities are essential.

Policy Implications of Government Regulations

In emerging markets, government regulations have a significant impact on the state of digital marketing. Marketing strategies are influenced by policies concerning digital advertising, online transactions, and data privacy (Gupta et al., 2019).

Social Media Marketing

Social media has completely changed how companies communicate with their target markets, opening up new marketing opportunities and challenges. The purpose of this review of the literature is to shed light on essential themes and conclusions related to social media marketing.

Social Media Marketing's Evolution

Since its inception, social media marketing has undergone significant evolution. Social media marketing (SMM) was first defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as using social media platforms for marketing communications. SMM has developed into a complex tactic essential to contemporary marketing techniques due to the growth of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Effect on Purchaser Conduct

The influence of social media marketing on customer behavior is one of the main areas of study. According to Smith and Johnson (2017), social media interactions significantly impact people's attitudes, perceptions, and buying decisions. Building brand trust and loyalty on social media platforms requires a strong emphasis on authenticity and engagement.

Strategies for Creating and Engaging Content

Developing engaging content is essential to successful social media marketing. According to Alton (2018), successful campaigns frequently combine interactive, textual, and visual elements. Furthermore, Li and Lee's (2019) research highlights the value of user-generated content in promoting community involvement.

Influencer Promotion on Social Networks

Influencer marketing has become more popular on social media sites in recent years. In their investigation of the efficacy of influencer marketing initiatives, Brown and Jones (2021) emphasized the importance of influencers in establishing brand reputation and connecting with target markets.

Difficulties and Ethical Issues

Marketing on social media is not without its difficulties. Marketers must think ethically about privacy issues, information overload, and the proliferation of fake news (Choi & Lee, 2018). This field's research provides insight into how to overcome these obstacles while upholding moral marketing principles.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has become a leading tactic for companies looking to engage and authentically connect with their target audiences in recent years. To comprehend the influence, efficacy, and difficulties of influencer marketing, this literature overview summarizes the significant discoveries in the field.

What Influencer Marketing Is Not

Partnerships between brands and people who have a sizable social media following are what define influencer marketing (Brown & Smith, 2016). These influencers can change customers' attitudes and actions because of their relatability and genuineness.

The efficacy of influencer marketing initiatives

According to research by Johnson et al. (2018), influencer marketing programs have the potential to be very successful in connecting with and interacting with target audiences. Customers' enhanced trust due to influencers' perceived sincerity leads to favorable brand perceptions and excellent conversion rates.

Influencer Types and Their Effects

There are many different kinds of influencers: celebrity, micro, nano, and macro influencers (Li & Wang, 2017). Every category has advantages and disadvantages. For example, micro-influencers work well in specialized markets because of their devoted and highly engaged fan base.

Risks and Difficulties in Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has advantages, but there are drawbacks as well. According to research by Smith and Jones (2019), concerns include the possibility of backlash, disclosure policies, and influencer reputation. It is imperative to tackle these obstacles to preserve influencer marketing tactics' authenticity.

Metrics and ROI Calculation for Influencer Marketing

Research focuses on quantifying influencer marketing's return on investment (ROI). According to Garcia et al. (2020), several indicators are crucial for determining the effectiveness of influencer marketing, such as conversion rates, reach, and engagement rates.

New Developments in Influencer Marketing Trends

Emerging trends as the industry changes are shaping influencer marketing methods. Attention is being drawn to virtual reality and artificial intelligence, as well as the growth of virtual influencers (Kim & Lee, 2021). Maintaining an advantage in a highly competitive environment requires comprehending and adjusting to these changes.

Multichannel Advertising

Because customer behavior is dynamic and digital technologies are evolving, omnichannel marketing is becoming more and more critical in modern marketing strategies. To examine the implications, difficulties, and tactics related to omnichannel marketing, this study of the literature summarizes the most important findings.

Overview of Omnichannel Marketing: Definition and Frameworks

A smooth and integrated consumer experience across several online and offline channels defines omnichannel marketing (Watson & McCarthy, 2015). To improve customer happiness and loyalty, academics like Verhoef et al. (2015) have suggested frameworks highlighting the necessity of a cohesive strategy across various touchpoints.

Customer Conduct in the Omnichannel Environment

Considerable study has been done on consumer behavior in omnichannel environments. Li and Kim's (2018) research indicates that customers anticipate uniformity and tailored experiences throughout all channels. Effective omnichannel strategy development requires understanding how customers interact and navigate several channels.

Technology-Based Facilitators of Multichannel Advertising

One cannot emphasize how vital technology is to creating omnichannel experiences. A 2017 study by Chen et al. examines how big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things help provide customers with a seamless and customized omnichannel experience.

Obstacles and Difficulties in Putting Omnichannel Strategies into Practice

Although omnichannel marketing has many advantages, putting it into practice has its share of difficulties. According to Sharma and Mitra (2019), the main obstacles to a successful omnichannel deployment include data integration problems, organizational silos, and the requirement for a single perspective of consumer data.

Omnichannel KPIs and Success Measurement

The selection and monitoring of pertinent metrics is necessary to assess the effectiveness of omnichannel strategies. Key performance indicators (KPIs) like client lifetime value, cross-channel conversion rates, and overall customer happiness are discussed in Smith and Davis's research (2020) as critical markers of omnichannel success.

Techniques for Implementing Omnichannel Effectively

Strategy is needed for omnichannel adoption to be implemented effectively. According to Lambert and Cooper (2018), effective omnichannel marketing requires tactics including a customer-centric approach, real-time data synchronization, and cross-functional cooperation.

Scope of the Study

This study aims to deliver a thorough analysis of digital marketing methods in emerging nations, covering a range of tactics companies use to meet particular difficulties and seize the opportunities these markets offer. We hope to disentangle the complex relationships influencing customer interactions and buying patterns in these emerging markets by emphasizing Influencer, social media, and Omnichannel marketing.

Objectives

- Analyzing the state of digital marketing in developing nations at the moment.
- Evaluating how influencer marketing affects consumer loyalty and brand recognition.
- Examining the application and results of omnichannel marketing techniques.
- Offering doable advice for effective digital marketing in developing nations.

Research Methodology

Analyzing the state of digital marketing in developing nations at the moment.

Online Infiltration: The rates of Internet penetration in emerging countries differ significantly. While the number of people using the internet has increased dramatically in some nations, ubiquitous connectivity remains difficult in others.

Using Mobile: In developing countries, mobile devices are essential for digital marketing. Mobile-friendly marketing methods are crucial since many consumers use mobile phones as the primary means of internet access.

Impact of social media: In developing countries, social media platforms are extensively utilized for communication and information exchange. Reaching a large audience through social media marketing may be quite successful.

E-commerce Expansion: Due to expanding middle classes and improved internet access, e-commerce is becoming increasingly popular. Digital marketing tactics that concentrate on e-commerce platforms are becoming increasingly popular.

Problems: Internet and technology access is restricted in some places—differences in technology literacy and economic status. Infrastructure problems include some areas' patchy network connectivity and erratic electricity supplies—regulations and privacy problems.

Customized Text: Local languages, customs, and tastes are often considered in marketing techniques, which lead to tremendous success. It is imperative to tailor information to appeal to the intended audience.

Governmental Directives: Regulations and laws from the government may affect digital marketing. Specific internet activity or content genres may be restricted in some countries.

Knowledge and Consciousness: For companies and marketers operating in developing countries, education and learning regarding digital marketing best practices are crucial. This entails knowing digital security, data privacy, and successful Internet advertising techniques.

Collaborations & Partnerships: Partnerships with nearby companies, celebrities, and civic leaders can improve the success of digital marketing initiatives.

Taking Up New Technology: In certain developing countries, cutting-edge technology in digital marketing, such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, is steadily rising.

Evaluating how influencer marketing affects consumer loyalty and brand recognition.

Customer Loyalty: Favorable Factors

Authenticity and Trust: Influencers frequently establish a close relationship with their followers. Consumer loyalty can rise when they support a brand or product because it fosters a sense of trust.

Relatability: Influencers are frequently viewed as approachable by their followers. An influencer can encourage brand loyalty if they embody a lifestyle that appeals to the audience or if the brand shares the same values.

Engagement and Interaction: Influencers usually use shares, likes, and comments to interact with their audience. Through this connection, followers and the brand may form a stronger bond, increasing loyalty.

Challenges:

Authenticity Issues: Trust can be damaged if influencers are thought to be endorsing goods purely for financial benefit. Genuineness is essential, and any perceived deficiency might undermine customer loyalty.

Changing Alliances: Influencers could collaborate with several companies. An influencer's endorsements may have less effect if they switch allies frequently, which could result in less loyalty.

Brand Awareness:

Beneficial Effects:

Reach and Exposure: Influencers give brands access to a broader audience, particularly those with sizable followings. This expanded audience has the potential to raise brand awareness significantly.

Content Creation: Influencers frequently possess strong writing abilities. Their capacity to provide goods or services in an exciting and captivating way has the power to impact their followers and advance brand awareness.

Credibility Transfer: An influencer's reputation and some of their credibility are given to the brand when they promote it. This may have a favorable effect on consumers' perceptions of the brand and encourage recognition.

Problems:

Saturation: As influencer marketing has grown, some audiences can get overstimulated with sponsored content, decreasing its efficacy in helping people recognize brands.

Mismatched Audience: The influence on brand recognition may be restricted if there is a mismatch between the Influencer's and the brand's target audience.

Examining the application and results of omnichannel marketing techniques.

Use of Omnichannel Marketing: Cross-Channel Integration:

Omnichannel marketing ensures a cohesive and consistent brand message and experience across all channels. This covers offline (physical stores, customer service centers) and internet (website, social media, email) channels.

Use of Customer Data: Integrating client data from several touchpoints makes a more tailored and focused approach possible. Companies can use data analytics to comprehend consumer preferences and behavior across channels.

Inter-Channel Transmission: Omnichannel marketing aims to promote smooth communication across many platforms. Customers may, for instance, look up a product online, go to an actual store to see it in person, and then use a mobile app to complete the purchase.

Technology Integration: Effective omnichannel strategy implementation and management depend heavily on technology usage,

including marketing automation, analytics tools, and customer relationship management (CRM) systems.

Customization: Customizing promotions and materials according to the tastes and behavior of customers improves the whole experience. This personalization can be used across media to provide a consistent and pertinent client journey.

Omnichannel Marketing Outcomes:

Improved Client Experience: Omnichannel marketing aims to give customers a smooth and satisfying experience. When done correctly, this can result in more satisfied and devoted customers.

Increased Retention of Customers: Brands may increase customer loyalty and lower the chance customers would go to rivals by providing a reliable and easy experience.

Increased Revenue and Sales: Personalized experiences and the ease of interacting with brands through many channels frequently result in more revenue and sales. A streamlined approach can encourage customers to make purchases more often.

Data-Based Perspectives: Strategies utilizing omnichannel produce insightful data about consumer behavior. Understanding customer preferences through data analysis enables more focused marketing campaigns and improved decision-making.

Cohesion and Recognition of Brands: Keeping your brand consistent across all platforms contributes to its strength and recognition. Customers are more likely to trust a consistent brand, strengthening brand cohesion.

Offering doable advice for effective digital marketing in developing nations.

Recognize the Local Context: Learn everything there is to know about the area's customs, language, and culture. Ensure your digital marketing tactics meet the target audience's demands and interests.

Optimizing for Mobile: Considering how common mobile usage is in many developing countries, ensure your digital content and website are optimized for mobile devices. Adjust for smaller screens and slower internet speeds to reach a larger audience.

Engagement on social media: Utilize the area's widely used social media networks. Establish a powerful online presence on channels that your target market frequents. Use relatable and culturally relevant information to interact with your fans.

Producing Localized Content: To improve audience engagement, have material in the native tongues. Make use of references and slang terms that are appropriate for the area.

Cost-effective Marketing Channels: Examine affordable digital marketing avenues. Unlike traditional advertising, email marketing, social media, and influencer relationships can be more cost-effective and frequently offer a closer relationship with the target demographic.

Integration Offline: Acknowledge the significance of offline media. Face-to-face interactions are still highly valued by many consumers in underdeveloped countries. Incorporate your digital efforts with regional

gatherings, collaborations, and sponsorships to create a seamless transition between online and offline encounters.

Campaigns for Awareness and Education: Invest in instructional materials to increase consumer awareness of your goods and services. Educate prospective buyers about the features and advantages of using palatable digital content.

Security and Privacy of Data: Address worries around the security and privacy of data. Explain to customers exactly how their data is used and safeguarded. Build confidence by putting strong security measures in place.

Partner with Regional Influencers: Join forces with neighborhood influencers who genuinely connect with the audience. Influencers significantly impact how people perceive brands and can help establish credibility and trust.

Messages about Sustainability: Emphasize any environmentally friendly or socially conscious actions your company takes. Consumers in poor countries who may be becoming more aware of ethical issues can respond favorably to sustainability messaging.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Remain flexible and prepared to modify your tactics in response to changing market conditions. Keep a close eye on the results of your digital marketing initiatives, and be ready to adjust your strategy as needed.

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The Impact of Marketing Expenses on Performance Indicators in Non-Life Insurance Market in Albania

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Abstract: The role of marketing expenses and their impact on the profitability of businesses is widely investigated by many researchers, but there is a gap in research in this field in the insurance market. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the impact of marketing expenses on the performance indicators of non-life insurance companies in Albania. The methodology is based on multiple regression analysis of secondary data for ten years, 2013 – 2022, for the five largest non-life insurance companies. The results support the hypothesis that marketing expenses improve the profitability of insurance companies.

Key words: insurance, marketing, profitability

JEL: G22, M310

Introduction

The term "Insurance" is a term that has many definitions in the literature. This is because the field of insurance is related to several elements such as: risk, uncertainty, fear, promises, contracts, damages, and institutions. All these terms may create ambiguity for people not in the field. Dictionary of Political Economy states that insurance theory is based on the fundamental notion of risk. Different researchers connect insurance with what Blaise Pascal called the "geometry of hazard" or "algebra of chances" (Ewald, 1991). Insurance can also be defined as a legal contract involving two parties, who undertake to fulfill the contract's obligations (Denenberg, 1963). Many statistical, financial, and legal definitions must be understood to define the term: insurance properly. Insurance is a complicated topic that requires a certain level of knowledge and skills to be properly understood and used by customers (Sanjeewa & Hongbing, 2019).

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Insurance is among the most complex financial products that many consumers purchase in their lifetime (Tennyson, 2011; Driver, Brimble, Freudenberg, & Hunt, 2018; Sanjeewa W., 2019). Generally, customers have a low level of knowledge of insurance products, which varies on different factors, including demographic ones (Tennyson, 2011). According to Tania Driver (2018), most people have poor knowledge of personal insurance with many not seeing the value and importance of those policies (Driver, Brimble, Freudenberg, & Hunt, 2018). In this context, it is of high importance for insurance companies to spend on activities/events/promotions to reach, inform, educate, and attract potential customers. The founding principle of insurance sales is that, through marketing, insurance companies make individuals aware of the presence of risk and its transfer to insurance companies.

Many researchers have studied the perception of risk, financial decision-making, or willingness to be insured. Sanjeewa and Hongbing (2019) developed a conceptual framework that explains the association between insurance literacy, insurance education, behavior, and well-being. The human capital factor is related to insurance education and development. Other factors such as attitude, perceived risk, emotions, lifestyle, social and cultural factors, economic context, behavioral/cognitive decision-making biases, or external circumstances also contribute to the purchase of insurance policies (Schoemaker & Kunreuther, 1979; Hsee & Kunreuther, 2000; Buzatu, 2013; Kunreuther & Hogarth, 1992).

Marketing, as a business philosophy, focuses on the analysis and consideration of all problems related to the circulation and sale of goods from producers to consumers. The concept of marketing emerged in the mid-1950s. Instead of a product-centric, 'produce-and-sell' business philosophy shifted to the consumer, 'understand-and-respond'. This means that the goal is not to find the right customers for your products but to find the right products for customers (Kotler and Keller, 2008).

For the insurance company to reach its target insurance market, it should analyze all the chances and threats in its external environment and then carefully examine its strengths and weaknesses in terms of organization, personnel competence, capital adequacy, public image, and above all determine the potential basis for direct sales to those market segments and sales channels that will be the most optimal for the company and that will give the best results (Piljan et al, 2017).

Literature review

Why is it important to study insurance marketing?

Marketing is an essential aspect that creates added value to the business process in general and to the insurance process in particular. First, it helps insurance companies to present their products. An effective marketing strategy would create a rapprochement with customers by increasing the latter's awareness of insurance. A marketing focused on the importance of "why we should be insured" would increase people's

information and encourage their willingness to be insured. Insurance is often considered a complex and intangible service, and effective marketing helps simplify and communicate the benefits to consumers. In this way, trust in insurance companies would also increase.

On the other hand, marketing is always a process that evolves very quickly, in search of innovations. In the competitive nature of the insurance market, more advanced marketing would create a differentiation of the company from others. As technology evolves, digital marketing and data analytics play an increasingly important role in reaching and engaging with customers, making it essential for industry professionals to stay abreast of the latest tools and strategies.

In summary, insurance marketing is important to stay competitive, understand customer needs, comply with regulations, and effectively communicate the value of insurance products in a dynamic and evolving market. There are two significant answers to the research question: Why is it important to study insurance marketing?

- *First, because good marketing increases sales and profits in the insurance sector*

The importance of marketing in business is unquestionable. It helps create familiarity in product recognition. The more people know or hear about a product or service from publicity, advertising or other forms of marketing, the more likely they are to consider it when making a purchase. Furthermore, effective marketing convinces potential customers that the marketed product is the solution to their problems. But marketing is not only about spending on beautiful ads and catchy slogans, it is an important factor that increases sales and improves a company's performance indicators.

Many researchers have studied the impact of marketing on company performance (Nath, Nachiappan, & Ramanathan, 2010; Anderson, Chandy, & Zia, 2018; Krasnikov & Jayachandran, 2008). The study of (Büyükdağ, Kaya, & Kitapci, 2019) has proven that there is a double-sided relationship between marketing expenses, net profit, and earnings per share. It has also been provided that there is a significant positive impact of marketing expenses on sales profit margin and return on investment (ROI) on business performance (Haryanto & Retnaningrum, 2020).

- *Second, the increase in insurance profits affects economic growth*

Several factors show the link between the insurance sector and economic growth:

- (i) Risk protection: Insurance companies protect people from unforeseen events, which in turn allows them to invest and engage in economic activities without fear of large financial losses. This can stimulate economic growth.
- (ii) Capital size: Insurance companies are among the main institutional investors. Profits generated by insurance companies can contribute to the accumulation of capital, which is essential for

investment in various sectors of the economy. In Albania, the size of the capital of total insurance companies is around 130 million euros (Financial Supervisory Authority, 2022).

(iii) Stability and confidence: A developed insurance sector provide stability to businesses and consumers, especially in times of crisis. This stability can instill confidence in businesses and consumers, encouraging spending and investment. A typical case in Albania was the earthquake in 2019 where the insurance companies faced damages of about 4.7 billion ALL or about 38 million euros according to the estimates of the FSA.

Several researchers have investigated the connection between the increase in the profits of insurance companies and economic growth. Ward and Zurbruegg (2000) found that in certain countries, the insurance industry Granger causes economic growth, whereas in other countries the opposite holds. Kugler and Ofoghi (2005) conducted a cointegration analysis, along with causality tests, to illustrate that in most cases there is a long-run relationship rather than a cyclical effect between insurance market size and economic growth. Apergisa and Poufinas (2020) showed that in OECD countries, insurance growth of both life and non-life led to economic growth. This study considered a set of indicators, such as gross premiums, insurance penetration, gross claims payments and gross operating expenses for insurance growth, while economic growth was expressed in terms of GDP.

The Albanian financial market is a developing market. As such, it has gone through many challenges. In the previous periods, the financial market was accompanied by an obvious lack of competition and a limited choice of financial services in the market. In such an environment, the banking and state securities market developed first, and then new financial intermediaries such as insurance companies or private pensions entered. With their entry, the criteria for the legal regulation of financial institutions were tightened and we are now in a new phase of development where the main feature is the strengthening of competition and the struggle to attract customers.

The insurance industry in Albania continues to be focused on traditional ways of doing marketing and has not utilized technologies that help increase communication with clients such as blogs, wikis and podcasts in the public domain. In the survey conducted by the Albanian Financial Supervisory Authority with insured customers in Albania, it was reported that customers who purchased through personal selling defined the purchase as dependent on the professionalism, value, accuracy and usefulness of the provider, while those who purchased through more commercial methods claimed that the purchase depended on the company's prompt service, value and understanding of the customer's needs. The same study showed that of the 1,500 insured through a personal lines policy, 52% were more interested in creating a long-term

relationship with their agent than finding the lowest price, compared to so-called "autopilot" buyers, who represents 26%, who wanted insurance issues to be handled without contacting the agent. Of the 750 commercial lines customers in the study, 67% considered property and casualty insurance to be a good investment in the long term, while 33% were less likely to agree, many of whom had switched agents frequently.

New developments in insurance marketing

The technological embrace is inevitable in the function of achieving goals on the management of marketing strategies, Data Mining products, Internet-based risk assessment and analysis systems, solutions for the automation of the sales force, for the automation of business processes (Coviello & Di Trapani, 2013). In their study, they have shown the importance of including CRM in the insurance industry, in a more pronounced focus on the customer, improving and enriching the offer of customer service, reorganization of production processes and administrative systems and reorganization of agency and sales networks.

Also, the use of Artificial Intelligence in the marketing of insurance companies will help to better understand the customer's needs and offer him the insurance he needs. In this way, insurance companies would move away from mainly standard products by customizing the products according to the characteristics and needs of the client (Rana, Aradhana; Bansal, Rajni; Gupta, Monica , 2022).

Social media marketing is another form of marketing that can create the value needed to win and retain customers in this industry (Brucker, 2022). Social media platforms create high customer engagement. They enable you to respond directly to customer comments, questions and complaints, giving them an improved customer experience. The inclusion of an influencer in the marketing of the company can bring a new audience to the company if the influencer is a trustworthy person. In this way, trust in the company will also increase.

There are also many ways in which Insurtech can be involved in the function of reaching the customer's attention through the creation of mobile applications suitable for users, or gamification, which makes the customer's relationship with the company even more attractive (Yan, Schulte, & Chuen, 2017).

The impact of marketing expenses on insurance companies' performance

Despite its importance, only a few researchers have written about insurance marketing. Büyükdağ, Kaya and Kitapci (2019) have found that the marketing expenditures made by companies are a significant gain gateway for companies because the increase in marketing expenditures is a reason for profitability for companies. In addition, the increase in marketing expenditure also leads to an increase in profit per share. This situation allows companies to find investors more easily. As a result, it is

recommended that company managers allocate more resources for marketing expenditure in terms of their profitability.

In addition, a significant and positive relationship between the intensity of advertising and the price and profit of the company was identified in other studies (Choi & Weiss, 2005). Also, market structure and performance can be affected by the lines of business mix because of differences in marketing, demand, and complexity of underwriting processes.

Dogan and Mecsek (2015) conducted a study with 120 firms to investigate the influence of marketing Expenses on firm value. The most important finding of the study was the evidence of the positive relationship that marketing expenses have with both accounting-based performance indicators (ROA and ROE). The increase in marketing expenses causes the company's profitability and value to increase. The authors suggest companies evaluate marketing expenses as an investment that creates value for the company and not as an expense.

Methodology

The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of marketing expenses on the performance of insurance companies in Albania. There are not many studies that link marketing expenses with performance indicators in the insurance field compared to other sectors. But it is very interesting to undertake such analysis, especially in an oligopoly market such as the insurance market in Albania. Therefore, this study contributes not only theoretically but also empirically to the field of insurance companies' performance evaluation.

To meet the objective of the study, we have used secondary data for 10 years (2013 – 2022) for the five largest non-life insurance companies in Albania. The sample is representative in terms of (i) the number of companies since 8 non-life insurance companies have been operating since 2019 in Albania (Financial Supervisory Authority, 2022) and (ii) market share, since the five companies comprise 80.82% of the market (Financial Supervisory Authority, 2022). Non-life insurance still dominates the market with a share of 91.98% of the premium portfolio, while life insurance has 7.94% and reinsurance 0.08%. This is the reason that in this paper only the market of non-life insurance companies was analyzed.

The analysis is carried out using the multiple regression model for panel data in E-views 12. This method explains the relationship between a set of independent variables and the dependent variable. From the financial point of view, to determine the role of marketing expenses, the impact of this expense on financial indicators must be verified. Many studies have shown that three of the most important indicators in measuring the company's performance are: ROA, ROE and Sales profitability ratio (Kopecká, 2017; Kotane & Kuzmina-Merlino, 2012). The dependent variable in this study is the return on Assets (ROA). It is measured as the

ratio of net profit divided by the total assets of a company and indicates how well a company is managing its assets for profit generation. Data for this performance indicator is taken from the reports of the Financial Supervision Authority in Albania.

The independent variable included in the study is the annual marketing expenses (MKG) of the insurance companies. Due to lack of official disaggregated information, the marketing expense amount is used as a lump sum (as a natural logarithm), thus it includes all expenses related to advertising, printing, promotional activities, etc. for one year. Data for marketing expenses are taken from the explanatory notes of the financial statements of non-life insurance companies

To increase the accuracy of the model, we have also used some control variables:

(i) Financial leverage (LEV) which is measured by the debt ratio calculated as total debts divided by total assets.

(ii) The size of the business measured by the amount of gross written premiums (GWP) (as natural logarithm), which is one of the most important indicators for insurance companies.

The above-mentioned data were used to show the importance of marketing expenses in this market, the progress over the years, the correlation with performance indicators, and the statistical relationship between them. Considering these variables, the general multiple regression can be expressed as:

$$ROA_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * MKG_{i,t} + \beta_2 * LEV_{i,t} + \beta_3 * GWP_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

Where β_0 is the intercept and $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ is the error term.

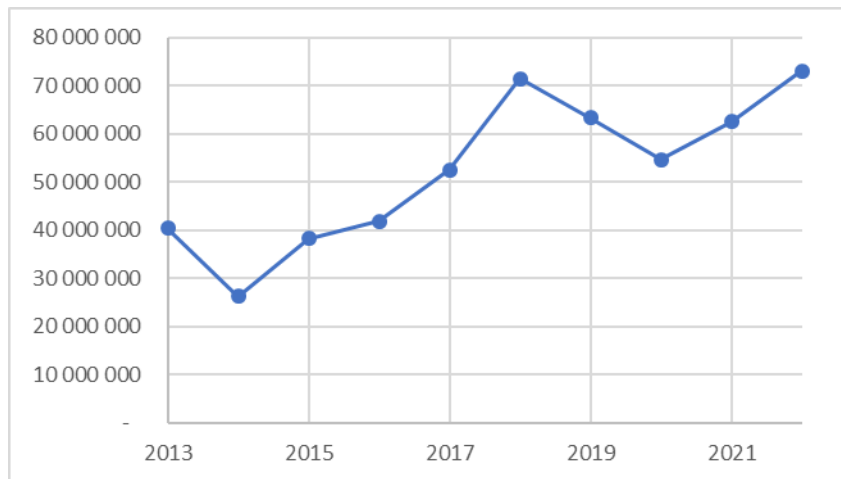
Limitations of the study: The limitations of the study are mainly related to the lack of data for a longer period. Accounting standards have changed and in previous years it was not required that marketing expenses to be reported in the performance statement, so in most cases it is difficult to identify these expenses and separate them from administrative ones.

Results and discussion

Descriptive results

The insurance market in Albania is dominated by a few companies that have owned most of the market share for many years. As mentioned in the previous sections, in the last years, these companies had very good profitability indicators. Nevertheless, the average return on assets for the period in the study is not high, at 1.85%. This comes because of the influence of the first years (2013 – 2016), when some companies had negative ROA (till -12.4%) due to negative profits. Regarding financing, it is common for insurance companies to use debt. The average debt ratio for the period is 65.7%.

Figure 1 gives a trendline of the average marketing expenses for the insurance market. Companies have increased their expenditure significantly during the last years compared to ten years ago. The decreasing trend during 2019 – 2020 is linked with situations such as the earthquake and COVID-19, when insurance companies have not been interested in spending on marketing. Many articles and studies have shown that COVID has negatively affected the marketing budget of companies. But, on the other hand, that period influenced the creation of new ways of marketing (Hoekstra & Leeftang, 2020; Taylor, 2020; Nikbin, ranmanesh, Ghobakhloo, & Foroughi, 2022).



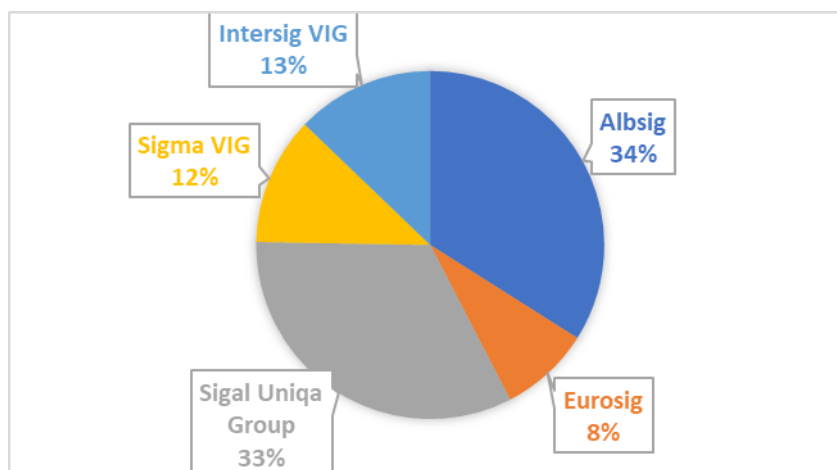
Source: *Financial Statements in National Business Center, 2017-2022*

Figure 1: Average marketing expenses, non-life insurance companies

Marketing expenses from non-life insurance companies remain at low levels compared to other expenses. Marketing is related to service distribution. In the insurance market, this distribution can be done by 3 parties:

- Sales network of insurers,
- Insurance agents,
- Insurance brokers.

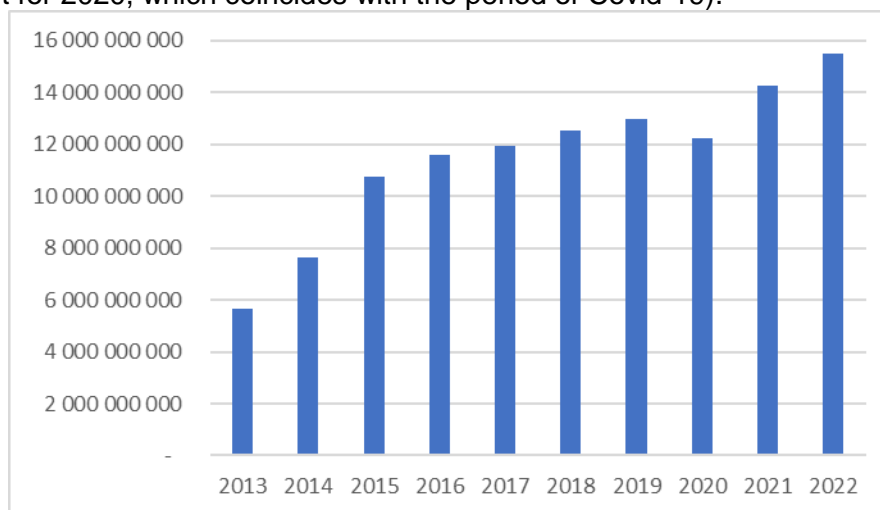
The graph below shows the distribution of marketing expenses for each company in relation to the total.



Source: Author's Calculation from financial statements

Figure 2: Marketing expenses share, non-life insurance companies

During the period 2013-2022, the trend of premiums is increasing (except for 2020, which coincides with the period of Covid-19).



Source: Financial Supervisory Authority, Albania, 2022

Figure 3: Gross written premiums (ALL) in non-life insurance

The summary of descriptive data is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	ROA	MKG	LEV	GWP
Mean	0.018549	17.37311	0.657369	21.45071
Median	0.023723	17.2874	0.637982	21.50214
Standard Deviation	0.032202	0.990954	0.125671	0.48268
Minimum	-0.12472	14.87953	0.346612	20.25336
Maximum	0.055862	19.05629	0.841761	22.365

Source: Authors' calculations in E-views

Based on the correlation matrix (Table 2), ROA is negatively correlated with the leverage and positively correlated with the marketing expenses and the gross written premiums. Nevertheless, the correlation coefficient between marketing expenses and ROA is not very strong (0.3309).

Table 2: Correlation matrix

	ROA	LEV	GWP	MKG
ROA	1.0000			
LEV	(0.2607)	1.0000		
GWP	0.4579	(0.1394)	1.0000	
MKG	0.3309	(0.0683)	0.7864	1.0000

Source: Authors' calculations in E-views

Empirical results

The results of the regression analysis are given in Table 3. The regression model is significant for $\alpha = 0.05$ and the adjusted determination coefficient (R^2) is 31.09%, which is expected because other factors impact ROA, which are not included in this study. Based on the regression coefficients, marketing expenses positively impact ROA and this relationship is statistically significant. On the other hand, leverage (debt ratio) and company size (gross written premiums) have a negative impact on ROA.

Table 3: Multiple regression coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	St. error	t-statistic	Prob.
MKG	0.025122	0.005625	4.466176	0.0001*
LEV	-0.06184	0.030457	-2.03048	0.0481*
GWP	-0.04289	0.011769	-3.64396	0.0007*
C	0.543368	0.19523	2.783227	0.0078*
Adj. R^2	0.3109			
Prob. (F-stat)	0.000151			

* $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors' calculations in E-views

Residual tests, such as Jarque-Bera normality test, Breusch – Godfrey serial correlation LM test, Breusch – Pagan – Godfrey heteroscedasticity test confirm the appropriateness of the model, therefore it can be determined that an increase of marketing expenses will improve the profitability of insurance companies.

Table 4: Summary of residual diagnostic tests

<i>Jarque-Bera</i>	8.402539		
Prob.	0.054977		
<i>Breusch – Godfrey serial correlation LM test</i>			
F-statistic	0.737925	Prob. F (2.44)	0.4839
Obs*R-squared	1.622675	Prob. Chi-Square (2)	0.4443
<i>Breusch – Pagan – Godfrey heteroscedasticity test</i>			
F-statistic	2.75688	Prob. F (3.46)	0.053
Obs*R-squared	7.61981	Prob. Chi-Square (3)	0.0546
Scaled explained SS	8.936186	Prob. Chi-Square (3)	0.0302

Source: Authors' calculations in E-views

Conclusion

Insurance is a "promise" rather than a tangible product. Selling the insurance policies is challenging, which is why marketing is crucial. Insurance is among the most complex financial products and this requires financial knowledge from people who buy insurance.

Marketing expenses have been rising throughout the previous ten years, with the exception of 2020, when the consequences of COVID 19 had an impact in all the indicators of the financial statements. This pattern resembles the gross written premium trend. Nonetheless, marketing costs as a percentage of value are still rather modest and have a negligible impact on non-life insurance businesses' performance statements.

This analysis confirms that there is a positive correlation and statistical significance between the variable "marketing expenses" and ROA. While the association between rising marketing costs and Roa's growth is not very strong, it does exist. This is due to the fact that insurance businesses appear to place a higher value on other costs than other forms of marketing, such as insurance agent salaries and commissions. Albanian insurance businesses should therefore concentrate more on marketing insurance policies and using more modern marketing strategies.

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Digital Customer Engagement in Streaming Platforms in Bulgaria

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Paolina Petrova

Abstract: In recent years, streaming platforms have risen in popularity among customers. The strong competition encourages companies to impose their marketing strategies. In order to satisfy customer needs and increase subscriptions, companies strive to publish engagement content. The main goal of the paper is to study the engagement rate on three of the most popular streaming platforms, comparing Bulgarian customers with all customers in the world. For the purpose of this research, the period in which it was studied was from July to September 2023. Primary data was used by two research methods. Company website engagement is presented by search engine optimization (SEO) methodology. The survey methodology shows Bulgarian customers' satisfaction with streaming services. While secondary data is extracted from the company's quarter financial statements. Netflix ended up being the most popular streaming platform and won customer satisfaction in Bulgaria.

Key words: customer engagement, streaming platforms, digital marketing

JEL: M31

Introduction

In the corporate world, digitalization refers to the concept of increasingly automated and digital procedures. All information is transferred to computer systems, where it is more easily accessible. The rise of streaming service providers such as Netflix and HBOMax in the television and film industries demonstrates the necessity for digitization. These businesses were able to reach the international market because they used their resources and abilities creatively to create new value. It enables businesses to respond to shifting consumer preferences and market situations (Carla Santos Pereira, 2022)

Firstly it is needed to have a definition of what digital customer engagement is. *“Digital customer engagement is all the ways a customer interacts with your business via technology, and how you interact with them. Think of it like this: it’s all of the digital interactions your customer has with your brand, including email, social media, and even your website”* (Hueffner, 2023)

Secondly, why is it important? Nearly 80% of customers have switched to a different competitor because they have had one bad experience. Nowadays customers have high expectations and want to be treated as individuals by companies. The method one-size fits all does not work anymore. Companies who keep track of consumer data and are able to understand customer experience are leading the right way to success (Hueffner, 2023)

The three services that have been chosen to have a brief research on are: Netflix, Prime Video and HBOMax. All three have a common audience characteristics to which they provide streaming services such as movies, series, documentaries and other entertainment. The HBOMax and Prime Video buyer persona is described as a married or partnered couple with or without children. The Netflix buyer persona includes teenagers, college-goers, entrepreneurs, working professionals unlike HBOMax and Prime Video.

The main goal of the paper is to answer the following two questions:

1. Do these services successfully manage their marketing strategies and have similar performance?
2. Is there a distinction if having a large online engagement is equivalent to customer satisfaction?

The case of Netflix, HBOMax, and Prime Video

To be able to determine which company has a much more customer centric orientation, it is crucial to understand the overall marketing strategies, i.e., by having a clear picture of the strategy and the result.

Netflix

Netflix's strategy has a more website engagement focus. This means that having a user-friendly website is important for viewers as a first impression. Netflix uses a customer-focused, personalized, and data-driven marketing approach. Social media is one technique that is used to promote its content through its multi-channel approach in digital marketing. Netflix purposely uses their content as advertisement and memes on social media. They provide global content to adjust user's appeal and multilingual options. Free-trials are provided to new users to experience and decide whether they would like to continue their services. User's also have the option to rate or provide feedback over content. This allows Netflix to utilize

data analytics to craft customer-satisfying experiences. Since it already knows what kind of content its customers prefer to view, customer data analysis is used to recommend content to them. Netflix's 90 out of 100 domain authority is evidence of their outstanding SEO. Netflix has used both on-page and off-page SEO tactics to increase traffic organically (Chaurasia, 2023).

HBOMax

HBOMax's strategy is to create original content focus. HBOMax has built its reputation around by producing high-quality unique programming. Each episode of this unique programming is released once a week, allowing the viewers to be left with a sense of anticipation. HBOMax focuses on producing a smaller number of high-quality shows aimed at a specific demographic. This focus of producing high-quality content lets HBOMax be associated with quality over quantity. Recommended content is based on the user's past browsing habits, and personalized recommendations are displayed. HBOMax makes it more likely for viewers to find new series that they might like, which keeps them on the website much longer (TBH, 2023).

Prime Video

Prime Video focuses much more on social media marketing. Using multiple channels to promote what content is shown. To create hype and raise anticipation for its original series, films, and documentaries, Prime Video shares shareable and entertaining material like trailers and suggestion videos.

Another essential element of Prime Video's digital marketing approach is search engine advertising. Through deliberate keyword bidding and ad campaign optimization, Prime Video guarantees top placement on search engine results pages. This raises the brand's chances of drawing in new platform subscribers by allowing it to gain the attention of users who are actively looking for content. By constantly analyzing user behavior and preferences, Prime Video's digital marketing makes personalized content recommendations, ensuring that users are shown television series and films that suit their tastes and viewing routines (DAN, 2023).

Differences and Similarities

The key difference is where the companys' focus is. Netflix's focus is on their overall performance of their website, since Netflix knew that all their

engagement would be on their web page. HBOMax emphasizes their originality and quality to increase brand identity while Prime Video proves to be more aware of their SEO and social media marketing to increase brand awareness.

However, what all three strategies share between one and another is analyzing user behavior and ensuring that viewers receive personalized recommendations, and the brand's overall presence on social media.

Literature review

Marketers have a general sense of agreement on what customer engagement is in spite of their slight difference in their definition and how customer engagement is linked to other sources.

VWO, a company providing A/B testing tools, the level of interest, attention, and involvement a customer can have in a business is measured by their level of customer engagement. The argument is presented because businesses fail to concentrate on the three main foundations of long-term achievement: customer engagement, customer experience, and customer satisfaction. It is well recognized that consumer engagement begins with satisfied customers. Customers are more prone to interact in the future when they are pleased with the brand. Successful customer engagement, memorable experiences, and satisfaction guaranteeing set off a positive chain reaction that boosts repeat business, positive word-of-mouth, and long-term, sustainable growth (VWO, 2023).

Another author by the name of Serena Miller, who has similar views on the three main foundations, stated that customer engagement goes far beyond the transaction. Customer satisfaction is the last determinant of whether he/she leaves an engagement feeling that their expectations were satisfied or not. Furthermore, Serena has also explained that it is possible for businesses to have low satisfaction and high engagement, and vice versa (Miller, 2023).

PeopleMetrics, another marketing oriented company that helps create more customer-centric approaches, argued that customer satisfaction is a functional metric that looked at how customers felt about observable and logical outcomes, while customer engagement included emotions. Customer engagement is an excellent strategy for increasing retention as well as other business outcomes such as earnings and return on investment (ROI). If left with an ultimatum on whether to choose customer

satisfaction or customer engagement, the answer should be clear that customer engagement is a better tool (PeopleMetrics, 2023).

An article written by Carlota Borges made research about streaming engagement and included different authors' perspective for customer engagement. Kunzental explained that there are three different insights in customer engagement: psychological process, motivational psychology perspective and behavioral manifestation (Kunzental, 2017, as cited in Borges, 2022). Bowden claims that there is psychological process of engaging customers, and that is what makes them loyal to both new and existing customers, considering their intellectual and emotional needs (Bowden, 2009, as cited in Borges, 2022). Motivational psychology perspective is when customer engagement occurs when a brand and the customer experience are connected throughout a service relationship (Brodie, 2011, as cited in Borges, 2022). Lastly, behavioral manifestation is defined when purchases and other acts are taken by customers because of motivational drivers (Van Doorn, 2010, as cited in Borges, 2022).

Methodology

For the purpose of this research is using primary data through SEO and Survey methodologies, and secondary data through financial statements. The data which was extracted and analyzed was from the period between July to September 2023.

SEO methodology provides digital data about services's websites which are already chosen. The information that is chosen to observe is the research process, which includes competitor benchmarking, evaluation of the current state, usage of keywords, evaluation of website engagement, and brand awareness. The final conclusion is based on information which compares services one by one.

Survey methodology was conducted as a questionnaire which was prepared in Google Forms. For this sample population was selected in Bulgaria. A very important note here was to spread it among people who are close to the customer persona of these three brands. The focal point here was to use snowball methodology. This in terms means people who already received a survey and fill in to share it with their close friends which have similar interests. The survey itself includes a title by which all people understand the survey's goal. Then 12 questions were prepared divided in four parts. The first part includes questions related to usage of the platforms. The second part includes questions related to the engagement of the customers. The third part includes questions related to customer satisfaction. The last one includes questions related to the demographic

profile of the respondents. This diversification helps with gathering the right quantity of information in order to answer the paper's questions. The survey received 80 responses which were organized in Excel tables and analyzed.

Results and Discussion

The whole analyses compare the Bulgarian and world streaming platform's users. The world ranking classification that SEO results are in the industry of entertainment/TV movies and streaming, which show that Netflix is in second place, HBOMax is in eleventh place and Prime Video is in sixteenth place.

The world statistics show that three platforms have quite similar gender audiences. Only Prime Video has a more difference with higher percentage male audience. The majority of responders are female.

Table 1: World Gender Distribution
Gender Distribution

World	Male	Female
Netflix	51.4%	48.6%
HBOMax	49.8%	50.2%
Prime Video	56.8%	43.2%

Table 2: Bulgarian

Bulgaria	
Gender	
Male	36.3%
Female	63.7%

Source: Table 1 Similarweb SEO & Table 2 Author's research

According to worldwide statistics all companies have similar target audience with dominant age group of 25-34, followed by 18-24. Survey results show that majority of the responders are between 18-24.

Bulgaria	
Age	
18-24	81.0%
25-34	10.0%
35-44	5.0%
45-54	2.0%
55-64	1.0%

65+	1.0%
-----	------

Table 3: World Age Group

Table 4: Bulgarian Age Group

World	Netflix	HBOMax	Prime Video
18-24	22.4%	22.0%	20.6%
25-34	32.1%	32.1%	32.3%
35-44	20.7%	21.0%	22.5%
45-54	13.9%	13.1%	14.1%
55-64	7.5%	7.6%	7.4%
65+	4.5%	4.5%	4.1%

Source: Table 3 Similarweb SEO & Table 4 Author's research

Based on the results below, computer or laptop devices are most preferred to watch video on streaming platform, followed by mobile devices.

Table 5: World Preferred Devices

Table 6: Bulgarian Preferred Devices

World	Desktop	Mobile
Netflix	74.2%	25.8%
HBOMax	79.5%	20.5%
Prime Video	90.7%	9.3%

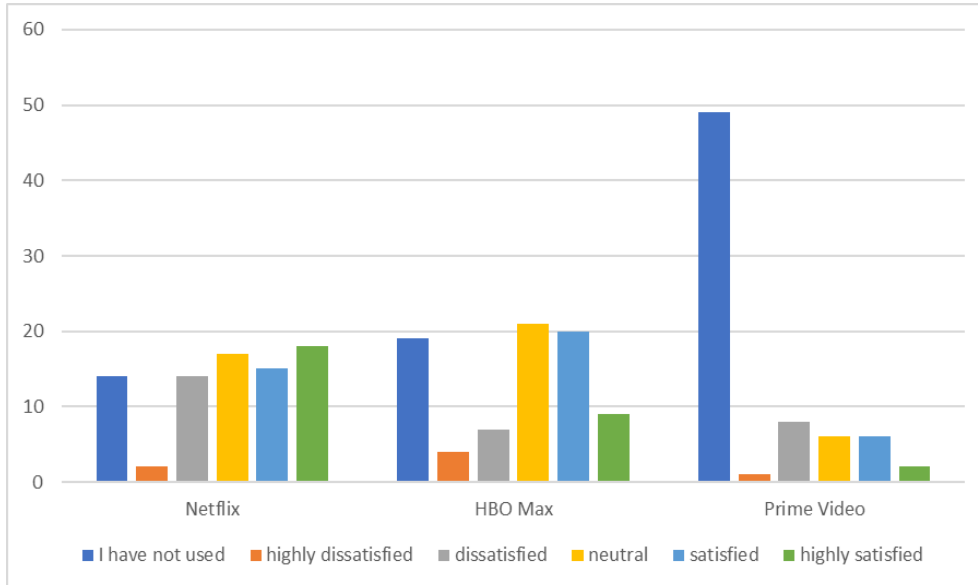
Bulgaria	
Tablet	6.3%
Mobile	48.1%
Computer/Laptop	68.4%
TV	36.7%

Source: Table 5 Similarweb SEO & Table 6 Author's research

The survey results show that a significant part of responders take their decisions based on suggested content and price for subscription. The responder's most preferred platform is Netflix with 57%, HBOMax with 24%. Prime Video is in last place with only 1%.

To measure customer satisfaction for Bulgarian responders, the survey compares the three platforms. They are highly satisfied from Netflix services, then HBOMax and finally Prime Video. With not a big difference are the answers "neutral" and "satisfied" for HBOMax. The significant difference is observed in using platform Prime Video where 49 persons responded that they haven't purchased any services from them. Most of

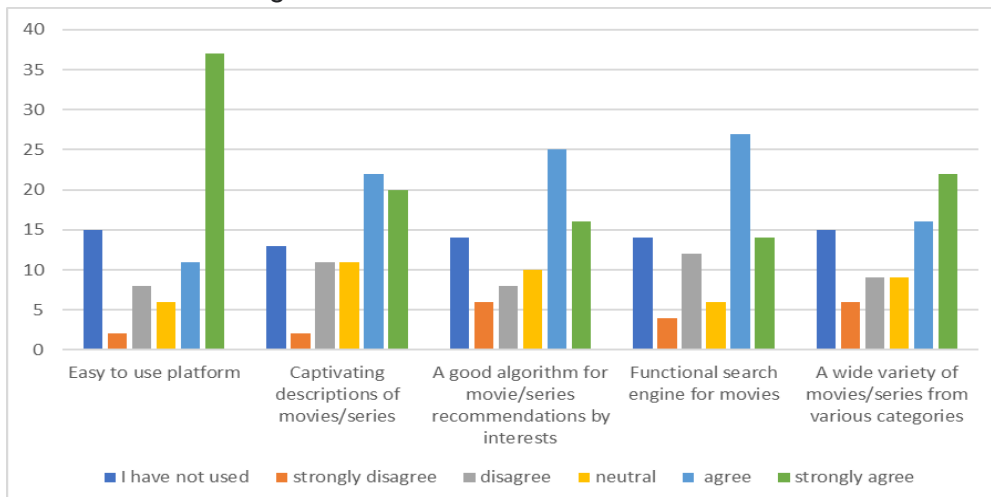
them who are using their services are not as satisfied as the other two platforms.



Source: Author's research

Figure 1: How would you rate the streaming platforms listed below in terms of satisfaction with the services you have purchased from them?

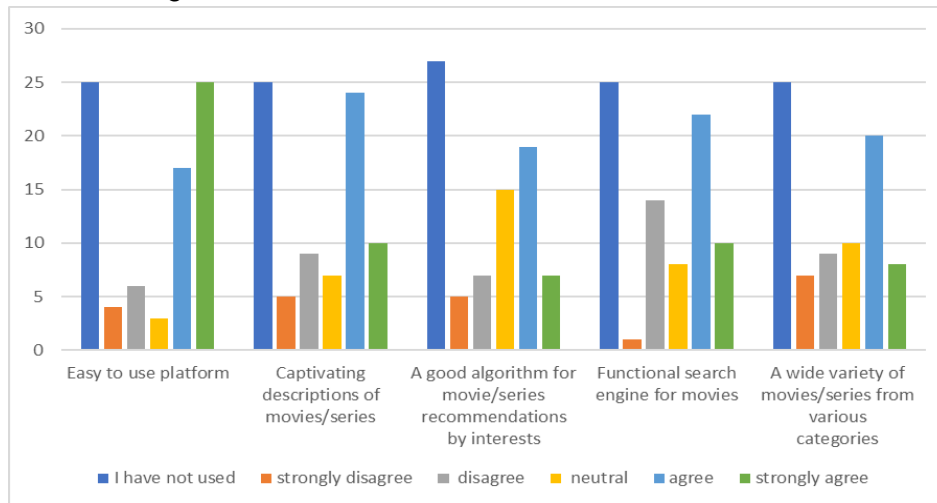
Netflix's users strongly agree with these two statements: easy-to-use platform and variety of movies or series from various categories. Users agree that the search engine is functional; algorithm is good and has a functional search engine for movies and series.



Source: Author's research

Figure 2: How much does Netflix meet the following criteria compared to the content you find on the platform?

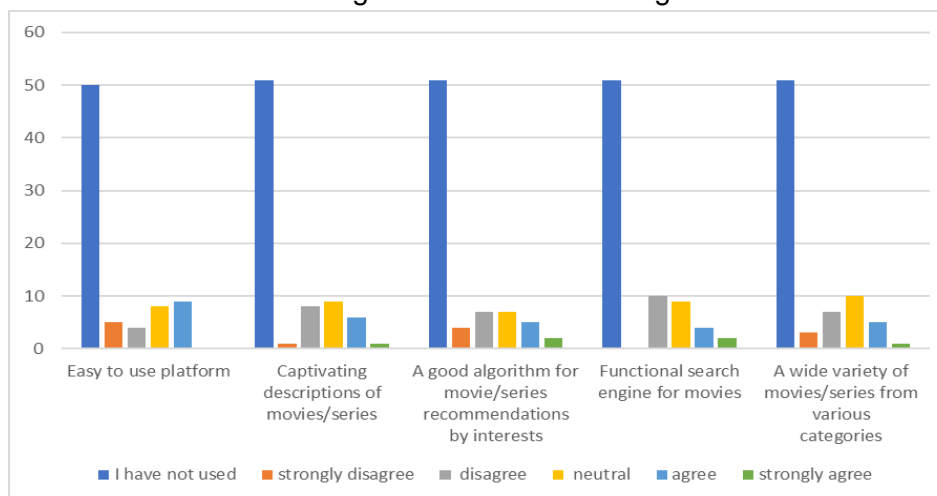
HBOMax’s users strongly agree that the platform is easy to use. They agree that descriptions of movies/series are captivating, the search engine is functional and the platform has a wide variety of movies/series from various categories.



Source: Author’s research

Figure 3: Choose from 1 to 5 how much does HBOMax meet the following criteria compared to the content you find on the platform?

Prime Video’s users agree that the platform is easy to use. They have neutral opinion with the statements – description of movies/series is captivating and a wide variety of movies/series. 50% of users disagree or are neutral about good algorithms for movies/series recommendations by interest. Most of them disagree that the search engine is functional.



Source: Author's research

Figure 4: Choose from 1 to 5 how much does Prime Video meet the following criteria compared to the content you find on the platform?

Netflix is the most visited site and has the least amount of bounce rate. Although Prime Video has slightly larger visits than HBOMax, but their bounce rate is higher than HBOMax.

Table 7: Engagement

Metric	netflix.com	hbomax.com	primevideo.com
Total visits	4.459B	378.6M	655.3M
Monthly visits	1.486B	126.2M	218.4M
Pages per visits	4.34	4.07	2.80
Bounce rate	34.42%	35.5%	44.88%
Page views	6.454B	513.6M	612.0M

Source: Similarweb SEO

Netflix has demonstrated to be a more dominant player when it comes to organic searches, since it was also part of Netflix's digital marketing strategy. Prime Video has shown much more of their SEO strategy in paid searches. These searches also depend on Amazon's name to be shown as relevant searches.

Table 8: Organic Search

Organic Search	Traffic Share	Volume	CPC
netflix	36.80%	50.9M	\$0.64
prime video	3.68%	11.9M	\$0.46
amazon prime	1.94%	18.9M	\$0.29
hbo max	1.92%	7.6M	\$0.55
Amazon prime video	1.63%	8.1M	\$0.53

When it comes to the overall competitive share between the three platforms, Netflix has the most. Audience share there is only slight differences, but Netflix still remains to be ahead of the others.

Table 9: Competitive Share and Audience Share

Domain	Competitive share	Audience share
netflix.com	83.11%	9.6%
hbomax.com	6.45%	9.0%
primevideo.com	10.45%	8.5%

Source: Similarweb SEO

The secondary data that was used is to make a comparison between world users and Bulgarian users to understand the average payment, additional (loses) of users and price differences.

Data for calculations were taken from financial reports. However for Prime Video this information was restricted, because Prime Video is part of the Amazon Prime bundle, from these 200 million users do have access to Prime Video, but how many of them really use it, is unknown. For additional members the data was collected from 2019 till 2021, this was a 33.33% increase.

Table 10: World users

World	Netflix	HBOMax	Prime Video
Users	247 million	95.1 million	*200 million
Average payment	\$10.88	\$7.82	\$5.52
Additional users (lose) %	7.06%	-0.73%	*33.33%

Source: Q3 Financial Statements

Comparing monthly subscription prices between the three services, Prime Video is the cheapest out of the three. Although the difference in prices is not very large, it depends on the consumer's preferences of content.

Table 11: Bulgarian Users

Bulgaria	Netflix	HBOMax	Prime
Users	200,000	150,000	40,000
avg. payment	\$8.36	\$7.63	\$6.29

Source: FlixPatrol

Bulgaria in comparison to the rest of the world is in the top 10 countries who have least-cost effectiveness with prime video. This means the subscription price which is paid monthly is not received equally as in terms of the number of movies and series as other countries in the world. Bulgaria along with some other countries are below average.

Table 12: Top 10 least cost-effective countries for Amazon Prime Video

Country	Price (local)	Price USD	# of TV shows	# of Movies	Total Library size
Latvia	5.99 EUR	6.29	390	440	830
Greece	5.99 EUR	6.29	400	456	856
Estonia	5.99 EUR	6.29	395	506	901
Lithuania	5.99 EUR	6.29	399	534	933
Slovenia	5.99 EUR	6.29	410	577	987
Slovakia	5.99 EUR	6.29	418	586	1,004
Croatia	5.99 EUR	6.29	416	592	1,008
Bulgaria	5.99 EUR	6.29	414	595	1,009
Albania	5.99 EUR	6.29	464	871	1,335
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5.99 EUR	6.29	462	894	1,356

Source: Comparitech

Conclusions

The three streaming platforms have similar target audience and used different tactics and strategies in order to capture customer audience and have competitive advantage. The results show that Netflix is the most popular streaming platform and won customer satisfaction in Bulgaria, then is HBOMax. But Prime video is the least used platform and has the most dissatisfaction from customers. Netflix has a more customer centric approach because they capture audiences with global content that are relative to the subscription price. The platform is more user-friendly and includes more personalized recommendations than other companies.

Customer engagement and customer satisfaction are closely related. In most case scenarios if customers are satisfied, there will be a higher engagement. The company has a good approach if it offers specific content according to the customer's interests and prices relevant to suggested content and region on which they operate. The case of Prime Video is an example that the monthly subscription they offer is not equivalent as in terms of releasing a larger amount of movies and series, and as a result Bulgaria is one of the least-cost effectiveness countries. The

current analysis shows some doubt in customers' opinion when they have to evaluate HBOMax's service satisfaction. HBOMax can improve its engagement platform by observing the main competitors on the market, one of them being Netflix. HBOMax's website could be improved by having a wider variety of movies and series, and having a better algorithm.

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Digitalization BG: 4 by 20 - 1962-1982-2002-2022 years

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Nikola Nenovsky²

Abstract: This work traces the development of Bulgaria, starting from its industrialization, going through cybernetization and computerization of its economy in order to enter the era of digitalization and attempts to fit into the new digital world. The analysis is also made on the basis of the studies of the French archives. Four milestones are defined - the years 1962-1982-2002-2022, around which a model picture of the stages our country goes through in its attempts to maintain a competitive economy in the global world is built. The contribution of Bulgarian economic thought in justifying the need to build economic systems on a scientific basis to achieve optimal development is sought.

Key words: digitalization, industrialization, computerization, French archives, global world

JEL: J11, J21, J31

Introduction

This introduction is a synthesized résumé of the main insights of the publication and contains the following sample questions: problem; existing solutions and degree of examination of the problem; limitations of the study; expected results of the author's contributions.

The development of any economic system passes through successive stages, each of which is a prerequisite for the development of the next, and each successive stage is the result of the accumulations that have been realized at the preceding ones. The Bulgarian economic system is no exception to this rule, starting with its industrialization in the mid-twentieth century through the active introduction of mechanization and automation of business processes in the national economy, to reach the digital age, within which the Bulgarian economy is gradually becoming an integral part of the global system of division of labour. In today's technological world, digitalization has become an essential component of today's societies. Through the process of digitalizing analogue information,

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it is revolutionising various industries and strongly dynamizing the way we work and live.

The paper explores the path of digitalization in Bulgaria through the four significant periods defined by the years 1962 - 1982 - 2002 - 2022, showing the progress, but also the steps backwards that the country took in its adaptation to the digital era and highlighting the factors that have directly or indirectly influenced this process.

Within the framework of the research carried out, a variety of sources of primary information were used - it involved the examination of official state documents from the Bulgarian government during that period; the archives of the French Ministry of Economy were visited, where diplomatic and commercial correspondence of their representatives in our country was kept; literature analysing the development of Bulgaria in the period under consideration was reviewed; statistical sources reflecting specific conditions in one or another aspect of social and economic life were consulted. Such a volume of preparatory work provides the prerequisites for deepening and broadening the research on the subject, provided that the necessary conditions are in place.

It should be acknowledged that this work incorporates an emotional element connected to the name of the patriarch of Bulgarian economic science, Acad. Evgeni Mateev, one of the architects of Bulgarian industrialization, cybernavigation and computerization. It was he who was one of the authors of the country's great twenty-year perspective plan of 1962, which aroused the attention of the entire developed world at that time. Subsequently, he was the man who, after a month-long assignment in the United States, returned with recommendations to our national leadership for a policy of anticipatory development in the field of information technology, which was a novelty at the time. It was the enactment and implementation of this policy that put our country in the ranks of the world's computer leaders setting the trends of technological development in the next few decades to make a smooth transition into the digital age.

Main exposition 1962 - 1982

Here is what the French chargé d'affaires reported to the Quai d'Orsay on October 9, 1962, concerning the Bulgarian twenty-year perspective plan³:

- An act of faith in the future.
- There are many problems with this plan that its authors must not have taken into account or did not know in

³ French State Archives of the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Independence ([Les archives économiques et financières | economie.gouv.fr](https://lesarchiveseconomiquesetfinancieres.economie.gouv.fr)):
Note of the Chargé d'Affaires of France in Bulgaria to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France, Mr. Maurice, dated 9.10.1962, Sofia

advance were insoluble.

- It is about increasing production and national income fivefold in 20 years, as well as consumer goods. To achieve this goal, industrial output must increase by 700% and agricultural output by 250%.
- Electricity production should increase 11-fold over this period and by 1980 import additional electricity at double the 1962 level (at the time of writing), or a total of 11 billion kwh, which seems utopian.
- The production (consumption) of lignite should increase 14 times and of oil - 20 times, which is merely a tentative hypothesis, as Bulgaria has always suffered from chronic shortage of energy resources. It is too doubtful that in 20 years it will be able to provide similar volumes of energy capacity, (the latter have always been a bottleneck for the overall development of the Bulgarian economy, in spite of all other industrial sectors depending on them for their own development⁴ .
- It is impossible that Bulgaria could have had the metals it needed by 1980.
- In connection with the development of heavy metallurgy, the output of the machine- building industry is planned to increase 17 times. How can this be achieved? And what will be the cost of production produced locally under the anti-economic conditions applied and which should feed an export-oriented economy in transformation?
- The chemical industry needs to increase its production 27 times. This is an area in which Bulgaria has never achieved its targets, despite support from the CIL.
- Paper production should increase 12-fold and pulp production 40-fold. In the event of a wood deficit, this would be even more difficult to achieve.

The note to Paris is sufficiently detailed, comprising 23 pages, but the spirit throughout the document is the same: the Bulgarians are adventurers who do not even understand what extravagant goals they have set for

⁴ The necessary quantities of oil were subsequently secured through imports from the USSR. By the early 1980s. The People's Republic of Bulgaria was already a net exporter of crude oil, re-exporting about half of the strategic raw material received, in conditions of a global oil crisis and a sharp price spike. This was not perceived positively by the new Soviet leaders around Gorbachev, and by the mid-1980s this practice had been discontinued and Soviet supplies sharply curtailed.

themselves to achieve. The diplomat further states that “we on the side-line can only watch how, in time, all their plans will go to the wind”.

The analysis of the implementation of these promising plans for the industrialization of Bulgaria, which the young generations of Bulgarians set themselves in the early 1960s, is the subject of numerous studies. Let us consider some conclusions drawn by prof. Ivan Iliev in his study "The Economy of Bulgaria in the Period 1949-2001":

- "During the period 1961-1980, high rates of economic growth were achieved... The average annual growth rate of the national income produced during the 20-year period was 7.35%."(p. 68)
- "A decisive influence on the high rate of average annual growth in national income over the period... was the increase in labour productivity, provided mainly by the increase in the stock of labour" (p. 69).

Table 1: Annual growth rates of some indicators

	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985
National Income generated from industry.	9	12.50	9.30	6.75	6.95
Main industrial funds in manufacturing	14.6	13.65	9.40	9.90	7.60
Workers employed in industry	3.65	4.00	1.30	1.30	1.60
Funds/labour in industry	10.60	8.70	5.80	5.80	5.90
Labour productivity in industry	5.20	8.25	5.40	5.40	5.30

The numbers make it abundantly clear that during the period 1961-1985 the average annual growth rates of national income produced in industry were greater than the average annual growth rates of national income produced in all material production. This implies that the development of industry during this period was crucial to the high growth rates of the overall economy. (p. 71)

- "During the period 1961-1975, high rates of growth were achieved in both the national income and the basic productive funds in the industry. The growth of the basic productive funds ensured both a relatively high growth in the number of new jobs created and in the number of persons employed in industry and, in particular, an increase in the capital stock and in labour productivity.

During the period, as a result of the introduction of scientific advances, new machinery and technology, the gap between the rate of growth of capital stock and the rate of growth of labour productivity in industry has been steadily narrowing. The impact of the rate of growth of labour productivity on the rate of growth of national income in industry is growing" (p. 72).

- " ... the generation, transmission and consumption of electricity is the lifeblood of the economy and society. If production stops everything stops. In the period of industrialization, electricity production grew equally, even faster than the growth of industrial production. The production of electricity in Bulgaria has increased from 4657 million kWh in 1960 to 44328 million kWh. In 1989 - i.e. 9.5 times" (p. 74).
- " ... manufacturing accounts for a crucial share of the total output of the entire industry. The growth rate of manufacturing has a decisive impact on the growth rate of the whole industry, including the growth rate of the electricity and Heat." The Processing Industry is the main consumer of electricity in manufacturing" (p. 74).

Table 2: Mean annual growth rate of national income in Bulgaria and mean annual growth rate of gross domestic product in developed capitalist countries

	1951-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1986
Bulgaria	10.95	7.75	7.30	4.00
USA	2.7	4.7	2.8	2.8
Great Britain	6.502	2.8	1.5	2
France	4.5	5.7	3.5	1.6
FRG	7.5	4.6	2.7	1.4
Japan	5.2	5.7	5.203	3.7
Austria	5.9	4.5	3.603	1.503
Switzerland	3.4	4.3	2.004	1.704
Belgium	3.1	4.7	3.00	1
Denmark	3.6	4.7	2.5	2.6

- "Throughout the period 1951-1986, the average annual growth rates of national income in Bulgaria were higher

than the average annual growth rates of gross domestic product in the nine advanced capitalist countries. Moreover, the difference between the average annual growth rates in Bulgaria and the corresponding advanced capitalist countries is significant. It was lower than in France, the FRG, Japan and Austria in the period 1961-1970, and increased thereafter, with the exception of Japan... Bulgaria's high rates of economic growth ensured a narrowing of the gap between the level of economic development of Bulgaria and that of the advanced capitalist countries... Bulgaria was accepted by the United Nations as a medium- developed country and included in the list of countries participating in the provision of aid to underdeveloped countries in accordance with the rules adopted by the organization" (pp. 95-96).

- "Under the influence of experienced specialists and scientists, the state leadership promptly oriented itself since the early 1960s towards the development of the electrical and especially the electronics industry, using the experience of advanced countries. A lot of efforts were made and a lot of money was spent on the development of the electronics industry. Among the member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, Bulgaria took a leading position in the development of this sector.
- Very high rates of growth in the total output of the electrical and mainly the electronics industry have been achieved for 18 years (1971-1988) . These are reflected in the continuous increase in output in kind and its diversification... The high growth rates of the electronics industry have also had an impact on the achievement of high growth rates of the whole industry" (pp. 79-80).

We can continue giving additional data in this direction, but the format of our presentation leads us to stop here, drawing the important conclusion that the successfully conducted industrialization covering the period under review is a solid basis for the anticipatory introduction in the country of information technologies, which in turn provide solid competitive advantages on the road to digitalization of the modern Bulgarian economy.

1982 - 2002

This is the period of the last stage and the end of the Cold War (the Third World War) with the subsequent incorporation of Bulgaria into the American system of division of labour.

A prerequisite for the development of high technology in any country is the existence of an extensive network of scientific institutes, in the broad

sense of the term, and highly qualified scientific personnel actively engaged in research and development. The totality of elements entering into this area of the societal system in the terminology of Acad. Evgeni Matveev is called the noosphere.

In Bulgaria, the noosphere received a powerful impulse for development with the first significant results of its industrialization. The priority in its development was universally acknowledged, since at that time it was deeply realised that without the use of the tools of science and scientific achievements no further progress in economic development was possible, especially as regards the new information technologies of the time.

The rapid development of science is not denied by anyone, and this process is reflected in the establishment of research centres and organisations for experimental implementation of scientific developments, in the sharp expansion of the material base, the number of Bulgarians engaged in science, as well as in the creation of all the necessary conditions for the active conduct of scientific research and the implementation of the results in real economic practice. Thus, prerequisites are created for "borrowing" of the latest world technological developments, which enables our country to permanently establish itself as one of the planetary leaders in the field of high-tech information technologies.

Here are some statistics on the development of science in the period under review:

Table 3:

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1989
1. Research and innovation organizations as of 31.12 nbr.	92	115	392	423	368	465	656
2. Researchers as of 31.12. nbr.	5846	8973	12765	18436	22601	26891	31611
3. Structure of researchers	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
3.1. Research and innovation institutes	46,1	46,7	52,9	58,4	51,8	56,0	57,1
3.2. Higher education institutions	53,9	53,3	47,1	41,6	48,2	44,0	42,9
4. Researchers as of 31.12. by branches of science	-	8973	12765	18436	22601	26891	31611
4.1. Technical sciences	-	2262	4072	5767	7641	10208	12799
4.2. Medical Sciences	-	1701	2146	3430	4785	4492	4573
4.3. Natural Sciences	-	1734	2127	3443	3769	4490	5351
4.4. Agricultural Sciences	-	1367	1739	2039	1965	2126	2310
	-	1834	2632	3724	4441	5575	6578
	-	75	49	72	-	-	-

4.5. Social Sciences and Humanities	-	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
4.6. Other sciences	-	25,2	31,9	31,3	33,8	38	40,5
5. Structure of researchers by sciences	-	19	16,8	18,6	21,2	16,7	14,5
5.1. Technical sciences	-	19,3	16,7	18,7	16,7	16,7	16,9
5.2. Medical Sciences	-	15,2	13,6	11,1	8,7	8,2	7,3
5.3. Natural Sciences	-	20,5	20,6	20	19,6	20,4	20,8
5.4. Agricultural Sciences	-	0,8	0,4	0,3	-	-	-
5.5. Social Sciences and Humanities	-	-	-	17623	18135	19675	22474
5.6. Other sciences	-	-	-	100	100	100	100
6. Research topics and developments nbr.	-	-	-	78,1	82,8	80,7	86,9
7. Structure of research topics and developments by type	-	-	-	12,3	9	8,5	5,7
7.1. Applied research and development	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.2 Fundamental research	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

7.3. Basic and applied research and development	-	-	-	9,6	8,2	10,8	7,4
8. Structure of implemented scientific results by type	-	-	-	100	100	100	100
8.1. Applied research and development	-	-	-	93,1	91,4	99,1	99,9
8.2 Fundamental research	-	-	-	2,1	2,2	-	-
8.3 Basic and applied research and development	-	-	-	4,8	6,4	0,9	0,1
9. Implemented results of own research and development and used foreign achievements	-	-	-	6485	6972	8479	12115
9.1. Own research and development	-	-	-	4054	5728	7389	10140
9.2. Foreign achievements	-	-	-	661	310	294	1049
10. Relative share of science development expenditure in national income in %	-	-	2,1	2,1	2,3	3,1	3,2
11. Economic effect of the scientific achievements	-	-	-	388,4	891,2	907,9	556,7

implemented in production million BGN							
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Source: Statistical Yearbook of the PRB 1961 , 1971 , 1976 1977, 1987 , 1990.

The tendency is for a steady increase in the number of people employed in science, and before the end of the 1980s their number exceeded their quantity by an average of more than 5 times compared to the beginning of the 1960s, with the excess in practice-oriented research and development and implementation centres being well above the average, at the expense of those in universities, where it was just over 4 times.

In turn, the integration of computers and information systems (cybernetization) has led to a significant change in the overall shape of the Bulgarian economy by revolutionizing various industries, further increasing labour productivity through automation of manual processes reducing human errors and increasing operational efficiency. This period has seen the active expansion of digital infrastructure and the introduction of computer systems in key sectors such as finance, telecommunications and material production.

As a result of the systematic efforts made in the late 1980s. Bulgaria became the undisputed leader in the high-tech computer industry with its share in the markets of Eastern Europe (then COMECON) reaching 40%, and the country ranked in the top three of the world leaders in the field of information technology.

Subsequently, after the collapse of the Soviet system of division of labour in the aftermath of the surrender in the Third World War, the Republic of Bulgaria actively sought its new place in the then actively globalizing world. And despite huge losses of productive and human capital for the size of the country, the colossal accumulations in the scientific sphere made in the previous decades allowed Bulgaria to be among the pioneers of the "internetization" of businesses, which actively began to conquer the existence of human civilisation and the forms of business interactions since the beginning of the 21st century.

2002 - 2022

In the last two decades, Bulgaria has made significant efforts towards the digital transformation of its economy. The political class has reached a consensus on the potential of digital technologies to increase labour productivity and efficiency in various sectors. The period has seen significant progress in the integration of computer technology into everyday manufacturing and service operations, revolutionizing traditional work processes and paving the way for further increases in automation. The widespread use of digital technologies and the Internet is transforming

various aspects of Bulgarian society, including communications, commerce and governance. Online banking and e-commerce are becoming popular.

Digitalisation is one of the main drivers of economic growth in this period. The automation of processes, the creation of online platforms and the entry of digital start-ups provide new opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation and are becoming a major driver of economic growth, thus creating new high-tech jobs, including by attracting foreign investment.

Since the beginning of the zero years of the XXI century, initiatives have been launched to introduce the so called "e-government" in the Republic of Bulgaria. The need for efficient delivery of public services through digital technologies to streamline administrative processes is recognised. The introduction of electronic identification, online tax filing systems and digital signatures mark a significant shift towards a more connected and digitally functioning society. These initiatives aim to improve transparency, reduce bureaucracy and enhance interaction between citizens and the administration.

Relevant structural reforms have been made, a number of strategic documents have been adopted to introduce regulatory frameworks and clear rules in the field⁵.

The world (in its global version) and Bulgaria are on the threshold of a new era of digitalization. Bulgarian business has always been ready to embrace promising technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and the Internet of Things. New opportunities for economic growth, innovation and improved quality of life are expected to emerge through this digital revolution. The commitment to digital transformation is evident in investment in research and development, in fostering entrepreneurship and in creating an enabling environment for the development of start-ups.

- Globalisation and de-globalisation and their impact on digitalisation

Different generations of technologies become possible at different scales of the potential markets that can absorb them. For example, in a tribe isolated from modern industrial civilization in the Amazon, it is impossible to produce even bicycles, since the latter require at least several thousand potential solvent consumers and access to the relevant technologies to be profitable.

The digital revolution has been made possible by an already globalised modern world. The interconnectedness of economies, the free flow of information and global demand, including for digital products and services, have given impetus to the development of digital transformation around the world and in our country. Bulgaria, drawing on its historical experience as a vanguard of scientific and technological progress, is

⁵ See, for example, "Strategy for e-Government in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020 - <https://dev.egov.bg/PDev/publExtData.jsf?idPubl=102>

actively trying to use globalisation to attract investment in the digital sphere, to promote digital innovation and international cooperation.

With the escalation of negative trends in the global division of labour system associated with the end of the current development model, the reverse processes of deglobalisation are also becoming increasingly evident. This poses potential challenges to the processes related to the development of digitalization in Bulgaria. The growing tendency towards protectionism and trade barriers, the continuous ignition of new regional hotbeds of fierce military conflicts limit the country's access to global markets and lead to the defragmentation of business activities. However, for the time being, the consensus in the country remains on the need to continue to build a strong domestic digital infrastructure and to encourage local initiatives in this area.

In any case, however, it must be taken into account that a further deepening of the deglobalisation processes may lead to the need to question the future appropriateness of further investments and developments in digital technologies.

Conclusion

Modern generations of Bulgarians have received an invaluable heritage from the builders of modern Bulgaria, a heritage that has permanently placed us among the leaders of world scientific and technical progress. Undoubtedly, entering the digital age is another, higher stage of this progressive movement.

From the period of industrialization in the 1960s, through the cybernetization of the 1980s and the digitalization of the 2000s, the foundation of passion and the inexhaustible energy of the pioneers has led the way. The country has made significant progress in building a strong foundation in computer science, integrating digital tools into the economy, and adopting e-government initiatives.

Leveraging a scientific approach to managing business systems led to an early awareness of the need for digital transformation, contributing to increased efficiency, economic growth and improved quality of life for citizens. As the country looks to the future, it must address the challenges of globalisation and deglobalisation to sustain its digital progress by investing in digital infrastructure, promoting business initiatives and preparing a skilled workforce. In this way, Bulgaria can position itself as an actively developing digital hub serving as a catalyst for future economic growth.

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ChatGPT: A Blessing or a Curse in Disguise

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Abstract: This research paper explores the impact of Artificial Intelligence, specifically ChatGPT, on various sectors and its potential risks and ethical concerns. It examines the multifaceted nature of ChatGPT, its positive effects on multiple sectors, and its potential to replace human employment. The paper also examines the impact of ChatGPT on work, aiming to determine whether it represents a blessing or a threat regarding job displacement. The report aims to provide an exhaustive analysis of the relationship between ChatGPT and job displacement, shedding light on the various aspects of AI integration within the workforce. By exploring both the positive contributions and challenges posed by ChatGPT, the paper aims to foster discussions on responsible AI implementation and strategies to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on employment.

Introduction

ChatGPT is an AI model for natural language understanding and generation built on OpenAI's GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) architecture. It can answer questions, generate text, complete prompts, and conduct other language-related tasks. GPT models, such as ChatGPT, have been trained on massive volumes of text data from the internet, allowing them to acquire human language patterns and structures.

GPT was the first in the GPT series, followed by GPT-2, GPT-3, and more recent versions as of my last update. Each iteration increased the model's capabilities, with GPT-3 being more comprehensive and adaptable.

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GPT-3 has improved in size, scale, and performance over its predecessors, allowing it to tackle a wide range of jobs with exceptional accuracy.

The development of AI language models like GPT has roots in various techniques and breakthroughs in the field of artificial intelligence:

- **Rule-Based Systems:** Earlier attempts at natural language processing used rule-based systems in which programmers explicitly set grammatical rules and language structures. These systems required greater adaptability and scalability.
- **Statistical Methods:** Researchers later switched to statistical methods, using algorithms to examine massive corpora of text data to derive patterns and probabilities. Hidden Markov Models (HMMs) and probabilistic context-free grammars were commonplace in this age.
- **Machine Learning and Neural Networks:** Natural language processing was transformed by introducing machine learning and neural networks. Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) and subsequent models such as Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks and Transformers increased language comprehension and creation.
- **Transfer Learning and Pre-training:** GPT models use transfer learning, in which the model is pre-trained on a large dataset to learn broad language patterns. Fine-tuning specific tasks aids the model's adaptation and performance in specialized fields.

These developments resulted in models such as GPT-3, which can understand and generate human-like writing in various scenarios. However, prejudice, interpretability, and ethical problems remain areas of study in AI development.

In terms of functionality, ChatGPT and similar models can:

- Answer questions based on the information provided.
- Generate coherent and contextually relevant text.
- Provide suggestions or completions to prompts.
- Assist in language translation, summarization, and text generation tasks.
- Engage in conversation and simulate human-like interactions to a certain extent.
- Continuous research and development in AI language models aim to improve their capabilities further, making them more versatile, accurate, and beneficial across different applications and industries.

Importance of AI in Modern Industries

AI has become a cornerstone in the modern industry due to its ability to automate activities, analyze massive volumes of data, and generate predictions. From healthcare to banking, AI applications simplify processes, improve decision-making, and boost efficiency.

Rising Concerns about AI-driven Job Displacement

While AI has enormous benefits, there are concerns about job loss. Specific employment roles may become outdated or significantly change as automation progresses. However, it is crucial to emphasize that AI generates new career prospects, notably in AI creation, maintenance, and ethical monitoring.

Objectives:

1. To assess the benefits and drawbacks of using ChatGPT by analyzing data from various types of literature on credible websites.
2. To learn about the benefits of ChatGPT in the education and research industries worldwide from available user experiences presented through a literature review.
3. To identify the areas where ChatGPT can benefit the education and research industries worldwide.

Research Methodology:

1. Literature review with conceptual clarity on ChatGPT technical notations.
2. Gathering user feedback and reviews to understand the benefits and drawbacks of using ChatGPT.
3. Using Content Analysis and Conceptual Analysis from the literature research, conceptualize the Pros and Cons of ChatGPT in the education and research industry, including implications.

Scope of the Study:

(a) To add literature to the already limited review of the literature to clarify the general understanding of the utility of ChatGPT, particularly in the education business.

(b) To comprehend the actual value of ChatGPT and why the fear of ChatGPT's presence is prevalent in the education business.

(c) To determine if ChatGPT would harm learning culture in the educational and research sectors based on shared experiences.

Limitations of the Study:

As the overall notion of ChatGPT is quite limited, this study has its own existing and predictive limitations. Even in user experience reviews, there are few resources to refer to and consolidate because many are in the trial-and-error phase.

- (a) There are very few study outcomes available globally.
- (a) The user experience sharing could be more broad.
- (c) The shared experiences are based on perceptions.
- (d) Many people have yet to have this experience thus far.
- (e) The ChatGPT version is in the primary or nascent stage of development, and the actual potency of ChatGPT is unknown.

Literature Review:

- **Stephen Marche (*Atlantic Magazine 2023*)** found that there is yet to be a clear understanding of the application essays that ChatGPT essays.
- **Daniel Herman (*Nature Journal 2023*)** discovered that ChatGPT can usher in the end of high school English.
- **Chris Stokel-Walker (2023)** discovered that the education provider's critical thinking or reasoning needs improvement.
- **Emma Bowman (*NPR 2023*)** discovered that the risk of student plagiarism is substantial and permanent and might result in illogical writing or authoritative-toned content.
- **Joanna Stern (*The Wall Street Journal 2023*)** discovered that high school students in America are cheating in English by using technology to write an essay.
- **Check Point (*Research 2023*)** discovered that ChatGPT may create phishing emails.
- **James Vincent (*The Verge 2023*)** identified ChatGPT's viral success as the mainstream AI.
- **Tyler Cowen**, an economist, discovered and highlighted concerns about the consequences of democracy that ChatGPT will bring.
- **Samantha Lock (*The Guardian 2023*)** discovered that ChatGPT generates incredibly comprehensive human-like tests.
- **Derek Thompson** discovered that Chat GPT is "*the generative AI eruption because it may change our minds about how we operate.*"
- **Despite its shortcomings, Kelsey Piper (*Vox2023*)** discovered Chat GPT as the general public's first hands-on "*smart enough helper.*"
- **Derek Thompson (*The Atlantic Magazine 2023*)** discovered that the ChatGPT, like the generative-AI eruption, has the potential to

revolutionize our thoughts, our work, and the way we conceive about what creativity is.

- **Microsoft Bing, the information website** -The New York Times 2023, wants to make optional ChatGPT capabilities public as a search engine shortly.
- **Stuart Cobbe (England and Wales)** examined the ChatGPT by questions and discovered that the ChatGPT got a 42% pass mark, even though the pass percentage was 55. He believes the advanced version will be too good to overcome the limitation of passing tests.
- **Steven Minz (Inside Higher Ed) (2023)** discovered that ChatGPT is an ally and beneficial support rather than an opponent because the AI may aid educational goals such as producing reference lists, generating initial draughts, and solving equations. He discovered that the AI could even fix tutoring while simultaneously assisting in evaluating the answers with particular solutions to inquiries posed.
- **Sam Altman (The New York Times 2023)** discovered that AI's support for humanity might be so strong that it is difficult to believe the intellectual help that AI could provide, which we cannot explain in simple terms.
- **Cai GoGwilt, Ironclad's CTO**, discovered that ChatGPT could summarise modifications to legal papers. He found that ChatGPT outperforms similar language AIs in terms of imaginative responses.
- ChatGPT was determined to be more helpful in using Microsoft's Azure Cloud by **LexisNexis and Min Chen (Legal Research and Data Company)**.
- **Abeba Birhane (Mozilla)** discovered that ChatGPT generates song lyrics. Krishna Gade, CEO of Fiddler, found that ChatGPT causes disturbances in web searches, which Google has long controlled.
- **Reich and Aaron (2022) state that** students may outsource all writing work, including homework/assignments, to ChatGPT.
- **Benj Edwards (2022)** discovered that excessive plagiarism exists at all levels.

Positive Impacts of ChatGPT:

ChatGPT has brought about several positive impacts across various domains:

1. **Advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP):** ChatGPT represents a substantial advancement in NLP capabilities. Its ability to recognize context, provide coherent responses, and aid

in many language-related tasks has pushed the frontiers of what AI can do in understanding and processing human language.

2. **Applications in Customer Service and Support:** ChatGPT has transformed customer service by enabling chatbots to understand and respond to consumer concerns. These chatbots can give instant help, answer frequently asked questions, and assist users in diagnosing issues, increasing customer satisfaction and decreasing business response times.
3. **Educational and Language Learning Opportunities:** ChatGPT is an excellent academic and language learning resource. It can assist students by explaining, responding to queries, providing examples, and participating in language practice sessions. This provides more individualized learning experiences and allows people to enhance their language abilities.
4. **Assistance in Content Generation and Creative Pursuits:** ChatGPT's capacity to help content creators, authors, and artists generate ideas, provide prompts, and even co-create content is beneficial. It can aid in brainstorming narratives, developing creative writing, or providing insights that fuel creative pursuits, increasing productivity and creativity in various sectors.

Overall, the positive effects of ChatGPT span numerous industries and applications, improving efficiency, accessibility, and creativity while opening up new avenues for innovation and development.

Potential Risks and Ethical Concerns:

The expanding usage of AI language models such as ChatGPT carries with it several potential hazards and ethical concerns:

1. **Spread of Misinformation and Fake Content:** AI models can be taught to deliver inaccurate information, misleading news, or malicious content. If used carelessly, these models may contribute to the spread of disinformation, which poses a significant threat to society by undermining trust in information sources and influencing public discussion.
2. **Privacy and Data Security Implications:** Using AI models demands the interchange of data, which raises concerns about data privacy and security. The risk of disclosing or misusing sensitive data could lead to privacy violations or unauthorized access.
3. **Bias and Ethical Considerations in AI-Generated Content:** AI models learn from the data taught to them, picking up biases from the training data. This prejudice has the potential to cause

discriminatory or unjust outcomes by perpetuating societal biases based on race, gender, or other characteristics. Combating discrimination in AI-generated media is vital to promoting justice and diversity.

4. **Potential Job Displacement and Economic Impacts:** Specific work automation utilizing AI models may result in employment displacement in particular industries. Jobs that need repetitive or rule-based tasks may be threatened, hurting the workforce and necessitating reskilling or upskilling initiatives.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach combining collaboration among politicians, developers, and society as a whole:

- **Algorithmic Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure transparency in the operation of AI models, hold them accountable for their outputs, and allow for criticism and explanation of their judgments.
- **Ethical Guidelines and Regulations:** Ensuring openness in how AI models function, holding them accountable for their outputs, and allowing for inspection and explanation of their conclusions.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Improvement:** Regularly monitor AI models for biases, faults, or malicious use and increase their robustness and fairness.
- **Education and Awareness:** Raising user knowledge of the limitations and potentials of AI models and teaching them how to evaluate information generated by such systems critically.

Balancing the benefits of AI language models with ethical considerations and risk mitigation strategies is crucial for their responsible and beneficial integration into society.

Societal Effects and Impact Assessment:

The integration of AI, including language models like ChatGPT, has profound societal effects and warrants careful impact assessment across various dimensions:

1. **Influence on Human Interactions and Communication:**
 - **Communication Patterns:** AI-powered communication technologies can change how people interact, particularly online. Conversations can be influenced by automated responses and chatbots, leading to more standardized or predictable encounters.

- **Social Dynamics:** AI can alter societal dynamics as humans interact with chatbots and automated systems. This can influence how information is shared, received, and discussed within communities.
- 2. Psychological Implications of Interacting with AI:**
- **Trust and Reliance:** Humans may rely on AI systems for knowledge, advice, or emotional support. Understanding the limits of AI capabilities and cultivating a healthy level of skepticism is critical for avoiding overreliance.
 - **Emotional Connection:** Individuals may create emotional relationships with these systems if emotionally responsive AI interfaces are developed. This raises ethical concerns about developing computers that replicate emotional responses.
- 3. Cultural and Societal Shifts Due to AI Integration:**
- **Workforce Changes:** Automation and AI integration have the potential to change the work economy, resulting in shifts in employment prospects and an increased need for new skill sets. To react to these developments, efforts in reskilling and upskilling will be required.
 - **Cultural Adaptation:** AI technology can impact cultural norms and values. Societies may need to adjust to new methods of dealing with technology while addressing privacy, security, and ethics issues.
 - **Access and Inclusion:** If AI technologies are not widely available, socioeconomic inequities may worsen. It is critical to ensure inclusion in the use of AI to minimize marginalization and promote equitable possibilities for all.

It is critical to perform continuing assessments of AI's societal impacts, considering the various perspectives and potential unintended consequences. Policymakers, researchers, and industry executives all play essential roles in defining the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies to maximize beneficial outcomes while mitigating negative consequences on persons and society.

ChatGPT in the Workforce

ChatGPT has played a critical role in workforce transformation across multiple industries, demonstrating its adaptability in various applications. *Brown et al. (2020)* emphasized its vast application, ranging from

customer service and assistance to content development, language translation, and medical diagnostics.

Incorporating AI models such as ChatGPT has resulted in the automation of standard processes, enhancing efficiency and accuracy. However, as **Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014)** described, this automation has generated concerns about its possible influence on employment. Because of AI's ability to perform such responsibilities, jobs involving repetitive or rule-based work may be displaced or altered.

Case studies have demonstrated the impact of ChatGPT on labor dynamics in various job categories. In customer service, for example, AI-powered chatbots powered by ChatGPT have drastically cut response times, handled basic requests, and freed up human agents to focus on more complicated issues. AI has been utilized in content production to generate articles, product descriptions, and marketing materials, changing the roles of content developers and writers.

ChatGPT has aided professionals in assessing symptoms, indicating potential illnesses, and offering preliminary information and patient assistance to patients in healthcare diagnostics. This has shifted healthcare providers' workloads, allowing them to focus on higher-level decision-making and patient care.

These case studies shed light on the changing environment of several job sectors due to the integration of ChatGPT and AI technologies, highlighting the importance of a strategic approach to workforce adaptability and skill development in the face of automation.

ChatGPT displays a variety of applications from various industries. It improves response efficiency in customer service, which benefits the e-commerce and hospitality industries. Appointment scheduling and preparatory information provision enhance healthcare. Marketing is experiencing increased content development for personalized marketing. However, this automation of standard processes may result in job displacement in roles concentrated on repetitive functions.

Several case studies demonstrate ChatGPT's transforming power. Zendesk uses ChatGPT to handle fundamental customer support issues, resulting in faster response times and more customer satisfaction. Healthcare professionals use AI chatbots to make appointments, considerably decreasing administrative duties and improving patient service.

These examples demonstrate the critical role ChatGPT has in improving operational efficiency and service quality across a wide range of professional fields.

Advantages of ChatGPT

ChatGPT brings forth a multitude of advantages across different domains, making it a valuable tool in numerous sectors:

1. **Efficiency and Productivity Improvements:** *Larson et al. (2019)* found that ChatGPT enhances efficiency by automating repetitive tasks, allowing professionals to focus on higher-value activities. It manages questions, generates content, and assists with various operations, reducing time spent on routine tasks. ChatGPT responds quickly to frequent requests and tasks, processing large amounts of data while optimizing processes. This boost in efficiency allows workers to focus on more complex, high-value jobs, resulting in increased output.
2. **Cost-effectiveness for Businesses:** ChatGPT's cost-effectiveness and scalability assist businesses. According to *Huang et al. (2021)*, AI-powered systems such as ChatGPT can be more cost-effective than hiring additional staff for customer assistance or data analysis jobs. ChatGPT systems are scalable, cost-effective, and easy to scale to meet increasing workloads. They automate customer support, content generation, and administrative tasks, leading to simpler operations, lower human expenses, and better resource allocation. This makes them a cost-effective option for businesses seeking efficiency improvement.
3. **Expansion & Creation of New Job Opportunities in AI-related Fields:** The rise of AI technologies like ChatGPT, despite concerns about job displacement, presents new career opportunities in fields like AI development, data science, machine learning engineering, and ethics and governance. This growth promotes job market development and diversity despite the misconception that ChatGPT and AI technologies are catalysts for new work roles. *Bessen (2016)* emphasized the rise of jobs in AI-related disciplines, such as AI trainers, data annotators, and AI ethicists. These professions necessitate human expertise to train, refine, and ensure the ethical usage of AI systems such as ChatGPT, resulting in new job opportunities.

These benefits demonstrate ChatGPT's disruptive impact in improving operational efficiency, lowering expenses, and contributing to the evolution of career prospects in AI-related industries. ChatGPT's adaptability and versatility contribute to its widespread acceptance, providing tangible benefits across industries while clearing the way for innovation and new labor roles.

Challenges and Ethical Concerns

The integration of AI, including ChatGPT, brings about several challenges and ethical considerations:

1. **Job Displacement and Workforce Restructuring:** *Frey & Osborne (2017)* highlighted the potential job displacement caused by automation, as AI technologies like ChatGPT may replace repetitive tasks. This could lead to unemployment in easily automatable roles, necessitating retraining and upskilling to adapt to evolving job requirements. Strategies for reskilling and upskilling the workforce are needed to transition into roles that leverage human creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.
2. **Quality and Reliability Issues in AI-generated Content:** *Varol et al. (2017)* highlighted the challenges in maintaining the quality and reliability of AI-generated content despite AI systems like ChatGPT excelling in content production. They underlined the need for continuous improvement and oversight to ensure accuracy and credibility in critical sectors like healthcare, finance, and legal advice. Addressing misinformation, lack of context, and output errors is crucial for maintaining credibility and reliability.
3. **Ethical Implications of AI Decision-making and Biases:** *Hagendorff (2020)* highlighted ethical concerns in AI decision-making, stating that AI systems like ChatGPT can inherit biases in their training data, potentially leading to biased decisions. Addressing biases and ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability are crucial to preventing discrimination and upholding ethical standards. This requires vigilant monitoring, diverse training data sets, and ongoing algorithm refinement to avoid bias and perpetuate societal inequalities.

Navigating these challenges and ethical concerns requires a multifaceted approach encompassing technical advancements, ethical guidelines, and collaboration between AI developers, policymakers, ethicists, and stakeholders to ensure responsible development and deployment of AI technologies.

Regulation and Mitigation Strategies:

Regulations and ethical guidelines governing AI are continuously evolving, aiming to address the challenges and risks associated with AI technologies like ChatGPT:

1. **Current Regulations and Ethical Guidelines:**

- **GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation):** The GDPR in the European Union includes data protection rules that affect how AI systems manage user data and ensure transparency and user consent.
- **Ethical AI Principles:** Several groups, including IEEE, the Partnership on AI, and the EU's High-Level Expert Group on AI, have established ethical standards for AI development and deployment, emphasizing justice, transparency, accountability, and social benefit.

2. **Proposed Strategies to Mitigate Risks Associated with ChatGPT:**

- **Bias Mitigation:** Using bias identification and mitigation strategies throughout the training phase to reduce data biases. It is critical to monitor and audit AI-generated content for discrimination continuously.
- **Transparency and Explainability:** Increasing the transparency of AI systems by explaining created results. This can assist users in comprehending AI models' limitations and decision-making processes.
- **Privacy and Security Measures:** Enhancing privacy by using encryption, secure data processing procedures, and tight protocols to protect user data.

3. **Importance of Responsible AI Development and Usage:**

- **Ethical Considerations:** Responsible AI development requires considering the societal implications of AI technology and actively addressing ethical concerns such as prejudice, privacy, and justice.
- **Trust and Accountability:** Instilling confidence in AI systems among users and stakeholders is critical. Accountability measures ensure that creators are accountable for AI model behavior and consequences.
- **Long-Term Sustainability:** To ensure the long-term and constructive integration of AI in society, a long-term perspective is required, concentrating on the ethical, societal, and economic consequences of AI technology.

Responsible AI development and application are critical for building trust, assuring ethical practices, and maximizing the sound effects of AI while limiting potential risks and drawbacks. Collaboration among

politicians, industry leaders, researchers, and the broader community is critical for establishing solid regulatory frameworks and ethical principles that support the responsible use of AI technologies.

Mitigating job loss resulting from AI integration involves multifaceted strategies:

- Reskilling and Upskilling Programs for Affected Workers: **Manyika et al. (2017)** suggest reskilling and upskilling initiatives to equip workers with AI-related skills, such as data analysis and AI programming, for emerging job markets, focusing on technological literacy, critical thinking, and adaptability.
- Regulatory Measures and Policies for Responsible AI Integration: **Whittaker et al. (2018)** emphasize the need for policy frameworks and regulations to govern the ethical use of AI and its impact on the workforce, prioritizing transparency, accountability, fair treatment of workers, and smooth job transitions.
- Collaborative Efforts Between AI and Human Workers: **Rouse (2019)** emphasizes the significance of fostering a symbiotic relationship between AI systems and human workers. By promoting collaborative work environments where AI complements human skills and decision-making, productivity and efficiency can be enhanced, maximizing overall performance.

Governments, educational institutions, businesses, and industry stakeholders must collaborate on strategies to mitigate job displacement and optimize productivity in the evolving job landscape influenced by AI integration, combining reskilling initiatives and regulatory frameworks.

Future Outlook

- **Predictions for the Evolution of ChatGPT and AI Technologies:** **Amodei et al. (2016)** believe that AI technologies will continue to evolve, including more excellent natural language processing, contextual comprehension, and nuanced responses from models such as ChatGPT. These advancements may also improve AI's ability to grasp emotions, sarcasm, and context, resulting in more human-like interactions. As AI systems grow more interwoven into daily life, they will assist various businesses and provide tailored and adaptable interactions.
- **Strategies to Balance AI Integration and Job Preservation:** **Brynjolfsson and Mitchell (2017)** propose ways for balancing AI integration with job preservation, such as investing in education and

training programs, offering incentives for retraining and retention, and encouraging entrepreneurship to generate new job prospects. They prioritize human-centric AI development, emphasizing AI's augmentation rather than replacing human talents. They support policies that promote job growth, encourage collaboration between AI and human workers, and invest in workforce development programs to prepare individuals for changing industries.

- **Ethical Frameworks and Guidelines for AI-Driven Industries:** Ethicists such as *Jobin et al. (2019)* underline the importance of moral rules and frameworks to control AI use. Transparency, justice, accountability, and bias prevention should be prioritized in AI systems. To achieve inclusion and ethical AI practices, diverse stakeholders should be included in establishing and implementing these principles. Policies should address bias reduction, data protection, algorithmic transparency, and the appropriate use of AI in decision-making processes. Policymakers, ethicists, industry experts, and stakeholders must work together to develop and enforce these ethical norms.

Future-oriented considerations like technological advancements, job preservation strategies, and ethical guidelines will shape a more inclusive, sustainable, and ethically responsible AI landscape as AI evolves. By envisioning AI technologies, implementing strategies that balance integration and job preservation, and establishing ethical frameworks, we can steer AI development toward a more responsible, inclusive, and beneficial future.

Recommendations

ChatGPT, like many AI developments, has a dual nature—it has enormous potential while posing inherent risks and challenges. On the one hand, its natural language understanding and generation skills have transformed areas ranging from customer service to education and content development. Concerns about misinformation, bias, and privacy, on the other hand, loom as possible threats to civilization.

To negotiate this dual nature, it is critical to approach ChatGPT usage with a balanced perspective. While exploiting its powers for innovation and efficiency, it is also crucial to recognize and address the ethical concerns and hazards involved with its use.

Fostering responsible AI implementation requires a concerted effort:

- **Ethical Frameworks and Guidelines:** Create and follow comprehensive ethical frameworks in AI development and

deployment that prioritize fairness, transparency, accountability, and societal well-being.

- **Continuous Monitoring and Auditing:** Implement comprehensive systems for monitoring AI systems, recognizing biases, and routinely reviewing their outputs to ensure they adhere to ethical standards and social values.
- **Education and Awareness:** Promote AI technology education and awareness among users, developers, policymakers, and the general public. Encourage critical thinking and a knowledge of the possibilities and limitations of artificial intelligence.
- **Collaborative Approach:** Encourage collaboration among stakeholders (business, academics, policymakers, and communities) to develop legislation, guidelines, and best practices for responsible AI use.
- **Iterative Improvement:** Encourage the AI model's ongoing improvement by incorporating user feedback, developing ethical AI research, and improving technologies to solve future concerns.

By following this advice and taking a holistic, responsible approach to AI adoption, we may reap the benefits of ChatGPT and related AI technologies while reducing potential hazards, ensuring their integration contributes positively to the growth and well-being of society. Balancing innovation with ethical considerations is critical in designing a future where AI improves human experiences while preserving moral norms and values.

Conclusion

In the preceding study, we addressed the diverse influence of ChatGPT on employment. While its integration increases efficiency and creativity across industries, it has prompted worries about job displacement and workforce reorganization. **Frey and Osborne (2017)** and **Manyika et al. (2017)** found that specific jobs could be automated, posing workforce difficulties.

Taking a balanced approach to AI integration in the workplace is critical. It entails a variety of tactics. To begin, as **Manyika et al. (2017)** recommended, investing in reskilling and upskilling programs is essential to equip people with the skills required to complement AI technologies. Second, as **Whittaker et al. (2018)** and **Jobin et al. (2019)** recommended, adopting ethical frameworks and rules can enable responsible AI deployment while minimizing biases and preserving fairness.

The role of ChatGPT in job circumstances can be viewed as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it streamlines procedures, increases

productivity, and provides new job roles in AI-related sectors, as seen by **Bessen (2016)**. However, its ability to automate specific jobs raises worries about job displacement, necessitating proactive actions to offset these consequences.

The influence of ChatGPT on employment is not primarily positive or negative. Instead, it's about navigating and exploiting its capabilities while solving the issues that come with it. ChatGPT and AI technologies can coexist beneficially, boosting productivity and complementing human capabilities in the shifting employment landscape with the correct methods, ethical concerns, and a proactive approach to workforce adaptability.

ChatGPT's role in the workplace is more of a transformational tool than an unambiguous curse or blessing. While it may result in job reorganization and displacement in some areas, it will also create new career opportunities in AI-related disciplines. The employment landscape will be shaped by how responsibly and ethically integration is deployed and integrated into processes, combining efficiency gains with job preservation and human-centric development. Finally, the impact of ChatGPT on employment is determined by how well we negotiate these hurdles and capitalize on its promise for positive workforce development.

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Is AI Just a Tool or Can It be Considered a Stakeholder in the Process of Facilitating and Developing Innovation Ecosystems?

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Abstract: This article examines the different views of scholars and researches on the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the process of developing and facilitating innovation ecosystems. Artificial intelligence systems are explained as they are considered to have significant impacts on decision-making, employment, ethics, and societal structures - all elements of an innovation ecosystem. In facilitating innovation ecosystems AI is often recognized as a useful tool within the development processes, but is rarely considered a stakeholder. Scientists agree that AI has a significant potential in directing the way innovation develops, whilst increasing its autonomy. Therefore, AI could be positioned as a stakeholder with its own set of interests and responsibilities within an innovation ecosystem.

Key words: artificial intelligence, innovation ecosystems, strategic planning, stakeholders

JEL: O30, O32, O33, O36

Introduction

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and its implementation in the different areas of technological advancement and in society, suggests that the world can no longer live without recognizing its application, capabilities and potential. AI's impact on society, economic growth and even the environment, has been acknowledged by scholars, researchers, practitioners and institutions (Dwivedi, et al., 2023). Just recently, the European Parliament published a report on the advantages and opportunities of Artificial intelligence (European Parliament, 2023). Furthermore, a policy brief from December 13th of the European Commission (EC), also acknowledges the potential of AI in science to boost Europe's global competitiveness (European Commission, 2023). (European Union, 2023) (European Commission, 2021)²

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² The European AI Strategy and the Coordinated Plan on AI are also two important documents to be considered when analyzing the use, application and opportunities of AI on a regional level.

The role of AI in the decision-making processes has been investigated in the literature throughout the years (Spangler, 1991), (Rusthollkarhu & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2020), (Stahl, 2022), however, concrete findings on its impact in the facilitating and development of innovation ecosystems, have not been clearly outlined, neither by scholars, nor by researchers or even practitioners. When defining the concept of AI and its application, most of its characteristics illustrate it primarily as a useful and important tool (Barber, 2023), whereas AI is merely considered to be a stakeholder on its own (Blanchard, 2023). As a tool in different decision-making processes or developments, the significant role of artificial intelligence is rapidly evolving, along with the pace of all technological developments (Dwivedi, et al., 2023). The role of AI as a stakeholder has not been researched enough by scholars, therefore the literature review, supporting the hypothesis that it can be considered a stakeholder, is limited to a number of articles, mostly presented by practitioners. This paper aims at exploring, through the available resources, the application and implementation of AI within the processes of development and facilitation of innovation ecosystems. The article will outline the opportunities and advantages AI has as a useful tool in that context and will propose an alternative hypothesis where AI could be, also, considered an important stakeholder, therein. The results of the study highlight the potential of AI for economic growth within the innovation ecosystem, acknowledging the speed of technological advancement, the ethical implication of its implementation and its possible role of a responsible stakeholder in the process.

Methodology

This article aims at studying available statements and opinions on the role of artificial intelligence in strategic processes, in particular, in developing and facilitating innovation ecosystems. The methodology used for this study is primarily desk research with summarising the observations on the work of other researchers related to the proposed question. Secondary qualitative data in comparing the different hypothesis is applied. More specifically, this paper aims to present the summaries of the literature review and to discuss the role of AI as a tool and its potential as a stakeholder, the challenges and opportunities, therein, and its impact on innovation ecosystems.

Literature review

The role of artificial intelligence in the dynamics of the contemporary world and the economic systems, including the processes of strategic planning, is gradually gaining popularity in the literature (Mariani, et al., 2023). In relation to innovation ecosystems and open innovation processes and management (Kuzior, et al., 2023), AI is often associated as a driver to innovation, therefore, an important player of the ecosystem itself. Often, in decision-making, its applications are acknowledged as significant in that process, mainly because of the available AI organizational and management tools. Rarely in the literature, the ethical implications of the

application of the ecosystem concept to AI are underlined (Stahl, 2021), (Stahl, 2022), (Deloitte, 2023).

The role of AI as a tool and as a stakeholder

The term “artificial intelligence” has been defined already back in 1955 by the Stanford professor John McCarthy (Manning, 2020), who addresses it as a science subdivision and very much related to machine learning, which concept has gradually developed throughout the years. Later, B. J Copeland defines artificial intelligence in the Encyclopaedia Britannica as “the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings” (Copeland, 2024). Having an “ability” to do something already suggests of an action that is usually performed by someone (stakeholder) and not so much through something (a tool). In all cases, behind a computer or computer-controlled robots, a set of information is pre-selected and stored to serve as a basis on which AI could learn and make its assumptions and proposals, positioning it, somehow, more as a stakeholder. The limitation here stretches to the exact timing when the information (data, incl. big data), has been powered within the AI system. For example, ChatGPT was launched in November 2022 trained to process information powered only up until September 2021 (Radford & Kleinman, 2023). This was regrettably acknowledged by the organisation’s co-founder and CEO, Sam Altman, stating that “GPT-4’s knowledge about the world ended in 2021” (Mok, 2023).

AI has traditionally been used to facilitate innovation which is a driving force to economic growth (Rosenberg, 2006). A systematic review and investigation of Chinese scholars from Pula and Chengdu, debate on the relation between AI and economic development, since today it is very much linked to the quantity and quality of innovation emerged within the economic system. The results of their analyses allow scholars and researchers interested in the topic to better understand the “current stand and potential knowledge gaps” in the field of AI and economic development (Qin, et al., 2023), which adds value to the literature and opens opportunities for further research. The authors clearly acknowledge the, sometimes immeasurable, impact AI has on economic development, driving innovation.

AI tools are developed and updated on a regular basis and with accumulating pace (Phillips-Wren & Jain, 2006) (Phillips-Wren, 2012) (Duan, et al., 2019). In modern science, AI is recognized not only with its pace of development and vast and diverse application in many industries, including healthcare, automotive, finance, education, retail, etc., but also in areas involving decision-making, business behaviour, culture, and others. Researchers argue that AI’s ethical application, including its responsible development and deployment are issues which should be taken into consideration even more when recognizing AI’s new roles and potential (Verma, 2023). In their article “Artificial intelligence for decision making in the era of Big Data – evolution, challenges and research agenda”, Y. Duan and his colleagues acknowledged that very little academic publications are

available which show observations on the progress and opportunities of AI throughout the years. The authors conclude in their paper that “one of the most important applications of AI history is precisely using it for decision-making (Duan, et al., 2019).

AI's impact on innovation ecosystems

The concept of innovation ecosystem has evolved greatly in the past decade (Pilelienė & Jucevičius, 2023) and AI could be considered, also, an important player in that process, mainly as driver to innovation. The significance of AI in the contemporary landscape of innovation ecosystems is increasing in the last years. The topic of artificial intelligence in relation to innovation ecosystems' development has been already explored by researchers, mainly acknowledging the technological advancement AI brings within the dynamics of innovation ecosystems. AI could be identified as a resource (or a tool) in facilitating the processes of innovation ecosystems emergence and development. Indeed, the use of AI applications and presence in organising the processes of creating and managing innovation ecosystems has been already put into practice (Fenwick, et al., 2018). In some cases, innovation ecosystems are developed because of the emergence of AI within the work of the stakeholders involved, therein.

AI impacts different innovation ecosystems, depending on their type and focus. For example, AI is impacting tremendously startup ecosystems in Europe, according to some practitioners. Baris Efe, co-founder of an Entrepreneurship hub in Berlin, suggests in his article “AI and its importance for the startup ecosystem – a European perspective”, that using AI and the opportunities alongside might require “bold policy action” and collaboration among stakeholders, including business leaders, startups, technologists and policy makers (Efe, 2023) which speaks of a participatory approach, where AI on its own could play a key role.

The concept of a stakeholder in the context of innovation ecosystems has been already developed in the existing literature. Emanuele Giovannetti in chapter 3 "Digital Divide and Digital Multiplier: A Paradigm Shift through Innovation" of the book “ICT-centric economic growth, innovation and job creation” identifies six types of stakeholders which play an important role in the innovation ecosystem (Giovannetti, 2017). Those are, namely: public sector, private sector, finance, entrepreneurial support networks, academia and entrepreneurs. When considering AI and the opportunities and potential it holds, its role could fit in most of the above-mentioned types of stakeholders depending on the scale and scope of participation within the innovation ecosystem. In parallel, other scholars focus their attention on building and accelerating the innovation ecosystem through a stakeholder framework, acknowledging the importance of stakeholders in the process (Budden & Murray, 2019). The authors of the same working paper give a number of examples of innovation ecosystems such as the Silicon Valley, Greater Boston (biotech-led ecosystem) and Israel (Start-Up Nation), where in some of the cases the stakeholders emerged in the process, and in others – it was a

strategically planned process by already identified stakeholders. In the context of strategically planning the emergence and development of innovation ecosystem, it is crucial to identify the key stakeholders involved in the whole process which could become the networking partners and even final beneficiaries of the ecosystem itself (Budden & Murray, 2019).

When considering the influence stakeholders have on decision-making and their outputs within the ecosystem, we could, also, take into account the presence and characteristics of AI. A study on the relation between the Stakeholder Theory and the implementation of AI provides insightful results concluding that the “use of Intelligent Systems related to the Stakeholder Theory in organizations” is relevant (Montez, 2022); and, the implementation of AI in the decision-making processes within the system is observed as fundamental.

Considering AI as a stakeholder in fostering innovation ecosystems. Opportunities and challenges

Recognizing AI as a stakeholder in the process of facilitating and developing innovation ecosystems involves understanding its role and impact on various aspects. AI contributes to strategic planning by providing insights and recommendations based on data analysis. As a stakeholder, AI could influence decision-making processes by offering valuable input on innovation strategies. Its application in the ecosystem could result in enhanced accuracy; speeding up the process of decision making; freeing up human resources, thus improving the overall efficiency of the process; mitigating risks and better risk assessment; providing data-driven insights, supporting decision-makers in making informed choices and optimizing innovation strategies (The Upwork Team, 2023). In relation to speeding up the decision-making process AI can process information at speeds far surpassing human capabilities, enabling quicker identification and resolution of complex problems (Makarius, et al., 2020), which further highlights its advantages within the facilitation and development of innovation ecosystems. Some of the observed challenges and limitations, therein, include the fact that in some cases AI could process incomplete, inaccurate, or biased data which could question its reliability (Duan, et al., 2019). Perhaps the biggest challenge in that opportunity is the lack of human understanding and context coupled with overreliance and decision bias, which may also lead to the lack of trust of the AI assistance, therein.

Furthermore, AI could play a role in optimizing resource allocation within an innovation ecosystem (Füller, et al., 2022). AI-driven optimization algorithms can assist in efficiently allocating resources, reducing waste, and enhancing overall productivity in the innovation process (Deskera, 2023). It could support stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and maximize the impact of innovation initiatives, thus positioning itself as an essential part of the stakeholder framework. AI systems can analyse vast amounts of data and identify patterns that may not be apparent to humans, leading to innovative ideas and solutions. With the development of the AI systems and their capabilities, a particular challenge arises, concerning issues of ethical character, which should be, at the least, addressed. One

of these issues are the privacy challenges, highlighted by Dr Mark van Rijmenam in his article “Privacy in the Age of AI: Risks, Challenges and Solutions” (Rijmenam, 2023). Sometimes, the complexity of data processing could surprise individuals and organisations in that their personal data is used to make decisions that might affect them. So, the ethical implications in this particular area of development of AI and its implementation should be taken into consideration. An opportunity for AI as a stakeholder could be its influence in the formulation of guidelines and standards to ensure the ethical use of AI technologies within the innovation ecosystem.

As mentioned above, AI systems are integral components of the technological infrastructure in innovation ecosystems. As a stakeholder, AI influences the integration of cutting-edge technologies and ensures seamless collaboration between human and machine capabilities. This component of the role of AI is discussed broadly among practitioners and mostly in connection to the human-machine collaboration (Lark Editorial Team, 2023). This is commonly observed in the digital transformation of healthcare with the use of AI. The synergy between human knowledge and creativity and AI's analytical capabilities can result in more effective collaboration, leading to novel and groundbreaking innovations.

One of the challenges associated with the implementation of AI within the innovation ecosystem is that it may substitute partly the role of some of the other stakeholders involved (Cockburn, et al., 2018). For example, the workforce within the research and development area which is an essential part of the innovation ecosystem, could be threatened by the emergence of AI tools which optimize the process using less time and substituting real people. Labour costs could be lowered; however, priority is given to machine and deep learning mechanisms compared to real humans' capabilities. Although, it might save on costs and time, the effectiveness and efficiency work processed could be argued. This argument has not yet been proven neither by scholars, nor by practitioners. In the process of development of AI and its application over time, its impact will be further studied and analysed. It is worth acknowledging, however, the position of the American computer scientist Fei-Fei Li on the role of AI. He suggests that “Artificial intelligence is not a substitute of human intelligence; it is a tool to amplify human creativity and ingenuity” (Krysiak, 2023).

As a stakeholder, AI could play a role in shaping the skill sets required for individuals to thrive in an AI-driven innovation landscape. AI can contribute to the development of talent within the innovation ecosystem by offering educational resources and training programmes. Practitioners regularly provide information on how AI could contribute to enhancing talent, thus supporting decision-makers within the scope of large companies and/or innovation ecosystem. Reference to that is the recent article by talent development consultant James Bruce who proposes several ways in which AI is revolutionizing talent development in companies (Bruce, 2023).

Simultaneously, AI could also foster collaboration by providing tools and platforms for interdisciplinary cooperation (Cain, 2023). In fact, the success of AI is not measured anymore by its independent performance but rather by its “ability to cooperate”. As a stakeholder, AI contributes to the creation of partnerships and networks that enhance the overall innovation ecosystem (Ozcan, 2023).

AI could be considered a stakeholder which supports entrepreneurship and startups and facilitates their growth within an innovation ecosystem (Battisti, et al., 2022). This is usually done by offering tools for market analysis, business intelligence, and automation (McKinsey, 2023). A study conducted by McKinsey reveals that businesses which use and deploy AI – driven tools and management mechanisms envisage better performance and “meaningful changes to their workforces” (McKinsey, 2023). Furthermore, AI algorithms can forecast trends and potential disruptions, helping organizations proactively address challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities within or outside the innovation ecosystem. This has been showcased in a study in the field of supply chain in complex manufacturing, conducted by researchers who aimed to analyse the opportunities of AI for predicting supplier disruptions (Brintrup, et al., 2019).

AI also acts as a stakeholder in promoting a conducive environment for new ventures (Zhao & Fariñas, 2022) or for improving existing ones. In the context of a data-driven retail ecosystem, for example, researchers affirm in the results of their study that “AI-based innovation orchestrated by meta-organizations can enable new business models by creating shared value for society” (Battisti, et al., 2022), thus contributing to a larger system.

AI could serve also as a stakeholder in monitoring and evaluating the impact of innovation initiatives. It provides real-time feedback, performance metrics, and analytics to assess the effectiveness of strategies and interventions. In support of this role of AI, practitioners have tried to highlight the benefits of AI in change management, which could be a difficult process on its own (Delfino, 2023).

AI contributes to the development of public policies and regulations that govern its use within innovation ecosystems (Stahl, 2021). As a stakeholder, AI could influence discussions on regulatory frameworks to ensure responsible and inclusive innovation practices, overcoming regulatory gaps (Lescrauwaet, et al., 2022).

Continues learning and adaptation are important characteristics of artificial intelligence. AI, as a stakeholder, could actively participate in its own evolution by learning from experiences and adapting to changing circumstances (Hutchinson, 2021). This adaptability contributes to the dynamic nature and evolution of the innovation ecosystem.

Overall, recognizing AI as an active participant in innovation can contribute to economic growth by fostering a more competitive and dynamic business environment. It is essential to note that these benefits come with challenges, such as ethical considerations, the need for responsible AI development, and potential workforce implications. Additionally, the landscape of AI and innovation is continually evolving, so staying updated

with the latest research and developments is crucial. AI can accelerate the research and development process by automating experiments, simulations, and analysis, leading to faster innovation cycles. The Hitachi corporate innovation ecosystem has already embedded this principal in their research and development strategy (Moriwak & Akatsu, 2017).

Case Study – AI in project management (micro innovation ecosystem)

When speaking of Artificial intelligence within the ecosystem, an interesting case study illustrates AI's role in the decision-making processes within a corporate innovation system. It is part of an experimental project developed with community collaborators at the arXivLabs³. This experiment on how communicative agents could be organised entirely through AI sources for software development is illustrated in a paper presenting the study and its results, written by Chinese specialists and researchers, who use the ChatDev AI tool as a basis on their work (Qian, et al., 2023). In addition, the professionals recorded their work in applying the AI tool for the purposes of the experiment in a video format (Roth, 2023), also, available with an open access. In this particular case study, AI has played a role beyond that of a tool in fostering innovation. It actually performed on different levels, mimicking human behaviour and patterns of making decisions in order to create a collaborative product and serve a customer as if the whole process was run by human beings. The results of this experiment and the conclusions made by the authors of the paper thereafter, hold a very positive direction. They even provide their code in case there are others who would like to further develop their work. Indeed, such application of AI could easily position it as a stakeholder within the process of creating innovations and even facilitating innovation ecosystems. On the other side, the limitation of this experiment is associated with the point of time⁴ when the information and data has been powered within the AI system. The AI system could only respond based on the previously inputted data and could not take into account anything newer than that, including interconnectedness and interrelations between the data powered in. The experiment positions AI entirely as a stakeholder in the process of project management and development with a relative success which requires further research.

Further Ethical Considerations

Following the above-presented case study and its outcomes, it is inevitable to miss on discussing the ethical implications related to AI's involvement as a stakeholder (Stahl, 2022). Issues such as accountability, transparency, and bias in AI-driven innovation should be considered and addressed. The subject of ethical implications of the implementation of AI

³ “arXivLabs is a framework for enabling the arXiv community to contribute to arXiv and develop tools that can benefit the scientific community”. It is located at the Cornell University, <https://info.arxiv.org/labs/index.html>

⁴ Specific point of time in the past

have been already discussed among scholars and practitioners (Nassar & Kamal, 2021). The international network of Deloitte company addresses openly and exploratory their vision on transparency and responsibility of AI. In their position paper, the authors argue that AI should be explainable to all stakeholders (employees and customers in their case) and should align with the company's core principles (Roovers, 2023). Considering the company as a network of firms operating in different locations and all acknowledging the importance of innovations, it could be emphasized that Deloitte on its own acts as an innovation ecosystem. Within that system, AI certainly plays a crucial role, and therefore, their attention has fallen on the ethical implications of its implementation within the system.

Results and discussion

The analysis of this study reveals that AI is undeniably a powerful tool in the facilitation and development of innovation ecosystems. Its ability to process vast amounts of data, identify patterns, and generate insights has significantly enhanced the efficiency of various processes within these ecosystems. The data collected demonstrates a positive correlation between the integration of AI tools and increased innovation output in different types of innovation ecosystems. Contrary to the traditional perception of AI as merely a tool, the findings of the current research suggest that AI can also be considered a stakeholder in the innovation process. As AI systems become more autonomous and capable of independent decision-making, they play an active role in shaping the direction and outcomes of innovation ecosystems. The ethical considerations and implications of AI-driven decisions in innovation are highlighted in the study as relevant of the proposed question. This opens up discussions on the responsibility, transparency and accountability of AI systems in contributing to, and sometimes steering, the innovation agenda. The study also acknowledges the dynamics of human-AI collaboration within innovation ecosystems. While AI enhances productivity and efficiency, it also raises questions about the potential displacement of human roles. The results suggest that successful integration requires a strategic approach that leverages the strengths of both AI and human contributors, considering AI as a stakeholder in facilitating innovation ecosystems. The discussion acknowledges challenges associated with the integration of AI in innovation ecosystems. These include concerns related to bias in AI algorithms, data privacy, and the need for continuous adaptation to evolving technologies.

Ethical considerations are at the forefront of discussions surrounding AI as a stakeholder. The current analysis highlights the need for robust ethical frameworks to guide AI's role in innovation ecosystems. These frameworks should address issues such as transparency, accountability, and fairness to ensure that AI's contributions align with ethical standards and societal values.

The potential evolvement of AI's role in innovation ecosystems should be further explored and reasoned based on the experience and observations of practitioners and the analyses and findings of other

scholars and researchers. More real-life case studies could support these argumentations such as the case with the Japanese government which envisaged already back in 2016 a “super smart society” or “Society 5.0” (Fukuda, 2020).

Conclusion

The academic literature lacks resources on the specific role of AI as a stakeholder within the innovation ecosystem. This concept gradually develops among practitioners and is becoming more interesting for researches in the last years. The role of AI within the innovation ecosystem, is usually considered in the context of useful tools for processing decision-making, organisation of other stakeholders and, overall, driving innovation. AI is merely seen as a stakeholder on its own. Respectfully, recognizing AI as a stakeholder highlights its active role in shaping, influencing, and contributing to the overall health and success of innovation ecosystems. It involves collaboration between AI developers, policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders to create a balanced and sustainable innovation environment. Opportunities arise for further research on the role of artificial intelligence for the facilitation and development of innovation ecosystems and in relation to the decision-making processes. Areas for further exploration include the development of standardized ethical guidelines for AI in innovation, strategies to enhance human-AI collaboration, and the continuous monitoring of AI's impact on the socio-economic aspects of innovation ecosystems. Research on the implications of AI as a stakeholder within the processes of development and facilitating innovation ecosystems should be further investigated and reinforced.

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The New Dimensions of Sustainable Marketing in the Digital Era

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Abstract: The modern aspects of the marketing concept are not limited to satisfying consumer needs and wants. In the digital age, consumers themselves, as part of the global society, are directing their attention and becoming increasingly concerned about global economic, social and environmental issues. They are looking for ways to influence the resolution of a number of problems such as population growth, global warming, resource scarcity issues, increasing diseases that are caused by water and air pollution, limiting the carbon footprint.

In reality, consumers seek to preserve their own health and that of future generations, and this largely depends on whether companies will preserve the environment and take responsibility for their actions. It is this interrelationship between consumers and companies that requires the observance of all principles of sustainable development in both directions. It is necessary for companies to integrate the achievement of their sustainable behavior in the three aspects - social, ecological and economic. It is sustainable marketing that will help companies show their responsible approach and make it visible in their business strategies, practices and behavior, through the prism of the digital age.

Key words: sustainable marketing, consumer behavior, digitalization, dimensions, innovation

JEL: M30, M31, I120, I110, I150, O33

Introduction

The marketing concept shows satisfaction of customer needs and requirements. In today's global society, customers are increasingly concerned about global economic, social and environmental issues: people are aware of population growth, the widening gap between rich and poor societies, global warming, resource scarcity issues, increasing health problems, air and water pollution and chemically processed foods. What customers want today is a better quality of life for current and future

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generations. The quality of life of future generations depends on how today's companies protect the environment and take responsibility for their actions. Customers want to support companies that demonstrate strong ethics and stewardship of people and the planet. Organizations are forced to adhere to the principles of sustainable development and act in a sustainable manner in order to remain successful. This success is not only driven by economic aspects, but also by social and environmental aspects. This responsible approach should be evident in business strategies, practices and behaviour.

Digitalization has provided new opportunities and challenges to address sustainability issues. Moreover, the politicians are engaged in a continuous search for an optimal strategy for dealing with economic, social and environmental crises, including stagnation and rising inequality after the 2007-08 crash and rapidly accelerating climate change and environmental instability. In this context, the growth of the digital economy, innovation and technology have emerged as a means to address these crises [8]. Therefore, bridging disciplinary perspectives or even empirical fields will become crucial as digitization and sustainable development become increasingly intertwined.

The purpose of the article is to present the new dimensions of sustainable marketing in the digital age.

Literature review

In the scientific literature, as well as in practice, the traditional marketing concept focuses on meeting the current needs of both target customers and short-term sales and company growth. These two goals can be achieved by engaging customers and providing them with what they want at a given time. Sometimes, however, marketing does not serve the best future interests of either customers or businesses because it creates too much materialism and too little social good. Marketing has been criticized for being a driver of unsustainable results. Unsustainable overconsumption and overselling of private goods leads to social costs that can include air pollution, resource scarcity, environmental degradation, population growth, world hunger and poverty. Marketing, through its consumption-oriented practices, may have encouraged unsustainable production and consumption practices. Today's challenge is to stop or reverse this unsustainable production and consumption. Under such conditions, the traditional marketing concept proved to be an inappropriate philosophy (Crompton, Alexander, Shrubsole, 2011). Some companies still use questionable marketing practices that may cause future harm to the environment or society. These practices are not consistent with sustainable marketing and will not lead to customer value and satisfaction and will not create sustainable customer relationships. Marketing has been accused of harming consumers through high prices, deceptive practices, high-pressure sales, unsafe products, poor service for disadvantaged consumers, and planned obsolescence (Kotler, Armstrong, 2017).

Building business models for combining socially responsible business behavior with policies to expand markets and form ecological consumption is extremely difficult, but it is increasingly becoming mandatory, in the search for sustainable development and the implementation of sustainable marketing strategies linked to care for environment and society. (Ilieva, D. 2023)

The high prices are mainly due to the high costs of distribution, advertising, sales promotion, excessive markups and packaging, which add mainly psychological rather than functional value. On the other hand, some consumers are willing to pay more for high-quality products that provide them with this psychological value. Other questionable marketing practices include deceptive practices that trick consumers into thinking they will get more value than they actually do. These deceptive practices can be used in promotion, packaging and pricing. Some practices may include misrepresenting product features, using misleading labels or terms, or falsely discounting the price. By using such practices, companies will lose users who did not get what they expected. Through the use of high-pressure selling practices, consumers are forced to buy products they did not really want to have. Critics also complain that marketing pushes products that are of low quality, don't perform well, or are sometimes even harmful and dangerous. Sometimes companies refuse to open or expand more stores to underserved communities because they do not want to focus on low-income areas (Kotler, Armstrong, 2017). Another criticism involves some companies' practice of planned product obsolescence. It is a business strategy where obsolescence is planned and built into the product from its early conception. The effect of this strategy is that such products have a limited life, they become unserviceable or unprofitable to repair, and the consumer feels the need to purchase new products and services that the manufacturer offers as replacements for the old ones (Hindle, 2008; Slade). , 2006). The services also use methods supporting the strategy of planned obsolescence: lack of possibility to repair the product outside of authorized workshops due to the need to use specialized tools; expensive spare parts consisting of large modules; frequent changes of product components (Hamrol, Najlepszy, 2013).

Today, due to the fact that green markets are expanding, more companies are communicating the environmental friendliness of their products and practices. More companies have sections of the website that are dedicated to disclosing environmental and social policies and results. Green advertising has tripled since 2006 (Delmas, Burbano, 2011). Some studies show that there is a difference between consumer purchasing behavior and consumer concern for the environment. Even if consumers express a positive attitude towards the environment, they may have a problem converting this attitude into positive behavior (Mataracı & Kurtuluş, 2020).

Along with the growing number of green products and claims, the phenomenon of greenwashing is also becoming a significant problem. Greenwashing is characterized as (Lyon, Maxwell, 2011) "selectively disclosing positive information about a company's environmental or social

performance, without fully disclosing negative information about these aspects, so as to create an overly positive corporate image." This image is misleading and misleads customers because claims about a company's environmental performance or the environmental benefits of a product or service are simply false. A company that uses a greenwashing strategy engages in two behaviors simultaneously: poor environmental performance and positive communication about its environmental performance (Delmas, Burbano, 2011). Consumers are deliberately misled by being sent false or incomplete marketing messages containing information about the company's concern for the environment when, apart from the green label, the products have little to do with ecology. Companies using greenwashing strategies tend to spend more on promoting supposedly green products and actions than on changing the production process and following sustainability rules. Greenwashing is definitely unethical as organizations take advantage of consumers' environmental sensitivities.

Methodology

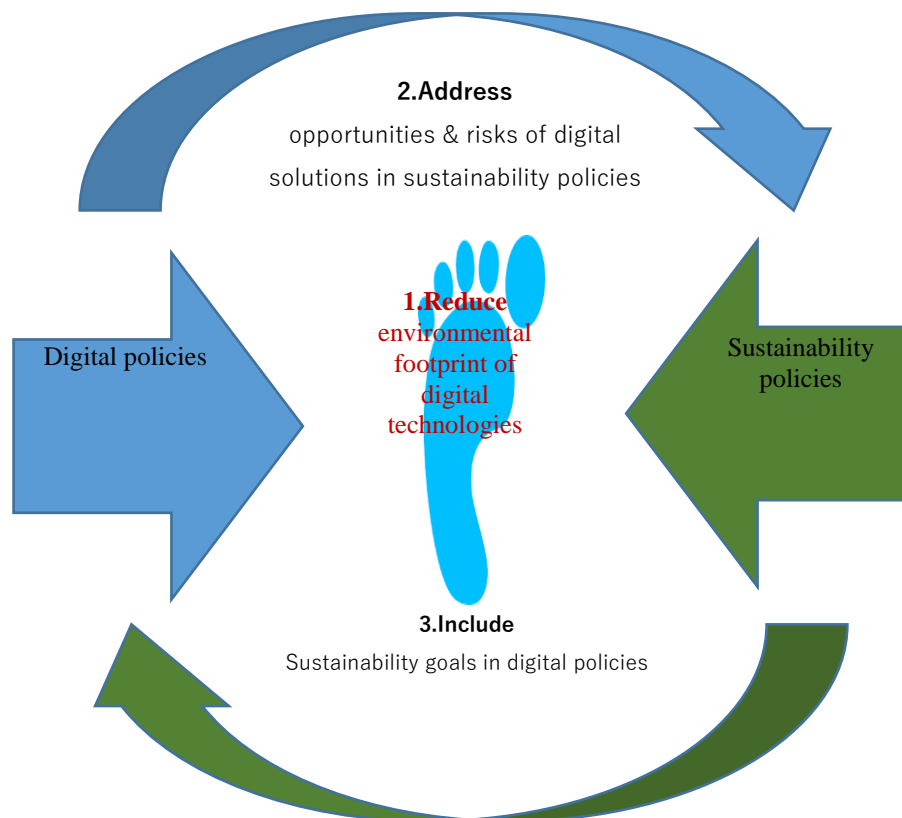
The transformative implementation and management of digitization requires more than public authorities offering smart incentives or even a full mix of regulatory, financial or information-based tools. It requires the so-called Digital Green Deal.

Above all, the Digital Green Deal must be tied to a broad vision of the role that digital technologies play in the prospects for people around the world to realize a dignified life within the safe functioning of humanity (Digitalization for Sustainability (D4S), 2022). This vision needs to recognize environmental challenges as cross-cutting issues and include issues of equity and justice. They must also be flexible in their local and cultural interpretations, allowing for cultural diversity as well as variation at different geographic scales.

For example, equality of access to digital green solutions should be considered, especially when considering global technology implementations in low-income countries. At the same time, the vision must integrate and take into account internationally agreed policy objectives, such as sustainable development, development goals, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other framework conventions. The development of such a vision must engage citizens and civil society, but also the private sector – in all its diversity (company size and business models) – to be a key partner in

Based on this vision, the Digital Green Deal will aim to ensure coherence between sustainability policy and digital policy initiatives.

This requires the identification and integration of three goals (Fig. №1).



Source: Dencik, L., Diez, T., Ferreboeuf, H., Jankowski, P., Hankey, S., Hilbeck, A., Hilty, L.M., Hojer, M., Kleine, D., Lange, S., Pohl, J., Reisch, L., Ryghaug, M., Schwanen, T., Staab, P., 2023

Figure 1. Three aims to ensure policy coherence between sustainability and digital policies.

The first relates to the fact that policies need to reduce the environmental footprint resulting from the life-cycle impact of digital technologies. For example, design directives can lead to the establishment of environmental standards for the production of hardware, requiring production to increase the proportion of recycled materials and reuse.

In addition, hardware companies may be incentivized to change their business models from selling to renting (device as a service).

To reduce impacts during the use phase, policies must be clear and ambitious.

Second, sustainability policies should encourage the development and implementation of digital solutions that aim to drive real transformations in delivery and distribution systems, while minimizing the use of digital innovations that are ecologically counterproductive. Digital opportunities and risks need to be addressed in a cross-sectoral manner, for example in circular economy legislation, value chain management and corporate accountability requirements. Opportunities and risks should also be addressed across sectoral policies, thus promoting sustainability

transformations in energy, mobility, agriculture, construction/housing, industry and consumption of goods and services, while not postponing social issues.

In general, management should ensure that the digitized solution provides added value compared to the non-digital solution.

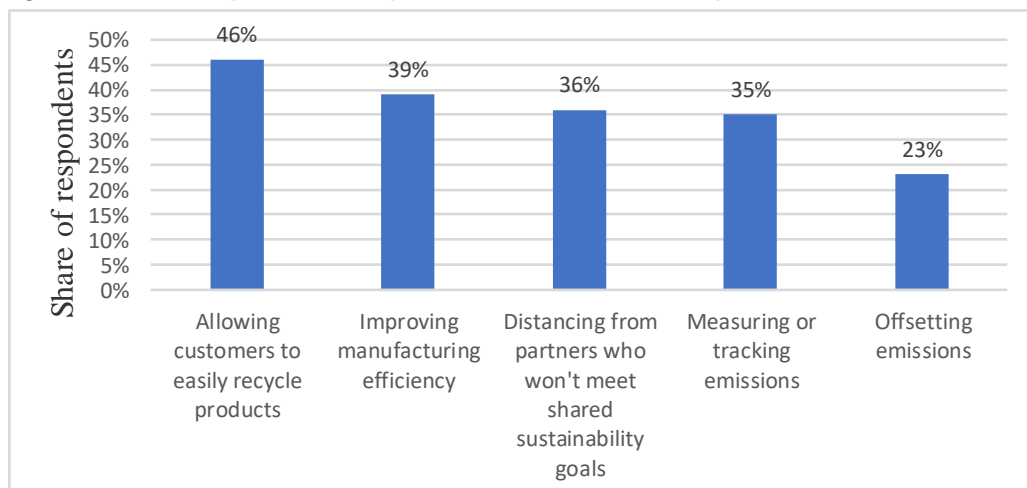
Additionally, digital disruption risks caused by either unpredictable environmental events or malicious actors (eg cyber security attacks) must be assessed and countermeasures configured.

Third, digital policies should include elements that serve sustainability goals. For example, most platform markets lack “manufacturing”.

It is especially important to have policies in place regarding data governance, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, digital finance, cryptocurrencies and more. These should include legislation that promotes sustainability goals.

Decision-makers targeting ambitious policy initiatives regarding the second and third goals of such a digital green deal need to be aware of this governance and the growing role of technology and the fact that sustainability transformation does not always lead to changes in production and consumption (Dencik, L., Diez, T., Ferreboeuf, H., Jankowski, P., Hankey, S., Hilbeck, A., Hilty, L.M., Hojer, M., Kleine, D., Lange, S. , Pohl, J., Reisch, L. , Ryghaug, M., Schwanen, T., Staab, P., 2023)

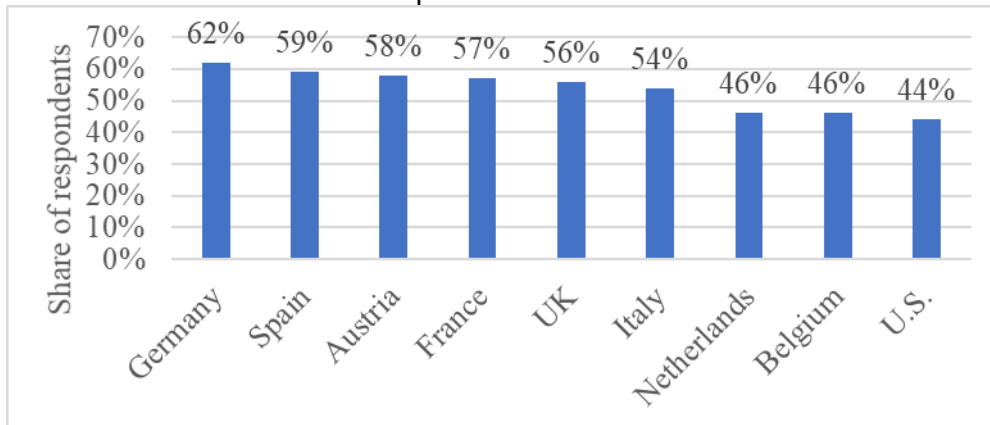
In a narrower sense, the role of a properly built sustainable marketing strategy in the conditions of the ever-increasing role of digitalization is of particular importance. The statistics speak for this:



Source: DIGITAL & TRENDS Sustainability in e-commerce, <https://www-statista-com.study/102849/sustainability-in-e-commerce>

Figure 2. Carbon footprint of Amazon from 2018 to 2021, by type of emissions (in million metric tons CO₂e) Amazon`s corporate carbon footprint 2018-2021, by type of emissions

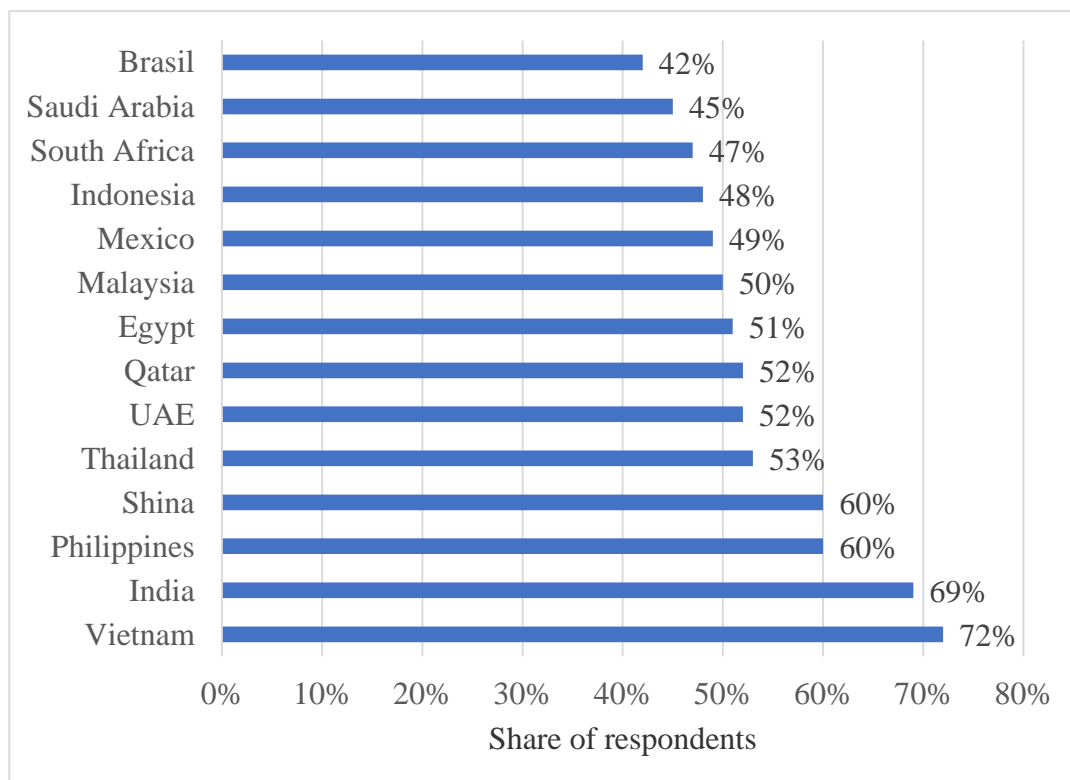
The online marketplace Amazon assessed its worldwide carbon footprint by releasing data on the the amounts of emissions generated by its operational activities between 2018 and 2021. The total footprint of the marketplace increased over the period considered, reaching 71.54 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2021.



Source: DIGITAL & TRENDS Sustainability in e-commerce, <https://www-statista-com.study/102849/sustainability-in-e-commerce>

Figure 3. Share of consumers thinking e-commerce is a problem for the environment in 2022, by country Consumers concerned about online shopping sustainability 2022, by country

A survey from 2022 indicated that European consumers were more concerned about the environmental footprint of e-commerce than U.S. shoppers. Over six in ten German respondents believed online shopping to be a problem for the environment and 59 percent of Spanish consumers had the same opinion, followed by Austrian and French shoppers at 58 and 57 percent, respectively.



Источник: DIGITAL & TRENDS Sustainability in e-commerce, Source <https://www-statista-com.study/102849/sustainability-in-e-commerce>

Figure 4. Share of online shoppers buying eco-friendly and sustainable products worldwide in 2021, by country Online shoppers buying eco-friendly products 2021, by country

In 2021, online shoppers in Vietnam showed the highest environmental awareness compared to 25 other countries worldwide. According to a global survey, 72 percent of online shoppers living in this Southeast Asian country reported very often or always buying eco-friendly products. India ranked second, with 69 percent of online shoppers registering this purchasing habit, while the Philippines and China followed with 60 percent each.

Results and discussion

Achieving sustainable marketing behavior requires a change in core marketing management by those who implement, approve, support and target marketing activities (Crompton, Alexander, Shrubsole, 2011). The idea of sustainability needs to move into the marketing mainstream. The concept of sustainable marketing has emerged both as a trend in academic research and as an important business issue that can be a source of

competitive advantage and is becoming a necessity. Sustainable marketing lasts forever because it provides solutions to people's needs that are environmentally oriented, viable in terms of technical feasibility and economic competitiveness, and relationship-based (Peattie, Belz, 2010). Even the stability of our global market system depends on responsible behavior, sustainable business models and proactive management of the impact of business on society (Smith, Lenssen, 2009).

Conclusion

In conclusion, digitalization has a significant impact on the interaction between government, business and consumers because it encourages them to reorganize their entire behavior through its prism. Indeed, over the last decade, the world has witnessed a rapid growth in the spread and use of digital technologies, which are becoming an internal dimension of companies' efforts to contribute to a more inclusive, competitive and above all sustainable economy and society. These goals can be achieved with a targeted marketing strategy.

There is also a challenge regarding the extent to which the impact of digitalisation will affect overall sustainable competitiveness at the national level. It is an indisputable fact that digitization has brought great results to individual companies worldwide. This trend will develop and in the future digitalization will acquire essential dimensions and importance for the overall sustainable development and in particular the creation and implementation of sustainable marketing strategies.

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Exploring the Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Human Resource Management: Strategies, Challenges and Impact on Organizational Performance

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Abstract: Social media marketing has changed how people communicate on a global scale and has had a variety of effects on how well organizations succeed. Social media recruitment techniques are one of the biggest effects of social media marketing on HR practices of different firms. Through a review of prior research, this study aims to identify the numerous contexts in which social media marketing can be employed as a component of HR practices in businesses, as well as the strategic implications and difficulties the company may have when putting these tactics into effect. It's also advised to make further recommendations regarding potential social media marketing and HRM developments.

Key words: Social Media Marketing, Social Media Recruitment, Recruitment, Human Resource Practices

Introduction

The evolving global corporate environment of the modern era has brought about significant changes in working culture characteristics and communication. Online and offline channels for organizational communication have been developed to meet the demands of the global business environment. Social media marketing has become a new dimension of organizational working that has shown its presence and impact on organizational performance. Social media marketing refers to

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use of various social media networking sites and tools for the purpose of marketing and selling goods and services online. The use of social media is increasing in all the aspects of organization including Human Resource Management. Social media networking sites and tools for social media marketing are two significant developments. Social media marketing tools and networking sites have become a major tool for organizational communication and employer branding. Various social media tools and networking sites are being used in different HR practices such as Recruitment, Selection, engagement etc. This study focuses on analyzing the various directions in which social media marketing tools and HRM practices can be aligned together to meet organizational objectives. Further the various strategies and challenges that are faced in meeting the above objectives are the point of focus in this study.

Social Media Marketing and its use in HRM and Organization

In the ever-evolving landscape of business, Social Media Marketing (SMM) has transcended its traditional role of brand promotion to become a strategic cornerstone in Human Resource Management (HRM). This multifaceted integration of social media platforms into HRM practices has revolutionized the way organizations attract, engage, and manage talent. The use of SMM in HRM is not merely a trend but a dynamic strategy reshaping recruitment, employer branding, employee engagement, and overall talent management.

SMM Tools and Strategies: Before delving into its applications in HRM, it's essential to understand the tools and strategies that characterize SMM. Platforms such as Buffer, Hootsuite, and Sprout Social empower organizations to schedule, manage, and analyze their social media presence efficiently. Graphics design tools like Canva and analytics tools like Google Analytics and Brandwatch contribute to creating visually appealing content and monitoring brand sentiment. The dynamic landscape of social media advertising is navigated through tools like AdEspresso, optimizing campaigns and enhancing performance.

Use of Social Media Marketing in HRM:

Following uses of Social Media marketing in HRM practices have been identified:

1. **Recruitment and Talent Acquisition:** SMM serves as a dynamic channel for sharing job opportunities, with platforms like LinkedIn Recruiter enabling proactive candidate engagement.
2. **Employer Branding:** Organizations utilize social media to showcase their culture, values, and workplace environment, contributing to a positive employer brand.
3. **Employee Engagement:** Internal communication is facilitated through social media, fostering collaboration and recognition of employee achievements.
4. **Professional Development:** HR leverages social media to communicate learning opportunities, share industry insights, and position the organization as a thought leader.

5. **Recruitment Events:** Live streaming events and virtual tours through social media provide an interactive and transparent glimpse into the organization.
6. **Candidate Engagement:** Interactive content and chatbots enhance candidate engagement, providing a more immersive and user-friendly experience.
7. **Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:** Social media becomes a powerful tool to highlight an organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion, attracting a diverse talent pool.
8. **Employee Advocacy:** Encouraging employees to share company achievements and job openings on personal profiles amplifies recruitment efforts.
9. **Employment Brand Monitoring:** Social media is monitored for feedback about the company's employer brand, allowing for continuous improvement.
10. **Onboarding and Offboarding:** Social media is used to welcome new hires and bid farewell to departing employees, creating a positive and transparent transition experience.

In this interconnected era, the strategic use of social media in HRM has become a catalyst for organizational success, reshaping the employee lifecycle and fostering a dynamic and engaging workplace culture. This integration represents not only a technological shift but a paradigm change in how organizations perceive and harness the power of human capital through the lens of social media marketing.

Review of Literature

The fusion of Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Human Resource Management (HRM) presents a complex yet transformative landscape for contemporary organizations. Kellett and Hede (2016) set the stage by highlighting the innovation-driven challenges faced by event organizations within the broader tourism sector. Their findings underscore the sporadic adoption of social media, primarily as an ad-hoc solution, with only a minority strategically integrating it into the core fabric of their operations. This sporadic integration, however, hints at the potential to reshape the traditionally cyclical nature of event communications. The advent of social media facilitates year-round engagement, potentially reshaping the demand for event professionals and challenging the industry's conventional seasonal nature.

Azizi et al.'s (2021) exploration delves into the pivotal role of talent management in this digital era. Amidst the evolving landscape, strategies shift from traditional talent acquisition to a holistic approach encompassing virtual communication, flexible work arrangements, and a focus on employees' physical and mental well-being. The shift toward remote work, necessitated by global events, has prompted organizations to reassess their strategies, emphasizing flexibility and recognizing the multifaceted nature of employee satisfaction and motivation. As organizations grapple with the advantages and challenges of remote work, a reevaluation of HRM practices becomes imperative.

Farzana Parveen Noor Ismawati Jaafar Sulaiman Ainin (2016) contributes to this narrative by emphasizing the transformative impact of social media on organizational performance. The study underscores the positive outcomes of social media usage, ranging from cost reduction to enhanced customer relations. Social media not only provides a platform for cost-effective marketing but also facilitates improved customer service and accessibility to crucial information about customers and competitors.

Kluemper et al.'s (2016) focus on the recruitment process brings attention to the evolving role of social media in personnel selection. The research identifies social networking platforms as essential tools for employee selection, enabling employers to gauge a candidate's cultural fit and influencing recruitment decisions. The study points out the benefits and risks associated with using social media in personnel selection, highlighting the need for a nuanced approach that considers both performance improvement and potential privacy concerns.

Holland and Jeske (2017) contribute a conceptual exploration, shedding light on the changing dynamics of social media in recruitment and selection. They emphasize the imperative for ethical, legal, and moral frameworks to guide HR specialists through the challenges arising from the intersection of social media and HRM. The chapter underscores the need for increased education and awareness, providing a foundation for future research endeavors to address the ethical considerations and information management challenges inherent in this evolving landscape.

In synthesis, this review showcases the diverse insights provided by scholars in exploring the intricate relationship between social media, HRM, and organizational performance. From the transformative potential of social media in event communications to the nuanced strategies in talent management, each study contributes a layer to the evolving narrative of organizational adaptation in the digital age. As organizations navigate this intersection, the challenge lies not only in harnessing the benefits but also in addressing the ethical, legal, and strategic considerations that accompany the integration of social media into HRM practices.

Rationale of the Study

This research is motivated by the requirement to systematically look at the complex relationships between social media marketing and human resource management. Research on the distinct effects of Social media marketing and human resource management on the organization, with their evolving dimensions, has increased, but there is a gap regarding the interactive effect of these variables, that guided this investigation. By elucidating the complex interactions between tactics, obstacles, and—above all—the measurable influence on the overall performance of the organisation, this study aims to close this gap.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

- To conduct a thorough analysis of the various social media marketing tactics that are used by the businesses.

- To identify the ways in which HRM strategies can be aligned with and enhanced by the integration of social media marketing strategies.
- To evaluate the difficulties businesses face in integrating HRM with social media marketing, as well as the effects this has on business performance.

Significance of the Study

This study has various significant impacts for different users. There are important ramifications of this research for academics, practitioners, and policymakers. Understanding the complex correlation between social media marketing and human resource management will enable enterprises to enhance their methodologies, cultivating a more adaptable and agile strategy towards the modern corporate environment. Furthermore, the study's conclusions can benefit academia by strengthening the theoretical foundations of HRM and SMM.

Research Methodology

This study uses a systematic literature review design. Electronic databases, academic journals, and reliable conference proceedings were used to find pertinent content. "Social Media Marketing," "Human Resource Management," "SMM strategies," "HRM and organisational performance," and associated terms are some of the keywords and phrases that were used. 50 research papers in all that have been published in Taylor and Francis, Emerald Insights, Science Direct, EBSCO, peer-reviewed journals, scopus indexed journals, web of sciences journals and credible books in the past two decade (2003-2023) have been used for the purpose of this study.

Discussions

The papers by Holland & Jeske (2017), Hosain (2021), L'Écuyer & Pelletier (2020), Holland et.al. (2016), and Azim (2016) collectively illuminate the transformative potential and intricate challenges associated with integrating social media marketing into Human Resource Management (HRM) practices. This discussion encapsulates the diverse insights offered by these studies, addressing the evolving role of social media in recruitment, the utilization of social media information in HRM practices, patterns in social media use for recruitment in SMEs, the positive relationships between social media use and job satisfaction, and the potential of HR 2.0 in driving sustainable business success.

Evolving Role in Recruitment:

Holland & Jeske's (2017) conceptual exploration underscores the evolving role of social media in recruitment and selection. While acknowledging the benefits, they emphasize the need for robust ethical, legal, and moral frameworks. This echoes the sentiment of adapting to new boundaries and information management challenges. As organizations

increasingly leverage social media for recruitment, ensuring ethical practices and legal compliance becomes paramount.

Utilization of Social Media Information:

Hosain's (2021) study provides a comprehensive overview of the current landscape, emphasizing the increasing use of social media information in HRM practices. Notably, the focus is primarily on talent search, recruitment, and selection. The dominance of Facebook and LinkedIn in providing behavioral and job-related information, respectively, highlights the need for organizations to strategically align their recruitment efforts with the platforms that offer the most relevant insights.

Patterns in Social Media Use for Recruitment in SMEs:

L'Écuyer & Pelletier's (2020) examination of social media use in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) sheds light on distinct patterns. The findings reveal that social media is not the primary choice for recruitment, lacks structure, mirrors personal use, and involves marketing professionals in recruitment practices. Recognizing these patterns is crucial for SMEs, as they grapple with social media capabilities, knowledge gaps, and skill deficiencies in recruitment.

Smart Social Media Use for HRM:

Contrary to the often-discussed negative aspects of social media, Holland et.al. (2016) take a constructive approach, examining the relationships between social media use and job satisfaction. The study reveals that while job satisfaction influences the desire to voice concerns through social media, such expression is not common. This suggests untapped potential for organizations to gain real-time insights into workplace issues, emphasizing the smart and constructive use of social media in HRM.

HR 2.0 and Sustainable Business Success:

Azim's (2016) exploration of HR 2.0 aligns Web 2.0 tools with HR functions, envisioning a collaborative approach for sustainable business success. The paper recognizes the challenges posed by the integration of Web 2.0 tools, such as information management and potential conflicts. However, it underscores that transforming organizational culture can mitigate these risks. This conceptualization aligns with the idea that the effective integration of social media marketing strategies into HRM practices requires a cultural shift within organizations.

Challenges in Integration:

The challenges inherent in integrating social media marketing strategies into HRM practices are multifaceted. From maintaining privacy and compliance with regulations to managing reputational risks and employee resistance, organizations face a complex landscape. The need for a delicate balance between professionalism and authenticity, ensuring inclusivity, and addressing cybersecurity concerns underscores the

complexity of this integration. Moreover, measuring the return on investment (ROI) and effectiveness, crisis management, employee training, and resource allocation emerge as critical hurdles.

Conclusion

In the digital era, the symbiotic relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Human Resource Management (HRM) stands as a cornerstone for organizational success. This research paper has unraveled the complexities, strategies, challenges, and impact of integrating social media into HRM practices. The synthesis of existing literature underscores the pivotal role that a harmonious convergence of these two domains plays in shaping the future of work. Our exploration into the strategies employed for integration revealed the multifaceted nature of leveraging social media for talent acquisition, employee engagement, and employer branding. Organizations are crafting innovative approaches to recruitment, tapping into the interactive nature of social platforms to create a compelling narrative that attracts top-tier talent. Moreover, employee engagement strategies, including employee advocacy programs, showcase the power of social media in fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. However, the journey is not without challenges. The paper delved into the intricacies of maintaining privacy, ensuring legal compliance, and overcoming employee resistance. As organizations navigate these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the need for a delicate balance between transparency and safeguarding sensitive information. The impact on organizational performance is evident across various dimensions. From streamlined recruitment processes to heightened employee satisfaction and retention, the integration of SMM and HRM emerges as a catalyst for positive change. Social media's role in crisis management and building a resilient employer brand demonstrates its far-reaching influence on organizational reputation. As we conclude, it is evident that the integration of social media marketing strategies with HRM practices is not a mere trend but a transformative force shaping the future of organizational dynamics. This synthesis invites organizations to adopt a strategic, adaptive, and ethical approach to navigate the evolving landscape successfully. As we gaze into the horizon of possibilities, it becomes clear that the synergy between SMM and HRM is not just a contemporary necessity but a foundational element for thriving in the digital age. The findings of this research offer valuable insights for practitioners and scholars alike, paving the way for continued exploration and innovation in this dynamic intersection.

Scope for Future Research

The possible potential for future directions for research and practice in this domain:

- Future research could explore how advanced data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance the integration of SMM and HRM. This includes using AI for talent analytics, predictive hiring,

and personalized employee experiences based on social media data.

- Investigating the application of blockchain technology in HR processes facilitated by social media. This could include secure and transparent verification of credentials, streamlined recruitment processes, and enhanced data privacy.
- Examining the role of social media in promoting employee well-being and mental health. Future studies could explore how organizations can leverage social platforms to provide mental health resources, foster supportive communities, and address the challenges of remote work.
- Future research might focus on how social media can be utilized to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within organizations. This includes strategies for promoting a more inclusive employer brand, reaching diverse talent pools, and fostering inclusive communities.
- Exploring effective strategies for organizations to manage HR-related crises on social media platforms. This includes developing real-time response mechanisms, crisis communication plans, and leveraging social media for reputation repair.
- Investigating the impact of social media on global talent acquisition strategies. Future research could explore how organizations attract and retain international talent, considering cultural nuances and the use of social media in different global contexts.
- Examining how employee advocacy programs on social media can be optimized in the context of remote work. This includes strategies for maintaining a sense of connectedness, promoting organizational culture, and encouraging virtual employee advocacy.
- Research exploring the benefits and challenges of increased collaboration between HR and other departments, such as marketing, IT, and data analytics, to maximize the impact of social media strategies on HRM.
- Future studies may delve into the ethical implications of using social media in HRM practices. This includes issues related to data privacy, consent, and ensuring fair and unbiased decision-making in recruitment and employee management.
- Investigating innovative ways to use social media for continuous learning and development. This could involve the integration of virtual reality, gamification, and social learning platforms to enhance employee skills and knowledge.

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Sustainability as a marketing tool. What can Albanian businesses learn?

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Abstract: In today's modern times, where necessity to combat climate changes and depletion of natural resources are two of the most discussed global issues, sustainability is no longer an option. The conventional idea of businesses causing social and environmental problems by pursuing their profit-oriented activity is no longer viable. Businesses nowadays not only have to change the way they see themselves, but also the way stakeholders perceive them, moving from being the cause to being the solution of the problem. The new thinking is that businesses can create shared value through meeting social and environmental needs. The concept of sustainable marketing is becoming one of the key business strategies for companies. Realizing the importance of people's concern for environmental issues and preference for consuming environmentally friendly products and services, companies are trying to take advantage of this when designing their strategies in order to gain competitive advantage. Albanian companies are still in their early steps of implementing sustainability strategies and they are mainly driven by institutional factors. The paper aims to carry out a desk research of the literature and best practices regarding the issue of sustainability as a marketing tool. The discussion aims to bring insight of the main theoretical perspectives, adopted to the context of Albanian companies.

Key words: sustainability, marketing, business, competitive advantage, customers

JEL: M31, Q01, Q56

Introduction

The nexus between sustainability and marketing has emerged as an important area of research. In a globalized economy, characterized by higher environmental and social awareness, the intersection of corporate practices with ecological and social considerations has become a main point for strategic management. This study seeks to explore the dynamic interplay between sustainability and marketing, specifically examining its relevance as a strategic tool for businesses.

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The imperative for businesses to adopt sustainable practices has evolved into a strategic obligation that shapes consumer and investors' perceptions, and the overall organizational resilience. As the Albanian business landscape is mapping its trajectory in a globalized marketplace, the need to understand and integrate sustainability as a viable marketing tool becomes increasingly critical. This paper tries to contribute to the academic discourse by analyzing theoretical frameworks, and practical insights to illustrate the strategic dimensions of sustainability in the marketing field.

In this era of heightened environmental awareness, consumers are demanding more than just quality products or services—they are seeking a commitment to sustainable practices and a genuine dedication to positive social impact. As a result, marketing strategies that emphasize sustainability not only contribute to a company's bottom line but also try to answer the needs of the growing segment of eco-conscious consumers. From eco-friendly product packaging to transparent supply chain practices, businesses are finding innovative ways to weave sustainability into their narratives. This approach not only addresses the concerns of environmentally conscious consumers but also requires a broader cultural shift toward responsible and ethical consumption.

Promoting environmentally responsible business practices requires the incorporation of sustainability across all aspects of the production process; including packaging, distribution, and promotion. This involves adopting manufacturing methods that minimize ecological impact, using eco-friendly materials for packaging, optimizing distribution channels to lower carbon footprints, and promoting products or services in ways that adhere to sustainable principles. By seamlessly integrating sustainability into every stage of the business cycle, organizations can actively contribute to environmental conservation and address the increasing call for socially and ecologically conscious approaches.

Literature review

The origin of the term sustainability is linked with sustainable development, a term which gained momentum into the political agenda of countries in the report called "Our Common Future", 1987. Sustainable development was defined as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, 1987). Since then, the terms have been widely used and there has been an increase of work in the academic context. This definition is considered vague and unclear, because it does not offer instructions by which the term can be operationalized in the business context and moreover it is difficult to decide today what is considered to be best for future generations (Ben-Eli, 2018). Despite the criticism, the definition remains today one of the most cited regarding sustainable development and has served as a basis for other definitions to emerge.

There is no general agreed definition of the concept and there have been continuous attempts to provide definitions of the term, because

sustainability is a multidisciplinary concept, so one definition cannot be appropriate in every context. The terms sustainable development or sustainability have been used to mean different things in different contexts. As a result, it is necessary to clearly define the discipline and the context of the discussion of the term in order to better understand the essence and implications related to the concept.

According to (Mensah & Casadevall, 2019), the fundamental essence of sustainable development revolves around achieving fairness within and between generations, grounded in three distinct interconnected dimensions: the environment, economy, and society. The concept of three sustainability pillars is encountered almost everywhere. This triple relationship was first illustrated by (Barbier, 1987), through a diagram, where sustainable development is placed at the intersection between the biological system, the economic system and the social system. The Earth limited capacity and finite resources are two of the main issues that stay at the roots of sustainability. (Ben-Eli, 2018) perceives sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium within the interaction between a growing population and the carrying capacity of its environment. In this perspective, sustainability is achieved when the population evolves to express its complete potential without causing irreversible negative impacts on the environment's carrying capacity.

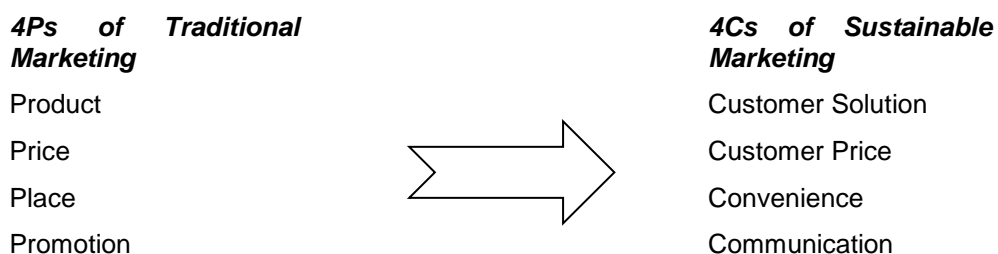
The intersection of sustainability and marketing has emerged as an important point in contemporary business literature, reflecting a paradigm shift where economic, environmental, and societal considerations. As consumers become increasingly conscious about the environmental and social impact of their choices, businesses are compelled to reassess their strategies, adopting sustainable practices that resonate with the values of their stakeholders. The academic discourse surrounding sustainability in marketing has evolved to address this dynamic landscape, exploring the multifaceted dimensions of how businesses integrate sustainability into their marketing initiatives.

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholars primarily investigated sustainability issues through an environmental perspective, concentrating on aspects like environmental considerations in the development of new products. Drucker was one of the first scholars in marketing that discussed about the sustainability concepts in marketing, even though by not using the specific term. He supported the idea that firms must operate in a way that creates positive value for the society and gives management the responsibility to take actions that contribute to the stability, strength, and harmony of the community (Drucker, 1995). (Elkington, 1997) argues that sustainable marketing activities should include three elements: economic, social, and environmental. Initially, sustainability was studied in the marketing field from an environmental perspective, taking forms of environmental activism behavior, green marketing or eco performance (Lunde, 2018). Later there has been an increase in the studies which give insights about sustainability in marketing from an overall perspective. According to (Lunde, 2018), the Brundtland Commission definition does not connect marketing with its function of the exchange of value and provides

limited assistance in outlining the responsibilities of consumers, businesses, and marketplaces in minimizing environmental harm. In order to avoid these problems, (Lunde, 2018) proposes a new definition: *“Sustainable marketing is the strategic creation, communication, delivery and exchange of offerings that produce value through consumptions behaviors, business practices and the marketplace, while lowering harm to the environment and ethically and equitably increasing quality of life and well being of consumers and global stakeholders, presently and for future generations”*.

(Fuller, 1999) explains that sustainable marketing practises have to meet three criteria: satisfying customer needs, achieving organizational goals, and ensuring compatibility with ecosystems. (Belz & Peattie, 2009) suggested that sustainability marketing requires a long-term focus on relationship building, rather than the traditional short-term transactional focus of modern marketing. They propose a model which integrates traditional forms of marketing into sustainable marketing. According to (Krunal, Pooja, & Vandana, 2018), environmental marketing, green marketing, and societal marketing are variations of sustainable marketing. These marketing strategies involve businesses progressing responsibly without depleting the environment while meeting the needs of both current and future generations.

Consumers stand at the center of any marketing activity. According to (Fischer, et al., 2023), there is a growing consumer preference for sustainable products and services. The significance of environmentally friendly products and production methods is increasing in the fields of customer relationship management, market expansion, and brand development. Successful sustainable marketing involves anticipating the future, addressing societal and environmental challenges, and creating new business models that generate value for both society and shareholders. Innovative marketing concepts play a key role in consistently innovating the value creation process in alignment with the overall business strategy. There is a shift in the 4Ps of traditional marketing into 4Cs of sustainable marketing (Belz & Peattie, 2009) as follows:



Source: (Belz & Peattie, 2009)

In the process of promoting sustainability to customers, companies are obligated to ensure the delivery of value at the organizational level. According to (Mittelstaed, Shultz, & Peterson, 2014) it is imperative that firms and their workforce recognize the inherent value in adopting sustainable practices, encompassing aspects such as business operations,

community engagement, environmentally friendly strategies, and the marketing of sustainable products and services.

The benefits of pursuing sustainability marketing practises are perceived to be brand differentiation, brand loyalty and increased customer retention. Companies that implement sustainable marketing practises perform better than their competitors. Their sustainability marketing practises can be used as a sustainable competitive advantage to achieve improved organizational performance in line with the resource-based view theory of firms (Hart, 1995). In the marketing context firms can create differentiation by sustainability practices in production process, packaging, distribution and promotion (Martin & Schouten, 2014). Moreover, customers feel appreciated when the company engages in responsible forms of marketing. This helps in the creation of brand loyalty and the company is able to retain a wider base of customers.

Methodology

The methodology of this paper is qualitative and involves an in-depth exploration of existing literature on sustainable marketing, followed with a contextual analysis of the current state of sustainability practices within the Albanian business landscape. Primary data for the study has been collected through interviews with managers or professionals who are directly involved in marketing and have experience with sustainability initiatives, selected based on their expertise in the field of sustainability. The use of open questions provides a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in implementing and promoting sustainability within marketing strategies. The questions cover topics related to sustainability integration into the business strategy, such as company approach to sustainability, changes and impact on consumer behavior, challenges and opportunities for the industry and future trends and reflections.

Recognizing the novelty of this field in Albania and the lack of company published reports about sustainability matters in general or regarding specific subfields within a business, the decision to conduct interviews with managers in the exploration of sustainability as a marketing tool was a strategic approach. Managers, as key decision-makers within companies, play a critical role in shaping and implementing sustainability strategies. Their perspectives would provide valuable depth and context to the study, offering a view into the organizational dynamics, decision-making processes, and the integration of sustainability within marketing strategies.

Moreover, the analysis of the responses and insights of professionals in the relationship between sustainability in general and sustainability in marketing, and the wide contextual information for the country served as a basis for conducting a SWOT analysis. This analysis helps to identify internal and external factors influencing the adoption of sustainable marketing practices in Albania. The findings are then synthesized to provide tailored recommendations for Albanian businesses, considering potential societal and economic benefits of integrating sustainability into their strategic planning and marketing activities. Moreover, customers feel appreciated when the company engages in

responsible forms of marketing. This helps in the creation of brand loyalty and the company is able to retain a wider base of customers.

Results and discussion

After gathering and analyzing the responses from the interviews performed, below are given some of the main points derived from the interview answers. Results come in these dimensions:

1. Awareness

Albanian market is an evolving and growing market in the field of sustainability developments. Businesses are still in their early stages of growing awareness for sustainability benefits and implementation. Some of the respondents acknowledged that sustainability should not be perceived just as a moral obligation but also should be incorporated as an integral part of the core business strategy, in order for it to be successful. There is a considerate level of awareness in the only in individuals being engaged in managerial positions.

2. Challenges and Barriers

Interviewees commonly cited challenges associated with resource constraints, both in terms of finances and expertise, as significant barriers to the effective implementation of sustainable marketing practices.

Another challenge identified is the lack of standardized metrics and guidelines for measuring the impact of sustainability initiatives posed a challenge for companies striving to communicate their efforts transparently.

3. Consumer Education and Perception

Companies emphasized the need for increased consumer education on sustainability to bridge the gap between their efforts and customer understanding.

4. Innovative Marketing Strategies

Companies shared innovative approaches to sustainable marketing, such as involving digital platforms, storytelling, and partnerships to communicate their commitment to sustainability.

Some interviewees explored collaborations with other similar organizations to amplify the impact of their sustainability messages.

5. Employee Engagement

The role of employees emerged as crucial in driving sustainable marketing initiatives. Companies recognized the need to foster a culture of sustainability internally to effectively communicate their values externally.

Training programs and internal communication strategies were identified as key tools for aligning employees with the company's sustainability goals

6. Most commonly used sustainability marketing practices

Green Product Labelling: Using eco-labeling and certifications to highlight the environmental benefits of their products and help consumers make informed choices based on the sustainability attributes of the items.

Eco Friendly packaging: The use of sustainable packaging solutions, including reduced packaging, use of recycled materials, and biodegradable options, in order to minimize the environmental impact of product packaging.

7. Innovative Marketing Campaigns

The use of innovative marketing campaigns centered around sustainability, storytelling, and the social and environmental impact are used to communicate what the company has done in relation to sustainability and which are the brand's values.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis categorizes crucial information into two primary domains, as outlined by (Brilhante & Skinner, 2015):

- Internal factors, representing strengths and weaknesses, encompass all aspects of the 4 P's: product, price, placement/distribution, and promotion.
- External factors, capturing opportunities and threats, which stem from various external elements such as demographic, economic, technological, political, legal, social, and cultural factors.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis for sustainability marketing development

<p>S - Strengths Growing Consumer Awareness Rich natural resources and biodiversity Strong customers connections</p>	<p>W - Weaknesses Limited Customers Education Resistance to change Insufficient infrastructure Weak innovation and research capabilities Difficulties in measuring their sustainability impact and communicating it to customers Inconsistent or missing industry standards for sustainability Limited availability of marketing professionals with expertise in sustainability Hesitation to integrate sustainability in marketing practices due to concerns about the potential resource and time investments.</p>
<p>O - Opportunities Access to global markets Partnerships and collaborations The emergences of sustainable innovations Opportunities to attract funding related to their sustainability goals.</p>	<p>T - Threats Competition Consumer Skepticism</p>

Source: Author illustration

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study conducted a desk research of existing literature in relation with the identification of theoretical frameworks of the

application of sustainability in the marketing domain. The main findings from the literature were used in order to make an assessment and comparison of the main theoretical findings with the actual situation of businesses operating in Albania. Interviews with companies to gain firsthand insights into their practices and perspectives were used. The findings underscore the significance of sustainable marketing strategies as integral components of business operations. Through the results of these interviews, it becomes evident that Albanian companies are merely embracing sustainability as a marketing tools due to institutional factors, rather than recognizing it as a fundamental and strategic imperative. In this context, there is a lot of work to be towards the incorporation of environmentally and socially responsible marketing practices in business leader's mindset. These practices should be seen not only as a response to consumer or legal demands but also as a driver for innovation, competitive advantage, and long-term improved financial performance. The interviews unveiled diverse approaches and challenges. The shared experiences provide a foundation for refining existing frameworks and shaping future discourse on the evolving role of sustainability in the marketing domain.

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Digital Marketing in the Bulgarian Tour Operator Market

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Abstract: Marketing is one of the most crucial tools in any business, organization, and institution, and it takes on an increasingly central role in managing a specific company. It helps the company gain greater visibility, recognition, and trust from customers and partners. The role of marketing, especially digital marketing, was further strengthened during the Covid-19 crisis. Thanks to their digital presence, businesses and organizations demonstrated that they were still operating and, in this way, stayed connected with their customers and gained more trust. At the time of the pandemic, one of the most affected sectors was the entire tourism industry. All travel companies suspended their physical operations, but the pandemic situation and the right marketing decisions, mainly involving the use of new technologies, a strong presence on social media, and the development of value propositions tailored to their customers' needs, were at the core of the recovery of the tourism industry after this unprecedented crisis. This is why, to effectively implement marketing, a good theoretical understanding is necessary, along with building a theoretical framework for tour operator agencies, understanding their specifics and characteristics.

Key words: Digital Marketing, Tour Operator, Market, Technologies, Business

JEL: A11; A13; M2; M3; L83

Introduction

In this report, we will develop a business model and value proposition canvas for the travel agency Mistral Travel. Secondly, we will construct a marketing plan proposal for positioning Mistral Travel in the digital environment. Thirdly, we will explore best practices from the marketing of travel and tour operator agencies and derive specific marketing proposals for Mistral Travel.

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Furthermore, to test whether these assumptions work, we can test them through the behavior of other companies in the industry worldwide, through our competitors, or through testing them on a small scale, while digital channels indicate the actual strengths and weaknesses of the company. To simplify, defining the business model can be achieved by perceiving it as a value-added model for a business, with the focus on the customer and what exactly adds value. The business model includes various elements, and for a clearer and more comprehensive delineation of key points for Mistral Travel, a business canvas will be used, creating an overall picture of assumptions that would bring profit.

It is characteristic that its completion always starts from the user segment, defining a specific target. The key questions asked to distinguish the specific target audience are who we create value for and who are our most important customers. Then comes the determination of the value proposition, which should provide some benefit or alleviate specific pain. The subsequent stage in the business canvas is the way customer relationships will develop and through which channels. Once we know what value we give to whom, it's time to determine the revenue sources, as well as the key activities and resources, partners, and last but not least, the cost structure. Each element influences the others, with consumer segments and the value proposition leading.

The development of the shared consumption also determines the restructuring of the tourist market and imposes changes in the demand for tourist products. Result of the opportunities it provides is the emergence of unpredictability of the consumer's behavior - tourists are looking for a new type of product to be matched to their individual needs. Opportunities to improve the relationship between the end-user and others, involved in creating the travel package, as well as offering new and diverse tourist products, are presented as a way to respond to current demand changes. New trends in touristic behavior and expectations, related to the digital economy lead to digital marketing and promotion, but also are an environment for capacity building and product development (Ianeva, Georgieva, 2018).

Developing a business model and value proposition for Mistral Travel

Authors will construct a proposal for a business model, value proposition, and positioning that would likely lead to even more successful results. The business model is the way a specific business plans to make money (Course Marketing Basic, 2022), incorporating assumptions about what a company receives revenues for, what it will and will not do, assumptions about markets, customers, and competitors, their values and behavior, as well as technologies, while outlining strengths and weaknesses (Drucker, 2011). It should be noted that these are simply assumptions that could be successful, not real data. To test whether they are successful, it is necessary to test, implement, and develop the business model. Thanks to digital marketing, this can happen more easily, simultaneously facilitating decision-making processes and result tracking.

The business channel is one of the elements of marketing that can greatly contribute to the even more successful positioning of Mistral Travel, as it provides a comprehensive picture, and through the step-by-step testing using digital marketing resources, it will be seen whether the risks and challenges are avoided and whether the target consumer segment is correctly identified. Clearly and visibly, competitive advantage is outlined, and whether there will be greater efficiency. As already evident, the foundation of the working business model is the value proposition, which can be tailored for different customer segments. The value proposition can be defined as the reasons and ways given to users to benefit from our products and services, which must be real (Course Marketing Basic, 2022).

In support of building a value proposition, questions arise - how important it is, why it is used, how it is used, and when. A strong value proposition must correspond to the idea that the customer wants it, needs it; differentiate it by emphasizing that there are no better alternatives and winning trust in its qualities, proving that it is proven good. In order to work, all stages - reasoning, differentiation, and proving, must be present. It is necessary to answer the question of whether the user or the proposal will be at the core of the marketing strategy, which will be used, as the approach itself will be different.

The main risks and challenges in attempting to build a value proposition are that it may not be targeted enough, undifferentiated based on availability, and may be biased. To avoid these risks, marketing practitioners use a value proposition channel, which the author of the thesis will use to build a strong value proposition for Mistral Travel.

One of the important and key things in this channel is user tasks and their specific target users and key activities. The description of Mistral Travel's target users: Bulgarian citizens or permanent residents in the country aged 18 to 55. Men and women, families, couples, and people from major cities such as Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, with above-average incomes for the country, who love travel, cultural heritage, adventures, sports, and activity. In addition, another key target group is corporate clients, with a desire to create a stronger community, combined with vacation and an affinity for more luxurious travel.

Key activities characterizing Mistral Travel's users are expressed in the love of travel and the search for new destinations, a desire to experience new emotions and communicate with people with similar interests (applies to corporate clients as well), having a relationship with cultural heritage and adventures.

After having established the business model and value proposition channel, the marketing positioning of Mistral Travel can be further refined. Although, as clarified by the analysis of the current marketing, the tour operator is already well-positioned, the author now proceeds to develop a marketing plan for Mistral Travel.

Developing a marketing plan for positioning in the digital environment of Mistral Travel

The marketing plan is a document that companies create when planning a specific task, project, or business. It outlines how they intend to achieve their marketing goals, thereby facilitating and managing their marketing efforts. It is an integral part of an organization's overall planning process, assisting in the management and proper allocation of resources and efforts within the company, making it easier to achieve set goals. The marketing plan consists of three main phases - analytical, conceptual, and detailed. In the first phase, data about the enterprise itself, competition, market potential, and target market segments are studied, while in the conceptual phase, target groups to be reached are selected, marketing goals are set, which must be clearly measurable, and a time and technological plan /marketing mix/ is determined. The marketing plan includes information about the offered products/services and their prices, information and analysis of competitors, the marketing budget, expected results, the target audience, and various channels for promotion and content (Bogdanov, 2020), while simultaneously answering questions such as: Where should the consumer reach, how to move them there, what is the time distribution, and what is the budget investment. Creating a specific marketing plan makes it easier to determine priorities and the plan for work and organization, while also making gaps in audiences and stages visible. Since digital marketing is of increasing importance and we have already analyzed the current state of Mistral Travel's marketing, these steps will be skipped here, and specific suggestions for regular marketing planning will be provided, such as an annual plan, quarterly plan, and monthly plan. The annual plan allows for identifying periods without active communication in the overall picture, while the quarterly plan most clearly distributes the work among the respective teams, and the monthly plan provides an opportunity to build details for active campaigns and regular content.

Considering that the Mistral Travel team is small and somewhat cross-functional, the Lean planning approach /"circular planning"/ will be used, where everything depends on previous results, operational planning occurs week by week, changes happen more easily, and it is suitable for regular and repeatable marketing activities. The annual plan (Table 1) the author proposes will be divided into four quarterly periods, starting in July 2022, with only digital activities included in the first quarter.

Table 1. The annual plan of the company Mistral Travel

Q 1	July 1-10	July 11-17	July 18-24	July 25-31	Aug 1-7	Aug 8-14	Aug 15-21	Aug 22-31	Sept. 1-11	Sept. 12-18	Sept. 19-25	Sept. 26-30
	Preparation	Promo Egypt and Tunisia			Preparation			Promo sept. holidays	6 sept. Day off		22 sept. Day off	
Q 2	Oct. 1-9	Oct. 10-16	Oct. 17-23	Oct. 24-31	Nov. 1-6	Nov. 7-13	Nov. 14-20	Nov. 21-30	Dec. 1-11	Dec. 12-18	Dec. 19-25	Dec. 26-30
	Preparation	Promo Christmas and			Preparat	Пром	Promo	Preparat	Exot	Holida		

			New Year			ion	o 8 dec.	o black friday	ion	ic	ys 24-27	
Q 3	Jan. 1-8	Jan. 9-15	Jan. 16-22	Jan. 23-31	Feb. 1-5	Feb. 6-12	Feb. 13-19	Feb. 20-28	March 1-5	March 6-12	March 13-19	March 20-31
	Preparation		Promo campaign for the start of the year and Early registration		Preparation	Last minute St. Valentine	Preparation		3 march Day off	Promo 8 march	Promo Easter holidays	Preparation
Q 4	Apr. 1-9	Apr. 10-16	Apr. 17-23	Apr. 24-30	May 1-7	May 8-14	May 15-21	May 22-31	June 1-11	June 12-18	June 19-25	June 26-30
	Promo May Holidays	Easter Holidays			1 и 6 may Holidays	Preparation	Summer 2023	24 may Day off	Preparation			20 years Mistral Travel

Source: Autor Systematization

After constructing this annual marketing plan, it is evident that there are almost no 'dead periods' concerning the establishment of Mistral Travel's digital presence, except for periods with more days off in April, May, and September. With proper task distribution within the team and adhering closely to its logic, high results could be achieved, fulfilling Mistral Travel's marketing objectives.

Best Practices from the Marketing of Tourist and Tour Operator Agencies and Specific Proposals for Mistral Travel

With the advent of Covid-19, digitization has become an increasingly essential tool and has begun to occupy a significant place in marketing planning for business sustainability. This includes the need for tourism-related activities to adapt to the new changed conditions. Tourism is among the leading industries in utilizing digital technologies to maintain better relationships with customers and professional communication among employees in travel companies (Kazandzhieva, 2021). Additionally, we can add that due to the digitization of tourism, the profile of the tourist is changing to some extent, achieving greater transparency, efficiency, and regularity of activities. The implementation of new technologies and monitoring and utilization of digitization trends ensure greater competitiveness of tourism enterprises, among which tour operators play a crucial role. This is why they are increasingly entering the marketing spotlight.

Here, we will present good practices from the digitization of tour operators' activities. Currently, by examining the websites and social media of tourist operators and agencies in Bulgaria, it is noticeable that their digitization efforts are mainly focused on social media marketing. Scholars have found that the positive impact on the potential of digitization in the tourism industry is due to factors such as the 'sharing economy,' 'personalized offers,' 'increased sales and social media' (Osondu, 2018).

Some of these factors have been embraced by tour operators and are successfully being implemented.

Let's start by showcasing several activities of different tourist operators in Bulgaria, which were undertaken during the complete closure of the world for tourism but kept them close to their customers. With the reopening of borders for travel, they are now operating at pre-pandemic levels.

One of the good practices discovered was from the tour operator Zapryanov Travel Ltd, whose team conducted virtual excursions every Thursday for 15-30 minutes, virtually presenting their real routes and visits to landmarks. This sparked enormous interest from people who visibly became more active on their page, leading to increased communication between users and the tour operator. To this day, Zapryanov continues to share pictures from their current travels, demonstrating the current situation and normalizing travel to their selected destinations.

A similar practice, but in the form of Instagram Stories, was also implemented by Mistral Travel and Events (the main object of the study). They transported their followers to Ancient Egypt through videos with images and narrations. Mistral Travel successfully engaged their audience and digitized their activities by offering useful, educational, and entertaining quizzes to their followers, providing discounts as rewards. Another good practice for Mistral Travel remains sharing videos and stories on Instagram, demonstrating the real-time experiences of their clients, sparking a desire to travel with them. One of the best practices regarding social media presence stands out at Mistral Travel, where they create interest-based groups and offer fun games with rewards and special offers in these groups.

Another good practice from Mistral Travel towards its clients involves conducting survey research after each trip. The company's marketing strategy includes conducting surveys regarding attitudes, expectations about travel, and desired destinations.

Rhapsody Travel, another tour operator, stands out with a notable practice. They organized a large travel quiz on quiz.com during the first lockdown. Another practice employed by the same tour operator during Covid-19 was a segment called 'Stay at Home During Corona,' where their followers had the opportunity, in separate episodes, to get acquainted with the tour guides and office employees of the company. They used various formats, such as quick interviews between them or answering pre-set questions from users. Last but not least, a commendable practice includes the publication of memories and photos from people who have traveled with them.

Some of the best practices in the digitization of tourism and marketing can be found in the social media management of an Italian tour operator, WeRoad. This tour operator stands out not only with innovative and creative presence on social media but is also one of the pioneers directing efforts towards comprehensive digitization of its activities, currently even preparing for the first journey into the Metaverse.

The successful digital management of social media by the Italian tour operator is evidenced by the fact that it has 535,000 followers on Instagram and 472,648 followers on Facebook. They also effectively use Telegram, where they have over 10,000 users. The tour operator successfully communicates with its users, encouraging each of them to become a member of their various communication channels because different information is offered everywhere. In the Telegram group, they share hidden discount codes for their trips and provide information about upcoming events for meetings in Italy, called AperiRoad. In this group, they also use video messages to provide the latest information on restrictions for specific destinations and gauge the attitudes of group members through their reactions and comments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can deduce that the future of tourism is increasingly shaping up to be in a digital environment, and concurrently, digital marketing will be of growing significance. Swift and timely adaptation can ensure greater competitiveness and market sustainability. Best practices can serve as a solid foundation for a more effective and efficient harnessing of the digitalization potential in the Bulgarian tourism sector, where Mistral Travel has various opportunities to take leading positions among tour operators, given the right direction in which its marketing is moving.

The use of marketing research, the development of a business model, value proposition, and marketing plans contribute to a quicker adaptation to changing consumer needs and external factors. Best practices identified among competitors can serve as a solid foundation for a more effective and efficient harnessing of the digitalization potential in the Bulgarian tourism sector. For Mistral Travel, numerous opportunities to secure leading positions among tour operators emerge, given the right direction in which its marketing is progressing.

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Digital Distribution Channels in Tourism Industry: A Study on the Bulgarian Customers' Preferences

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Abstract: The paper presents the Digital Marketing Channels for distribution of the tourism product, based on a study of customers' preferences at the Bulgarian market. The analysis of the customers' preferences about the tourism product distribution channels incorporates the questions: where do the Bulgarian tourists acquire information about the offers when deciding on a destination, an accommodation and a type of transport; what are their motives for choosing a tourism product; which are the main characteristics (geographic, demographic, socio-economic, geodemographic and psychographic) of Bulgarian customers that influence the decision-making process and how they complete the process of booking tourism services. In that context, a survey was done on a sample size of 1000 respondents, to identify the specific types of digital distribution channels which are preferred by the Bulgarian customers with reference to the reservation of internal tourism products and international tourism products.

Key words: distribution channels, tourism products, digitalization

JEL: M31, L81, L83

Introduction

An analysis of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recognized tourism as a major engine of economic recovery and expansion. Furthermore, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) most recent assessment of tourism flows precedes the IMF's outlook. International travel is expected to return to between 80% and 95% of pre-pandemic levels by 2023 and the UNWTO forecasts for September–December 2023 indicate that the economy will continue to improve (IMF, 2023). The According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Tourism (OECD) data tourism is a significant employer and source of revenue for Bulgarian economy. In 2019, about 236 300 people were employed in the tourism industry. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic's effects, this decreased by 41 700 individuals, to roughly 194 600 in 2020. Typically, the Bulgarian tourism industry was driven by foreign travel. In 2019, 12.6 million foreign visitors brought in BGN 8.5 billion, or 88.2% of

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the total amount spent on tourism, while the same year the number of domestic tourists hit a record of 4.1 million. Domestic tourism rebounded in 2021 with 9.6 million domestic nights across all lodging types after a notable downturn in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. But nevertheless, the industry's overall GDP contribution will likely take longer to recover, reaching pre-pandemic levels by 2025–2027 (OECD, 2022).

The highly competitive tourism industry faces several global challenges related to geopolitical uncertainty and economic instability. That raises the question of tourism distribution channels' effectiveness. There is a steady trend of developing and expanding the global online travel market that in turn creates several risks and opportunities for customers (tourists), intermediaries (tour operators and travel agencies) and tourism service providers (hotels, airlines, transport companies, etc.). The tourism industry led the introduction of digital distribution channels, due to the ease of overcoming geographical boundaries when selling tourism products and due to the widespread usage of e-tickets. Moreover, the number of travel agencies worldwide has declined due to the reduction, and in many cases, the complete elimination of the commissions paid to them by the services providers and especially by the airlines. Along with that instead of the process of intermediary elimination – reducing the number of the intermediaries in tourism product distribution the process of re-intermediation has been observed, because new types of intermediaries, referred as cybermediaries or e-intermediaries, entered the tourism distribution system (Aamir, 2020).

Highlighting the importance of the tourism industry for Bulgarian economy the following paper examines customers' preferences on the digital marketing channels for increasing the revenue generated by the industry.

Literature review

Distribution contributes to the competitiveness of the tourism business and affects the other elements of the marketing mix, while at the same time affecting the profitability of the participants in the tourism distribution channel. Buhalis (2001:8) defines the main distribution functions in the tourism industry as: "information services, travel combination and arrangement services. Therefore, most distribution channels provide information to prospective tourists, integrate tourism products, and establish mechanisms that allow consumers to make, confirm, and pay for reservations." Middleton and Clarke (2001) add that the main functions of distribution are to expand the number of points of sale or to provide remote access to services, and to enable the purchase of products before their production. Although a number of scholars are focusing their research on distribution channels in tourism, the literature continues to reveal numerous gaps. In their 2005 study, Pearce and Schott note that the focus is mainly on supply-side issues, which examine the relationship between tourism product suppliers, intermediaries (e.g. travel agencies, inbound and outbound tour operators, etc.) and their efforts to reaching end customers (O'Connor, 1999; Buhalis, 2001; Alcázar Martínez, 2002; Crotts, Aziz &

Raschid, 1998; García-Falcón & Medina-Muñoz, 1999). Far less attention has been paid to consumers and how they perceive and use different distribution channels (Öörni, 2003; Wolfe, Hsu & Kang, 2004).

Pearce and Schott (2005) emphasize that research on distribution channels in tourism should be further linked to research on demand. Pearce (2009) calls for suppliers to focus on the consumer, taking into account customer requirements in terms of distribution. It is necessary to study consumer behavior during the process of searching for information, booking and paying for travel products in order to build effective distribution channels in a market that is becoming more and more competitive.

Distribution occupies a large share of the enterprises' costs, and their competitiveness largely depends on its optimization (Katrandzhiev, 2013). The traditional supply chain in tourism is an integrated system of various participants - producers and marketing intermediaries, including airlines, computer reservation systems and travel agencies whose activities are interconnected (Ivanov, 2013). In this case, if an airline sells a seat on a plane, all other participants in the chain also generate income. But the advent of online travel is creating new business models that are completely changing the relationships between key players in the tourism supply chain. They are becoming less and less interdependent and more and more competitive with each other.

Distribution channels in tourism are a system of intermediaries that facilitate the sale and delivery of tourism services from producers to end consumers (Buhalis, 2001). More precisely, they are part of the marketing mix that makes tourism products accessible to consumers. The structure of the distribution system in the travel industry not only affects the alternatives available to consumers, but it also affects the business models and marketing strategies applied by individual actors in the distribution channel. The impact of information technology since the advent of the World Wide Web has led to significant changes and completely transformed the structure of distribution channels in tourism (Pearce, 2004). This evolution and transformation, especially under the influence of information and communication technologies, expands the possibilities of consumer choice, intensifies competition regarding the participants in the distribution channel and increases the complexity of the structure of the tourism industry. The development of information and communication technologies has transformed the distribution channels in tourism in several directions:

- Increasing the levels of distribution channels.
- Exclusion of some of the intermediaries from the distribution channel, i.e., bypassing traditional intermediaries, due to the possibility of direct communication between suppliers of tourism products and consumers, provided by ICT.
- Reintermediation of existing participants in the distribution channel, which is a process of adaptation to changes in the market environment and the introduction of new technologies that provide added value to intermediary services (Buhalis, 2004).

While this technologically induced structural change offers more choices to consumers, it also creates an environment of fierce competition

among distribution channel participants. In this regard, the current research focuses on the development of the structure of the distribution channels in tourism, the systematic and diagnostic analysis of the progressively increasing number of intermediary levels, as well as on the processes of exclusion and re-intermediation of some of the participants in the distribution channels.

The analysis of World Travel and Tourism Council report on the consumer travel trends in 2022 illustrates that a decade of constant growth for the travel and tourism industry came to an end in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The industry's overall GDP contribution decreased by nearly \$4.9 trillion and more than 62 million people lost their jobs. The recovery came in 2021 when the Travel and Tourism Industry's contribution to the global economy increased by 21.7% and 18.2 million jobs were created. Moreover, in 2022, there was a significant increase in demand for international travel, the number of international arrivals was doubled (109% annual growth) compared to 2021, reaching 62% of its volumes in 2019 (WTTC Report, 2023).

The report outlines the technological advancements as one of the main sources for travel inspiration, including the Metaverse. Social media's immersive audio-visual experience is defined as a useful source of information for many travelers. Instagram is the most travel influential media (cited by 40% of the participants) followed by Facebook (33%) and TikTok (25%) according to the Skyscanner survey.

Methodology

Research philosophy is a framework guiding the approaches for data collection and analysis. Considering the three main research philosophies: positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory, the positivism has been chosen as a philosophy of the following research (Snyder, 2019). It is based on the perception that an objective reality exists, and it can be observed and measured through scientific methods. The research has been conducted in a systematic and empirical way, using quantitative methods to collect and analyze data. Its aim is to discover causal relationships between variables and to develop theories that can be tested and verified through scientific methods. As positivism assumes that reality is external and independent of human consciousness, our role is to observe and measure this reality objectively. The results presented below are value-free and free from personal bias, and the data was collected through standardized and reliable methods (Snyder, 2019). Positivism research philosophy has been chosen because it is effective when data is gathered via surveys and the research is in the field of economics.

Research methods are specific procedures implemented to collect, analyze, and interpret data in order to gain new knowledge and understand the phenomena under study. Depending on the characteristics of the research object and the set goals, different research methods can be applied.

Empirical methods are methods that are based on the collection of factual data through observation or experiment. These include surveys,

observations, experiments, interviews, etc. Empirical methods allow the collection of specific data that can be analyzed and used to draw conclusions and formulate theories. Because of their advantages the empirical methods have been chosen for the current study. The main benefits provided by them are as follows:

- Based on factual data: Empirical methods are based on the collection of factual data through observation or experiment providing a basis for drawing objective and testable conclusions.
 - Representativeness: Empirical methods allow the collection of data from a representative sample or the extraction of random samples, allowing a wider generalization of the results to the entire population.
 - Reproducibility: Empirical methods allow research to be repeated with the same or similar methods, which makes it possible to verify the results and confirm their reliability.
 - Discovering relationships and regularities: Empirical methods are useful for discovering relationships and regularities between causes and effects, factors, and results. They can help identify cause-and-effect relationships and understand causal relationships.
- However, empirical methods also have some disadvantages:
- Possibility of subjectivity: Empirical data can be influenced by subjective factors, such as prejudices or personal preferences of the researcher or sample representatives. This can lead to skewed results or false conclusions.
 - Limited scope: Empirical methods usually investigate only specific aspects of phenomena and cannot always provide a complete and comprehensive picture. They may discard important contextual or qualitative aspects of the study.
 - Possibility of error: Empirical methods require precision and care in data collection and processing. Errors in data collection or applied statistical methods may lead to inaccurate results or incorrect conclusions.
 - Time and resources: Empirical research often requires considerable time, effort, and financial resources to conduct. This can be challenging for researchers and organizations with limited resources.

The purpose of the research is to assess the alignment of distribution channels digital transformations with the Bulgarian tourists` preferences. In this regard, the research procedure was developed on the base of qualitative data collection through in-depth interviews because of their indisputable advantages to obtain reliable and detailed information on complex issues.

The research procedure is structured according to the following tasks:

1. Defining the research objectives.
2. Developing a qualitative data collection tool (questionnaire).
3. Sampling.
4. Data collection.

5. Data analysis and interpretation.
6. Findings and conclusions.

In the context of the research procedure a survey is conducted among 1000 customers of tourism products investigating the impact on the digitalization of distribution channels in the tourism sector. The research period is October-November 2022.

Results and discussion

The survey results illustrate that 34.8% of the respondents do not travel abroad, while every one of those who completed the questionnaire travels in Bulgaria for leisure at least once a year. Based on the data, two main trends can be identified. Customers travel frequently in the country, and with the increase in the number of leisure trips in Bulgaria per year, the percentage of tourists also increases. The frequency of leisure trips abroad illustrates the inverse relation, and with the increase in the number of trips the number of travellers decreases. It can be concluded that customers choose domestic travel at least twice a year in Bulgaria while they usually take part in international tourism trips only once a year.

The highest percentage of respondents (46.4%) mainly travel in Bulgaria more than 3 times a year, followed by 39% travelling two or three times a year, and a relatively low percentage (14.6 %) of the respondents travel within the country only once a year. In contrast to these data are the results related to the frequency of international leisure travel. 34.8% of the respondents do not travel abroad, 43.5% of them travel once a year, 14% travel two or three times during a calendar year, and only 7.7% of the customers travel for leisure more than 3 times outside the borders.

In the domestic tourism Bulgarian customers prefer direct distribution channels as most of them book directly from the services providers such as hoteliers, transport companies and companies for additional services. Almost half of Bulgarian domestic tourists (49.8%) prefer direct distribution, 26.4% of them use different distribution channels for booking various tourism products, so they have no clear preferences. 12.1% of the respondents book private accommodation and use shared transport, while 11.7% prefer to deal with intermediaries, namely tour operators or travel agencies. Survey data shows that domestic travelers who prefer to book through direct distribution channels are 4.3 times more than those who prefer intermediary booking services.

Almost half of the tourists (47.8%) book the transport for the individual travel at the company's website. 27.5% of them use different websites for offers or discounts, 24.5% book on the phone, 21.7% prefer mobile app bookings, and the lowest percentage of tourists (14.9%) book directly at the office of the transport company. And it should be stressed that 24.5% of Bulgarian customers travel by private cars and do not use the services of transport companies. As a comparison the ratio between digital and traditional distribution channels preferred by the customers is 97% vs 39.4%.

The most preferred distribution channels for accommodation when organizing an individual travel are the metasearch engines (booking

platforms) such as Booking and Trivago, outlined by 64.5% of the respondents. Hotels' own websites are ranked at the second place, as 54% of the tourists prefer that channel. Phone calls are the distribution channel chosen by 41.9% of the tourists. Opposite to the global trends of increasing mobile bookings, relatively lower percent of the Bulgarian customers 24.2% book through mobile apps and insignificant percent (3.3%) prefer other distribution channels. In that context it can be claimed that Bulgarian customers prefer the digital distribution channels for hotel accommodation.

58.4% of the Bulgarian tourists book their accommodation usually at Booking's website, 16.7% do that at Grabo website, Pochivka.bg and Airbnb are preferred by 6.7% and 6.1% of the respondents, while Trivago and Esky gain just 3.4% and 1.2% of the bookings. 1% of the tourists are users of other websites and 6% of the respondents do not use any similar websites.

The travel booking process through intermediaries confirms the trend that digital distribution channels are preferred by the Bulgarian customers. 53% of the respondents book leisure travel services through the tour operator's website, 48.9% complete the process of purchasing tourism products through promotional offers websites such as Grabo. Telephone bookings are ranked at third place as a distribution channel by 37.5% of the respondents. They overtake the reservations at the tour operators' offices preferred by 31.3% of the tourists. Once again, the percentage of those who book through mobile applications tourism products is the lowest (11.7% of respondents use them). 3% of those surveyed use other channels when booking through intermediaries.

Summarizing those research findings, it can be stated that the digital transformation of tourism distribution channels complies with the preferences of the Bulgarian customers. Furthermore, customers preferences can be outline as follows:

- Domestic travel prevails the international travel.
- Most of the Bulgarian customers travel at least three times a year within the country.
- Bulgarian tourists prefer direct distribution channels when booking domestic leisure travel.
- The company's website is the most preferable distribution channel for transportation services.
- Meta searching engines and particularly Booking as an accommodation distribution channel acquire the highest percentage of the Bulgarian tourist reservations.
- When booking through intermediaries most of the customers prefer tour operator's website as main distribution channel for their products.
- Company's websites are the most preferred distribution channel, followed by the promotional offers websites.
- The mobile applications acquire lower percentage of Bulgarian tourists' bookings of different types of tourism products.
- The phone calls as a traditional distribution channel remain effective for the Bulgarian market.

The general trend in the Bulgarian customers preferences regardless the tourism product is that they book through digital distribution channels, mainly companies` own websites and the reservation platform – Booking. Along with the limited application of the traditional tourism distribution channels, mobile applications do not play a significant role for reservation of the individual elements of the tourism product in the Bulgarian market.

Conclusion

Technological advancements in the digital age have fundamentally altered the tourism distribution channels. In that context one of the primary channels via which many services providers offer their products online is e-commerce. The analysis of the data from the survey of Bulgarian customers regarding tourism products enable suppliers to create effective models of distribution channels that are highly preferred by the tourists. According to the trends presented specific recommendations to the tourism service providers can be highlighted. They should invest in SEO optimization and website development. Travel service providers regardless of their type are required to offer promotional products on the Grabo website. When dealing with tourism intermediaries, hoteliers are advised to include Booking in their distribution channels. Despite the low popularity of mobile applications among the Bulgarian customers the services providers should invest in their development and promotion because they will become the main distribution channel for the domestic tourism product.

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Influence of Digital Marketing in the Tourism

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Abstract: The article is focused on digital marketing as one of the main tools to promote a destination. Based on secondary research, hinge on published existing data collected and analyzed by the authors, as well as a methodology adopted for the purpose of this report, it aims to show how this kind of marketing change the direction of development of a specific destination and attract the tourist attention. The conclusion is eloquent that this is the way to reach the target audience and to increase the number of visits.

Key words: digital marketing, tourism, social media, destination, target audience

JEL: A11; A13; M2; M3; L83

Introduction

The digital age has ushered in a new era for the tourism industry. The inclusive use of digital marketing has revolutionized the way businesses engage with travelers and has transformed the industry's landscape. This article explores the impact of digital marketing on the tourism sector and its role in promoting the destination as well as in satisfying the customer needs. Using the secondary research, the focus of the article is on those aspects that tourism stakeholders - DMOs, hoteliers, restaurateurs, governmental and non-governmental organizations should use in order to increase the sales and to reach their target audience. The limitation of this article is the examination of only some of the concepts of the digital marketing and the consideration of their impact on the tourism in the destinations. The expected results at the end of the study are in favor of the use of the digital marketing as the main means of promoting the tourism, as well as confirming its huge impact on the customers' choice and the influence that such advertising has on them.

Literature review

The travel industry has undergone a major metamorphosis in recent years, which is largely due to the huge impact digital marketing has

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had on it. This literature review critically examines a wide range of research and methods related to the impact and dynamics of digital marketing on tourism and ways to reach the target audience. Focused on synthesizing the existing knowledge, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing strategies are transforming the tourism landscape on a daily basis, influencing consumer behavior and choice, destination promotion and overall industry dynamics.

The integration of digital marketing channels has fundamentally altered the way tourists plan, book, and experience their journeys. Various studies emphasize the role of online platforms, social media, and mobile applications in shaping consumer behavior. (Duffy, B., D'Astous, A., & Leclerc, F., 2022, p. 139-150). Digital marketing enables personalized communication, real-time engagement, and tailored promotional efforts, thereby influencing tourists' decision-making processes and preferences. The review delves into the existing literature to unravel the intricate ways in which digital marketing has become a cornerstone in understanding and harnessing consumer behavior within the tourism industry, exploring the social media, which has become indispensable tool for the travel industry (Fesenmaier, D. R., 2021), target marketing, content marketing and storytelling (Gretzel, U., Sigala, M., Xiang, Z., & Koo, C., 2020, p. 635-643), also can be added that in this context, video content, particularly on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, is emerging as a significant and influential element within the broader framework known as content marketing (Shankar, V., 2018, p. 48-60). Influencer marketing, accessibility and mobility are also key factors for the successful destination promotion.

A significant focus of the literature review is on how digital marketing serves as a catalyst for destination promotion and branding. Research suggests that online platforms provide destinations with unprecedented opportunities to showcase their unique attributes, engage with a global audience, and craft compelling narratives. The review explores case studies and based on the secondary research focuses on good practices for marketing strategies that consider increasing the visibility, competitiveness and overall attractiveness of tourist destinations.

In addition to all the positive impacts, the literature review also looks at the challenges and creating opportunities related to the digital marketing in the tourism. With the rapid pace of development, information overload and technological advances, destinations must strive to sustain the consumer interest, not just to reach the potential visitors.

This literature review synthesizes a diverse range of research and good practices to present a comprehensive overview of the impact of the digital marketing on the tourism industry. From shaping the customers' behavior and the promotion of the destinations to the role of the social media, content marketing and storytelling, inherent in this digital age. The review provides valuable information for both stakeholders and researchers. As the travel industry continues to navigate the digital landscape, the understanding of the multifaceted impacts of the digital marketing becomes imperative for the good positioning of the tourism

product in the market and reaching the target audience and thus for an overall sustainable development of the tourism.

Methodology

This report uses a methodology centered on the secondary research to examine the role and impact of digital marketing in the tourism industry, using a set of tools popular in both theory and practice, which for the purposes of the study are systematized and derived. Based on them, an analysis of the current situation in the tourist services market is made and an expert assessment is made to help the business. The aim is to provide a comprehensive overview of effective digital marketing strategies and practices that have proven successful in promoting and enhancing the tourism experience.

The tools for analysis in this article, including the current methodology, are: target marketing and personalization, authentic visual storytelling, influencer marketing, content marketing and storytelling and accessibility and mobility. At this moment, from the point of view of the market situation, the derived indicators have different significance from the point of view of political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and other factors influencing the situation of the tour market, respectively on the economy and consumers. Target marketing and personalization can be defined as the most powerful tool for promoting destinations, since this is the basis of advertising a tourist product in a way that would be interesting and attractive to the specific target group. In the next place can be placed accessibility and mobility, which from your side is a key element to reach the desired messages to the potential visitors in a modern and fast way. Next in importance can be influencer marketing due to the huge influence social media has on consumers right now and the choices consumers are making. authentic visual storytelling as well as content marketing and storytelling go hand in hand and also work successfully for businesses to reach consumers.

Digital marketing - understanding and theoretical formulation

The economy is now driven by the impact of prices, the force of potential sales and human needs, and therefore even further, initially transformed, marketing activities are developing. Under the new market conditions, the emphasis is placed on the experience the product brings and its impact on consumers rather than on its quantitative and qualitative characteristics. Companies want to invoke moods, emotions and feelings and this can be achieved best through an absolute immersion. Recently, the concept of experience economy has become particularly emphasized and analyzed, probably due to its invasion in a large number of sectors of the economy.³

In the dynamically developing digital marketing, the first cornerstone on which success is built lies in the deep-rooted understanding and theoretical underpinning of this ever-evolving landscape. Theory and

³ (Ianeva, Gaydarov, 2019)

practice are inextricably linked when it comes to digital marketing. The theoretical formulation is the basis on which strategies are built and goals are set. It involves the assimilation of marketing theories, target audience behavior, and insights from data analytics to create a structured approach to digital marketing endeavors.

A lot of authors have made substantial contributions to the field of the digital marketing. Some of the prominent figures include Philip Kotler, who is widely regarded as the father of modern marketing and has written extensively on the principles of digital marketing. Gary Vaynerchuk, known for his expertise in social media marketing and branding, has also been a prolific author and speaker. Dave Chaffey should also be mentioned as the co-author of the bestselling book "Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice," and Ann Handley, renowned for her insights into content marketing, have provided invaluable guidance and resources to digital marketers. These and other authors who have worked both in the field of the digital marketing and in the field of the tourism provide a wealth of knowledge and good practices that specialists should apply and combine with the experience of their practice in order to achieve long-term results.

Digital trends and their impact on the tourism industry

From the increasing use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to offer immersive travel experiences to the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and chatbots for personalized customer service, the industry is at the forefront of technological innovation. For the purposes of the secondary research, the main trends in the digital marketing in the tourism will be examined and their impact on both the tourism product offered and the consumers will be traced.

One of the most important aspects of using digital marketing in the travel industry is its ability to provide the opportunity for **target marketing and personalization**. The tourism business has huge databases and analytics⁴ available to identify the target audience and to build clear and precise strategies tailored to the customer profile of each group in order to attract the attention of tourists and to promote the destinations.

Digital marketing allows travel businesses to create highly targeted and personalized campaigns. Through data analysis and insights, the preferences, interests and behavior of potential customers could be identified. This allows businesses to tailor their marketing efforts to specific demographics and segments, which makes their message more enticing, accurate and targeted. Inclusive marketing isn't just about reaching a wider audience, it's about connecting with potential customers on a more personal level and meeting their ever-increasing needs.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have become indispensable tools for the travel industry.⁵ These platforms allow businesses to win customers in real-time, giving them a

⁴ (Smith, J.,2019, p. 45-56)

⁵ (Fesenmaier, D. R., 2021)

comprehensive platform to ask questions, share experiences and feel part of the travel community. User-generated content, including reviews and photos, increases trust and encourages travel and visits.

Navigating a digital landscape, the tourism stakeholders have discovered and implemented some notable best practices in the social media marketing, changing the way they can connect with their audiences. *For the purpose of secondary research*, the focus will be put on some of these good practices and share examples of how they are transforming the travel industry, starting with the ***authentic visual storytelling***, which is one of the best working strategies in social media marketing for the travel industry. The days of stock photos and overused, clichéd visuals are now history. Instead, successful businesses focus on sharing real, compelling images and videos of their destinations and experiences. For example, Airbnb's Instagram page (@airbnb) uses user-generated content to showcase unique and authentic stays, allowing their community to tell the story of their properties, thereby reaching more people who would eventually like, rent and plan a vacation at the specific place, gaining both a visual idea of the place from the Instagram post itself, as well as trust and desire to travel, reading the text to the post.

The other extremely valuable good practice is the ***influencer marketing*** in both paid advertising through influencer posts and the sharing of content from random visitors who present the product objectively through their prism. Influencer marketing has become a significant player in the tourism industry.⁶ Businesses partner with influencers to promote their destinations and experiences. An example of this type of marketing was the intensified campaigns of Bulgarian influencers presenting Cyprus as a good summer destination, encouraging their audience to visit not only the specific hotel where they are staying, but also the destination itself, presenting it in its fullness of natural and anthropogenic resources. This concept of advertising the destination in its entirety - presenting beaches, sights, lifestyle of the local population is extremely profitable, since advertising only a specific hotel, for example, largely limits the target audience due to the different financial possibilities of the future tourists.

Third good practice which is included in this report for the purpose of the secondary research is the ***accessibility and mobility***, alongside with the ***content marketing and storytelling***.⁷ The mass distribution and use of smartphones and mobile devices makes information much more easily accessible, which is a bonus for the tourism stakeholders as it can reach the target audience much faster. Potential tourists, in turn, can research and book their trips on the go, easily, quickly and conveniently. This inclusivity caters to a broad spectrum of travelers, including those with busy schedules or limited access to traditional booking methods. It is the oversaturation with information, photos and videos that should make those employed in the tourism constantly ambitious to be better, more innovative,

⁶ (Duffy, B., D'Astous, A., & Leclerc, F.,2022, p. 139-150)

⁷ (Gretzel, U., Sigala, M., Xiang, Z., & Koo, C.,2020, p. 635-643)

better specialists and more intriguing for their potential visitors. It is necessary to work in the direction of innovation, both in the aspect of advertising and in the direction of developing an overall touristic product - starting from the superstructure (hotels, restaurants, facilities, etc.), as well as various types of attractions, tours, etc. in order not only to attract, but also to retain the user's attention for a long period of time.

In this line of thinking, video content, especially on platforms like YouTube and TikTok, is emerging as a new and big factor in the overall picture, called content marketing.⁸ Short, engaging videos can provide significant information to the users about both a specific tourist spot and the destination as a whole. This has been quite a successful way to promote tourism and increase the potential visitors in the recent years. The explosion of this type of advertising can be compared to the Instagram boom and the creation of so-called Instagram spots in various places such as hotels, places to eat, beaches, shops, etc., which undoubtedly helps to increase the number of visitors, in order to make a photo for example on that specific location and create a content for the social media. It's like a never-ending cycle of gaining visits and interest that the tourism industry has taken advantage of over the years and undoubtedly quite successfully.

Results and discussion

The secondary research conducted on the impact of the digital marketing in the tourism industry reveals a transformative landscape where the increased use of the digital marketing tools has a profound effect on the tourism stakeholders and meeting the needs of the potential visitors. The combination of target marketing, social media engagement, accessibility, content marketing, influencer partnerships, virtual reality and special sustainability are leading to a paradigm shift in the way the industry connects with its target audience.

One of the prominent findings is the democratization of travel through digital marketing. The strategies employed have contributed to making travel more affordable for the majority of tourists. Through targeted marketing and promotional campaigns, destinations can reach a broader audience, fostering a more inclusive tourism sector. Social media platforms, in particular, have emerged as powerful tools for engaging with potential visitors, offering them a glimpse into the unique experiences awaiting them.

Additionally, the industry's adoption of content marketing, namely the development of compelling narratives and showcasing different aspects of each destination, is proving to be a key concept for reaching the potential visitors and promoting the destinations. Using influencer partnerships broadens the reach of marketing efforts by leveraging influencers' trust and reach to connect with different demographics. Virtual reality adds an immersive dimension to the destination marketing, allowing the potential visitors to virtually explore and experience an area before making their travel decisions.

⁸ (Shankar, V., 2018, p. 48-60)

In summary, the results highlight that the increased reliance on digital marketing tools has ushered in a new era for the tourism industry. Through the strategic use of these tools, the industry is not only reaching a wider and more diverse audience but also redefining the dynamics of travel, making it more accessible and affordable for a broader demographic.

Conclusion

In conclusion and summarizing the results of the secondary research conducted, it can be concluded that all the increased use and influence of digital marketing in the tourism industry is changing the way tourism stakeholders reach their potential visitors on a daily basis, thereby making travel much more accessible to most tourists. The paper's contribution is to demonstrate that through the use of target marketing, social media engagement, accessibility, content marketing, influencer partnerships, virtual reality and sustainability promotion, the industry reaches a wider and more diverse audience. Realizing the power of digital marketing and its full use, as demonstrated in the exhibition, is the basis for a sustainable future of the tourism industry, as well as for a more stable and successful positioning of destinations and gaining more and more visits and tourist interest.

Another contribution and an opportunity for improvement is that based on this article, primary empirical research can be done and this will help to study the destination Bulgaria and develop its nine tourist regions in relation to the concept of tourism zoning⁹ by applying all of the already mentioned in the article aspects of digital marketing.

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Digital Presence of Tourism Businesses in Bulgaria - Good Examples and Success Stories

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Abstract: The need to attract more customers in a challenging environment highlights the importance of a strong digital presence for tourism businesses. This research aims to present the opportunities that digital presence provides to businesses in the tourism industry. The study reveals that well-planned digital presence supports growth, attracts new customers, increases revenue and creates a positive company image. In-depth interviews with digital marketing experts are conducted regarding the results businesses can achieve with a strong digital presence. Using the good examples of several companies that have favourable digital positioning the publication gives recommendations for building an effective digital presence of tourism businesses.

Key words: digital presence, tourism businesses, digital marketing, digital positioning

JEL: Z320, Z330, M310

Introduction

The penetration of digital technologies in everyday lives of consumers and businesses has significantly transformed the approaches to attracting, retaining and communicating with customers before, during and after the consumption of tourism services. The digital space creates a promising and constantly improving business environment that provides many opportunities, but also poses some challenges for the development of tourism companies. The number of Internet users is constantly increasing. According to data from Statista.com, as of October 2023, there were 5.3 billion Internet users worldwide, representing about 65.7% of the global population. Of this total, 4.95 billion were social media users, which amounted to 64.1% of the world's population. The digital presence of tourism businesses opens the door to this vast global market and makes it easier to overcome the borders of the internal or regional markets. With the use of the Internet and digital technologies, consumers can access millions

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of commercial offers, conduct in-depth research, make informed choices and provide feedback on the selected products or services.

The current publication is focused on the impact that digital presence and digital marketing can have on the corporate results of tourism businesses, and how they can change the firms' development and customer relations. The study explores various techniques for online positioning - corporate website, social media profiles, search engine optimization (SEO), online advertising, content marketing and mobile apps. The research aims to analyze the use of digital channels and platforms by tourism businesses in Bulgaria that have realized the need to invest in an effective web presence. Based on their experience and best practices, recommendations for a strong digital presence of tourism businesses have been made. The publication also discusses the main obstacles that tourism companies may encounter in taking full advantage of the benefits of digital channels for marketing and communication.

Given the increasing significance of digital transformation in all sectors of the economy, numerous publications on the topic of digital marketing and digital presence can be found in the scientific literature. Past research analyzes the main segments of the tourism market and the application of digital tools in them. However, there is rarely a focus on small and medium-sized businesses that have implemented consistent and effective digital strategies, especially in Bulgaria. The current study includes valuable information on the role of online presence in promoting the tourism product of Bulgarian companies. The research further develops the topic by simultaneously presenting opinions from three marketing experts. The results provide useful guidance for the private sector, consultants, marketing teams and scholars on the relationship between web presence and digital business results. Additional future research on the topic could analyze in depth the separate impact of each digital channel or a certain combination of channels. This can provide a better insight into the effectiveness of each individual marketing policy in the overall corporate strategy.

The conducted research is subject to certain limitations. Among them, we can point out some external factors that can have an impact on business results despite marketing efforts - economic problems, political uncertainty, geopolitical, health crises, etc. The scope of the research is limited to the case studies of two hospitality companies and their experiences in achieving a successful online presence. Their stories should not necessarily be considered representative of the entire tourism business community in Bulgaria. The information gathered from the interviews with marketing experts is subjective and reflects their opinion on the

development of digital technologies and the opportunities they provide to businesses. In this sense, some alternative viewpoints on the subject may have been missed.

Literature review (TNR 12pt., bold, left centred)

The importance of digital presence

Businesses can derive many benefits from online presence and digital marketing tools. Among the main advantages for tourism businesses we can include increasing the visibility in the web space, reaching a global audience and attracting larger number of clients, retaining the attention of current customers, increasing revenue, enhancing advertising, better engagement and communication with consumers, tracking and analysis of consumer behavior, receiving valuable feedback on the service and quality of the products, maintaining a positive online reputation (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Talmaciu & Manolescu, 2023; Mallick, 2023; Purohit, 2021; Velikova, 2019; Bala & Verma, 2018, Desai & Vidyapeeth, 2019, Kulova & Mihaylov, 2018).

The digital space provides multiple channels and tools for achieving these goals. The following forms of digital presence are widely used in the tourism business:

- Own website;
- Google Business account;
- Profiles in social networks;
- Online advertising;
- Search engine optimization (SEO);
- Video content creation;
- Email marketing;
- Influencer marketing;
- Mobile app.

According to a survey by McKinsey and Company (2020) during the Covid-19 pandemic, consumers have moved dramatically towards online channels, and companies and industries have responded in turn. The survey results confirm the rapid shift towards interacting with customers through digital channels. Businesses have quickly realized the advantages of digitalization of processes and digital presence and have directed their investments in this field, accelerating their long-term business plans. Experts expect the changes in consumer behavior related to digital technologies to prove permanent and become the "new normal".

Digitization is no longer only applicable to placement (Velikova, 2019, p.5). In recent years, the focus has also been on communication. Business websites and social networks accompany tourists during their

travel. They provide useful information, sales points, text and visual content, valuable reviews and direct communication with the brand. Creating an active online presence has allowed tourism businesses to compensate to some extent for the limitation of physical sales and physical contact with customers. One of the great advantages of the web presence is that it gives users access to businesses 24/7 through their own website, online chat options and social media profiles. This has helped eager to travel tourists to choose a destination quickly and arrange their transport and accommodation after the lifting of travel restrictions around the world. Digital media is a powerful tool for brand building, as consumers and business customers have a wide choice of ways to participate in discussions, create and share content, and talk to one another (Satya et al., 2023, p.30). Managing a successful digital image is of particular importance for tourism businesses. Companies can regularly analyze and manage their reputation through online reviews and comments left by users on specialized platforms or social networks. Digital channels provide valuable data and analytic tools which help businesses measure the effectiveness of their online campaigns (Ocak, 2023). This enables the process of objective decision making and supports the refining of web presence strategies over time.

Digital marketing in tourism

Digital marketing encompasses many forms of online presence of businesses (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). It focuses on the management of channels such as the company website, social network profiles, mobile applications, as well as the use of tools such as search engine optimization, online advertising and email marketing. Digital marketing tools enable firms to segment their audience and create highly targeted marketing campaigns (Ocak, 2023). By getting to know consumers and analyzing their preferences and behavior, tourism businesses can target their messages more successfully to specific audiences and thus achieve higher results with their marketing campaigns (Purohit, 2021; Tsonev & Basmadzhieva, 2023). The opportunity to measure everything and relate it to the expenditure part of the budget is extremely tempting, which is a strong motivator for the developers of new digital tools (Потебня, 2023).

Social networks, for example, provide a field for direct communication with consumers, but also for a better understanding of their habits, behavior, requirements and preferences (Appel et al., 2019). This can be beneficial for developing a product or service, as it can provide a deeper understanding of the market while fostering brand loyalty (Mallick,

2023, p.67). The ability to promptly and accurately measure the results of marketing efforts is one of the great advantages of digital marketing over traditional channels such as television, print and radio. Of particular importance is also the opportunity of getting to know the consumers better and predict their future behavior and expected reactions.

Digital marketing and communication channels also pose some challenges regarding their big diversity in terms of available functionalities, target audiences, content creation and the specifics of message transmission (Паламарова, 2020). In this diverse environment and with so many available marketing channels, companies should create an appropriate mix of tools to reach their audience, so that they don't get "dispersed" in the Internet space and their messages don't get lost in the so-called "online white noise". These challenges are particularly relevant in the tourism sector, which, thanks to the digitalization of the communication process, targets ever more comprehensive audiences through its marketing strategies (Svajdova, 2019). Among the challenges related to the development of effective digital marketing of tourism businesses, we can also point out the lack of specific knowledge and skills among the personnel, constant development of digital technologies and the need for a flexible response to changes and the risk of inefficient integration of digital channels with traditional ones.

Methodology

The object of research in this publication is the digital presence of businesses in the tourism industry in Bulgaria. The subject of research are tourism companies that have achieved a successful online presence and benefited from the opportunities it provides. With this research, we defend the thesis that an effective and well-planned digital presence supports business growth, attracts new customers, retains the attention of current clients, increases revenue and creates a positive corporate image. The main goal of this publication is to derive recommendations for an effective digital presence based on the successful strategies of tourism businesses that are well represented in the digital space.

A literature review and an analysis of secondary data on the topic of the effect of online presence on the results of tourism businesses is applied. The information is collected from various sources, including academic journals and books, online articles and statistical platforms. A source of secondary information is also the data provided by two marketing agencies from strategies developed by them and implemented in practice in 103° Hotel & Spa and Hotel Sevtopolis Medical & SPA and the results achieved from their implementation. Primary data for the publication was

obtained through structured interviews with open-ended questions with three digital marketing experts. The questionnaire consists of ten questions that aim to provide additional information about the benefits, challenges and applicable approaches in creating a successful web presence.

Results and discussion

The conducted research develops the topic of digital presence by presenting opinions from marketing experts with more than 15 years of experience from two leading digital marketing companies:

- *Katya Todorova* – managing partner at Clientric,
- *Nikola Minkov* – founder of Serpact and
- *Borislav Arapchev* – SEO strategist at Serpact.

Clientric offers and implements a complete cycle of solutions with focus on marketing and sales in the tourism businesses. The agency uses online and offline marketing, new generation interactive, software and hardware solutions. The team has more than 15 years of experience in the HoReCa field with a focus on Online Distribution, Online Marketing, Digital Identity, Hotel Software, Hotel TV and Digital Signage. Clientric partners with many hotels, hotel complexes, restaurants, bars, clubs and other tourism businesses that want to use modern technology and innovations. Their portfolio includes Festa Hotels, Hotel Vega Sofia, Premier Best Western Sofia, Mascara Club, Soupateria Restaurant, Spaghetti Kitchen and many others. The agency also runs the Clientric Academy for Innovation in Tourism accumulating new knowledge and skills.

Serpact is an SEO agency providing comprehensive services of site optimization for search engines. It also offers consulting services and analysis, as well as creation and distribution of relevant content for attracting target audiences and generating conversions in various forms. The team has vast experience working on major marketing projects for brands such as Technopolis, DSK Bank, Tavex, Acronis, Strypes, bTV Media Group, Ampeco and many others. The agency has worked for 10+ companies in the tourism industry, and among its long-term partners are Imperial Resort, Sunny Beach and Aparthotel Lucky Bansko SPA & Relax. Today Serpact has nearly 3,000 successfully implemented projects for clients from all over the world and 15+ international awards from prestigious competitions.

Advantages and benefits of the digital presence of tourism businesses

All three experts agree that the benefits for tourism businesses of an effective digital presence are many and can lead to long-term positive results. According to Nikola Minkov and Borislav Arapchev, the presence of

a website and other digital channels can be monetized effectively, even without using advertising campaigns with large budgets. Customers learn a lot of information about a given location and business - through images, description, service details - even without ever being there. This removes the geographical restrictions and provides access to customers anywhere. The digital presence also ensures rapid dissemination of news about the companies – success stories spread immediately, consumers can react to them and share them with others. Another benefit comes from the increase of reservations which are not limited to telephone or personal contact anymore.

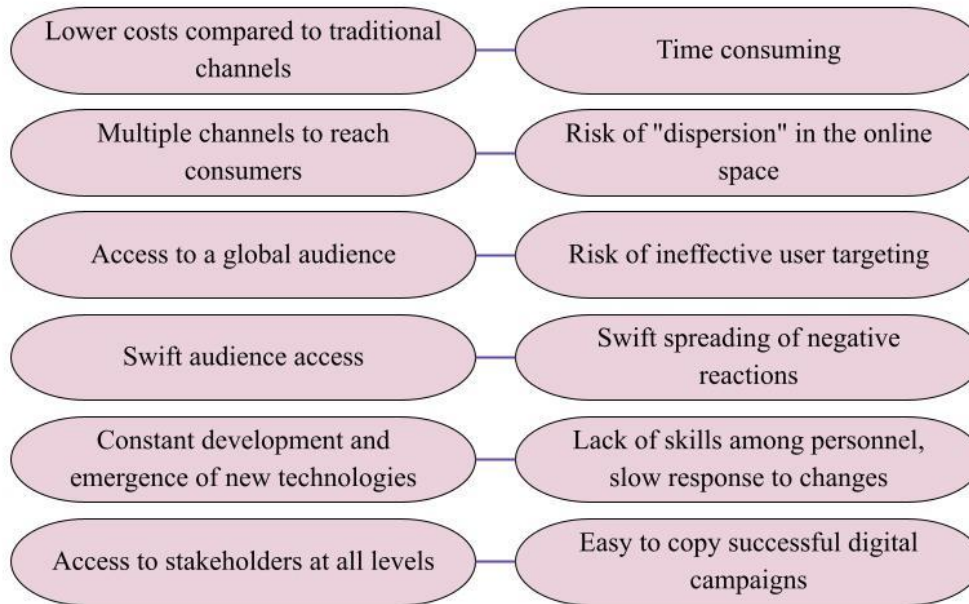
According to Katya Todorova, the advantages for businesses can be at any level. On the one hand, there is the advertising and promotion of the companies to potential customers, on the other hand, to potential employees. From the employer branding perspective, this advantage can be very important. Businesses that want to work with the best talent in a certain field, need to make themselves present and known. They should position themselves as a business that gives the potential employees an opportunity to be part of a community with strong values and a positive image. Katya states that tourism businesses cannot stay competitive without the channels for digital sales.

Main challenges in creating an effective digital presence

One of the main challenges according to Katya Todorova is the misunderstanding of the amount of budget resources that need to be allocated and the results that can be achieved with these funds. On many occasions a mismatch between managers' expectations and the willingness to invest in digital presence can occur. Also, a lot of companies try to manage online presence with their own teams and marketing departments, which may not prove to be effective and may delay the marketing results for months.

According to Nikola Minkov and Borislav Arapchev many challenges can arise from the lack of a digital strategy in place, because many brands underestimate the importance of a solid strategy when preparing for the online presence. Another difficulty is that some companies don't impose their brand identity on all chosen digital channels, messages are multidirectional and efforts are not well structured. Impatience can also create some obstacles when businesses draw back from a certain digital channel if it does not immediately produce the desired result. Brands should remember that building a brand requires time, patience and consistency in decisions and actions. These challenges can be overcome with a well-defined strategy with a focus on values and emotional

connections, using monitoring and evaluation tools and ensuring that the identity of all digital channels matches the brand identity.



Source: Author's representation based on the literature review

Figure 1: Advantages and Challenges of Digital Presence

Appropriate channels of digital presence for Bulgarian tourism businesses

The appropriate forms and channels of digital presence depend on the specific business needs and aims and the targeted audience. Katya Todorova points out that certainly the website is the most important channel because it is the own business resource from which information can be shared in all other channels. Serpact's experts also put the company website on the first place among digital channels. Other recommended forms of digital presence are Google Business Profile with location in Google Maps, Facebook page, Instagram profile, TikTok profile, YouTube channel and in some cases own mobile app. According to Katya Todorova video content especially in its short forms (Reels, Shorts, TikTok videos) is very important for the travel industry, because they can focus on experiences. Facebook and Instagram remain important channels depending on the specific target group. Google as a search engine is a key channel in terms of advertising and optimization. If the business has enough customers to communicate with, email marketing and Viber groups can also prove to be effective and very cheap forms of digital presence.

The target audience is the main factor to consider when choosing the digital channels for each business. In the field of employer branding tourism companies should not ignore the opportunities LinkedIn provides. When targeting younger customers Instagram and TikTok are the channels to be present in especially for hotels and restaurants. If the company aims to reach and promote sales among older potential consumers (40+) Katya Todorova recommends using Facebook and its instruments. Google advertising is key when businesses want to reach the users that search for specific products or services. Reservation platforms, specifically Booking.com, are not only key B2B and B2C channels, but also a tool for purely advertising purposes. Being positioned and shown as constantly full in Booking.com or having only a few available rooms and very good reviews is very important from an advertising perspective. Reviews in each of the digital channels, depending on the audience, are key to the tourism businesses and should be addressed and managed effectively.

All three marketing experts agree that businesses should not be everywhere on the Internet. The content brands create for the different channels can be adapted so businesses can get more digital coverage. The goal is not to repeat ourselves, but to adapt to the audience of each used platform, says Nikola Minkov. Katya Todorova recommends creating a strategy with clear goals of the business, specific budget and priorities for the online presence. Clientric uses the 80/20 model, creating strategies that determine which 20% of the resources can be utilized to achieve an 80% result. Thus the business would not scatter all around the digital space.

Success Stories

103° Hotel & Spa is an elegant 4-star hotel located in Sapareva Banya. The hotel opened in April 2019 and provides an escape from the noisy city environment, in a relaxing and peaceful setting in the heart of the Rila Mountain. The hotel has a fine restaurant, SKY bar with an outdoor heated pool and SPA center with steam bath, relaxation area, Finnish sauna, salt room, mineral indoor pool and fitness. The target audience of the hotel can be divided into two groups depending on the gender of the potential customers:

- Group One - Male customers, aged between 25 and 60 with high to medium financial status (min. BGN 3,000 monthly income), married or single from major Bulgarian cities. Profession - politicians, economists, bankers, celebrities, IT executives, entrepreneurs, athletes. They travel a lot, are interested in the latest technologies, play sports, like to pamper themselves, have developed taste and are influenced by celebrities, enjoy SPA services and look for privacy.

- Group Two - Female customers, aged between 25 and 45 with medium to high financial status, married or single. They are interested in designer clothes, boutique shops, expensive cosmetics, trips to exotic destinations, staying in notable hotels, attending social events, SPA & Wellness centers. They tend to be influenced by the opinions of the people around them, visit different places and tag themselves in popular destinations, hotels, spas and high-end clubs.

Clientric started working with 103° Hotel & Spa six months before the official opening of the hotel knowing that imposing a new brand online is not an easy task, especially when the market competition is high. The team prepared a comprehensive marketing strategy of the hotel, aimed at building a brand identity, creating engagement with the brand and turning the hotel into a recognizable place among the specific target audience. These goals help to increase hotel bookings and build a loyal customer base. It is important to note that in its business strategy, the hotel chose not to use intermediaries and tour operators, but to rely entirely on its own marketing channels and the selected digital marketing agency. To achieve the main goals Clientric implemented the following tasks:

- Creation and maintenance of a new brand, building a strong image - between 50,000 and 100,000 total users reached in social media for the purpose of branding in the first 3 to 6 months; min. 300 segmented potential customers on the FB page in the first 3 months; 1,000-2,000 likes on the FB page in the first 3-6 months.

- Reaching new customers through online channels - creating an engaged audience through an active online presence, sharing up-to-date information and offers; allocating an effective advertising budget; increasing bookings through online channels on a 6-month basis.

The digital channels Clientric chose for 103° Hotel & Spa are Facebook and Instagram, as these are the channels where the target audiences spend the most time and would respond to the brand content. For each of the channels, the team uses certain design templates to support the visual identity of the brand, which is always supported with proper messages. The Instagram communication is maintained daily using hashtags of the brand (#spahotel103, #hotel103degrees, #103hotelspa). Advertising campaigns in social networks aim to both increase traffic to the site at reasonable prices, and to engage users with the posted content.

As a result currently 103° Hotel & Spa's Facebook page has 14.9K followers and Instagram has 10.2K followers. This justified and even exceeded the initial targets. The company website ranks very well and is positioned on the first page of Google for its main brand keywords. In an advanced Google keyword search such as "hotel sapareva banya", the site

ranks on the first page, second position. The total FB page reach increased to 196,000 in October 2023 with average monthly reach of 97,000 for the first ten months of the year. The average reach of the Instagram page is 19,000 users monthly for the first ten months of 2023. The hotel website has 21,800 average monthly page views in 2022 with 12% direct and 67% organic traffic according to Google Analytics data. The direct and organic traffic show the good results for Brand Awareness that have been achieved. The customer ratings as of December 2023 are as follows - Facebook 4,5 of 5, Google My Business - 4.6 of 5, Booking - 9.1 of 10. Additional activities that contributed to the promotion of the hotel include various PR activities, participation in events, as well as accommodating influencers at the hotel, whose stay was shared on social networks.

Hotel Sevtopolis Medical & SPA opened in 2010 in Pavel Banya and established itself as an attractive center for recreation and prevention of diseases of the musculoskeletal system. For its qualities, the 5-star hotel has been awarded a number of awards, including recognition for innovation by the European Spa Association in 2021 and the title of "Best Concept Hotel" in 2019. It combines traditional architecture with home comfort and modern amenities. Guests can enjoy spa treatments, indoor and outdoor pools with mineral water, restaurant, lobby bar and other services. The target audience of the hotel can be divided into three groups.

- Group One - male and female Bulgarian guests seeking medical services, aged between 40 and 64, with medium to high financial status.
- Group Two - male and female Bulgarian customers looking for SPA services and escape from everyday stress, aged between 35 and 55 with medium to high financial status.
- Group Three - male and female Bulgarian guests with a busy and dynamic daily life, working in IT companies, aged between 30 and 44, with medium to high financial status.

Clientric's team chooses to implement a digital marketing strategy focused on the competitive advantages of the hotel including professional medical services, a wide range of balneological and healing procedures, large spa center, signature rituals and exclusive therapies, the modern and the high-tech medical equipment, rehabilitation and physiotherapy with mineral water and qualified and certified specialists in kinesiotherapy and physiotherapy. The marketing strategy aims to achieve better brand awareness, product and services promotion, more effective communication with current customers and new customer attraction. In addition to the own website the chosen digital channels are:

- Facebook - with the aim to promote the brand and create customer engagement using unified messages and distinctive visions across the platform. The social network is also used as a traffic generator for the target audience to the site.

- Instagram - communication with the younger audience (up to 35 years), stimulating interactions between users and the generated content in the social network. The platform is also used as a traffic generator to the site. Using a brand hashtag: #sevtopolishotel #hotelsevtopolis, which is included in all video and online materials related to the platform. In order to reach a new audience and all existing followers of the brand through retargeting, the team has included a monthly budget for advertising on Facebook and Instagram.

- LinkedIn - this channel provides an opportunity to build relationships and contacts with potential new employees and business profile audience. It is used for sharing image information about the hotel and about employees, searching for new employees, sharing business offers and brand positioning among a more business-oriented audience.

- YouTube - sharing interesting and informative video content to promote the key competitive advantages of the brand. Through proper SEO of videos, a better and faster spread of the hotel profile is achieved.

Results of the implemented digital presence strategy (in the two year period between 2021 and 2022) achieve the main goals. The average monthly number of reached Facebook users with the chosen activities is about 270,000 with a target of 200,000. The total number of people that are reached in the two year period on the page is 5,760,354. The brand maintains a high FB Engagement Rank, which varies from 4% to 10% compared to a goal of 5%. The strategy has generated almost 4,000 new page followers, exceeding the target of 2,500. The average number of reached Instagram users is about 15,000, with a target of 10,000. The total number of people that have been reached with the published profile posts is 342,906 with a high engagement rate of over 6% on average. The Instagram profile attracted 1,871 new followers against a target of 1,000.

The average number of impressions generated on the LinkedIn page is about 1,000, with a goal of 700. The total number of generated impressions in the two year period is 23,661. The profile has 290 followers at the end of 2022. The average monthly YouTube channel views is about 5,000 with a target of 3,000. Total watch time in hours for the 2021-2022 period is about 1,200 hours. The channel has 297 new subscribed users for the period. The average monthly number of sessions on the website is about 17,000, with a target of 12,000. The average time spent on the site (avg. session duration) is about 2 minutes (with an average time spent of 1

minute in 2020). There is also a drop in the Bounce rate (the percentage of site visitors who leave without opening a second page) to 40%-50%. This aspect is key to evaluating the effectiveness of design, content, navigation and overall marketing efforts.

Recommendations

Based on the answers in the structured interviews and the data and results shared by the marketing agencies, we can derive the following recommendations for the digital presence of tourism businesses in Bulgaria:

- Businesses must approach their online presence responsibly and with a consistent strategy for positioning in selected digital channels depending on the target audience and set corporate goals.
- Having an own website with up-to-date content, photos, videos and a description of the business and the services is a mandatory element of a successful digital presence.
- A presence with effectively maintained pages on Facebook and Instagram is highly recommended for Bulgarian businesses, because the majority of the consumers in our country actively use these platforms. When targeting younger users, a presence on TikTok is also recommended.
- Creating a Google My Business profile provides business visibility, promotes its location, and provides customer feedback and reviews.
- The information and publications that are created and distributed in the digital channels must be realistic and not exaggerated, accompanied by photos, videos and real customer reviews.
- Tourism businesses should create and share engaging video content especially in its short forms which can be posted in many of the popular digital channels.
- Businesses need to create a recognizable visual identity to be applied across all chosen channels.
- Companies should not "scatter" in the online space, but choose carefully the most effective channels on which to focus their efforts and budgets.
- Tourism businesses should consider using the service of digital marketing agencies when they lack the internal capacity or knowledge to manage a comprehensive marketing strategy. This can save time, money and other valuable resources.
- Companies should remember that building a brand requires time, patience and consistency in decisions and actions.

Conclusion

In the contemporary fast changing digital environment tourism businesses should implement effective measures to create a versatile online presence. Digital technologies have transformed marketing and its tools, opening up new ways of reaching and interacting with consumers. Online presence provides a strong platform for growth of tourism businesses by reaching maximum number of customers for minimum time and cost. As evident in the data provided by interviewed experts choosing the right digital channels, creating engaging web content and building data-driven campaigns can lead to many positive results such as customer attraction and retention, increase in revenue, maintaining a favorable image, better communication with consumers and supporting growth. When conducting a digital marketing strategy brands should also maintain a balance between visibility in the digital space and respect for the user's personal space, so that they do not become too aggressive or annoying. Not every successful strategy is applicable to each business, therefore companies should find their way and a successful approach based on the good examples from other businesses. The results from the current study can be used as a basis for further research to connect each digital channel with specific corporate goals to analyze the individual effect of the main channels and their combined influence on the business results.

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Relationship Between Work Motivation and Digital Era of Albanian' Public Universities

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Abstract: The relationship between people and their work has long attracted psychologists and other behavioral scientists. Their work dealt with measurement of aptitudes and abilities to improve the job-person fit. The study of motivation now forms an integral part of both industrial and vocational psychology. However, in both fields, concepts like need, motive, goal, incentive and attitude are appearing with greater frequency. If a company knows what drives employees to work, it is in a better position to stimulate them to perform well. Exploring the attitudes that employees hold concerning factors that motivate them to work is important to creating an environment that fosters employee motivation. A survey research design was used in this study to investigate work motivation and working conditions in particular high tech technology (pc, laptop, photocopy, telephone, fax,) This research project aims to analyze the relationship that exists between employees' motivation and their working conditions, to identify individual characteristics, professional and organizational, to compare findings and to model motivation of university staff. In this context, this study aims primarily to contribute to the further recognition of the school environment, to coordinate research and findings of researchers in the field of organizational psychology, and give an original analysis.

Key words: working conditions, work motivation, technology, motivational factors, and information system

Introduction

Work motives are important determinants of actions and values are the basis of cognitive choices (McClelland [1985]). Work motivation and values contribute to the occupational choices process (Vroom, [1964]) and improve one's ability to predict behavior (McClelland [1985]). While motives

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are seen as hierarchical, changeable (Maslow [1943]), and acquirable (McClelland, [1965]), human values are stable and enduring, give expression to human needs, provide guidelines for making decisions, and help one choose between alternatives. Work motivation and work values continue to be the focus of assessment development and research in the fields of counselling, applied psychology, and organizational studies (Brady, [2002]; DeShon & Gillespie, [2005]; Miner, [2005]; Reis, [2004]). People are centrally concerned with motivation -- how to move themselves or others to act. Everywhere, professors, supervisors, teachers, coaches, and managers struggle with how to motivate those that they mentor, and individuals struggle to find energy, mobilize effort and persist at the tasks of life and work. People are often moved by external factors such as reward systems, grades, evaluations, working conditions, technology or the opinions they fear others might have of them. Yet just as frequently, people are motivated from within, by interests, curiosity, care or abiding values. These intrinsic motivations are not necessarily externally rewarded or supported, but nonetheless they can sustain passions, creativity, and sustained efforts. One of the problems facing current academic motivation research is that despite a proliferation of theories and models testing specific relationships and hypotheses, no single model can capture the full dynamics of motivated behaviours" (Bong [1996]). Although Bong was commenting on the research of motivation in an educational setting, the statement is equally true when applied to the research of motivation in a work environment. In order to understand the evolution of the motivational paradigm and the various theories that have been developed from the motivational beliefs prevalent at the time, it is necessary to examine the types of organizational structure that exist and their possible influences on the control and motivation of the workforce within those organizations. Johnson and Gill [1993] describe motivation in work organizations as "the processes by which people are enabled to and induced to choose to behave in particular ways". Motivation is therefore associated with a search for the means by which members' job performance and productivity may be improved or maintained. Motivating the workforce of an organization to work more effectively towards the organization's goals is perhaps the most fundamental task of management. Organizations motivate their workforce to perform effectively by offering them rewards for satisfactory performance and perhaps punishing them for unsatisfactory performance. In the age of Scientific Management, forwarded by Frederick Winslow Taylor in the 1890's, only monetary rewards were considered to be important to employees. This rather limited view of employees' needs, technology and working conditions when a series of experiments at the Western Electric Company's Hawthorne plant led to a new paradigm of worker motivation. This viewpoint, known as the Human Relations Movement, attempted to identify and satisfy the social needs of the worker in the belief that a satisfied worker worked harder than an unsatisfied worker. Bong [1996], in a paper highlighting the problems in academic motivation research, stated that the fact that no single model has been able to capture the full dynamics of motivated behaviours was due to "different

theoretical orientations of investigators working in the field, who tend to emphasize a particular dimension of motivational phenomena over the others” (Bong [1996]). Generally, motivation models may be classed as belonging to one of two theoretical orientation groups – cognitive models and social-cognitive models. An organization's environment consists of a social, technology and material element. The social element consists of other organizations and groups of people, such as regulatory bodies, supervisors and colleges. The material element consists of both the natural resources on which many companies depend and natural forces that can influence the ability of many organizations to operate. The technology includes pc, laptop, telephone, fax, photocopy etc. All these factors affect the extent to which an organization is dependent upon the environment and working technology.

The Job Characteristics Model

The Job Characteristics Model by Hackman and Oldham [1976] focuses on the interaction between the psychological states of employees, the job characteristics that are believed to determine these states and the attributes of individuals that determine how positively a person will respond to a complex and challenging job. The core job dimensions are seen as prompting three psychological states that, in turn, lead to a number of beneficial personal and work outcomes. The critical psychological states are defined as: experienced meaningfulness of the work, experienced responsibility for the work outcomes and knowledge of results. The theory proposes that employees who experience these states at sufficiently high levels are likely to feel good about themselves and respond favourably to their jobs. The model suggests that five core job dimensions can be seen as determining the extent to which employees experience the three critical psychological states: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Specifically, skill variety, task identity and task significance are seen combining to form the experienced meaningfulness of the work. Job autonomy is seen as determining experienced responsibility for the outcomes of the work and feedback is seen as determining knowledge of the actual results of the work activities. The three psychological states are then seen as combining to determine various personal and work outcomes such as high internal work motivation (i.e. intrinsic motivation), high-quality work performance, high satisfaction with the work, and low absenteeism and turnover. To summarize, the model postulates that an individual experiences positive affect to the extent that he/she *learns* (knowledge of results) that he/she *personally* (experienced responsibility) has performed well on a task that he/she *cares* about (experienced meaningfulness).

Working conditions and technology. Individuals scoring high on this construct believe that a good work environment and creature comforts (climate control, privacy, adequate lighting) are important. They value having the materials, equipment, necessary technology and resources to do their work effectively and efficiently. Having a comfortable work

environment and the equipment and tools necessary to do the job are important to individuals who highly value Working Conditions.

Research methodology

Aim of this study: This study attempts to investigate the relationship between work motivation and other factors, in particular technology and working conditions in public universities academic staff. After selecting the scale that would be used for this purpose, it was independently translated from English to Albanian language. According to literature, the author has created questions that measure technology and working conditions among public universities. Then, they were synthesized into only one questionnaire by the researcher herself. To ensure the correct presentation of the Albanian questionnaire a bilingual specialist in the field of psychology revised it and corrected few terms so that the questionnaire was user friendly. The questionnaires were distributed and gathered mainly by the researcher herself. The university of Tirana was chosen first as a part of 11 public universities which are selected for this research.

The questions and hypotheses of current study are:

Q1: What is the level of work motivation among Tirana university academic staff?

Q2. What is the level of satisfaction with each of motivation constructs?

Q3. What is the level of satisfaction with working technologies and conditions?

H1: There is a significant relationship between personal factors (age, education level, work experience) and overall work motivation.

H2: Skill variety is positively related with overall work motivation among academic staff.

H3: Task identity is positively related with overall work motivation among academic staff.

H4. Task significance is positively related with overall work motivation among academic staff.

H5: Autonomy is positively related with overall work motivation among academic staff.

H6: Feedback is positively related with overall work motivation among academic staff.

H7: Technology and working conditions are positively related with overall work motivation among academic staff.

Sampling

Public university academic staff were the participants of the study. The sampling method used is simply casual where each employee based on random selection had an equal chance to be elected. Data was gathered from 54 lectures working in university of Tirana. (N = 54)

Instrument:

Hackman and Oldham [1976] developed a self-report instrument to measure the five core job features of job characteristics model. The questionnaire consists of 23 items, and items were scored on 5 point Likert type scale. The 5 subscales pertaining to 5 job characteristics were scored in accordance with the standard scoring of job diagnostic survey. JDS has been found to be a reliable measure of job characteristics with Cronbach's alpha 0.739.

Findings and discussion

The concept of job characteristics model focuses on designing a job so that it motivates a person (Droar, 2006). Based on job diagnostic survey, Hackman, Oldham, Janson, and Purdy (1976) developed this approach. Job characteristics are objective characteristics of jobs, particularly the degree to which jobs are designed so that they enhance the internal work motivation and the job satisfaction of job incumbents (Hackman & Oldham, 1974). The five core job features, which are task significance, task variety, task identity, autonomy and feedback, believed to positively correlate with job satisfaction and performance (Hunter, 2006). Skill variety is ostensible variety and intricacy of skills and talents required by a job to perform it (Buys, Olckers, & Schaap, 2007). Task identity requires from a worker to perform all the tasks necessary to complete the job from beginning to the end of the production process whereas the worker's feeling for his job that it is meaningful for his colleagues and organization because of its impact upon them is termed as task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). When the job provides its owner the freedom and power to exercise his own authority while taking the decision is the job feature of autonomy (Buys et al., 2007). When employee gets direct and clear information about his performance on his job it is known as feedback characteristic of job (Hunter, 2006). The job characteristic model predicts that if the aforementioned job features are present in a job, the job incumbent will be more likely to have high internal work motivation, high satisfaction with the work and low absenteeism and turnover (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, & Cardy, 2005; Matteson, 2002).

Population Description

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS® Version 14 for Windows). Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Frequencies and percentages were reported for the demographic data. Means and standard deviations were computed for the job characteristics. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS 14 package. The analysis reveals that the respondents were mostly female, age up to 25 years (6.7%), 26 – 35 years (66.7%) and 36 – 45 (26.7%). Marital status was single (6.7%), married (80%) and divorced (13.3%). Their education level was mostly master degree (80%), doctor of science (13.3%) and as. Professor (6.7%).

Level of work motivation

Based on the five point scale used, the minimum work motivation rating was 2 and a maximum of 4. The median rating value was 3.23, with a standard deviation of SD= 0.580. The mean rating was 3.25 implying that overall level of work motivation in Tirana university academic staff is good or at e moderate level.

Perceptions of the Job Characteristics

Based on 54 responses, academic staff perceived the job characteristics skill variety and task identity to be present most in their jobs, while they perceived feedback from supervisors the least. The research question is: What is the level of satisfaction with each of motivation constructs? The main constructs of internal motivation according to Oldham & Hackman were skill variety, task identity, task significance, feedback and autonomy. They are seen as independent variables which correlate with overall internal work motivation (dependent variable).

1. The first most satisfied factor as perceived by academic staff was “task identity” with a mean score 3.83. This indicates that their job has a beginning and an end with a tangible outcome. They can complete a ‘whole’ and identifiable piece of work. Doing the work independently from beginning to end.
2. The second most satisfied factor was “skill variety” with a mean score 3.60. This shows that their job requires a variety of activities that involve different skills and talents.
3. Task significance and autonomy are at the same level, with a mean score 3.47 which reflect moderate satisfaction. This indicates that their job affects the lives or work of other people, both in the immediate organization and in the external environment. In the meantime it allows the individual substantial freedom, independence and discretion to schedule the work and determine the procedures for carrying it out.

Table 1. *The mean rating for the job characteristics variables*

Categories of work motivation	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of satisfaction
Skill Variety	2.40	4.60	3.6000	.55032	Moderate
Task Identity	3.00	4.75	3.8333	.54827	Moderate
Task Significance	2.50	4.50	3.4667	.54989	Moderate
Autonomy	2.00	4.25	3.4667	.68051	Moderate
Feedback	2.33	4.33	3.2444	.58373	Moderate

4. Referring to table 1, we can see that the last most satisfied factor as perceived by academic staff was “feedback” with a mean score 3.24

which reflect that they are unsatisfied with direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance.

Level of satisfaction with technologies and working conditions

Table 2. *The mean rating for the categories of external motivation*

Categories of external motivation	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of satisfaction
Technologies	1.00	5.00	2.8667	1.35576	Low
Working conditions inside	1.00	4.00	2.0000	1.00000	Low
Outside environment	1.00	5.00	3.2000	1.26491	Moderate
Library	1.00	5.00	2.3333	1.11270	Low
Student's number for class	1.00	5.00	3.2667	1.33452	Moderate

Referring to data on table 2, we can see that the subjects are not satisfied with technologies (such as laptop, pc, telephone, photocopy and so on) used in their work. They need much more to continue. The first most satisfied factor was “student’s number for class” with a mean score 3.27. This shows that academic staff is preoccupied mainly for technologies and working conditions inside the faculty, not for other categories. According to data even library is in low level, which means that Tirana University needs much more books and online access for all.

Conclusions

Overall, Tirana university academic staff perceived skill variety to be present in their jobs, meaning that they felt that their jobs require an array of different activities to carry out the work, requiring them to use a number of different skills and talents. This conclusion is consistent with Ferguson’s (1992) study, which indicated that Nebraska staff perceived skill variety to be present in their jobs.

They perceived task significance to be present in their jobs, meaning that their jobs have a substantial impact on the lives of other people, whether those people are in the immediate organization or the world at large.

But they perceived feedback from others to be present in their jobs the least, meaning they perceived clear information about their performance from supervisors or from co-workers is not as prevalent in their jobs as other job characteristics. This conclusion is consistent with Ferguson’s (1992) study.

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China in the Digital Age

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Abstract: The report examines general trends and prospects for the development of the Chinese economy in the context of the ongoing globalization of the local economy in the world system of division of labor. The main mechanisms for managing and planning the processes of China's transformation in the new Digital Age are analyzed, focusing on the leading role of the central governing for the smoother and coordinated course of these processes in the context of deepening turbulence in the global economy. It examines the prospects for Chinese digitalization and the associated competitive advantages that the country seeks to build.

Key words: China, Digital Age, planning, coordination

JEL: P270

Introduction

In today's globalized world, the Chinese economy stands out as a force to be reckoned. With its immense potential and strategic planning, China has managed to navigate through the challenges posed by globalization and emerge as one of the leading players in the digital age. This article explores the general trends and prospects for China's economic development in light of ongoing globalization. We will focus on how central governing plays a crucial role in managing and planning transformation processes, ensuring a coordinated approach that offers competitive advantages.

The Role of the State in Chinese Digitalization

The Chinese government is playing a pivotal role in guiding China's digital transformation journey. Its proactive approach includes setting clear objectives and implementing policies that foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and infrastructure development. By actively promoting digitalization across various sectors such as finance, healthcare, manufacturing, transportation, education, and more recently 5G technology

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adoption—the government ensures that all industries benefit from these advancements (State Council, 2021).

While globalization undoubtedly opens up numerous opportunities for economies around the world, it also leads to an increase in spatial and temporal uncertainty due to the complication of ties and relationships between countries' economies. In this context of deepening imbalances in the global economy, central government becomes even more critical to maintaining stability. By prioritizing coordinated actions between different governmental bodies at both the central and local levels, China ensures a smoother course for economic development (CAICT, 2021b; Yicai, 2023).

The History of China's Digital Development

In accordance with the policy guidance of Chinese government, this article divides the development of digitalization in China into six stages:

Firstly, the Westernization Movement (1860s-1890s) was the beginning of China's industrialization. After the founding of People's Republic of China, China entered a period of socialist industrialization based on the planned economy until 2018. The national industrial fixed assets have increased by more than 26 times compared with the original value, and the railways, highways, waterways, aviation, post and telecommunications and other industries have also experienced great development, laying the foundation for rapid industrialization after reform and opening up, especially the foundation of heavy industry.

Secondly, after the reform and opening up, China embarked on the road of industrialization under the socialist market economic system. Mainly through the comprehensive implementation of standardized collaboration with division of labor, and based on equipment reform, China vigorously promotes the construction of infrastructure such as high-speed trains, aircraft, heavy machinery, and precision instruments, to pursue high-efficiency and high-quality fundamental purpose. The total industrial output value continues to increase, and the GDP expands rapidly.

The third is to take the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Economic System Reform" as a symbol, which kicked off the development of informatization in 1984, shifting the focus of the development of the electronics and information industry to developing the national economy, vigorously developing the electronics industry, and accelerating China's economic and social information construction.

At the same time, with the advancement of reform, postal and telecommunications have become market-oriented, and monopolies in the communications field have been broken. The "Village-to-Village" project started in the 1990s formed a nationwide household-based fixed telephone network. By the 21st century, with the help of this network, the Internet began to be applied and popularized in China. At the same time,

companies have upgraded their hardware, mobile phones have become more popular, and Internet users have increased. Traditional industries have also begun cooperation with the information industry, and the latter is developing rapidly in China.

Fourthly, in 2002, China proposed a development strategy of "informatization-informatization integration", that is, using informatization to drive industrialization, and industrialization to drive informatization. It takes a new road to industrialization and form a high-tech, high-economic-efficiency, low resource consumption, low pollution, and high human resource advantages.

From 2005 to 2015, China's Ministry of Commerce launched the "Thousands of Villages and Townships" project to build rural retail network, which used subsidy policies to popularize and upgrade modern home appliances in households across the country, laying the foundation for smart homes and the Internet of Things. In the second decade of the 21st century, smartphones were fully promoted, and the digital era was fully launched from the micro-individual level.

Fifth, in the 2016, National Informatization Plan of 13th Five-Year Plan, "the construction of digital China is fruitful" as the overall goal of informatization work during the 13th Five-Year Plan period. China has gradually entered the digital era, and digital applications such as intelligent manufacturing, digital finance, digital government, and intelligent transportation have fully blossomed, accelerating the construction of Digital China, and vigorously exploring the development potential of informatization.

Sixth, in May 2020, the National Development and Reform Commission announced the "Digital Transformation Partnership Action". China enters a stage of comprehensive digital transformation of the economy and society in 2021, with artificial intelligence, cloud computing, Internet of Things and other technologies being applied throughout society; the government has also begun to actively promote the development of the digital economy, and the Internet field is advancing towards traditional industries (CAICT, 2022).

At the same time, in order to conduct comprehensive statistics on the scale, speed and structure of the digital economy, the National Bureau of Statistics of China announced the statistical classification of its major industries. Generally speaking, China's digital development process mainly includes three major stages: industrialization, informatization, and digitization. The representative products of the three stages are constantly upgraded and their connotations are progressive, but the content of the stage development is integrated. While digitalization is advancing, industrialization and informatization are also deepening.

Current Status of China's Digital Development

Digitalization has maintained rapid growth in China in the past ten years, with a compound growth rate of 83.4% from 2014 to 2019 (Shao, 2021). Digitization is an important driving force for economic development. It has played a positive role in accelerating the development of Internet industry, making people's digital cultural life more colorful, expanding digital consumption, and making important contributions to the modernization and improvement of national governance capabilities. Currently, China's provincial digital development shows the following characteristics:

(1) The leading provinces in the overall scale are making great efforts, and the overall growth rate in the lower-tier provinces is outstanding.

In terms of scale, economically developed provinces still rank high. Among them, Guangdong and Jiangsu continue to rank in the top two, Shandong surpasses Beijing and rises to third place, while Hebei rises to ninth place after breaking through the top 10. In terms of growth rate, on the one hand, provinces that started digitalization late are showing a trend of accelerating development, with Tibet, Qinghai, Guizhou, and Gansu ranking the top four in terms of growth rate; on the other hand, Shanghai, the leading province in digitalization, still maintains a high growth at high starting point (CAICT, 2023).

(2) The cluster effect appears, and 11 metropolitan agglomerations have become the backbone of promoting digitalization.

Although the number of the 11 metropolitan agglomerations is only half of the nationwide cities, they account for 70% of China's total digital China index. Among the 11 agglomerations, the digitalization level of the Pearl River Delta metropolitan agglomeration is much higher than that of other agglomerations, relying on the two cores of Guangzhou and Shenzhen. The average digital China index of the Pearl River Delta in 2019 was 15, while the average digital index of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei (BTH) and the Yangtze River Delta was only about one-half (CAICT, 2020).

(3) Digital industry drive becomes the core engine of digital development.

Among the four major sectors, the digital industry has developed the fastest and contributed the most to the overall index. Among them, the eastern coastal cities remain in the lead, with the Pearl River Delta, BTH and Yangtze River Delta leading the way in digital industry development; in addition, Yunnan, Guizhou, Jilin, and Qinghai all rose 3 places in the 2019 digital industry index compared with previous year, and the digital economy is unleashing the potential of the western region. In terms of industry segments, retail, education, medical care, life services, catering and accommodation are leading the growth rate; among them, catering, accommodation and tourism have become the main modules driving digitalization in the western region.

(4) Digitalization promotes new business forms, new models, and new drivers of the economy.

In the first half of 2020, digitalization played an important role in the fight against the epidemic. The epidemic also forced education, automobiles, medical care, culture and tourism and other fields to carry out digital transformation and carry out technological upgrades in all aspects. In July 2020, China issued the "Opinions on Supporting the Healthy Development of New Business Forms and New Models to Activate the Consumer Market and Drive Expansion of Employment", proposing to support the development of 15 new business models to active consumer market, expand employment, and build new advantages in the digital economy (CAICT, 2021a).

With the gradual popularization of digital technologies such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things, China will promote the development of various "cloud" services and realize the growth of the "cloud" economy. Smart retail, smart culture, smart travel, smart manufacturing, etc., will all promote the smart development of the economy and society in the future and create a good digital ecosystem driven by digital transformation. The "Overall Layout Plan for Digital China Construction" released in 2023 set out two time points in 2025 and 2035. By 2025, China will complete 11 tasks, which echo the overall framework of subsequent planning. By 2035, two goals must be achieved, namely, the level of digital development will enter the forefront of the world, and major achievements will be made in the construction of Digital China (State Council, 2021; CAC, 2019, 2022, 2023).

Prospects for Chinese Digitalization

Digitalization is a very important aspect of cultural and economic development and witnessing it helps dive into the country itself. Experiencing both digitalization in China and the West, we gathered some insides into how they differ and function.

Firstly, what impressed one European Citizen it is the overall digitalization of China in comparison to Europe. The China is on another level of digitalization than Europe - digitalization is implemented in every aspect of China's economy. To be able to order bubble tea in the big city a person is obligated to have a phone, otherwise the latter is impossible. There were cases in large cities when older Chinese try to order products without having a phone available. This was meet with confusion by working staff and subsequently rejected as an order, which urged the companies to improve their operation management immediately. The experience of Europeans with ordering bubble tea is more pleasant because of the courtesy of welcoming foreigners in China. Still, problems may appear with the order because of the inability to make a payment. So, the service staff had to order everything for the foreign customers. As noted earlier, almost everything in the bigger cities is digitized, especially the payment methods -

even the street performers and beggars have a QR-code that you can give them money.

Another aspect that can leave an impression on a foreign visitor is the 'monopoly' of the apps that exists in China. To elaborate, there is this app in China that has all the functions needed for someone to be digitally active and it is called WeChat. (Montag, Becker, Gan, 2018) Using only WeChat you can find a restaurant on the map, order food, entertain yourself while you are waiting for the food, pay for the food. For example, if you want to get a haircut and if you decide to do it in Shanghai, by using only WeChat you can find a hairdresser channel, where it is situated and reviews. Happiness from a new haircut could not be greater after such experiences. Various services in the West are divided into many apps, while in China every service exists in WeChat. Digitalization in China reached a great level. Without the use of a phone, you can feel left out of the society. Because to some extent, society in China is the internet nowadays.

However, the luxuries and completeness of the Chinese apps may not be enough for a person coming from another part of the world, especially from Europe or the US. That is a struggle that one European encounter during his stay in China. Using a VPN is always an option; however, it can stop working at any time. Without the VPN, a Westerner is left behind the 'global network' (Gavin, 2023) (by global network we refer to the Western network) and is forced to consume information only from China. For a European, leaving the habitual virtual space (for example, the TikTok ribbon) and entering unfamiliar territory, in the case of Chinese virtual space, leads to the feeling of missed events and trends that have happened without his direct participation.

China's digitalization journey holds immense promise. Its internet penetration rate is already one of the highest globally, with about 1 billion internet users. The rapid expansion of e-commerce, mobile payment systems like WeChat Pay and Alipay, and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in various sectors serve as strong indicators of China's technological prowess. Moreover, China's large domestic market offers a unique advantage to its digital economy. With its sheer size and diversified consumer needs, Chinese companies have ample opportunities to test and refine their products before expanding globally. This «home court advantage» provides a solid foundation for Chinese firms to compete effectively in international markets.

Conclusion

China has emerged as an engine in the global digital landscape through strategic use of its huge population, proactive government policies and an emphasis on innovation. As globalization faces more and more obstacles in the context of an intensifying global crisis of the development model, it is obvious that China's central government will continue to strengthen its role in managing and coordinating the processes of

transformation to a digital economy in an increasingly secure world. With its rapidly expanding digital infrastructure and thriving tech ecosystem encompassing e-commerce, artificial intelligence applications, mobile payments systems, among others—China is well-positioned to further solidify its competitive advantages on the world stage. The use of digital technologies will remain one of the main drivers of growth in various sectors of the Chinese economy, thereby ensuring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Integrating Traditional and Digital Strategic Approaches adoption by Higher education institutes

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Abstract: In the past few years importance and involvement of Digital platforms has kept the institutes on more alert regarding updation of its ranking status, admission query, courses held, usage of e-learning and many more. According to All-India Survey of Higher Education 2021-22 there are 56 Central universities, 460 state universities, and 430 Private universities in India. In total there are 43,796 Colleges (approx) in India. This research has been conducted to know the role of Traditional and Digital strategic approaches influenced by social media in various codes of conduct at the institute in Indore City.

The findings suggest that time spent on usage of internet, Gender, area of residence i.e rural and urban on enrollment decision as well. Further the results show that YouTube, Instagram and Whats-App are most influential digital platform. The important parameters in the admission process are Placements, Academic information, Fees, Students life at the campus and Scholarships. Although other parameters as Sports and other facilities also influence the admission. Information on educational opportunities and respective related alerts are important perspectives to be handled properly. However, a gap with reference to mismatch or difference of information on social media and traditional methods was found to be different.

Key words: Social Media, Digital Advertisements, Higher education institutes, Personalized communication

1. INTRODUCTION:

Over last few decades online social network have deeply permeated our daily routine and reshaping youngster's lifestyle. They have not only transformed into a crucial mode of entertainment and communication but also surged popularity among adults and youngster. Social media has totally reshaped the individual's lifestyle not only by serving as a mode of communication but also as a sustainable source of knowledge and

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information. Higher education institutes that leverage the capabilities of social media can utilize its channels to promote themselves among prospective students. Therefore it is essential to investigate the impact of social media on individual's decision making process particularly in the context of selecting most suitable Higher Education Institution (Šola, H. M., & Zia, T. 2021).

Now a day's social media has become a proven effective tool for students to receive information about colleges they wish to enroll in. Additionally it's vital for universities admission team to regularly gather feedback from prospective students to assess the effectiveness of their social media initiatives. It is necessary for institutions to invest in personnel who are engaged in managing social media profiles and enabling them to retain relevant and sustain in this modern era also (Peruta & Helm, 2018).

The competition amongst higher education institutes is continuously rising. Universities are facing challenges with the task of enrolling an adequate number of students each year (Johnston, T.C. 2010). Therefore understanding the determinants that shape student's decision, holds paramount significance for institutions. Main focus of this paper is to investigate the factors which highly influence the choice of students especially in the framework where globalization and educational reforms are shaping higher education. Potential college students enjoy much wide array of choice due to significant growth in number of universities.

A recent initiative of Government of India towards digital India has accelerated the trends by widespread availability and accessibility of smart phones. The ease of internet availability has reshaped the business landscape, helping businesses in using database to serve customer better. This shift has opened exciting and new opportunities for businesses from healthcare to education for branding on digital platforms. Universities are using this medium to promote themselves among targeted students.

The 21st century has been seen as digital revolution that totally reshaped individual's personal and academic lives. Now a day's every student uses at least one smart device in their daily life (Nández and Borrego, 2013). Consequently it's hard to imagine a classroom without technological tool in order to achieve necessary skills for this digital era. The world has undergone a significant testing and disruption due to Covid - 19. This global crisis has left its impact on every facet of the society including education sector, one of the most profound affected area. It has entirely changed the perception and adaption capacity of universities as well as students about online learning. Hence to survive in this digital world universities has started adopting social media platforms to positioning themselves (Leonardi, 2014).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to study by David (2010) and Thompson (2007), many university students apply for admission through social media platforms. This is supported by research from Junco (2015), which found that majority of youths are using social media extensively for purposes of learning. Fischer (2015) stated that Chinese parents have a great deal of influence

over their kids' educational choices, and that there is a lot of pressure to succeed in the booming Chinese economy. The need for students and their parents to achieve success cannot be emphasized. The fact that three out of four Chinese students cited job goals as their main motive for seeking education overseas in 2014, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE), emphasizes the importance of career results. In addition, reference groups are key to the formation and distribution of these goals and are essential tool in understanding the decisions made by students before considering their educational institutions. According to the study of Bavarsad & Mennatyan (2013) stated that satisfaction received by users has a high positive impact on usages and selection of digital platforms and also it is one of the factor which influence the students to go along with the suggestion of social media.

According to study of Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, (2006) there are numerous marketing strategies which can be implemented throughout the admission process and institutes use various marketing tools such as - websites, brochures, media relations, and alumni networks social media, prospectus etc. But it is important to know when to use which tactics, and in which market it is to be used. This study basically found that what potential students need for and what institutions are providing. Ganim-Barnes' (2009) conducted a survey to answer few question about usage, importance , familiarity, adoption of the social media as well as search engine for the selection of universities by the prospective students. And the results were quite impressive it showed that even when social media was just emerging; in 2007-08, that time also 88% admission department felt the importance of social media for near future. Gondane, V., & Pawar, M. (2021) has concluded in their research that female students are more aware about the digital platforms as compare to the male students. It was also concluded in his study that there is significant difference between no. of admission in pre post adoption of digital platforms. Also it was found that parents plays a great role in deciding the course and college for their students while in case of post graduate , 80% students themselves choose their college and course. Biswas, S. (2020) has investigated on large scale empirical search to examine the impact of DM on students an institutions and about subjective study. At this stage they found the department-wise (management, science, engineering) impact of digital marketing platforms on admission. Overall their study worked in a new direction in the field of customized branding and information according to the need of Prospective customer; institutions in order to build strong relations with customers. Shafiq, M., & Parveen, K. (2023) their research suggested that because of student's high involvement in social media the students learning outcomes, knowledge and their performance has been improved. They also found in their study that Social media is beneficial for teachers, students and for institutions to increase their academic performance. Hossain, S., & Sakib, M. N. (2016) finds in their study the factors that are most influential in the admission process. He suggested that social media marketing having high institutional brand related content are most useful and impactful for the students. In addition popular content about the brand becomes more

influential for the students of university. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and Macgregor, (2014) they explored that there are some push and pull factors available which highly influence the decision of students to move from their home city/country to study at other place. Push factors includes lack of institutional in their city, availability of limited subjects /courses, social factors, lack of career opportunity etc. On the other side pull factors influence students to come to any new location. Pull factors may includes wide range of subjects, education quality in terms of reputation and recognition of course and institute, scope for gaining work experience with study, chance to improve English language and overall development as an individual. Digital platforms play an important role in the daily life of college students (Salaway et al., 2008). The influence and use of Digital platforms has increased in the education industry majorly to exchange/communicate ideas, information. With the help of these digital platforms, students having same academic knowledge, institutions and subjects can meet to each other and can share their problems, experiences and concerns (Boumarafi, 2015; Ellison et al., 2007). There is a role of demographic factors in selecting the digital platform for social networking and decision-making process. Students, who think social media is a valuable platform to gather information, often use to access educational information through these platforms. When they come across these platforms and find suitable educational content according to their need, gender, age and social-economic background, it influences them to select institution. Therefore social media offers diverse opportunities to students (Athukorala, 2018).

3. RESEARCH GAP: On the basis of review of literature some significant questions were traced showing a gap. They are as follows:

1. Is there any correlation between gender of prospective students and impact of digitalization on their enrollment decision?
2. To know the correlation between the amount of time individual spent and its influence on decision to enroll at the university.
3. Is there any impact of demographic area upon student's enrollment decision?
4. Which social media platform is most widely used by students while college search process?
5. Identifying feasibility strategies for student admission with respect to digitalization in higher education institute.
6. To identifying the gaps with respect to admission process on digitalize platform by higher education institutions.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To know the correlation between the amounts of time individual spent on social media with the decision to enroll at the university.
2. To study Correlation between gender of prospective students and impact of social media impact on enrollment decision.
3. To study the impact of demographic area upon student's enrollment decision.

4. To know that which social media platform is most widely used by students while colleges search process.

5. HYPOTHESIS:

H1:

There is no significant relationship between time spent on social media and enrollment decision.

H2:

There is no significant relationship between Gender and influence of social media on the enrollment decision.

H3:

There is no significant relationship between influence of social media on the basis of demographic condition.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research Design –

A survey approach is considered as the best method to find out opinion of the people for a specific research problem. The study was conducted on the students of graduation and post graduation (first-year) courses. For the purpose of recording responses from the students self designed questionnaires by the researcher herself was administered with the help of Google form. This study was conducted in Indore city. The data thus collected was tested with the help of Correlation and Regression to assess the impact and relationship of various aspects. In the later part the results are discussed with the help of chart on various attributes. Further suggestions are provided for handling.

Area of the study-

The area of the current study is limited to students of Madhya Pradesh only due to lack of resources; time.

Sample Size-

Using non probability convenience sampling the questionnaire was shared with 250 students out of which only 224 students responded and considered for the purpose of the study.

Limitation-

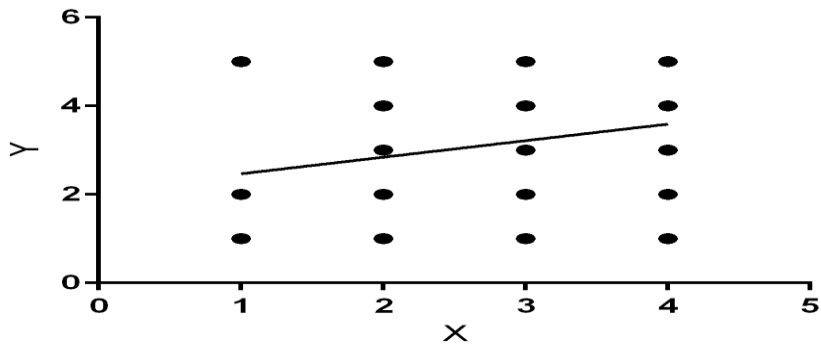
Current study is limited to the students of Madhya Pradesh studying in Indore city only. Further this study can be extended to know the perception, challenges and need of experts dealing with admission department.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Objective1- To know the correlation between the amount of time individual spent on social media with the decision to enroll at the university.

Tool	Time spent and decision about Enrollment
Correlation	0.205438651
Slope	0.3742 ± 0.1196
p-value	0.0020

Table no. 1



Regression plot no. 1.1

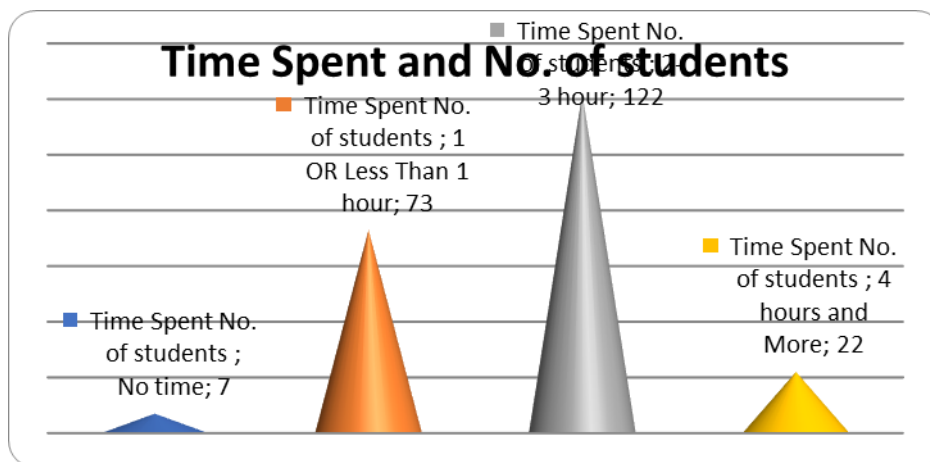


Chart No. 1.2

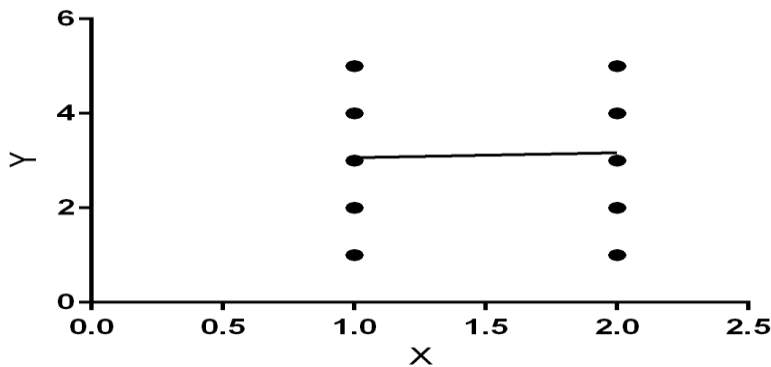
Result - On the basis of Table no.1 and Chart no.1 the results show that there is relevant effect of time spent and enrollment decision for the course. The correlation value is .20 and the p-Value is .002044. Hence result is significant at $p < .05$. On the basis of p- value the hypothesis-
H1 –

“There is no significant relationship between time spent on social media and enrollment decision” is not accepted. In India majority of youngster spent their 150-200 minutes on digital platforms. While some spent more than it while others has no time for it. Some findings suggest that students who devote more time on these digital platform are more influenced by them vice-versa.

Objective2- To study Correlation between gender of prospective students and impact of social media impact on enrollment decision

Test	GENDER
Correlation Between Gender and Enrollment decision	0.04151129
Slope between decision making regarding admission using digitalization and	0.1042 ± 0.1683
p-Value	0.535100292

Table no.2



Regression plot no. 2.1

Mean Male	3.0625
Mean Female	3.1667

Table no.2.2

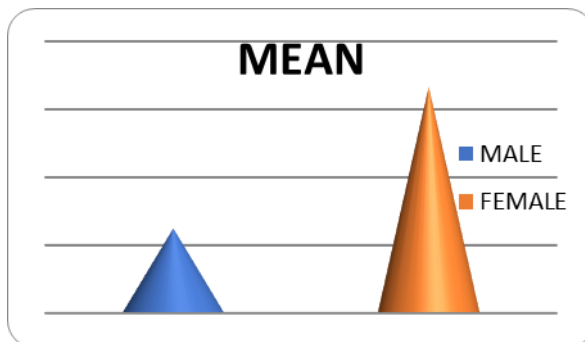


Chart no. 2.3

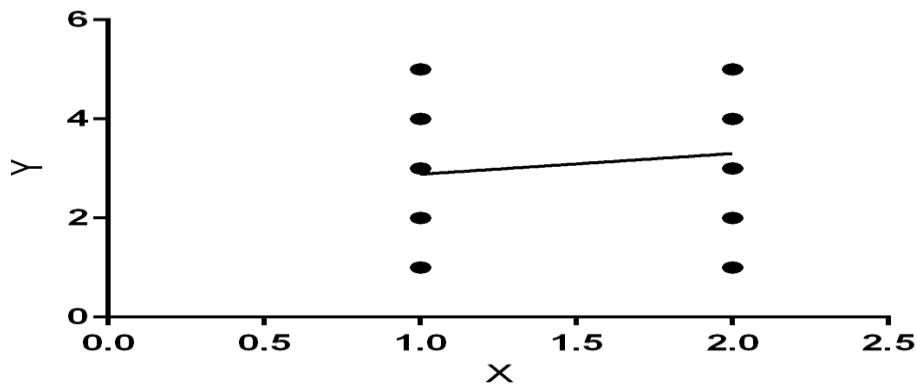
Result - On the basis of Correlation and Regression value (table no.2 and 2.1) the difference is clearly visible for the impact of gender on enrollment decision. The values of above test show low positive correlation between gender and enrollment decision as the correlation value is 0.0415 which is very less (near to 0). On the basis of p-value the hypothesis-**H2**- There is no significant relationship between Gender and enrollment decision stands accepted. The p-Value is 0.53. Hence result is insignificant at $p > .05$. On the basis of mean however chart no. 2.3 the influence of

digitalize platform was found to be more influencing for female in comparison to male aspirants.

Objective3 –To study the impact of demographic area upon student’s enrollment decision

Test	Between Enrollment decision and Area
Correlation	0.167494175
Slope	0.4168 ± 0.1647
p-Value	0.0121

Table no.3



Regression plot no. 3.1

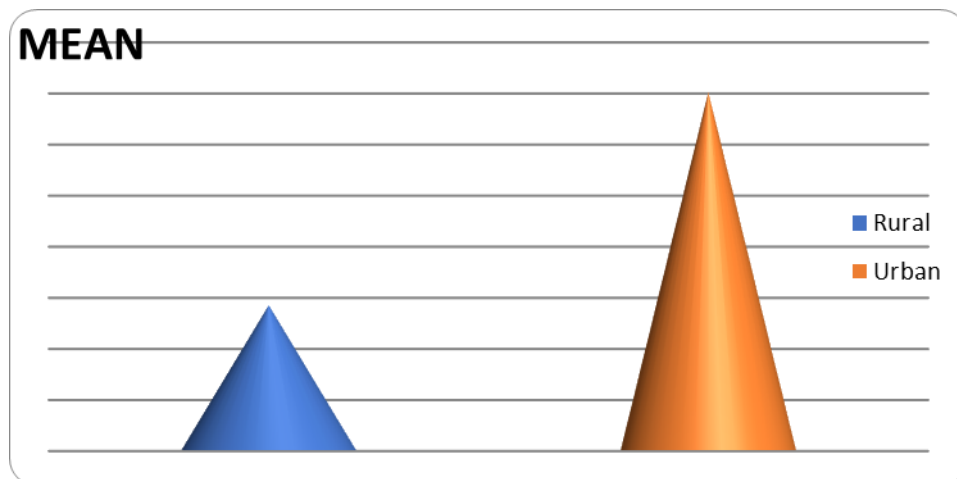


Chart no. -3.2

Result – According to survey result, Correlation value (table no.3) there is high impact of Demographic area on enrollment decision. The values of above test show positive correlation 0.167494175 between Area and enrollment decision as the correlation vales is which is very less (near to 0). On the basis of p- value the hypothesis- **H3-**

There is no significant relationship between influence of social media on the basis of demographic condition is not accepted. The p-Value is 0.0121. Hence result is significant at $p < .05$. Similar results were reported by Kutu, J. O., & Kutu, F. I., 2022.

Objective 4- To know that which social media platform is most widely used by students while colleges search process.

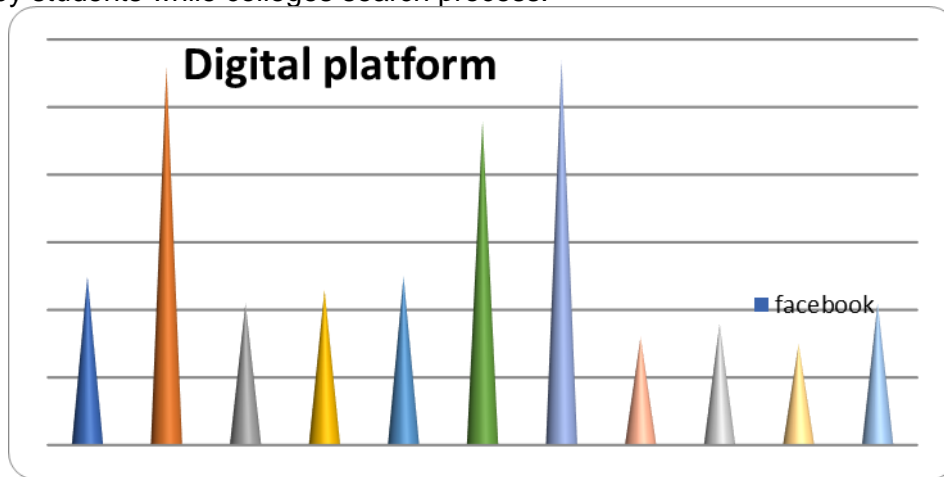


Chart no. -4

Result- According to survey result it was found that YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp are most influential digital platform among students whereas Wechat, Skype, Pinterest and Twitter are least influential platform. Similar results were found in the study of Kutu, J. O., & Kutu, F. I., (2022).

Statement 1- To know the impact of these social media platforms in the process of searching college/university.

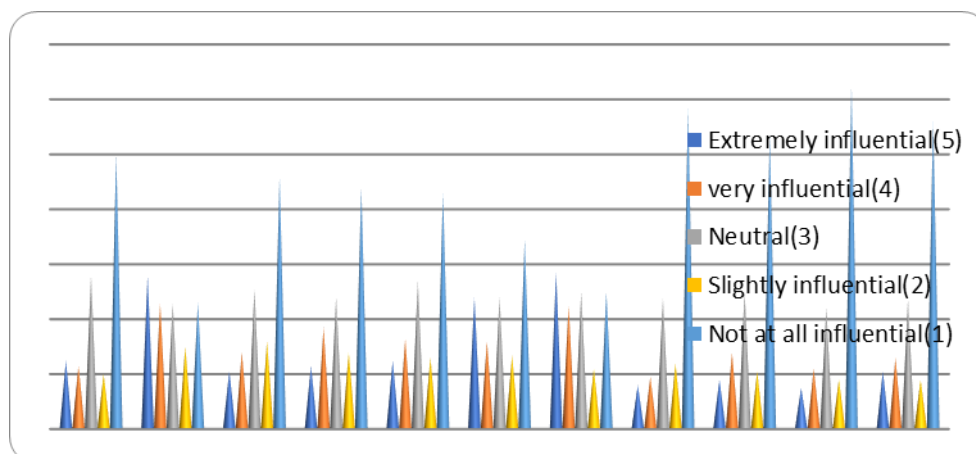


Chart no. -5

On the basis of chart no. 5 for comparative data the clear inclination towards usage of Instagram, Whatsapp and Youtube are being predicted

as a digital platform for getting acquaintance related to admission process by higher education (Manca and Ranieri 2016, Stutzman 2006).

Statement 2-To know the preference (in term of importance) of students for these below information of any college.

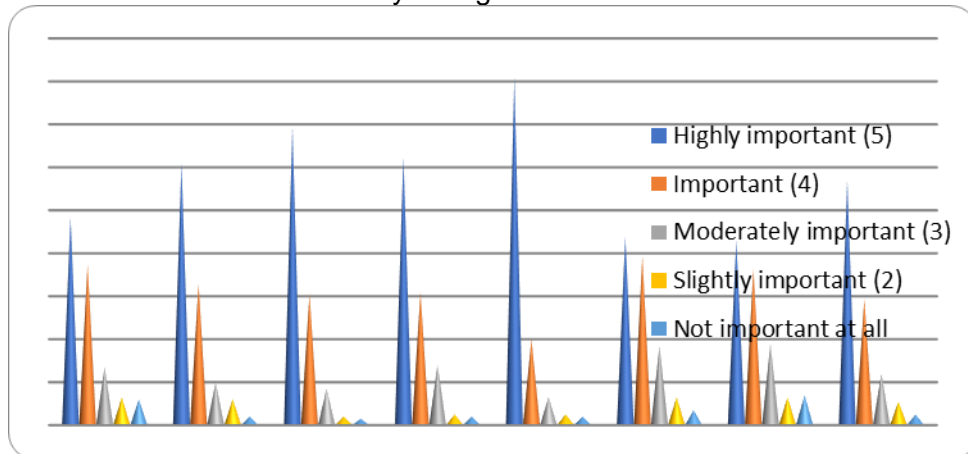


Chart no. -6

On the basis of chart no. 6 the results shows that the important parameters in the admission process are Placements, Academic information, Fees, Students life at the campus and Scholarships. Although other parameters as Sports and other facilities also influence the admission. Similar results were depict by Onyancha (2015).

Statement 3- To know about the information which prospective student wants from the institute on social media.

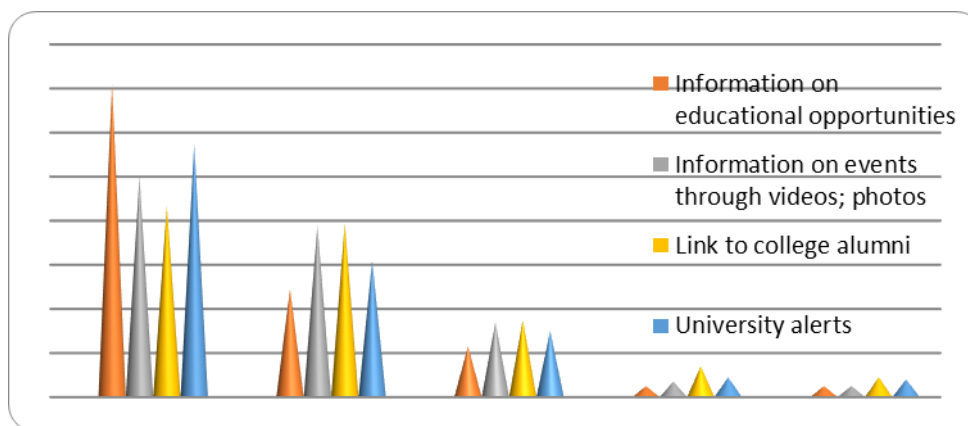


Chart no. -7

The results show higher deviation towards information on educational oppurtunites and respective related alerts about the prompt information. The digitalized platforms are a boon to the higher education system for the entire process of admission process. The going green concept of UGC is clearly being helped up with such modernisation. The sites are helpful to help out students with virtual platforms. Similarly concluded in the study by Ganim-Barnes' (2009).

Statement 4- Recommendation of Social media platforms to your friends to select a HEI course.

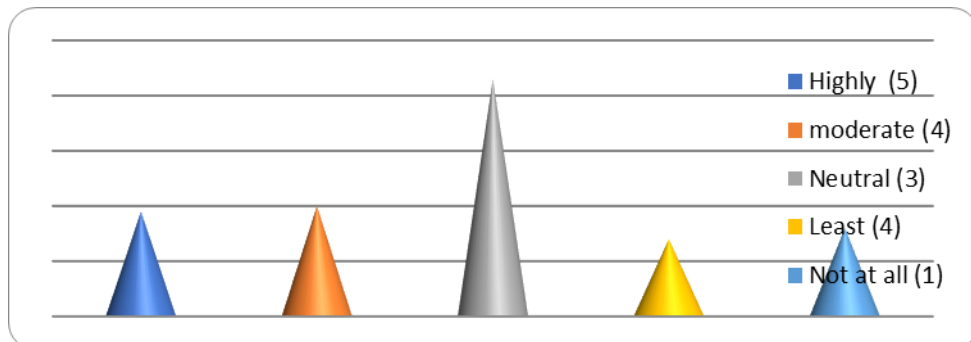


Chart no. -8

According to the above findings 17% respondent highly recommended social media platforms are useful in selection of higher education courses. 38% students are neutral about recommending social media platforms. Whereas there are group of students who are leaning towards not suggesting it to select Higher Education courses. Akram and Kumar, (2017) also concluded in his study that student also encourages their colleagues and personal contacts to use digital platform for admission and academic purpose.

Statement 5- To know that at what Extent to aspirants go along with suggestions on social media.

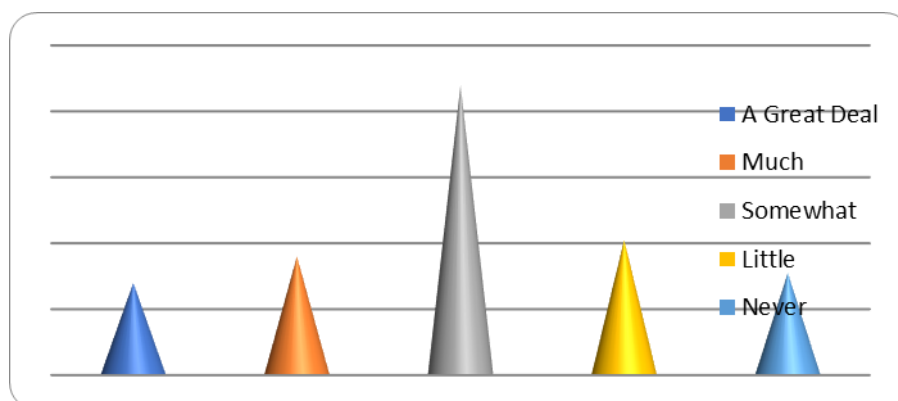


Chart no. -9

The results shows that high no. of students are neutral to go along with the suggestions on social media which shows that there may be some other factors in the decision making process which may influence. Some group of students are highly recommending or suggesting to along with the suggestion of social media.

Statement 6- To find that is there any mismatch between information provided by social media about the college and reality of the college.

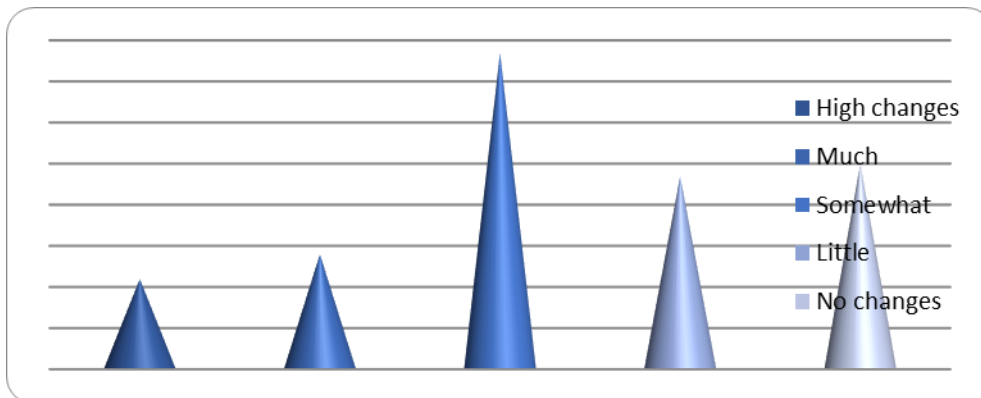


Chart no. -10

The result depicts that many of the respondents find mismatch or differences between the information provided by digital platforms and the actual scenario of an institute. Some accept that there is no change between the information displayed on social media and the reality, while others find major changes between these two. Institutions are recommended to provide actual information on their social media sites to assist students. Students who find a mismatch are not much reliant on the information provided by digital platforms; hence, they opt for traditional methods for their admission purposes.

6. FINDINGS:

In this study, it can be concluded that the enrollment decision of a student is more influenced by user-generated content (Obar and Wildman, 2015) on digital platforms (YouTube 18%, Instagram 17%, WhatsApp 15% etc.) compared to the marketing content created by the educational institution (Holmes and O'Loughlin, 2014).

Digital media, especially for the education sector, guides prospective students for schools, universities, and colleges in building their careers and also amplifies the institutes in making their brand image. Further, it can also be concluded that social media and digital platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and SEO have a significant impact on the student's enrollment decisions of students seeking to pursue higher education (Jacob Olorunjoba Kutu, Febishola Idowu Kutu, 2021). Also, it is found that there is a slight variation between the information available on social media platforms and the reality. A group of students seeks for placement, fees-related information, and about academic information on institutions' social media sites. However, it is highly advisable for higher education institutes to start promoting their content on digital platforms as today's youth is more influenced by social media.

7. FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The approach to use the digital platform for the enhancement of various admission-related strategies was found to be quite appropriate.

However the future lies in usage of internet for all efforts of advertising and approaching the valid customer.

The entire admission process includes dealing with proposing a approach to select and compare information with reference to higher education institutes on portal. The results infer that the gap between the digital platform and traditional approach are different.

Future scope of study shows a clear demarcation of information that is being given and information that is really required to be crosschecked with the prospective students at the time of admission decisions.

The virtual tours, interviews and picture are just not sufficient. The approach is good but it needs physical validation as well. Due to paucity of time and limitation the other approaches to handle this research issue was not possible.

Further a clear insight on digitalized platform and traditional approach both are justified. A mixed blend of the both approach is advisable for better decision making for the same.

8. SUGGESTIONS:

After analyzing the results of the study it is suggestion for the higher education institutes to give equal weighted to the traditional strategies as well as to the Digital strategies for admission purpose. Traditional such as face to face counseling session, interaction with faculties etc. creates different impact on the mind of students as compare to the Digital strategies. The other strategies are follows-

- There should be some preferred and authentic site on which students and parents can trust easily.
- All the information provided by institutions on their digital platforms should not be misleading and inaccurate.
- There should be no comparison of institutions on digital platforms.
- There should be proper certified copies of approvals received from concernering bodies such as NIRF Ranking, AICTE etc.
- The information given by the students on digital platforms (i.e. website) must not be used for other purposes except their admission process.
- Close check should be maintained by the institute with reference to any offensive message or comments on their sites.

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Impact of influencer marketing on purchase intention in the tourism sector: Case of Albania

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Abstract: Social media is an important tool for marketing because of its sales-oriented reflections on purchasing decisions. The diversification of its platforms and the increasing impact of influencers, has transformed into a phenomenon buying a touristic product/service after being influenced by them. This research is focused on how influencer marketing characteristics impact purchase intention in tourism context. A questionnaire was created using Google forms and distributed through social media channels. It was completed by 116 Albanian respondents. The data were analyzed using SPSS. The results showed attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and quality content have a positive and significant correlation with purchase intention.

Key words: social media, influencer marketing, tourism, quality content

JEL: M31, M37, Z33

Introduction

Social media has become one of the most important promotion and marketing platforms and has the power to influence perceptions, feelings, and experiences (Luo & Zhong, 2015). It is one of the biggest inventions that has changed the way through which tourists acquire information and utilize it (Xiang et al., 2015). The term was first used in literature by McLuhan related to electronic data gathering and global access in 1953 (Peters, 2009). Social media has a multifunctional nature since it offers different possibilities to easily communicate, interact, share information, chat, etc. Some of its distinguishing features, which are worth mentioning consist in: it is substantially free and low-cost for users, allows access to significant communities in a short period, it is easy to use, and users can update whenever they want (Korkmaz, 2012). It also encourages users to create their own content and publish it (Yaylagül, 2017), as well as state their ideas, opinions, critics and judgments. Having said that, social media enables and facilitates the interaction between users and informants as a communication technology (Enli, 2017).

The newest form of marketing known as 'Social Media Influencer Marketing' (SMI) (Cox et al., 2009) refers to individuals with a significant audience size and who can influence others' decisions through their social

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media platforms (Lee et al., 2021; Tuten, 2020). Radwan et al. (2021) defined social media influencers as individuals who have gathered large numbers of followers as they post attractive content, mainly highlighting their lifestyle. Another definition about social media influencer given by Lou & Yuan (2019), considers them as individuals who become famous on social media for their expertise and knowledge on a particular subject.

Nowadays, SMIs can be an efficient tool for creating demand, because followers perceive SMIs as reliable sources that provide true and accurate information (Brown & Hayes, 2008). In this regard, companies and suppliers use the posts of SMIs to market their products in order to affect followers' purchasing decision process. The travel segment is one of the most popular fields in which SMIs are considered a more reliable and credible information source. Since tourism has intangible features, because the user can not test it without travelling. In order to minimize the risk, online suggestions/recommendations can also be used as evidence before reserving travel products and taken into account in decisions. Social Media Influencers provide content to their followers about different aspects of their travel in order to capture follower's attention and build a sense of connections and authenticity. Therefore, followers can plan their travel based on those posts or enhance their travel planning due to comments, pictures, or videos (Koç, 2019).

The use of influencer marketing in tourism was initiated by international hotel firms and has then gained popularity in destination management organizations (DMOs) (Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020) to generate benefits including direct destination endorsement, increased destination awareness, and a wider target audience (Glover, 2009; Zhang & Huang, 2021). Evidence indicates that influencer marketing can help to drive behavioral change, redirect tourism flows to less popular areas in order to reduce overtourism (Li et al., 2017), and can play a critical role in tourism recovery during a global crisis (Femenia Serra et al., 2021). In this regard, it is assumed that SMIs are the critical determinants for purchasing decision process and destination choice, primarily when the destination choice is majorly based on internet searches.

Social Media is considered an import source of information and as a result it has a crucial role in travel decision-making (Dabija et al., 2018; Fotis et al., 2012; Usui et al., 2018). One of the main reason for this impact refers to the content that is provided by social networks, which enables tourists to make decisions about travel.

One of the key advantages of leveraging social media influencers is their ability to target niche audiences. Influencers often have dedicated followers who share similar interests, because people value and listen to the opinion of others who have actually experienced a product or service through their social network connection. Previously studies have found that the use of influencers has a positive influence on consumer's purchase intention (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2017). However, what are the characteristics of influencer marketing that we as consumer value the most and effect our purchase intention? This research aims to better understand the impact influencer marketing has on consumer behavior within the travel

and tourism industry and seeks to identify if the attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and content quality of SMIs influence the purchase intention and consumer attitudes towards tourism products and services.

Literature Review

Social media has globally modernized the personal and organizational interactions through its different platforms, showing its power which cannot be underestimated and is expected to continue. Nowadays social media is an area that is in a state of flux, becoming a dominant form of communication and expression (Appel et al., 2020).

As tourism is an 'information intensive' industry, social media is an extremely vital source for obtaining knowledge and is particularly relevant as a marketing tool (Hays et al., 2013). Evidence shows that there is a strong correlation between perceived level of influence from social media and changes made in travel plans prior to final decisions (Fotis et al., 2008). Since social media allows customers to be directly involved in the circulation of information, it influences tourists in how they search for information, plan their holidays, share their experiences, meet other travelers, engage with tourism providers and perceive destinations (Gretzel, 2017; Pudliner, 2007). Utilizing social media can also assist travelers in defending their decisions and lowering post-purchase dissonance, including their choice of destination (Tussyadiah et al., 2018). Yazgan & Sevinç (2015) also revealed a significant relationship between social media usage and destination choice and figured out that tourists use social media to reach accurate information and to get additional knowledge. Thus, the experience and comments stated in social media applications can increase or decrease the demand for the destination and provide predictions of the destination (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008).

In the study "Role of Social Media in Marketing in the 21st Century", Gulavani, S. & Kulkarni, M. (2022) found out that social media sites are freely accessible to everyone due to internet connectivity and as a result, products and businesses can interact and connect with followers personally through social networking sites. Also, Ayoub, A. & Balawi, A. (2022), in their study "A New Perspective for Marketing: The Impact of Social Media on Customer Experience" came to the finding that social media use is having an impact on all aspects of human existence and its platforms have become an important and beneficial tool to enhance the customer experience. According to the study "The Impact of Social Media and Digital Marketing on Consumer Behavior" by Ashrafuzzaman, Md. et al., (2022) was concluded that decision-making of consumers using social media was easier and funnier compared to consumers of other information sources, especially when people felt that the material on social media was of higher quality and bigger quantity than they had anticipated. Overall, the results show that social media significantly affects the choices that consumers make.

According to Cheung et al (2022), social media has transformed users from being passive recipients of marketing messages to being

communicators who can openly share their opinions. Being this type of communicator has created the term “influencer”. Over the past few years there has been an increase in the use of social media influencers to promote products and services, where it is of great importance to emphasize that influencers with high numbers of followers have been found to be more likeable than others and also more influential as opinion leaders (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

Previous studies have analyzed the social media influencers’ influence on travel intentions through different variables such as: information quality and trustworthiness (Magno & Cassia, 2018), attractiveness (Caraka et al., 2022) and trust (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017; Pop et al., 2021). Other studies have highlighted the impact that social media has on communication of tourism experience (Wong et al., 2020) and tourists’ attitudes (Chatzigeorgiou & Christou, 2020; Y. Wang et al., 2021). Avcı and Bilgili (2020: 90) concluded that the proximity, attractiveness, and innovativeness of SMIs that recommend a destination, positively affect the intention of potential tourists to choose that destination. Bakker (2018) found out that authenticity and trust in the influencer are considered as key aspects by the consumers and that influencers are more popular and successful when they are authentic and spontaneous.

Social Media Influencers and Purchasing decision

Consumers are increasingly considering social media as a major information source when it comes to making decisions on what to purchase (Alalwan et al., 2017). Leung, Bai, and Stahura (2015) state that experience with social media influences a consumer’s attitude towards brands using social media. Chopra, Avhad and Jaju, (2020) have said, “influencer marketing is the act of an external person who influences the consumers buying choices.” SMIs, replacing traditional information sources in the same way as the advice of acquaintances, can influence individuals’ purchasing decisions, feelings, and thoughts (Armağan & Doğaner, 2018; Mert, 2018).

SMIs can influence their followers’ emotions, thoughts, and purchasing decisions through social media applications similar to Instagram, Youtube, Twitter, and Facebook, by posting images, videos, or live broadcasts. At some point, some content or people are much more preferred by the followers, which allows them to gain more followers and increase their effect on followers (Ki & Kim, 2019), as well as raise awareness and influence the purchasing decisions of those who seek and value their expertise. Individuals have the option to choose to follow influencers online and as they share aspects of their life and interact with followers often, individuals perceive them to have better accessibility, be more believable, intimate and easier to relate with (Abidin, 2016).

According to their type, social media influencers can be classified according to:

The number of followers: SMIs with more followers are called mega-influencers, and those with fewer followers are called micro-influencers (Armağan & Doğaner, 2018). Micro-influencers’ have a greater effect on followers compared to mega-influencers, because it is thought that their interaction and sincerity with their followers have more sense of trust than

mega-influencers (Avcı & Bilgili, 2020). Regarding effectiveness, they can do much better job because they are not that busy and overwhelmed with work (Sanders, 2023.). The newest type of influencer is nano influencers, that represents ordinary people who are experts in their narrow areas and with a very narrow audience (Geysler, 2023).

The typology: Regarding this division, influencers can be considered as: snoopers, which is referred to influencers that share content on social networks as a hobby, curious, eager to make new acquaintances and very eager to communicate with people and share their knowledge and experience (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018, p. 3). The other type of influencer are informers, which offer completely credible information and their need to inform the audience is based on the educational level. Entertainers, that are creative and team-oriented influencers whose content is mostly related to relaxation and enjoyment (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018, p. 4). The last are infotainers, also known as hybrid mode of informers and entertainers, who most often associate their content with some form of entertainment and enjoyment (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018, p. 5).

In tourism, the planning process is very demanding and social media is used as an important source of information during every stage of it (Fotis et al., 2008). Although consumers may find travel related information in many different sources such as websites, pages, ads or blog posts (Castañeda et al., 2020), online Word-of-Mouth is the most used source for consumers searching for travel information (Terttunen & Terttunen, 2017) and it is the pillar for influencer marketing in travel and tourism (Gretzel, 2018), by giving an overview of the destination, accommodation, various activities to be done on the spot and mode of transportation. Moreover, travel influencers can inform their followers on how tourism affects the environment and local communities. In this regard, they can suggest to their followers eco-friendly activities and inspire them to lessen their environmental impact. By using their influence, social media influencer can help to protect and preserve the world's natural and cultural resources for future generations.

According to Shuqair et al (2017), the significant power of social media platforms as sources of information, makes users more attached to travel influencers during the decision-making process regarding their travel and choice of sustainable destinations. Therefore, using marketing channels, advertisements and their content have an enormous effect on consumer purchase decisions (Garashov, 2016).

Since 2008, there have been many studies on the connection between tourism and influencer marketing. One of the first to connect tourism and influencers was the study by Miguens et al. (2008), which found that users could develop the destination's image and encourage the desire in others to visit the city through the forums and reviews that users submitted to the website. Pestek and Alic (2017) interviewed 150 people who used social media and found that 79% followed a travel influencer and that the content the influencer shared could impact where the user chose to travel. Lim et al. (2017) researched the effectiveness of social media influencers on consumer attitude and purchase intention and found that

they do have a positive impact on intention to purchase in consumers. Magno and Cassia (2018) found that followers may adopt the travel suggestions provided but that depended on the perceptions of trustworthiness and quality of information provided.

Also, SMIs' various characteristics affect purchasing decisions positively. Chen, Shang and Li (2014) concluded that the blog's novelty, reliability, comprehensibility, and attractiveness positively affect the use of the blog and the intention to visit the destination. Lisichkova and Othman (2017) found that the honesty, reliability, originality, accuracy, and expertise characteristics of SMIs are effective in online purchases of consumers. Rebolo (2017) determined that honesty and attractiveness, which are reliability dimensions, positively affect purchase intention. Lou and Yuan (2019) concluded that the knowledge quality of the content produced by SMIs and the reliability, attractiveness, and proximity of SMIs positively affect brand awareness and purchase intention. Wiedmann (2020) found that the most important requirement for a social media influencer success in online campaigns is trustworthiness.

According to the Social credibility theory, which was first proposed by Ohanian (1990) as a scale to integrate and measure endorsers perceived attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, incorporating the two large models from existing literature: source attractiveness (familiarity, likeability and similarity dimensions) and source credibility (expertise and trustworthiness). The three dimensions of credibility, which combine social media influencer expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness, are very important in the advertising process (Sertoglu et al., 2014) and the success of the shared message is fundamentally dependent on the acknowledged level of the influencer's trustworthiness and expertise, which is associated across literature with the perceived credibility of influencers.

Also, content quality means more than just a beautiful image, because it represents a connection between brand, influencer, and consumer, and it "works best when the content is natural, genuine, and realistic,". (Childers, Lemon, & Hoy, 2019). In content marketing, the focus is on creating "valuable, relevant, and quality content" to share in "online media," (Peres & Mesquita, 2015). Emamjome, Gable, & Bandara (2013) added to these studies with a conceptual model based on content quality, which found that high-quality content often gains more interaction.

Effectiveness of Social Media Influencers in Promoting Tourism

The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions, as well as their capacity to bridge cultural barriers and facilitate real-time engagement, makes them a valuable tool for destinations seeking to attract potential travelers. One of the most significant topics of great interest in the recent years is related to the effectiveness of social media influencers in promoting tourism. Regarding to this, one key advantage that can be mentioned is related to the influencers ability to reach niche audience. If they share their personal experiences and adventures in a particular destination, influencers can create an emotional connection with their

audience, because they are often followed by those who share similar interest. This connection often translates into a higher level of trust.

Another essential aspect is the real-time engagement, because social media allows for immediate interactions between influencers and their audience. Having that said, potential travelers can ask questions, seek recommendations, and receive instant feedback. This real-time engagement enhances the decision-making process and addresses potential concerns, making potential visitors more comfortable with the idea of exploring a new destination.

However, the effectiveness of social media influencers in promoting tourism has its challenges, such as authenticity and credibility, which are paramount in influencer marketing.

Research Problem

Since there is no opportunity to try touristic products like other products, their purchasing process is more complex (Dalgın & Oruç, 2015). Researches have highlighted the positive relationship between social media influencer with purchase intention (Lim et al., 2017) and for this reason, the effect of social media platforms on the tourism product purchasing decision is significant. Many individuals now prefer to believe what SMIs have to tell, so while SMIs are disseminating these travel memories via social media, many tourists strategically select the information that is useful to them and plan to have the same experience (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013).

Considering the issues discussed so far within the scope of the research, the hypotheses of the research are as follows:

H1 - SMI's attractiveness positively influences purchase intention.

H2 - SMI's trustworthiness positively influences purchase intention.

H3 - SMI's expertise positively influences purchase intention.

H4 - SMI's quality content positively influences purchase intention.

Study area and Methodology

In this study was used a structured questionnaire to collect data, which is composed of questions, statements with Likert scale categories and several yes/no questions. It was conducted via Google Forms during September 2023 and was shared via email, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook accounts using a snowball sampling method. One of the advantaged of the online survey is that it reaches a large sample, demographically and geographically, as well it can be returned quickly at little or no financial cost. 132 participants contributed to the survey, but 16 questionnaires were excluded from the analyses due to incorrect or incomplete filling. Complete anonymity was maintained throughout the research and the participants' names were replaced with coding to ensure confidentiality. The data were analyzed on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, using the Spearman correlation to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables.

This study was based on the Source Credibility Model created by Ohanian (1990). According to this scale, credibility is composed of three

dimensions, attractiveness (which refers to the consumer's perception of the physical appeal), trustworthiness (which concerns honesty and the degree of trust), and expertise (which considers the consumer's perception of the knowledge, skills, and experience). Also, social media channels are built on user-generated content shared by the audience. As such, the quality of the content is a vital aspect of how a follower interacts with an influencer. Having said that, the other central aspect of influencer marketing is the quality of the content being shared and how it impacts the intentions of the followers.

Results and Discussion

• Descriptive Statistics

There were 116 usable questionnaires out of which 60 (51.52%) were filled in by men and 56 (48.28%) were responded by women. The results show that the gender of sample population is balanced. The respondents were asked to inform their age by selecting one of the following “under 25 years old”, “25-30”, “31-40”, “over 40 years old”. The vast majority (34.48%) of respondents were between 25 and 30 years old, 25.86% were under 25 years old, 21.55% were between 31 and 40 while 18.1% were aged over 40 years old. The other question asked respondents what was their highest level of education. Concerning education level, 0.86% of the respondents completed doctorate degree, 3.45% completed technical/vocational Training, 4.3% have high school degree or equivalent, 21.55% have a bachelor degree. The most significant numbers were from respondents with master’s degrees (69.83%). No participants were registered, completing the category of Some high school, no diploma and Postgraduate degree. According the question 4, most respondents were employed (56%), while 14.65% were students, 11.2% were self-employed, 6.89% were unable to work, 6.89% were retired and 4.31% of respondents were homemakers.

In the following question, the participants were asked if they follow any Social Media Influencers on social media, and 92.2% said yes, compared to 7.8% that answered no. Those who answered yes to previous question, were then questioned how many Social Media Influencers they currently follow on social media. Most of the participants stated that they follow 6 to 10 influencers (30.8%), 26.2% marked between 11 to 15, 25.2% follow between 1 to 5, and 17.8% follow more than 15 Social Media Influencers.

Following, the respondents were asked on the frequency of social media usage to access Influencers. The data collected are presented in Table 1 shows the frequency level of usage of the listed social media. The Likert scale was used to facilitate the analysis of the variables in the SPSS software. In this case, 1 represents “Always”, 2 represents “Very Frequently”, 3 is “Occasionally”, 4 is “Rarely”, and 5 is “Never”.

Table 1. How often do you use the social media channels listed below to access Influencers?

Channels	Always	Very frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Facebook	6	14	18	30	39

Instagram	72	14	10	5	6
YouTube	10	30	27	29	11
Tik Tok	59	12	8	12	16
Twitter	8	6	10	40	43
Snapchat	9	21	27	21	29

Source: Author

In the other question, were identified the SMIs's characteristics that impact their audience. According the results presented in Table 2, trustworthiness is the characteristic considered very important to the respondents. Participants also classified expertise as being a very important aspect of SMIs, followed by attractiveness.

Table 2. Characteristics of SMI

Characteristics	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important
Attractiveness	23	52	23	8	1
Expertise	28	45	32	2	0
Trustworthiness	39	38	25	4	1
Quality content	8	28	45	22	4

Source: Author

After that, participants were asked to "Consider the following statement: I desire to buy a product or service that an Influencer recommended", which is related with the purchase intention for a product or service recommended by an influencer. According to the responses, 30.8% of the participants agreed, and 9.35% said they strongly agreed. On the other hand, 0.93% said they disagree, and 58.8% said they neither agree nor disagree.

The next question addresses the results regarding the sources of information used in the decision-making process to purchase tourist products. Initially, the online sources of information were identified to understand which ones were consulted by consumers in their decision-making process. Based on the results, Review websites (38.8%), followed by Digital Influencer (26.7%), Family and Friend (25.9%) and Official websites, apps and blogs (8.6%).

After that, respondents were asked how likely they would consider trying products and services based on SMI's recommendations. The findings are displayed in Table 3. According to the respondent's opinion, Holiday destination, Accommodation and Restaurants were considered to be the most likely to try, followed by package tours and indoor and outdoor activities. The least services the respondents considered trying was Pub/Nightclubs/Events (14.2%) and travel.

Table 3. How likely would you buy the following products and services based on SMI's recommendation?

Characteristics	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely
Holiday Destination	3	11	21	41	31
Accommodation	3	11	29	38	26
Restaurants	2	9	21	49	26
Indoor and outdoor activities	5	15	34	36	14
Travel Methods	6	18	32	43	9
Package tours	6	23	33	27	18
Pub/Nightclubs/Events	5	16	39	37	10

Source: Author

- **Inferential Statistics**

Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale is 0,828, which indicates that the tool used is reliable.

Relationship between Attractiveness and Purchase Intention

H0 - SMI's attractiveness does not positively influence purchase intention.

H1 - SMI's attractiveness positively influences purchase intention.

Spearman's correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between Attractiveness towards Purchase Intention. The test showed that there was a moderate positive correlation ($r_s(107) = 0.510, p = .001$). In this case, because the p-value is lower than 0.05, the correlation is statistically significant, indicating strong evidence for the alternative hypothesis against the null hypothesis. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Relationship between Trustworthiness and Purchase Intention

H0 - SMI's trustworthiness does not positively influence purchase intention.

H2 - SMI's trustworthiness positively influences purchase intention.

Spearman's correlation was conducted to investigate the association between Trustworthiness towards Purchase Intention. The test found that there is a moderate relationship between the variables ($r_s(107) = .0.574, p < .001$). The correlation is statistically significant, given that the p-value is less than .001 (2-tailed), representing very strong evidence against the null hypothesis, supporting the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Relationship between Expertise and Purchase Intention

H0 - SMI's expertise does not positively influence purchase intention.

H3 - SMI's expertise positively influences purchase intention.

The Spearman's correlation revealed a moderate significant correlation between Expertise towards Purchase Intention ($r_s(107) = 0.570$, $p < .001$). The p-value was lower than .001, which was statistically significant, suggesting very strong evidence against the null hypothesis supporting the alternative hypothesis. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Relationship between Quality content and Purchase Intention

H0 - SMI's quality content does not positively influence purchase intention.

H4 - SMI's quality content positively influences purchase intention.

The Spearman's correlation revealed a weak positive significant correlation between Quality Content towards Purchase Intention ($r_s(107) = 0.410$, $p < .001$). The p-value was lower than .001, which was statistically significant, suggesting very strong evidence against the null hypothesis supporting the alternative hypothesis. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusions and Recommendation

Social networking refers to expressing views, exchanging data, and holding discussions on social media. In this regard, social media influencers are a very important connector for potential customers. They constitute significant knowledge sources and they should be known and used as an important source to increase the tourism demand, because with the influence and content provided by influencers, potential consumers or tourists will be fascinated and interested in visiting the promoted attractions. Also, since influencers act as role models for many followers, they can encourage their community to support sustainable tourism and that it can be achieved by practicing it themselves.

Social media platforms have become an important factor in the decision-making process. In this regard, many travelers become interested in a touristic product or service as a result of recommendation given by social media influencers through reading their personal evaluations other sorts of information. The findings suggest that social media influencers should be careful regarding the content they post and the information therein, in order to avoid confusing/misleading information that allows them to develop a long-term friendly relationship with their followers. In this regard, they should provide a realistic image of the reality and as a result, they will be more reliable and will influence more the purchase intention.

Some recommendations that can be given based on the results:

In order to develop tourism, the suppliers should collaborate with influencers and encourage them to share inspiring stories in order to captivate audiences and spark wanderlust.

Influencers should be careful on what they post, because if they want to influence in the purchase decision of their followers, they have to be trustworthy, expert and attractive.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

The number of participants is small in order to generalize the results. Thus, future researchers should focus on increasing the number of total participants in order to make more conclusive opinions.

Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness and content quality are some of the many factors involved. In future, researchers can explore other traits of travel influencers affecting purchasing intentions by including other exploratory variables.

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Uses of Machine Learning in Email Marketing

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Abstract: Machine learning is being used nowadays in the business world to support the email marketing campaigns and increase their level of success. In order for a campaign to be successful it needs to lead to high open and click rates. By analyzing past behavioral data, machine learning algorithms can predict the consumers' future behavior and provide feedback on how to personalize the content, colors used, subject lines of emails, as well as the send out times and conduct email campaigns in a faster and automatized way for brands and companies, while allowing them to gain higher revenues. This article offers an overview of the main uses of ML in email marketing, based on academic research from 2013-2023, accessed in Science Direct, Web of Science and Google Scholar databases and relevant statistics from industry reports. A scheme that summarizes the connection between the main uses of ML in email marketing activities is proposed as well as directions for future research.

Key words: machine learning, email marketing, personalized emails, ML

1.Introduction

One of the main challenges of brands and organizations in recent years has been providing personalized experiences for their subscribers in order to keep them interested in what they have to offer. This cannot be achieved without the companies knowing their consumers.

Email marketing remains on a global scale one of the most important channels of marketing communication for businesses, used not only to increase brand visibility and awareness, but also as a tool to help promotion and sales.[1] It has the power to reach customers at the appropriate time with the appropriate offer. Moreover, the use of this form of direct marketing provides for marketers an average ROI of 36 dollars for every dollar spent, according to the State of Marketing Report 2023 by Hubspot [2].

As email marketing gains more and more attention from companies, this causes an overflow of campaigns received by subscribers in their email addresses, which potentially leads to a lower visibility and opening rates and as a result, lower action taken by the consumer, which consequently means lower sales. This makes having high open rates very important for a company. [10] According to a study in 2020 [3], subscribers open an email

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if they perceive that there is any value in it for them, making it crucial not only for the inside content to be personalized or relevant for the customer, but also the subject line, as that is what is initially read from the user, before clicking to open the email. Also, if sent during an optimal time, it would increase the chances of the email being opened and for the subscriber to be attracted. While artificial intelligence attempts simulation, extension and expansion of human intelligence using artificial methodology and technology [4], machine learning (ML) as a branch of AI, is the scientific study of algorithms and statistical models that computer systems use to perform a specific task without being explicitly programmed.[5] They “learn” by constantly being fed with data, and garner better and better results in the future.

Although academic research in this area is still considerably limited, this article aims to offer an overview of the main uses and implications of machine learning in email marketing, as a result of sifting through existing articles and academic research of the last decade, dating from 2013-2023, accessed in Science Direct, Web of Science and Google Scholar databases and relevant statistics from industry reports.

2. Related Work

Machine learning, is being utilized in email marketing to enhance various aspects of email campaigns, with the final goal of increasing the effectiveness of this type of direct marketing. It is able to track, gather and analyze past data from subscribers and to use it in order to predict their future behavior towards the following campaigns, thus determining the best parameters of these campaigns, such as send-out times and personalization in order to enhance the success of marketing efforts.

2.1 Email Personalization

Email personalization is the process of customizing the content and structure of emails according to subscribers specific and individual needs taking advantage of their navigational behavior. Personalization is a refined version of customization, where marketing is done in an automated way based on the customer's user's profiles, rather than customer requests on their own behalf. [6]

Research has focused on developing algorithms to automatically identify customer segments based on attributes like demographics, past purchase behavior, and engagement history. This leads to better targeted and more relevant email campaigns.

Subject and sender lines have a strong influence on click rates of the emails, as the customers often open and click emails based on these two elements, according to [8]. Therefore, machine learning models are able to assist in personalizing them for subscribers, by using past data on consumers' past behavior and how they have reacted to certain words and subject lines. Moreover, since machine learning enables businesses to use it for content creation, it is useful to generate the content of emails in a personalized way, use the same logic as with subject lines, and even more so, doing this simultaneously on an individual level for every customer or target group.

According to a study in the hotel industry [11], regarding the post stay email campaigns and communications, emails with personalized content tend to influence more the customers' attitude or intention to revisit the hotel. In other words, personalized emails, as opposed to generic ones, have the strongest impact on attitude towards the brand and repurchase intention.

While by personalization we refer to personalizing the content, it is in no way limited to only that. Previous studies have already shown that design elements such as the colors used in an email have the power to influence the customers in terms of the level of attention they show and by triggering the right mood in order to respond positively to the email. [12]. By deploying machine learning, past attitudes of customers towards different colors used, can potentially help identify which colors they react best towards and choose them for future campaigns or communications.

Artificial intelligence has also made possible the rise of hyper personalization, which is catering to every individual customer in a personalized way, thus covering a whole database of customers at the same time. By personalizing content, subject line, color, send out time etc. at the same time, different marketing strategies can be implemented for different customers, simultaneously, on an individual level.

2.2 Predictive Analytics

Machine learning has been applied to predict user behavior, such as the likelihood of a recipient opening an email or making a purchase. Predictive models can help marketers send emails at times that are optimal for best campaign performance or start follow-up emails based on user interactions. Scholars identify three predictors of open rates: recipients' characteristics which are found in the consumer's profile, subject line characteristics, and send-out time.[7] Machine learning can be used to predict subject-line click rates by learning from the history of subject lines. It has been proven possible to predict the click rate for a targeted marketing email. [8] Combined with analysis and segmentation of the subscribers, less loyal ones can be identified and customized marketing strategies can be applied for these groups in order to retain them.

What is important is not only the content of an email, but also the time in which the subscriber receives it. If received at the right time, there are increased chances of it being opened, and therefore there will be better chances for that campaign to be successful. Machine learning algorithms can analyze historical data to determine the best times to send emails to different segments of the audience, thus achieving better open rates and engagement, which overall translates in increasing income for the business. The interest regarding sending a marketing communication at the right time to a subscriber has increased, in recent years. Companies are investing more in the implementation of machine learning algorithms in their services and products—companies such as Salesforce, Adobe, or Netflix. [9]

Businesses are able to segment the consumers into profiles or types based on whether the email was opened and the time of opening,

using three machine learning models. In the study [13] the algorithms are proven to be able to predict future behavior by analyzing past data, as they have been useful in predicting the best send out times for each consumer segment.

Another study [14] shows two different machine learning models were able to predict open rates based on these variables: the emails and the content of the emails that were sent, the action taken by the subscriber, the day and time of opening, the location of opening and the email domain of the subscriber.

To this point, it is evident that every element that is used for personalization, is in fact a source for prediction and should therefore be part of the data that is gathered and analyzed by machine learning models in order to calibrate future campaigns. It is impossible to separate personalization as one of the purposes of use of machine learning from its capacity to predict from past data, as it is its predictive analytics capacity that feeds personalization on a large scale.

2.3 Email tracking

Email tracking is an activity that allows the email sender to collect information on their recipients in order to have a better understanding of their customer base and performance of their campaigns.

It is important to distinguish between common web tracking and email tracking. Although they both rely on similar mechanisms such as cookies and tracking images (which can be unique and non-unique) in emails that are HTML-based, email tracking, as opposed to web tracking, the data is necessarily matched to a specific email address in order to be gathered, and consequently to the name and very possibly organization, work, social media accounts/ handles of the subscriber[15] as well as behavioral data such as location opening time, number of times the email was opened etc. [16].

This is a machine learning approach and brings to the gathering of data that is afterwards analyzed and used for prediction of future behavior of customers in email marketing activities.

In terms of practical implementation, the use of cookies is subject to consent by the user, but in the case of unique tracking images, user privacy is potentially invaded because this mechanism allows for gathering identifiable and sensitive information on the user without their knowledge or consent. It is cause for raising privacy concerns. Moreover, there are two main implications from a marketing perspective to be taken into consideration:

1. There may not be enough user awareness regarding the effects of unique tracking images on their privacy. Both legal and ethical aspects may call for consideration of the lack of transparency from the businesses involved in the campaigns towards their subscribers.
2. Machine learning is also involved in the counterpart which is related to filtering the emails. If ML algorithms would filter both unique and non-unique tracking images in incoming emails in the name of

privacy protection, by classifying all these emails as spam, very important data in terms of advertisement, consumer behavior etc. that would have otherwise been gathered by the companies, would be lost and the effectiveness of the campaigns would be seriously hindered.

A 2018 study [15] suggests a machine learning classification model designed to only prevent tracking from unique tracking images that collect personal data. The suggestion is to reach a balance in order to solve these situations and make the best of them, by finding solutions through implementing tailor made machine learning algorithms.

2.4 Functions of machine learning

By combining these three aforementioned main uses, there are two functions of machine learning in email marketing, as follows:

1. **Optimization.** Using tracking, predictive analysis and personalization, if done successfully, leads to optimized campaigns with better results.
2. **Automation.** It is made possible through the capacity of machine learning to handle huge amounts of data in dramatically shorter times, to send emails to large databases at once and to personalize at scale.

3.How does a successful implementation of a ML model look like?

Every use of a machine learning model within the email marketing activities is intertwined and does not exist apart. Algorithms can be unique and tailor made in order to garner the needs of the companies, their characteristics and communication strategies.

As the following scheme in Figure 1 suggests, the connections between these uses are such that one feeds the other by creating a cycle of flowing information that is expected to increase in volume but also in quality overtime, if the model and its implementation have been successful:

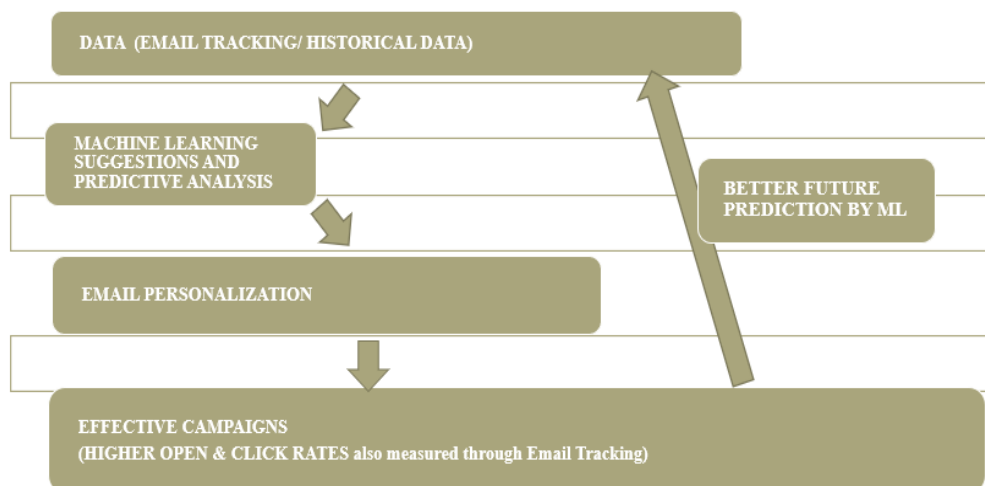


Figure 1. *Connections between uses of machine learning in email marketing*

Data comes from past email campaigns and it is becoming increasingly important for companies to invest in gathering it in a central database so that it can be analyzed overtime for predictive analysis. This analysis becomes a source of information and feedback to be used for future campaigns, as the ML model is able to discover patterns of behavior and space for improvement so that these patterns can be turned into opportunities from the businesses and better garner their customers' needs and preferences through personalizing their communication with them via email. This leads to the next campaign where the cycle, after implementation, continues to run its course as email tracking captures new data to be stored and analyzed for future purposes.

4.Recommendations and future research

Artificial intelligence, machine learning and their practical implementations are rapidly increasing every day. There is a sparsity of research by the marketing academics in this field and the majority of published research is computer science related, also due to the technological nature of these concepts.

But, although it may be understandably so, whether we like it or not, AI is here to stay and we are already finding it impossible to understand companies, businesses and their marketing activities without considering the implementation of artificial intelligence as part of them, and in this case of machine learning. This new reality suggests that it is more than ever time from an academic perspective for not only more marketing focused or computer science focused research but also more interdisciplinary research in order to study the implications of AI in business, as the practical aspect precedes the theoretical findings in many cases, but it could also be that academic research serves as a source of new ideas and approaches in order to better implement this technology in the future.

From a practical perspective, companies need to seriously consider that a collaborative relationship between marketing roles and data scientist roles would be very beneficial in order to get the best results out of a ML model.

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The Role of Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology Industries

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Abstract: The scientific report on the topic "The Role of Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology Industries" aims at an in-depth examination of the given problem and a practical case study.

The thesis aims to determine what the characteristics of Influencer Marketing in the industry of Emerging and Future Technologies are, what the current state of the industry landscape is, and what the role of Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers is. This question will be addressed in two aspects – the role according to the Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers themselves, and the role according to businesses, companies, governments, and organisations in the industry of Emerging and Future Technologies.

The topic unites several practical spheres and theoretical areas. The problem, which is being reviewed, is new and the subject of the study is current and relevant, as it relates to an emerging field that is still forming on a global scale. In this emerging field, the rules, frameworks of activity, interrelations and dependencies are not yet regulated. Accordingly, the limitations in the research and development of the topic are rooted in its degree of novelty and lack of previous scientific works in this area. The subject matter is new, both for the scientific environment and for the business environment. The practical area to which it refers is at the intersection between technology, marketing, and business. A limited number of globally renowned experts, who are recognized by the relevant industries, chart the development and formation of this new field. To date, discussions on the topic still remain only in a business context.

The main thesis of the scientific report is that the role of Thought Leaders and Technological Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries is significant and should be considered in several aspects – on the one hand to provide guidance, criticism, suggestions, and predictions for the global development of technologies, and on the other hand – to work with businesses in support of certain technological developments, brands, and products.

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In the practice, there is no established framework to regulate and define the interrelations, dependencies, and permissible interactions in the niche of Thought Leadership and Technological Influencing in the industry of Emerging and Future Technologies. There is no unified interpretation of the matter in the scientific circles and a position on the problem under consideration has not yet been formed.

The report aims to emphasize the need for creation of a global framework that outlines the permissible activities, ways and methods of work and cooperation in the field of Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing in the technology industry.

Key words: Thought Leadership, Tech Influencers, Emerging Technologies Influencer Marketing, B2B

JEL: M300, M310, M370, M380, M390

Introduction

The Influencer Marketing industry has gained significant momentum over the past decade. There are numerous studies on the subject, as well as practical knowledge, rules, and guidelines. A new niche under the Influencer Marketing field that only emerged a few years ago and is still in the process of shaping, solidifying, and growing, is Thought Leadership and Technology Influencing in the Emerging and Future Technology Industries. This new type of Influencer Marketing is fundamentally different from the well-known traditional Influencer Marketing, as it is about B2B ("business-to-business") activities in one of the fastest-growing, risky and difficult industries – the industry of Emerging and Future Technologies. In order to be called a "Thought Leader and Technology Influencer", a specialist must meet extremely niche and rarely met criteria – the specialist must be recognized by the industry and its participants as a global expert, must be proven both in the field of Emerging and Future Technologies and in the field of marketing, as well must have outstanding theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in both fields. Globally, the number of recognized "Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers" is extremely small, with the most influential being only 100. The participants and stakeholders in Thought Leadership and Technology Influencing in the field of Emerging and Future Technologies are: global experts, proven both in the field of technology and in the field of marketing; the largest global corporations; the most innovative businesses and companies; international companies with significant market share; governmental organisations and regulatory bodies; industry associations; investors and independent organisations.

The chosen topic for the scientific report is new, both for the scientific community and for the business community. The research question, which is the focus of the study, is to determine the specific role of Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries. To broaden the understanding of the topic, the research will examine the role of Thought Leaders and Technology

Influencers from two different viewpoints – analysing the perspectives on the role of the Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers themselves, and the perspectives of the stakeholders (businesses, companies, corporations, associations, governments, and organisations in the industries of Emerging and Future Technology).

The subject matter is current, trending, novel, and of present interest in the B2B world, as it refers to a newly emerging field in the recent years. This field still lacks the necessary regulations for frameworks of activity, principles and standardization, interrelations and dependencies between the stakeholders and other parties concerned. The logical implications, deriving from the extend of novelty of the topic of this study and the deficiency of previous scientific works in this area, are causing significant limitations in examining and developing this topic. The topic of the role of Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology Industries presents fresh opportunity for the scientific community to explore an entirely new niche topic and to dwell on a new perspective in an entirely unexplored area, given that Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing in the technology industry is a modern phenomenon emerged at the intersection of marketing, technology, and business.

According to Thinkers360, “while B2C influencers are typically social media influencers and celebrities, the fact is that B2B influencers and thought leaders typically wear many hats in terms of their persona: they’re academics, advisors, analysts, authors, consultants, entrepreneurs, executives, social media influencers, and speakers – and any combination thereof. These various roles all represent avenues for these thought leaders to reach their target audience and positively impact the world through their ideas.” (www.thinkers360.com)

Literature review

The subject of this research is new in scientific and business terms. The respective field of practice is still emerging and evolving globally. This new domain presents an intersection between marketing, technology, and business. The development and organisation of this new field is currently being led by a small number of recognized industry experts. These experts are practitioners in the business field and are not involved in scientific work. This leads to the lack of scientific discussion on the topic. Until now, discussions on the matter remain only in a business context. The novelty of the topic is the reason why the related terminology and specific terms are mostly transferred in English in most languages. The essential terminology, both in the technology domain and in the marketing communications domain, is best to be used in English, in order to preserve original context and actual meaning.

Since the topic is not yet written about in scientific circles, similar theories from related fields will be sought and used for the purposes of scientific research. Considering that the subject concerns a new niche, linking of the topic with relevant and already known topics is needed, along with good argumentation. Authors, who have contributed to related topics,

will be explored, with the aim of a future and more extensive research and a theory in this new context to be developed. It will be aimed to base the theory on already existing theories from closest possible fields, which have assumptions that are admissible in the new theory.

Since the thesis is new to the scientific community and is not yet a subject of scientific discussion, there are no relevant literature sources on the subject yet. Accordingly, the review of selected literature sources on the topic will consist of a search for theories from related fields that are as close as possible in essence. The literature review will explore authors who have contributed to topics that contain elements which the thesis touches on. In this way the theory can rely on previous research.

An interesting study that can serve in understanding the specific dynamics of modern digital marketing, is that of Cooper, T., Stavros, C. and Dobele, A.R. (2023). In the study, the authors examine the tensions in brand management created by the rapid transformation of social media, marked by maintaining increasingly complex dynamics of B2B relationships with key intermediaries. Thought Leadership and Tech Influencing are also affected by the fast transformation of digital marketing and social media. It can also be claimed that Thought Leadership and Tech Influencing are a direct result of the fast alterations and the revolutionizing of the marketing and digital industries. B2B marketing, which is the focus of Thought Leadership and Tech Influencing, is also radically transformed and businesses are often incapable of adapting their strategies, methods and tools to these newly emerged alterations in the highly-technologized marketing field. Brands are seen to struggle with keeping up with the trends and are in most cases unable to adapt to the shifted landscape. Many companies still try to keep marketing and branding related work and efforts in-house, which leads to poor results and inability to reach the target stakeholders in the correct manner. The rapidly shifting digital world requires brands to be actively involved in a multi-way communication at all times, ensuring that customers are able and willing to interact with the brand. The inability to comply with these new requirements and changes in marketing, leads to failure of the brands to keep up with the market and the expectations of customers. Thought Leadership and Tech Influencing are the tools to be used in B2B context for technological companies, as these will empower brands to maintain their positions and will facilitate marketing and branding efforts to allow collaborations outside the companies, which will lead to better credibility and higher authority in the technology field. Companies, relying on active and regular partnerships with Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers, are seen to gain more momentum and attention and are able to position themselves higher in the respective industry.

A study by Hardey, M. (2019) provides interesting results. In his article, the author explores the various obstacles that women continue to face in tech culture, and why terms like "women in tech" are problematic. This research correlates directly with the role of Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers, as women in the field of Thought Leadership and Tech Influencing are few and they are constantly facing practices of inequality in

the tech sphere. Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers, who are female, are seen to gain less projects and collaborations, with lower frequency, as compared to male Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers. More, female Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers are also paid less when collaborating with brands. Further research is needed in this direction, however, first initial terms and solid frameworks of principles for Thought Leadership and Tech Influencing in the B2B field in the Emerging and Future Technology industries must be established.

The article by Lindgreen, A., Antioco, M., Palmer, R. and van Heesch, T. (2009) discusses some avenues for future research in the marketing of high-tech products. High-tech products are usually the subject of partnerships between companies and Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers. Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers must be highly skilled in niche marketing for high-tech products. Such niche marketing is based on the unique practical and theoretical experience, as well as reputation and industry expertise each Thought Leader and Tech Influencer has. Thus, the most valuable characteristic of efficient Thought Leadership and Tech Influencing is that there is no single working strategy, each strategy is unique and is crafted specifically by a Thought Leader and Tech Influencer for the actual need of a particular technological brand.

Methodology

Due to the limitations in volume and given the novelty of the chosen topic, the current study is empirical. Thus, broader and more in-depth future study and scientific work will further develop the current findings of this scientific report. Since the topic has not yet been discussed in the scientific community, an extensive study is required to pave the foundations of the scientific discussion on the subject of the role of Thought Leaders and Technological Influencers in Emerging and Future Technology industries. Such future study will provide broader quantitative and qualitative research, as well as empirical and conceptual research, given the novelty of the matter and the lack of previous scientific research globally.

The current empirical research will be based on the author's industry expertise and practical experience in the sphere of Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing in the Emerging and Future Technology industries. As one of the limited numbers of globally recognized Thought Leaders and Technological Influencers in Emerging and Future Technology industries, the author will provide original insights and insider analysis on the current state of Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing in the Emerging and Future Technology industries. Further, the scientific report will examine the existing business reports on the present outlook of B2B Influencer Marketing and Thought Leadership in the Emerging and Future Technology industries.

The related broader future scientific research and study will require utilization of more methods of scientific research. Since the topic is new to the scientific world and no scientific literature is available on the subject yet, the methodology of this future study will be complex. The lack of relevant authoritative literature sources on the selected topic and the lack of existing

hypothesis on the topic require creation of new hypotheses, which should be tested accordingly to prove a single theory.

In order to develop further the topic, the future scientific paper will be based on the current scientific report as a starting point and will aim to develop a new theory on the matter. The novelty of the chosen topic, along with the fact that the corresponding practical business sphere is still emerging and in a state of initial formation, implies prediction, development of a new theory and an in-depth examination of the given problem and practical case. The theory should describe the problem, explain how it works, what the dependencies and interrelationships are, based on practice and scientific methods. The theory must provide definitions and concepts, and should explore interrelationships between individual quantities, and describe how they work together.

The theory will aim to describe, explain, and predict why the mechanisms work in practice, and how they work, as well as to explore how the context will change if the quantities change. In its instrumental part, the theory will determine the number of factors that are relevant to the given problem and will examine how and in what way they are interconnected. In the normative part, the theory will explore how a good knowledge of the practice can be applied to draw theoretical conclusions. Comparable theories from related practical fields will be used for the purposes of the future scientific study, since the subject is new to the scientific community. A solid and comprehensive argumentation is needed, as well as linking the researched topic to existing relevant topics, for which there are developed and accepted scientific theories, in view of the fact that the subject matter relates to a new practical niche and a yet unexplored scientific topic. The theory will aim to be based on existing theories from as closely related fields as possible, which have assumptions that are admissible in proving hypotheses for the new theory.

The future theory to be developed in the future study, would be easily falsifiable because it is new to the scientific community and applies to several industries and practical fields. Each one of these spheres could easily reject the claims if the problem is viewed only through the prism of its domain and the direct interrelationships with the other spheres, which are necessarily inseparable in the context of the theory, are not considered. Like any new hypothesis and theory, these would be easily falsifiable when presented to the scientific community.

The main thesis of the current scientific report and the upcoming extensive scientific work is, namely, that the role of Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in Emerging and Future Technology Industries is significant and should be considered in regards to several aspects – respectively, on the one hand – to provide guidance, criticism, insights, proposals and predictions about the global development of technologies, and, on the other hand – to promote the development of certain technologies, to indicate and justify the weaknesses of others, to work with businesses and governments to support certain technological developments, brands and products. The purpose of proving this thesis is that its confirmation should lead to the validation of the need of creation of

a global framework that outlines the acceptable activities, methods and ways of work, recommended practices, as well as policies of mutual relations and partnerships in the field of Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing in the Emerging and Future Technologies industries.

These statements will be presented in a broader perspective, with the aim of a greater degree of generalization. Certain facts from the practice will be studied for the purpose of forming a general hypothesis and deriving main arguments. The tasks at this stage are to draw up hypotheses to be explored in the form of theories. Hypotheses will aim to assess the relationship between variables and the relationship should be established logically. The relationships will be tested using various methods and tools in scientific research. This will prove the verifiability of the thesis as a mandatory quality for scientific research. Following the formation of the hypotheses, important assumptions will be made. The hypotheses are the following:

- The role of Thought Leaders and Technological Influencers in Emerging and Future Technology industries is significant and should be considered in several aspects – on one hand to provide guidance, insights, criticism, suggestions, and predictions for the global development of technology, and on the other hand – to work with the business, industry stakeholders, governments, organisations and associations in support of certain technological developments, brands and products, while providing expert opinion on the potential and essence of different technologies.

- The role of Thought Leaders and Technological Influencers in Emerging and Future Technology industries is not of a great importance and cannot be considered in several aspects.

Following the literature review, the next stage consists in choosing the methods for the scientific research. The choice of methodology will be in terms of whether the methods are suitable to prove whether the hypotheses are falsifiable and whether the study can be reproduced. The aim is to select methods which allow generalization and have a wider scope of applicability of the findings, in order to make the research more useful.

The scientific methods that will be applied are analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction. Different methods will be used to answer different questions posed by the particular problem.

In the preparation of the methodological part, an empirical study will be conducted. The development of the methodology of the empirical research will be based on theoretical literary sources and previous empirical studies in the most closely related fields. The empirical research will be quantitative and qualitative. Since the problem addressed in the scientific work is complex, the quantitative method could not support it in all its aspects. Therefore, a qualitative method will also be used. For the purpose of the quantitative research, a statistical analysis will be done in two directions – the business and the technology influencers in the technology industry. The variables should be defined in a way that they can be measured. Research will be carried out on known empirical data from the practice – annual benchmarking reports, with a focus on quantitative

metrics, statistics and surveys. For the purpose of the qualitative research, known empirical data from the practice will be examined and analysed – annual benchmarking reports, examining psychological attitudes, qualitative studies and analyses. Once the empirical data is analysed, empirical results will be derived. Empirical results will aim to demonstrate whether the research is replicable and whether known empirical evidence from practice supports the stated thesis. In view of the fact that the theory presented in the scientific work is new, the inductive method would be more appropriate. The theory should be empirically testable, which would indicate that it is empirical, based on experience, and will aim to result from the application of the inductive method. The next phase of the work consists of analysing and summarising the evidence, revising the literature review, preparing a theoretical part, and formulating a conclusion, as well as outlining possible perspectives for future research.

The logical and workflow structure of the scientific work should follow the below points:

1. Observation and formulation of a research question
 - Exploratory research work – on theoretical literary sources and previous empirical studies. Preparation of a literature review on the topic of the scientific work.
2. Hypothesis formation
 - It must be verifiable and falsifiable through experimentation and subsequent analysis.
3. Development of the methodology of empirical research – empirical research work
4. Preparation of separate parts / sections / of the scientific work – of a theoretical and part of a methodological chapter
5. Experimentation and data collection
 - Empirical research work – conducting empirical research on the topic of the scientific study.
 - Hypothesis testing – performing experiments (all variables must be controlled except the one being observed; data must be measurable, consistent, and repeatable).
 - Experimental, laboratory or other empirical research work
6. Results and Data Analysis
 - Empirical research work – analysis of the results of the conducted empirical research on the topic of the scientific work. Comparing the predictions of the null hypothesis with those of the alternative hypothesis; determining whether the null hypothesis can be rejected.
7. Preparation of separate parts / sections of the scientific work – preparation of a chapter containing an analysis of the results of the empirical research.
8. Finalisation of the scientific work
 - Formulating a conclusion and outlining possible perspectives for future research.

Results and discussion

The topic of this scientific report has not yet been a subject of discussions and analyses. The subject matter of the role of Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries is exceptionally niche, given that globally only a limited number of experts and industry practitioners with extremely diverse experience and education are able to become such leaders and influencers. This is the reason why the topic is still new, both for the scientific world and for the business world, even though the Thought Leadership and Technology Influencer Marketing in the Emerging and Future Technology industries already exists for several years. Moreover, the field of practice to which the topic relates is emerging and is still developing and shaping globally. This new niche field is at the border between marketing, technology, and business. Only a few are the exceptional experts, who are able to meet the extensive and rare criteria for becoming Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries. Very limited is the total number of current Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries, who have the required education, practice, and knowledge for becoming such authoritative industry leaders. These leaders are highly recognized by the specific industries and are creating the outlook, development, and formation of this new field.

In the scientific circles, there is still no formed statement on the problem, which is the focus of the present scientific report, since the experts on the subject have a practical, not a scientific orientation. The subject unites several practical fields, each of which has its own global specialists, but few are the experts who are simultaneously recognized in these several heterogeneous industries and fields. To date, the world's leading experts, who are globally recognized as Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries, have a practical and business orientation, which creates a fertile field for theorising on the topic. The purpose of the current research and study is, based on relevant niche practical experience, to initialise an initiative for the creation of a global framework for the given emerging field, as well as to define the interrelationships, dependencies, and rules to be followed.

In 2023, discussions on the matter of the role of Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries are absent in the business context. Same applies to discussions in the scientific context. Established frameworks, interrelationships, dependencies, and rules do not yet exist in this emerging field, and the need for them is substantial. The novelty of the topic is the reason why the scientific work on the problem is the first of its kind for the scientific community.

The uniqueness, newness and rarity of the problem discussed is the reason why to date there are still very few materials and analyses on the topic, both in business and in scientific terms. The limited present documents and data on the topic, such as yearly reports, benchmarks, and industry outlook data, are created by the two major B2B Influencer

Marketing agencies – Onalytica and Thinkers360. Since Influencer Marketing and Thought Leadership in the technology industries is still emerging, there are not many agencies globally which specialise in B2B relations between corporate clients and B2B tech influencers. These two, Onalytica and Thinkers360, are the world's only proven and largest B2B influencer marketplaces.

Onalytica was founded in 2009 and is an “award-winning influencer marketing software platform that connects brands with topical influencer communities and helps them to scale and structure influencer programs globally” (onalytica.com). Since its foundation, Onalytica has completed over 1,000 B2B and B2C influencer programs for the biggest global brands and corporations in the world, covering numerous sectors – Technology, Healthcare, Energy, Finance, and FMCG.

In 2021, Onalytica launched “MyOnalytica” – the world’s largest B2B influencer marketplace. (Russel, 2021)

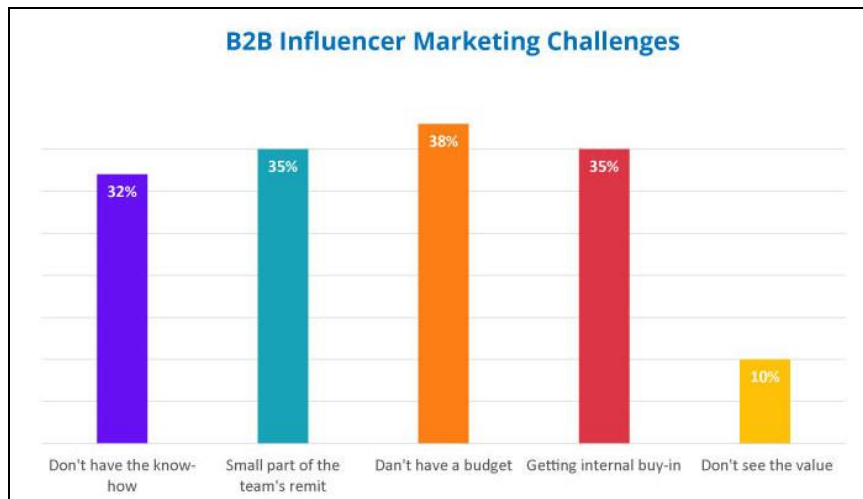
Onalytica’s Influencer Relationship Management (IRM) platform enables B2B and B2C clients to “identify, track and engage with influencers beyond the traditional engagement model of media relations, digital marketing and public affairs.” (onalytica.com)

Onalytica’s mission is to empower “organizations to enhance the role of organic influencer marketing in their wider marketing and communications strategies.” and to connect “brands and influencer communities to create inspiring content.”

2022 State of B2B Social Media Marketing Industry

In the report “2022 State of B2B Social Media Marketing Industry” Onalytica provides key insights into the top challenges B2B Marketers face in relation to B2B Influencer Marketing. Among the identified major obstacles and pain points are legality and regulations around B2B Influencer Marketing, namely for B2B influencers “to satisfy the requests from brands whilst also complying with the regulators”; misunderstanding between the value add of a B2B Thought Leader and Influencer and the way pure media functions (i.e. clicks and ads), namely brands asking for free services and non-paid partnerships; evaluating the ROI and results of paid influencer-generated content; influencers preferring longer relationships and partnerships with brands, while brands perceiving such long-term collaborations as too expensive; clients not understanding how Influencer Marketing works and having unrealistic expectations. (<https://onalytica.com>, 2022)

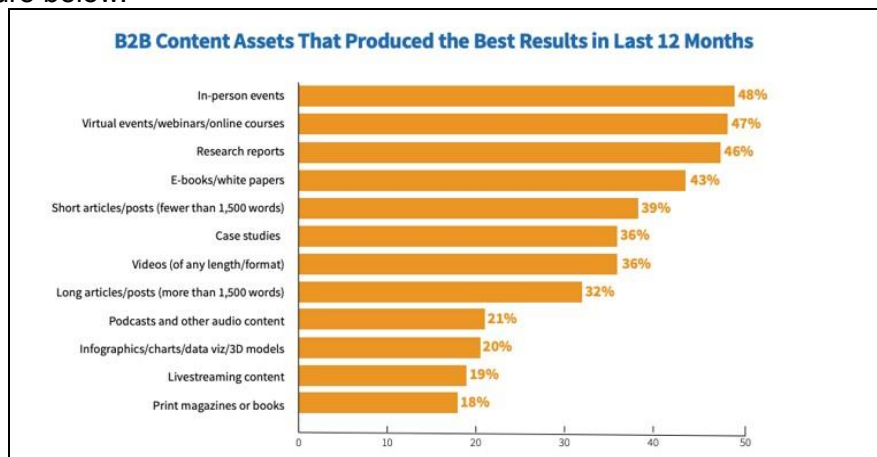
These main challenges are visualized in the figure below:



Source: Analytica

Figure 1: B2B Influencer Marketing Challenges

Additionally, Analytica’s survey identifies the best performing content assets. The study shows that content “from events, research reports and eBooks/white papers produced the best results over the past 12 months.” (<https://analytica.com>, 2022) These results are visualised in the figure below:

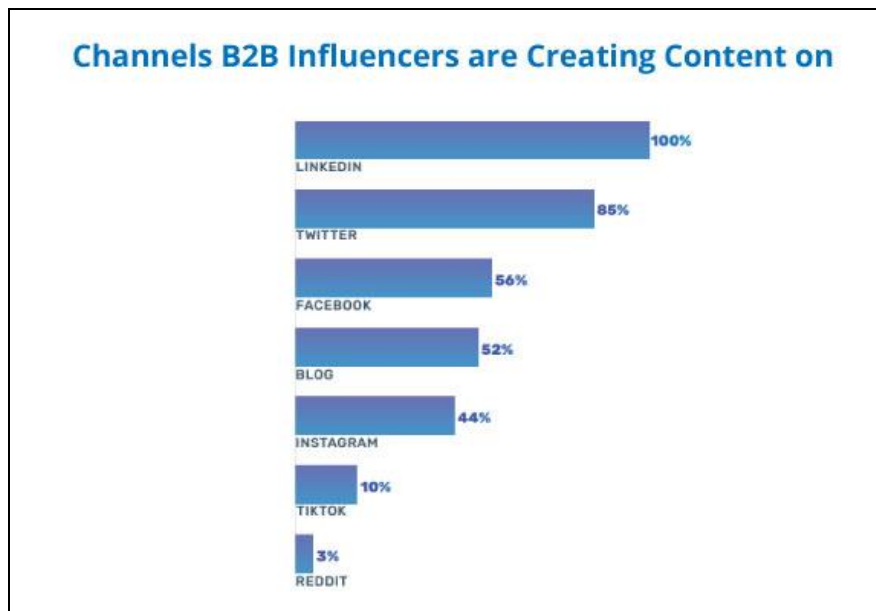


Source: Analytica

Figure 2: B2B Content Assets That Produced the Best Results in Last 12 Months

Moreover, Analytica's research found that there is “a shift in focus of priority regarding channels that B2B influencers are actively creating content on, with typically “consumer” channels such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok performing better than expected.” (analytica.com, 2022)

These findings are represented in the figure below:



Source: Analytica

Figure 3: Channels B2B Influencers are Creating Content on

The reports and studies conducted by Analytica are of immense value, as they provide information in a field where there is lack of regulations, rules and requirements. Further, Analytica’s reports are very useful for B2B Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries and provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges and trends in this emerging field.

Thinkers360 is “the world’s largest and premier thought leader community and expert marketplace for B2B thought leaders, influencers and analysts (100M+ followers combined) – including academics, advisors, analysts, authors, consultants, entrepreneurs, executives and speakers.” (<https://www.thinkers360.com>)

As an “exclusive B2B community of the world’s premier thought leaders and authentic influencers with over 100M followers combined”, Thinkers360 works with various of the world’s top brands. (<https://www.thinkers360.com>)

Thinkers360 mission is to connect “global brands with the world’s foremost thought leaders, analysts & influencers on business, technology and sustainability for game-changing results.” (www.thinkers360.com)

Thinkers360 believes in “crafting tailored B2B thought leadership strategies” to suit a brand’s “specific needs and objectives.” (www.thinkers360.com)

Thinkers360 carries out “independent research on thought leadership as well as cutting edge business and technology topics and emerging trends and technologies.” (www.thinkers360.com)

Annually, for the last three years, Thinkers360 carries out industry research on B2B Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing.

For 2023, in association with the British Computer Society, Thinkers360 has conducted their “3rd annual industry research into the current and future state of B2B thought leadership working with our opt-in B2B thought leader and influencer community with over 100M followers on social media combined.” (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

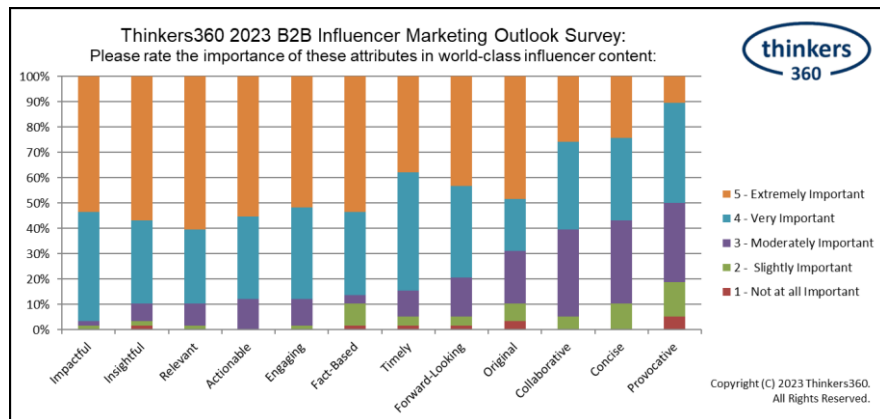
2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Report

The “2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Report” by Thinkers360 provides valuable insights on the current B2B Influencer Marketing outlook. (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

The report indicates that, as per a report by Statista, “the global influencer marketing market is expected to reach \$22.2 billion by 2025.” This means that the market is growing and expanding at a high rate, as the amount projected for 2025 is “more than double of the amount recorded in 2020 (\$9.7 billion U.S. dollars).”

Some of the key findings of the report are that B2B influencers cited that the personas they most identified with are consultants (70%), advisors (61%), social media influencers (61%), authors (59%), speakers (57%), entrepreneurs (54%). More, the data shows that “unlike B2C influencers, B2B influencers identify with multiple personas not just that of social media influencer. In fact, over 60% identified with 3 personas and over 50% identified with 6 personas.” Consumers of B2B influencer content were asked to rate the importance of several attributes of world-class influencer content. Influencer content consumers cited “impactful” (97%), “insightful” (90%), “relevant” (90%) and “actionable” (88%) as extremely important or very important attributes of influencer content. According to the report, “traditional notions of thought leadership such as “peer-reviewed” (45%), “counter-intuitive” (43%) and “adopted” (36%) were cited by the majority as only moderately important.” Furthermore, the report details that “in contrast to thought leadership content, the primary requirement for influencer content is that it’s “impactful”. While “insight” is also important, there’s less emphasis on it being “forward-looking”.” (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

These results are summarised in the figure below:



Source: Thinkers360

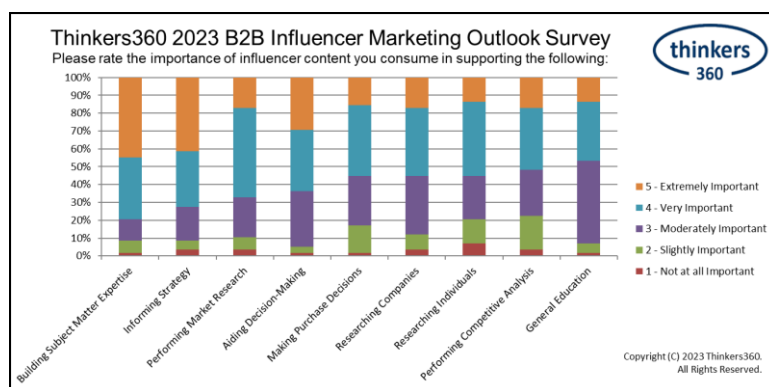
Figure 4: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Survey

The work of B2B Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers is seen to improve brand awareness, as B2B influencers have a “large and engaged audience of potential customers. By partnering with influencers, businesses can reach a wider audience and increase brand awareness.” As cited by the report, research by Nielsen “found that 92% of consumers trust recommendations from people they know, even if they have never met them and a study by TopRank Marketing found that 76% of B2B buyers are more likely to trust a brand after seeing it endorsed by an influencer.” Furthermore, B2B influencers help businesses in generating leads. The report refers to research by Influitive, which states that “72% of B2B decision-makers are more likely to buy from a company that has been endorsed by an influencer and a study by HubSpot found that companies that use influencer marketing generate 63% more leads than those that don’t.” Additionally, partnerships between brands and B2B Thought Leaders and Tech Influencers are seen to enhance corporate Thought Leadership. The report annotates that “B2B influencers are experts in their field. By working with influencers, businesses can position themselves as thought leaders in their industry.” The Thinkers360’s report details that a research by Contently concluded that “74% of B2B marketers believe that influencer marketing helps them establish thought leadership in their industry” and that a research carried out by Altimeter Group found that “82% of B2B buyers say that thought leadership is important when making a purchase decision.” Further, the report states that working with B2B influencers leads to improved credibility and trust for brands, citing a research by Edelman, which determined that “83% of B2B buyers trust the recommendations of industry experts and a study by Nielsen found that 90% of consumers say that authenticity is important when deciding which brands to support.” In addition, B2B Influencer Marketing leads to higher conversion rates, as data shows that “potential customers are more likely to convert into paying customers when they are referred by an influencer they trust.” The report details related statistics from a study by Sprout Social,

which states that “B2B brands that use influencer marketing see a 2.9% higher conversion rate than those that don’t and a study by BuzzSumo found that B2B content that is promoted by influencers has a 42% higher click-through rate than content that is not promoted by influencers.” More, the report asserts that brands are advised to work with B2B influencers, as this will lead to better customer engagement, because B2B influencers, with their industry expertise, are able to assist companies in the creation and promotion of engaging content, resonating with the target audience. As a result, businesses achieve increased brand loyalty and improved customer engagement. To prove this, the report cites a study by Social Media Examiner, which states that “B2B brands that use influencer marketing have a 22% higher engagement rate on their social media channels than those that don’t and a study by Hootsuite found that B2B brands that use influencer marketing generate 35% more leads from their social media channels than those that don’t.”

For the purposes of the report, Thinkers360 requested consumers of B2B influencer content to rate the importance of B2B influencer content, in regard to several benefits as end-users. According to the statistics gathered, B2B influencer content consumers quoted “building subject matter expertise” (79%), “informing strategy” (72%), “performing market research” (67%), and “aiding decision making” (64%) as extremely important or very important. The report details that “Making purchase decisions” was rated as extremely important or very important by 55% and a total of 82% cited it as moderately important or higher. While motivations and benefits of consuming influencer content vary widely, over 77% consider it moderately important or higher across all potential benefits.” (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

The results from this study are shown in the figure below:

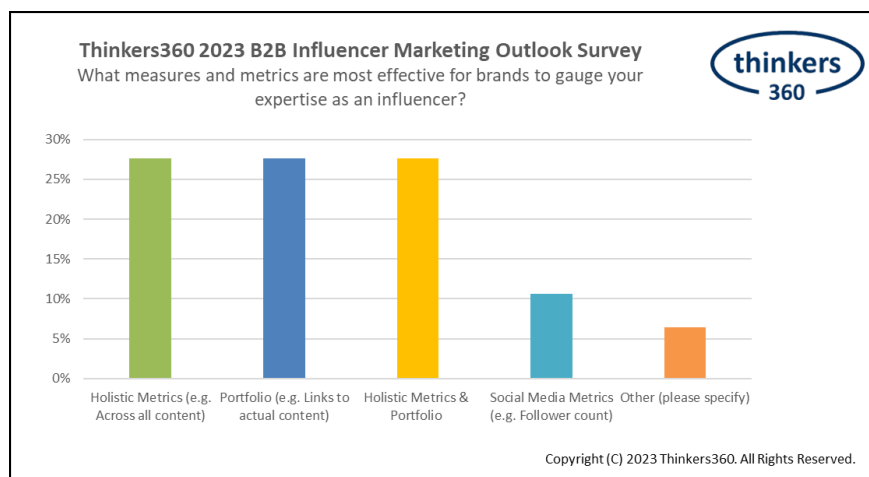


Source: Thinkers360

Figure 5: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Survey

In the “2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Report”, Thinkers360 invited real-world B2B influencers and thought leaders to share their views on the most effective metrics, stats, and measures for brands to estimate their expertise in the industry as B2B influencers. The results are surprising, as Thinkers360’s report determines that “Overwhelmingly, B2B influencers stated that “holistic metrics (e.g. across all content)” and “portfolio (e.g. links to actual content)” were the most effective measures and metrics for brands to gauge their expertise.” What is intriguing, is that “social media metrics (e.g. follower counts) were cited by only 11% as the most effective measures and metrics for brands to gauge their expertise.” Thus, considering that the majority of B2B influencers are offering to the brands a more diverse portfolio than only social media services, it is logical to grasp why influencers cited holistic metrics as the “most effective measures and metrics”, in comparison to social media analytics and stats. (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

The results from this analysis are depicted in the figure below:



Source: Thinkers360

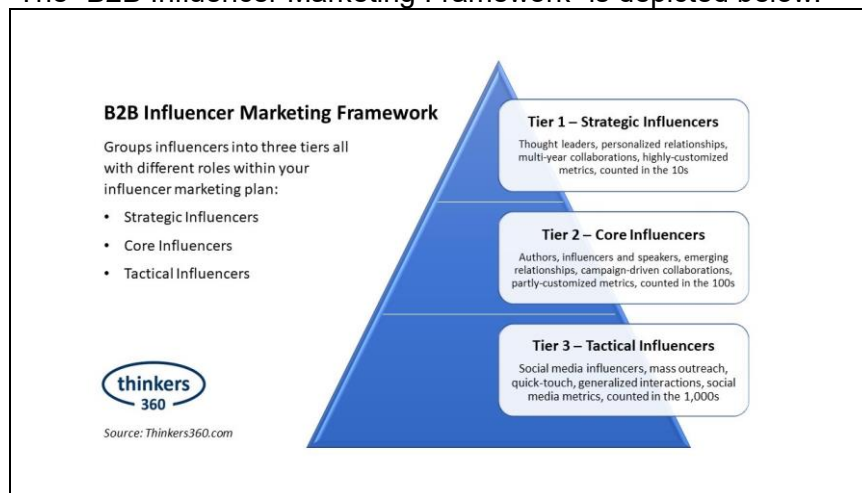
Figure 6: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Survey

Moreover, for the annual report, Thinkers360 asked real-world B2B influencers about the most effective B2B Influencer Marketing content formats. B2B influencers, producing such content esteemed the effectiveness and highest performance of various content types for B2B Influencer Marketing as follows: “LinkedIn Posts” (83%), “LinkedIn Videos” (46%), “Blog Posts” (46%), “LinkedIn Live” (43%), X Posts” (43%), and “YouTube Videos” (35%). It is not surprising that in the B2B context, posts and videos on Facebook and Instagram are rated lower by B2B influencers (under 20%), given the B2C orientation of these two social media networks. The report annotates that “While LinkedIn, X and YouTube predominate as most effective for influencer marketing, B2B influencers also cited blog posts (46%) on any channel as a preferred content format.”

Furthermore, Thinkers360’s report presents data on the primary and secondary sources of B2B Influencer Marketing content end users consume. The respondents selected “specialist communities” (60%) and “social media channels” (56%) as their primary sources. The report details that “All other destinations, other than individual and publisher web sites, were seen more as secondary sources than primary sources with academic, association and vendor web sites seen by over 19% (each) as not applicable. Specialist communities and social media appear to be the tip of the spear for access to influencer content.” (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

Further, Thinkers360 advises brands to undertake “multi-layered approach to B2B influencer marketing” and to embrace “more specialized “select few” who will become your key strategic partners and evangelists – these may well be the 20% who deliver 80% of your returns.” This strategic principle is outlined in the “Thinkers360 B2B Influencer Marketing Framework”. The framework details a method for managing the niche B2B Influencer Marketing relations and classifies B2B influencers into three tiers, each of which with unique roles within the brands’ Influencer Marketing plan. (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

The “B2B Influencer Marketing Framework” is depicted below:



Source: Thinkers360

Figure 7: Thinkers360 B2B Influencer Marketing Framework

In the “2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Report”, Thinkers360 also examined B2B influencers’ client base and typical engagement size and duration, as well as detailed insights on the typical services provided. The results show that, regarding the B2B influencer client base, “50% of respondents work with 1-5 brands per year, 37% with 6-10 brands per year and 7% with 11-15 brands per year. Only 4% work with more than 20 per year and only 2% work with more than 30 per year. B2B influencers clearly focus their attention on a small, targeted group of brands and typically average just 1 brand per month throughout the course of the year.” As for B2B influencer engagement size, data indicates that

when influencers work with brands, the “typical size of an engagement varies considerably from under \$1K to over \$20K per engagement. While engagement size was evenly distributed, the three most common engagement sizes were under \$1-2.5K (20%), \$5-10K (20%) and over \$20K (26%).” When it comes to B2B influencer engagement duration, the analysis of data indicates that “the typical duration of an engagement varies considerably from under 1 month to over 6 months per engagement. While engagement duration was evenly distributed, the two most common engagement durations were under 4 months (54%) and over 6 months (43%). It’s clear that B2B influencer marketing engagements are more than transactional, as in the B2C case, and often last in excess of 6 months per engagement.” The report further details that the results from the survey show that when partnering with brands, B2B influencers “provide a variety of services including consulting (85%), advising (74%), speaking (70%), authoring (52%) and influencing (43%).” Given that, as discussed, the study found that B2B influencers identify with multiple personas, it is a logical outcome that their services are mirroring this perception and categorisation. The report states that the results indicate that B2B influencers, a difference from B2C influencers, are not only offering social media services, but also “a variety of services including consulting, advising, and speaking as part of an engagement.” (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

Additionally, Thinkers360 inquired B2B influencers to provide insights on measuring ROI and results for the brands they collaborate with. As per the findings, B2B influencers acknowledged that ““tangible deliverables” (64%) were the most frequent means of measuring results and ROI with the brands they work with.”. What is intriguing is that, as a source for evaluating ROI and results, “social media metrics” are indicated by merely 40% (i.e. below half of respondents). The report concludes that “Since most B2B influencers are delivering more than social media services for the brands they work with, it makes sense that tangible deliverables were cited by over 1.5x as many influencers when compared to social media metrics.” (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

These results are summarised in the below figure:



Source: Thinkers360

Figure 8: Thinkers360 B2B Influencer Marketing Framework

To summarise, the “2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Report” by Thinkers360 provides valuable niche data, indicating that “the most successful brands are looking far beyond social media marketing and beyond traditional social media influencers.”

The key insights from the report are cited below:

- Making Purchase Decisions – 82% see influencer content as moderately important or higher for making purchase decisions
- Impact and Relevance are Key Attributes – Impactful (96%), Relevant (89%), and Actionable (88%) are the key attributes in world-class influencer content
- Looking Beyond Social Media Influencers – Primary sources of influencer content include authors (49%), social media influencers (46%), entrepreneurs (42%) and consultants (32%)
- Specialist Communities amplify Content – Over 95% see specialist communities as either primary or secondary outlets for distributing influencer content in 2023. (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

The main findings from Thinkers360’s “2023 B2B Influencer Marketing Outlook Report” are that “For a B2B brand, the benefits of B2B influencer marketing include increased brand awareness, improved lead generation, enhanced thought leadership, improved credibility and trust, higher conversion rates, and better customer engagement.” (www.thinkers360.com, 2023) This statement clearly indicates that the main thesis of this scientific report can be proven valid and strongly suggests that brands should seek meaningful and long-term relationships with B2B Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries.

2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Report

Thinkers360, in association with the British Computer Society (BCS), has released the “2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Report”. The purpose of the study is to “better understand current and future trends with regard to both thought leadership creators – such as individuals, agencies and brands – and thought leadership consumers and their plans for 2023.” (www.thinkers360.com, 2023) The report offers a unique perspective and valuable insights into the state of Thought Leadership in 2023. The key insights from the report are cited below:

- Sales & Marketing Priority – 39% consider thought leadership the #1 priority within their sales and marketing strategies for 2023
- Continuing to Scale Up – 56% of thought leadership creators plan to produce more thought leadership in 2023 than in 2022
- Specialist Communities Are Key – Social media (74%), individual web sites (58%) and specialist communities (57%) are key for disseminating thought leadership content in 2023
- Working in a Post-Truth Era – In a post-truth era, 73% of thought leaders plan to cut through the noise by making their content highly actionable (www.thinkers360.com, 2023)

Discussion

Onalytica provides useful niche insights on the current state of B2B Influencer Marketing. Some of the most valuable citations are:

“Influencer Marketing is still an emerging category with brands and influencers both figuring out how to best work together for mutual benefit in an environment with no rules.” (onalytica, n.d.)

“In the last 10 years, influencer marketing as a whole has matured and grown at a rate that no one could predict. 10 years ago “influencer” was still a term no one had really heard of. Fast forward to today and it’s an industry set to be worth \$15 Billion by 2022, with thousands of platforms and software providers in the market to-date and new ones entering the scene every day.” (onalytica, n.d.)

“While the industry has matured, we could see a real gap in the market for a B2B influencer marketplace, whereby B2B brands and B2B influencers could easily connect together to create great content for their audiences. As the market leaders in B2B influencer marketing, we set out on a mission to build a marketplace that would take B2B influencer marketing to the next level and address the pain-points felt by both marketers and influencers.” (onalytica, n.d.)

“Influencer marketing is part of a wider social advocacy play. Influencers can be integrated into so many areas of marketing and comms activity. Everything from content marketing, events strategy, thought leadership content creation, product innovation and PR.” (onalytica.com)

Additionally, Onalytica summarises “pain points when it comes to brand and influencer collaborations”, which are cited below:

- Lack of time and resources – Influencer marketing is often only 10% of a marketer’s role
- Lack of expertise/best practice – when it comes to reaching out to influencers
- No industry rules for engagement – no standard partnership agreements, rate cards, KPIs etc.
- Poor initial outreach – Analytica’s research highlights that 58% of influencers think marketers’ initial outreach needs improvement
- Overwhelming influencer demand – influencers are sometimes receiving upwards of 50 messages per day” (Russel, 2021)

Thinkers360 also provides constructive insights on the current state of B2B Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing. Some of Thinkers360’s the most valuable citations regarding the current issues in the Thought Leadership industry are:

“Today, the thought leadership ecosystem is highly-fragmented and often closed to most outsiders. Once a specialized art, practiced by a few, thought leadership is now a widespread discipline practiced by many – beyond the current 1% that the “industry” currently serves. Many upcoming thought leaders and experts aren’t yet social media stars, celebrity authors, analysts, influencers or speakers, but are leading authorities in their fields. Both established and emerging thought leaders need new ways to measure their expertise – looking beyond influence – and a platform to advance their audience and impact.” (www.thinkers360.com, n.d.)

“The first rule in B2B influencer marketing is that there are no rules. While many influencer marketing platforms and pundits may advocate a specific approach, the reality is their approaches are often based on their own strengths and weaknesses. While we’ve been conditioned to look at social media data, B2B influencers are far more complex and diverse in real life.” (www.thinkers360.com, n.d.)

“Since B2B influencers don’t fit into a neat box, they’re likely important to many of your teams across branding, thought leadership, influencer marketing, content marketing and more.” (www.thinkers360.com)

Furthermore, Thinkers360 also summarises the main pain points in the B2B Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing landscape when it comes to the relationship between B2B Thought Leaders and Influencers and brands, which are cited below:

“Opportunities for thought leaders to advance their audience and impact are limited since opportunities and contacts are mostly hidden from view.” (https://www.thinkers360.com)

“There’s currently no way to measure thought leadership and it’s often confused with influence, public speaking or other partial measures.” (https://www.thinkers360.com)

“The thought leadership “ecosystem” is highly-fragmented, expensive and time-consuming to navigate when trying to find suitable experts.” (https://www.thinkers360.com)

“When moving from “paid media” to “earned media”, today’s companies often miss the intermediate “owned media” opportunity. While they allocate considerable resources to digital properties and channels, they often under-utilize their own corporate executives and experts and don’t have suitable tools to activate and amplify their thought leadership.” (<https://www.thinkers360.com>)

“While there’s a lot written about influencer rates on the web, the fact is that for B2B it varies considerably based on the B2B influencers’ level of expertise and their audience. Unlike B2C, it doesn’t hinge solely on audience size (i.e. follower count) and level of expertise is an equal if not more important factor.” (www.thinkers360.com)

The analysis and examination of the studies carried out by Onalytica and Thinkers360 identify that the author’s thesis correlates to the current trends and outlook of the B2B Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing field. As concluded, given the data analysed, B2B stakeholders are relying more and more on building meaningful and long-term relationships with B2B Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries, covering a vast range of services and activities. Moreover, the statistics gathered, noticeably prove that the global authority and credibility of the B2B Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers is of greater significance in the B2B field, across multiple industries and sectors for all stakeholders concerned, including businesses, corporations, governments, organisations, and associations. This fact is a clear indicator of the potential of B2B Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers to dictate the rules and principles in the corresponding practical fields. Same applies to the potential of B2B Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries. The findings from the research indicate that Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries have the necessary power and authority to advocate for or call for ban on certain technologies and technological developments, guiding and navigating B2B stakeholders through the complex Emerging and Future Technology industries landscape. This also annotates that governments, organisations and associations are required to collaborate with B2B Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries to craft the present, prospective, and future outlook of technology in general.

Conclusion

The current scientific report will be followed by major extensive scientific work on the same topic, given that the problem reviewed is more complex and is still not discussed and analysed in the scientific community, thus a solid and broad scientific study is required to explore and grasp all aspects related to the chosen topic.

The explored topic is original because it comes from practical experience in a new niche. It is also relevant, as it relates to one of the fastest growing sectors, in which there is already a need to outline the

framework for operation according to business and stakeholder needs. The stage of development of this new field is precisely in this phase, which allows the initiation of a scientific discussion and the shaping and forming of the first scientific theories on the matter. Therefore, the development of this topic will contribute not only to the practical, but also to the scientific environment. The chosen subject will have a theoretical added value because it aims to explain a problem that has not been explained until now through the prism of science. The theoretical added value that the scientific work will offer is that the findings and conclusions can be applied in practice and can function as an initial starting point for crafting a global regulatory and guiding framework in the relevant field.

The analysis of data from the practice has proven that the main thesis of the current scientific report is true – that the role of Thought Leaders and Technological Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries is significant and should be considered in several aspects – on the one hand to provide guidance, insights, advise, criticism, suggestions, and predictions for the global development of technologies, and on the other hand – to work with businesses, industry practitioners, governments and organisations in support of certain technological developments, brands, and products. As data has clearly indicated, not only the role of Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries is of huge importance in the business world, but also that there is an imperative need of establishing a global framework for regulation and monitoring of the business relations in the field of Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing in the technology industry. In the industry, till date there has been no alternative, similar to such global regulatory framework. This leads to unfair practices, unequal opportunities and payment, as well as unfair remuneration practices. The urge for outlining and detailing strict principles of interrelations, dependencies, and permissible interactions in the niche of Thought Leadership and Technological Influencing in the industry of Emerging and Future Technologies is evident. However, the problem of the current research is still not being addressed neither in the scientific community and scientific literature, nor in the business world and practical literature.

The described global framework for Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries should be able to outline acceptable activities, terms of cooperation and partnerships, advisable practices, ways and methods of work, along with legal and ethical requirements.

As detailed, more extensive research, and in-depth exploration of the chosen topic will be carried out in an upcoming broader scientific study.

The main conclusions that the upcoming scientific work will aim to draw, are what exactly the role of Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries is, and in how many aspects can it be considered. The thesis will seek to prove that

this role is significant and should be analysed in two separate aspects – on the one hand, that Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers should provide predictions, analysis, guidance, insights, criticism and proposals for the overall development of technology, and, on the other hand, that they should work with the industry stakeholders, companies, governments and organisations to support the development of certain technologies and certain technological advancements, as well as technology products and brands. The limitations of the study will be rooted in factors stemming from the novelty of the topic for the scientific community, as well as the fact that this practical area is newly formed and still emerging and developing.

A potential area for future research is the exploration of the degree of DEI (Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion) in the field of Emerging and Future Technology. Matters, such as equal pay, equal opportunities and equal share of voice can be further examined. In particular, the role of women Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries can be studied in-depth. Given that the field of Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing in the Emerging and Future Technology industries is new and still in process of development, it is crucial to ensure that fair and unbiased practices, objective remuneration, equal rights and conditions are guaranteed. This can only be achieved through creation of a global framework for regulation of the Thought Leadership and Influencer Marketing in the Emerging and Future Technology industries.

The novelty of the studied topic is a prerequisite for favourable opportunities for original further research, such as – the role of women in the Emerging and Future Technology industries; whether and to what extent gender bias exists in the industry; exploring the role of Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the various sub-segments of the industries of Emerging and Future Technology.

Due to the recent emergence of the field of Thought Leadership and Technological Influencer Marketing, there is currently a lack of scientific discussion on the matter, as well as a lack of recommendations for good practices in the industry. Therefore, the applicability of the research findings is high. The theoretical added value of the scientific work consists in the fact that the conclusions can be applied in practice. Future broader scientific work and industry discussions will be aimed at finding support on international and local level for the creation of a global industry framework for Thought Leaders and Technology Influencers in the Emerging and Future Technology industries.

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Gender Equality and Gender Integration, Legal and Institutional Concepts

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Abstract: Gender Equality means the participation, empowerment and visibility of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, with no gender differentiation, and it aims at promoting full participation of women and men in society.

For a long time, gender equality in Europe was perceived as “de jure” the act of acknowledging equal rights, opportunities, conditions and treatment for men and women in all areas of life and the spheres of society. Nowadays, it is accepted that de jure equality does not automatically result in “de facto” equality. It is important to understand that the living conditions of men and women are different - to a certain extent, due to the women's maternal function. The main problem is not the existence of these differences but the fact that they should not have a negative impact on the living conditions of men and women, they should not be a cause of discrimination against them and should contribute to an equitable division of power in the economy, society, and policy-making processes. A gender perspective should be looked at in order to define the gender concept. Two aspects are important in this context: the social structure of gender and the relationship between the sexes.

Key words: gender equality, policy making processes, gender concept, maternal function

Introduction

Defined as equality between men and women in all spheres, both public and private, gender equality means equal access to and control over resources and benefits, equal participation in political decision-making, and equality before the law for women and men. (February 2009:19)

Gender is not just a socially constructed definition of women and men, it is a socially constructed definition of the relationship between the sexes. Policies and structures play a very important role in living conditions and often institutionalize the maintenance of the social construction of gender (Anastasi, Mandro-Balili, Shkurti, Bozo, 2012:8). This social construction contains an unequal power relationship with male dominance

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and female subordination in most spheres of life. Men and the jobs, roles, functions and values that contribute to them are valued in many ways more than those associated with women. It is widely accepted in society that the male norm is considered the norm for society as a whole and this is reflected in policies and structures.

1. Gender equality and its conceptual framework

Policies and structures play a very important role in living conditions and they often institutionalize the maintenance and reproduction of the social construction of gender. Gender is not just a socially-defined definition of women and men, it is a social definition built on gender relations. This social construction contains a relationship of unequal power with the domination of men and the subordination of women in most areas of life. Professions, roles, functions, and values attributed to men are valued more in many aspects compared to those associated to women. It is widely accepted in society that male norms are called norms for society as a whole and this is reflected in policies and structures. The latter often unknowingly reproduce gender inequality².

Gender Equality means accepting and evaluating the same differences between men and women and the different roles they play in society. Gender equality includes the right to be different and to take into account the existing differences between men and women regarding the class of political opinion, religion, race and sexual orientation. Gender Equality means discussing what is going to happen further to change the structures in society that contribute to the maintenance of an unequal power relationship between men and women and to achieve a better balance in values and different female and male priorities. The problem is the gender hierarchy, not the women, to make sure that the social construction of gender doesn't indicate differences and does not contain the notion of hierarchy that places men above women (UNIFEM 1995:7) ³. This means a real partnership between men and women and their shared responsibilities in displacing imbalances in their public and real lives. The main issue still remains the use of competences, values and talents of every citizen to involve women and men in the essence of the society. Gender inequality must be fought, protected and promoted as a human

² Scott's definition of gender links gender to power, because it states that "gender is a primary way of determining power relationships" according to Scott, gender is implicated in the concept of self-building because gender references to some extent distribute power control over material and symbolic resources (Scott 1986: 1067)

³ UNIFEM 1995: 7,

right, and achieving it is a persistent process that is often questioned, has been re-conceptualized and redefined.

Gender Equality means participation, empowerment and visibility of both genders in all areas of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, with no gender differentiation, and it aims at promoting full participation of women and men in society.

For a long time, gender equality in Europe was perceived as providing de jure equal rights, opportunities, conditions and treatment of men and women in all areas of life and society. Nowadays, it is accepted that de jure equality does not automatically conquer de facto equality. It is important to understand that the living conditions of men and women are different - to a certain extent, due to the maternal function of women.

The main problem is not the existence of these differences but the fact that these differences should not have a negative impact on the living conditions of men and women, it shouldn't be a cause of discrimination against them and should contribute to an equitable division of power in the economy, society, and political-making processes. A gender perspective should be looked at in order to define the gender concept.

Two aspects are important in this context: the social construction of gender and the relationship between the genders. Gender is a socially-based definition of women and men. It is the social description of the biological sex, determined by the profession, functions and roles attributed to men and women in society in public and private life. It is a specific cultural definition of femininity and masculinity, and, as such, it changes in time and space. The creation and reproduction of gender occurs at an individual and social level where both are equally important. Human beings shape roles and gender norms through their activities. There is a growing consensus that gender should be considered both at political and institutional level (UNIFEM 1995:7)⁴.

An important objective is the recognition and full implementation of women's rights as human rights. This includes respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights of women and men alike by ensuring that both parties fully respect these rights. It also means combating interferences with women's freedom and dignity (Fighting Violence against Traffic and the Institution, promoting reproduction control rights, addressing specific migration and minority problems).

In addition to human rights, the development and upgrading of democracies is the most important issue. Low representation or sometimes

⁴ UNIFEM 1995:7 Conclusions of the Conference "Equality and Democracy: Utopia or Challenge" Council of Europe 1995 Final Report of the Group of Specialists on Equality and Democracy. The Council of Europe 1996

lack of decision-making in women in all levels and areas of life is a major problem, although there are wide variations in this aspect between different countries. When women or men are about 1/3 of the members of a decision-making panel, they influence the agenda and there is a real opportunity for change. It is important for women to be equally visible in social events as well as in the history of each country.

Another important objective for gender equality is the individual economic independence that provides for the same salary, equal access to credit, the same labor market conditions and the distribution of assets that take into account gender differences in private life. The position of women and men in the economy is in many ways vital to the balance of power between them. Combating the feminization of poverty is also very important.

Education is a key objective in gender equality because it includes the way in which societies transform norms, knowledge and skills. It is important that education systems empower women as much as men and provide for the countervailing of the existing gender hierarchies. The media also has a very powerful position in the transfer and consolidation of these norms and knowledge.

The last objective to mention is the recognition of the need for men and women to omit the imbalances in society and their shared responsibility to do so⁵.

There are still problems with gender equality in Europe. The most important achievement in gender equality is increasing awareness of the need and willingness to promote gender equality (Lejenaar: 1997). Some countries have established equality policy mechanisms that are developed and implemented by giving special attention to problems specific women. In a parallel direction, there is a development of knowledge and expertise regarding women's position and gender issues. There is also an increase in awareness of the role of men in the promotion of gender equality⁶. Another important achievement is the effective progress of women. In Europe, the level of women's education is increasing, they participate more in the labor market than before and have an active role in public and political life as well as in decision-making. However, little progress has been made in this area in many European countries⁷. In Eastern and Central Europe, there is a lot of pressure on the previous achievements in the field of gender equality. However, the development of civil society in these countries gives women

⁵ Declarations and resolutions were made at the 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Men and Women. Istanbul 1997.

⁶ Council of Europe International Summit on Promoting Equality: A Common Issue for Men and Women Council of Europe 1997.

⁷ The document on "Women in politics" Council of Europe 1997

more space to form their NGOs and offers new opportunities to participate in decision-making. However, these achievements should not be overestimated. New forms of inequality have been developed and there is an increase in diversity among women (Walby 1997: 5).

In fact, progress towards gender equality seems to be having a number of obstacles in Europe. The structural changes that have occurred in Europe over the last two decades, as a result of the globalization process of financial and economic systems, technological innovation, the world's highest competition and liberalization, have been followed by a series of social serious problems that have produced millions of victims . Mass unemployment, greater inequalities, the depreciation of human labor, social exclusion, disordered conflicts and ecological imbalances are some of the problems that mobilize the attention of governments and public authorities. These problems affect women differently from men and may limit their right to a free choice to a certain degree, e.g. in matters relating to sexuality, reproductive health and their life style(Walby 1998)⁸. They also have noticed that gender equality in many countries is not considered a priority.

2. Gender integration

Europe is undergoing changes in political and institutional levels. In Western Europe, a new vision of government functions and roles is developing, the "thinking model that plays primarily a managerial role rather than a functional one". Governments consider themselves as active managers and leave the rest of the management to market forces and civil society. Such management policies are not conducive to gender equality because they do not see the need to adapt work to family life and measure progress economically more than humanly.

Many Central and Eastern European regimes are characterized by a well-organized infrastructure that allows women to combine work with the family, provide a high level of social security, an accessible health system, and a liberal law. These rules came from an ideology equality. The main objective was the full integration of women into the production process. Equality rights did not always allow a free choice and equality was often defined as uniformity. Thus, the attitude towards equality policies is often a hesitant stand, and, what is more, macroeconomic problems make governments concentrate their efforts on more important policy areas (Fank and Mueller, 1993, Knezevic: 1997).

⁸ WALBY 1998 Council of Europe Formation Forum on "Ensuring freedom of choice in matters of reproductive sexuality and lifestyle in Europe trends and developments

For the implementation of a gender-sensitive policy, an institutional and conscious environment is required to meet the specific needs of men and women. Thus, the degree of consciousness is this environment to implement programs that address gender inequalities and promote equality. Social inpatients form the basis on which social life arises. They are vital regulators of relationships that human beings create with each other to ensure succession of generations (Anthony Giddens). A structural condition that damages the woman's power in the family and contributes to the power of her husband and family is the widespread practice of patriarchal tradition in which the young woman moves to her husband's home.

Gender equality is a key feature in the country's development process. The reasons for the inequality encountered in the family, in the community, in the labor market and in general in Albanian society, should be considered in order to achieve this. The separation of work by gender is consuming (measured by time and energy), requires recognition (prestige), and results in differentiated power for women and men. Gender inequality negatively affects the balance between opportunities, living conditions and the social and political status of women and girls and men and boys. Worldwide, life is different for men and women. Usually, women have far less rights and incomes. These inequalities limit the opportunities and achievements of women and contribute to unequal development, and consequently perpetuate the low status of women in society. Albanian Society is mainly patriarchal, with different expectations regarding the appropriate behavior and roles acceptable to men and women. There are many stereotypes for women, for example, women are considered inferior to men, women's education is less appreciated, women are just destined to marry, and so on. As a result, women have little power in terms of the economic income sources, higher levels of unemployment than men, become victims to any form of violence and experience minor improvements in their quality of life, despite their ever-growing development efforts. However, gender relations vary from one region to another and are quite noticeable in rural areas of Albania. Gender inequality in Albanian society is not only a matter of human rights but also a development issue. Integration of the gender perspective is a difficult job. Gender integration is about changing attitudes regarding roles, values and status of both men and women. The political and social change required by gender integration is a long process but of high value. The aim is that Albanian policy-makers should develop policies and programs that will ensure equality between men and women in everyday life.

Integration equality issues underline the need to base and evaluate any policy depending on the impact it has on individuals and social groups,

men or women, with their needs and values. Such an approach improves the practice that evaluates general policies according to their outcomes and creates new ways for replacing the "traditional" practice of economic and ideological indicators with more valuable and concrete indicators related to people's well-being.

Integrating gender equality can be a step forward in a more humane and less economical approach to overall development and management of democratic societies, using the gender equity perspective policies will be more explicitly expressed in relation to the real needs of women and men, by improving them and by leading into a winning strategy.

Gender integration will lead to a better policy making and more informative system, consequently, to better governance. It challenges policies as a neutral factor, which actually is not - and will show hidden assumptions about reality and values. Integration will lead to greater transparency and liberalization of the political process.

Until now, work on promoting gender equality has been carried out by women. Gender integration includes both women and men. It makes clear that society depends on the use of all human resources and the experience of both women and men and recognizes their shared responsibilities in removing imbalances in society.

Finally, involving a greater number of external actors in the gender-based political process can lead to the reduction of the democratic deficit that characterizes today's democracy.

Gender integration provides a clear idea of the implications and impact of women's and men's political initiatives and the balance between them. The issues of gender equality will become more visible and integrate into society while they have always been removed. It will show that gender equality is an important social problem for everyone and is not "just a cost or a luxury" (Rubery, 1996). Gender integration recognizes the inequality between men and women that cannot be effectively combated without interest and engagement in the political system and society as a whole. It will change the attitude towards gender equality that is often negative and will start a new debate on the problems of equality.

It is known that women and men are not a homogeneous group⁹; to pay the right attention to this diversity, policies and political instruments should allow diversity to be taken into account. From a gender integration perspective, the problem is not the fact that there are differences but that these differences are related to the hierarchy and there is a risk that all citizens are measured by masculine norms. In this sense, gender

⁹ Men and women differ in different aspects such as: biologically, group / class, race, political / political opinion, ethnicity, age, religion or sexual orientation.

integration goes a step further than merely working towards gender equality. It creates opportunities for non-hierarchical diversity in terms of sex, race, class or a combination of such factors.

Conclusions

Data on the current situation of men and women and gender relations are essential for integration. The problem is not only that statistics are not always separated by gender, but data may be prejudiced by gender. Effective statistics comprise data that are relevant to men and women and are separate from gender and other variables.

It is important for women to participate in political and public life into much larger numbers. Also to enter in decision-making processes and ensuring that different values of interest and women's life experiences are taken into account when making decisions. It is clear that not every woman is naturally an advocate for women's issues, but the fact is that most advocates for gender relations are women. Experience has shown that where women participate in a larger number in decision making, the differences are more substantial and they are more likely to occur. What happens if these prerequisites or conditions are not present ? The most necessary prerequisite is the political will. Without political will there is no reallocation of funds to develop awareness on gender issues and to implement gender perspective policies and inclusiveness. Gender mainstreaming has led to increased awareness of gender inequalities and the increased awareness on gender issues.

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Gender Inequality in The Workplace in Albania

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Abstract: In this work, the main focus is the discrimination of the female gender. Women are considered to be physically weak when compared to men. Gender discrimination has two main forms: direct discrimination, which occurs when a person treats a woman less favorably than a man, and indirect discrimination, which is gender discrimination, which occurs indirectly against a woman if the behavior such can be objectively justified, can constitute indirect gender discrimination. One of the major problems of today that is often overlooked is Employment Discrimination. It is a problem that women have to face in the workplace, being deprived of basic rights in the workplace and often harassed by co-workers. Just because they are women, they are not assigned jobs that they are capable of doing. In many workplaces, women are a minority and therefore are under constant pressure from the work environment. There have been many situations in which men and women perform the same type of work and perhaps have the same qualification, but still employers do not give equal pay to men and women, simply because of gender inequality. The paper analyzes some of the international legal instruments ratified by Albania related to non-discrimination, as well as the Labor Code in Albania, which provides for: prohibition of discrimination, prohibition of sexual harassment, health and insurance in the workplace. Does the paper analyze the causes and reasons that make discrimination possible.

Key words: Female gender discrimination, Legal documents, Labor Code

1. Brief overview on women's rights.

Brief overview of women's rights. Their protection and guarantee in internal legislation. In the period 1945-1990, Albania was a socialist country led by a single party and the government system was classified as a dictatorship of the proletariat. During this period the legal status of women improved in many respects. The 1946 Constitution proclaimed equality without distinction of sex, expressly stating that "women are equal to men in all aspects of political, state, economic and social life". In the period 1945-1990, women enjoyed numerous rights, including the right to vote and the right to health services. The right to equal education and employment with

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men allowed women to study and work in "traditionally male fields" such as engineering, medicine, and agriculture. Working hours did not differentiate based on gender. Although these efforts to implement women's rights in the public sphere were no longer accompanied by the same intensity in the private sphere, women remained the primary gatekeepers, often carrying the double burden of succeeding in the public and private spheres. As in the countries of Eastern Europe, also in Albania at the beginning of the 1990s the application of "shock therapy" in the new market economy had consequences for the entire population, but women were the ones more seriously affected. Female unemployment has increased significantly, making women dependent on the income of male family members: many social services have been cut. The change was accompanied by the revival of traditional views and prejudices that relegated women to the role of housewife. In rural areas the situation of women has worsened considerably. After land privatization and the cessation of state funding, women were overworked. The very limited financial resources of rural Albanian families have forced these families to use women's labor instead of machines. Furthermore, the emigration of men has increased the workload of women, who have to take more care of the home, children and the elderly. Therefore, the limitation of employment opportunities and the burden of the entire social burden has limited the acquisition of information, the search for opportunities and the participation in various activities. Generally, it has been accepted that equality and non-discrimination are positive and negative statements of the same principle (F. Bayefsky, 1990). In other words, equality means non-discrimination and maintaining the principle of non-discrimination between groups will lead to equality. Giving a definition of what is called discrimination (Strand, 2006) is not easy. However, many researchers are of the opinion that discrimination means "different and unequal treatment of a person based on some of his or her qualities." But it is necessary to distinguish between what constitutes different treatment and what constitutes discrimination, since not every different treatment constitutes discrimination. The most widespread forms of discrimination are: gender discrimination, discrimination against people with disabilities, discrimination due to pregnancy, racial discrimination

The term "discrimination" is used to denote unfair treatment or denial of normal privileges to people because of race, sex, national origin, or religion. The term comes from the Latin language - to discriminate, to discriminate and has the meaning of separation, difference, different treatment, limitation of rights or institution of inequality².

² Prof.Dr. Zejnullah Gruda, "International Protection of Human Rights", second edition, Book I, Pristina 2001, p. 199

Discrimination can be defined as behavior (unfavorable treatment), in which certain individuals or groups of individuals are placed in a disadvantageous position (compared to other individuals, who in a similar situation, have not been treated that way) on the basis of by law for prohibited conduct, and in situations where this is provided for by law³.

2. Gender discrimination in Albania

Discrimination as one of the most serious forms of violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms is a widespread phenomenon and is based on the doctrine of the superiority or inferiority of racial , peoples, genera, etc., according to which some have less value and need to be governed by races of greater value⁴. Discrimination can be defined as a reaction or behavior (unfavorable treatment), during which some individuals or groups of individuals are placed in an unfavorable position (compared to other individuals, who, in the same situation, have not been treated in that way). Based on the legislation on prohibited behavior and in situations where this is required by law. Discrimination is one of the most widespread phenomena and the most brutal form of violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Discrimination based on age, gender or sex, disability, equal pay or compensation, harassment, national origin, discrimination due to pregnancy, racial or color discrimination, discrimination based on religion, retaliatory discrimination, sexual harassment, etc⁵. Discrimination includes: (a) any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or compromising the equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or profession; (b) a difference, exception or other preference which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in matters of employment or profession, as may be determined by the member concerned after consultation with representative employers organisations; work and workers, where existing, and with other competent bodies⁶.

The Labor Code in Albania provides: prohibition of discrimination, prohibition of sexual harassment, health and insurance protection in the

³ Transition “How to implement the right to non-discrimination” (Guide for the so-called project implemented in 2014) - The project was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic within the framework of the transitional cooperation program.

⁴ Gruda, (Work of Cit.1) p. 200

⁵ Ibid, p. 200.

⁶ Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, Geneva 1958 (No. 111)

workplace. In the European Union, the female gender share in senior positions has increased by 3.1% over the last ten years, reaching the current level of 30.6%⁷. Gender discrimination is that type of discrimination based on gender of a person. Women are typically treated differently and unequally than men in education, career, economic advancement and political influence. It is a common type of discrimination that occurs all over the world, even in developed countries. Well, what concerns us is why this discrimination occurs? What are the causes and reasons that make discrimination possible? One of the main reasons is culture. It is culture that enables us to know who men and women are and what kind of relationship they have with each other. According to culture, a woman's job is the home and a man's job is the community. Women are considered to be physically weak when compared to men. Gender discrimination has two main forms: direct discrimination, which occurs when a person treats a woman less favorably than a man, and indirect discrimination, which is gender discrimination, which occurs indirectly against a woman if the behavior such can be objectively justified, can constitute indirect gender discrimination. One of the major problems of today that is often overlooked is Employment Discrimination. It is a problem that women have to face in the workplace, being deprived of basic rights in the workplace and often harassed by co-workers. Just because they are women, they are not assigned jobs that they are capable of doing. In many workplaces, women are a minority and therefore are under constant pressure from the work environment. Pay discrimination: There have been many situations where men and women do the same type of work and perhaps have the same qualification, but employers do not give equal pay to men and women, simply due to gender inequality. work: In case a woman is pregnant, some employers don't even like to interview her. Many women in the workplace hide their pregnancy only because of the uncertainty they feel about losing their job.

The Labor Code of the Republic of Albania, which is based on fundamental constitutional principles, respects ratified international conventions as well as rights. The prohibition of discrimination is a fundamental right in the Labor Code. In this way, the Labor Code prohibits any type of discrimination in matters of employment and profession and clearly defines the meaning of discrimination by listing, among other things, as such: difference, exclusion or preference due to sex which violates the right of the person equal treatment and work. Cases where these differences, exceptions or preferences should not be considered discrimination.

⁷ <http://www.studylecturenotes.com/basics-of-sociology/gender-discrimination-definition-types-examples>.15 April 2020 8 Ibid.

In the Labor Code we find important principles of equality in work and employment relationships reflected;

Prohibition of forced labor for all without exception;

The protection and prevention of violation of the personality and dignity of the worker as an obligation of the employer, including sexual harassment;

Failure by the employer to collect information relating to employees during the employment relationship (except when such information relates to the professional skills of the employees or is necessary for the performance of the contract). This means not receiving information relating to sexual orientation, marital and family status, etc.;

Trade union freedom;

Registration of the employee in social security;

The Labor Code includes in its content an important chapter entitled "Special protection for women", which contains legal regulations that take into account the special role of women in society and family. Among which to mention:

*Prohibition of work for pregnant women and new mothers (article 104)

*The invalidity of the termination of the employment contract by the employer during the maternity leave or adoption leave period (article 107)

*Birth permit

* Adoption permit

*Prohibition of night work for pregnant women (article 108)

Albania has ratified a significant part of international instruments related to the protection of women's rights and human rights. The Constitution has well defined the place of international instruments in the internal system as well as the methods of their implementation. Undoubtedly, the ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights has reformed Albanian legislation with the standards and practices established by the ECtHR in its jurisprudence. Article 17 of the Constitution underlines that, even when there are cases of limitation of the rights and freedoms provided for by the Constitution, such restrictions can only be imposed by law for the public interest or for the protection of the rights of others. . Furthermore, such restrictions must be such that they do not violate the essence of freedoms and rights and in no case can they exceed the restrictions provided for by the ECHR.

Some of the international legal instruments ratified by Albania related to non-discrimination are;

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aimed at abolishing the death penalty
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
 - Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
 - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, relating to the involvement of children in armed conflicts
 - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
 - International Convention for the Protection of Rights
 - Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
 - International Convention for the Protection of Rights of migrant workers and members of their families
 - Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
 - Beijing Platform for Action
 - Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

In June 2016, the amended Labor Code came into force. It has adapted a number of directives regarding non-discrimination at work. Recent legislative changes to the Labor Code have marked improvements in non-discrimination, which make the latter fully compliant with the aforementioned directives. This includes the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of people regardless of racial or ethnic origin, as well as the Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment. Recent legislative changes have also raised the minimum working age from 14 to 15, thus respecting the conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO). One of the most important instruments that Albania ratified in 1994 is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol, otherwise known as the Women's Constitution. The Commission on the Status of Women was

established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It is the leading global decision-making body that focuses exclusively on gender equality and the advancement of women. Article 11 of CEDAW focuses on the right to work, the right to equal pay, social security, protection from discrimination based on gender and discrimination at work. Albania reports regularly to CEDAW. During its membership of the ILO, Albania ratified 54 conventions, including the Convention on Discrimination in Employment Relations. Albania is responsible for reporting the progress of labor rights and working conditions in international mechanisms, established by international acts ratified by the Albanian Parliament or to which Albania is a party. Specifically, Article 1 of the Convention on Discrimination in Employment, which came into force in 1960, considers discrimination: "Any difference, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, of national or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or compromising equality of opportunity or treatment in matters of employment and invites the signatory parties to follow a national policy aimed at promoting, through methods adapted to national conditions and practices , equal opportunities and treatment in employment, with the aim of eliminating discrimination. Albania has signed all the main ILO conventions.

The Constitution of the Republic of Albania strengthens the protection of human rights with a special provision against discrimination, including gender among the reasons for which discrimination is prohibited. The general principle of non-discrimination, including what happens in employment relationships, is underlined in the Constitution. Article 18 states that "everyone is equal before the law" and "no one may be discriminated against on the basis of sex, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, philosophical or religious beliefs, social situation, educational and economic and parental status".

CEDAW, adopted by Albania in 1993, establishes in Article 11 that "the Parties shall take all necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women at work, so that they are offered the same rights on the basis of equality between men and women. Therefore, women should have the right to freely choose their profession and place of work, have the right to be promoted, have job security, training and professional preparation among other rights. Gender equality can only be achieved when, as a result of law enforcement, both men and women have the same benefits, rights and responsibilities. Labor Code In December 2015 the Albanian Parliament approved law no. 136/2015 which introduced important changes to the Labor Code. The focus was on harmonizing the law with the EU employment acquis. This included minimum standards for employment,

equality, health and safety at work and non-discrimination. The changes came into force on 22 June 2016. Regarding the most basic gender discrimination at work, the latest changes include three important new principles that employers must take into account in employment relationships: non-discrimination, protection of the consultation of personal data. The 2015 legal changes also apply to maximum working hours, working conditions, overtime, holidays, annual leave, night work, non-discrimination and employee consultation. General provisions for all workers in the Labor Code The legal amendments to the Labor Code that came into force in 2016 regulate: employment relationships between the employer and the employee; payments for hard work and late hours; maternity leave; health at work; and temporary work. These changes make the Labor Code a modern document that offers greater protections to workers. Discrimination against women must be treated as a violation of human rights. According to international standards, the right to work is enshrined in the provisions of the Albanian Constitution in Article 49: "Every individual has the right to earn a living through legal work that he has chosen and accepted himself". According to Shtylla (2016), this constitutional provision guarantees the right to work for every person, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language, political or religious affiliation. Likewise, the right to work includes the right to choose a profession, a place of work and a professional qualification system aimed at earning a living through legal work.

Law on Gender Equality in Society Law No. 9970 On gender equality in society, of 07.24.2008,⁸ declares the fundamental principle of equality between women and men in public and private life. Its purpose is to ensure adequate protection against discrimination based on gender; establishes guarantees for equal opportunities between women and men to eliminate discrimination based on gender; defines the responsibilities of state bodies in supporting gender equality; and defines protection against discrimination and harassment by providing special measures to ensure a representation of at least 30% for the least represented gender in political or public decision-making positions. Furthermore, the law provides for gender equality in education, employment and the media. The main purpose of the law is to "ensure effective protection against gender discrimination and any form of behavior that encourages gender discrimination" as well as "determine measures that guarantee equal opportunities between women and men, eliminating all forms of discrimination of gender"⁹. This provision lays the foundation for a proactive

⁸ Article 1 together with Article 2 of the Gender Equality Act.

⁹ Prof. Dr. Mariana Semini-Tutulani, Judicial conflicts in employment relationships

and reactive approach, in which public institutions have the responsibility to react to any case of gender discrimination, as well as the duty to actively prevent discrimination before it occurs. The Gender Equality Act defines terms related to gender, gender-based discrimination, equal gender representation, temporary special measures, gender-sensitive employees, equal value for equal work, gender-based harassment and sexual harassment. However, these definitions cannot be considered complete since they do not include the definition of sex, which is linked to a person's biological affiliations, compared to gender which the law defines as the opportunities and social attributes associated with being a woman or man, as well as the relationship between them. Furthermore, gender stereotypes and gender identity are not defined. Furthermore, the definition of gender requires improvement. The law defines gender-based discrimination as "any difference, exclusion or limitation based on sex which aims at or results in an impairment, failure to recognise, enjoy and exercise the equally fundamental human rights of both sexes as defined in the Constitution and in legislation , in the political, economic, social, cultural and civil fields".

Law on Protection from Discrimination Albania has established protection to address discrimination through the adoption of Law No. 10221 on protection from discrimination of 4 February 2010, the so-called anti-discrimination law. The law is in line with EU legislation, as the definitions of different forms of discrimination are in line with that legislation. The Protection against Discrimination Act extends the scope of protection against discrimination beyond what is guaranteed by EU legislation in two main respects. First, it states that denial of reasonable accommodation constitutes discrimination. EU member states are still discussing the implementation of this approach in negotiations for a new EU equality directive. Secondly, the law is based on the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice which specifically states that "discrimination by association" is a prohibited form of discrimination.

of the anti-discrimination law, guarantees the right of every person to:

a) be considered equal before the law and be protected equally by the law;

b) have equal opportunities and opportunities to exercise rights and freedoms and to participate in public life and

c) have effective protection from discrimination in any form of behavior that encourages discrimination.

seen from the perspective of gender equality, 2014, p. 53.

Some important national strategies in order to protect and strengthen the role of women in society. Albania has undertaken important national and international legal commitments to fight discrimination and to promote and make gender equality a reality. In this context, government structures in cooperation with civil society and international organizations have worked in a special way in the direction of improving legislation and gender-sensitive policies, building and strengthening structures in support of gender equality and for the prevention and fight against violence against women and domestic violence. Over the years, the Albanian governments, with the support of several international organizations and various NGOs, have drawn up several strategies for the protection of women's rights. Mention: The National Strategy and Action Plan for Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007-2010), which determined the policies and concrete actions of structures, including police bodies, for the prevention and response to domestic violence. The drafting and implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and the Elimination of Domestic Violence marked a qualitative step in the commitment of the Albanian Government to address issues related to gender integration in public policies and the protection of girls and women from abuse and violence. The revised National Strategy for Gender Equality, Reduction of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, 2011-2015, as well as the Action Plan were conceived on the analysis and treatment of two main issues: Gender Equality and Reduction of Gender-Based Violence. 127 Other equally important elements are the four strategic goals:

1. Strengthen the institutional and legal mechanism;
2. Increase women's participation in decision-making;
3. Economic empowerment of girls and women;
4. Reduction of gender violence.;

The strategy is accompanied by a well-defined action plan, accompanied by measurable and monitorable objectives. Through the implementation of the objectives of the Strategy, we aim to make significant steps in achieving gender equality in Albania through the integration of the gender perspective into all aspects of policy design and implementation. This means equal participation of women and girls, men and boys in the social, economic and political life of the country, as well as equal opportunities to enjoy all their rights and make use of their individual potential for the benefit of society. The strategy (2014-2020) focuses on gender inequalities and aims to undertake an inclusive and specifically gender-sensitive approach, designing responses and programs aimed at ensuring that the benefits of reforms are distributed equally between different categories of women and men, boys and girls in Albania."The

specific interventions envisaged by this strategy include the removal of barriers by facilitating access to training and employment; encourage participation in the formal labor market; address the low participation of women in the labor market and strengthen capacities to equitably integrate gender into the design and planning of policies and outcomes. The first Strategic Objective of the National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE, 2016 - 2020) provides for the economic empowerment of women by addressing the gender inequalities that lead them to poverty. The strategy does not specifically focus on gender-based discrimination in the labor market; but refers to the situation in which women are disadvantaged and discouraged from participation. For example, the strategy refers to reducing the gender pay gap, increasing female employment and reducing unpaid work. According to the strategy, these aspects influence gender-based discrimination in terms of access to employment. The strategy should include more considerations on combating discrimination against women who are already part of the labor market.

Conclusions

This article analyzed the most important laws related to protection against gender-based discrimination at work, such as the Constitution, the Labor Code, the Law on Protection against Discrimination and the Law on Gender Equality. Elements of other laws have been taken into account to the extent that they are related to gender discrimination in employment and other issues relevant to this analysis. Protection from discrimination is guaranteed by the Albanian Constitution, international conventions ratified by Albania, the Labor Code and special laws, such as the Law on Protection from Discrimination and the Law on Gender Equality. One of the most important obstacles to access to justice is the lack of effective compensation mechanisms for victims of discrimination. Well, despite all the laws, statutes and measures adopted to prevent discrimination, the latter and legal inequalities in employment relationships exist. Given the traditional gender roles of men and women, this could mean that women do not recognize gender-based discrimination when it occurs, or fear social stigmatization if they report it. Other factors that contribute to the fact that reports of discrimination at institutions are very low are the concern for anonymity, the fear of dismissal, the long bureaucratic procedures, the difficulties in documenting the case and the lack of trust in the institutions.

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- 4) Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in relation to access to employment, professional training and promotion, and working conditions.
- 5) Directive on the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access and supply of goods and services, Directive 2004/113 / EC.
- 6) European Charter of Human Rights, EU.
- 7) The Labor Code of the Republic of Albania
- 8) European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, ratified by Law No. 8137, dated 31.7.1996 (completed with additional protocols)
- 9) Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (KEFDG)
- 10) Constitution of the Republic of Albania
- 11) Law No. 10221, date. 4.2.2010 "On protection from all forms of discrimination in RSH"
- 12) Law no. 10221, dated 4.02.2010 "On protection against discrimination"
- 13) Law no. 10237, dated 18.02.2010 "On safety and health at work"
- 14) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- 15) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- 16) Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 17) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, relating to the involvement of children in armed conflict

Strategic Legal Issues when Managing Healthcare in the Digital Era

Olga Sovova ¹

Abstract: Marketing is one of the most crucial tools in any business, organization, and institution, and it takes on an increasingly central role in managing a specific company. It helps the company gain greater visibility, recognition, and trust from customers and partners. The role of marketing, especially digital marketing, was further strengthened during the Covid-19 crisis. Thanks to their digital presence, businesses and organizations demonstrated that they were still operating and, in this way, stayed connected with their customers and gained more trust. At the time of the pandemic, one of the most affected sectors was the entire tourism industry. All travel companies suspended their physical operations, but the pandemic situation and the right marketing decisions, mainly involving the use of new technologies, a strong presence on social media, and the development of value propositions tailored to their customers' needs, were at the core of the recovery of the tourism industry after this unprecedented crisis. This is why, to effectively implement marketing, a good theoretical understanding is necessary, along with building a theoretical framework for tour operator agencies, understanding their specifics and characteristics.

Key words: Digital Marketing, Tour Operator, Market, Technologies, Business

JEL: A11; A13; M2; M3; L83

I. Introduction

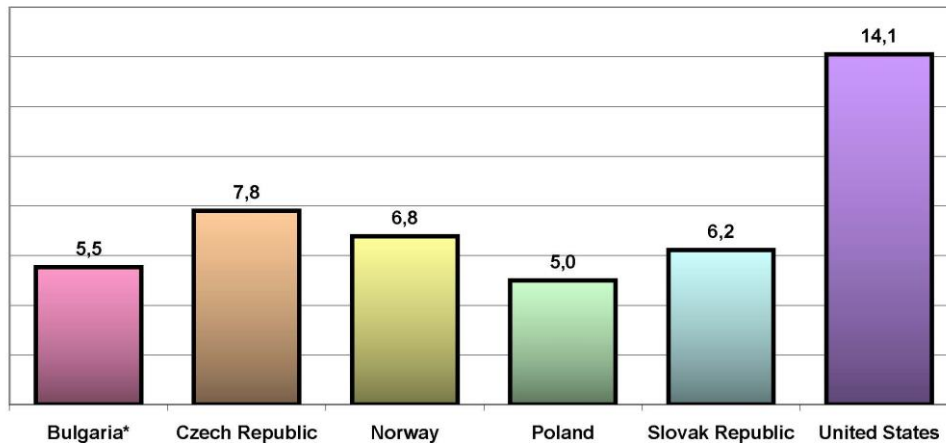
"Managing a medical facility is one of society's most complex managerial activities. The reality often differs from the issues focused on by the public, the media, or theory or teaching." (Drucker, 2011, p. 214)

Health service providers, regardless of the place or country of provision of care, their legal form or ownership, are essential players in the national and international service markets. The importance of this segment and its economic, human, professional and legal potential is evidenced by comparing public expenditure as a percentage of the gross domestic product.

Graph No.1 introduces the percentage of Gross Domestic Product spent on healthcare costs.

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Expected Percentage of Public Finance Health Expenditures 2022



* available data 2021

Source: <https://stats.oecd.org/>

The paper explores the intersection of strategic managerial and legal issues in the digital era. Managers and senior executives who want to share and expand their visions about the future direction of health services become leaders. They must have managerial knowledge that will enable them to solve the problem comprehensively and precisely because the environment is multidisciplinary and includes various linked and connected activities.

Using the methodology of desk research, literature and case-law analysis and her attorneys-at-law experience, the author underlines the necessity of a completely new, multidisciplinary approach when managing health care delivery.

In graphs, the author compared selected European Union member states and countries outside the EU, whose economic performance is comparable with countries in Central Europe and the European Economic Area.

II. Strategic legal and managerial challenges in the health services

"Strategic planning is becoming for hospitals what business analysis is for private companies."

(Mc Donald, Beange, Blachford, 1992)

General management skills include applying basic market principles and systems thinking to the provision of health care. Business knowledge is an essential part of healthcare management and day-to-day operations. The Healthcare Leadership Alliance (HLA), a consortium of six major professional membership organisations, used the research from and experience with their credentialing processes to posit five competency domains common among all practising healthcare managers: (1) communication and relationship management, (2) professionalism, (3)

leadership, (4) knowledge of the healthcare system, and (5) business skills and knowledge. (Steffl, 2008)

Currently, the most crucial area is work with information and knowledge. Information management is a unifying discipline that increases the quality of daily work.

In this context, the author draws attention to the importance of interweaving information and knowledge management:

Information management can be defined as a transdisciplinary set of knowledge, methods, and recommendations of system approaches and informatics that help to implement the information processes of managerial thinking and action appropriately to achieve the organisation's goals. Knowledge management is a set of methods and procedures that enable managers to manage the creation and use of knowledge available in and around their organisation. (Řezáč, 2009)

Knowledge management in the healthcare sector is gaining importance as the healthcare sector, in addition to the classic provision of routine healthcare, is also developing innovative procedures and technologies. Research activity and clinical studies are integral parts of the financial resources of many healthcare facilities. Knowledge and its improvement through the process of a learning organisation is considered a key currency of healthcare. In recent years, knowledge management in healthcare has, therefore, focused on three essential areas:

- 1) Essence of knowledge, type of knowledge management,
- 2) motivation suitable for the healthcare sector,
- 3) barriers and support for introducing knowledge management. (Bordoloi, Islam, 2012)

The effectiveness of knowledge management depends on how the knowledge processes are connected in the organisational structure and, at the same time, how they operate within the framework of interactions with the environment. When introducing and managing knowledge management, A strong interrelationship exists between individual management tools and the organisational structure.

The legal concept of due managerial care is essential for properly performing the manager's activities. Not only managerial skills and leadership but also the manager's legal awareness significantly define the concept of responsibility for the performance of the function. Responsibility is objectively measurable not only by the economic results of the provider she manages but also by whether she and other workers comply with the obligations imposed on them by legal regulations. Relatively broadly conceived legal responsibility is enshrined in the legal order of the EU and individual national states. Although they differ due to individual legal systems, both outside the EU and within the EU, certain common areas, and above all, the direction of the future development of managerial legal responsibility, can be traced.

A critical factor that a manager must work with is human resources. The law regulates working conditions in the healthcare sector. These are closely related to the specific position of a healthcare professional in

society. The performance of regulated professions within non-European and European countries is governed not only by Community law and generally binding legal regulations but also by statutory by-laws. In federally organised states, a license to provide health services may be limited to one or several states or, conversely, valid for the entire territory.

Enrollment in a professional chamber with compulsory membership is required. Registration may be obligatory in several professional chambers, depending on the territorial organisation of the state. Professional chambers also regulate rules for foreign nationals or visiting experts from scientific institutions.

Professional regulation, in general, is also a limiting factor. Therefore, the profession's performance is not dependent exclusively on the market environment but, above all, on the concept of public interest. Which, even as a result of historical traditions, understands the provision of health care as a mission. This convention is typical, especially for European countries where free and market-based access to health services has been distorted due to the influence of the planned economy. After 1990, there was a strong emphasis on compulsory health services financed from public sources, often without the possibility of a patient's choice. Legislation often differentiates and still distinguishes the working conditions of healthcare workers. State or community-owned healthcare providers often offer different remuneration for the same job position.

For the manager, it is a fundamental issue to solve the working conditions, adjust the motivation of the workers and reward them both in the form of wages and salaries, as well as benefits and above standards. A permanent lack of funds or an underestimation of remuneration for work and, at the same time, a more significant workload impact not only the direct provision of health care but also the safety of patients and health workers. The conflict of dual loyalties is also sharpened since the effort to obtain sufficient funds for remuneration or directly increase the number of workers can lead to redundant performances. More funds are drawn from public sources without any measurable effect.

Monitoring workload, working time fund, remuneration and implementing and billing health services lead to discovering where cash flows must align with stakeholders' interests. One part of the managerial care, examined below as a Czech experience, is optimising financial flows and their control. The transition to digital monitoring of the funds spent in their complexity is inevitable.

III. Czech experience

The facts mentioned earlier resonate very strongly in the Czech Republic. In mid-November 2023, the government caught up with the progress of the digitalisation of the Czech Republic and presented the Digitalisation Strategic Plan until 2030. (digitalnicesko.gov.cz/vize) According to the DESI Scoreboard 2023, the Czech Republic still occupies 18.- 20. places in digitalisation among EU countries. (digital-decade-desi)

Therefore, the state, the subjects financed by it and their managers must focus on an entirely new approach to digital services. Health care,

financed primarily from public funding and compulsory health insurance, is included in this task.

Table No. 1 describes the distribution of public resources in healthcare.
Public expenditures for health services in the Czech Republic – mio CZK

Resource	Year		
	2019	2020	2021
State and community budgets together	22 502	46 691	39 661
State Budget	8 639	31 927	26 358
Community Budgets	13 863	14 764	13 303
Compulsory insurance	317 994	352 194	419 571
All together	340 496	398 887	459 231

Source: Czech Ministry of Finance

Medical and healthcare providers are at the top of usage. Modern technologies and AI provide health care and manage healthcare facilities' daily operations. However, this technological advance does not manifest itself in communication with patients. The possibilities of using digital technologies for communication with the health care provider or medical specialist telemedicine and remote access to the patient's files still need to be improved. The Czech Republic adopted Act No. 12/2020 Coll. on the Right of Digital Services in 2020 and Act No. 321/2021 Coll. on the Electronisation of Health Services one year later. The second-mentioned act should be fully valid in 2026, but the government proposes to postpone it.

Nevertheless, the practice imposes high charges and expectations on managers in this field. That is why the legal regulations of managerial obligation and responsibilities should be critically reviewed. A manager afraid of punishment for an innovative or unusual decision will not even consider it in depth and will use proven, even outdated, tactics and attitudes.

The author underlines that solving the mentioned issue is especially urgent because, as Table number One shows, publicly financed health facilities provide essential national health care.

The Czech Civil Code stipulates in Section 159, par.: "A person who accepts the office of a member of an elected body undertakes to discharge the office with the necessary loyalty as well as with the necessary knowledge and care. A person who is unable to act with due managerial care although he must have become aware thereof up."

The general regulation applies to legal entities under both public and private law. The requirement of due managerial care thus applies to managers and health service providers who are directly managed organisations of the Ministry of Health and to providers in the form of business corporations, regardless of their legal form or ownership structure.

Due managerial care is primarily connected with obligations regulated by private law, the so-called unfaithful administration. The law stipulates the obligation to protect entrusted values and property interests

within the framework of labour legislation. Due managerial care is also reflected in the possible criminal liability of both natural and legal persons. The criminal offence of breach of duty in managing someone else's property, according to Sections 220 and 221 of the Criminal Code, forms the basis for the possible punishment. The manager, as well as other senior staff in the process of providing health care, are responsible for properly setting up the economic operations of the health service provider so that it does not lead to illegal actions.

This relatively general formulation then has its concrete reflection in the legal regulation of the awarding of public contracts, the protection of whistleblowers, and the unique legal regulation of the management of public property, which was entrusted to health services providers for their operations.

A fundamental question managers must solve is the need for a labour force, such as doctors, pharmacists, and nurses. Their working conditions need an immediate improvement. The provision of standard care in hospitals depends on a large amount of overtime work. Primary health care faces personal deficiency in small towns and rural areas. Primary care specialists nationwide are aging and retiring.

Complete health service reform in the Czech Republic is inevitable. Healthcare providers, including the state and communities as owners, need to appoint to high managerial positions, not only medical doctors, but also other professions with economic and legal backgrounds. Real leaders must stand at the head of the health service providers. They should be able to have both vision and strategy. The dual loyalty conflict must be resolved by focusing on all stakeholders' interests. On the one hand, the patient-centred care; on the other hand, the fair working conditions and a healthy environment for the staff.

Last, managers must follow health services' financial and legal regulations and maintain a balanced budget. The author agrees that a manager's dismissal every four years, when the Ministry or Major, as a representative of the public owner, changes, leads to maintaining the course without introducing progressive thoughts into practice. (seznam. zpravy) After the six-month trial period, the manager should be appointed for at least five years to have the opportunity to realise the vision in the daily practice. The Czech labour law enables it; however, private and public entities do not exploit it.

The Czech Republic has to comply with two main legal challenges when managing healthcare in the digital era. The digitalisation in the healthcare sector forms the first one. The second one is the balanced and appropriate healthcare system, where the workload of medical professionals, especially young doctors, creates the most challenging obstacle.

The Czech government adopted the "Health 2030" strategic plan in July 2020. (zdravi2030.mzcr.cz) Act No. 325/2021 Coll., on Healthservices Electronisation, followed. However, this law is a very technical grid on basic demands of digitalisation and cyber security of patients' and providers' staff data. The remote exchange of information between primary and specialised

care, the digital informed consent, and complete digitalisation of records and files, including patients' remote access to healthcare data, still need to be introduced into the practice.

The scissors between private and public financed health services are opening, and the gap is widening. Private companies offer telemedicine, online healthcare scheduling, and remote patient file access.

State-owned hospitals offer health care based on modern technologies and artificial intelligence. However, the organisation and possibility of arranging medical consultations and paperwork online are almost excluded. The patient has to appear personally and queue for several hours to get the operation date. The possibility of making an appointment online is infrequent and only available in a few hospitals and services. The phone is the standard means of communication. A patient's success in reaching the expected result depends on a nurse or receptionist's presence and willingness to pick up the call. This outdated method delays and causes economic losses because qualified workers often devote themselves to administrative work instead of doing their jobs.

It is also, among other things, the administrative burden mentioned above and the uneven assessment of working time with much overtime, which causes general dissatisfaction among healthcare professionals.

Managers of health facilities need more power to solve the issues mentioned above. The digitalisation of medical facilities and the possible increase in the number of employees depend not only on financing from public funds but also on public procurement and the provider's possibility of restructuring the labour force.

The requirements for awarding public contracts are stringent, both within the legal framework in the European Union and nationally. As mentioned earlier, those dramatically hold back the possibilities of creating modern digital health services.

The rigid Labour Code Act. No 262/2006 Coll., which makes it challenging to enter into flexible employment contracts and has relatively formalised the legal requirements for home-office and remote work, does not add to the flexibility of health services. However, the transition to the requirements of modern communication methods in the digital age has yet to take.

The Czech Republic has high-quality health services, depending on the professionals' commitment to their healthcare profession and mission. Due to the population's aging and the effort to ensure the availability of health care to the broadest possible spectrum, intelligent technologies and telemedicine are developing significantly.

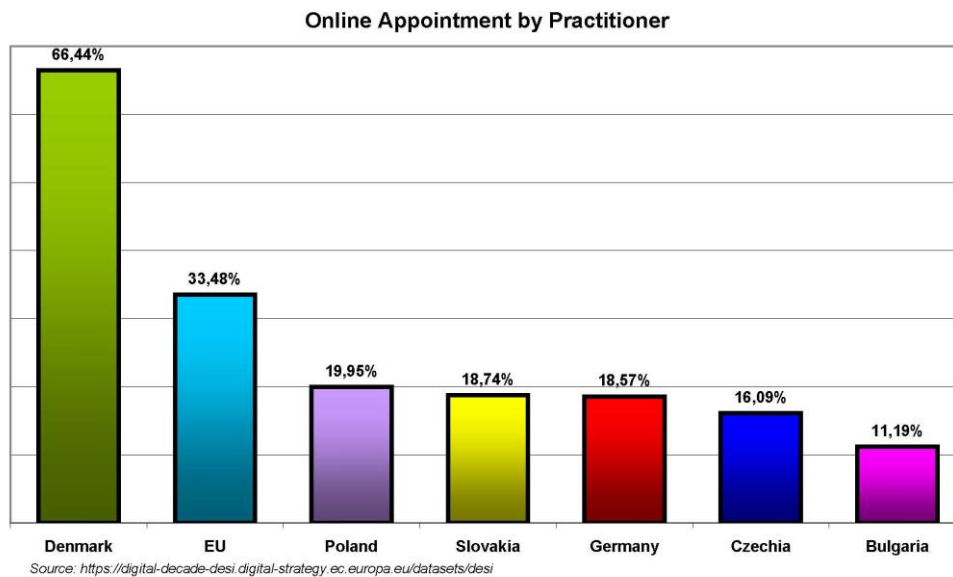
Despite this, graphs 2 and 3, introduced in the discussion, underline that the Czech online digital health services fall under the EU average.

IV. Discussion

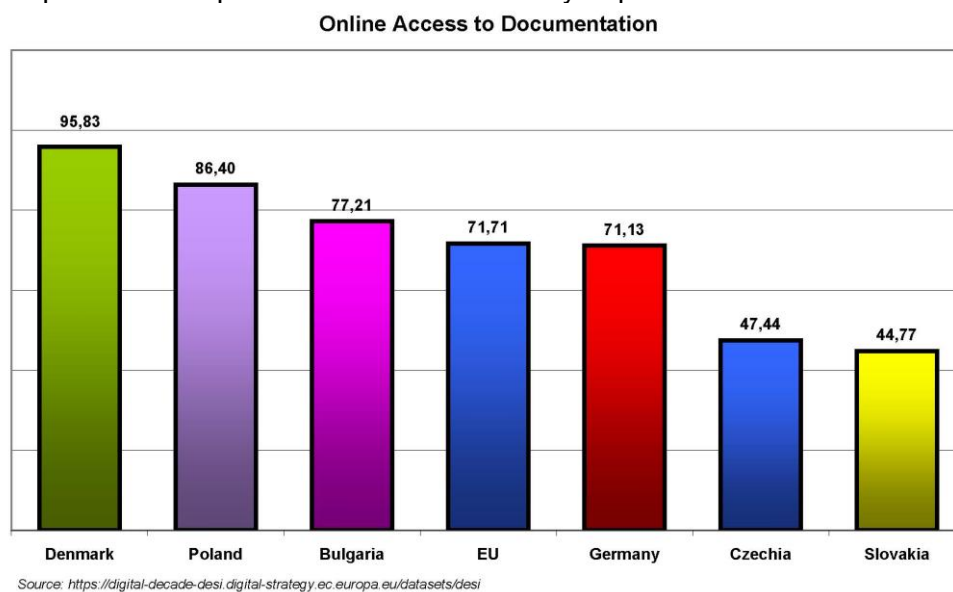
The author is confident that the key findings about the intersection of managerial and legal knowledge and responsibilities reflect the daily operation of the healthcare provider. The primary stakeholder, the receiver of health services, the patient, needs and must catch up.

Due to obstacles and incredibly confusing and hypertrophied legislation, the leader loses vision and strategy. The daily struggle for financial and human resources consumes the managers at the middle and higher levels. Healthcare providers are supported based on capita or free-to-service healthcare delivery. Such systems do not force the transformation to modern, digitalised health services.

Graph No. 2 examines the availability of the reservation of the practitioner's appointment.



Graph No. 3 compiles the online accessibility to patients' files.



Though digitalisation is quite good with the EU and the selected countries, achieving such digitalisation would enable online access to health services within the national and European healthcare systems takes much work. Many providers and national health systems enable remote access only for professionals and patients. Sometimes, the patient may access only some files connected with an electronic prescription.

According to the author, value-based healthcare is the future. Providers should be financed to improve patient's health status and reduce costs for chronic disease. Modern, remotely controlled technologies could help patients live healthier and safer in their homes than before. All respective medical specialists and providers should digitally share the evidence of patients' health data.

The EU platforms for data exchange, like electronic cross-border health service or European Healthdata Space (see health.ec.europa.eu), allow substantial change in healthcare and manage all health services.

Remote access to services and workplaces seems unlikely to be temporary. Even the healthcare provider must be aware of this radical change in the future of services provided. However, in an environment where schedules and every interaction and conversation are filtered through the impersonal lens of a computer screen, building trust and creating space for exchanging ideas and legally anchored health care demands an entirely new approach and ways of thinking. (Lange, Hayward, 2020)

The transition to a new concept of responsibility for due managerial care in a broad sense, as examined in the paper, is, therefore, essential and unavoidable.

V. Conclusion

Managers often look for new solutions in a globalised, digitally connected world. Such procedures must be legally based to meet the requirement of due managerial care.

Digitalisation in healthcare services is an effort to provide topical healthcare and a business opportunity. Modern technologies bring income through direct use and indirectly through job opportunities while developing production capacities.

Therefore, systemic, comprehensive thinking and constant pressure to make the provider a continuously learning organisation is essential.

"Systems thinking is the art and science of making reliable inferences about behaviour by developing an increasingly deeper understanding of the underlying structure." (Richmond, 1994)

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Revealing New Opportunities for Agribusiness by Digital Marketing

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Abstract: Agribusiness is faced with challenges like changes in climate and solving food shortages problems. A possible solution to overcome these difficulties is use the digital marketing possibilities. The artificial intelligence and IoT introduction in marketing allows to analyze and process big data, create prediction, manage customer relationships and introduce new agricultures. These capabilities help to manage business operations, predict the crops demands and their markets, and reduce possible losses from discarding unrealized produce with early intervention, i.e. to improve production, yield realization and food wastage reduction. The report presents role and opportunities of digital marketing with modern IT for agribusiness.

Key words: IoT, Digital marketing, AI, Agribusiness

JEL: C63, M31, Q13, O33

Introduction

The level of IT (information technology) use in agribusiness is quite advanced in terms of automation of daily work and maintenance. Innovations in agribusiness related to AI (Artificial Intelligence) are found in several technologies - IoT (Internet of Things), autonomous machines, robots, monitoring of pests and conditions for the development of agricultural crops and quality use of chemicals, fertilizers and feed. IoT, with the help of the global network, connects different devices that can interact with each other or influence the external environment. The data collected by the devices' sensors is collected, aggregated and processed. They are at the heart of AI. AI applications controlling daily work in agribusiness can be tied to external systems – marketing, logistics, financial, etc.

In terms of digital marketing, agribusiness still uses less technology than other industries. It is essential for any business to access the global market of the World Wide Web because of the many opportunities. Of all business industries, agribusiness has the lowest rate of digital marketing usage at 78% compared to an average of 88% for all other industries (Bojkić et al., 2016). The reason is not that agribusiness is slower than

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other industries to adapt to new technologies. Proof of this is the numerous AI applications used in everyday work. However, in the sale of the produce, the possibilities of traditional marketing are no less important for the customers of the agricultural produce. Customers, especially in retail sales, need an assessment of real agricultural production. They prefer to visit local markets, get to know local producers and their products. Therefore, agribusinesses run successful marketing campaigns as a combination of online and offline techniques, and these capabilities are essential for customers.

Place and role of digital marketing in agribusiness

The main difference in the marketing of agricultural products is that in agribusiness the marketing of the product is mainly through a business-to-business approach and less often direct targeting to end consumers. Digital marketing enables building trust with customers and enables closer engagement of business partners. The connectivity and interoperability of the systems in the partner organizations enable the streamlining of their business processes (Petrov et. al., 2020).

Digital marketing is an integral part of marketing campaigns and is an important success factor. The ability to use IT gives access to large amounts of up-to-date information. The inclusion of AI technologies enables the timely processing of huge volumes of data collected from various sources and provides advice and support in decision-making. In the agribusiness field, AI applications collect and process a vast database of agricultural data, such as soil conditions, weather forecasts, and climate change. This data is combined with data collected by marketing applications for market evaluation and together with a target function for optimal decision-making supported marketing processes. Marketing supports the cultivation of globally needed agricultural crops, the efficient realization of the crop, obtaining a better price for quality and reducing crop wastage. On a global scale, their use leads to a reduction in food shortages, an increase in the environmental friendliness of production and a reduction in damage to ecosystems from aggressive agriculture, which is not tolerated by customers. Digital marketing systems in agriculture are tied to the applications that implement the collection, processing and decision-making in the production of agricultural crops (Fig.1). They offer potential customers the opportunity to track the entire production process in real time and give customers certainty about the type and condition of the crops grown, the preparations, fertilizers and production methods used and thus guarantee the quality of the products.

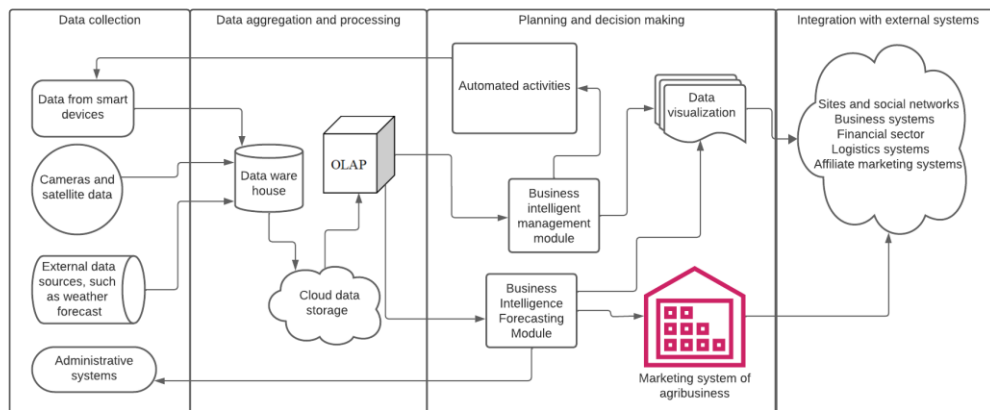


Figure 1: Relationship of a marketing system with AI applications in agribusiness

On a broad scale, the role of digital marketing in agribusiness can also be viewed from the perspective of agribusiness's involvement in the marketing systems of other sectors on the customer side. For example, the provision of financial, insurance and transport services is of utmost importance to agribusiness. Platforms have been developed to unify banking systems with AI solutions for agribusiness (Cook & Neill, 2020). This allows financial institutions to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on the producer's mining status and enables producers who would otherwise be rejected as high-risk to obtain a loan.

Linking applications that monitor the state of crops and climate (IPCC, 2023) with various insurance companies allows them to more accurately determine the risk, insurance contribution and premium in the event of adverse conditions. With the help of satellite photos and sensors, the truth of the insured event can be established more quickly and the manufacturer's insurance can be paid.

AI is used in marketing campaigns and also in the implementation of logistics processes (Sulova et. al., 2022). In the field of logistics, AI enables route optimization, cost reduction and increased profits for organizations (Mileva et al., 2021). The goal of marketing is to create reliable and long-lasting relationships with customers, which allows for the creation of sustainable supply chains.

Finding the right suppliers for the raw materials used - seeds, feed, fertilizer, preparations - is important for minimizing costs and production efficiency. The main relationships in agribusiness are business-to-business. Therefore, by tying the AI applications of the producers with the marketing systems of their partners, it can be used for the timely delivery of preparations necessary to protect against pests and treat diseases of agricultural crops. Improvements in the quality of satellite images, network cameras, drones and thermal cameras allow the collection of numerous images of plants in a given region. They can be used to detect diseases and problems at an early stage, even when a minimal number of plants are affected (Golhani et al., 2018). The collected images are used by AI

applications for phenotyping agricultural crop disease resistance and availability of sufficient nutrients (Agri.bg, 2018; Mahlein et al., 2019; Yara.bg, 2023). Based on the data collected from soil analysis and even just from pictures of deformations in agricultural crops, various applications such as Atfarm (Trace Genomics, 2023; Yara.bg, 2023) detect the lack of the necessary substances in soils. By linking to a marketing system of a business partner, the agricultural producer can get the necessary fertilizers and preparations on time and minimize losses in his crop. On the other hand, the partner can plan production and deliveries to the farmer.

Agribusinesses also rely heavily on non-digital, established business growth strategies. But digital marketing through search engine optimization (SEO) and paid search advertising offer long-term business performance benefits and are proven successful strategies. Combined with AI, digital marketing enables sustainable competitive advantage in real-time operations through continuous, personalized interactions with customers. The use of AI in digital marketing saves resources and time to search for relevant customers and business partners, as well as customers when moving through the individual steps of the shopping process. AI enables automatic content creation, ad refinement, image recognition, email marketing and virtual reality.

Digital marketing tools and platforms for the agriculture sector

A key tool of digital marketing is creating a company website and improving the site's metadata, textual content and SEO elements that improve the site's ranking in search engines. Optimizing on-page SEO elements such as keyword density, page titles, internal links, site structure, and more allows a company's site to align with its content marketing strategy. Site content is one of the most important ranking factors.

The site enables the collection of data on performance, traffic and sales, and enables the improvement of the overall online marketing strategy. The collected data can be used to adjust areas of the site for better engagement, ranking and conversion rate. The collection of data on user behavior when working with the site allows to improve its design and adjust the SEO campaign. AI allows, based on the analysis of previous campaigns, to evaluate the effectiveness of their individual elements - from the basic idea to the formatting of individual elements of the site or advertisement, such as buttons, used colors, etc. The AI also explores the web page to find the most appropriate place to place an ad.

Analytics tools for example Google allow to track the segments from which site traffic comes, such as search engine, social media, referrals from other users, and through them can improve a digital marketing strategy.

Another marketing tool is pay-per-click (PPC) advertising on search engines such as Google or Microsoft's Bing. These platforms provide search advertising options for paid listings that appear on search pages alongside regular organic results. The advantage of this tool is that paid ads provide the agribusiness with more site traffic than SEO alone and help increase visibility.

Another tool is paid social media marketing. Their goal is the same as PPC ads. Popular social media platforms represent one of the fastest growing and most popular marketing channels on the Internet. Social platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram also offer opportunities for business-to-business contacts and the growth of e-commerce in the agricultural sector.

Another tool is Messenger ads or mail ads that are designed to reach individual customers. They are used for various marketing purposes ie. ads can be tuned to increase revenue, brand awareness, site traffic, product sales, and more. Social media ads have the advantage of being able to attract audiences based on interests, jobs, location, and more.

Modern digital marketing is increasingly tied to AI. In addition to its traditional channels, marketing uses the capabilities of AI applications used in agribusiness. The data collected by the applications is used to show the qualities of the produce, to enable better planning of the moment of harvest and to tie into the supply chains between the partners. They allow predictions to be made about the expected quantity of agricultural products on a global scale and their price.

Benefits of using digital marketing in agribusiness

Digital marketing systems can assist producers in discovering and promoting new varieties and types of agricultural crops. Globally, the production of new agricultural crops is the main measure to fight world hunger, improve livelihoods in rural areas and increase economic growth in poor areas. The agricultural sector is a major sector for livelihood and livelihood of people from poor areas and is highly dependent on natural conditions and climate changes. The need to increase cultivated areas destroys nature and further changes the climate. Using the possibilities of digital marketing can improve the conditions by ensuring a fair price for the realization of the production. Marketing analysis can provide advice on selecting suitable agricultural crops according to climate and market.

In agribusiness, digital marketing has the same advantages as in all other industries. Digital marketing increases competitiveness. It gives access to the tools and methods to influence other producers from all over the world, including the largest in scale. Compared to traditional marketing methods, such as advertising on television, radio, print media or sending brochures and letters, the cost of digital marketing methods is much lower. Therefore, it reaches more potential customers and is a more profitable investment.

Digital marketing has the ability to obtain aggregated information on respondent and customer actions in real time and thus to continuously adjust the marketing strategy and optimize it, therefore obtaining a better return on investment. This leads to greater flexibility. Because in digital marketing campaigns, changes can be introduced according to the behavior of target customers in real time. Marketing systems may disclose when predicting different consumer behavior.

In digital marketing, more data can be collected and analyzed about the respondents, such as socio-demographic data, psychological data,

internet behavior, etc. ie. to segment the audience. Digital marketing campaigns can be more effective by customizing the impact methods according to the respondents. This leads to optimization of marketing efforts and maximum return on investment.

The digital environment provides an opportunity to improve customer interaction and experience by getting feedback from them. This creates trust and security in customers and maintains constant channels for placement.

An important feature of agribusiness is the seasonal nature of production cycles. Digital marketing in agribusiness is essential for planning marketing activities so that customers are found when the produce is ready. Combined with AI, it is being used in agribusiness to determine when it is time to harvest. Data obtained from plant monitoring can be used to calculate vegetation indices, and together with weather forecast, climate and soil fertility data, allow AI to make accurate harvest time predictions. These forecasts, together with the yield quantity forecast, can be used for the advance marketing of the crop as well as for the planning of storage and processing facilities (Özgüve et al., 2022). The shelf life of agricultural produce is often very limited and securing sales channels in advance is of great importance for the successful realization of the harvest.

Annual food losses along supply chains are around 1.2 billion tonnes (WWF, 2021). The possibilities of digital marketing to establish contact with business partners lead to the creation of new supply chains and allow the product to move to the market in the fastest way so that losses are minimized. Using the capabilities of the global network can improve the transparency of global food supply chains and facilitate the monitoring of food quality. This will allow quality food producers to get better pay, even if they are small.

AI-powered digital marketing, by increasing the visibility and targeting of ads, can help agribusinesses improve customer engagement. Through digital channels such as social media or email marketing, manufacturers interact with their customers in real time, answering questions and providing up-to-date information, even videos, about their products.

One of the most innovative applications of digital marketing in agribusiness is keeping up with modern production trends such as precision agriculture. Precision agriculture uses digital technologies such as GPS, sensors and drones to collect and analyze data about crops and soil conditions. This data can be used to optimize yields, reduce waste and improve sustainability, and this information through marketing channels can be provided to customers.

Digital marketing can also be used to promote sustainability in agribusiness. By using digital channels to promote sustainable farming practices and green products, agribusinesses can help consumers make more informed choices and reduce the environmental impact of their purchases.

Linking marketing systems to agricultural applications using AI can provide agribusiness with valuable advice on the need for certain products

in regional and global markets and create price forecasts for a particular crop when it comes to market. When the data is up-to-date, the applications can identify the glut of markets for a given crop and predict price changes. Producers can get advice on the demand for a certain crop, on new varieties or on the realization of the production. and placement opportunities, based on the collected data on the crops produced in the region.

Challenges related to the introduction of digital marketing in agribusiness

Despite the undeniable advantages of digital marketing, there are restraining factors that prevent its implementation by all agricultural producers.

In the agricultural sector, production is closely related to natural cycles. The development of agricultural crops is fixed in a precisely defined annual period. It is necessary to take measures in a precisely defined time interval. In order to improve crop development and increase yield, response time is strictly limited. It takes time to test and optimize a marketing strategy, even if AI is used to create and manage it. The accuracy of the choice of marketing strategy is important because there is no possibility of optimization in the limited time frames of the annual production. Few producers have the financial opportunity to optimize their marketing strategy for several seasons.

AI applications tied to marketing systems that provide advice to growers on selecting crops that customers want have a hard time collecting data because of the short agricultural cycle. In addition, there are gaps in the collection of agricultural data for the training of AI models due to the wide variety of conditions in agricultural lands and varieties of agricultural crops. This makes it difficult to apply marketing to select successful crops if they are less popular or to use non-traditional methods to produce them.

To use the methods of digital marketing requires the acquisition of new skills by the producers. Regardless of hiring the specialists to create a digital ad, website, etc., they still require basic IT knowledge to be used properly and securely. It is possible that problems related to the service of potential customers or the sale of agricultural products, data protection, etc. may arise.

Another challenge is related to the financial side of introducing new technologies. For the initial investment, there are various programs, especially within the European Union, which support producers. The bigger issue is related to the rapid development of IT, and especially AI, and the demands of maintaining a modern presence on the global network, which dictates the need for continuous spending to implement the latest developments. Another problem is the cost of using the services of specialists, software support and hardware devices. They are spread over the cost of the whole crop and put small producers at a disadvantage and increase inequality. And globally, farmers in poor countries do not have the means to invest in new technologies, have limited means of communication

and limited access to the global market and high-tech applications that help solve their problems (Patel & Sayyed, 2014).

Another major challenge for poor areas is the lack of infrastructure. Many manufacturers do not have access to high-speed Internet and other IT, which makes it difficult for them to take advantage of the opportunities of digital marketing.

Digital marketing offers new opportunities, but often, especially at the beginning, it takes some time to prove their effectiveness, which is a deterrent for some manufacturers. Distrust in new technologies is overcome by their successful applications.

Farmers may end up on fraudulent websites that fail to achieve their marketing goals. The digital environment makes it possible for many more fraudsters to engage in it, compared to their number in a small regional market. Therefore, it is important to ensure the security and reliability of future partners. In order to be less susceptible to fraud, manufacturers must have experience working on the global network. For the relationship between customers and sellers, trust is essential. To increase digital sales, a number of links are maintained with other online networks, as well as reviews from other customers, cross-site search capabilities, etc.

Conclusion

Agribusiness effectively uses digital marketing to reach the desired customers. Through marketing, businesses have the opportunity to present their company's values to customers. And digital marketing is constantly expanding its possible applications in the field of agribusiness - to accurate forecasting and placement of production at the right time and discovery of new crops according to the wishes of customers, faster advertising of crops and improvement in the entire supply chain of production to the end user. Despite some restraints, it has undeniable advantages. Therefore, the role and opportunities of digital marketing are expected to grow.

Many consumers prefer to make personal purchases, so manufacturers cannot rely on digital marketing alone. We can conclude that in order to accelerate the penetration of digital marketing in agribusiness, it is also necessary for customers to show interest in digital channels for the distribution of agricultural products. For this purpose, applications for agribusiness must be developed and offered by computer specialists. An initiative is needed for changes in the agricultural sector by young, educated people who are carriers of progress and support new technologies. On the other hand, young people can be attracted to agriculture if it is modern and uses IT. Digital marketing is essential for the future of agribusiness, the rise of its prestige on a global scale and the popularization of the possibilities of technologies in this sphere, i.e. for agribusiness to be attractive to young people.

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Free Movement in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: A Legal Analysis in the Context of International Law

Iris Dhamo¹

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Abstract: This article aims to explore the challenges and opportunities presented by the increasing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into contemporary society and its impact on free movement within the framework of international law. Through a comprehensive legal analysis, the article examines how AI technologies influence the free movement of people, goods, and services, with particular attention to the legal implications arising from the presence of autonomous systems and automated decision-making.

The primary focus is on existing international regulations, such as the Schengen Convention in Europe, and how these adapt to the emerging challenges of AI. Additionally, the article explores global initiatives aimed at establishing common guidelines and standards to ensure fair and secure movement in a context where intelligent technologies are rapidly becoming an integral part of daily operations.

The analysis extends to issues related to privacy and security, considering how AI may impact individual and collective rights within the realm of free movement. The article underscores the need for a global and cooperative approach within the international legal framework to address emerging challenges and ensure that free movement not only survives but effectively adapts to the era of artificial intelligence.

In conclusion, the article provides recommendations for states and international organizations to develop policies and regulations capable of preserving the fundamental principles of free movement while addressing the new realities introduced by AI, thereby contributing to shaping a future where technology and law harmoniously collaborate for global well-being.

Key words: IA, free movement, international law, initiatives

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INTRODUCTION

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionized many sectors, including the free movement of citizens. This article will explore how the new challenges and opportunities presented by the IA have influenced the legislative framework that regulates the mobility of people.

At present, the free movement of citizens is a fundamental principle in many regions of the world. In the European Union, for example, the right to free movement is sanctioned in the EU Treaty, with the principle of European citizenship that guarantees the right to move freely within the Union, thanks to the so-called "European citizenship".

European integration has led to the creation of a space where the free movement of citizens is a cornerstone principle. This article will examine the fundamental legislation regulating this freedom, with particular attention to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Directive 2004/38/EC, which enshrines European citizenship.

The TFEU, in its Article 21, underscores the right of Union citizens to move freely and reside within the Member States. This constitutes the legislative core that fuels the principle of free movement.

Directive 38/2004, Known as the "Directive on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States," this legislation outlines the rights of European citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the EU.

Before the ratification and approval of directive 38/2004, there was talk from the normative side about European citizenship, a legal criterion which was added to the relationship between the state and its citizens, which is born and extinguished based on the rules established by the state itself and influenced to a very small extent from public international law.

Community legislation has marked as a first form of European citizenship the free movement of persons and their residence, a right which, although limited to the economic sphere, has represented the recognition of the first common right of all citizens of member states.

Thanks to the legal knowledge of the founders of the EEC, free movement is chosen together with the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of nationality, contained in the EEC treaty. Based on this principle, the community treaties have extended to the citizens of the member states certain prerogatives, which were reserved exclusively for national citizens within any legislation, in order to place the citizen in the same legal situation as the national citizen.

The result of this was the birth of a new legal situation, that of the community citizen, who is in the position of a privileged foreigner, as he feels equal to the situation of a citizen of the state where he resides.

In the legal framework, the figure of the community citizen represents an intermediate situation, which has developed in the direction of the creation of European citizenship.

EU citizenship has the characteristic of being superimposed on the citizenship of a member state, from which it is inseparable.

The acquisition of the citizenship of a member state, which is achieved only through the rules of that state, also brings the acquisition of European citizenship, thus building the European identity. A citizen of the European Union is any person who has the citizenship of a member state. This principle makes possible the automatic acquisition of European citizenship.

It should be emphasized that the acquisition of European citizenship does not replace national citizenship, but is added to the latter.

The status of a citizen of the European Union, also due to the complementary nature of national citizenship, takes on a connotation exclusively in relation to situations related to a community interest, that is, they are not presented only as internal.

The determination of the citizenship of natural persons is made at the complete discretion of the state that grants it. In this way, an irreversible rule of international law is established, which limits this freedom only for some special cases and at the same time does not prohibit the possession of more than one citizenship

However, the widespread implementation of AI in the border management and security controls raises important ethical and privacy questions. Current laws may be outdated in adequately addressing the challenges of collecting and processing personal data in the age of AI.

Some legislative foundations are:

Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code):

- The code regulates checks at the external borders of the Schengen area. Together with implementing regulations, it ensures the free movement of persons within the Schengen area while establishing common rules for controls at external borders.

Decision 2009/894/EC:

- This decision concerns the cooperation between Member States in the implementation of Directive 2004/38/EC, promoting coordination and information exchange to facilitate the uniform application of provisions on free movement.

To address these challenges, legislative adaptation is needed that balances technological innovation with the protection of individual rights. An approach based on principles such as transparency, accountability and data security could be key to ensuring compliance with existing regulations.

CJEU (Court of Justice of the European Union) rulings significantly impact the interpretation and application of free movement rules. The Court's jurisprudence helps define boundaries and clarify contentious aspects of legislative provisions.

These legislative references form the normative foundation for the principle of free movement in the European Union. It is essential to note that the legislative context may evolve over time through amendments and new directives.

The evolution of AI could lead to even more complex future scenarios, such as the need to regulate the circulation of robotic entities or autonomous agents. Policymakers will need to be ready to address these

emerging challenges to ensure the harmonious coexistence of AI and the free movement of citizens.

Current challenges, such as migration management and the impact of new technologies, require constant legislative adaptation. The EU must address issues such as the protection of personal data and the balance between security and freedom of movement, ensuring that laws are up-to-date.

Free movement and European citizenship are fundamental pillars of European integration. Current legislation provides the legal framework, but societal evolution demands a dynamic approach to address emerging challenges. Constant adaptation of legal norms is crucial to ensuring a free, safe, and harmonious movement of citizens within the European Union.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the ever-deeper integration of AI into society requires a thoughtful approach from policymakers. The free movement of citizens in the age of AI not only requires adaptations to existing laws, but also an innovative perspective to address the challenges and maximize the benefits arising from this convergence of technology and human mobility..

In the era of AI, the legislative journey concerning free movement requires a delicate balance. Adapting existing frameworks to accommodate technological advancements while upholding individual rights is paramount.

The journey forward involves not only amendments to current legislation but a proactive stance that anticipates and addresses the dynamic interplay between free movement and artificial intelligence in the European context.

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Lisbon Treat And The Europe Of The European Citizens In The Free Movement

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Abstract: The European Union has a past with differences and, therefore, must necessarily have a future with differences.

European construction arises from a political vision, that is, from the objective to create the conditions of peace within Europe.

The European citizens, first only workers and then, starting from 1990, also students, pensioners and generally economically inactive persons, could work, study or stay in the territory of any member state without any restrictions. But, in order to exercise this right, an essential work of harmonization between the states has been developed.

With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, Europe is clothed with transparency and democracy thanks to the strengthening of the European Parliament and national Parliaments, for the efficiency of distribution of powers at the European and national level, as well as thanks to the effective participation of community citizens.

The expression "Citizens' Europe" has a very broad connotation, as it means the passing of being a citizen of a state, and therefore the sole ownership of the rights and obligations arising from this status.

In this sense, the role of social and cultural cooperation, which represents the soul of every community, gains special importance, while one of the principles on which the European Union is based is that of equality of dignity, a concept that is one of the most important in terms of organization social, political and economic.

Key words: European Union, Lisbon Treaty, citizens, freedom of movement

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INTRODUCTION

European citizens, at first the workers themselves and then, starting from 1990, also students, pensioners and generally economically inactive persons, could work, study or stay in the territory of any member state without any restrictions.

The right of free movement and the right of residence do not simply constitute some normative provisions, since in order to exercise them it is provided by the norms in force that all citizens of any state, if they decide to stay in the territory of a member state, they can enjoy the same rights and eventually the same facilities as citizens who were born in the territory of the state in question.

It should be emphasized that in the past years, the main object of care by the EU has been the workers and, as a result, in December 1989, the majority of the member states at that time of the community signed the Common Charter of Fundamental Social Rights of Workers

The affirmation of these rights and other rights took shape at the moment of the creation of European citizenship, which constitutes one of the most important aspects of the reforms made by the Maastricht Treaty. For this reason, it is no coincidence that the loss of the economic connotation on the part of the community has been verified at the moment of entry into force of this innovation.

This innovation has made it possible for every citizen to possess two citizenships and, as a result, to have a double benefit: on the one hand the protection of fundamental rights from the country of origin, and on the other hand the exercise of some international rights.

It is important to emphasize that the decisions taken at the European level can be directly applied by the member states, thereby affecting the lives of citizens, who can neither control the elections nor express themselves about them.

This is the reason for which, until the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, there was talk of a lack of democracy in Europe.

The Lisbon Treaty marked a significant milestone in the evolution of the European Union (EU), substantially influencing the legislative framework regarding the free movement of European citizens.

This article will explore how the Treaty's provisions have shaped the current freedom of movement, focusing on its relevance in today's context.

Adopted in 2007 and entering into force in 2009, the Lisbon Treaty introduced crucial institutional and regulatory changes. For example, Article 3 of the Treaty emphasizes the EU's objectives, including the promotion of an area of freedom, security, and justice—a key element for the free movement of citizens.

It also promote the European Citizenship and Free Movement, especially on Article 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), that grants to the EU citizens the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States.

This principle was further developed by Directive 2004/38/EC, providing specific details on the rights and conditions of free movement.

The jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has played a crucial role in interpreting and solidifying the rights arising from European citizenship and free movement. Key decisions have contributed to defining boundaries and ensuring the uniform application of the rules.

The Treaty strengthened European citizenship, granting EU citizens broader and clearer rights. Article 20 of the TFEU establishes the principle that every citizen of the Union is also a European citizen, thus expanding guarantees related to free movement.

Also, Article 9 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) granted legal relevance to European citizenship, defining it as complementary to national citizenship. This solidified the notion of a European identity with specific rights, in addition to those conferred by national citizenship.

The Lisbon Treaty extended the rights connected to European citizenship. Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) establishes the right of every Union citizen to enjoy diplomatic and consular protection from the authorities of any member state, representing a significant step forward in safeguarding European citizens.

The European citizenship, has also an impact on the democratic participation, because European citizenship, as outlined in the Lisbon Treaty, give the right to the European citizens to participate in elections to the European Parliament and benefit from diplomatic protection, thereby contributing to the EU decision-making process.

Regarding the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, it distinguishes, or rather originally classifies, the fundamental rights of the EU, in six separate categories, and dedicates a separate chapter to each category.

The Treaty of Lisbon makes the Charter binding and places it in the same rank as treaties, through the modification of Article 6, but has not made it part of the treaty, thus solving many problems that have appeared and the difficulties of defining its legal value.

Thanks to the attribution given to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, making it mandatory and classifying it in the rank of primary European rights, European citizens are guaranteed the enjoyment and exercise of more values and rights.

This means that in case we have a violation of the Charter, the latter can be sanctioned by both national and European judges.

The Treaty of Lisbon recognizes European citizens the right to the power of legislative initiative, as we have a strengthening of the powers of national parliaments above all in terms of the principle of subsidiarity, with the power of the latter to initiate an intervention procedure on the legislative process .

The expression "Citizens' Europe" has a very broad connotation, as it means the passing of being a citizen of a state, and therefore the sole ownership of the rights and obligations arising from this status.

This expression shows much more, as it implies the idea that it constitutes a desire to build a Europe for the citizens and, as a result,

represents a cooperation between the European institutions and the citizens themselves, with the result of participation more and more their active in community activities. This postulate has been reached today thanks to Article 11 TBE integrated by the Treaty of Lisbon, based on which European citizens are recognized with the power of legislative initiative.

In this way, the European citizen is such because the citizen of a member state is represented in the European Parliament in the same way as in the National Parliament.

Therefore, it can be emphasized that European integration cannot be possible without the active and responsible participation of its citizens.

But for Europeans to feel like citizens of the EU, it is necessary for citizenship to find a foundation in common democratic values.

In this sense, the role of social and cultural cooperation, which represents the soul of every community, gains special importance, while one of the principles on which the European Union is based is that of equality of dignity, a concept that is one of the most important in terms of organization social, political and economic.

CONCLUSIONS

In the current context, free movement faces new challenges, such as managing health emergencies and digital security. Current legislation must be agile to adapt to these challenges without compromising the fundamental principles outlined in the Lisbon Treaty.

With the evolution of social and economic dynamics, it is crucial to monitor and continually adjust legislation. Possible developments may include initiatives for greater digitization and the integration of new technologies to facilitate movement, always in line with the principles outlined in the Lisbon Treaty.

The Lisbon Treaty, with its key provisions, continues to be a guiding beacon for the free movement of European citizens. Its relevance is evident in contemporary challenges and opportunities, requiring an ongoing legislative dialogue to ensure that freedom of movement remains a fundamental pillar of European integration.

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Protection of Private Life and Personal Data in the "Information Society"

Ana Dhamo¹

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Abstract: The digital revolution of the 21st century has profoundly affected fundamental rights.

This revolution has opened up new prospects for the implementation of basic rights recognized by the constitutions of democratic countries.

Latin American countries, since the construction of their relatively new constitutions, have made efforts and created chapters dedicated to the protection of privacy and personal data.

They not only detail the catalog of privacy rights but also provide constitutional guarantees in case of violation of these rights or freedoms.

Some European countries, such as Italy, have considered creating an "Internet Constitution". One of the topics covered is the processing of information related to privacy (privacy rights), i.e. ensuring control over digital identity, security and access to personal information.

This is a difficult topic to tackle, because if information is treated as an object, it will be more attractive, more popular, and more expensive.

The big challenge is realizing the "Internet constitution" to prevent criminals from destroying information and property in the 21st century.

Key words: constitution, private life, Italy, Latin America, web, personal data

Introduction

From the panorama presented to the concept of habeas data in Latin America, some general considerations can be made and some conclusions can be reached. Above all, the Latin American experience in the field of habeas data confirms the considerable degree of legal integration achieved, above all in Public Law, with an effort that dates back to the end of the dictatorships of the 70s-80s.

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The evidence of Latin American integration is observed by the comparative study of the continent's systems, especially in the form of the state and governance; catalog of constitutional rights and guarantees; constitutional and administrative justice; institutes and control bodies; institutes of democracy and participation; economic governance mechanisms; regional political and economic integration and relations of hierarchy and supremacy of international law over domestic law, and in the field of constitutional review, amendment and reform proceedings.

The Latin American experience in this field allows the understanding of several typologies of habeas data.

Doctrine and jurisprudence agree on the fact that we have two major typologies: *habeas data proprio* and *improprio*. The first for the protection of personal data, the second for getting to know public information of general, collective interest. The right of access to data banks, archives and public or private registers of the collection of personal information, in order to verify the authenticity, the purpose of the collection and, consequently, access to its correction, updating, cancellation or deletion or prohibition of circulation or dissemination, is based on several subtypes of *habeas data proprio*.

Latin America Habeas Data

Latin American habeas data, as a constitutional action or recourse, runs parallel to amparo. In this sense, its application becomes very simple, fast and direct. The citizen is not required the typology of habeas data that he wants to apply in defense of his IT rights. He only needs to request the protection of his right, violated rights, and have an urgent intervention by the judge.

Habeas data improprio protects the right of access to public or state information, to guarantee the right of democratic citizen participation and transparency in political and administrative proceedings as well as a mechanism capable of finding those responsible for decisions.

Active and passive subjects are clearly established by norms, interpretation and jurisprudential processing. In this sense, the former are natural and legal persons, with no distinction, the lawyer or ombudsman of rights, the associations that protect collective rights. The second, data banks, archives and electronic or manual registers, public or private, responsible for the collection and processing of information and personal data. Of course, there are also some subtle differences from system to system, as we were able to ascertain, but the trend of marking the active and passive subjects of habeas data goes towards the uniformity of the above-mentioned method.

The procedural aspects of the habeas data action or recourse, in conclusion we can affirm that, in general, the norms of constitutional protection or amparo are applied. In this sense:

1. Any person, without distinction or discrimination, may act directly or indirectly, with or without a lawyer or prosecutor.

2. The request, in the case of minors, illiterates or persons in need or without means of protection, can be submitted to the People's Advocate or associations for the protection of rights.

3. Recourse can be presented even during extraordinary constitutional states.

4. All judges - in some cases, such as in Costa Rica, the constitutional judges - of the country where the violation or violation of rights is manifested, are competent to take and give a decision on the recourse. Only in Brazil is there a difference between the competent judge according to the qualification of the person, or the authority against which the recourse is exercised.

5. The formal and essential requirements of the action are: marking the right that is considered violated or violated; the report of the act and the circumstances that provoke the request; the name of the natural or legal person or authority, the possible author of the violation or violation; generalities, identity and residence of the applicant.

6. The procedure of the action foresees the performance in a public form, with the supremacy of the substantive right, procedural economy, speed and efficiency. In other words, it must respect the right of defence, the principles of adversity and publicity of decisions. Judges should prioritise the protection of the right and not the formal aspects of the terms or the claim. The process should reach a final decision in a short time. The judgment must be short and concise, with immutable and binding dates and deadlines.

7. The judge, with his decision, can decide to accept or dismiss the request. In the first case, the judge makes a decision that is valid only for the parties. If the authority or individual is found guilty, they must comply with the decision immediately.

8. Decisions can be appealed within a few days - usually 3 - of notification, which must be done within 24 hours of the decision being made. The decision should usually be made within 20 days of receiving the internship.

9. The review decision, which revokes or modifies the decisions of the first instance, must be motivated, while others can be briefly justified. Also, they must be notified quickly, no later than the day after the decision is made.

10. With the decision taken and notified, the responsible authority or private individual must fulfil it without objections. If this does not happen, the judge, directly, sends a request to the person in charge;

11. In addition to suspending the application of the concrete act, the judge, primarily or at the request of the parties, may also dispose of any measure of protection or security addressed to the protection of the right, in order to avoid in this way the production of other damages as a result of facts, always in accordance with the circumstances of the case.

12. The liquidation of the damage caused and other prejudices will be carried out in an administrative trial, that is, before the competent judge, according to a special procedure within the following six months.

13. If the judge assesses that the fact was committed intentionally or with serious guilt, the culprit will be punished, together with the relevant institution, to repay the damage caused, as well as court costs.

14. Petitioner's waiver is allowed, and the proceedings are hereby archived, being further opened to show non-compliance with the request.

At the end of this note, it should be emphasised that with this constitutional guarantee of habeas data, Latin American public law is not only enriched, but offers a valuable contribution to public law in general. The rule of law also acquires an efficient institution for the protection of fundamental rights and, consequently, is perfected more and more.

Considerable jurisprudence and doctrine in the field of habeas data help to confirm the political development that is being achieved in Latin America thanks to the renewal and progress of public law.

The Italian "Constitution for Internet"

In Italy, something is developing regarding the topic of privacy in the network. It is being considered to create a Constitution for the Internet, which will be processed by an expert commission created by the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament.

If the Internet is the new space in which we live, it is right to decide what are the new rights of this new scenario. So, it is important to form an "Internet Bill of Rights", meaning a "Constitution for the Internet".

One of the topics that needs to be addressed is certainly that of privacy, that is, the way of guaranteeing the right of control over the digital identity, for reservation, security and access: how to guarantee habeas data - n.

All this effort is difficult, but not impossible. Difficult because if information becomes a "commodity", it is naturally more provocative, more popular and sells more.

Feasible because it is not right to leave the wealth of the 21st century, information, to the titans of the Web (social networks).

The online life of each of us presents many unknown aspects, but this does not mean that ethics should remain outside this new world, on the contrary. We must delve as quickly as possible into the study of this ethics and social responsibility of the new virtual world and its connections with the real world. Computer professionals have an important role in this aspect because they are the ones who develop and create new virtual spaces and they are the ones who should help us deal with this mix between online and offline without having the "fear" of feeling stolen from our identity.

Conclusions

At this point, the new approach is placed before the law and the education of computer ethics, the understanding of the dangers of the network, especially for the new generations, for whom the online life is almost completely taking over the part of the offline one, is done.

The Italian constitution has not expressly provided for the right to privacy or the protection of personal data. This is an apparent loophole

which has made it possible to find the right to privacy as a constitutionally protected basic human right.

It often happens that both rights, privacy and the protection of personal data, are mixed up. There are two notions used to express the will to exclude a whole group of people from knowing some information. We are dealing with a macro category, where on the one hand we have the concept of privacy or "right to be alone" of American origin, which guarantees citizens from infringements by third parties; on the other hand, it is the right to protect personal data, which presents new problems for the protection of the dignity and freedom of people from the speed of technological changes.

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Protection of Human Freedoms and Fundamental Rights in Latin America and in the Republic of Albania

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Abstract: The culture of law, which is synonymous with justice and is reliant on both the advancement of technology and science as well as the advancement of civilization, is more important for the protection of rights than mere formal constitutional guarantees.

However, social and economic advancement as well as civilization do not guarantee a culture that upholds justice and human rights. As is the case in the majority of developing nations, you can draft countless statements, constitutions, and lists of rights; however, translating them into a broader protection of human, collective, and societal rights is not only belated, but frequently appears to regress, to the point where it is questionable whether Western countries should do so at all.

The need for modernization and adaptation of the title on constitutional guarantees is of essential importance for the citizens of the Republic of Albania. The comparison of the constitution of our country with those of the Latin American reality is triggered by the historical and political similarities of these realities. The approach and adaptation of our country, within the long-desired Euro-Atlantic integration, starts precisely from these constitutional reforms.

Key words: Albania, Constitutio, Euro – Atlantic, Integration

Introduction

Latin American constitutionalism has been characterized, since its origin, by institutions that are aimed at guaranteeing basic human freedoms, such as *amparo* and protection. In order to achieve this, Peru offers six mechanisms for the defense of fundamental freedoms in the current constitution ³: the action of *habeas corpus*, which dates back to

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³Article 38 of the Constitution.

ancient English and Spanish law; the action of amparo; the action of habeas data; the action of unconstitutionality; and the popular action.

Amparo, or protection from the acts or inactions of any official or private person that affects or violates any constitutionally recognized right, with the exception of individual rights and related rights, which are protected by the habeas corpus action and the rights safeguarded by particular jurisdictional actions.

The *habeas corpus action* is brought about by the action or inaction of any official or private person that interferes with or affects a person's right to request information from any public entity within the legal timeframe, without giving a reason, unless the information affects personal privacy, is expressly prohibited by law, or is necessary for national security.

It is specified that bank secrecy can be terminated upon the request of the judge, the Attorney General (Task Force) or a Congressional Commission of Inquiry. Habeas data also proceeds in cases related to the right in order that IT, computer, public or private services do not disclose inaccurate or offensive information to honor, good reputation, personal privacy, family and image, with the consequent right to ratified for free, directly and proportionally.

The action of unconstitutionality proceeds against the norms of a law rank, legislative decree, emergency decree, treaties, regulations of the congress, as well as regional norms of a general character and municipal orders, in the case when they are contrary to the constitution in form and substance. Conversely, the popular action moves forward against administrative norms, rules, and general decisions and decrees issued by any authority for breaking the law and the constitution.

The President of the Republic, the Nation's Prosecutor, the People's Advocate, and 25% of the Congress's legal members may propose an action deemed unconstitutional; in their respective domains, the President of the Regions may do so with the consent of the Council and Professional Colleges.

This action must be submitted by no less than 5,000 citizens (the previous constitution required 50,000). In contrast, it should be underlined the fact that in Colombian constitutionalism, only one citizen is enough to initiate the action.

Furthermore, the action functions as a jurisdictional guarantee, which ensures obedience to legal norms, or to administrative acts by an authority or an official ⁴.

Human rights, duties and guarantees in Venezuela

Venezuela was granted access to all of the major Latin American countries' field experience from the end of the 1980s to the present day by Title III of the new Constitution.

In this period, most of the countries have experienced the birth of democracy, at least the formal one, on the basis of the political remains left

⁴Article 200 point 6.

by the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay), of the countries Andean, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and Central American countries, Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, known for their sad stories of unlimited violations of human rights.

Just consider the phenomenon of "desaparecidos" as an example. Democracy opens up a new stage for human rights, and new guarantees and rights are incorporated into all new constitutions in Latin America. Some of the most significant ones⁵ include the following: environmental rights, consumer rights, rights to participate in public administration, control over the rulers, and the ombudsman.

The most important changes of the recent Venezuelan constitution in this area can be summarized as follows:

1. The principles of progressivity and the requirements of international treaties on this field have refined human rights rules, elevating them to a constitutional status.

The human rights treaties, pacts, and agreements that Venezuela has ratified and signed have constitutional hierarchy and predominate in the internal legal system, meaning that they are more favorable than the principles established by the constitution and laws for the enjoyment and exercise of rights because they have direct application from the courts and other state bodies. In this sense, the catalog of rights and guarantees contained in the constitution does not represent a limit or denial of others.

2. The right of *amparo*, or protection, is established by an oral, public, brief, and uncomplicated procedure in which the competent judge is entitled to determine the violated legal subject matter, or the one that most closely approximates it, as a jurisdictional guarantee of those rights not specifically mentioned in the constitution. The judge must give the action priority treatment at all times after it is filed.

3. Concerning nationality and citizenship, the new constitutional standards provide dual citizenship, meaning that a person who obtains citizenship in another country does not lose their Venezuelan citizenship. Additionally, foreign nationals wishing to apply for citizenship must reside in the country for at least ten years; however, this period is shortened to five years for natives of Latin America, Spain, and Italy, as well as for spouses of Venezuelan nationals.

4. First, when it comes to citizen rights, it is anticipated that Venezuelans for adoption will have the same rights as native-born citizens, but they will not be able to elect or appoint the following officials: the president and vice president of the Republic or the National Assembly; magistrates of the Supreme Court of Justice; the Attorney General; the

⁵Breyer-Carias A. (1999). *Asamblea Constituyente y Ordenamiento Constitucional* 1, Caracas, page 122 ff.

Comptroller General; ministers in charge of security, energy and mining; education; governors or mayors of border states and municipalities; and senior military officers.

5. Voters will be able to demand an explanation from their representatives under the new constitution, which establishes the citizen's right to revoke the mandate of all elected authorities, including the President of the Republic. Additionally, methods for popular political participation are established, such as the referendum on legislation adopted upon the request of two thirds of National Assembly members;

A consultative referendum is also established under the request of the President of the Republic, of the National Assembly or of 10% of the total number of those registered in the electoral lists; the revocation referendum, precisely for the revocation of all duties and magistracies by popular election, upon the request of at least 20% of the electorate.

6. Regarding civil rights, the state's obligations to guarantee those incarcerated, performing military or civil service, or in any other capacity under its jurisdiction are increased, and the full equality of all people is upheld. As a result, it becomes illegal for civil or military authorities to engage in, condone, or permit the forced disappearance of individuals. This is a crime that regrettably occurs frequently throughout Latin America for both criminal and political reasons.

7. The autonomy and independence of churches and religious views are guaranteed in the area of religious freedom. Along with the revived rights to reply and review against offensive or false material, there is also an increase in the availability of relevant, honest, unbiased, and uncensored information. It is anticipated that children and teenagers will have the right to adequate information for their integral development, and that everyone will have the right to their honor, privacy, image, "confidentiality," and reputation. Additionally, everyone will have the freedom of conscience and its expressions, even if doing so means opposing the application of the law or preventing others from exercising their rights.

8. The most significant aspects of social rights are the following: the establishment of free unions and families between cohabitants; the protection of elderly people's rights and guarantees; the right to a job guarantee with a pension that cannot be lower than the minimum wage; the right to decent, safe, and comfortable housing; the prohibition against the privatization of public health services; the recognition of housewives' work as an economic activity that adds value, generates wealth, and promotes social well-being; and the allowance of housewives' right to social security.

9. Regarding trade union freedom, it is anticipated that the rules and laws governing trade union organizations will require that their leaders and delegates be chosen universally, directly, and in secret. Additionally, it will be declared illegal for managers to misuse the advantages of their freedom union for their own benefits or personal interests.

10. Culture is taken into consideration, above all, in terms of the multi-ethnic society, providing relief and incentives for persons, institutions

and the community in the given field, social security coverage for cultural operators, guaranteeing the spread of culture.

The state is committed to the development of popular cultures, which are considered an essential part of *Venezuelization*.

11. Another aspect of the new constitution in the field of social rights is that of public education, which is offered free of charge until the university graduation, establishing the rule of merit competition and personal and comparative evaluation and excluding any other criteria .

It envisages the obligation of education in the environmental and social field and guarantees the special use of informatics to allow universal access to information. University autonomy, the inviolability of university headquarters are constitutionalized and science, technology, knowledge, innovation and information services are recognized as public interest , guaranteeing their development with sufficient means.

12. It should also be noted the constitutional nature of privatizations among the new economic rights. There is also provision for the right to quality and information on the content of consumer goods.

13. An important part is dedicated to the rights of indigenous peoples, already following a constitutional trend in Latin America. With this part of the constitution, the Venezuelan state recognizes the existence of indigenous peoples and communities, their social, political and economic, cultural organization, customs, idioms and religions, as well as their environment and original rights over the lands they traditionally occupy, necessary for development and to ensure their way of life. The use of the state's natural resources must be carried out in compliance with these rights and through prior consultation with indigenous communities.

The section on rights is concluded with a discussion of duties⁶, which include the protection of national interests, sovereignty, nationality, symbols, and territorial union; fulfilling social obligations and actively engaging in national politics, civic life, and community affairs; and promoting and defending human rights as the cornerstone of social harmony and democratic coexistence.

We can affirm, based on this summary of rights, that Venezuela's new constitution was created in the best possible way, taking into account the trends of democratic nations and the American subcontinent.

Constitutional guarantees in the Republic of Albania

In comparative constitutional law, constitutional guarantees are grouped into two typologies:

- basic guarantee
- procedural guarantee.

The first ones are considered those guarantees that constitute the conditions or instruments for the existence of basic rights and freedoms. The second are closely related to legal guarantees, which are provided both by ordinary justice and by constitutional justice. However, these types

⁶Chapter X, articles 130-137.

of guarantees can be completed in any case through special guarantees, such as the Ombudsman.

Our constitution has sanctioned that the limitations of fundamental rights and freedoms that it has provided for "...cannot infringe the essence of freedoms and rights...". this formulation constitutes what is called the "guarantee of the essence" of rights and freedoms, with the aim of respecting their essential content and preventing its distortion.

The Constitution expressly regulates the cases when it can lead to the temporary suspension of human rights.

During periods of severe crises, the state must take extraordinary measures.

due to "state of emergency", "state of war", "natural disaster".

The new 1998 constitution clearly defines the competent bodies that have the authority to declare a state of emergency and their duty to specify in the acts of proclamation the rights and freedoms that are limited in the relevant case. It also outlines the fundamental freedoms and rights that cannot be restricted in the aforementioned cases.

Regarding jurisdictional guarantees, the Constitution sanctions the institutions through which fundamental rights will be guaranteed.

Some articles contain rules that establish autonomous legal and jurisdictional institutions with the aim of guaranteeing the practical implementation of the rights included in the Constitution.

One of the guarantees is the one provided by the People's Advocate.

The institution of the People's Advocate was established for the first time with the Constitution of 1998 7. The main duty of this institution is to guarantee the rights and freedoms, the legitimate interests of the individual against the illegal acts of the public administration.

The Constitution clearly defines that the purpose of this body is the resolution of disputes for the protection of human rights, as well as the protection of human dignity against abuses of the public administration.

The Ombudsman (People's Advocate) is an institution recognized by our constitution, and it has several means at its disposal to carry out its duties. The Ombudsman's ability to submit a request to the Constitutional Court for matters pertaining to the interests of his role is one of the fundamental rights granted by the Constitution.⁸

The Constitution also contains other jurisdictional guarantees for the protection of individual rights and freedoms, and one of these guarantees is constitutional justice, otherwise known as the control of the constitutionality of principles.

All forms of constitutional control offer real guarantees for the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Certain guarantees, usually referred to as specific guarantees, are included in the comparative constitutional law and are upheld by certain unique constitutional law procedures.

⁷ Articles 60 - 63 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania.

⁸ Article 134/1/dh of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania.

The most important place is occupied by the possibility of individual recourse to the Constitutional Court for the violation of their basic rights provided by the Constitution. Such is the amparo recourse that is explained in detail in the chapter on Latin America.

In our country, this specific guarantee is that of the Ombudsman who, as I defined above, addresses to the Constitutional Court for issues related to its own interests.

Additionally, the Constitutional Court has provided the Ombudsman with a clear definition of what constitutes his interests in its ruling on this matter. Pursuant to Article 134/2 of the Constitution, according to the Constitutional Court, the Ombudsman can apply to the Court for issues related to his functioning in defense of the rights, freedoms and legal interests of the individual, when these are violated by the illegal and irregular actions or inactions of the public administration bodies and ascertained by the Ombudsman, as well as when the constitutional rights for the organization and functioning of his institution have been violated.

Conclusions

The culture of law, which is synonymous with justice and is reliant on both the advancement of technology and science as well as the advancement of civilization, is more important for the protection of rights than mere formal constitutional guarantees.

However, social and economic advancement as well as civilization do not guarantee a culture that upholds justice and human rights. As is the case in the majority of developing nations, you can draft countless statements, constitutions, and lists of rights; however, translating them into a broader protection of human, collective, and societal rights is not only belated, but frequently appears to regress, to the point where it is questionable whether Western countries should do so at all.

The discovery that certain nations are worried about developing jurisdictional procedures for broader protection of rights in this context—both local and international—can only provide a symbolic comprehension of the issue. Since the political elite is unable to realistically and materially guarantee the protection of human rights, they fabricate legal guarantees, even those of a constitutional kind, to cover up and rationalize their failure to win the "war" for rights.

This pessimistic view, however, appears to be at odds with the everyday reality of the majority of Latin American nations, which depicts an ongoing and intensely personal struggle. Meanwhile, those groups who acknowledge these guarantees and have access to the tools formal law offers to guarantee their formal rights and freedoms use them for their own benefit as well as the good of society and the development of the legal culture.

The same thing should be taken into account for our nation, which recognized the necessity for a constitutional revision to bring the document up to date with international and continental principles following several historical vicissitudes. The Republic of Albania's Constitution ought to

incorporate the most advanced models of rights and guarantees found in Latin America and the continent.

The need for modernization and adaptation of the title on constitutional guarantees is of essential importance for the citizens of the Republic of Albania. The comparison of the constitution of our country with those of the Latin American reality is triggered by the historical and political similarities of these realities. The approach and adaptation of our country, within the long-desired Euro-Atlantic integration, starts precisely from these constitutional reforms.

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Еврозоната и националната конкурентоспособност

Николай Дончев¹

Резюме: Едва ли има по-дискусионен въпрос в икономическите и финансовите среди през последните три години в България от този кога страната ще се присъедини към еврозоната. Членството в еврозоната, заедно с присъединяването към шенгенското пространство, бяха издигнати в ранг на днешните „големи национални цели“ пред България след приемането ѝ в НАТО и Европейския съюз. В основата на така определените „големи национални цели“ стои разбирането, че присъединяването към еврозоната непременно ще доведе до постигане на ускорено модернизиране и развитие на икономиката, до повишаване на нейната конкурентоспособност, до значително нарастване на доходите и стандарта на живот. Опитът на страните от еврозоната показва, обаче, че присъединяването към единната европейска валута е по-коректно да се разглежда не като цел, а като възможност, и от способността на държавата ефективно да я оползотвори ще зависи дали ще постигне желаните резултати.

Основният фокус на изследването в настоящата статия беше да се установи по какъв начин се изменя националната конкурентоспособност след присъединяването на дадена страна към еврозоната. За измерване и оценка на националната конкурентоспособност се използва детерминантата на матрицата на (E-A), получена от модела „input-output“ на базата данни на The World Input-Output Database (WIOD). За установяване на степента, в която интеграционният процес съдейства за намаляване на различията в ефективността, с която функционират отделните национални икономики, се използва коефициентът на вариация, изчислен като отношение на стандартното отклонение в стойностите на детерминанта на матрицата (E-A) и средната стойност на детерминанта в началото и в края на периода.

Ключови думи: национална конкурентоспособност, еврозона, структурни изменения, номинална и ре-ална конвергенция

JEL: E1, O1, O4

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Eurozone and National Competitiveness

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Abstract: There is hardly a more debatable question in the economic and financial circles in the last three years in Bulgaria than when the country will join the Eurozone. Membership in the Eurozone, along with accession to the Schengen area, were elevated to the rank of today's "major national goals" for Bulgaria after its accession to NATO and the European Union. At the base of the so-defined "major national goals" is the understanding that joining the Eurozone will necessarily lead to the achievement of accelerated modernization and development of the economy, to an increase in its competitiveness, to a significant increase in income and the living standard. The experience of the countries of the Eurozone shows, however, that joining the single European currency is more correct to consider not as a goal, but as an opportunity, and whether it will achieve the desired results will depend on the state's ability to effectively use it.

The main focus of the research in this article was to find out how national competitiveness changes after a country joins the Eurozone. To measure and evaluate national competitiveness, the determinant of the (E-A) matrix obtained from the input-output model of The World Input-Output Database (WIOD) is used. To establish the extent to which the integration process contributes to the reduction of differences in the efficiency with which individual national economies function, the coefficient of variation is used, calculated as the ratio of the standard deviation in the values of the determinant of the matrix (E-A) and the mean value of the determinant at the beginning and at the end of the period.

Key words: national competitiveness; Eurozone; structural economic changes; nominal and real convergence

JEL: E1, O1, O4

Въведение

Въвеждането на единна валута по същество представлява естествена стъпка към по-нататъшно разширяване и задълбочаване на интеграционния процес. От тази гледна точка основният въпрос не е дали една страна-членка на Европейския съюз да се присъедини

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към еврозоната, а кога е най-подходящият момент за присъединяване. А този момент ще зависи както от състоянието и тенденциите на бъдеща промяна в самата еврозона, така и от степента на подготвеност на страната за пълноправно членство, т.е. от способността ѝ бързо и ефективно да се адаптира към приемащата я среда.

Още с по-голяма тежест стои този въпрос пред България, която в условията на валутен борд разполага с ограничени възможности за провеждане на парична политика и използване на валутния курс и лихвения процент като инструменти за гъвкаво приспособяване на икономиката и поддържане на нейната конкурентоспособност. Възприема се разбирането, че валутният борд вече е изчерпил своя потенциал за поддържане на макроикономическата стабилност и постигане на високи темпове на икономически растеж. Поради това колкото по-бързо страната се присъедини към еврозоната, толкова по-бързо тя ще може да догони по основни икономически показатели водещите европейски страни. С други думи, ако страната постигне номинална конвергенция, това непременно ще гарантира и нейната реална конвергенция.

Изхождайки от това разбиране усилията на страната трябва да бъдат съсредоточени главно върху удовлетворяване на критериите и изискванията за приемане в еврозоната (т.нар. Маастрихтски критерии). Счита се, че дори и да не отговаря напълно на всички критерии (например, на критерия за инфлация) Европейската централна банка и Европейската комисия трябва да направят компромис и да приемат България, за да може тя по-бързо да се присъедини „към клуба на богатите и да не остане в периферията на Европейския съюз“. Сред привежданите аргументи в подкрепа на бързото присъединяване на страната към еврозоната преобладават по-скоро тези от политически характер, отколкото от социално-икономически характер. Споделя се разбирането, че влизайки в еврозоната страната вече ще седи на масата на лидерите в Европейския съюз, ще се чува нейният глас при обсъждането на най-важните въпроси и ще бъде част от тяхното решение. По този начин България ще може да запази своята геополитическа ориентация, тъй като все още няма приет механизъм за излизане от еврозоната. Икономическите ползи, които се изтъкват от бързото приемане, се свързват най-вече с намаляване на валутния риск и транзакционните разходи, което би трябвало да доведе до по-високо доверие в инвеститорите, до увеличена инвестиционна активност, до

повишаване на конкурентоспособността, доходите и стандарта на живот.

На другата страна застава разбирането, че страната ще извлече значително повече ползи от присъединяването си към еврозоната, когато се доближи максимално близо до степента на социално-икономическо развитие на водещите европейски страни. Основните аргументи в подкрепа на тази теза са, че при големи различия по отношение на доходи, производителност на труда, конкурентоспособност, стандарт на живот и т.н., в условията на ниска мобилност на основните производствени фактори и режим на наднационална (обща) парична политика и фискална политика от национална компетентност страната трудно би се измъкнала от капана на теглене на заеми при по-ниски ниски лихвени равнища и бързо повишаване на задлъжнялостта. С други думи, много бързо при тези условия ще се премине на пътя на повишаване на доходите и стандарта на живот не чрез по-висока производителност и конкурентоспособност, а чрез външни заеми и натрупване на дълг. На следващо място наличието на висок ценови диференциал (особено при цените на услугите) е съществена предпоставка за по-бързо нарастване на цените на стоките и услугите спрямо растежа на доходите веднага след приемането на еврото, което ще облагодетелства основно предприемачи и финансисти, а за по-голямата част от населението това ще предизвика загуба на покупателна способност.

Сравнително слабо в изследванията по темата „Членство в еврозоната“ се дискутира въпросът за това защо страни, когато отговарят на всички условия (и на номинална, и на реална конвергенция) не желаят да се присъединяват към еврозоната, защо непрекъснато отлагат своето членство. Може ли страна-членка на Европейския съюз да постигне ускорено модернизиране, развитие и растеж на своята икономика, без да се присъединява към еврозоната? Едва ли отговорите на тези въпроси могат да намерят своето логично обяснение само с нежелание за отказ от паричен суверенитет, по-ограничени възможности за поддържане на конкурентоспособността чрез маневриране с лихвени проценти и валутен курс или с причини от исторически характер.

Вече повече от две десетилетия изминаха от въвеждането на единната валута в Европейския съюз. Този период е достатъчно дълъг, за да се направят по-задълбочени изследвания и анализи на постигнатите резултати при всяка една страна-членка на еврозоната. Например, едни резултати постига Гърция след своето

присъединяване към единната валута и съвършено други резултати постига Ирландия. Ако насочим погледът към по-големите икономики като Германия, Франция, Италия, Испания, Холандия, Португалия ще видим много различна картина на постигнатите резултати. Съвършено друга картина се наблюдава в страните от Централна и Източна Европа – Унгария, Чехия, Полша, които отговарят на критериите и изискванията за членство, но обществените нагласи показват ярко изразен скептицизъм по отношение на изгодите от евентуално членство в еврозоната.

Фокусът на изследванията в България по темата еврозона е насочен основно към степента на подготвеност на страната по отношение на критериите и изискванията за членство, т.е. какво трябва (или остава) да направи България за по-бързото ѝ приемане в еврозоната, както и към това какви биха били ефектите от това членство по отношение на цени на стоки и услуги, доходи, инвестиции и т.н. Сравнително слабо е изследван въпросът за това как се изменя конкурентоспособността на една национална икономика след присъединяването ѝ към еврозоната. Причините за този по-слаб изследователски интерес са свързани най-вече със затруднения в ясното дефиниране на това понятие, т.е. какво означава национална конкурентоспособност, с конструирането на адекватен инструментариум за оценка и сравнение и неговото информационно осигуряване.

Методи за изследване на националната конкурентоспособност

Още в началото на 90-те години на XX век в своето произведение „Конкурентното предимство на нациите“ Майкъл Портер свързва концепцията за конкурентоспособност на национално равнище с производителността, с която се използват националните ресурси [Портер, 1998, с. 18] Според него не е коректно конкурентоспособността на една национална икономика да се свързва основно с наличието на природни ресурси, с равнището на заплати, на лихви, на данъчни ставки, на валутни курсове, на бюджетни и външнотърговски дисбаланси и т.н. С други думи, основна детерминанта на националната конкурентоспособност се явява ефективността, т.е. каква стойност постигаме от единица труд или капитал.

Стъпвайки на това разбиране постепенно започват да се изследват и изясняват основните фактори, които оказват влияние върху националната производителност. Съществен принос в това

отношение има Световният икономически форум и конструираният от него Глобален индекс на конкурентоспособност. Индексът обхваща различни показатели групирани в 12 стълба – институции, инфраструктура, макроикономическа среда, начално образование и здравеопазване, висше образование и обучения, ефективност на пазара на стоки и услуги и на пазара на труда, степен на развитие на финансовите пазари, технологична готовност, размер на пазара, бизнес практики, иновации.

От една страна, наличието на множество фактори в индекса дава значително по-ясна картина за отделните аспекти на националната конкурентоспособност. Но, от друга страна, поради голямата разнопосочност в поведението на показателите (заедно с преобладаващия брой субективни оценки при определяне на техните стойности) е трудно да се направи обективен анализ на постигнатите резултати и даването на ясен отговор на въпроса по какъв начин приемането на дадена страна в еврозоната оказва влияние върху нейната конкурентоспособност. От тази гледна точка решението следва да се търси към намиране на синтезиран показател, който адекватно да отразява измененията в ефективността, с която функционира националната икономика.

В краткосрочен аспект оценка на националната конкурентоспособност се основава на изследване на връзката между цените на производствените фактори и цените на стоките и услугите, като най-често използваните показатели са разходите за труд на единица продукция и реалният ефективен валутен курс. Водещите страни по глобалния индекс на конкурентоспособност Дания, Швеция, Швейцария, Ирландия са ярък пример за това, че цените на основните производствените фактори не могат да се разглеждат като съществена детерминанта на националната конкурентоспособност.

При оценката на националната конкурентоспособност в дългосрочен аспект се използват най-често показателите за производителност на труда – БДС на един зает, БДС на един отработен час, БВП на глава от населението по ППС. Основният недостатък на тези показатели се свързва най-вече с характера на изпълняваните икономически дейности. Например, в икономика, в която по-голямата част от създаваната добавена стойност идва от дейности с нематериален характер, съпоставянето на полезния резултат (или ефекта) с изразходваните ресурси или направените за него разходи не винаги дава коректна представа за производителността на труда. Според Питър Дракър най-сложната задача, която трябва да бъде решена през XXI век, е как да се

повишава производителността на хората на умствения труд [Дракър, 2000, с. 157].

Един такъв синтезиран показател за измерване и оценка на ефективността, с която функционира една национална икономика, представлява детерминантата на матрицата (E-A), или т.нар. *Leontief matrix* от модела "input-output". По думите на академик Евгени Матеев [Матеев, 2015, с. 94] детерминантата представлява коефициент на полезно действие на икономическата система по отношение на ресурсите, които получава отвън, за да ги преработи в краен ефект (т.е. крайна продукция). Балева и Иванов [Балева, 2003, с. 128] разсъждавайки върху икономическия смисъл на отделни елементи от детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) отново стигат до извода, че тя може да се разглежда като израз на относителния дял на крайната продукция, т.е. като израз на продуктивността на икономическата система. Интерпретирайки икономическия смисъл на елементите на матрицата на пълните разходи Манов [Манов, 2016, с. 370] определя стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) като инструмент за изследване на ефективността от най-висок ранг, а именно ефективността, с която функционира икономическата система в цялост.

Теоретичните граници, в която може да се изменя стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) е от 0 до 1. Колкото по-висока е стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A), толкова по-ниски ще бъдат стойностите на преките разходи за единица произведена продукция, т.е. ще нараства делът на създаваната добавена стойност в икономиката. И обратно – ако стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) намалява, това означава че се повишават разходите за единица продукция, т.е. намалява продуктивността на националната икономическа система.

В това си качество детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) може да бъде използвана и като синтезиран показател за измерване на националната конкурентоспособност. Основното предимство на избрания метод се състои най-вече в съпоставимостта за измерване на националната конкурентоспособност в страните от еврозоната както в статичен, така и в динамичен аспект. Нарастването на стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) след присъединяването на дадена страна към еврозоната ще се счита за белег за повишаване на нейната конкурентоспособност. И обратно - ако стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) намалява, това ще означава, че белег за загуба на национална конкурентоспособност.

Резултати

За изследване на националната конкурентоспособност беше използван моделът „input-output“ и базата данни на The World Input-Output Database (WIOD). Данните са представени в 56 отраслова агрегация за периода 2000-2014 г., което даде възможност да бъде направен сравнителен анализ по единна методология за всяка една държава-членка на Европейския съюз.

За проследяване на настъпилите изменения в стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) бяха изчислени по години за всяка една държава-членка на ЕС:

- Симетрични „input-output“ таблици (SIOT);
- Матрицата на преки материални разходи (E-A);
- Матрицата на пълни материални разходи (E-A)⁻¹;
- Детерминантата на матрицата (E-A);
- Коефициент на стандартно отклонение за страните от еврозоната, за страните извън еврозоната, и за ЕС като цяло;
- Коефициент на вариация за страните от еврозоната, за страните извън еврозоната, и за ЕС като цяло.

За установяване на степента, в която интеграционният процес съдейства за намаляване на различията в ефективността, с която функционират отделните национални икономики, беше използван коефициентът на вариация, изчислен като отношение на стандартното отклонение в стойностите на детерминанта на матрицата (E-A) и средната стойност на детерминанта в началото и в края на периода.

Изследването показва много различна картината на ефективността в страните от еврозоната и извън еврозоната. За изследвания четиринадесет годишен период еврозоната остава икономика с твърде големи различия в ефективността, с която функционират участващите в нея страни-членки. Коефициентът на вариация показва най-големи стойности именно при страните от еврозоната. Най-ниски стойности на коефициента на вариация се получиха при седемте държави извън еврозоната – Дания, Швеция, Полша, Унгария, Чехия, България и Румъния.

За установяване на измененията, които настъпват в структурата на икономиката на всяка държава-членка и как тези изменения оказват влияние върху постигания икономически растеж и ефективността, с която функционира съответната национална икономическа система, беше направен мултипликативен анализ на следната функционална връзка:

$$\Delta(E-A) * \Delta S_x * \Delta X = \Delta Y,$$

където

A – матрица на преките материални разходи,

X – обем на брутната продукция,

S_x – структура на брутната продукция,

Y – крайна продукция, т.е. БВП.

Получени резултати показаха, че като цяло настъпилите изменения в структурата на брутната продукция не оказват съществено влияние върху постигнатия икономически растеж за периода 2000-2014 г. Върху нарастването на крайната продукция основно влияние оказва увеличаването на обема на брутната продукция. Влиянието на двата интензивни фактори – преки материални разходи и структура на брутната продукция – върху постигнатия икономически растеж е много слабо изразено – между 0,2 и 2,6%.

Потвърждава се тезата, че малките държави могат да извлекат значително по-големи ползи от участието си в Европейския съюз и Евроразоната спрямо по-големите икономики. Изследването показва, че най-силно изразено е влиянието на интензивните фактори върху нарастването на БВП в Ирландия. Ирландия е страната и с най-голямо нарастване на стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) за изследвания период. С други думи, големият печеливш от интеграционния процес и участието си в еврозоната е Ирландия.

В началото на своето присъединяване към еврозоната Ирландия е на последно място по стойност на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A) спрямо останалите държави членки от еврозоната. За период от 14 години Ирландия успява да увеличи повече от два пъти тази стойност (от 0,0042 през 2000 г. на 0,1027 през 2014 г.). Никоя друга страна от еврозоната и Европейския съюз като цяло не постига такова съществено повишаване на ефективността, с която функционира националната ѝ икономика. Тази висока национална конкурентоспособност дава възможност на Ирландия през следващия десет годишен период (2013-2022 г.) да удвои дохода на глава от населението (от 34 520,1 евро на 82 704,4 евро по ППС) и да се превърне в страната с най-високи доходи на глава от населението от еврозоната и Европейския съюз като цяло. През 2022 г. доходът на глава от населението (по ППС) в Ирландия е над два пъти по-висок спрямо средното равнище за еврозоната и Европейския съюз като цяло.

Словения, Словакия, Литва и Естония са другите четири по-малки държави-членки, които успяват така да реструктурират своите

икономики от участието си в интеграционния процес, че да създават единица полезен резултат с нарастваща ефективност. За четиринадесет години тези четири държави постигат над два пъти увеличаване на стойността на детерминантата на матрицата (E-A).

Изследването показва също, че сравнително по-слабо е влиянието на структурните изменения върху нарастването на БВП и ефективността, с която той се създава, в по-големите държави-членки и основателки на ЕС и на Евророната. В страни като Франция и Италия промените в структурата на икономиката довеждат до намаляване на ефективността, с която се създава всяка една единица БВП. При Германия, Холандия, Белгия измененията в структурата на създаваната брутна продукция не водят до изменение в ефективността.

Дискусия

Примерът на Гърция и на Ирландия е много показателен за това, че за да извлече по-големи ползи от присъединяването си към европейското валутно пространство не е достатъчно само постигането на номинална конвергенция. Намаляването на транзакционните разходи и на валутния риск не може да гарантира повишаване на инвестиционната привлекателност и привличането на по-качествени инвестиции, които да доведат до позитивно изменение в структурата на икономиката. Много по-важни за ефективното членство в еврозоната са въпросите за реалната конвергенция.

Вече има ясно изразена тенденция на сближаване на икономическите структури между страните-членки на еврозоната. Поради това факторът, който ще влияе най-силно върху бъдещия растеж, ще бъде ефективността, с която функционира съответната национална икономика. При ниска степен на реална конвергенция основният риск се свързва най-вече с формиране на усещането за бързо забогатяване и нарастващо потребление несъразмерно с икономическите реалности. Именно страни като Гърция, Италия, Португалия, Испания са пример за това колко трудно се излиза от капана на повишаване на доходите и стандарта на живот на базата на теглене на заеми при облекчени условия, а не на базата на по-висока национална производителност и конкурентоспособност.

Заключение

Изследването показва, че само по себе си членството в дадена организация не гарантира автоматично постигането на по-висока конкурентоспособност на националната икономика. Присъединяването

на България към еврозоната трябва да се разглежда по-скоро като възможност за ускорено модернизиране и развитие на икономиката и на тази основа повишаване на доходите и стандарта на живот. Но дали страната ще оползотвори тези възможности, които предоставя единното валутно пространство, ще зависи от нейната способност да проектира своето стратегическо бъдеще. Добър пример в това отношение е Ирландия, която успешно върви по своя втори 20 годишен стратегически план (за подробности виж *National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040*). Поради това много по-съществен въпрос е не кога България ще се присъедини към страните от еврозоната, а при какви условия страната може да се превърне в големия печеливш от това бъдещо членство.

Спонсорство

Публикацията съдържа резултати от изследване, финансирано със средства от целева субсидия за НИД на УНСС по договор № НИД НИ - 18/2021.

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Залезът на класическия маркетинг и възходът на стратегическото планиране

Боян Дуранкев¹

Резюме: През последните три десетилетия се наблюдава последователен отказ от прилагането на „класическия“ маркетинг, в центъра на който стои човекът-потребител с неговите нужди и потребности; същевременно е във възход стратегическото планиране, при което във фокуса на икономическата дейност са поставени корпоративните или националните интереси. Освен това, класическият маркетинг се основава на допускането, че съществуват свободни пазари, при които решаваща роля играят корпорациите, а не държавата; в съвременната действителност решаваща роля играят държавата и транснационалните институции, въпреки че зад държавата често стоят корпоративни интереси. Тезата, която се защитава, е че се формират две обвързани тенденции: на „обърнат маркетинг“ и на „сглобка“ от транснационално-национално-корпоративно стратегическо планиране, които променят икономическата парадигма.

Ключови думи: класически маркетинг; стратегическо планиране; обвърнат маркетинг

JEL: M31; P110; P120; P160; F540

The Decline of Classic Marketing and the Rise of Strategic Planning

Boyan Durankev²

Abstract: In the last three decades, there has been a consistent rejection of the application of "classical" marketing, centered on the human consumer with his needs and wants; at the same time, strategic planning is on the rise, where corporate or national interests are the focus of economic activity. Moreover, classical marketing is based on the assumption that free markets exist, in which corporations, not the state, play a decisive role; in modern reality, the state and transnational institutions play a decisive role,

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although corporate interests are often behind the state. The thesis defended is that two related trends are forming: of "reverse marketing" and of "assemblage" of transnational-national-corporate strategic planning, which are changing the economic paradigm.

Key words: classic marketing; strategic planning; reverse marketing

JEL: M31; P110; P120; P160; F540

Да предложиш социални действия за общественото благо на Лондонското сити е като да обсъждаш произхода на видовете с епископ преди шестдесет години. Първата реакция не е интелектуална, а морална.

Джон Мейнард Кейнс

Въведение

Класическата маркетингова теория използва няколко *предварителни аксиоми, които определят поведението на пазарните агенти* (купувачи и продавачи) (Kotler, et al., 2023):

Основен икономически агент са частните корпорации, които внимателно изследват нуждите на потребителите и им предоставят конкуриращи се блага на свободния пазар с цел печалба;

Потребителите притежават свободен избор, който е преди всичко рационален, и разумно преценяват и претеглят ползите от конкуриращите се блага на пазара;

На пазара е налице (почти) свободна конкуренция, предполагаща отсъствието на монополи (включително и на брандови монополи) и на диференциална рента;

Предлаганата информация от страна на производителите и търговците е точна, честна и достатъчна, за да могат потребителите да осъществят своя правилен разумен избор;

Доколкото държавата се намесва на пазара, ролята ѝ се свежда до създаването на свободна конкуренция между корпорациите и защита на потребителите от недобросъвестни производители.

В тази прелестна система на добронамерени отношения между производители и потребители съществува пълна хармония, в която *маркетингът заема полагащото му се централно положение като основна функция на всеки бизнес*, а потребителите достигат върхова степен на блаженство в „края на историята“ (Fukuyama, 2006). Самата еволюция на маркетинга го довежда до още по-високо фазово ниво –

до „маркетинг от човек към човек“ (Human-to-Human Marketing - H2H Marketing) (Kotler, et al., 2021).

Потребителите получават необходимите *ползи*, а корпорациите – еквивалентите *справедливи печалби* (отговарящи на разноските) за продадените блага.

Правилно ли тази схема отразява съвременните пазарни отношения?

1. Краят на „свободния“ пазар

Догадки че така описаната хармония съвсем не е хармонична, могат да се намерят още у Жан-Батист Колбер (1619–1683), който твърди че „максимата на *laissez-faire* няма никаква научна основа, а в най-добрия случай е просто удобно правило за практиката“, а по-късно у Алфред Маршал (1842-1924), доказващ че частният интерес и общественият интерес не са хармонични.

Дефектите на горепосочената схема бяха най-подробно разкрити от Джон Мейнард Кейнс преди повече от век (1926 г.) в неговата статия „*Краят на laissez-faire*“ (Keynes & Skidelsky, 2015, pp. 89-111), в която се разгромява идеята за „божествена“ хармония между личния интерес и общественото благо, открита от Адам Смит, който беше готов да позволи на общественото благо да почива върху „естественото усилие на всеки индивид да подобри собственото си състояние“.

Причините „свободният пазар“ (laissez-faire) да бъде поставен в центъра на политикономистите през предните векове Кейнс вижда в няколко посоки: от една страна, в „некадърността на публичните администратори, което силно предубеждава практичния човек в полза на *laissez-faire*“, понеже „почти всичко, което държавата направи през осемнадесети век, надхвърляйки минималните си функции, беше или изглеждаше вредно, или неуспешно“; от друга страна, понеже „материалният прогрес между 1750 и 1850 г. идва от индивидуалната инициатива и не се дължи почти нищо на насочващото влияние на организираното общество“. По този начин почвата е била плодородна за една доктрина, че независимо дали на божествени, природни или научни основания, държавното действие трябва да бъде тясно ограничено и икономическият живот оставен, доколкото е възможно, нерегулиран, на уменията и здравия разум на отделните граждани, управлявани от „възхитителен мотив да се опитваш да се наложиш в света“.

В схемата се забелязва единствен метод за извеждане на най-успешните печеливши производители на върха чрез безмилостна

борба за оцеляване, която избира най-ефективните при производството на блага, задоволяващи нуждите на потребителите, чрез фалита на по-малко ефективните – ето го „*маркетингът от страната на производителите*“. Той не отчита цената на борбата, а гледа само на ползите от крайния резултат, които се приемат и за индивидуално значими, и за обществено приемливи. „Печалбата се натрупва, при *laissez-faire*, при индивида, който, независимо дали благодарение на умения или късмет, е намерил производствените си ресурси на точното място в точното време. Система, която позволява на умелия или щастлив индивид да бере всички плодове от тази конюнктура, очевидно предлага огромен стимул за практикуването на изкуството да бъдеш на точното място в точното време. Така един от най-мощните човешки мотиви, а именно любовта към парите, е впрегнат в задачата за разпределяне на икономическите ресурси по начин, който е най-добре изчислен за увеличаване на богатството“.

По подобен начин е представен и „*маркетингът от страна на потребителите*“: На първо място, всеки индивид ще открие кой от възможните обекти на потребление се иска и желае най-много по метода на пробата и грешката, и по този начин не само всеки потребител ще разпреди структурата на потреблението си най-изгодно, но и всеки обект на потреблението ще намери своя път към потребителя, чието удоволствие от него е най-голямо в сравнение с това на останалите, защото този потребител ще наддаде над останалите. По този начин, образно разказано от Кейнс, ако оставим жирафите индивидуално да избират с какво и как да се хранят, то: (1) максималното количество листа ще бъде опасано от най-добрите, тъй като жирафите с най-дълги вратове ще се приближат най-изгодно до дърветата, като уморят останалите от глад; (2) всеки жираф ще направи достатъчно големи усилия за достигане на листата, които той намира за най-сочни сред тези в обсега; и (3) жирафите, чието удоволствие от дадено листо е най-голямо, ще се промъкнат най-много и най-близо, за да си го достигнат. По този начин ще бъдат погълнати повече и по-сочни листа и всяко отделно листо ще стигне до жирафа, който смята, че най-много го заслужава от цялата плячка.

Погледнато и от двете страни – на производители и на потребители – *схемата се абстрахира от реалностите и подробностите*. Икономистите избягват въпросите от реалната практика, а именно: какво се случва на „свободния пазар“ когато корпорациите станат единствени потребители или производители; когато са необходими обществени разходи и инвестиции в полза на частния интерес, например, изграждане на инфраструктура – кой ще я

заплати; когато корпорациите започнат да изкривяват информацията за характеристиките на произведените от тях продукти; когато потребителите са невежи и некомпетентни, за да направят правилен избор; когато „пазарът“ не може да отговори ефективно и бързо на търсенето и във времето, и в пространството – например, за учители, лекари или медицински сестри; когато неравенството, създадено от асиметричния пазар, ерозира демографската и социалната система; когато на „пазара“ на едни страни има определен вид ресурси, а на друг – отсъстват, какво се случва в този случай – прилага ли се битка за „жизнено пространство“ или не; и т.н. Много от онези, които признават, че предлаганата схема на хармония не отговаря точно на фактите, все пак заключават, че тя „представява това, което е „естествено“ и следователно – идеално“, заключава Кейнс.

Освен всичко останало, зоркото око на Кейнс не пропуска да отбележи някои *обществено позитивни тенденции от миналия век* като: създаването на полуавтономни органи в рамките на държавата, чийто критерий за действие в рамките на тяхната собствена област е единствено общественото благо (училища, болници, национални банки и т.н.); тенденцията на акционерните институции да се доближават до статута на публични корпорации, а не на индивидуалистично частно предприятие, като по този начин все повече се социализират; усилията на правителствата не да правят неща, които корпорациите вече правят, или да ги правят малко по-добре, а да правят онези неща, които в момента изобщо не се правят.

Заключението на Кейнс е следното: „смятам, че *капитализмът, управляван мъдро*, вероятно може да бъде направен по-ефективен за постигане на икономически цели от която и да е алтернативна система, която все още се вижда, но сам по себе си в много отношения е изключително нежелателен“. Обратно, когато управлението се основава на хроничен икономически фанатизъм за „свободата на бизнеса“, националната сигурност ерозира (Farrell & Newman, October 19, 2023).

След повече от сто години по-късно промените в посока на „*управляван мъдро капитализъм*“ са също под въпрос, но не само в смисъла на Кейнс. Но те поставят по нов начин и въпроса за „края на свободния пазар“, и за отношенията между икономическите агенти в съвременния свят.

2. Краят на „класическия маркетинг“, който „добавя ползи“ за потребителите, и възходът на „обърнатия маркетинг“ чрез „добавяне на стойност“ за корпорациите

Посочените по-горе доказателства за „края на свободния пазар“ поставят по нов начин въпросът за верността приложимостта на „класическия“ (теоретичния) и „правилен“ маркетинг. Преди няколко десетилетия изследователите се съмняваха в отделни елементи на класическия маркетинг, например в полезността и ефективността на масовия маркетинг (Tedlow & Jones, 1993). Време е да се усъммим в цялостната теоретична постановка на „класическия“ маркетинг.

Съществените съмнения в хипотезата за верността на „класическия“ маркетинг идват от няколко посоки. Идиличните представи че компаниите проучват нуждите и потребностите на потенциалните и реалните купувачи, като ги задоволяват по печеливш начин – без да се интересуват особено от собствените си ползи в този обмен (най-често: от прираста на печалбата и на пазарния дял), просто не е вярна. Ако потребителите се интересуват от максимизация на собствените си ползи, защо се допуска че и корпорациите не се интересуват от максимизация на собствените си ползи?! Естествено, интересуват се. По-нататък, ако корпорациите наистина са заинтересовани от максимизация на собствените си ползи и ако имат практическата възможност да го правят, ползвайки се от пазарните си позиции и възможностите за манипулиране на търсенето (включително чрез лобизъм и прокарване на изгодни закони чрез „възнаграждаване“ на удобните им политици), какво се случва?

Нека наречем това възможно пазарно поведение „обърнат маркетинг“ - маркетинг в полза на корпорациите, които предлагат структура на продукцията и съответно – на потреблението, която е свързана с максимизация на корпоративните ползи. Корпоративният жаргон нарича това поведение „добавяне на стойност“ (авторът познава дискусиата относно точния смисъл на немския термин *wert*, използван и като „стойност“, и като „ценност“, но това е тема за друг анализ (Найденов, 2017)), която не е свързана с „добавяне на ползи“ за крайните или междинните потребители на тяхната продукция, а най-често с обратното – с влошаването на качеството на живот и/или на жизненото им равнище. По този начин класическия маркетинг се измества от „обърнатия маркетинг“, който служи за реализирането на целите на корпорациите, т.е. на тяхното стратегическо планиране и антиконкурентно поведение (Ambler, 2003). Този феномен се напълно се вписва в религиозната доктрина за „свободния пазар“ и „невидимата ръка“, която решава всички проблеми по магически начин, измествайки центъра на религията от Ватикана на Уолстрийт.

„Челен опит“ на бизнеса от последните години: масовата практика на измамата чрез *Shrinkflation* (от думите свиване и

надуване) – например, филетата от съомга вместо 250 грама, изведнъж стават само 200 грама, като цената и опаковката остават същите; по-малко съдържание, същата цена! Вместо да увеличат цената на даден продукт, нещо, което веднага би било очевидно за потребителите, производителите намаляват размера му, като поддържат същата цена. Абсолютната цена на продукта не се повишава, но цената за единица тегло или обем се е увеличила. Малкото намаление на количеството обикновено остава незабелязано от потребителите (поне на това се надява производителят).

Елементарен пример за илюстрация на „обърнатия маркетинг“: хранителните продукти. Почти не се намира изследване, което да не констатира факта, че съвременната система на производство и продажба на хранителни продукти носи отговорност за все повече заболявания на консуматорите и даже до съкращаване на продължителността на техния живот. Тази система обаче изпълнява стратегическите корпоративни цели и донася огромни печалби за доминиращите селскостопански и фармацевтични корпорации. Голяма част от съвременната хранителна система е оформена от големи агробизнес концерни като Monsanto (сега Bayer) и Cargill, гигантски корпорации-производители на храни като Nestle, Pepsico и Kellogg's, институционални инвеститори като BlackRock, Vanguard и State Street. В техния портфейл централно място заема ултра преработена храна (UPF), която „добавя стойност“, базирайки се на евтини и нездравословни съставки. Към системата на бързото хранене ежедневно се вписват 85 млн. граждани на САЩ; няколко корпорации са основните доставчици на училищните обеда за 30 млн. деца; за милиони деца в неравностойно положение в САЩ тези ястия са единственият им достъп до хранене (Todhunter, October 16, 2023). В страни с високи доходи, като САЩ, Канада, Обединеното кралство и Австралия, UPF представляват повече от половината от общия прием на калории. Проблемът не е че едносекторните транснационални са силни, а че „добавят вреди“ за консуматорите, извличайки „добавена стойност“ за себе си. Moms Across America (MAA) и Children's Health Defense (CHD) тестваха училищни обеда и установиха фактите: 95,3% от продуктите за училищния обяд съдържат канцерогенен, ендокринно разрушаващ и причиняващ чернодробни заболявания глифозат; 74% от пробите съдържат поне един от 29 вредни пестицида; 4 ветеринарни препарати и хормони са открити в 9 проби от ученически обеда в нива до 130,76 ng/g.; 100% от пробите от училищния обяд съдържат тежки метали на нива до 6 293 X по-високи от максималните нива на EPA, разрешени в питейната вода; по-голямата част от

пробите са с изключително ниско съдържание на хранителни вещества (Honeycutt, September 28, 2022). По подобен начин, изследването на петдесетте най-брендирани хранителни продукти „добавящи стойност“ (QSR, August 2 2021), доказва „добавянето на вреди“ за потребителите (Health Research Institute, 2023).

В изследване на Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) беше доказано, че *нивата на затлъстяване фатално нарастват най-бързо сред най-ниско доходните социално-икономически групи*. Това е така, защото богатите на енергия храни с ниска хранителна стойност са по-евтини от по-питателните и по-здравословните храни (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2016), влошавайки здравето на стотици милиони граждани чрез „добавени вреди“, но „добавящи стойност“ за няколко стотици собственици на корпорации. При очерталата се тежка пандемия от затлъстяване в САЩ, милиони американци са започнали да приемат хормоналните лекарства за потискане на апетита GLP-1, което... „застрашава бизнеса на корпорациите“ (Абаджиева, 21 ноември 2023). Същите корпорации „инвестират“ милиони евро в лобисти (и подкупи сред „вземашите решения“), за да блокират до момента етикетите за хранителна стойност с цветен код в целия ЕС (Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling - FOPNL) (Calvert, 16th October 2023). Впрочем, ако болните тръгнат да се лекуват от каквото и да е, включително от затлъстяването, в много случаи разбират че често „частното здравеопазване е опасно за тяхното здраве“ (Parramore, Jun 22 2023), а лекарските практики с частен капитал са свързано с увеличени разходи за здравеопазване, както и до намален достъп до тези услуги (Singh, et al., September 2, 2022).

Друг пример от най-развитата страна – САЩ. „Най-големите, най-агресивните и най-малко съвестните корпорации са финансовите: банките като JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America и Wells Fargo; инвестиционните компании, като Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley и Berkshire Hathaway; и холдинговите компании и хедж фондовете като BlackRock, State Street и Vanguard. Военно-промишленият комплекс също е в тяхната хватка. Например, последните трима са мажоритарни собственици на Lockheed Martin, най-голямата американска отбранителна фирма. *Тези компании имат една цел: печелене на пари*, без значение какво – законно или незаконно, без значение цената за общественото здраве, благосъстоянието или дори оцеляването. Всъщност най-благоприятният сценарий за тях е военното време“ (Robert F. Kennedy, Sep 28 2023). Ако има забележка към горния пример, може да си припомни 2008 г., когато в разгара на световната криза финансовите корпорации се измъкнаха от

отговорност с помощта на държавата (която според тях по дефиниция е „излишна“), като обикновените граждани ги спасиха чрез данъците си, понеже виновниците са „твърде големи, за да фалират“. Банките са използвали силата си, за да си осигурят безпрецедентно богатство, което им е купило още повече власт. И понеже финансовите организации са едни от най-печелившите, те служат като магнит за най-алчните – от времената на ENRON, през пирамидалната схема на Бърни Мадоф, до Сам Банкман-Фрайд от FTX и гиганта Wirecard. Примери за „свободен пазар“ и „невидимата ръка“!?

Майсторите на „добавяне на стойност за себе си чрез добавяне на вреди за останалите“ същевременно финансират пряко и непряко (чрез НПО-та) научно-изследователски институти и отделни изследователи, които са заинтересовани да доказват че „няма вреди“ за потребителите и са носители на „корпоративна социална отговорност“ – това е част от техния „бял“ PR – утвърдена практика от времената на големите измамите на тютюневата индустрия, която сега прави дарения за фондове за подпомагане на борбата с коронавируса, спонсорира кампании за почистване на фасове от цигари, финансира програми за засаждане на дървета, но не се отказва да печели от увреждането на здравето на пушачите. Същевременно част от корпорациите се занимават с „политическо инвестиране“ – чрез „субсидиране“ на политици прокарват изгодни за корпорациите закони (по примера на „добрите практики“ на Enron, където изчисляваха колко „добавена стойност“ ще реализират при единица „инвестиции“ в различни политици – едни струваха по-скъпо от други). Че едносекторните транснационални корпорации са част от „демократичните процеси“ е илюстрация и фактът, че пределният данък върху доходите на хората с най-висок доход през 50-те години на XX век е бил 91% в САЩ, а по-късно – чрез корпоративната политика на влияние – е паднал на 37% (през 2022 г., за физически лица, за които доходът е по-висок от 523 600 долара – за женени двойки, които подават общо заявление за данъци, или 209 425 долара - за неженени). Още по-нисък данък се заплаща в страни с властваща олигархия като България, където пределната ставка на данъка върху физическите лица е едва 10%. И като гарнитура: корпорациите имат „свободата“ да избират къде да заплащат данъците си, което обяснява огромният брой офшорки или примера на Ирландия, която показва (уж) огромен икономически растеж в системата на националните си сметки. Немалко корпорации извършват „едри“ престъпления, някои от които стигат до присъда, но други - не (Hedges, Oct 12 2023). Някои

корпорации вече включиха в битката за пазарите и изкуствения интелект, както и големите бази данни (Smith, September 23, 2023).

Още едно направление на ефектите „обърнатия маркетинг“: the Death Economy (*Икономиката на смъртта*). Тя води до изчерпване на природните ресурси, до влошаване качеството на околната среда и до все по-високи нива на глобално затопляне. Водени от целите за максимизиране на печалбите, абстрахирайки се от социалните и екологичните разходи, този тип икономика доминира в настоящата ни глобална икономическа система. „Корпорациите определят нашето бъдеще“, твърди Джон Пъркинс (Perkins, 2023).

Изглежда, че част от съвременните транснационални корпорации са вредни за природата, вредни за икономиката, вредни за заетите лица в тях, вредни за гражданите, независимо че си „добавят стойност“. Но ако е настъпил краят на „класическия маркетинг“, който „добавя ползи“ за потребителите, и е в ход възходът на „обърнатия маркетинг“ чрез „добавяне на стойност“ за корпорациите, който следва аксиомата „печалбата е над хората“, то *има ли кой да им се противопостави?*

Възходът на стратегическото национално и наднационално планиране

Дотук отбелязахме залеза на „класическия маркетинг“ (който не отговаря на реалностите) и *възхода на стратегическото корпоративно планиране*, базирано върху „обърнат маркетинг“, създаващ „добавена стойност“.

Както можеше и да се очаква, всяко действие може да предизвика противодействие. Силата, която се изправи и продължава да коригира недобросъвестното поведение на корпорациите и „грешките“ на пазара (пазарът е без разум, но дава постоянни дефекти), и възникващите дефицити, е *демократичната система, вписваща се във високо разположения център за икономическо управление* – държавата. Впрочем, и при авторитарно управление на държавата, но в полза на народа, е теоретично допустим вариантът за усилване на обществено полезното ръководство на икономическата система (Пилсбъри, 2015). Нещо повече, напълно е възможен вариант, при който доминацията на обществото като ръководител на цялостния икономически живот да доведе до оптимални резултати (Матеев, 2015).

Няма как да се абстрахираме от *важната роля на държавата в създаването на позитивни социално-икономически тенденции*, предсказани от изследователи като Едуард Бернщайн (Bernstein,

1961), като: създаването на пълна трудова заетост (Кейнс, 2016), опазването на природната система от опустиняване и ерозиране чрез добивната и преработващата промишленост, създаване на национално значими публични (обществени) сектори в икономиката, осигуряване на безплатни или евтини блага като здравеопазване, образование и култура за всички (Илиев, 2004), определяне на минимална работна заплата и т.н.

Освен гигантски едносекторни транснационални корпорации, през XXI век съществено нарасна значението на *многосекторното национално стопанство*. Например, държавните разходи през 2023 г. като дял от БВП в Европейския съюз са постоянно над половината от него - 51,1%, в неолиберални страни като България - 40,7% (Eurostat, 2023). И не само това, високо разположеният център за национално управление „изгражда“ червени линии, в които да се вписва поведението на корпорациите чрез системата на националното прогнозиране, програмиране и бюджетиране (известното „ППБ“), регулациите, поръчките, данъците, акцизите, контрола и т.н. Шагреновата кожа на „свободата на бизнеса“ се свива в полза на „добавените ползи“ на обществото и гражданите. Може да се твърди, че маркетингът се издига и на държавно ниво, той става *„обществено полезен маркетинг“* чрез националните стратегии и програми.

Важна забележка. Отделните националните стопанства са не само в „приятелски“ или „неприятелски“ отношения, но и в *остро конкурентни отношения* – и за икономически растеж, и привличане на инвестиции, и за привличане на работна сила и т.н. Например, САЩ против Китай, против Русия, против ЕС и т.н., както и обратното (Unger, 2007). Много често развитите страни изпращат „икономически убийци“ в по-слабо развитите страни, където – чрез „инвестиране“, сливания и поглъщания, се настаняват техните корпорации, извличащи печалба (Perkins, 2023). Или, друг пример, войните за икономическите коридори като взривяването на „Северен поток“ и създаването на постоянни пречки пред китайската инициатива „Един пояс, един път“ BRI (Escobar, September 25 2023). Сблъсък на национални стратегически планове!

От средата на миналия век – и до сега, а и в бъдеще – възникна и се разви още един още по-висок център на социално-икономическо управление – *този на транснационалните транссекторни институции като Европейския съюз, като ООН* и т.н., които се грижат за регионалните структури и глобалното човечество и подготвят планове за тяхното добруване.

Програмите на ЕС за финансиране, изпълнявани чрез многогодишната финансова рамка за периода 2021—2027 г. са с ясно посочени цели, функции и насоченост – продукт на *стратегическото планиране на този регионален транснационален център за управление*: (1) Единен пазар, иновации и цифрови технологии; (2) Сближаване и ценности; (3) Природни ресурси и околна среда; (4) Миграция и управление на границите; (5) Сигурност и отбрана; (6) Съседни държави и светът. И въпреки че те са недостатъчни и откровено либерални (в тях липсва обща политика за трудовите ресурси, за демографско развитие, за единна фискална политика и т.н.), стратегическото планиране на ЕС е крачка в правилната посока.

Най-високият център за управление – ООН също се занимава с *транснационално транссекторно стратегическо планиране*. През 2015 г. на Общото събрание на ООН държавите подписаха Програмата до 2030 г. за устойчиво развитие и нейните 17 цели за устойчиво развитие. Програмата до 2030 г. и Парижкото споразумение относно изменението на климата представляват „пътната карта към един по-добър свят и глобалната рамка за международното сътрудничество в областта на устойчивото развитие и неговото икономическо, социално, екологично и управленско измерение“ (Европейски съюз, 2023).

С други думи, в началото на XXI век е налице „сглобка“ (повече под формата на „лего“ от различни центрове за планиране, отколкото като единна система) от: *стратегическо планиране на транснационалните корпорации, стратегическото планиране на многосекторните национални стопанства и стратегическото планиране на трансекторните транснационални институции*.

Заключение

Summa Summarum. Свидетели сме на „края на простотата и възхода на сложността“. Тази формулировка се отнася и за маркетинга, и за стратегическото планиране.

Факт е „краят на класическия маркетинг“, но не е под въпрос дали не е настъпил и „краят на стратегическото планиране“, както се опасява Минцберг (Mintzberg, 2014). Според него, терминът е оксиморон - че стратегията не може да бъде планирана, защото планирането е свързано с анализ, а стратегията е свързана със синтез. Нищо подобно, стратегията е винаги синтез на идеи и цели за бъдещето, продукт на предварителни анализи и прогнози.

Поне засега сме свидетели на две обвързани тенденции: на „обърнат маркетинг“, на „лего“ от национално-корпоративно

стратегическо планиране и национално-транснационално стратегическо планиране, които променят икономическата парадигма.

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Системата на икономическата информация: изисквания на методологическата база и възможности за надграждане от дигиталните трансформации в икономиката

Диана Генкова¹

Резюме: Докладът проучва разширяването на източниците на данни и информация, което се открива пред икономическото управление от цифровизацията и няколко технологични вълни, наблюдавани до момента в епохата на информационните и комуникационните технологии. За целта първо се представят основните характеристики на традиционната СИИ – като цялостна методология, чрез която се определят данните за икономическите процеси и събития изобщо. В последствие се разглеждат данните и информацията, формиращи се от операциите в електронна среда. На тази основа се очертава спецификата на източниците на информация, възникващи от дигиталните трансформации, както и тяхното значение за процеса по разработване и обосновка на икономическите решения.

Ключови думи: икономическа система, икономическо управление, икономически решения, методология на икономическата информация, данни

JEL: A12, B4, C8, P

Economic Information System: The Requirements of the Methodology and the Opportunities for Upgrading that Stem from Digital Transformations in Economy

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Abstract: This paper studies the expansion of economic information system due to new data and information sources shaped by digital transformations in economy of information and communication technologies age. For this purpose, first we consider the essential features

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of the orthodox economic information system – as a holistic methodology for identifying and collecting data on economic processes and phenomena. Next, we consider data created by economic operations, processes and phenomena in the electronic environments. On this basis, we identify the specificity of data, especially, in terms of sources that stem from digital transformations in economy and modify the process of economic decision-making.

Key words: economic system, economic governance, economic decisions, methodology of economic information, data

JEL: A12, B4, C8, P

Въведение

В доклада ще представим основните моменти на разширяването на информационната база на управленския процес, в частност на процеса по разработване и обосновка на икономическите решения, което е резултат от цифровизацията и дигиталните трансформации в икономиката. За едно от най-значимите предимства на епохата на информационните технологии се сочи **увеличаващата се възможност за рационализиране на използването на ресурсите** (Sheth, 2018; Zakoldaev и др., 2019). Предполага се от разширяващия се достъп до данни за поведението на стопанските субекти в електронна среда, а на тази основа и до повишаване на адекватността на икономическата информация. Дали обаче въпросното предимство следва автоматично от технологичните новости, които епохата на информационните и комуникационните технологии (ИКТ) предложи, разширявайки средата за реализиране на икономическите решения и проява на поведението на субектите?

В търсене на отговора на този въпрос си поставихме за *цел* да очертаем разликата между основните (традиционните) източници на информация за икономиката, от една страна, и тези, които се разкриват от характеристиките на няколкото технологични вълни, наблюдавани до момента в епохата на ИКТ – индустрия 3.0, 4.0 и 5.0 (Genkova, 2022). *Обект* на изследване е системата на икономическата информация. *Предмет* на изследване е съдържанието на информацията, което се предполага от аспекта на социално-икономическите процеси и спецификата на връзките в зависимост от наблюдаваните признаци и възможните източници/канални за набиране на данни. Методологията на изследването се основава на системния подход и системния анализ в икономиката (Матеев, 1983), базисните постановки на кибернетиката (Ashby, 1957; Wiener, 1961), методологията на системата на националните сметки като модел на системата на икономическата информация (СИИ) за пазарните стопанства (SNA '68, '93, '2008 – UNSD; Генкова, 2023), концептуалната основа на бизнес софтуера и в частност, концепцията на облачно базираните ERP системи. *Методиката* на изследването следва дедуктивния подход, като комбинира елементи на теоретичния анализ

и на синтеза, за да се опише спецификата на различните източници на данни от гл. т. на съдържанието и каналите за набирането им, както и връзката между традиционната СИИ и новите източници на информация за икономическото поведение на субектите, генерирана за целите на разработването и обосновката на икономическите решения. Така от цялостната методология на обработване и извличане на икономическата информация ще направим преход към автоматизираните информационни системи (дигитални системи) и техните разширения в среда на големи данни и облачно базирани мрежи, чрез които управленските информационни системи (УИС) на корпоративно ниво се интегрират помежду си и се превръщат в нови източници на данни.

Проучването е проведено на няколко етапа, резултатите от които поднасяме в същата последователност. Първо представяме основните моменти около изграждането на СИИ. Тази проблематика включва дефиниране на икономиката (като обект на измерване и управление), в т.ч. идентификацията на механизмите за разпределение на икономическите ресурси. Това е фундаментът, върху който стъпва разработването на методики за описание и измерване на ефектите от икономическата дейност. Следва представяне на основните моменти около източниците на данни и информация от поведението на физическите лица и организациите в електронна среда. Накрая ще очертаем разликата между традиционната СИИ и източниците на информация, възникващи от цифровизацията и работата в електронна среда, и ще опишем връзката между така обособилите се две направления на информацията за икономическото ни поведение.

Системата на икономическата информация като формализация на икономическата дейност на обществото

В областта на описанието на икономиката за целите на управлението ѝ следните уточнения имат основополагащо значение: *СИИ; дефиниция за икономиката: обхват, съдържание, основни структури във вътрешната среда на икономиката; източници на данни; канали за набиране на данните; институционална рамка (правно-нормативна рамка и организационна структура) на процеса по набиране и обработка на данните.*

Системата на икономическата информация е понятие, възприето в научната литература, за да обозначи идеята за цялостно описание на икономическия живот в конкретен исторически момент (Stone, 1947; Матеев, 1974, с. 73-74; Генкова, 2023). Идеята се реализира на две нива – теоретично и емпирично. *Първото* е резултат от научноизследователска работа по изграждане на информационен модел, който описва реалните процеси по производство, разпределение и използване на икономическите блага и факторните доходи. Моделът представлява *информационна система за икономиката* (SNA, UNSD; Матеев, 1987; Генкова, 2023). *Второто* ниво се отнася до превръщането на модела в практика по

систематично наблюдаване на икономическите процеси. За целта е институционализирана дейност по събиране и обработване на данни за фактически настъпилите събития в икономическия живот на страните, които се обработват до конкретни показатели, за да се измерват и оценяват ефектите от осъществяваната икономическа дейност през стандартизирани като продължителност периоди. На тази основа се измерва състоянието на икономиката към даден момент и се оценява настъпващите във времето промени.

Въпросните две нива на системата на икономическата информация се представят като *единна методология и методика за организиране на икономическата информация*, която е превърната в съвкупност от свързани помежду си показатели, разположени в балансови таблици. Чрез въпросната съвкупност от показатели може да се измерват и оценяват всички аспекти на икономическото функциониране и развитие (Балева и Иванов, 2003).

Моделът на СНС и неговото присъствие в управленските системи на организационно ниво

За страните с пазарна икономика единната методология и методика за организиране на икономическата информация е известна под наименованието „Система на националните сметки“ (System of National Accounts), за краткост СНС (SNA). За първи път е публикувана през 1947 г., въз основа на разработките на Р. Стоун върху измерването на дохода и богатството на страните. Периодично бива ревизирана и усъвършенствана, като последната актуална версия е СНС'2008. В момента тече подготовка на нова версия, която следва да отрази промените в икономиката от разпространението на ИКТ – като нови икономически дейности (електронни услуги в дигитална среда), крипто активи, нови източници на данни и канали за тяхното набиране и обработване (IMF, UNSD). Очаква се тази версия на СНС да бъде публикувана след 2025 г. (UNSD).

Въпросният модел представлява информационна система за икономиката, тъй като описва икономическия живот в неговата пълнота. В агрегиран вид представя производството, разпределението и използването на икономическите блага и факторните доходи, като събира и обработва данни за дейността на икономическите субекти и извършваните от тях дейности през отделните години. Заради агрегацията, чрез която се представя обработената информация (като съвкупност от свързани помежду си макроикономически показатели), СНС е по-популярна като методологическа база на макроикономическата статистика. В действителност обаче СНС е **единна методология** за набиране и обработване на информацията за извършваните от стопанските субекти икономически дейности и реализираните от тях ефекти (Балева и Иванов, 2003; Генкова, 2023). Нещо повече, тази методология е съгласуван с единните принципи и правила на международните счетоводни стандарти (International Accounting Standards Board, IASB), с методологията на платежния

баланс (BMP6) и с Методологията на държавната финансова статистика (GFSS).

Бивайки съгласуван с посочените стандарти за отчетност в отделни, по-тесни области и аспекти на дейността на стопанските субекти, и представлявайки модел на системата на икономическата информация (Генкова, 2023), СНС установява *базисния понятиен апарат, с който икономиката се представя като кибернетична система*. Този понятиен апарат се използва от мениджмънта и е залегнал в основната на управленските информационни системи (УИС) на организационно ниво – както за комерсиалните компании, така и за органите и учрежденията на публичната власт и организациите с идеална цел. Така например, отделните *подразделения на ERP системите* моделират различни аспекти на процесите по производство, разпределение и използване на богатата и факторните доходи. ERP системите моделират процеси, които протичат в рамките на един субект или връзки (сделки) между субекти. Затова изходна точка при тяхното разработване е идентификацията на няколко базисни параметъра: *икономически субект* (организационна единица в икономиката); *аспект/аспекти на дейността на субекта, който/които се моделират с дигиталната система* – вътрешни процеси, чрез които се извършва основна, второстепенна и/или обслужваща дейност на субекта (респективно – производство, логистика на входа на предприятието, логистика на изхода, маркетинг, счетоводство и отчетност към държавата); *връзки с други субекти* (поръчки на изхода, продажби и канали за дистрибуция, поръчки на входа и доставки, следпродажбено обслужване); *структурни единици в рамките на субекта, в които се осъществява моделираният процес* (СНС ги означава като поделения/заведения); *системата от технически операции* (като елементи и връзки) *и участващите в тяхното извършване производствени фактори* (материални и нематериални активи, финансови ресурси, човешки ресурси), които изграждат моделирания процес; и др. п.

Модификацията на СИИ за страните от ЕС

За целите на управлението на икономиката при условията на международната икономическа интеграция в ЕС е разработена модифицирана версия на СНС, известна под наименованието Европейска система от национални и регионални сметки (ЕСС) / European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA). В унисон с ревизиите на СНС, ЕСС периодично също бива преразглеждана и актуализирана, за да отрази новостите в международно признатата методология, както и да внесе подобрения в методите и алгоритмите на икономическата информация за целите на управлението на икономиката при условията на интеграцията в ЕС. Последната версия на ЕСС е от 2010 г., въведена с Регламент (ЕС) № 549/2013. Статистическата служба на ЕС е насърчена да проучи възможността за използването на нови методи за събиране и обработване на данни в реално време (Регламент (ЕС) 549/2013, Преамбюл, пар. 11). Така

дигиталните системи са припознати като важно направление за подобряване и разширяване на базисната СИИ за страните от ЕС.

Разработването на единна методология и методика за обработване на икономическата информация е резултат от развитието на икономическата теория и теорията на управлението на икономиката (мениджмънта). В допълнение биват разработени и периодично се преразглеждат **техническите способности** за наблюдение и емпирично описание на икономическият живот. Именно към последния аспект имат отношение цифровизацията на икономиката и възникването на нови канали за набиране на данни и извличане на информация.

Дигиталните системи като източник на информация за икономическото поведение на субектите

В тази част ще уточним спецификата на източниците на данни от поведението на субектите в електронна среда. Последните се класифицират на: източници на *структурирани*, *полуструктурирани* и *неструктурирани* данни в зависимост от изходните признаци, които се наблюдават при субектите и дейността им. Те предполагат както възможности за надграждане на базисната информационна система за икономиката и за реализиране на допълнителни ползи в управленския процес, така и предизвикателствата и проблемите.

В световен мащаб появата на информация за целите на **икономическото управление** от цифровизацията на икономиката се свързва с обособяването на автоматизираните управленски системи, познати от края на 70-те и началото на 80-те години на 20 в. (Lyytinen, 1987; Lyytinen and Hirschheim, 1995; Clarke, 2000). В ерата на интернет технологиите УИС са разширени и надградени чрез разработени и базирани в облака системи, опериращи с мрежи от данни. Пример за такова надграждане и разширение е разработената от Oracle NetSuite автоматизирана система. Въпросът е какви аспекти на дейността на организациите и икономиката моделират и с какво този тип информация добавя ползи в процеса по разработване и обосновка на *икономическите решения* за организациите и икономиката в цялост.

Появата на ИКТ и разширяването на обхвата на цифровизацията на икономиката, в т.ч. чрез дигиталните трансформации на бизнес процеси (ДТ), внесоха помени както в самата икономика, така и в системата на икономическото управление (мениджмънта). *Промените при обекта (икономиката)* се отнасят главно до появата на нови икономически дейности, в т.ч. материални производства и услуги, и нови организационни форми на извършване на дейностите. *Промените при субекта (управлението на икономиката)* се изразяват в нови методи за набиране и обработване на данни и извличане на информация (технически решения чрез дигитални системи); автоматизиране на обработката на информацията при изготвянето на икономически решения, при което дигитална система обвързва изходите и входовете на различни части от управленска информационна система (УИС). Пример в това отношение е еволюцията на маркетинговата информационна система (МИС/MIS).

Първоначално МИС е ориентирана главно към осигуряването на информация под формата на факти и фигури (през 90-те години на 20-и век), но в последствие и особено с разрастването на индустриалния интернет на нещата (IoT), след появата на социалните мрежи и дейности в електронна среда, МИС е ориентирана към подпомагане на изработването на маркетинговите решения на компанията (т.нар. Marketing decision support system / MSDD) (Hooley, G., and al., 2017, pp. 103-104). Новите методи и средства за набиране и обработване на информация породиха необходимост от изработване на нови норми и правила, както и от актуализация на правно-нормативната рамка на социално-икономическия живот и структурите за нейното съблюдаване.

Акад. Матеев подчертава, че *следва да правим разлика между техническата основа и алгоритмизацията при автоматизираното обработване на данни и извличането на информация*, от една страна, и *превръщането на тази информация в управленски решения за бизнеса и икономиката*, от друга (Матеев, 1974, с. 8). Превръщането на информацията, която стои на изхода на дигиталните системи (автоматизираните системи за управление) в управляващи решения за икономиката (конкретен бизнес) е сложен социологически процес, а още по-сложен процес представлява самото изпълнение на взетите решения. За разлика от управлението в чисто кибернетичен смисъл (дигиталните системи), управлението на социалните системи (каквато представлява икономиката и отделна организация) включва съществени елементи на *социологическия* процес на управление – като работа с кадрите, система от стимули и отговорности, съотношението на интереси, идеология и др. п. (Матеев, 1974). Именно в този пункт се разкриват проблемите и предизвикателствата пред икономическото управление, които новите източници на данни и информация от ДТ в икономиката поставят.

Пример за дигитална система, която предлага широк *набор от приложения за моделиране на процеси от вътрешната среда на организациите, както и на връзките им с външни организации* (доставчици, клиенти, органи на публичната, стратегически партньори и пр.), е системата NetSuite. Портфолиото ѝ включва няколко основни области на моделиране (направления на корпоративните УИС), по-конкретни: ERP, CRM, BI, PSA (Professional Services Automation), SRP (Services Resource Planning), HR, eCommerce и др.

Връзката между традиционната СИИ и новите източници на данни и информация от дигиталните трансформации в икономиката

СНС като единна методология идентифицира и утвърждава *съществените признаци* на процесите и обектите, изграждащи икономиката като реална система. Накратко, определя *що е икономика, от какво е изградена, докъде се простира производствената граница*, отвъд която е неикономика, т.е. другите системи на обществото. На тази основа биват идентифицирани

допълнителни (надграждащи) **признаци** на процесите от икономиката, представляващи интерес за конкретно ниво от управленската система на икономиката, поради което биват превръщани в обект на специални подразделения на УИС. Допълнителните признаци конкретизират параметрите на дейността на стопанските субекти, като идентифицират и описват достатъчно разбираемо различни аспекти на дейността им. Например, за да говорим за *логистика на изхода на едно предприятие* и да моделираме с **дигитална система** този бизнес процес от вътрешната среда на предприятието, ние се нуждаем от достатъчно точна представа за *ролята и мястото на този процес* за дейността на една организация, както и за *специфичните променливи*, с които той може да бъде описан. Въпросните характеристики се определят от базисната дефиниция на икономиката и еднозначно определените структури на съдържание ѝ, както и от правно-нормативната уредба на икономическата дейност в дадена страна. С други думи, тези характеристики не съществуват а priori, а се извличат от основните параметри на икономиката и тяхното специфично проявление при извършване на икономически дейности от конкретни организации (субекти), в конкретна юрисдикция (държава, район).

СНС уточнява що е **стопански субект** (организация) и що е **икономическа дейност** (предмет на дейността на стопански субект). В добавка посочва критерий, по който извършваните от една организация дейности се класифицират на *основни, второстепенни и спомагателни* – приноса на дейността в добавената стойност на предприятието (SNA, 2008; Генкова, 2023). На тази база операциите на компанията по организиране на процеса по изпращане на готовата продукция от производствените складове към избраните дистрибуционни канали (**логистика на изхода**) следва да се разглежда като спомагателна дейност, която е част от целия процес по производство и реализация на продуктите на компанията. Логистичната дейност може да има значение за изграждането и поддържането на конкурентно предимство на компанията, което да трябва да бъде постигнато чрез дигитална трансформация и надграждане на съществуващата УИС чрез включване на нов модул, но това е въпрос от прерогативите на маркетинг мениджмънта и се решава в конкретиката (на емпирично ниво). Ако процесът по придвижване на продукцията на една компания от производствените ѝ складове до целевите групи клиенти се насочва по различните дистрибуционни канали от външна фирма, то за компанията изпълнител логистичната дейност ще играе ролята на основна (вид бизнес услуги). За компанията производител на продукцията логистиката на изхода (като част от процеса по реализиране на продуктите ѝ) ще е предмет на аутсорсинг. Последният ще е предпочетен от мениджърите по някакви конкретни причини.

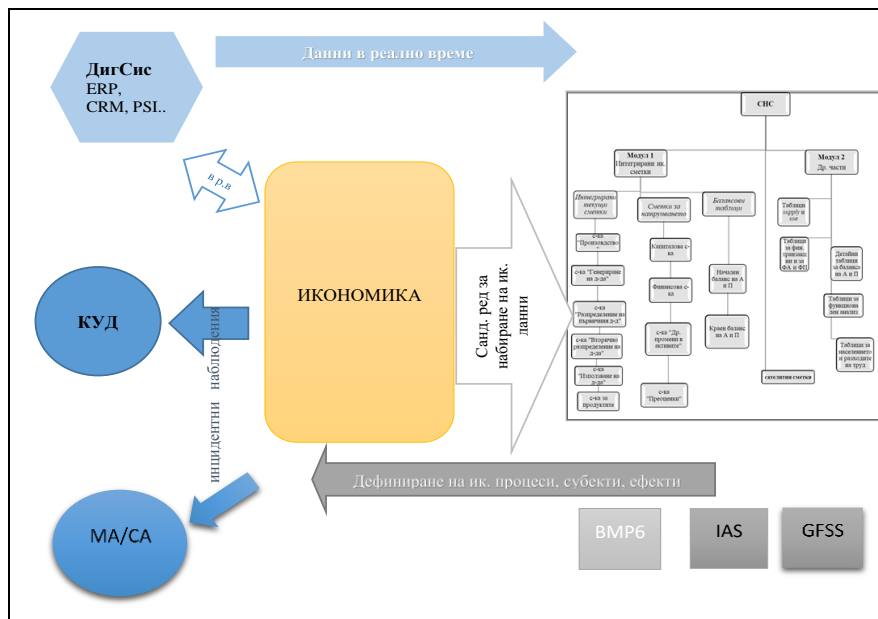
За СИИ и надграждането ѝ чрез дигиталните системи от ключово значение е разграничаването на субектите, както и на дейностите (техническите операции и действия), които са в

прерогативите на всеки от тях, в т.ч. при осъществяване на сделките помежду им. На принципно ниво, от гл. т. на значимите за икономическото управление проблеми, въпросът е решен от методологията на СНС. С други думи, разликата между икономическия субект и икономическата дейност е еднозначно уточнена в традиционната СИИ. Моделът на СНС е изграден върху строго очертаване на границите на *стопанството*, описано като *кибернетична система*. Обхватът, съдържанието и структурите от вътрешната среда на икономическата система се идентифицират от теоретична концепция. СНС работи с една от трите известни в икономическата литература – *разширена концепция за икономиката* (Студенский, 1968; Балева и Иванов, 2003; Генкова, 2023). В добавка са възприети прагматични правила, чрез които икономиката еднозначно е разграничена от демографската система и домашното стопанство (SNA, 2008, pp. 6-8; Генкова, 2023). Съществен момент от теоретичното определяне на икономиката е идентификацията на мястото на **технологията**. Последната се представя като съвкупност от последователни технически операции по обработване на реални (материални и нематериални) и/или финансови ресурси с участието на човека под една или друга форма, при което се постига конкретно преследван ефект. Технологията присъства както при основните и второстепенните дейности на организациите (производство на различни материални продукти и услуги), така и при обслужващите (управление, финанси и счетоводство, маркетинг, логистика, др.). В допълнение в нормативни актове на съответна юрисдикция (държава, интеграционна общност) се изработват законови правила и норми, чрез които се уреждат действията по институционализиране на стопанските субекти, както и отношенията между субектите в процеса на производство, разпределение и използване на икономическите блага и факторните доходи.

СИИ като модел на икономическата дейност на обществото и част от управляващата система (мениджмънта), заедно с разширенията и надграждането ѝ по линия на дигиталните системи, е представена на фиг. 1.

Заключение

Развитието на технологиите, в частност на ИКТ, изменя техническата основа и способите за събиране, пренос, обработване (извличане), съхраняване и използване на емпирична информация за икономиката, без обаче да изменя и отменя управлението на икономиката от социално-психологическа гл. т. Акад. Матеев изрично подчертава, че не може и не бива да се слага знак за равенство между техническа основа на прехода от една операция по обработка на информацията към друга (*цифровизацията на информационната система за икономиката чрез т.нар. автоматизирани системи за управление*) и *управляващата система на икономиката* (мениджмънта) (Матеев, 1974, с.15).



Източник: Собствена разработка. **Легенда:* КУД – компании за управление на данни; МА – маркетингови агенции; СА – социологически агенции; BMP6 – методика за платежния баланс; IAS – международни счетоводни стандарти; GFSS – методика за държавната финансова статистика.

Фигура 1: Системата на икономическата информация: базова и надграждаща част

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**STRATEGIC PLANING AND
MARKETING IN DIGITAL
WORLD**

**СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКО ПЛАНИРАНЕ И
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ИЗДАТЕЛСКИ КОМПЛЕКС – УНСС

Брандинг и маркетингова стратегия в дигиталната ера

Елена Терзиева¹

Резюме: Изграждането на силен бранд и разработването на успешна маркетингова стратегия са ключът към дългосрочния успех на фирмите, а оттам и на тяхната устойчивост в една силно конкурираща

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се дигитална среда. За да успеят да посрещнат и задоволят максимално нуждите и потребностите на своите потребители в технологичната ера, бизнесите следва да познават добре възможностите, които предоставя дигиталния маркетинг, както и бързата адаптация спрямо трудностите, с които също неимоверно се сблъскват фирмите. В тази връзка в доклада са разгледани предимствата и недостатъците на основни маркетингови инструменти в дигиталната среда през погледа на конкретна продуктова категория, но приложими в много по-широк спектър.

Ключови думи: бранд, стратегия, дигитален маркетинг, инфлуенсър, омниканален маркетинг

JEL: M310; M370

Branding and Marketing Strategy in the Digital Era

Elena Terzieva²

Abstract: Building a strong brand and developing a successful marketing strategy are the keys to the long-term success of companies, and hence to their sustainability in a highly competitive digital environment. In order to be able to meet and satisfy as much as possible the needs and wants of their customers in the technological era, businesses should be well aware of the opportunities that digital marketing provides, as well as the rapid adaptation to the difficulties that are also certainly faced by companies. In this regard, the report examines the advantages and disadvantages of basic marketing tools in the digital environment through the eyes of a specific product category, but applicable to a much wider spectrum.

Key words: brand, strategy, digital marketing, influencer, omnichannel marketing

JEL: M310; M370

Въведение

Брандингът и маркетинговата стратегия са от ключово значение за постигането на поставените цели от страна на фирмите. Когато говорим за тези съществени елементи, ние очакваме едно не само понятийно разбиране, но и практическо такова. През последните години обаче, бизнесът се наложи да преосмисли и адаптира добре

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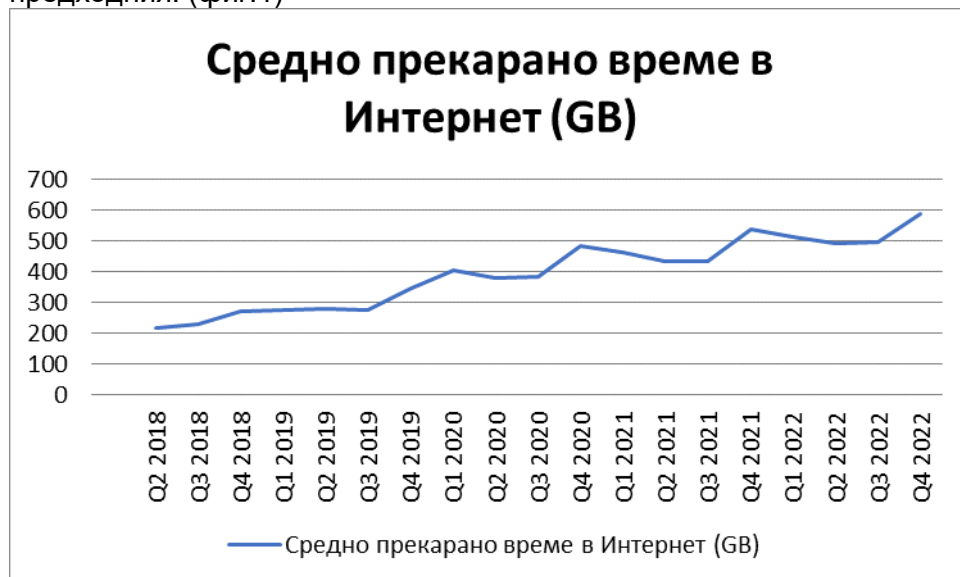
email: e_neycheva@unwe.bg

усвоените до този момент познания. Covid-19 преобърна бизнеса в неочаквани посоки. Приемани преди пазарни предимства за безусловни, загубиха своята стойност. Набиращият популярност така или иначе дигитален маркетинг се превърна в основен инструмент за достигане до настоящите и потенциални потребители. Разходите на фирмите се пренасочиха, целейки се към оптимизиране в една непрестанно конкурираща се среда, която очаква и изисква по-високи маркетингови инвестиции. В този контекст в настоящия доклад са разгледани някои добри практики през погледа на конкретна продуктова категория, както и някои препоръки и насоки за оптимално използване на инфлуенсърите. Не на последно място се търсят отговори на въпроси, свързани с избора между омниканалните структури и дигиталния маркетинг, при представените в същия доклад предимства и недостатъци на дигиталния маркетинг.

Неочакваната промяна на маркетинговите стратегии

Собствениците на бизнеси се справят с всякакви предизвикателства на дневна база, но всички бихме се съгласили, че с настъпването на пандемията, фирмите бяха изправени пред промени, които бяха и са твърде предизвикателни. Бизнесите бяха засегнати по много начини, като се започне от проблеми в производството и доставките до невъзможността да се достигне до потребителите.

Изследване, проведено от началото на 2018 година, посочва, че всеки следващ триместър потребителите прекарват с приблизително 25% повече време в онлайн пространството от предходния. (фиг.1)



Източник: OpenVault

Фигура 1: Време, прекарано в онлайн пространството от домакинствата в САЩ

Постепенно фирмите разбраха, че дигиталната среда е новото място, в което да се срещнат с потребителите. Това обаче се оказа много предизвикателно, защото нито бизнесите, нито потребителите бяха подготвени за такъв тип комуникация.

Ако разгледаме масажната продуктова категория, в условията на Covid-19, фирмите, предлагащи такъв тип стоки, на пръв поглед загубиха основните си конкурентни предимства. Когато говорим за масажни продукти, ние приемаме, че те притежават предимствата на материалните продукти. Те са осезаеми, могат да бъдат докоснати, тествани и използвани многократно. Потенциалните клиенти можеха да изпробват масажорите, да усетят действията им върху себе си, да разяснят с продавач консултанта всички интересувачи ги подробности. С настъпването на пандемията и невъзможността хората да посещават закрити помещения, тези пазарни предимства бяха отнети от компаниите и те бяха поставени в ситуация, в която трябва да продават материалните си високостойностни продукти в дигитална среда сред потребители с намаляващи доходи.

Недостатъкът е предимство

Това, което следваше да направят маркетолозите, е да изместят фокуса от досегашните предимства и да открият нови такива. Обръщайки поглед към масажорите, това, от което можеха и се възползваха част от бизнесите, беше да превърнат недостатъците в предимства. С поставените ограничения за пътуване, а и нарастващата тревожност, свързана със здравето, хората имаха нужда да подобрят общото си състояние. Това позволи на бизнесите, свързани с масажната категория, да пренесат СПА почивките и отчасти грижата за тялото и премахването на състоянието на тревожност. Така те се позиционират като възможната алтернатива за добро и полезно прекарване вкъщи.

Следващото ключово предизвикателство за компаниите, което трябваше да превърнат в свое основно предимство, беше именно свиването на разходите и оптимизирането на годишните бюджети. Пандемията принуди дори най-големите международни компании с впечатляващи бюджети да потърсят канали и да достигнат до клиентите си по-възможно най-ефективния начин. Така настъпи една нова ера в маркетинга, която няма намерение да си тръгва скоро, а именно ерата на дигиталния маркетинг. Бизнесите откриха, че това им дава някои сериозни предимства, но на каква цена?

Предимства и недостатъци на дигиталния маркетинг

Факт е, че дигиталният маркетинг не е новост за фирмите. Факт е обаче и, че до пандемията, той оставаше на моменти в сянка на омниканалните кампании и бюджети.

Предимства на дигиталния маркетинг:

- ❖ Персонализиране- дигиталните канали като email, социалните медии и дори търсачката дават възможност на маркетолозите да разделят потребителите си на по-малки сегменти и на база

- на това да изпратят по-персонализирани съобщения и рекламни материали. Масажорите за дома носят различна добавена стойност за младите и по-възрастните потребители. Персонализирането дава възможност и за съобразяване с финансовите възможности на потенциалните и реални клиенти.
- ❖ По-широк обхват- компаниите могат значително по-лесно да достигнат до нови потенциални клиенти. По-широкият обхват помага и за по-добро разпознаване на бранда.
 - ❖ Възможност за незабавни резултати и измерване в реално време- съществено предимство, което помага да оптимизираш бюджета си в рамките на същия ден, да пренасочиш ресурси там, където потенциалът е видим. Особено ефективно по време на активни кампании с намаление на цената на масажорите, например.
 - ❖ По-висок ROI (return of investment)- стандартно дигиталният маркетинг е много по-ефективен от стандартните маркетингови техники поради факта, че може много по-добре да се направи анализ на данните и да се оптимизират разходите, фокусирайки се върху печелившите практики
 - ❖ По-голяма ангажираност на потребителите- дигиталните среди дават възможност за по-близка комуникация с потребителите, те лесно могат да дадат обратна връзка или да получат отговор на свое запитване. Това спомага за изграждането на лоялност към бранда и общност на потребителите. Това, например, дава възможност на компаниите да разграничат оригиналните си продукти масажори от по-евтините имитации, като комуникират директно с потребителите си, както и с конкурентите. По този начин може дори да се потърси правна отговорност.
 - ❖ По-добро разбиране на клиентите-дигиталният маркетинг предоставя една богата база данни, която анализирана правилно, може да подобри не само комуникацията с клиентите, но може да изиграе съществена роля и в продуктовото портфолио на фирмата, както и на маркетинговата стратегия. По този начин, например, компанията с масажори насочи усилията си към разработване и представяне на по-скъп и по-комплексен масажор, който да е насочен към по-младите, но по-платежоспособни потребители, които работят активно, но професиите им са свързани със заседнала позиция.
 - ❖ Достъпност- потребителите могат да намерят веднага информация и референция за бранда, които ги интересуват. Не е нужно да положат съществени усилия, трябва им единствено Интернет връзка и интересувашката ги компания да присъства в онлайн пространството.
 - ❖ Социална страна на бранда-дигиталният маркетинг дава възможност на фирмите да представят не само своите продукти и услуги, но и своите социални принципи, да защитят

обществено важни проблеми и да подкрепят каузи, с които се асоцират.

- ❖ Богата визуализация-дигиталният маркетинг може да включва в инструментите си фотографии, звукови ефекти, субтитри, други специални визуализации.

Недостатъци на дигиталния маркетинг:

- ❖ Нарастваща конкуренция-все повече бизнеси насочиха стратегиите си към дигиталния маркетинг. За да успеят да се справят с това предизвикателство, фирмите трябва да изградят много по-силна и последователна дигитална стратегия. Конкурените бързо и лесно видяха кой е най-продаваният и търсен продукт на фирмата, като по този начин потърсиха по-евтини, макар и по-некачествени алтернативи, с които се възползват от вече изградения интерес към продукта.
- ❖ Постоянно променяща се среда-фирмите се налага да взимат стратегически решения в една дигитална среда с непрекъснати нови технологии, платформи и мрежи.
- ❖ Пренаселен пазар- дигиталната среда е страхотен начин да достигнеш до потребителите си, но не трябва да се забравя, че малки и големи бизнеси използват именно нея
- ❖ Ниска ангажираност-потребителите в онлайн пространството бързо губят интерес. Непрекъснато трябва да се поддържа завладяващо съдържание, за да се гарантира ангажираността на клиентите.
- ❖ Надеждност на технологиите- не можеш да съществува в дигиталния маркетинг, ако нямаш необходимата техника, свързаност и качествена поддръжка. Грешните могат да имат много сериозни последствия за бизнеса.
- ❖ Негативни потребители-Интернет пространството дава възможност на потребителите да споделят открито както своите позитивни преживявания, така и негативните такива, което може да повлияе силно върху възприятието на бранда. Многократно е доказано, че потребителите са много по-склонни да споделят негативен, отколкото позитивен опит с компаниите. За жалост, може и да се злоупотребява от конкурентни фирми с нереални „недоволни” потребители, които да провокират фирмата.
- ❖ Изисква специални умения- невсички потребители умеят да използват новите технологии, невсички клиенти имат онлайн връзка. Това определено създава пречка за комуникацията с реални и потенциални потребители чрез дигиталната среда.
- ❖ Неподходящ за някои бизнеси- някои специфични B2B бизнеси, например, няма да получат желания резултат при инвестиране в дигиталния маркетинг.

Инфлуенсърите- добре познат подход, личен опит и споделяне, нов вид платена реклама или най-доброто от трите?

За опитните маркетолози използването на лица за влияние е добре познат подход. До неотдавна обаче този подход не се беше обособил като самостоятелна нова професия. Той беше част от маркетинговата стратегия, но по-скоро като допълващ подход, отколкото като основен стълб. Личностите за влияние винаги са имали успех, но те придаваха нюансите на бранда, не толкова изграждането му като такъв. Натоварени с новите отговорности, инфлуенсърите често губят почва под земята си. Това прави вече личностите за влияние противоречив, но все пак успешен метод в разработването на маркетинговата стратегия. Когато говорим за продуктовата категория на масажорите, например, особено в контекста на лимитиран достъп до магазини, това дава възможност на потребителите да имат едно доверено лице, което да пробва продукта, да демонстрира резюмирано неговите основни предимства и недостатъци, а нерядко и да му даде насоки за начина на употребата му. В един некратък период инфлуенсърите се явяваха представители на потребителите. В процеса на времето инфлуенсърите стават все повече за сметка на доверието в тях, което напоследък спада, поради съмнението, което се поражда в последователите им, относно обективността.

Добре познат подход за маркетолозите:

- ❖ Надграждане на маркетинговата стратегия- когато специалистите имат нуждата да се открият и да встъпят встрани от добре познатите подходи за рекламиране, те се обръщат към личностите за влияние, за да затвърдят имиджа на продукта си
- ❖ Засилване на доверието в продукта- препоръките от лица, на които потребителите вярват, засилва цялостното доверие към продукта, а оттам и към фирмата. Клиентите приемат, че едно популярно лице не би искало да рискува лекомислено имиджа си.
- ❖ Гъвкавост при ценообразуването- факт е, че работата с личности за влияние обичайно е свързано със сериозен разход за компанията, но той носи със себе си някои предимства в процеса на ценообразуване на компанията. Така фирмата може да открие по-люксовите и скъпите си продукти, като в същото време успее да направи по-достъпно портфолио за масовите си потребители.
- ❖ Дългосрочна ангажираност с бранда- личностите за влияние се в действителност се превръщат в дългосрочни посланици на бранда. Ето защо и фирмите, и личностите внимателно подбират продуктите, с които ще работят. И

двете страни добре осъзнават, че дълго след рекламната кампания личността ще е свързана с марката и ще отговаря на въпроси, свързани с продуктите.

- ❖ Измеримост на сътрудничеството- нерядко инвестицията в такъв тип маркетингов подход дава резултати в дългосрочен план, отколкото инстантни видими резултати. Маркетолозите преди са използвали този подход с ясното разбиране, че в нередки случаи предимствата от използването му ще бъдат осезаеми на по-късен етап и дори биха могли да бъдат приписани на друг инструмент.

Личен опит и споделяне:

- ❖ Обективност - социалните мрежи дават възможност на потребителите им да споделят с близките си моменти, мнения, впечатления. Социалните платформи позволиха да се разкаже и за „находка” от страна на собственика на профила. Така потребителите имат поле сред близките си и не само, в което да разкажат за продукт или услуга, които много са ги впечатлили, открили са ги случайно или друг им ги е препоръчал, например. Често пъти това са непопулярни продукти, услуги, места и други.
- ❖ Силно доверие- когато потребителят е подтикнат да сподели заради високите качества на продукта, без да има финансов или друг стимул от страна на фирмата, когато споделянето е спонтанен акт сред кръг от близки хора, това създава изключително силно доверие към продукта и може да има много висок отговор и последваща дискусия относно продукта.
- ❖ Ограничена аудитория- мотивацията на споделящия не е да получи облаги от фирмата, а да отмени опит с близките си, следователно инфлуенсърът в този случай не се стреми към по-широка аудитория, не го разглежда като пазарно предимство пред потенциалния рекламодател. Добрата препоръка по естествен път може да продължи пътя на разпространението от уста на уста, но не е първично заложен ефект.
- ❖ Висока ангажираност- именно защото последователите на такъв вид опит и споделяне са ограничени, както и заради високото доверие, те са много по-склонни да се почувстват ангажирани към такъв вид публикуване на мнение, да задават въпроси, да предизвикат естествена дискусия около продукта.
- ❖ Краткотрайност- при такъв вид обмяна на опит и споделяне, собственикът на профила не се чувства мотивиран и ангажиран да продължи да споделя последващо мнение, да поддържа интереса на последователите си, освен ако не е мотивиран от нов продукт на същата фирма или друга лична причина.

Вид платена реклама:

- ❖ Креативност- когато личността за влияние е стимулирана от фирмата, чийто продукт ще представя, е много по-ангажирана, фокусирана в опознаването на продукта е много по-ясен процес. Инфлуенсърът дори може да открие нова добавена стойност на продукта, която е убегнала на компанията. Познавайки добре аудиторията си, личността за влияние може да създаде много по-профилирано съдържание.
- ❖ Интерактивност- споделянето на мнение и опит с продукта може да бъде надградено с интересни визуализации, допълнителни игри, анкети, награди и други
- ❖ Нарастващо влияние- успешните рекламни кампании с инфлуенсери, позволяват на личностите за влияние да придобият много широка популярност и да станат известни и разпознаваеми лица. От друга страна, достигането до нова таргет група за фирмата, например, се превръща в полесна, по-достъпна и отчасти по-евтина възможност.
- ❖ Намаляващо доверие- последователите на инфлуенсърите стават все по-мнителни относно обективността на споделяното съдържание. В следствие на нарастващото недоверие, а и донякъде от правна гледна точка, спонсорираните реклами все по-често се отбелязват като такива.
- ❖ Близост- този вид реклама остава усещането сред последователите за намалена дистанция между бранда и крайния потребител. Личностите за влияние в лицето си на говорители на бранда са много по-достъпни, личните съобщения и коментари към инфлуенсера са много убедителен начин за комуникация.

Все по-често се повдига въпросът докога ще продължи да се развива този маркетингов подход. Инфлуенсърите и фирмите се сблъскват с предизвикателства, които са силно социални като: изкуственото представяне на перфектен живот и неговото дългосрочно влияние върху психологията на човека и подрастващите; консуматорството като силно негативно влияние върху природата и ресурсите; все повече правни рестрикции, определящи коректното използване на такъв вид реклама и други.

В същото време инфлуенсърите намират нови възможности за доходи, като вследствие на все по-голяма популярност, желание да се инвестира в по-дългосрочен бизнес и сигурни доходи.

От друга страна, фирмите в следствие на голямото насищане, започват да наблюдават все по-ниска възвръщаемост на инвестициите.

Въпреки всичко това, този вид подход все още е много ефективен и комбинира в себе си най-разнообразни предимства както за компаниите, така и за личностите за влияние.

Омниканален маркетинг vs. дигиталния маркетинг

Макар и задочна, борбата между омниканалният и дигиталният маркетинг става все по-осезаема. По своята същност омниканалният маркетинг се отнася до добре интегрирано, структурирано и последователно клиентско изживяване посредством всички възможни канали, с които бизнесът е ангажиран като магазини, онлайн сайтове, бизнес партньори, телемаркетинг, печат и други.

- ❖ Омниканалният маркетинг е значително по-скъп метод за комуникация с потребителите в сравнение с дигиталния маркетинг.
- ❖ Омниканалният маркетинг и осезаемо по-негъвкав от дигиталния маркетинг, при промяна на пазарната среда, промяната на кампанията, имплементирането ѝ във всички канали е един бавен и тромав процес.
- ❖ Омниканалният маркетинг предполага едно дълго планиране за разлика от гъвкавостта на дигиталния маркетинг.
- ❖ Множествените канали са причина за много по-голяма и силна конкуренция.
- ❖ При омниканалния маркетинг уменията посланието да се персонализира е много по-трудно осъществимо.
- ❖ Омниканалният маркетинг създава по-голямо доверие в потребителите и те са много по-склонни да похарчат по-голяма сума за продукти на бизнеси, използващи този подход.
- ❖ Дигиталният маркетинг носи по-малка удовлетвореност на клиентите, при омниканалния подход, например, потребителите могат да закупят стока онлайн, но да върна в магазин.
- ❖ Потребителите имат по-лесен достъп до продуктите при омниканалния подход, което от своя страна води и до повече реални и потенциални клиенти
- ❖ Омниканалният маркетинг предоставя един добре разботен механизъм, със силна цялостна и последователна стратегия.

Заклучение

Пазарната среда не е била толкова динамична, както през последните години. Всичко това е свързано, както с непрекъснатото развитие на инструментите на маркетинга и нарастващата конкуренция, но така също и на външни, неконтролируеми фактори като пандемията от Covid-19. В света на бизнеса оцеляват тези, които са най-адаптивни, които познават добре потребителите си и искат да им предоставят едно цялостно вълнуващо изживяване с продуктите и услугите, които предлагат. Дигиталният маркетинг подава ръка на всички фирми, независимо размера си, за да могат да персонализират опита си с клиентите си, да достигнат бързо до тях и не на последно място, да го направят с един допустим бюджет. Наивно трябва да е за

всички маркетинголози и фирми да вярват, че това е преходен период. Дигиталната ера е тук, за да остане и фирмите трябва да грабнат най-доброто, което им предлага.

Бъдейки активна част от технологичната ера, потребителите стават все по-информирани, а оттам и все по-мнителни и недоверчиви към компаниите. Те имат повече изисквания и стават активна част в работния процес на фирмите. Поради тази причина фирмите имат нужда от личностите за влияние, за да могат да комуникират по-близо с клиентите си, но да не забравят фирмените цели.

Преследвайки тези цели, бизнесите трябва да умеят да отсеят кога инвестициите в една по-голяма омниканална кампания са оправдани и как заедно с нея успешно да имплементират предимствата на дигиталния маркетинг, противодействайки на слабостите на омниканалния маркетинг.

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Маркетинг в социалните мрежи: използване на сензорни послания в козметичната индустрия

Павлина Евтимова¹

Резюме: Целта на доклада е да разгледа и представи използването на сензорни послания в козметичната индустрия, прилагани при маркетинга в социалните мрежи. За постигането на тази цел в доклада се дефинира понятието маркетинг в социалните мрежи, дава се дефиниция на сензорния маркетинг и неговите елементи, а след това се разглеждат сензорните послания, които се използват от едни от най-приходните козметични брандове в социалните мрежи.

Ключови думи: маркетинг в социалните мрежи, сензорен маркетинг, козметична индустрия

JEL: D49, M31

Social Media Marketing: Using Sensory Messages in the Cosmetics Industry

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Abstract: The purpose of the report is to examine and present the use of sensory messages in the cosmetics industry as applied to social media marketing. To achieve this goal, the report defines the concept of social media marketing, defines sensory marketing and its elements, and then examines the sensory messages used by some of the most profitable cosmetic brands on social media.

Key words: social media marketing, sensory marketing, cosmetics industry

JEL: D49, M31

Въведение

Социалните мрежи са неизменна част от ежедневието на потребителите, предоставяйки им възможност за бърз и удобен начин за обмен на информация и впечатления. Този научен доклад разглежда иновативната употреба на онлайн сензорните послания в

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козметичната индустрия. С разрастването на онлайн търговията и социалните мрежи, козметичната индустрия се адаптира към новите тенденции, внедрявайки сензорни стимули в онлайн пространството. Със своето бързо развитие и технологични иновации, онлайн средата създава нови възможности за потребителите да се докоснат до много козметични продукти във виртуалното пространство.

Маркетинг в социалните мрежи

Маркетингът в социалните медии, известен също като дигитален маркетинг и електронен маркетинг, представлява използването на социални мрежи за изграждане на бранда на компанията, увеличаване на продажбите и стимулиране на трафика на уебсайта. Освен че чрез него се предоставя на компаниите начин да се ангажират със съществуващи клиенти и да достигнат до нови, маркетингът в социалните мрежи разполага със специално изградени анализи на данни, които позволяват на търговците да проследяват успеха на техните усилия и да идентифицират още повече начини за ангажиране.

Маркетингът в социалните мрежи е форма на интернет маркетинг, която включва създаване и споделяне на съдържание в социалните мрежи с цел постигане на маркетингови и бранд цели. Маркетингът в социалните мрежи включва дейности като публикуване на текстове, изображения, видеоклипове или друго съдържание, което стимулира ангажираността на аудиторията, както и платена реклама в социалните мрежи.

Според проучване на Data Reportal³ към януари 2023 година общият брой на интернет потребителите е 5,16 милиарда души, като в проучването е установено още, че средно на ден потребители прекарват по 6 часа и 37 минути в социалните мрежи. В друго статистическо проучване на Data Reportal, насочено към бизнесите и по-специално маркетинговите специалисти в компаниите, показва че Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Youtube и Twitter са петте най-използвани социални мрежи от тях. 82% от специалистите посочват, че главната им цел чрез използването на социални мрежи е бранд познаваемост. 48% от специалистите посочват, че планират от следващата година да започнат да използват и социалната мрежа TikTok за реклами. 53% посочват, че планират сътрудничество и с инфлуенсъри през следващата година.

Според друго проучване на HubSpot⁴ за тенденциите в социалните медии за 2023 година, Instagram е социалният медиен канал, който предоставя на търговците най-висока възвръщаемост на инвестициите (ROI), а на второ място се нарежда Facebook, друга платформа, собственост на Meta. Маркетолозите в проучването

³ Kemp, S. (2023). Digital 2023: Global Overview Report. Datareportal. Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report>

⁴ Forsey, C. (2023). Which Social Media Channels See the Most ROI. HubSpot. Available at:

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-channel-roi>

определят Instagram като най-ефективния канал за постигане на най-висока ангажираност. Повече от половината търговци (52%) планират да увеличат инвестициите си в платформата през 2023 г.

Сензорен маркетинг

В последните години все повече се говори за влиянието на определени символи и звуци върху човешкия мозък. Редица автори проучват как хората вземат решения за покупка на база тяхното възприятие. Несъзнателните стимули се превръщат в основна тема в много изследвания, поради спецификата, която представляват. Потребителите са склонни да обърнат много повече внимание на продукт, който им е предложен по интересен и влиятелен за тях начин. Едно от средствата за привличане на потребителското внимание е сензорният маркетинг.

Американската маркетингова асоциация дефинира сензорния маркетинг като „маркетингова техника, която има за цел да привлече потребителя, като използва петте сетива, които да повлияят върху чувствата и поведението му“. Потребителите използват петте си сетива - зрение, звук, мирис, вкус и допир, при възприемане и преживяване на околната среда и външния свят. Петте сетива допринасят за създаването на индивидуални и лични мултисензорни изживявания към брендовете, продуктите и услугите във физическа или дигитална среда.

Начинът, по който брендовете могат да пренесат същите сензорни преживявания от магазина в дигиталния свят, е като се опитат да ги пресъздадат, за да ангажират напълно съзнанието на клиентите и да ги накарат да се чувстват по-уверени в качеството и точността на артикулите, които купуват онлайн. Въпреки че докосването не може да се пресъздаде онлайн, има други начини за ангажиране на останалите сетива по креативен начин, за да се привлекат потребителите и за да се подобри изживяването при онлайн пазаруването.

Зрение

Силно визуалните знаци са много важни за онлайн търговците. Потребителите в голяма степен разчитат на това, което могат да видят на екрана, за да вземат своите решения за покупка, като вярват, че това, което пристига при тях, е същото като това, което са видели онлайн.

Звук

Звукът и музиката имат за цел да предадат правилното настроение на бранда, като се вземат предвид характеристики като жанр и правилно темпо. Звукът трябва да се използва като добро допълнение, но и трябва да се внимава да не се превърне в несъответстваща и отблъскваща характеристика.

Мирис, вкус и допир

Поради фактът, че потребителите нямат достъп до онлайн преживяване чрез мирис, вкус и допир брендовете следва да използват описателни думи и изображения, които симулират миризмата, вкуса и текстурата на продукта.

Някои от ползите, посочени от потребители относно сензорния маркетинг са:

При елемента „Звук“ – 79% от потребителите посочват, че музиката ги кара да харчат повече, а 20% от тях казват че музиката ги кара да прекарват повече време в магазина;

При елемента „Мирис“ – 65 % от хората могат да си спомнят с точност над 10 000 аромата дори една година след последният им контакт с него;

При елемента „Допир“ – 43% от потребителите биха пазарували повече ако им е топло в помещението в което се намират;

При елемента „Вкус“ – 79% от потребителите казват, че са склонни да пробват нови вкусове.

Инфлуенсър маркетинг

Инфлуенсър маркетингът се наблюдава когато бизнесът си сътрудничи с инфлуенсери, за да популяризира своя бранд в социални мрежи като Instagram, Facebook, TikTok или YouTube. Това е форма на маркетинг в социалните мрежи и може да бъде част от дигиталния маркетингов план на бизнеса.

Инфлуенсърите са създатели, които споделят съдържание в социалните мрежи, изграждайки общности около определени теми и ниши. Има и много следвани и харесвани знаменитости, които споделят аспекти от личния си живот в платформите и се радват на голям успех. Инфлуенсър маркетингът е определян като най-бързоразвиващия се в момента.

Инфлуенсър маркетингът е ефективен начин да се достигне до целева аудитория. За последователи си, инфлуенсърите обикновено се възприемат като надеждни фигури, така че е вероятно да се доверят на преценката им относно препоръчан бранд или услуга.

Козметичната индустрия

Козметичната индустрия представлява индустрията, която произвежда и разпространява козметични продукти. Козметичните продукти се разделят на две главни категории: бяла козметика и цветна козметика. Цветната козметика включва продукти като фон дьо тен, спирала, червило, а бялата козметика съдържа в себе си продукти като кремове, сапуни, шампоани, балсами и други.

В този доклад вниманието се насочва към цветната козметика и по-конкретно се разглеждат трите бранда с цветна козметика с най-високи приходи за 2022 година и тяхното присъствие в социалната мрежа Instagram. По данни на Brandirectory това са L'oreal, Estee Lauder и Guerlain. L'oreal има печалба от 11,2 милиарда долара за 2022 година, Estee Lauder има печалба от 7,9 милиарда долара, а Guerlain имат печалба от 6,1 милиарда долара. Световният пазар на

цветна козметика е оценен на 37,77 милиарда долара през 2022 година като се очаква той да достигне стойност от 77,44 милиарда долара до 2030 година. Това показва, че пазарът на цветната козметика е динамичен и силно конкурентен.

Козметичният бранд на първо място – L'Oréal, има 10,7 милиона последователи в платформата Instagram и редовно публикува снимки и видеоклипове, които рекламират продуктите на бранда. В тези снимки и клипове се съдържат множество сензорни стимули като ярки цветове и светлини, внимателно подбрана мелодия, а за пресъздаването на елементите мирис, вкус и допир са използвани описателни изображения със съставки и елементи, които да засилят въображението и интереса на клиента към дадения продукт. Компанията на второ място е Estee Lauder, която има 4,5 милиона последователи в Instagram и също залага на много снимки и видеоклипове с ярко съдържание на цветове и картини, комбинирани с приятна мелодия. Компанията на трето място Guerlain има 1,8 милиона последователи в Instagram, като при нея различното е, че се набляга предимно на видеоклипове, които са малко по-дълги, но много по-описателни и съдържателни. Използва се бързо сменяне на ярки цветове и затъмнение, драматична мелодия, с която се създава емоция, възбуждане и любопитство към луксозните продукти на бранда.

Сензорните стимули в онлайн пространството при козметичните продукти, са от съществено значение. Технологиите служат на брандовете да се възползват от дигиталния сензорен маркетинг и да се възползват максимално от своите канали за електронна търговия. Технологични иновации като обогатена реалност (AR) и виртуална реалност (VR) позволяват потребителите да пробват различни цветове, стилове и текстури в реално време.

Заклучение

Маркетингът в социалните мрежи се развива бързо и успешно. С всяка година интернет потребителите и времето, което прекарват средно на ден в социалните мрежи се увеличават. Брандовете, които умело използват възможностите на социалните мрежи и успеят правилно да създадат дигитални сензорни стимули, имат възможност да изградят по-силни връзки с потребителите и да постигнат конкурентно предимство на динамичния и разрастващ се пазар на козметични продукти. Дигиталните сензорни стимули в козметичната индустрия се очертават като ключова тенденция, която ще продължи да развива и преобразява начина, по който потребителите взаимодействат с продуктите. Технологични иновации като обогатена реалност (AR) и виртуална реалност (VR) са от съществено значение за брандовете да се адаптират към иновациите, за да останат конкурентни.

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Дигитални технологии в планирането и маркетинга на хотелските услуги

Десислава Димитрова¹

Резюме: Целта на настоящата статия е да акцентира върху влиянието на иновациите и технологиите в планирането и маркетинга на хотелските услуги, обхващайки всички видовете дигитални технологии, използвани в съвременните развити хотелски обекти, което да допринесе за правилното адаптиране на бизнеса към динамиката на потребителското търсене и нарастващото влияние на конкуренцията чрез правилния избор и използване на технологичните продукти.

Ключови думи: иновации, дигитални технологии, SaaS, маркетинг и планиране, развитие

JEL: M

Digital Technologies in the Planning and Marketing of Hotel Services

Desislava Drumeva²

Abstract: The aim of this article is to emphasize the impact of innovations and technologies on the planning and marketing of hotel services, encompassing all types of digital technologies used in modern, developed hotel facilities. This aims to contribute to the proper adaptation of the business to the dynamics of consumer demand and the growing influence of competition through the correct selection and use of technological products.

Key words: innovations, digital technologies, SaaS, marketing and planning, development

JEL: M

Въведение

В съвременния свят, доминиран от технологични промени, хотелската индустрия неизбежно се адаптира и интегрира иновации във всекидневната си практика. Дигиталните технологии се

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превърнаха в ключов играч в трансформацията на планирането и маркетинга на хотелските услуги, предлагайки иновативни решения и подобрени начини за комуникация с клиентите.

Едно от съществените приложения на цифровите технологии в хотелската индустрия е в областта на резервациите и планирането. Онлайн платформите и мобилните приложения предоставят на гостите лесен и бърз достъп до информация за наличност, цени и допълнителни услуги. Системи за управление на резервации автоматизират процесите, оптимизират заетостта на стаите и улесняват взаимодействието между клиенти и персонал.

В областта на маркетинга, дигиталните технологии предоставят множество възможности за персонализация и целево насочване. Анализът на данни позволява на хотелите да разберат предпочитанията на своите клиенти и да създават индивидуализирани маркетингови стратегии. Социалните медии играят важна роля, като предоставят платформа за взаимодействие с потребителите, споделяне на коментари и създаване на по-тясна връзка между марка и гост.

Използването на дигитални технологии в планирането и маркетинга на хотелските услуги предоставя неизбежни предимства, които подобряват клиентското удовлетворение и допринасят за успеха на индустрията.

Настоящата разработка, представлява обзор на най-използваните дигитални технологии в планирането и маркетинга в хотелиерската индустрия, базирайки се на задълбочен анализ на съществуващите технологии. Според Hotel Tech Report³: “През последното десетилетие се наблюдава фундаментална пренасочване от използването на скъпи инсталируеми инструменти към евтини специализирани SaaS/ софтуер под формата на услуга/ инструменти до степен, в която всяко звено в хотелската организация започна да разчита на специализирани инструменти, за да подобри работата си. Тази промяна създава огромно количество потребители на подобни услуги, които могат да повлияят на решенията за избор и покупка на тези продукти. Но тези нови потенциални и реални потребители не са професионални купувачи на технологии, а оператори. Те нямат технически познания, имат ограничено време за проучване и са фокусирани върху операциите.”

Навлизането на тези технологии в индустрията, значително надмина , скоростта на адаптирането и обучението за използването им в бизнеса, което често става причина за недобри резултати от

³ Hotel Tech Report <https://partners.hoteltechreport.com/about-us/>

използването на технологиите, както и генериране на неоправдани разходи на предприятията. Малките участници в сферата, нямат познанията и възможността да анализират постоянно излизащите на пазара технологии и често , правят избор за използването им без той да се базира на анализ, опит и прогнозни резултати.

В настоящата разработка, базирайки се на данни от Hotel Tech Report и специализирани за целта източници, ще се опитаме да покрием основните технологии, наложени на пазара в сферата на планирането и маркетинга в хотелиерската дейност, като опишем, анализираме и обобщим важните характеристики, нужни за вземане на правилно решение за използването им, а именно: достъпност, интуитивност при работа, поддръжка, възможност за обучение, цена.

На последно място съзнателно поставяме цената на технологиите, тъй като цената е фактор зависещ от резултатите, които могат да бъдат постигнати при правилното използването на подобни технологии и правилното определение е, че използването на подобен софтуер следва да се разглежда като инвестиция в подобряването на печалбата на предприятието, отколкото като разход.

Настоящата разработка, ще помогне на участниците в бизнеса, не само да се запознаят с наличните технологии , но и да научат етапите за избор на такава.

Съвременни дигитални SaaS технологии в планирането и маркетинга на хотелските услуги

В проучване на около 26 000 души в 31 компании, описано в брой на Harvard Business Review⁴, четири от първите шест „фундаментални черти на организационната ефективност“ – тоест черти, които позволяват на организациите да бъдат ефективни при прилагането на стратегия – трябва да се направят с информационен поток.

За целта, използването на SaaS /софтуер като услуга/ се превръща в задължителен инструмент за постигането на ефективност в добре управляваните организации.

Може би най-кратката и точна дефиниция на модела софтуер като услуга е дадена в статия в The Economist (САЩ), гласяща: „доставянето на софтуер като интернет базирана услуга чрез уеб

⁴ EOS-SaaS-White-Paper-2008 PDF (www.smr-knowledge.com Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Put the Focus on the KM/Knowledge Services Core Function by Guy St. Clair

браузър, а не като продукт, който трябва да бъде закупен, инсталиран и поддържан.⁵

По-пълна дефиниция дава Асоциацията на софтуерната и информационната индустрия. Подготвен от Изпълнителния съвет на асоциацията, документ от септември 2006 г., характеризира традиционния софтуерен модел като такъв с големи предварителни разходи и годишни разходи за поддръжка, изискващи внедряване на хардуер, сървъри, архивиране и осигуряване на мрежа. В същия доклад се отбелязва, че традиционните софтуерни приложения могат да бъдат персонализирани, посредством допълнителни разходи, като се описва и нуждата от текущата поддръжка и управление, които трябва да бъдат осигурени от клиента⁶.

За разлика от традиционните софтуери, SaaS: приложенията при поискване, софтуер като услуга (SaaS) се основават на повтаряща се абонаментна такса. Типичното внедряване на SaaS не изисква никакъв хардуер и може да работи върху съществуващата инфраструктура за достъп до Интернет. Доставчикът на SaaS поема цялата поддръжка, обучение, инфраструктура и рискове за сигурността в замяна на периодичните абонаментни такси. Моделът на услугата SaaS е проектиран да доставя бизнес приложения навсякъде и по всяко време, което от своя страна изисква от доставчика на SaaS да наеме специализирани екипи за поддръжка и персонал, които се предоставят на клиентите в кратки срокове.

Исторически анализ на навлизането на SaaS технологиите и иновациите в хотелиерския бизнес⁷

Преди 60-те години гостите са имали късмета да разполагат с климатик, евентуално, безплатни удобства за чай и кафе в стаята, да не говорим за телевизор в стаята. В хотелиерството е създадена първата автоматизирана електронна система за резервации и първия безплатен телефонен номер за резервация. American Express създава идеята за преносим, кредит. И това е само началото.

По-късно, чрез създаване на директна комуникационна линия между хората по целия свят, огромни количества информация могат лесно да бъдат достъпни и споделени. Възникват търсачките, както

⁵ Цитат по: Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Put the Focus on the KM/Knowledge Services Core Function by Guy St. Clair

⁶ Цитат по: Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Put the Focus on the KM/Knowledge Services Core Function by Guy St. Clair

⁷ Димитрова, Д., „Влиянието на технологиите и иновациите върху развитието на хотелската суперструктура“ „Туризм, образование, бизнес“ 2022 , стр.127-стр. 133

Yahoo, така и Google, и изведнъж светът става много по-малък и по-достъпен, което отваря безгранични хоризонти пред развитието на хотелиерството.

Hyatt Hotels и Promus Hotel Corporation са първите, които се възползват от мрежата, като стартират свои собствени уебсайтове през 1994 г. Първият онлайн каталог на хотели, Travelweb.com, също дебютира през същата година и през 1995 г. Choice Hotels International и Promus са първите, които предлагат на гостите достъп в реално време до централните резервации. Choice и Holiday Inn са първите, които въвеждат възможност за онлайн резервации – и отново Choice е първата верига, която изпробва компютрите в стаята като стандартно удобство за гости.

Сега имаме незабавен достъп до практически всичко; от най-новите новини, до онлайн пазаруване, банкови услуги, стрийминг на живо, картографиране и приложения за геолокация, възможността за контрол на отоплението, вентилацията, сигурността чрез системи за домашна автоматизация. Потребителите толкова се запознаха с този „нов“ начин на правене на неща, че по-голямата част от хотелският бизнеса трябваше да се адаптира, за да отговори на новите потребителски нужди.

През 60-те години луксът, който се очаква от посещението на хотел, включва климатик, безплатни удобства за чай и кафе в стаята, минибар и телевизор в стаята (все още черно-бял). 5 десетилетия по-късно, вече не е необходимо да се регистрирате на гишета, можете да направите това с мобилното си устройство. Мобилните ключове са по-удобни и по-желани от гостите. Ако имате нужда от услуги за гости, можете просто да се свържете с член на персонала чрез чат или приложението на хотела-няма нужда да вдигате телефона в стаята.

Докато хотелите са пълни с ентузиазъм до 90 -те години, създавайки системи за резервации и уебсайтове, много от тях, бавно се приспособяват към по-новите хотелски технологии, за да улеснят живота си в дългосрочен план и финансово по-добре. Тези, които са приели новата мобилна SaaS услуга, са пожънали оперативната ефективност; служителите могат да обработват поръчки, резервации, плащания и да проверяват клиентите, когато и където и да е. Тъй като комуникацията сега се осъществява по-ефективно между отделите, мобилността на хотела позволява на служителите да предоставят услуги на гостите по всяко време и навсякъде, което води до повишена удовлетвореност на гостите.

Към днешна дата развитието на хотелските технологии стремглаво продължава. През 2015 година в Япония е открит хотел

Непн-па, първият хотел, обслужван основно от работи в света, нови интелигентни хотели са тук, концепцията за IoT се развихря. През 2021 г. е открита първата 100% роботизирани пицария във Франция Pazzi. През 2023 в България е открит първия по рода си хотел Introvert , предлагащ различен продукт за новото технологично поколение потребители. Успешното паниране и маркетингът на хотелските услуги, става безвъзвратно зависимо от използването на дигитални технологии.

Водеци дигитални технологии в маркетинг и планиране на хотелската услуга

Възприемането на SaaS нараства експоненциално в почти всяка индустрия, като разходите за облачен хардуер, инфраструктурен софтуер и SaaS се очаква да достигнат \$55 милиарда през 2026 г.⁸ Дълго време технологията за хотелиерство е стара, тромава и скъпа, но SaaS започва да се превръща в популярен модел в индустрията на хотелиерството. Индустрията достигна точка, в която операторите започват да осъзнават предимствата на преминаването от вътрешен корпоративен софтуер към базирани на облак системи. Индустрията на хотелиерството е бърз, 24/7/365 бизнес, който зависи от множество системи. SaaS има способността лесно да свързва системи и предлага значителни изплащания. SaaS не само създава много ефективност, гъвкавост, мащабируемост, производителност на служителите и подобрява обслужването на гостите, но също така е много по-евтина алтернатива на традиционната локална технология и замества необходимостта хотелските компании да поддържат десетки собствени, back-end ИТ системи.

По-долу разглеждаме някои от хотелските системи, които са водещи, когато става въпрос за мигриране към облака и доставяне чрез SaaS. PMS/Property management system/, базиран на облак, предлага на хотелите всички предимства на цялостна система за управление без огромни инфраструктурни инвестиции. Няма нужда да инсталирате и конфигурирате софтуер, няма нужда да поддържате допълнително оборудване, опростява управлението на рецепцията, позволявайки Ви да управлявате всички операции, служителите вече не са обвързани с работното си място и могат да контролират работния процес от всяка точка. С облачен PMS хотелиерите могат да управляват комуникацията с гостите и да имат способността да

⁸ <https://www.stayntouch.com/blog/the-best-hotel-saas-solutions-on-the-market/?cn-reloaded=1&cn-reloaded=1>

осигурят по-голяма персонализация чрез персонализирани допълнителни услуги, надстройки и популяризиране на спомагателни услуги. Облачна PMS система може също да бъде канален мениджър на Вашия хотел, което означава, че системата може да разпредели всичките Ви налични стаи във всички канали и инвентарът се актуализира автоматично във всички сайтове, когато се направи резервация от всеки сайт; няма ръчна работа, грешките са намалени и възможностите за приходи са максимизирани.

Основно PMS, базиран на облак, позволява пълната автоматизация на всички бизнес процеси, включително продажбите на стаи. С облачно решение можете да добавяте потребители с различни нива на достъп, да управлявате финанси, да имате достъп до отчети, да наблюдавате производителността на служителите и т.н. от всяко устройство по всяко време.

Що се отнася до мениджър на канали, Siteminder , Room Cloud и Hotelrunner са едни от водещите онлайн платформи за разпространение в хотелската индустрия, помагаша на хотелите да привличат, достигат и превръщат в гости хора по целия свят. Чрез двупосочна интеграция, PMS се свързва с решения за управление на канали. Хотелите могат допълнително да опростят своя бизнес, като интегрират своя PMS със своя софтуер за управление на приходите и по този начин да увеличат ефективното планиране и маркетинг на своите обекти, като си гарантират увеличение на печалбата.

На база на проучване на 6185 хотелиери в 138 държави, Hoteltech Report⁹ създава класация на най-добрите SaaS PMS решения, като покрива всичко, което трябва да знае потребителя, включително водещи доставчици, сравнения на функции, ценови бенчмаркинг, необходими интеграции и други.

10 те най-добри PMS продукта според Hotel Tech Report за 2024 г.

- 1) Mews - Най-доброто за безпроблемни интеграции и автоматизиране на ръчни задачи
- 2) Oracle Hospitality - Най-доброто за големи имоти и портфейли с комплексни нужди
- 3) Cloudbeds – Най-доброто за по-малки имоти, които търсят решение „всичко в 1“.
- 4) HOTELTIME - Най-доброто за управление на имоти с много търговски обекти и удобства

⁹ <https://hoteltechreport.com/operations/property-management-systems>

- 5) ThinkReservations – Най-доброто за хотелиерите с по-малко разбиране в технологиите, които търсят лесен за използване PMS
- 6) ResNexus – Най-доброто за добавяне на функционалност чрез добавки и модули
- 7) WebRezPro – Най-доброто за свързване към OTA на трети страни и мениджъри на канали
- 8) RMS – Най-доброто за мотели, RV паркове и къмпинги
- 9) RoomRaccoon – Най-доброто за интуитивен интерфейс и модерен външен вид и усещане
- 10) Stayntouch - Най-доброто за извеждане на персонала ви зад бюрото

Дигитални технологии за управление на приходите¹⁰

Преди десетилетие системите за управление на приходите се използват изключително само от големите хотели с високи средни дневни цени, но с RMS/Revenue Management System/, базиран на облак, големи и малки хотелиери вече могат да се възползват от една и съща технология. С облачно RMS решение хотелиерите могат да се възползват значително от автоматизация, прогнозни анализи на данни и по-добра стратегия за управление на приходите.

Хотелите обикновено имат множество отдели, генериращи приходи, но членовете на екипа на оделните звена, често работят с отделни информационни потоци. Базираните в облак RMS решения дават възможност всички източници на приходи да се разглеждат и анализират общо и помагат да се осигури по-цялостна стратегия за управление на приходите. Автоматизацията дава на хотелиерите достъп до по-използваеми данни, което прави анализа на приходите и точното вземане на решения по-лесна задача, което позволява на хотелиерите да задават динамични цени, да продават повече стаи на оптимална цена, всеки ден, увеличавайки заетостта и приходите. Мениджърите на приходи, работещи без предимствата на автоматизирана система за управление на приходите, обикновено се оказват обречени на процеси на ръчно въвеждане на данни с по-високи рискове от човешка грешка, срещите се фокусират по-малко върху стратегията и повече върху основната логистика и разчитат на ограничени данни, за да направят ценообразуването и вземат стратегически решения.

¹⁰ <https://www.stayntouch.com/blog/the-best-hotel-saas-solutions-on-the-market/?cn-reloaded=1&cn-reloaded=1>

Използването на платформа за анализ и прогноза като тази на Duetto¹¹ може да помогне на мениджмънта на хотела да предвиди търсенето, да начертае потребителските модели и да увеличи максимално приходите, докато IDeaS¹² оптимизира производителността на приходите и прогнозира, като дава възможност на мениджърите по приходите по целия свят да спечелят точния гост в точния момент и на точната цена.

Чрез преместването на критични бизнес системи в облака хотелиерите създават гъвкава технологична среда, която е рационализирана, има способността лесно да интегрира и споделя безпроблемно данни между системите, адаптивна е и по-рентабилна. Той гарантира, че хотелиерите са подготвени за следващата вълна от ИТ тенденции, като същевременно им позволява да останат конкурентоспособни, увеличавайки максимално производителността, възможностите за приходи, като същевременно подобрява обслужването на гостите.

На база проучване на 2659 хотелиери в повече от 99 държави, Hotel Tech Report¹³ определя най-добрите доставчици на системи за управление на приходите, описвайки всичко, което трябва да се знае, за закупуване на правилните системи за управление на приходите (включително ръководство за системи за управление на приходите за 2024 г.). Анализират се данни за ключови критерии за вземане на решения, включително наличност на интеграция, партньорска екосистема, експертни препоръки и други на база подробно разработен метод за класиране на HTR¹⁴.

Изборът на правилните системи за управление на приходите зависи от няколко променливи, някои от които се свеждат до лични предпочитания, но повечето от които се свеждат до характеристиките на хотела.

Top 10 на RMS за 2024 според Hotel Tech Report¹⁵

1. Duetto
2. IDeaS
3. Revenue Solutions

¹¹ <https://www.duettocloud.com/en-us/>

¹² <https://ideas.com/revenue-management/>

¹³ <https://hoteltechreport.com/revenue-management/revenue-management-systems>

¹⁴ <https://help.hoteltechreport.com/en/articles/979295-ht-score-overall-rankings>

¹⁵ <https://hoteltechreport.com/revenue-management/revenue-management-systems>

4. RoomPriceGenie
5. Atomize
6. BEONx
7. Revolution Plus
8. PriceLabs Dynamic Pricing
9. FLYR for Hospitality
10. Guestrev (Cendyn)
11. Pricepoint

**Според Mr Kush Kapoor Chief Executive Officer Roseate
Hotels & Resorts:**

„Технология с оптимално използване на работната сила винаги ще печели пред конкуренцията. Индия винаги е била признавана за най-гостоприемната страна на Земята, що се отнася до културата, традициите, фестивалите и т.н. Следователно въвеждането на технология с човешко докосване винаги ще променя играта. Собственикът със сигурност трябва да внимава каква технология използва и каква е визията, тъй като технологията се променя всеки ден“¹⁶.

В допълнение: Г-н Зубин Саксена, управляващ директор и вицепрезидент по операциите, Южна Азия Radisson Hotel Group в същия доклад на въпроса „Как могат да бъдат внедрени нови технологии в хотелите? Дали Metaverse е бъдещето и накъде вижда това направление?, споделя:

„Безконтактната технология и иновациите помагат на хотелиерите успешно да трансформират неефективни и неангажирани процеси в работни потоци, които са напълно напреднали, централизирани, рационализирани и безпроблемно интегрирани. Хотелиерите са по-продуктивни поради използването на автоматизирани системи, което им помага да улеснят своята рутинна, повтаряща се работа. Въпреки че този акцент върху цифровите технологии продължава да съществува, това води до постоянно нарастване на пазара на хотелиерството. Поучително е да видим как нашата индустрия за хотелиерство се движи бързо и остава фокусирана върху разбирането и количественото определяне на оперативното и икономическото въздействие върху техните операции. Комуналните услуги безспорно са скъпо начинание в хотелското пространство. По-високите разходи и неустойчивите практики намаляват маржовете на печалбата и застрашават финансовото

¹⁶ Цитат от <https://www.reportlinker.com/> HOTEL IN 2032 A FORWARD LOOKING OUTLOOK

здраве и дългосрочната жизнеспособност на имота. С технологично внедряване като интелигентно оборудване и интелигентни сензори, индустрията на хотелиерството бързо рационализира операциите, оптимизира разходите чрез проследяване в реално време и навременна намеса в случай на предизвикателства. От машини до тави за храна, използването на иновативна технология може да помогне при управлението на активи и запаси в реално време, като всичко това подобрява изживяването на посетителите.¹⁷.

Основни причини, налагащи използването на дигитални технологии в маркетинга и планирането

Подобряване на онлайн присъствие: Клиентите все повече резервират хотели и настанявания онлайн чрез ОТА, мета-търсачки, собствени уебсайтове на хотели и други. С увеличаването на използването на трети страни за резервации, участниците губят контрол върху цените и преживяването при резервациите. В същото време голяма част от тях не са инвестирали в онлайн присъствие чрез ОТА или собствените си уебсайтове и не са решили проблема със засилващата се конкуренция в онлайн пространството, където има активно откриване на цени, клиентски рецензии и други визуални помощи като снимки на местоположението.

Позициониране в социалните медии: Социалните медии стават все по-важни в пътуванията, не само за споделяне на преживявания и вдъхновение за пътуване. Социалните медии са предпочитаният форум за обсъждане на теми свързани с пътуванията, включително отзиви, и също така стимулират ръста на пътуванията с цел почивка. Съдържанието и присъствието в социалните мрежи все повече влияе на решенията за пътуване и вече започва да насърчава пътувания, свързани с дейности и преживявания.

Управление на Приходите: С увеличаване на онлайн резервациите и показването на цени, конкуренцията се засилва. В индустрията, диктувана от променливото търсене и монополистичната конкуренция, значение придобива Управлението на Приходите. Хотелиерите трябва да управляват инвентара си ефективно и да максимизират потенциала на приходите си, като разработват, интерпретират и прилагат ценообразуване (онлайн) и действия за управление на наличностите. Това вече не е ръчен процес, а изисква сложни системи за прогнозиране на търсенето и проследяване на цените на конкуренцията.

¹⁷ Цитат от www.noesis.co.in 75 Хотел през 2032 г.

Задълбочаващ се проблем на пазара на труда:

Ограниченото предлагане на труд в областта на технологиите и оперативните роли също насърчава инвестициите в дигитални технологии за управление на бизнес нуждите. Технологичният талант е още по-редък, което принуждава представителите на хотелската индустрия да търсят все по-често аутсорсингови решения.

Основни приложения на SaaS в маркетинга и планирането на хотелската услуга

Автоматизирани резервации - Намаляване на ръчните процеси и грешки чрез автоматично събиране на информация за клиента, тарифите на стаите и детайли за резервации.

Онлайн плащания - Бързо събиране на информация за плащане директно от онлайн профилите на клиентите.

Реално време за анализ на данни - Получаване на реално време за справки и анализи, за да се идентифицират тенденции и възможности.

Инструменти за обслужване на клиенти - Предоставяне на персонализирана поддръжка на клиентите, за да се гарантира тяхното удовлетворение.

Автоматизирани комуникации - Оптимизиране на комуникацията с клиентите по различни канали като имейл и SMS.

Управление на наличности - Лесно управление на наличности и нивата на стоки на различни места.

Управление на стаите - Управление на наличността на стаи и функции като удобства, изглед и други.

Доклади и анализи - Получаване на обширни доклади и идеи за проследяване на ключовите показатели на успеха.

Автоматизирани работни процеси – Създаване на автоматизирани работни процеси, които да помогнат за автоматизация на процесите от начало до край.

Чрез използване на модерно хотелско SaaS решение, хотелските бизнеси могат да повишат ефективността на операциите си. С автоматизирани процеси и мощна аналитика те могат да оптимизират разходите, увеличат удовлетворението на клиентите, подобрят ефективността и да останат напред в конкурентната борба.

Заключение:

Хотелиерската индустрия се променя бързо, а софтуерът като услуга (SaaS) е основен катализатор за тази промяна. SaaS хотелиерски решения рязко подобряват клиентското изживяване,

мобилността, сигурността и ефективността на хотелиерите и ресторантьорите.

Ролята на дигиталните технологии в планирането и маркетинга на хотелските услуги стана несъмнено критичен фактор за успешно функциониране на хотелската индустрия. С началото на цифровата ера, хотелите се конфигурират като иновативни и адаптивни бизнес модели, където дигиталните стратегии играят ключова роля в привличането, удържането и удовлетворяването на клиентите.

Онлайн платформите за резервации промениха начина, по който хотелите взаимодействат със своите клиенти, като предоставят удобство и широк спектър от възможности за резервация. С разрастването на социалните медии и тяхната важност във взаимодействието с клиентите, хотелите трябва активно да участват в онлайн общността, да управляват репутацията си и да създават уникални преживявания.

Способността на хотелите да използват социалните медии и онлайн маркетинга е от съществено значение за създаване на дългосрочни взаимоотношения с клиентите. Дигиталните технологии не само оптимизират процесите на резервация и управление, но и предоставят ценни данни за предпочитанията и поведението на клиентите, които могат да бъдат използвани за персонализиране на услугите.

Също така, в сферата на маркетинга, дигиталните технологии предоставят инструменти за целево насочване, анализ на ефективността и създаване на атрактивни онлайн кампании. С тяхната помощ, хотелите могат да се свържат с по-широка аудитория, да изградят стабилна онлайн присъствие и да се диференцират в конкурентната среда.

В заключение: дигиталните технологии са ключов елемент в преобразяването на хотелската индустрия, като поддържат иновации, подобряват клиентското преживяване и насърчават устойчивостта на бизнеса. Отговорното им прилагане става съществена част от стратегията на хотелите за успешно изпълнение на техните цели в динамичната среда на гостоприемството и правилния им избор и използване е фундаментално за печалбата на всеки хотел.

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Последици от дигитализацията за финансовия сектор на Европейския съюз

Аглика Кънева¹

Резюме: В доклада са изследвани тенденциите в областта на дигитализацията във финансовия сектор на Европейския съюз. Извеждат се основните предимства и рискове от дигиталните технологии. Разгледан е регулаторният подход към дигитализацията на финансовите услуги.

Ключови думи: дигитализация, финансов сектор, регулаторни мерки

JEL: G2, O14, O3

Consequences of digitalization for the financial sector of the European Union

Aglika Kaneva²

Abstract: The report examines trends in the field of digitization in the financial sector of the European Union. The main advantages and risks of digital technologies are brought out. The regulatory approach to the digitalization of financial services is reviewed.

Key words: digitalization, financial sector, regulatory measures

JEL: G2, O14, O3

Въведение

Дигитализацията засяга всички финансови дейности (EUROFI, 2023, р. 51). Дигитализацията в областта на финансовите услуги коренно променя начина, по който функционират пазарите, и налага извършването на промени във финансови регулации и надзор (Ophèle, 2023, р. 94).

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Основната цел на доклада е да се изследват тенденциите в областта на дигитализацията във финансовия сектор на Европейския съюз.

За да се реализира целта, в доклада се очертават следните конкретни задачи:

1. Анализ на тенденциите при дигитализацията на финансовите услуги.

2. Изследване на предимствата и рисковете от дигиталните технологии за финансовите институции в Европейския съюз.

3. Представяне на регулаторния подход към дигитализацията на финансовите услуги.

Обект на изследването е дигитализацията във финансовия сектор на Европейския съюз. Предмет на изследването е влиянието на дигитализацията върху дейността на финансовите институции.

Основната теза на изследването е, че ползите от дигиталните технологии за финансовите услуги в Европейския съюз значително превишават рисковете от тях.

1. Тенденции в областта на дигитализацията във финансовия сектор на Европейския съюз

Изследване, проведено през 2016 г., показва, че европейските страни използват само 12% от пълния си дигитален потенциал, определен като претеглено внедряване на дигитални активи, труд и практики във всички сектори, в сравнение с най-дигитализирания сектор (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016, p. 7). Това е само две трети от потенциала на САЩ, които имат значителни възможности за развитие.

Големите западноевропейски компании продължават да разширяват използването на ранни дигитални технологии. В областта на банковите и финансови услуги клиентите в Европейския съюз са сред най-свързаните с дигитални технологии в света по отношение на приемането и използването на мобилно банкиране. Особено скандинавските банки са водещи в прехода към безналично общество. А движението за "отворено банкиране", започнало във Великобритания, в рамките на което разработчици от трети страни могат да създават приложения и услуги за дадена финансова институция, вече е разпространено по целия свят.

Изоставането на Европа в разпространението на дигиталните технологии вероятно ще се отрази и при разпространението на изкуствения интелект. Ранните дигитални компании първи развиха силни позиции в областта на изкуствения интелект, но само две европейски компании са сред тридесетте водещи дигитални компании в света. По-малко от половината европейски фирми са внедрили една от технологиите за изкуствен интелект, като по-голямата част от тях са все още в пилотен етап (Sjåtil, 2019, p. 174).

1.1. Европейски пазари на ценни книжа

Дигитализацията води до по-голяма автоматизация на процесите на търговия с ценни книжа, сетълмент и клиринг в Европа.

Това доведе до по-бърза и по-ефективна обработка на транзакциите, намаляване на времето, необходимо за сетълмент на сделките, и понижаване на риска от грешки. Дигитализацията променя структурата на европейските пазари на ценни книжа, което води до по-голяма достъпност и прозрачност за участниците на пазара.

Появата на нови платформи за търговия като например многостранните системи за търговия през последните две десетилетия бе улеснена от дигитализацията и предостави на участниците на пазара нови канали за търговия с ценни книжа. Това, от своя страна, доведе до засилване на конкуренцията, като се появиха нови финтех участници, и се насърчи по-високият темп на въвеждане на иновации от всички участници.

Навлизането на дигитализацията подобри достъпа до информация за участниците на пазара, като надеждните данни в реално време водят до по-голяма прозрачност и повишена ефективност (Laurensy, 2023, p. 99).

Дигитализацията също така помогна на пазарните структури като Централните депозитари на ценни книжа да въведат иновации и да се възползват от нови възможности, като същевременно запазят оперативната си устойчивост. Например френският пазар на ценни книжа е дематериализиран от много години, което довежда до подобряване на ефективността му (EUROFI, 2023, p. 51).

В бъдеще пазарът на ценните книжа ще продължи да се оформя от новите технологии като технологията на разпределената счетоводна книга и изкуствения интелект. Ако се използват разумно, тези иновации имат потенциала да ускорят модернизацията на пазара на ценни книжа, като осигурят по-голяма автоматизация, точност и бързина, които да позволят създаването на нови бизнес модели и решения за клиентите. Успоредно с това търсенето от страна на клиентите на дигитални услуги и услуги, базирани на данни, ще нараства.

Затова е важно европейските пазари на ценни книжа активно да проучват нови области за създаване на стойност. Например дигитализацията и токенизацията на активите могат да позволят използването на дигиталните валути на централните банки.

Прилагането на Директивата за пазарите на финансови инструменти II (MiFID II) през месец януари 2018 г. и на Директивата за правата на акционерите II (SDR II) през месец септември 2020 г. накара участниците на пазара да дигитализират своите процеси и работни потоци, за да се съобразят с новите изисквания за отчетност и прозрачност. Изготвянето на нови регулаторни режими като Регламента за дигиталната оперативна устойчивост (DORA) допълнително ще ускори дигитализацията на пазара на ценни книжа (Laurensy, 2023, p. 99).

1.2. Застраховане

Нарастващата дигитализация ускори фрагментацията на застрахователната верига. Застрахователите се стремят към нови

форми на сътрудничество и все повече прибягват към иновативни доставчици на услуги от трети страни за бърз и ефективен достъп до нови технологии и бизнес модели. Въпреки че навлизането на т.нар. големи технологии в застрахователния сектор на ЕС засега е ограничено, то има потенциал за бързо разрастване.

Появяват се и дигитални платформи. Те предлагат удобство чрез комбиниране на финансови, застрахователни и нефинансови продукти и услуги от различни доставчици. Все по-широкото възприемане на изкуствения интелект и използването на обмен на данни, управляван от стандартизирани интерфейси за програмиране на приложения, улесняват разработването на усъвършенствани фронт и бек-офис процеси и онлайн достъп. Интерфейсите за програмиране на приложения също така дават възможност за отворени бизнес модели в областта на финансите и застраховането, които могат да улеснят иновациите в цялата индустрия и да увеличат гъвкавостта на предприятията в отговор на промените в потребностите и очакванията на клиентите.

Съществуват нови възможности за потребителите и предприятията. Аутсорсингът позволява на застрахователите да се съсредоточат върху основната си дейност, което води до повишаване на гъвкавостта и ефективността. Дигиталните платформи увеличават удобството чрез денонощен достъп до по-широк набор от продукти и услуги. Това вероятно ще представлява интерес за фирми, които благодарение на вътрешния пазар и режима на свободно предоставяне на услуги ще могат да се възползват от по-широка клиентска база, включително и в чужди страни. Големите технологии могат да използват мрежови ефекти, за да достигнат до широк кръг потребители, включително и до такива, които в противен случай може да не получат достатъчно обслужване.

Възникват и нови рискове и предизвикателства пред надзора. Увеличаващата се зависимост от технологичните компании може да създаде нови видове операционен риск. Дигиталните канали за дистрибуция, съчетани с понякога агресивни маркетингови техники, например базирани на т. нар. "тъмни модели" или използване на социалните медии, също могат да повишат рисковете за защитата на потребителите.

Навлизането на големите технологии в застраховането може допълнително да създаде рискове от концентрация и да повдигне въпроси, свързани с равнопоставеността на действащите финансови групи, което изисква по-силен контрол върху пруденциалния надзор и поведението, надзора на продуктите и управлението и въпросите, свързани със стойността на парите.

Европейският орган за застраховане и професионално пенсионно осигуряване (EIOPA) наскоро започна структурирано проучване „Наблюдение на дигитализацията на пазара“ относно развитието, включително растежа на разпространението на дигитализацията, възприемането на изкуствен интелект или блокчейн, идентифицирането на киберрискове, както и относно възможни

области, в които регулирането и практиката не се съчетават добре. Европейският орган за застраховане и професионално пенсионно осигуряване продължава работата си по анализ на дигиталните бизнес модели, отвореното застраховане и изкуствения интелект. В качеството си на надзорен орган Европейският орган за застраховане и професионално пенсионно осигуряване също така следва да гарантира, че нормативната уредба остава актуална. Това означава, че следва да се възприеме подходът "еднаква регулация, еднакви правила, еднакви рискове", като се запази технологична неутралност (Hielkema, 2023, p. 101).

2. Възможности и рискове от дигитализацията на финансовите услуги в Европейския съюз

Новите технологии създават изцяло нови възможности, които обхващат всички сектори на икономиката. В областта на финансите тази трансформация дава възможност за по-ефективно предоставяне на по-изгодни и по-удобни финансови продукти и услуги на гражданите на ЕС, независимо от местоположението им в региона.

Тези нови възможности обаче доведоха до предизвикателството да се увеличат максимално иновациите, като същевременно се ограничат новите източници на рискове във финансовия сектор или за обществото като цяло, като например рискове, свързани с пазарната концентрация, защита на данните или изкуствения интелект (De Lis, 2019, p. 176).

Дигитализацията може да бъде двигател на просперитета в Европа. Тя укрепва европейския финансов сектор, като подпомага създаването на дигитален единен пазар на финансови услуги и подкрепя съюза на капиталовите пазари, като всичко това е с цел създаване на европейски дигитален единен пазар.

Дигитализацията създава иновации, намалява разходите за клиентите и фирмите и може да насърчи по-голяма конкурентоспособност и избор за предприятията и домакинствата. Пример за това е сферата на плащанията. С увеличението на електронната търговия клиентите все повече купуват и продават стоки и услуги онлайн. И все повече плащания на дребно се извършват чрез мобилни телефони.

Онлайн и мобилните плащания могат да ускорят извършването на транзакциите, да повишат прозрачността и да намалят разходите. Европа положи основите за подкрепа на иновациите в областта на електронните плащания на дребно чрез напълно хармонизирано регулиране на плащанията, включително Директивата за платежните услуги PSD2 и Регламента за Единната зона за плащания в евро (SEPA). Това позволява на клиентите в цяла Европа да получат достъп до сигурни, ефективни и лесни за изпълнение плащания. Насърчаването на устойчив и конкурентен пазар на плащанията в ЕС обаче изисква стратегически подход към общоевропейска платежна схема. Незабавните плащания като нова платежна форма в рамките

на Единната зона за плащания в евро (SEPA) могат да имат важно значение в това отношение.

Не само плащанията, но и финансите като цяло напълно се променят в резултат на наличието на все повече данни и нови технологии като блокчейн или изкуствен интелект. Тези тенденции създават нова динамика в предоставянето на финансови услуги и водят до появата на нови участници на пазара на финансови услуги. Технологичните фирми могат да достигнат до широки потребителски мрежи за секунди. За да могат европейските компании да се възползват от това развитие, те трябва да могат да предлагат своите дигитални продукти зад граница и да получат бърз достъп до единния пазар.

През 2018 г. Европейската комисия предприе важна първа стъпка за справяне с предизвикателствата, които това поставя пред създателите на политики, чрез своя План за действие в областта на финтех технологиите. В него се посочват стъпки към по-иновативен и конкурентоспособен финансов сектор в три ключови области. Първата област има за цел да насърчи иновативните бизнес модели чрез уеднаквяване на регулаторните стандарти и надзорни практики. Лабораторията за финтех, която обединява надзорни органи, доставчици на технологии и финансови институции, както и Европейската мрежа за подпомагане на иновации са само два примера за извършвани дейности в тази област. Втората област е осигуряване на по-широко внедряване на новите технологии чрез насърчаване на доверието в способността на регулаторните органи да запазят финансовата стабилност и да защитят клиентите. Глобални инициативи като монетата Libra на Facebook показват необходимостта от подновяване на ангажимента за разработване на общи европейски и международни подходи за регулиране на иновациите. Но, въпреки че дигитализацията предоставя огромни ползи за клиентите и предприятията, тя поражда и нови рискове. По тази причина насърчаването на оперативната устойчивост и справянето с киберпрестъпността са ключова част от политическата програма на Европа. Регулаторните органи и създателите на политики следва да гарантират, че потребителите и фирмите в ЕС ще бъдат защитени от тези рискове.

Планът за действие в областта на финтех технологиите е стъпка в усилията на Европейския съюз да създаде силен и сигурен общоевропейски финансов сектор, който да е конкурентоспособен на световно ниво и да създава просперитет за европейските граждани. Целта на Европейския съюз е да създаде Съюз на дигиталните финансови пазари (DFMU). Европейският съюз следва да се съсредоточи върху изграждането на цялостна дигитална екосистема, която ще позволи на клиентите и предприятията да се възползват от продукти и услуги с най-високо качество навсякъде в Европа (Holle, 2019, pp. 172-173).

3. Европейски политически подход към дигитализацията

През последното десетилетие ЕС въведе няколко регулаторни мерки с цел да насърчи иновациите в областта на финансовите услуги, да засили конкуренцията и да допринесе за по-добри и по-сигурни услуги за крайния потребител. Директивата за платежните услуги PSD2 е един такъв пример, който улесни увеличаването на конкуренцията и подобряването на обслужването на клиентите чрез достъпа, предоставен на доставчиците от трети страни (Mella, 2023, р. 98).

Дигитализацията може да ускори фрагментацията на единния пазар в някои области. Съществуват проблеми, свързани с начина, по който да се насърчават цифровите иновации и да се споделят данни на европейско равнище. Предизвикателство е да се осигури регулаторна рамка, която да подкрепя адекватно тези промени (EUROFI, 2023, р. 52).

Европейската комисия прие пакет за дигитални финанси през месец септември 2020 г. Основната цел е да се постигне конкурентен финансов сектор на ЕС с достъп до иновативни финансови продукти, като същевременно се гарантира защитата на потребителите и финансовата стабилност. Финансовото регулиране и надзор трябва да гарантират, че всички рискове са напълно обхванати съгласно принципа "еднаква дейност, еднакви рискове, еднакви правила".

Четири стратегии са приоритети на Европейската комисия са преодоляване на фрагментацията, стимулиране на дигиталните иновации, насърчаване на финансирането, основано на данни, и справяне с предизвикателствата, свързани с дигиталната трансформация, като например киберрисковете (Dejtek-Hack, 2023, р. 95).

От 2020 г. до момента, когато Европейската комисия представи пакета за дигитални финанси, се работи по цялостна програма за дигитални финанси. Целта е да се регулира по начин, който запазва способността за иновации (EUROFI, 2022, р. 138). От 2020 г. до момента бяха приети няколко допълнителни законодателни текста, обхващащи различни области на дигитални финанси (EUROFI, 2023, р. 52).

Стратегията на ЕС в областта на дигиталните технологии включва два регламента относно криптоактивите и дигиталната устойчивост, както и пилотен режим на технологията на разпределената счетоводна книга (DLT), който функционира от месец март 2023 г. В рамките на този пилотен режим на технологията на разпределената счетоводна книга участниците на пазара ще могат да експериментират с емитирането, търговия и сетълмент на акции или облигации с помощта на блокчейн технология. Регламентът за пазарите на криптоактиви (MiCA) е приет от законодателите на ЕС през месец юни 2023 г. Регламентът за пазарите на криптоактиви е цялостна правна рамка за надзор на стабилните монети (токени, свързани с активи, и токени за електронни пари в терминологията на

ЕС), на други видове криптоактиви, както и на доставчиците на услуги, свързани с криптоактиви.

С Регламента на ЕС за дигиталната оперативна устойчивост (DORA) се създава рамка за надзор на критични доставчици на информационни и комуникационни технологии (ИКТ) от трети страни и ще се засили способността на финансовите дружества да устояват на проблеми, свързани с технологиите, на които те все повече разчитат (Dejmek-Hack, 2023, p. 95). Регламентът за дигиталната оперативна устойчивост е първата надзорна рамка за справяне с киберрисковете и управлението на риска, свързан с информационните и комуникационните технологии във финансовия сектор, и отчита промените във веригите за създаване на стойност с нарастващата роля на критични трети страни доставчици на технологии (EUROFI, 2022, p. 138). Регламентът за дигиталната оперативна устойчивост ще започне да се прилага от 17 януари 2025 г.

Нова област, в която Европейската комисия работи, е европейско пространство за данни за финансовия сектор. Освен това Европейската комисия възнамерява да предложи рамка за отворени финанси. Ще бъде извършен преглед и на Директивата за платежните услуги PSD2 (Dejmek-Hack, 2023, p. 95). Целта е засилване на конкуренцията в сектора на финансовите услуги в ЕС, като същевременно се поддържат равни условия за различните участници. Законът за изкуствения интелект също е много важен в това отношение (EUROFI, 2023, p. 52). Тези нови рамки ще дадат възможност на клиентите на дребно и на бизнеса да контролират достъпа до своите данни, като важна част от европейското пространство за финансови данни. С платформата за дигитални финанси Европейската комисия цели да подобри възможностите за разрастване на иновативните бизнес модели в целия ЕС (Dejmek-Hack, 2023, p. 95).

Рамката за отворени финанси следва да улесни обмена на данни с прилагането на нови стандарти за обмен на данни и стандарти на Американския петролен институт (API). Но следва да се внимава регулаторните изисквания да не възпрепятстват иновациите (EUROFI, 2023, p. 51).

Европейската комисия си сътрудничи с Европейската централна банка за евентуалното въвеждане на дигитално евро, което да осигури на гражданите и предприятията сигурно, надеждно, иновативно и конкурентно средство за извършване на ежедневните им плащания. Въпреки че решението за въвеждане на дигитално евро се взема от Европейската централна банка, Европейската комисия ще предложи необходимото законодателство, придружаващо дигиталното евро (Dejmek-Hack, 2023, p. 95).

Европа е една от водещите юрисдикции в работата по дигитална валута на централната банка (CBDC). За да бъде успешно въвеждането на дигитално евро, трябва да се решат няколко важни въпроса. Един от тях е рискът от дезинтериоризация, така че дигиталното евро следва да остане предимно платежно средство и да

не се превръща в значимо средство за съхранение на стойност. Също така следва да се обърне внимание на въпросите, свързани с поверителността и защитата на данните, както и на аспектите, свързани с борбата с прането на пари и финансиране на тероризма (EUROFI, 2022, p. 138).

Технологиите допринасят за разпадането на предишни интегрирани вериги за създаване на стойност. Докато повечето финансови услуги традиционно се предлагат от един доставчик, дигиталните технологии позволяват на фирмите да се специализират в определен етап от веригата на стойността. Това води до увеличаване на конкуренцията и може да подобри ефективността, но също така може да направи веригите за създаване на стойност по-сложни и по-трудни за регулиране. Поради това Европейската комисия държи особено на прилагането на принципа "еднакъв риск, еднакви правила, еднакво регулиране". Същевременно това може да доведе до предизвикателства по отношение на практическото прилагане, тъй като някои технологии могат да изискват специално внимание при изготвянето на законодателството. Например съществуващите правила не винаги са съобразени с финансирането, базирано на технологиите на разпределената счетоводна книга. Пилотният режим на технологиите на разпределената счетоводна книга е добър пример за това как Европейската комисия приспособява настоящата система, за да позволи на технологиите на разпределената счетоводна книга да функционират за търговия, клиринг и сетълмент (Dejmek-Hack, 2023, p. 95). Няколко аспекта на стратегията на ЕС за блокчейн следва да бъдат подчертани, тъй като те показват как една динамична иновационна екосистема може да бъде от полза както за предприятията от финансовия сектор, които функционират от дълго време, така и за стартиращите предприятия:

- европейската инфраструктура за блокчейн услуги обединява 29 европейски държави от ЕС и Европейското икономическо пространство в предоставянето на трансгранични публични услуги с блокчейн и се подкрепя от програмата "Цифрова Европа". Тя е първата в света.

- създадена е Международната асоциация на надеждните блокчейн приложения, която е глобална асоциация на заинтересованите страни за управление на блокчейн със седалище в Брюксел. Тя предлага на разработчиците и потребителите на технологии на разпределената счетоводна книга глобален форум за взаимодействие с регулаторните органи и създателите на политики и за извеждане на блокчейн технологията на следващ етап (Bury, 2019, p. 174).

Като цяло Европейската комисия се стреми да гарантира, че нейните регулаторни интервенции са достатъчно широки и неутрални по отношение на технологиите, за да издържат проверката на времето и да бъдат възможно най-устойчиви в бъдеще.

Съществува риск финансовите услуги да мигрират към дигитална среда с фрагментирани екосистеми, включващи

взаимосвързани доставчици на цифрови услуги, които частично попадат извън финансовата регулация и надзор. Поради това дигиталните финанси може да направи по-трудно за съществуващите регулаторни и надзорни рамки да гарантират финансовата стабилност, защитата на потребителите и целостта на пазара. Дигиталният преход ще промени из основи европейския финансов сектор. Кriptoактивите са все по-институционализирани, изследват се дигиталните валути на централните банки, децентрализираните финанси се развиват бързо. Предизвикателство ще бъде да се осигури подходящо регулиране, което да гарантира високи нива на защита на потребителите и инвеститорите. Дигиталните финанси по своята същност са трансгранични и междусекторни. Европейската комисия има за цел да даде възможност за разширяване на обхвата на единния пазар и да преодолее оставащата фрагментация, като насърчава обмена на данни, гарантира киберустойчивост, създаде европейска цифрова самоличност или регулира изкуствения интелект.

Първо, ролята на доставчиците на технологии ще се увеличи. За да отрази това, Европейската комисия въведе надзор върху доставчиците от трети страни с новия Регламент за дигиталната оперативна устойчивост.

Второ, тъй като границите между финансите и другите икономически сектори все повече се размиват, Европейската комисия следи отблизо как големите технологични компании предоставят финансови услуги. Въз основа на съветите, получени от европейските надзорни органи, Европейската комисия обмисля допълнителни мерки за справяне със специфичните рискове, свързани с предоставянето на финансови услуги от корпоративни групи с различни дейности.

На трето място, Европейската комисия трябва да следи нови и нововъзникващи области на иновации, а именно децентрализираните финанси (DeFi). Въпреки че пазарът на децентрализирани финанси остава малък в относително изражение, през миналата година се наблюдава значително навлизане на пазарни участници в тази област (Dejmek-Hack, 2023, p. 95).

При дигитализацията се изискват много повече усилия по отношение на хармонизирания и съвместен подход към надзора. Това не означава да не се прилага надзор на национално равнище, а той да се адаптира към дигиталните услуги, които могат по-лесно да се предоставят на трансгранична основа (EUROFI, 2023, p. 54).

Липсата на хармонизация в страните членки възпрепятства иновациите и спира истинската трансгранична конкуренция, както и конкуренцията между традиционните и новите участници на пазара (Mella, 2023, p. 98).

Необходимо е да се обърне внимание на развитието на дигиталните технологии и да се гарантира, че надзорните органи разполагат с необходимите умения като разбиране на новите технологии, нововъзникващите бизнес модели, фронт и бек-офис процесите. Следва да се има предвид, че дигиталните иновации се разпространяват бързо в различни сектори и страни.

За да се актуализират уменията на надзорните органи, миналата година Европейската комисия съвместно с европейските надзорни органи и Училището по банково дело и финанси във Флоренция създаде нова надзорна академия на ЕС за дигитални финанси. Тя предлага програма за обучение на служители на надзорните органи, която им позволява да задълбочат познанията си за сложната дигитална трансформация, която оказва влияние върху финансите (Hielkema, 2023, p. 101).

Заклучение

Дигиталните иновации във финансовите институции са непрекъснати, тъй като очакванията на клиентите се променят и те трябва да отговорят на тези промени. Технологиите също ще продължат да се развиват, предоставяйки на финансовите институции нови възможности да отговорят на очакванията на клиентите (EUROFI, 2023, p. 51). Регулаторните и надзорните органи следва да намерят правилния баланс между отвореността към иновациите и ограничаването на потенциалните рискове от дигитализацията за клиентите и цялата финансова система (EUROFI, 2023, p. 51).

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Характеристики на политическите тролове в социалните мрежи

Екатерина Георгиева¹

Резюме: Днес темата за политическите тролове в социалните мрежи е особено актуална, но за съжаление е слабо изучена. Създаването на система от критерии за разпознаване на тези тролове, включваща поведение, психологически и други характеристики, е ключово за разбирането на този нов феномен, с който се сблъскваме все повече в ежедневието си. Получените резултати не само ще улеснят идентификацията на потребител в дадена социална мрежа, който подкрепя предварително определена манипулативна теза като трол, но и ще подпомогнат систематизацията на различните видове злобно поведение и възможните стратегии за справяне с тях, без да се налага цензура.

Ключови думи: трол, политика

JEL: O33, D72, Z13

Characteristics of Political Trolls on Social Networks

Ekaterina Georgieva²

Abstract: Today, the topic of political trolls in social networks is particularly relevant, but unfortunately, it is poorly studied. Creating a system of criteria for recognizing these trolls, including behavioral, psychological and other characteristics, is key to understanding this new phenomenon that we are increasingly encountering in our daily lives. The obtained results will not only facilitate the identification of a user in a given social network who supports a predetermined manipulative thesis as a troll, but will also support the systematization of different types of malicious behavior and the possible strategies to deal with them without imposing censorship.

Key words: digitalization, financial sector, regulatory measures

JEL: O33, D72, Z13

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Въведение

Думата тролене произлиза от английски и означава риболов с лъжичка, но едва ли някой вече си спомня оригиналното значение и ние всички възприемаме троловете в мрежите, повече като грозните чудовища от книгите на Толкинт. И дори да звучи фантастично, това може би е най-точното определение на тези “обитатели” на Интернет пространството - това са хора или ботове, които скрити зад фалшиви профили пишат манипулативни коментари, с които целят въздействие върху общественото мнение в полза на партията или дори държавата, която им заплаща да го правят. Тук е важно да осъзнаем, че тролът винаги има цел, към която се стреми и това го различава от обикновеният потребител. Неговите коментари “замърсяват” интернет общуването в мрежите и пречат на нормалните комуникации между потребителите и естественото протичане на информацията между различните източници и участници в информационният поток. “The online new emerging suspicious users, that usually are called trolls, are one of the main sources of hate, fake, and deceptive online messages. Some agendas are utilizing these harmful users to spread incitement tweets, and as a consequence, the audience get deceived. The challenge in detecting such accounts is that they conceal their identities which make them disguised in social media, adding more difficulty to identify them using just their social network information.” (Ghanem, B., Buscaldi, D., & Rosso, P., 2019)

Трябва ясно да се осъзнае, че единен и общ метод за определянето на това, кой в социалните мрежи е трол е невъзможно, а пълното им ограничаване би довело до нарушаване на принципа на свобода на словото и пазарните принципи на икономиката. Намесата на държавата или държавните органи може да доведе до отваряне на вратата за цензурата и репресиите в един бъдещ режим, който не спазва демократичните принципи. Ето защо е важно да се стремим към тяхното определяне и “самоограничаване” от самото общество, чрез повече дискусии на тази тема и по-детайлното им изучаване. “Cyber troops are government, military or political party teams committed to manipulating public opinion over social media. In this working paper, we report on specific organizations created, often with public money, to help define and manage what is in the best interest of the public.” (Tanchak, P. N. (2017)., 161, 253.)

Методология за идентифициране на политически тролове

1. Анализ на съдържанието: Изследователите трябва да извършват анализ на информацията постъпила от опорните тези на троловете, което включва анализ на ключови думи и изрази, които се повтарят в съдържанието. Преди това да започне е необходимо идентифициране на тролска, което включва проверка на информацията за профила или канала, както и предишни активности и оставени коментари. Повечето мрежи позволяват да се провери информация за регистрацията на профила, а от скоро

YouTube позволява да се проследяват последните оставени коментари. Тук е важно да се направи разграничаване между трол и блогер, който е неизвестен, но влага определено манипулативно съдържание. Първият е само човек оставящ коментари, вторият е лице, което много по-лесно може да бъде идентифицирано, поради условията на социалните мрежи за влагане на контент. Това разграничаване е важно от научна гледна точка, защото лицата влагащи контент с манипулативно съдържание лесно могат да бъдат блокирани заради принципите на работа на самите социални мрежи, докато ограничаване на човек, оставящ коментар, може да се третира като ограничаване на Конституционното право за свобода на словото. Тук съществува тънка морална и дори юридическа граница, която трябва да се постави заради принципите на демокрацията и свободното общество. Ето защо, когато говорим за трол, то това включва основно хора или ботове, които оставят манипулативни коментари в коментиращите секции, а не влагащи видео контент. Тук е важно да се отбележи, че видео контента все по-малко влияе върху потребителите в мрежите. Потребителя прекрасено осъзнава, че вложилият видеото блогер може да получава пари за това. До голяма степен този ефект се получи заради блогерите, които влагат нормален контент и множеството случаи, в които те са "хващани" че получават пари, за да рекламират един или друг продукт. Ето защо социалните мрежи все повече се насочват към това да бъдат място за споделяне на мнение и свързване на хора от различни точки на света. По тази причина коментиращите секции под мрежи като YouTube придобиват все по-голямо значение, защото това е практически единствената мрежа, която е отворена дори в тоталитарни държави като Русия и Китай.

2. Анализ на социалните мрежи чрез използване на изкуствен интелект и специализиран софтуер за разпознаване на тролове: анализът е възможен само в определени социални мрежи. Мрежите на Мета не позволяват да се прави външен анализ, защото алгоритъма не го позволява. Затворени мрежи като Вконтакте и Weibo не могат изобщо да бъдат анализирани от SNA. Тик ток също не позволява външни анализи чрез друг софтуер и може да получиш справка за активностите само от централата на компанията. Използването му е възможно в YouTube и интернет форуми, които са в свободен достъп. Идентифицирането на акаунта на троловете е възможно само в случаи, когато насреща не се използват специализирани умения за неговото сериозно прикриване, каквито се използват от руските и китайските правителствени тролове. Самите мрежи събират легално данни от потребителите с рекламна цел и това формира голяма част от техните печалби, заради което те не желаят да предоставят достъп до събиране на данни. Случаите с Туитър, който се противопостави на решение на американското правителство за ограничаване на постове, както и резултата от изслушването на

Генералният директор на Тик ток в Американският сенат, говорят че мрежите не желаят политическа намеса в работата си и я приемат за вид цензура. Причината за това е до някъде прецедента с Вконтакте, който беше отнет от руският софтуерен гений Павел Дуров, след като отказа да даде IP адресите на украинските си потребители след анексирането на Крим. В крайна сметка Вконтакте практически беше унищожена като мрежа, защото потребителите смятаха, че тя е контролирана от правителството и са следени в нея. Ето защо, когато говорим за изкуствен интелект или дори програма за троловете, трябва да имаме в предвид, че борбата с троловете може да доведе до пълното унищожаване на някоя социална мрежа вместо до ефективно справяне с тях в нея. Още по-големи са предубежденията към изкуствения интелект от обществото. И ако да напишеш съчинение или курсова работа с помощта му за сега се приема като нормално, просто поредното улеснение в забързаното ежедневие, трябва да се има в предвид, че човек не възприема тези дейности като някакво лично ограничение на собствените му права и неговата личностна замяна. В момента, в който човек се почувства ограничен или заменен от изкуствения интелект в него се появява естествено психологическо противопоставяне. Все пак този изкуствен интелект може да се използва за анализиране на по-ниските нива на тролене в държави без сериозни ограничения и за засичане основно на ботове. Нека не се забравя факта, че най-активни в мрежите са тролове на високотехнологични държави с диктаторски режими като Китай и Русия, които също имат достъп до разработки свързани с изкуствения интелект. Ето защо за момента неговото използване е силно ограничено и не особено ефективно.

3. Анализ на психологическият профил на тролът: психологическият профил на тролът е необходимо при продължителни дискусии в мрежите с лидерите на мнение, които са единственият реален фактор в борбата с троловете, особено на тези, които стоят на по-високо ниво в йерархията на фабриките за тролове. Смисъла на всяка дискусия е тролът да бъде отказан от продължаване и оборен с факти и аргументи, които подкрепят издигнатата защитна теза. Профилирането е необходимо, за да се преодолее емоционалното влияние на пропагандата, която присъства в опорните тези. Пропагандата действа на база на първосигналното влияние върху емоциите. Тя не борави с факти и аргументи, но много добре се възползва от психологическият факт, че човек взема решения на база емоции и след това на база логика. За съжаление така се взема решение дори за започване на военни действия. Това е факт доказан в множество изследвания. Ето защо троловете разчитат на тази първоначална реакция, която може да бъде превърната лесно в патос или дори в паника. Да се анализират настроения в троловете е ненужно, защото опитните PR специалисти, които обикновено разработват опорните тези,

никога не използват преки и конкретни твърдения или призови за действия. В 100% от случаите внушението се прави на база на манипулации и “подказване” на бъдещи действия. Конкретните примери за това са много. Тук може да се цитира опорната теза така популярна дори сред нашите родни политически тролове, след като властта не е успяла да се справи с дадена ситуация с коментарите “спрете да мрънкате, вие какво сте направили в тази ситуация, с какво помогнахте”. Даденият коментар цели да накара хората пишещи недоволни коментари да се почувстват лично отговорни и да не предприемат никакви по-нататъшни действия. Така се контрират следващи недоволни коментари, като просто психологически вината се прехвърля върху обикновените потребители в мрежите. Ето защо, бързото профилиране на написалият коментара е една от предпоставките той по-бързо да бъде изваден от равновесие при дълга дискусия, да направи грешка с преминавайки на обиди на лична основа, което според психолозите е вече признак на безсилие и възможност за неговото напускане от дискусията - което всъщност е крайната цел на всеки спор с очевиден трол. В съзнанието на обикновения потребител оставилият последен коментар се възприема като победител. Ето защо дискусии с тролове трябва винаги да приключват с последен коментар оставен от човека, който спори с тях.

4. Алгоритъм за машинно обучение: Опитът на програми като Метабот показва, че единственият начин да се обучат машините за разпознаване на тролове е просто тяхното “осветяване” пред потребителите в мрежите - тоест подчертаване на профила в цвят или изписване на предупреждение, че това е потенциален трол. Тенденцията за създаване на празни профили, дори от обикновени хора, заради страхът им от социално “порицание” в мрежите не позволява конкретно идентифициране на профила като тролски, а само отбелязване за възможен такъв. Дори използването на ключови думи и изрази не гарантира 100% сигурност при определянето. Поведението на потребителя също може да е резултат от това, че той е повлиян от троловете в мрежите и по тази причина повтаря техните модели. Ето защо е необходим цялостен подход, включващ множество специалисти по ПР, политология, информационни технологии и дори психолози. Създаването на протокол за противодействие е задължителен. Пренасянето на практиките на политическите тролове върху бизнеса вече е безспорен факт в Азия. По тази причина подобни екипи за борба с троловете няма да са необходими само на държавно и политическо ниво, но и на бизнес такова. Изготвянето на протоколи за борба с троловете включващо последователност от стъпки, които трябва да се изпълнят при очевидна тролска атака също ще стане задължително. Да може бързо и ясно да се извеждат защитни тези и да се противодейства на атаката налага и детайлно познаване на алгоритъмът на мрежите, бързината на разпространението на информация в тях и бързината на

преминаване на информацията от една в друга мрежа. Скоростта на противодействие е решаваща при тролски атаки, защото те обикновено са подготовка на обществото за истински физически действия. Сами може да видим как след анексирането на Крим в продължение на 8 години всяка тролска атака към Украйна и Европа всъщност подготвяше общественото мнение за евентуалната инвазия. Тези като “украински език не съществува”, “те са един народ”, “украинските власти се опитват да забранят говоренето на руски”, “украинската власт пренаписа учебниците и изменя историята”, “украинските политици са клоуни и наркомани”... Всяка тази теза през годините беше подготовка за събитията, които наблюдаваме в момента.

5. Извличане на данни: Извличането на данни е процес, който може сериозно да бъде затруднен от използването на специализирани умения и софтуер от троловете. А това е действителността с руските и китайските тролове, които разполагат със сериозни технологични възможности и практически неограничени ресурси за използването им. Все пак може да се направи максималното да бъде разкрит източника на атаките и от къде точно са започнали. Това означава да се позволи използване на технологични ресурси и в защитаващата страна и възможности за финансирането им. Държавната подкрепа и нейните ресурси са абсолютно необходими ако се желае ефективност на противодействието.

6. Създаване на лидери на мнение: лидерите на мнение са единственият сигурен фактор в борбата с троловете. Това са истински хора, които пишат през истински профили, информацията за тях може лесно да бъде намерена, възприемат се като експерти в дадена област, умеят да пишат аргументирано и със страст, не се страхуват от дълги дискусии и са психологически устойчиви на тролски провокативни коментари. Не е задължително тези хора да бъдат известни специалисти, учени или професионалисти. Достатъчно е тяхното мнение да бъде възприето от обикновеният потребител като обективно и с наличие на познания в областта. Лидерите на мнение се изграждат бавно и постепенно, но в дългосрочен план техен коментар може максимално да се противопостави на всеки анонимен тролски такъв. Трябва да е ясно че само с активната подкрепа на подобни хора в мрежите може ефективно да се противостои на тролски атаки. Лидерите на мнение трябва да притежават достатъчна самостоятелност да доразвиват сами защитните тези в процеса на дискусията и по този начин да доизграждат микро защитни тези, които ще се появяват в процеса на дискусията. Тези микро защитни тези могат да бъдат използвани като допълнителни аргумент в последващата борба срещу троловете. Важно е лидерите на мнение да не бъдат финансово обвързани с никой и да може лесно това да се докаже. Това става с изграждането на самият профил и неговата откритост. Лидерът на мнение не трябва да заема позиции различни от вече

изградените такива от него в течение на времето. Точно това е гаранцията за приемане на неговото мнение като експертно и неплатено. Дори изказаното от него мнение да бъде възприето като странно, факта че той се придържа към собствените си ценностни системи прави това мнение обективно и приемано за не манипулативно.

7. Сътрудничество с правоприлагащите органи: тук ясно трябва да се направи разлика между сътрудничество и цензура и опит за контрол. Сътрудничеството по-скоро трябва да бъде на ниво оповестяване публично на опорните тези, направените тролски атаки с цитиране на ключовите думи и изрази. Това е необходимо да се случи чрез популяризиране в пресата и интернет пространството на конкретни тролски коментари. Всяка друга форма на контрол може да наруши конституционните принципи и ако днес ние се борим с тролове, утре поставените от нас форми за контрол могат да послужат на възможна диктатура. По тази причина, към контролът винаги трябва да се подхожда с мисълта за бъдещото му използване с неправомерни цели. Всеки контрол трябва да бъде осъществяван така, че да не засяга свободата и демокрацията на обществото.

Верификация на предложената методика

За да бъдат направени изводите е използвана YouTube статистиката на собственият ми канал в тази мрежа през последните 5 години. Профилът ми е изграден изцяло на принципите за лидери на мнение. Аватарът ми е със собствена снимка, като е еднакъв за всички други социални мрежи, в които съм регистрирана с цел да бъде открита лесно. Името ми е едно и също във всички мрежи. Вложеното съдържание е мое лично и доказва, че съм реално съществуваща личност. Абонаментите ми разкриват ясно интересите ми, образованието ми и професионалната ми насоченост. Седмичното ми време за гледаемост е 30 часа и 42 минути, като статистически е най-силно в първите два дни от седмицата. Средното време в ден е 4 часа и 23 минути, а средно оставените коментари са 10. YouTube е единствената достъпна мрежа практически навсякъде по света, като информацията от нея постъпва средно за около 24 часа в другите социални мрежи, а дискусиите в нея са практически с най-ниско ограничаване и без изисквания за брой символи, какъвто има в мрежи като Тик ток. Алгоритъмът на мрежата е изграден така, че поставя в най-предни позиции коментарът, под който има най-много други коментари, което позволява дори на един човек да постига висок резултат на влияние, тъй като се гарантира, че неговият коментар ще бъде прочетен, независимо от поставените лайкове. За разлика от Фейсбук, където се появяват само най-актуалните коментари и всеки може да блокира всеки без сериозни основания, в YouTube коментиращата секция позволява актуалност и продължителност без ограничения, като така написаното ще запази лидерски позиции. Дискусиите в YouTube протичат самостоятелно, практически без

ограничаване от съдържанието на видеото, под което са направени, тоест съдържанието на това видео служи просто като катализатор, но не и като причина за влияние на обсъжданията. YouTube е и мрежата, чийто секция директно рефлектира върху бъдещи видеа, защото блогерите мониторят написаното и съставят последващите видеа на базата на това, заради алгоритъма за монетизация и страхът да не изгубят гледания, следователно и пари. Ето защо, моето изследване върху троловете е направено на базата на тази мрежа, която след началото на войната в Украйна се превърна и в главна арена на информационната война. Точно тя доказва, че YouTube оказва най-голямо влияние върху останалите мрежи и дори влияе върху решения за самият военен конфликт, заради силното значение на руските опозиционни канали, които могат да бъдат гледани само в тази мрежа. Тук трябва да се подчертае и тенденцията в страни с диктаторски режими да не се гледа телевизия изобщо, като например по статистика всеки 7 от 10 руснака във възраст между 14-45 години няма къщи телевизор. За тези хора, отхвърлили пропагандата от телевизията, мрежите се превръщат в единственият източник на информация, а при затварянето на останалите мрежи, YouTube се превърна в единствената реално значима такава сред тази група хора. В България все още остава популярен Фейсбук сред по-възрастната аудитория, но тази мрежа и информацията в нея имат по-скоро информативен характер и дискусиите са силно ограничени от самият алгоритъм, който позволява дори на тролове да блокират обикновени хора за дълъг период от време. Фейсбук е точно примерът, как с неправилен алгоритъм и реално строги ограничения дори може да се помогне но троловете да контролират коментарите, а не те да бъдат спрени. Тази особеност на мрежата кара хората да бъдат съмнителни към дискусиите в нея и да не спорят там, което не означава, че те приемат дадена тролска теза. Както вече споменах, мрежата служи повече за получаване на информация отколкото за реално силно въздействие. Значението и все повече намалява сред младите хора, които предпочитат Тик ток. Значението на тази мрежа ще става все по-силно в България. В момента най-популярните инфлуенсъри са точно хора правещи видеа за нея. Алгоритъмът на Тик ток позволява изключително бързо разпространение на дадена информация, дори в закрити мрежи като Вконтакте и Weibo. Ако на YouTube са необходими 24 часа за проникване на информацията, то на Тик ток са необходими средно 4-5 часа, заради спецификата на алгоритъма. Тик ток не се влияе от абонаментите, а започва да препоръчва видеа, които са харесани, коментирани и изгледани до края. Това позволява един и същи коментар лесно и бързо да бъде оставян под видеа с една и съща тема, които алгоритъма започва да препоръчва веднага. Тик ток е китайска собственост и като всяка китайска мрежа има ограничение на броят символи. Целта е да не се разрешават дълги дискусии, които не биха били в полза на режима. Но мрежата позволява чрез точни и правилни къси коментари, дадена теза бързо да достигне до другите мрежи и да окаже влияние в тях. Ето защо, най-доброто

противодействие на тролските атаки е чрез комбинирано използване на двете мрежи- чрез къси правилни послания в Тик ток и дълги аргументирани дискусии YouTube. Фейсбук, Туитър, Инстаграм и всички затворени мрежи като Вконтакте и Weibo са мрежи, в които по-скоро се отразяват действията от тези мрежи и имат повече информативен характер.

Изводи

Троловете в мрежите отдавна не са случайно явление, те са вече постоянна величина, с която ние сме длъжни да се съобразяваме. Хората знаят за тяхното съществуване, но много често дори не предполагат, че спорят с трол в социалните мрежи. За това как да се разпознават троловете има редица изследвания и множество видеа и филми в социалните мрежи. Много от опозиционните лидери в Русия и известните телевизии и информационни агенции имат разследвания за прочутата Фабрика за тролове на Пригожин. И въпреки, че той не е жив, тази прекрасно смазана машина за манипулации, продължава успешно да съществува. Точно тя е пример за това, че веднъж създадени троловете могат да служат на различни “господари” и за различни цели. Методите им на работа са също известни, но за съжаление демократичните държави избират пътя на противодействие или чрез създаването на собствени тролове, или чрез открита цензура. И двата варианта са неприемливи за едно демократично общество. Първият, защото в случаят “злото не може да бъде победено със зло”, а просто се получава обратният ефект- замърсява се Интернет средата и обикновените потребители, спират да се доверяват на изведените защитни тези, защото те са поднесени също от тролове. Този ефект е само в полза на самите тролове, които просто се възползват от извода “всички са еднакви, следователно всички лъжат”. Вторият вариант с цензура е неприемлив за демократичните общества, защото полага основата на репресии върху свободата на словото и ако днес ние вярваме, че това е за добро, то утре цензурата може да се използва от човек във властта с намерения за диктатура. Ограниченията в един демократичен свят винаги трябва да бъдат правени с мисъл за бъдещето и вероятното им използване при други политически условия. Така единственият ефективен и реално приложим начин е чрез създаването в мрежите на лидери на мнение - истински хора, които пишат през истинските си профили, пишат с аргументи и факти, приемат се за експерти в областта, която коментират и са психически устойчиви към тролски атаки на личните им профили и съдържание. Тези хора лесно трябва да могат да докажат кои са, за да спечелят доверието на четящите коментарите обикновен потребител в мрежите. За тази цел техните профили трябва да са общодостъпни, с истински снимки и лична информация. Тази общодостъпност ги прави уязвими към атаки от страна на троловете, но в дългосрочен план ползите от тази откритост е по-голяма отколкото недостатъците и страхът от атаки. В момента на регистрация на фалшивият профил тролът вече е

излъгал и това кара потребителят да подлага под съмнение всеки негов коментар. Коментар от истински човек, лидер на мнение може да бъде възприет като странен, но никога като лъжа. Това дава предимство на лидерът на мнение, което той е длъжен да оползотвори в дискусиата и да се опита да спечели още повече доверието на четящият, като разказва лични истории, дава лични преживени примери и пише със страст. Ето защо лидерът на мнение може ефективно да се противопостави на всеки тролски коментар при една дълга дискусия, към каквито трябва да се стреми той. А дори и тролът да избяга и да се откаже, това отново дава предимство на лидерът на мнение да изглежда в съзнанието на четящият като победител. За да успее обаче той е необходимо преди това да бъде направен щателен анализ на информацията, която носи всяка тролска атака - какво цели всъщност тя, от къде започва и какви са характеристиките на троловете, включващи техният психопрофил, методи на работа и вероятен работодател. За да се случи този анализ са необходими хора с конкретни умения в ПР, информационни технологии, политология, психология, бизнес и специалисти в зависимост от сферата на дейност, която е атакувана. Тези екипи трябва да могат да изведат защитни тези, като това трябва да се случи максимално бързо. Тези защитни тези, трябва да бъдат предоставени на лидерите на мнение и след това те да могат свободно да ги доразработят, като в процеса на дискусия дори могат да развият собствени допълнителни защитни тези. Този процес на естествен развитие гарантира, че читателите в мрежите няма да възприемат защитната теза като вид манипулация и ще могат да се доверят, като пренебрегнат емоционалната си първоначална реакция на поднесената тролска пропаганда. Процесът на убеждаване трябва да е естествен, за да може да бъде убедителен и дълготраен. Допълнителното използване на специален софтуер или изкуствен интелект в разпознаването на троловете трябва да подпомага тази дейност, но да носи основно информативен характер, а не ограничаващ. Обществото трябва ясно да разбере, че е нападнато с конкретна тролска теза и се прави опит за манипулация, но то само избира как ще реагира. Тази свобода на избора гарантира изграждането на истинска устойчивост в гражданите към троловете, защото те сами ще са направили избора и сами ще го защитават. Никой не обича да бъде манипулиран. Информиранието, че се прави опит за нещо подобно, кара човек да реагира негативно на манипулацията. Ако се направи опит да се наложи със сила защитната теза чрез ограничения, рестрикции или цензура, то реакцията няма да е доброволна и следователно неефективна. Потребителите в мрежите трябва да вярват в защитната теза, да вярват че сами са я избрали и по тази причина трябва да я защитават. В случаят свободата на изборът гарантира успехът на тази стратегия.

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Пазар и другите важни общности на една нестопанска организация

Емил Христов¹

Резюме: Анализа на основните фактори на средата на всяка организация е от ключово значение за нейното просъществуване и успешно развитие. Утвърдени учени и практики в областта на нестопанския маркетинг използват класификации на елементите на микромаркетинговата средата, които отразяват по-добре спецификата на организациите в нестопанската сфера и се различават от тези, популярни в бизнеса. В тази връзка, в доклада първо е представена една класификация на основните общности (групи фактори) в микромаркетинговата среда, препоръчвана за нестопанските организации. В съответствие с посочената класификация, както и въз основа на анализ на публично достъпна информация в интернет, във втората част от настоящия материал е даден пример за определяне на пазара и другите важни общности на конкретна нестопанска организация в България.

Ключови думи: нестопански организации (НСО), маркетинг на нестопанските организации (нестопански маркетинг), общности (аудитории) на нестопанската организация

JEL: M31

Market and Other Important Communities of a Non-Profit Organization

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Abstract: Analysis of the main factors of the environment of any organization is of key importance for its survival and successful development. Established scholars and practitioners in the field of nonprofit marketing use classifications of elements of the micromarketing

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environment that better reflect the specifics of nonprofit organizations and differ from those popular in business. In this regard, the report first presents a classification of the main communities (groups of factors) in the micromarketing environment recommended for non-profit organizations. In accordance with the specified classification, as well as based on an analysis of publicly available information on the Internet, the second part of this material provides an example of determining the market and other important communities of a specific non-profit organization in Bulgaria.

Key words: nonprofit organizations (NPOs), marketing of nonprofit organizations (nonprofit marketing), communities (audiences) of the non-profit organization

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Въведение

Безспорен факт е, че изследването и доброто познаване на важните фактори в средата на една организация имат съществено значение за самото съществуване и успешно функциониране на тази организация. По-малко известно обаче е, че са налице класификации на елементите на микромаркетинговата среда, съобразени в по-голяма степен със спецификата на организациите в нестопанската сфера, които са разработени от изявени специалисти в тази област и които се различават от съответните класификации, използвани в бизнеса. В този контекст, в първата част на доклада е представена една класификация на основните общности (групи фактори) в микромаркетинговата среда, подходяща за приложение в нестопанските организации. Въз основа на посочената класификация, както и с помощта на анализ на публично достъпна информация в интернет, след това в настоящия материал е даден пример за определяне на пазара и другите важни общности на конкретна нестопанска организация в страната.

Специфика на пазара и другите общности (основни фактори) в състава на микромаркетинговата среда на нестопанските организации

От гл. т. на класическата маркетингова теория „пазарът на даден продукт е съвкупността от реални и потенциални потребители, които имат сходни потребности, различни предпочитания и покупателни способности“ (Класова и кол., 2008, с. 6).

Според различни учени и практики в сферата на нестопанския маркетинг най-важните разлики между основното течение в

маркетинга³ и това, развивано за нуждите на нестопанските организации (НСО), са свързани именно с пазара на посочените организации. Например според Ловлок и Уайнбър, а също и Сергиант, една уникална характеристика на НСО в сравнение с фирмите е, че при тях е налице разделяне (в голяма част от случаите) на пазарите, от които се привличат ресурси, от тези, към които се насочват впоследствие привлечените ресурси или създадените от тези организации специфични продукти (Lovelock and Weinberg, 1990; and Sargeant, 1999). В този контекст потребителите на различните нестопански организации често получават техните продукти и услуги или безплатно, или на съществено намалена (чрез някакъв вид субсидиране) цена. Заплащането на продуктите, създавани от посочените организации, или на разликата в цената им се извършва с финансови средства, предоставени от институционални донори, както и от корпоративни или индивидуални дарители, подкрепящи дейността на съответните НСО. В тази връзка по мнението на Шапиро бенефициентите и донорите са целевите клиенти на нестопанските организации (Shapiro, 1973).

Вероятно за да представят по-добре спецификата на нестопанския маркетинг⁴, изтъкнати специалисти в разглежданата област използват термини като „общности“ (publics) или „аудитории“ (audiences) при представянето на факторите на микромаркетинговата среда на разглежданите организации. В този контекст автори като Уаймър и колектив, както и Андреасен и Котлър говорят по-често за целеви общности или аудитории, отколкото за целеви пазари в своите по-нови трудове (Wymer, Knowles and Gomes, 2006 и Andreasen and Kotler, 2014). Под общности на една нестопанска организация първият от уточнените авторски колективи разбира групи от хора и/или организации, които са от значение за тази НСО (Wymer, Knowles and Gomes, 2006). Подобен е и смисълът, вложен от Андреасен и Котлър в термина „аудитории“ на организация от представяния сектор (Andreasen and Kotler, 2014). Безспорно и двата цитирани изследователски екипа считат, че най-важните целеви общности (аудитории) на нестопанските организации са техни потребители. В допълнение на това обаче, според Андреасен и Котлър, към целевите аудитории на някои от разглежданите организации освен клиенти (потребители) биха могли да се включат също и дарители и/или

³ Съобразено най-вече с особеностите на бизнес сектора.

⁴ А сигурно и за да преодолеят разпространеното сред обществото погрешно разбиране, че пазар имат само фирмите и на тази основа незаинтересоваността или негативното отношение към маркетинга в много НСО.

доброволци (Andreasen and Kotler, 2014). По мнението на Уаймър и колектив пък в целевите общности на някои видове НСО, в определени ситуации, могат да се включат както потребители така и конкретни дарители, доброволци и/или служители (Wymer, Knowles and Gomes, 2006). Същият екип от специалисти представя една детайлна и практически полезна **класификация на общностите** (основните фактори) в състава на микромаркетинговата среда на представяните организации, в съответствие с която тези общности могат да се обособят в четири отделни групи (Wymer, Knowles and Gomes, 2006):

- A. **общности на входа на организацията** – в това число органи на централната и местна власт, доставчици и дарители, които определят най-общо рамките за функциониране на организацията и ѝ доставят необходимите първични/входящи ресурси;
- B. **вътрешни общности** – като управителния (надзорния) съвет на нестопанската организация, мениджърите в нея, другите служители и доброволците, които преобразуват (превърщат) входящите ресурси в ценни материални продукти и услуги, а също определят и осъществяват стратегиите на организацията;
- C. **партньорски, посреднически и конкурентно-партньорски общности**⁵ – тук се включват сътрудничащи организации, посредници (комисионери), търговци, маркетингови фирми и конкуренти/подобни нестопански организации, които популяризират, помагат за дистрибуцията и продават материалните и нематериални продукти на конкретната НСО или имат някакви конкурентно-партньорски отношения с нея;
- D. **консумиращи** (използващи резултатите) **общности** – например клиенти (потребители), местни общности, медии, активистки групи и обществото като цяло, които използват специфичните продукти на организацията и проявяват интерес към нейната дейност.

⁵ В посочения труд Уаймър и колектив наричат тази група общности само партньорски и посреднически. Според автора на настоящия доклад обаче е добре тя да носи това малко по-дълго име, за да става ясно, че в нея се включват и конкурентите/подобните нестопански организации, както и за да се акцентира върху факта, че природата на конкурентната борба в нестопанския сектор се различава съществено от тази при фирмите и че в някои случаи подобни НСО могат да се конкурират помежду си, а в други – да си сътрудничат.

Пример за определяне на пазара и другите общности на конкретна нестопанска организация

В съответствие с представената до тук информация, в следващата част от доклада ще се даде пример за определяне на пазара и другите важни общности на Планинската спасителна служба (ПСС), явяваща се основно поделение в рамките на една от най-големите НСО в страната и по-точно Българският Червен кръст (БЧК)⁶.

Ще започнем този пример с изясняване на най-важната общност за всяка организация, а именно нейните потребители. За посочената общност може да се съди въз основа на материалните и нематериални продукти, които конкретната нестопанска организация или фирма предлага.

За съжаление, информацията за специфичните продукти, предоставяни от ПСС на нейните потребители, не е изложена много ясно и систематично на интернет страниците на посочената служба и на БЧК⁷. В тази връзка се оказва, че за да получат по-пълна представа за услугите, предлагани от ПСС, заинтересованите лица трябва да са наясно с почти цялата информация на нейния уеб сайт⁸, както и с тази от фейсбук страницата на Службата⁹ и данните за дейност „Планинско спасяване“ в сайта на Българския Червен кръст¹⁰.

За нуждите на примера в доклада ще бъде използван един скорошен анализ, осъществен от автора на настоящия материал, според който в микса от предложения на Планинската спасителна служба могат да се оформят следните 14 броя продуктови линии (Христов, 2023):

⁶ Тъй като дейностите и специфичните предложения на Българския Червен кръст са многобройни и се характеризират с голямо разнообразие, както и че са предназначени за подпомагане на най-различни обществени групи, определянето на общностите на тази организация надхвърля възможностите, които предлага един доклад. От друга страна изясняването на важните за Планинската спасителна служба групи от хора и организации е напълно достатъчно от гл. т. на целите на настоящия материал, а също и би позволило на посочената служба да оптимизира своята работа и да бъде от полза за повече хора, изпадащи в беда по планините.

⁷ Този факт е напълно разбираем, като се отчита, че Планинската спасителна служба и Българския Червен кръст като цяло работят преимуществено на доброволна основа, в постоянен недостиг на необходимите им ресурси и действително е чудо, че помощта, която те оказват на множество хора, е на изключително високо ниво.

⁸ <https://www.pss-bg.bg/>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/mountainrescueservice/>

¹⁰ <https://www.redcross.bg/>

- а) „Търсене и откриване на изгубени и пострадали хора в планините“
- б) „Продукти от първа необходимост за намерените изгубени и пострадали в планините хора (в т. ч. храна, вода, дрехи и др.)“;
- в) „Оказване на долекарска медицинска помощ на пострадали в планините хора“;
- г) „Оказване на специализирана лекарска помощ на пострадали хора в планините (при необходимост и възможности)“;
- д) „Транспортиране на изгубени и пострадали в планините хора (съответно до близко населено място или лечебно заведение)“;
- е) „Търсене, откриване и транспортиране на тленните останки на загинали в труднодостъпни планински терени“;
- ж) „Ежедневна актуална информация за времето и състоянието на различните планини и планински курорти (предоставяна на сайта на ПСС, както и такава, разпространявана с помощта на медии)“;
- з) „Различни видове информация, свързана с мерки за безопасност и по-приятен престой в планините (на сайта на ПСС, в т.ч. за адекватни реакции при нещастен случай, при гръмотевични бури, при снежни лавини и преспи, както и правила за безопасност по ски-пистите)“;
- и) „Приложение на ПСС за смартфони“;
- к) „Охрана на спортно-туристически прояви“;
- л) „Курсове и сертифициране за планински спасители (даващи право за работа и като ски-спасители в зимни курорти в страната)“;
- м) „Оказване на помощ на нуждаещо се население на България и други страни, пострадало при бедствия, аварии и катастрофи (БАК) (като допълнение към специализираните в това направление други подразделения на БЧК)“;
- н) „Публични лекции, свързани с безопасния туризъм и спорт в планините през различните сезони“;
- о) „Възможности за реклама на организации-дарители“.

На база анализ на представения продуктов микс на Планинската спасителна служба за едно първоначално и обобщено характеризиране на **пазара** (общността от реалните и потенциални потребители) на **Службата** може да се каже, че в него се включват **2 основни групи** от потребители: „хора, отиващи в планински район на страната (в който не са жители и/или работещи) с цел туризъм, почивка и/или някакъв планински спорт“ и „жители и/или работещи в планински район на страната, отиващи в местната

планина на туризъм, някакъв планински спорт или с друга цел“. Характерно за тези групи е, че почти всички (ако не всички) хора, включени към първата от посочените и повечето от принадлежащите към втората са такива, които обичат планините и/или поне един спорт, практикуван в тях. Индивидите в посочените две групи са възможни потребители на следните 5 продуктови линии на Планинската спасителна служба: „Ежедневна актуална информация за времето и състоянието на различните планини и планински курорти“, „Различни видове информация, свързана с мерки за безопасност и по-приятен престой в планините“, „Приложение на ПСС за смартфони“, „Охрана на спортно-туристически прояви“ и „Публични лекции, свързани с безопасния туризъм и спорт в планините през различните сезони“.

В допълнение реалните и потенциални потребители на други 7 от продуктите линии на разглежданата служба представляват някаква част от или са тясно свързани с една от двете уточнени потребителски групи. По-конкретно, възможните ползватели на предложенията в линии „Търсене и откриване на изгубени и пострадали хора в планините“, „Продукти от първа необходимост за намерените изгубени и пострадали в планините хора“, „Транспортиране на изгубени и пострадали в планините хора“, „Оказване на долекарска медицинска помощ на пострадали в планините хора“ и „Оказване на специализирана лекарска помощ на пострадали хора в планините“ могат да се обединят най-общо в **потребителска група/сегмент „изгубени и пострадали в планините хора**“. Тази група от потребители на ПСС като цяло включва част от общността на индивидите, посещаващи планински региони на страната, в които те не са жители и/или работещи, както и от онази на жителите и/или работещите в разглежданите райони на България.

От своя страна, най-просто и удобно би било ползвателите на предложенията в линия „Курсове и сертифициране за планински спасители (даващи право за работа и като ски-спасители)“ да формират **потребителска група**, наречена **„желаещи да станат планински спасители и/или ски-спасители**“. Тази група също се състои от хора, включващи се към някоя от двете основни групи потребители на Планинската спасителна служба, посочени по-горе. Друго, което е характерно за повечето от имащите желание да бъдат спасители в планината, е, че те са алтруисти, т.е. че са готови за безвъзмезден труд в помощ на изпадналите в беда¹¹.

По подобен начин реалните и потенциални потребители на специфичните продукти в линия „Търсене, откриване и

¹¹ Тъй като 95% от планинските спасители в Службата са доброволци.

транспортиране на тленните останки на загинали в труднодостъпни планински терени“ могат да се обособят в **потребителска група „семейства/близки на загинали в труднодостъпни планински терени“**. Тясната връзка на хората, от които се състои тази общност с една от двете големи потребителски групи на ПСС се обуславя от факта, че загиналите в уточнените терени произхождат от общностите на жителите и/или работещите в съответните планински региони или на тези, които ги посещават за почивка, туризъм или някакъв спорт.

Накрая, възможните ползватели на последните 2 линии в микса от предложения на Планинската спасителна служба, представени по-горе, а именно „Оказване на помощ на нуждаещо се население на България и други страни, пострадало при бедствия, аварии и катастрофи (БАК)“ и „Възможности за реклама на организации-дарители“ биха могли да се включат съответно в **потребителските групи „население на България и други страни, пострадало при бедствия, аварии и катастрофи (БАК)“ и „организации-дарители на ПСС“**.

Сега, във втората част от примера ще бъдат представени системно и комплексно всички други **общности на Планинската спасителна служба**^{12 13}.

1. Общности на входа на Службата:

- 1.1. Определени органи на централната и местна власт¹⁴ – например Народно събрание¹⁵, някои министерства и кметствата във регионите, където ПСС осъществява своите дейности;
- 1.2. Фирмите-доставчици, от които Планинската спасителна служба се снабдява с всички необходими средства и оборудване за изпълнение на нейните важни и разнообразни задачи;

¹² В допълнение към тази на нейните потребители, изяснена току-що.

¹³ Уточнените по-долу общности са определени на база анализ на информация, включена в един или повече от следните източници: уеб сайтовете на ПСС (<https://www.pss-bg.bg/>), на Българска Лавинна Асоциация (<https://avalanche.bg/>) и на Българска асоциация по ски свободен и екстрем стил (БАССЕС) (www.befsa.com), както и Закон за Българския Червен кръст и Устав на БЧК, представени в уеб сайта на БЧК (<https://www.redcross.bg/>) и Правилник за маркировка на туристическите пътища в Р. България, качен на уеб сайта на Български туристически съюз (<https://www.btsbg.org/>).

¹⁴ Които със своите нормативни актове регламентират по някакъв начин работата на БЧК като цяло и конкретно на нейното поделение – ПСС.

¹⁵ То чрез закона за Българския Червен кръст (и по-точно чрез чл. 4, ал. 2 от закона) възлага на БЧК да извършва дейността „планинско спасяване“ чрез Планинската спасителна служба.

1.3. Дарители:

а) на финансови ресурси:

- Държавата в лицето на Министерство на финансите¹⁶;
- Различни стопански и нестопански организации – например фирма „SiteGround“¹⁷, фирма „Спорт депо“¹⁸ и Българската лавинна асоциация¹⁹, помогнали конкретно за дългогодишно наемане на важна за работата на ПСС апаратура²⁰;
- много физически лица.

б) на материални ресурси: например Главна дирекция „Гражданска въздухоплавателна администрация“ към Министерството на транспорта и съобщенията²¹.

2. Вътрешни общности на ПСС:

- 2.1. Органи на управлението на Българския Червен кръст като цяло²², в т.ч.: Общото събрание на БЧК²³ и Националният съвет (НС) на Българския Червен кръст²⁴;
- 2.2. Председател на Планинската спасителна служба, Управителен съвет на ПСС и Дирекция „Планинска спасителна служба“ в Секретариата при НС на БЧК²⁵;

¹⁶ То следва да отпуска субсидии от държавния бюджет за осигуряване на част от дейността на БЧК, в т.ч. и на ПСС (регламентирано с чл. 6, ал. 1 от закона за БЧК).

¹⁷ Един от лидерите в сферата на уеб хостинга и софтуер услугите в света.

¹⁸ Световната верига магазини за спортни стоки.

¹⁹ НПО, чиято мисия най-общо е да спомага за по-безопасен зимен туризъм чрез информирани условията в планините (и най-вече за лавинната обстановка) в България и обучение по лавинна безопасност за любители и професионалисти.

²⁰ И по-точно на детектори „RECCO“, предназначени за откриване на затрупани от лавини хора.

²¹ Тази дирекция е предоставила на Планинската спасителна служба специализирано оборудване във връзка с участието на Службата в Националния план за търсене и спасяване при авиационни произшествия.

²² Тъй като Планинската спасителна служба е поделение в рамките на БЧК по смисъла на представената класификация на общностите на Уаймър и колектив посочените управленски органи следва да се приемат като Вътрешни общности на ПСС.

²³ Приемащо и изменящо устава на Българския Червен кръст, определящо основните насоки и програмата за дейността на цялата организация, както и разпореждащо се с недвижимото имущество на БЧК (според чл. 15, ал. 1 от Устава на организацията).

²⁴ Който утвърждава Правилник за дейността и устройството на ПСС и различните вътрешно-устройствени наредби (според чл. 32, ал. 2 от Устава на БЧК).

²⁵ Осъществяваща оперативното управление на ПСС.

- 2.3. Други служители (неуправленски персонал) на Службата – тук се включват платените планински спасители²⁶;
 - 2.4. Доброволци²⁷:
 - а) доброволни планински спасители²⁸;
 - б) лекари доброволни планински спасители²⁹.
- 3. Партньорски, посреднически и конкурентно-партньорски общности на ПСС:**
- 3.1. Сътрудничащи органи на властта: например Районните полицейски управления към областните дирекции на МВР и кметствата в различните общини и области на страната³⁰, както и Министерство на околната среда и водите и Министерство на земеделието и горите³¹.
 - 3.2. Партниращи нестопански организации: като Международната организация за планинско спасяване ICAR³², Центровете за спешна медицинска помощ към Министерство на здравеопазването³³ и Българският туристически съюз³⁴.

²⁶ Изпълняващи основно организационно-оперативни дейности, а също и спасителни такива. Тези служители представляват съвсем малка част (или около 5%) от всички спасители, които работят към Планинската спасителна служба.

²⁷ Такива са 95% от всички над 550 спасители в състава на ПСС.

²⁸ Представляващи мнозинството от спасителите в Планинската спасителна служба.

²⁹ Те оказват специализирана лекарска помощ на пострадали и участват в медицинската подготовка на останалите спасители. Тези доброволци също представляват съвсем малка част от планинските спасители, работещи в разглежданата служба.

³⁰ Посочените два вида органи сътрудничат на Планинската спасителна служба при осъществяване на нейните спасителни дейности.

³¹ Според чл. 40 от Правилник за маркировка на туристическите пътища в Р. България последните два органа на властта заедно с Българския туристически съюз и ПСС следва да провеждат съвместни мероприятия за запознаване на посетителите на планината със значението на туристическата маркировка, както и с необходимостта от нейното съхраняване.

³² На която ПСС е член.

³³ Помагачи на ПСС при извършване на нейните спасителни акции.

³⁴ Който, както бе посочено по-горе, според Правилника за маркировка на туристическите пътища в Р. България следва да провежда съвместни мероприятия заедно с ПСС, Министерство на околната среда и водите и Министерство на земеделието и горите за запознаване посетителите на планината със значението на туристическата маркировка, както и с необходимостта от нейното съхраняване.

- 3.3. Сътрудничещи фирми: например фирма „SiteGround“³⁵ и фирма ПИК 3000 ООД³⁶.
 - 3.4. Конкуренти/подобни нестопански организации³⁷: като Българска лавинна асоциация³⁸ и Българска асоциация по ски свободен и екстремен стил (БАССЕС)³⁹.
4. **Консумиращи (използващи резултатите) общности на ПСС:**
- 4.1. Потребители⁴⁰;
 - 4.2. Средствата за масова информация⁴¹;
 - 4.3. Различни активистки групи⁴²;
 - 4.4. Обществото като цяло⁴³.

³⁵ Разработила съвместно с ПСС важен информационен продукт – опростен Наръчник за безопасност в планината, предоставян безплатно на потребителите на разглежданата служба и всички други заинтересовани лица.

³⁶ Която е съдействала на ПСС да изпрати свои инструктори на обучение за работа със специален ремък за осигуряване при евакуация с хеликоптер в централата на френската фирма, произвеждаща този ремък.

³⁷ Информацията за тях в примера показва ясно различния характер на конкурентната борба в нестопанския сектор от тази между фирмите.

³⁸ Която според класическата маркетингова теория би следвало да се счита за конкурент на ПСС. Това е така, защото според мисията на тази асоциация основната част от нейната дейност, а именно да информира за лавинната обстановка в България и да прави обучения по лавинна безопасност, в известна степен формално се конкурира с 2 от продуктите линии на ПСС (в т.ч. „Ежедневна актуална информация за времето и състоянието на различните планини и планински курорти“ и „Различни видове информация, свързана с мерки за безопасност и по-приятен престой в планините“). Същевременно Българската лавинна асоциация е дарител на ПСС (както беше посочено по-горе) и счита разглежданата служба за организация, която я подкрепя (тъй като в списъка с подкрепящите я организации на сайта на Асоциацията е посочена и ПСС).

³⁹ Според информация от сайта на тази организация едни от основните ѝ задачи (съответно дейности) са да организира обучителни мероприятия и събирания и да осигури необходимата информация за безопасното практикуване на ски спортовете. Тези дейности на БАССЕС се явяват конкурентни на продуктова линия на ПСС „Различни видове информация, свързана с мерки за безопасност и по-приятен престой в планините“. От друга страна, уточнената асоциация вероятно има някакви партньорски взаимоотношения с ПСС, тъй като на стр. „Приятелите“ в сайта на БАССЕС на първо място е записана именно Планинската спасителна служба.

⁴⁰ Уточнени детайлно в първата част от примера.

⁴¹ Те използват част от специфичните продукти на Планинската спасителна служба (и по-специално информационните такива) и проявяват като цяло интерес към резултатите и проблемите в нейната работа, защото тя е важна за съществена част от аудиторията на конкретните медии, а на високо (национално) ниво и за цялото население на страната.

⁴² Отстояващи определени права на част от потребителите на Службата и/или чиято дейност е свързана с районите, в които оперира ПСС.

Заклучение

Задълбоченото изследване и на тази основа доброто познаване на пазара и другите важни фактори в средата на дадена организация ѝ позволяват да разбере в детайли всички характерни особености на потребителите, чиито нужди и потребности тя се стреми да задоволява, както и на силите, които оказват съществено влияние върху резултатите от нейната дейност. Водещи учени и специалисти от практиката обаче са установили, че популярните класификации на факторите на микромаркетинговата среда, използвани с успех в бизнеса, не са много подходящи за нестопанските организации. В тази връзка авторът на представения доклад се надява, че с информацията в него ще допринесе за по-успешната работа на изследователите и практиците в сферата на маркетинга и управлението на разглежданите организации.

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⁴³ Тъй като в съвременния свят опазването на здравето и живота на всеки отделен човек е най-висша ценност.

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<https://www.facebook.com/mountainrescueservice/>

Приложение на „потапящите“ технологии в дигиталните образователни продукти (ДОП) за деца на 14 години: перспективи пред маркетинговото планиране

Теодора Данева¹

Резюме: Модифицирането и подобряването на образователните продукти в крак с промените в технологиите и изискванията на пазара на труда разкриват разнообразни перспективи в процеса по маркетингово планиране. Дигиталните образователни продукти за деца (ДОП) способстват за елиминиране на пречките при възприемането на сложни концепции и абстрактни понятия, а подрастващите са стимулирани да развиват таланти като едновременно се забавляват и учат чрез разбиране и практика. От друга страна внедряването на „потапящи“ технологии изисква адаптирането им в процеса на обучение чрез създаване на адекватни методики, съчетани с подходяща подготовка на педагозите в резултат от промените в потребностите на новото поколение ученици. Чрез ефективно планиране на ДОП се полагат основите за превръщането на училището в активно и интересно място за развитие на ключови компетентности и подготовка на обучаваните за реалния живот.

Ключови думи: дигитални образователни продукти за деца, маркетингово планиране, „потапящи“ технологии

JEL: M31

Application of "Immersive" Technologies in Digital Educational Products (DEP) for Children Aged 14: Prospects for Marketing Planning

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Abstract: Modifying and improving educational products to keep pace with changes in technology and labor market demands opens up diverse perspectives in the marketing planning process. Children's digital educational products (DEPs) help eliminate barriers to understanding

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complex and abstract concepts, and teenagers are stimulated to develop talents while having fun and learning through understanding and practice. On the other hand, the implementation of "immersive" technologies requires their adaptation in the learning process by creating adequate methodologies, combined with appropriate training of educators as a result of changes in the needs of the new generation of students. Through effective planning of ECE, the foundations are laid for turning the school into an active and interesting place for developing key competences and preparing students for real life.

Key words: digital educational products for children, marketing planning, "immersive" technologies

JEL: M31

Въведение

Внедряването на дигитални технологии е част от иновациите, които се въвеждат в множество направления на бизнеса с цел автоматизация на процеси, увеличаване на ефективността и оптимизация на ресурси. Създаването на преживявания едновременно във физическия и виртуалния свят чрез технологии с добавена/виртуална реалност (AR/VR), дава възможност за подобряване на резултатите на подрастващите в учебната дейност (Lee, 2012). По този начин се симулират сценарии от реалния живот, а подрастващите учат в безопасна и ангажираща среда. Планирането и внедряването на дигитални образователни продукти за деца (ДОП), съобразени със спецификата на изучаваните предмети и възрастта на децата, използвайки „учене чрез потапяне“ (immersive learning), дава възможност за елиминиране на пречките във възприемането и ограниченията на физическата среда като осигурява способ за разгръщане на пълния потенциал на децата. По този начин подрастващите са стимулирани да развиват таланти, творческо и критично мислене и не на последно място – едновременно да се забавляват и да учат чрез разбиране и практика.

Методология на изследването

Приложението на „потапящите“ технологии в ДОП е проведено в три модула. В първия модул са представени теоретико-методологичните особености, етапите на маркетинговото планиране на нов продукт и концептуализацията на процеса. Във втория модул е анализирана спецификата на „потапящите“ технологии, а в третия - нагласите на целевите групи. За тази цел е проведено пилотно проучване, което анализира информираността и цялостното потребителско преживяване при употреба на ДОП, ползите и потенциални негативни ефекти от приложението им в ежедневието на децата на 14г. Въпросите от проучването могат да бъдат предоставени при запитване от автора.

**Модул I. Теоретико-методологически особености на
маркетинговото планиране на нови/модифицирани продукти**
***Теоретични постановки на маркетинговото планиране
на нови/модифицирани продукти***

Съществуването на фирмите е възможно единствено в развиваща се икономика, а липсата на фокус върху потребителите създава множество заплахи в дългосрочен план. В същото време бизнес организациите не съществуват изолирано, а имат икономически и социални функции, в т.ч. да подобряват обществения живот и да подпомагат развитието му. А това е възможно единствено при наличието на промени и подобрения, които да предефинират бизнеса, за да му осигуряват ефективност. Според SCP³ парадигмата бизнес представянето се различава в резултат от възможностите на фирмите да анализират и оползотворяват пазарните трендове, давайки им възможност за превъзходство над конкурентите. Това налага изискването да се пренасочват ресурсите от ниско печеливши към по-печеливши дейности и да се създават нови (Drucker, 1986). За тази цел са необходими стратегии с фокус върху създаване, поддръжка и развитие на конкурентни предимства и иновации от страна на организацията. Тясно обвързана с маркетинговото планиране е и иновацията. Концепцията, въведена от Йозеф Шумпетер (1981), е интерпретирана като “създаване на нови продуктови комбинации” (Павлов, 2021, с.1), касаеща внедряването на нови продукти и/или продуктови модификации. В този смисъл маркетинговото планиране допринася за създаването на стойност и конкурентни предимства. (Узунова, Данчев, Василева, 2010). Базирайки се на декомпозиционния подход и теорията за отворените системи, процесът на планиране на нов продукт преминава през различни етапи, които са обобщени по следния начин: планиране, дизайн, тестване, комерсиализация и управление (Cooper 2007; Lilien, Rangaswamy, 2017). Интерпретирайки маркетинговото планиране от гледна точка на разработване и управление на нови и/или модифицирани продукти, чрез него се анализират и детерминират силите, които оказват влияние, точките на дистрибуция, определянето на цената и планирането на комуникациите, т.е., всички елементи на маркетинг микса. Според проучване (Gartner, 2020) мнозинството (62%) от изпълнителните директори се стремят да стимулират растежа на приходи чрез лансиране на нови продукти и услуги. Ситуацията в образованието не е по-различна – употребата на AI⁴, VR⁵, AR⁶ е прогнозируема и препоръчителна поради множество фактори: ниска мотивация и ангажираност, навлизане на технологиите и изкуствения интелект в ежедневието на децата и превръщането им в предпочитано средство за информация и забавление (GWI, 2023).

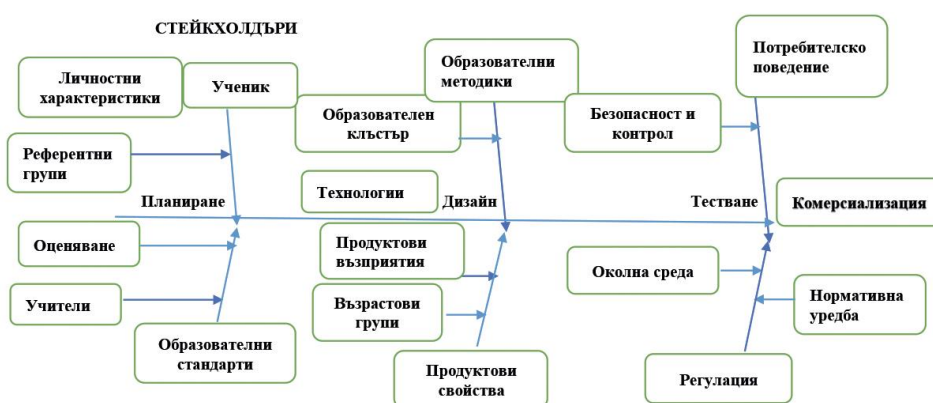
³ SCP – Structure, Conduct, Performance

⁴ Artificial Intelligence – изкуствен интелект

⁵ Virtual Reality – виртуална реалност

⁶ Augmented Reality – добавена реалност

Сканирането на средата показва значително разминаване между заложените цели и реалното представяне на подрастващите. Индикатор за придобитите компетентности⁷ на децата представлява PISA (OECD, 2022). Резултатите от 2022 год. показват, че българските ученици бележат стойности под средните за Европа. Това е основна предпоставка за ревизия на образователните методики в обучението и внедряване на учене на база практика. Ученето на база опит намира широко приложение в конструктивизма, чиито представители са John Dewey (1938), Jeremy Bruner (1996) и Jean Piaget (2007). Те интерпретират процеса на учене посредством активно взаимодействие на личността с околната среда.



Фиг. 1. Концептуален модел на маркетингово планиране на ДОП (адапт. по Диаграма на Ишикава)

Референтни групи

Референтните групи интегрират всички фактори, произтичащи от семейството на учащия, неговата/нейната културна, национална, образователна среда, в т.ч. среда в класната стая, дидактическият контекст и атмосферата в училище. Личностните характеристики включват социо-демографски променливи като социална класа, език и образование на родителите. Учителят(ите) и контекстът са решаващи фактори, когато става въпрос за оценяване на резултатите от обучението.

Учител(и)

Учителят(ите) са важен фактор за въздействие върху обучаваните. Характеристиките на учителите включват всички лични, професионални, педагогически фактори, допринасящи или възпрепятстващи обучението. Основните фактори са професионални, дидактически компетенции, компетентности за управление на класната стая, лични ценности, цели, очаквания.

⁷ обща способност на индивида да изпълнява определена дейност в съответствие с приети и наложени стандарти

Безопасност и контрол

Въпреки, че потапящите преживявания са виртуални, те могат да имат осезаемо въздействие върху физическото състояние на потребителите. По дефиниция ДОП блокират реалния свят, затова сливането или пълната замяна на физическия свят с виртуални елементи нарушава вниманието и увеличава потенциала за злополуки поради разсейване или сензорни препятствия.

Табл.1. Рискове и негативни ефекти при употреба на ДОП

Физически вреди	Когнитивни рискове	Психологически вреди
1.Затлъстяване	1.Затруднена координация	1.Липса на концентрация
2.Проблеми със съня	2.Аутизъм	2.Пристрастяване
3.Наранявания	3.Епилепсия	3.Агресия
4.Зрителни нарушения		4.Асоциално поведение
5.Киберболест		

Източник: адапт. по Kaimara, P., Oikonomou, A., Deliyannis, I. Could virtual reality applications pose real risks to children and adolescents? A systematic review of ethical issues and concerns. *Virtual Reality* 26, p. 697–735, 2022

Редица изследвания по темата (Miehlbradt et al, 2021) установяват възможните вреди при употреба от подрастващи. VR средата претоварва детския мозък и може да наруши координацията при децата, подтискайки различните сензорни входове – зрение, проприоцепция⁸ и вестибуларни входове – в полза на зрението. Резултатите от изследването показват още, че координацията между главата и тялото все още не е напълно зряла при деца до 10-годишна възраст. Освен това изживяването с ДОП е много по-интензивно в сравнение с телевизията или определен вид дигитални медии.

Образователни методики на обучението с ДОП

Ученето чрез практика е представено от „конуса на опита“ на Едгар Дейл (1969), който илюстрира по-високата степен на усвояване на учебния материал при наличие на практически опит и употреба на дигитални медии в сравнение с изолиран трансфер на знания или т.нар. „пасивно учене“. Ангажирайки повече сетива в процеса според Дейл (1969), увеличава шанса каналът да бъде предпочетен от по-голям брой ученици. Едно от многото предимства при използването на „потапящи“ технологии в обучението е възможността учениците да са ангажирани в образователния процес и от наблюдатели да минават в ролята на активни участници като подобряват концентрацията си. VR предоставя на обучаваните индивиди цялостно сетивно изживяване, чрез което те могат виртуално да виждат, слушат и манипулират физически обекти (Choi, Dailey-Hebert, Estes, 2016). Например

⁸ Мускулно усещане за чувство на самодвижение и позиция на части от собственото тяло една спрямо друга в пространството (способността на тялото да възприема своята позиция в пространството)

приложението „Unimersiv“, достъпно в Apple App Store и Google Play Android платформата, осигурява пълно изживяване на потапяне в древната история. С тази технология учениците имат възможност да учат и да се обогатяват културно, без да пътуват, както и директно да преживяват учебното съдържание (Yusof et al, 2019).

Табл.2. Педагогически аспекти на образованието чрез „потапящи“ технологии (immersive learning) и традиционния образователен процес

	Учител	Ученик	Дидактически възможности	Степен на ангажираност и мотивация	Ефективност
Традиционен образователен процес	Ръководи, инструктира и демонстрира	Наблюдател	Трансфер на знания и умения с необходимост от допълнителна практика	Ниска мотивация и концентрация	В зависимост от обективни и субективни фактори; ограничения на средата
Учене чрез потапяне	Ментор и партньор, който насочва окуражава и стимулира	Активен участник	Създаване и надграждане на компетентности в защитена и безопасна среда	Висока ангажираност с фокус върху процеса	Близка ценова ефективност до физическата среда; липсват ограничения - комбинация между физически и дигитален свят

Източник: адапт. по Cheney, A.W., Krista P. T. Immersive Learning Environments as Complex Dynamic Systems, International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2018, Vol 30, 2, p. 277-289

При употреба на ДОП подрастващите са в състояние да поемат различни социални роли. Те могат да бъдат използвани за подпомагане на рехабилитацията⁹ и обучението по социални умения при деца с аутизъм/СОП. За обучение по емпатия различни младежи и деца поемат ролята на различна раса, пол, националност или социална класа и да се поставят на мястото на друг.

Изследвания с възрастни показват, че ДОП намалява имплицитните расови пристрастия, когато потребителите се въплъщават с аватар от различна раса (Реск et al., 2013). Освен това „потапящите“ технологии в ДОП действат и като безопасна среда за хората да практикуват своите социални когнитивни умения без големи

социални последици. Например, юноши и тийнейджъри практикуват ефективна намеса с цел превенция на тормоза в училище.

Регулация

При сесии с ДОП се събират разнообразни потребителски данни, което повдига множество въпроси, свързани с конфиденциалността, собствеността и защитата на личните данни. Набраната информация варира от чисто биометрични данни като пулс, проследяване на погледа и движението на тялото до информация, засягаща здравния статус на потребителите. Друго съображение произтича от количеството на събраната информация, което е в много по-голям обем в сравнение с други технологии. Рискът от употреба за неетични цели налага използването на строги мерки за защита на децата във виртуалната среда. Съгл. GDPR¹⁰ всички данни, събрани и обработени чрез VR и AR технологии, не могат да бъдат използвани без позволение и са обект на закрила съгл. неприкосновеността на личния живот.

Образователни клъстър

Спецификата на образователните клъстър е свързана с характеристиките на услугата образование, както и с ролята им в образователния процес. Целите на образователните клъстър в процеса на проектиране на ДОП са свързани с набирането на средства, инвестиции, осъществяване на контакти с организации, осигуряващи внедряването на иновации и повишаването на качеството на процеса.

Модул II. Специфика на „потапящите“ технологии

Основните причини, поради които VR придобива популярност в образованието, са наличието на интерактивност (Gavish et al, 2015), възможността за възприемане и разбиране на сложни понятия и високата степен на ангажираност на обучаваните, които са поставени в различни среди, сходни с реалния живот и непостижими с базови учебни ресурси (Blascovich et al, 2002). Две са ключовите концепции в основата на VR и сходните технологии: потапяне и присъствие. Потапянето описва опита от използването на такъв тип продукти, докато присъствието се отнася до субективния отговор на потребителя към VR по начин, подобен на този в реалния свят (Slater, 2003; Jensen, Kongradsen, 2018). Понятието „потапяне“ представлява количествено измерима характеристика на технологията, която я отличава от други компютърни приложения (Kalyvioti, Mikropoulos, 2014; Mikropoulos, Strouboulis, 2004; Webster, 2016). Основополагащ фактор за реализиране на „потапянето“ е усещането за присъствие във виртуалната среда, подпомогнато чрез средствата на AR, VR, MR и 360°-ви видеа (Buchner, Andujar, 2019). Яркостта е друга особеност, определена като „представителното богатство на опосредствана среда, както е дефинирана от нейните формални характеристики“, т.е. начина, по който една среда представя сетивна информация” (Dengel,

¹⁰ General Data Protection Regulation – Закон за защита на личните данни

Magdefrau, 2022, с.2). Интерактивността може да се дефинира като степента, в която потребителите могат да реагират и дават обратна връзка, като манипулират физически обекти във виртуалната среда в реално време. Компонентите на потапянето (предоставен хардуер и софтуер) могат да бъдат директно манипулирани от учителя, за да се подобри процесът на обучение в потапящи виртуални среди (Dengel, Magdefrau, 2022). По този начин те улесняват учениците при визуализиране на конкретна учебна тема, вместо придобиване на знания единствено от учебник или книга.

Модул III. Потребителски опит при употреба на ДОП при децата на 14 години

Проведеното пилотно проучване е сред 108 респонденти на 14 год., учащи в гимназия с икономически профил в град Варна. От тях 52,8 % потвърждават употреба на ДОП. Честотата на употреба на ДОП за 25,5% от изследваните деца е няколко пъти седмично, най-често в следобедните часове, а 43,7% не са използвали никога. При попълване на въпросника при голяма част от децата се наблюдава липса на ориентираност какво представляват ДОП и „потапящите“ технологии. Въпреки това близо половината от проучваните не срещат никакви трудности при употреба на ДОП, а 39% намират контролите и интерфейсите изключително удобни и лесни. При най-голям процент от извадката (40%) ДОП са използвани с цел обучение, а при близо 1/4 от респондентите и с цел забавление. Въпреки, че голяма част от децата (35,7%) демонстрират готовност за препоръки на ДОП на свои приятели и познати (близо 70% отговарят положително, макар и в различна степен) при висок процент от респондентите се наблюдават негативни ефекти като болки в очите (37,2%) и главоболие (35,9%). Това са само част от потенциалните вреди, представени от изследователите в областта. Над 50% от респондентите са посочили като положителни потребителското преживяване и цялостната удовлетвореност от ДОП, като само 1/5 от децата са изключително недоволни. Изводите от пилотното проучване потвърждават тезата, че децата са положително настроени към употреба на „потапящи“ технологии. За образователните институции такъв тип технологии откриват нови възможности за учене чрез разбиране и ангажиране на децата по различните учебните дисциплини. Въпреки това посочените негативни ефекти са сериозни доводи за твърдението, че „потапящите“ технологии следва да бъдат прилагани в контролирана среда и за ограничен времеви период с цел елиминиране на потенциални вреди върху здравето на децата.

Заклучение

Разработването на ДОП, осигуряващи учене чрез „потапяне“ и учене на база опит, безопасни и изпълняващи образователните цели, е труден процес, който носи редица предизвикателства. Използването на съвременни технологии, позволяващи повишаване на ангажираността, концентрацията и мотивацията на подрастващите в

образователния процес, дава възможност за стимулиране на предприемачество, иновации и устойчив растеж от най-ранна детска възраст. Необходимостта от спазване на общоетични норми и спецификата на целевата аудитория допълнително затрудняват и ограничават изследователите в ранните фази по разработване на продукта и във фазата на тестване. Провеждането на проучване, засягащо въздействието на ДОП върху мозъка и нервната система на подрастващите между 12-18г. ще насочи и даде детайлна представа за рисковете при употреба на ДОП. Ролята на родителите, държавата и образователните интуиции е ключова, както и сътрудничеството между тях като участници в процеса по ангажиране, мотивиране и образование на децата в дигиталната ера.

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**Импулсивно купуване в маркетинга офлайн и онлайн –
сравнително изследване на факторите, които влияят върху
този тип потребителско поведение**

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Резюме: Импулсивното непланирано пазаруване офлайн и онлайн, представлява голяма част от продажбите в съвременната световна индустрия. Изследванията на новозараждащото се явление импулсивно купуване набират скорост през последните десетилетия и се търсят отговори как, защо и къде потребителите правят импулсивни покупки. В България липсват проучвания свързани с импулсивните покупки. В тази връзка в доклада се представя феноменът импулсивно купуване в маркетинга и сравнително изследване на факторите, които влияят върху този тип потребителско поведение чрез извършване на преглед на научната литература, която обхваща изследванията от 1950г. до днес. На базата на анализирани фактори може да се извършат бъдещи изследвания на импулсивното купуване.

Ключови думи: импулсивна покупка, фактори за импулсивно купуване

**Impulse Buying in Offline and Online Marketing - A Comparative
Study of the Factors that Influence this Type of Consumer
Behavior**

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Abstract: Impulsive unplanned shopping offline and online accounts for a large portion of sales in today's global industry. Research into the emerging phenomenon of impulse buying has gained momentum in recent decades, seeking answers to how, why, and where consumers make impulse purchases. There are no studies related to impulsive purchases in Bulgaria. In this regard, the report presents the phenomenon of impulse buying in marketing and a comparative study of the factors that influence this type of

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consumer behavior by conducting a review of the scientific literature, which covers research since the 1950s. until today. Based on the factors analyzed, future research on impulse buying can be conducted.

Key words: impulse buying, impulse buying factors

Въведение

Какво е импулсивното потребителско поведение? Как, защо и къде потребителите правят импулсивни покупки? Тези въпроси привличат интереса на множество учени и практики в областта на потребителското поведение. Изследванията на импулсивното купуване набират скорост след 1950 г., когато се появява нова парадигма – концентрирана върху това, което потребителите искат – и се опитва да разбере още по-задълбочено как се държат купувачите. Редица изследователи започват да проучват импулсивното поведение по време на пазаруване, като първоначално те се занимават предимно с разграничаването на импулсивното купуване от неимпулсивното купуване и въпроси свързани с дефиницията и категоризирането на импулсивното купуване. По-късно вече се търсят връзки на импулсивното купуване с различни фактори и как те влияят върху този тип потребителско поведение. Развитието на глобалните технологии и маркетинговите иновации довеждат до прехода на импулсивното купуване от традиционна среда за търговия на дребно в магазина към различни онлайн канали, което води до растеж на изследванията като цяло и особено на онлайн импулсивното купуване през последните десет години.

Сложността на въпросите, свързани с импулсивното купуване, произтича от наличието на влиянието на много фактори върху поведението на купувачите по време на пазаруване. В тази връзка изясняването на явлението импулсивно купуване и анализът на факторите в този доклад има за цел да подпомогне отговора на въпросите поставени в началото, като разглежда и систематизира отговорите на учените и практиците по отношение на същността на явлението импулсивно купуване в маркетинга и на факторите, влияещи върху импулсивното потребителско поведение офлайн и онлайн.

1.Що е то импулсивно купуване в маркетинга?

Според редица автори импулсивното купуване е непланирано решение за покупка на продукт или услуга, направено точно преди покупката. Моделът на взимане на решение при импулсивното купуване от психологична гледна точка се свързва с ирационалност и с емоционалната страна на потребителите. Процесът на покупателно поведение при импулсивното купуване е различен от обичайния, тъй като липсва търсене на информация и алтернативни етапи на оценка, които са типични за традиционното купуване. Потребителят се задейства от стимули и придобива импулсивно желание да купи

незабавно даден продукт без оценка на алтернативните налични продукти.

Импулсивното потребителско поведение се разглежда като поведение, при което потребителите изпитват внезапно желание да купуват. Внезапното желание за покупки, Rook (1987) го обяснява с наличието на внезапна, силна и постоянна импулсивност (силна и постоянна мотивация) при положителния ефект от спонтанното преживяване на потребителя при срещата с продукт или услуга, което води до внезапно желание да се купува незабавно. Поведението настъпва след като купувачът изпитва желание за покупка при среща с предмет в околната среда и то обикновено е спонтанно и без много размисъл, т.е. налице е импулсивност (Beatty и Ferrell, 1998).

Импулсивното купуване се разглежда като хедонично и многостранно поведение (Bailey и Nancarrow, 1998). То е резултат от непосредствена реакция на купувача към външни стимули, които често са хедонично ориентирани. В подкрепа на това разбиране за импулсивно купуване е и виждането на Hodge (2004), който смята импулсивното купуване за непланирано и възникващо като реакция на стимул включващ когнитивна и емоционална реакция и взимане на решение на място. Според Verhagen и van Dolen (2011), взимането на непланирано и внезапно решение за покупка е задвижено от специфични екологични стимули / сигнали на място и е придружено от силно чувство на удоволствие и вълнение.

Импулсивното купуване често води до специфичен стимул по време на пазаруването от гледна точка на Floh и Madlberger (2013). Стимулът може да бъде действителен продукт или външните атрибути на даден продукт, като например механизми за търсене и информация за продукта. Li (2015) описва импулсивното поведение като непреднамерено, неотразяващо купуване поради физическа и емоционална близост с желанния продукт, което води до лично удовлетворение, т.е. става въпрос за непланирано, внезапно и спонтанно попувателно поведение на потребителите. Хедоничното удовлетворение е тясно свързано с импулсивната покупка, а тя възниква, когато потребителите са неочаквано стимулирани (Lu и Wu, 2019). Импулсивната покупка се случва, когато потребителите изпитат неочакван, интензивен и непрекъснат импулс да купят нещо веднага (Parsad, 2020).

Много автори се опитват да разграничат планираното от непланираното (импулсивното) купуване и дават различни обяснения за явлениято импулсивно купуване, но всички те стигат до подобни изводи. В крайна сметка импулсивното купуване се очертава като непланирана покупка за потребителя, който изпитва спонтанно, внезапно желание да купува, т.е. налице е импулсивност (силна и постоянна мотивация), която е предизвикана от стимули (импулси).

2. Сравнително изследване на факторите, които влияят върху импулсивното купуване офлайн и онлайн

За сравнителното изследване на факторите, които влияят върху импулсивното купуване офлайн и онлайн са използвани 140 източника в областта. Наличната литература е на английски език. Времерата рамка обхваща периода от 1950 г. до 2023 г. и е продиктувана от факта, че първото изследване и въвеждане на термина „импулсивна покупка“ е направено от Clover през 1950г., а през следващите години се правят проучвания в областта, които нарастват в днешни дни. В тази връзка, в този доклад се посочват и анализират факторите, които са били изследвани от учени и практики за целия период от възникването на теоретичните обяснения за импулсивна покупка до днес.

Факторите, които според изследванията на редица автори имат отношение към импулсивното купуване ще бъдат разгледани и систематизирани в следните групи: външни фактори, вътрешни фактори, ситуационни фактори, свързани с продукта фактори, демографски фактори и социални фактори и културни фактори. При онлайн импулсивното купуване, всички изброени групи фактори са валидни, но съществуват различия във външните фактори. Някои маркетингови стимули съвпадат със стимулите при офлайн пазаруването, докато други са присъщи за онлайн търговията, а маркетинговата среда включва факторите, свързани с уебсайта. Схематизирането на факторите, влияещи върху импулсивното купуване офлайн и онлайн е представено в таблица 1.

Таблица 1 Фактори, които влияят върху импулсивното купуване офлайн и онлайн

Фактори, които влияят върху импулсивното купуване	
Външни фактори – маркетингови стимули и маркетингова среда	Маркетингови стимули, които повишават импулсивните покупки <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ниска цена– Промоции и отстъпки– Бонус пакети– Безплатни доставки и подаръци– Специални оферти– Реклама– Масово разпространение Маркетингова среда, която може да стимулира към импулсивни покупки – цялостната маркетингова околна среда чрез, която се въздейства върху емоциите на потребителите <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Оформление на магазина– Декорация– Дизайн– Атмосфера

	– Местоположение на оборудването
Вътрешни фактори – индивидуални характеристики на индивида, черти на личността	<p>Емоционални състояния – емоционалното състояние на потребителя при възможност за импулсивна покупка</p> <p>Афективни и когнитивни състояния – колкото повече потребителят е в афективно състояние, толкова повече той може да извърши импулсивни покупки</p> <p>Познание и анализ на информацията – как човек разбира и анализира информацията – при малко когнитивно осмисляне и пренебрегване на последствията са налице импулсивни покупки</p> <p>Нормативна оценка – възприятието на потребителя за импулсивната покупка, минали преживявания и състояние на духа при възможност за импулсивна покупка</p> <p>Тенденция към импулсивност – тенденцията човек да реагира бързо на стимул и да извърши импулсивна покупка, хората с по – голяма импулсивна тенденция правят повече импулсивни покупки</p> <p>Настроения на потребителя – импулсивно купуване в опит за подобряване на настроението или ако човек е в настроение, той е по щедър и проявява тенденция към импулсивно купуване</p> <p>Наличие на удоволствие при пазаруване – то е различно при отделните индивиди, хората, които се наслаждават на пазаруването, ходят в магазина за по – дълги периоди и са по – склонни към импулсивни покупки</p>
Ситуационни фактори – насочват потребителя към импулсивни покупки	<p>Навици на потребителя</p> <p>Функционално удобство</p> <p>Качество на услугите</p> <p>Сезонност</p> <p>Налично време за пазар – пазаруването в магазина е позитивно при наличие на време, което влияе на позитивните чувства на потребителя и може да се задействат импулсивни покупки</p> <p>Пазар по инерция – пазаруването може да доведе до покупки по инерция, която да задейства импулсивни покупки</p> <p>Местоположение на дребно – местоположението на продуктите може да предизвика импулсивни покупки</p>
Свързани с продукта фактори	<p>Външен вид и дизайн на продукта</p> <p>Функционални предимства на продукта</p> <p>Опаковка на продукта</p> <p>Възприемана концепция за продукта от реклама</p> <p>Продуктови категории</p>
Демографски фактори	<p>Пол – и двата пола са импулсивни в различни продуктови категории</p> <p>Възраст – импулсивност при младите, след 39г. спада импулсивността</p> <p>Доходи – импулсивност при ниски и високи доходи, но с различна мотивация</p>
Социални	Приятелско отношение на служители и клиенти в

фактори	<p>магазина, похвала от приятели – увеличава импулсивното купуване</p> <p>Присъствие по време на пазаруване – увеличено импулсивно купуване с връстници и намалено със семейство</p> <p>Анонимност по време на пазаруване – склонност към новост и фантазия – увеличава импулсивното купуване</p> <p>Физическа близост в магазина – разглеждане на каталози, докосване на стоки, дегустация на храни – увеличава импулсивното купуване</p>
Културни фактори	<p>Индивидуализъм – повишено импулсивно купуване</p> <p>Колективизъм – намалено импулсивно купуване</p> <p>Глобална потребителска култура – общо глобално увеличаване на импулсивното купуване</p>
Фактори, влияещи върху онлайн импулсивното купуване	Всички изброени фактори по – нагоре в таблицата са валидни и за онлайн импулсивните покупки
Онлайн маркетингови фактори	<p>Маркетингови фактори, които важат и за офлайн импулсивното купуване – цена, промоции и отстъпки, бонус пакети, безплатни доставки и подаръци, специални оферти</p> <p>Онлайн маркетингови фактори</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Онлайн снимки – Изображения на продукта – Рекламни банери – Недостиг на продукта
Фактори свързани с уебсайта – чрез тях се постига: Удобство за пазаруване Когнитивни и афективни ползи Импулсивност Настроение Доверие Вълнение и емоции	<p>Навигация на уебсайта – организация, оформление, интерфейс</p> <p>Дизайн – визуална привлекателност, външен вид</p> <p>Лекота на навигация (на използване) – функционално удобство</p> <p>Медиен формат – рекламен формат</p> <p>Сигурност – гаранция за лична информация и плащане</p> <p>Интерактивност – двустранна комуникация потребител – уебсайт</p> <p>Яркост – пазаруване на живо</p>

Съществуването на външни фактори и тяхната роля се изтъква от редица автори. Основно става въпрос за маркетинговите стимули и сигнали, които включват цялостната среда при пазаруване. Подчертава се важността на промоциите отговорни за импулса към покупки. Вътрешните фактори се свързват с индивидуалните характеристики на индивидите, които от своя страна определят хората да бъдат или да не бъдат импулсивни. Много автори се опитват да обяснят кои черти и какви емоционални състояния задвижват импулсивното купуване, както и какви влияния има върху тези вътрешни стимули на хората.

Ситуационните фактори най-общо насочват към импулсивно поведение. По отношение на факторите свързани с продукта някои

изследвания сочат, че импулсивното купуване е свързано с определени продуктови категории, които се купуват по-често от други, но все пак съществува зависимост и от някои други влияния като: къде се случват покупките, в коя държава, какви са хората там, какви порядки имат, какво продават в техните магазини и какви са предложенията.

Демографията на потребителите оказва влияние върху импулсивния акт на купуване. Изследванията сочат, че индивидите с относително ниски нива на доходите на домакинствата са склонни да се наслаждават чрез незабавно задоволяване и правят импулсивни покупки. От друга страна хората с високи доходи могат да си позволят да изхарчат повече, така че при тях е по – вероятно да настъпят импулсивни покупки.

Полът е друга важна характеристика за поведението към импулсивно купуване. Някои изследвания обявяват жените за по-импулсивни в сравнение с мъжете при купуване. Докато други проучвания откриват, че мъжете са по-импулсивни от жените, както и че жените внимателно планират техните покупки. Мъжете са склонни да участват в импулсивно купуване на инструментални и развлекателни предмети, които проектират тяхната независимост и активност, докато жените са склонни да купуват символични и самоизразяващи се стоки, които са свързани с външния им вид и емоционалните им аспекти.

Възрастта е един от императивните фактори, които влияят върху импулсивното пазаруване. Проучвания сочат, че по-младите купувачи са по-импулсивни в сравнение с по-старите. Wood (1998) установява, че възрастта е важен фактор за импулсивните покупки и съобщава, че потребителите на възраст между 18 и 39 години са склонни да правят повече такива покупки, а след тази възраст импулсивните покупки намаляват. Това се потвърждава и от други изследователи. Въпреки това, в някои страни, където младото поколение поради липса на независим източник на доходите е много зависимо от семейството, не може да се наблюдава такава тенденция.

По отношение на социалните фактори – отношението на служителите, клиентите, приятелите по време на пазаруване могат да увеличат импулсивните покупки. Проучвания сочат връзка между присъствието на връстници и семейство, в първия случай желанието за покупка се увеличава, докато със семейство намалява. От друга страна, анонимността може да насърчи импулсивното купуване, т.е. купувачите са склонни да пробват нови неща, стилове и да си фантазират при анонимна среда на самообслужване. Желанието да се купува импулсивно може да бъде стимулирано от физическата близост като докосване на стоки в магазина или безплатна дегустация на храни като по този начин се активират сензорни възприятия.

Измерението на културата индивидуализъм – колективизъм е най – важният императив на културните фактори, свързани с въпросът за поведението на импулсивното купуване. При колективизма се моделират индивиди, които считат себе си за част от група, докато при

индивидуализма, човек се смята за автономен. В случая, когато индивидът се смята за независим, съществува по – високо ниво на свобода и своеволие, което може да влияе върху импулсивното купуване в сравнение с индивид, който е ограничен от някаква група като например приятели или семейство. Установено е, че колективистичните потребители се включват в по–малко импулсивни покупки, отколкото индивидуалистичните потребители.

С разпространението на онлайн пазаруването, става все по – необходимо да се разберат в дълбочина явленията за онлайн импулсивното купуване. Според учените и практиците, които изследват онлайн импулсивните покупки, онлайн купувачите са по–спонтанни от потребителите в магазините поради факта, че онлайн купуването е с по – лесен и с по – кратък достъп. В електронната търговия насърчаването на продажбите е важен стимул за задействане на импулсивното купуване и от тази гледна точка прилагането на маркетинговите фактори посочени в таблица 1 влияят върху импулсивното потребителско поведение.

Стимулите на уебсайта са ключовите фактори, които отличават онлайн импулсивното купуване от традиционната среда. Уебсайтът за електронна търговия играе ролята на посредник между потребителите и продуктите, и процесът на онлайн покупка на потребителите трябва да взаимодейства с уебсайта, което пряко засяга възможността за онлайн импулсивно купуване (Wells, Parboteeah и Valacich, 2011). Факторите свързани с уебсайта, които представляват маркетинговата среда, основно стимулират импулсивните покупки чрез манипулиране на чувството за зрение на потребителите. За целта хедоничните визуални компоненти в онлайн средата могат да бъдат създадени чрез факторите на електронния магазин схематизирани в таблица 1, които влияят върху импулсивните онлайн покупки.

Заклучение

Разбирането на същността на явлениято импулсивно купуване в маркетинга, дава възможност феноменът да бъде изследван с цел стимулиране на импулсивните покупки. Външните стимули, вътрешните индивидуални черти на личността, ситуационните фактори, свързаните с продукта фактори, демографските фактори, социалните фактори и културните фактори формират поведението на потребителите към импулсивни покупки. Що се отнася до онлайн импулсивното купуване, онлайн маркетинговите фактори и факторите свързани с уебсайта са от изключително значение за купувачите. Сравнителният анализ на факторите в този доклад е основа за бъдещи изследвания на импулсивното потребителско поведение. Необходимо е и в България да стартират проучвания в областта с цел изучаване на импулсивната потребителска нагласа на българските купувачи.

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