

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN ONLINE STRATEGIC TOOL IN RELATION TO THE TWO REGIONS OF HUNGARY – A CHALLENGE FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

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Abstract

The aim of our research is to provide an insight into the reader about the appreciation of the role of social media today. Our study covers small and medium-sized enterprises in two regions of Hungary (Central Transdanubia and Western Transdanubia). As a first step, our goal is to show the way about the development of social media. Following this, we place great emphasis on presenting the most popular social platforms such as: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. It is also of paramount importance to present a problem that remains to be solved to this day. This is none other than the COVID-19 health crisis. In the next phase of the research, a hypothesis related to the topic will be formulated and analyzed, and then with the help of analysis we will draw conclusions and formulate our proposals in this regard.

Key words: social media, COVID-19, health crisis, SME sector, Hungary

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Introduction

The aim of our research is to examine the role of social media in the marketing strategy of small and medium-sized enterprises with the help of domestic and foreign literature. The importance and topicality of the topic is given by the fact that the role of social media is constantly growing. The aim of the research is to provide the reader with an insight into the current situation and the appreciation of the role of social media in the marketing strategy of small and medium-sized enterprises. Our choice of topic was also influenced by the answer to the question of whether companies operating in the SME sector are aware of the opportunities offered by social media today and to what extent they use these opportunities to create or increase a competitive advantage. In our research, we place great emphasis on presenting the role of social media in

the marketing strategy of small and medium-sized enterprises. As a first step, our goal is to define ever-changing, renewable conceptual definitions of social media. Subsequently, with the help of secondary research, the reader gets a comprehensive picture of the development and spread of social media, both internationally and domestically. In addition, the individual social media that are most popular in the world today are presented. In the following chapters of our theoretical review, the authors provide an insight into the opportunities provided by social media and their situation today. Finally, a hypothesis related to the topic was formulated, as well as an examination of its appropriateness.

1 What we know about social media?

Social media is a set of online platforms whose main goal is for people to form a community in order to create content and communicate with each other, which contributes to building different relationships. Depending on the type of platform, text image audio, or even video can be used. Nowadays we already know a huge variety of social media. These include for example social networks, blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, virtual game worlds and content communities. Because social media offers wide access, businesses are constantly looking for answers to the question of how to take advantage of social media opportunities. (Viju-Joshua, 2014)

Social media has become a medium that is essential in maintaining social relationships as well as resolving information. Nowadays we use social media as a platform where consumers can discuss issues and share experiences related to a particular brand. For this reason, social media has attracted the interest of businesses that see the potential for customer relationship management on these platforms. These platforms provide a good opportunity for users and organizations alike to publish information for a specific purpose, audience and context. That's why the creation of a corporate social networking site has become a priority for businesses, as it allows consumers to interact with different brands much more easily and quickly. (Yu, 2021)

Social media has an immense importance has triggered a unique shift in market power. Besides that social media has completely changed the way people make purchasing decisions and dealt a severe blow to traditional marketing tools. Marketers had to act quickly when they became aware of the dangers of customer engagement. As a result they had to develop a strategy that included social media. In our research we are also looking for the answer to whether companies in Hungary now apply such a strategy. It's important for businesses to highlight that the significant role of social media is nothing shows better than the hundreds of millions of people who use social media platforms as a part of their daily lives. (Carlota-María-Efthymios, 2014)

It is important to clarify that social media also has a downside. The spread of fake news on social media can be a major concern, especially nowadays. This threat affects almost everyone: the government, decision makers, organizations, businesses and citizens alike. Fake news is specifically designed to increase mistrust and exacerbate social and cultural dynamics through political, regional or religious abuses. Shu and his colleagues conducted a study in 2017 from which it was concluded that fake news has a bad impact on both individuals and society because it deliberately persuades consumers to believe in false beliefs. Organizations and brands face great challenges in fake news. The kind of fake news that involves a particular point of view or opinion may not necessarily be planned intentionally in advance. Studies have shown that false information can affect retailers in such a way that such information negatively affects shopping habits. In addition, it is also important to mention another form of online counterfeiting, which involves misleading consumers into buying a particular product based on false opinions. Based on these, it can be said that fake news can be a concern in the current world of social media, where anonymity, user content and geographical distance can greatly facilitate the spread of fake news. (Shalini-Amandeep-Dilraj-Gurnam-Jari, 2020)

Nowadays, due to the growing importance of mobile devices, mobile social networks are emerging as a new trend of social media. A good example of this are WhatsApp and WeChat. As mentioned earlier, social media provides an opportunity for users to connect with each other at any time and thus be a part of people's daily lives. This trend encourages businesses to deliver product placements through social media. This is important to them because mobile devices allow people to have instant access and stay in touch through mobile social networks. Let's take an example and look at why social media is important to businesses. The creation of like button on Facebook prompted researchers to do some research on its economic growth. It turned out, that the number of likes is directly related to both people's attention and the content. In addition it can also be observed that individual's commitment is greatly influenced by how they perceive different media content. Besides that it is important to mention that if a user frequently reads content, gives feedback, expresses opinions, shares messages on social platforms, another user could feel much more authentic about the content of a particular social network. (Ivan-Yide, 2020)

1.2 The most common social media platforms and the opportunities they offer

The beginning of the history of Facebook can be traced back to February 2004. This year, the four founding members, Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes and Eduardo Saverin, created a community platform that was still known as "thefacebook". Its expansion

was extremely rapid. In March of the founding year, it was launched on three more campuses (Yale, Columbia, Stanford), and a year later, 800 campuses already used Facebook, as the founders also introduced the message board feature. Its uniqueness was further enhanced by the fact that after a year the “mobile version” was also released and the service became available to everyone. The year 2009 can also be considered as a turning point, as the so-called “like” function was introduced at that time (ThePitch, online). Currently, the number of active users per month reaches 2.38 billion, and it has 1.56 billion active users per day, 47% of whom use the service exclusively on their mobile phones (Kit, 2019).

The beginning of Twitter’s history can be traced back to 2006, when four friends, Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Evan Williams, and Biz Stone, sought answers to the question of how to create a kind of community mini blog. The platform provoked extreme dissatisfaction. It was only due to luck, namely a conference held in Texas in 2007 that the company “escaped” where guests could communicate with each other and organize their programs exclusively through Twitter messages. Despite the initial difficulties, the platform was actually made big and unique by the fact that it became popular in political circles, which is still true today. Twitter has now grown into one of the most popular social platforms (Balla, 2014).

Instagram, as one of the most popular platforms today, started operating on Apple-powered iPhones in October 2010. The app was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Its popularity has been and continues to be due to its simplicity as well as the uniqueness of its creative photographs. The service will be available on Android devices from April 2012 and on mobile phones running Windows Phone from November 2013. Its development is unbroken, with the update of the new version, which will be on the market in 2013, each user has the opportunity to create a video of up to one minute, to which (similar to photos) a caption, location tag and sharing pages can be added (Instagram blog, online). Today, the number of active Instagram users is more than 1 billion per month, of which nearly half are daily active users. With regard to the companies present on the platform, it can be said that more than 25 million companies have a company profile, which shows a constantly growing trend (Szatmári, 2019).

Linkedin, the largest business social network in the social media market, was created on May 5, 2003 by Allen Blue, Konstantin Guericke, Eric Ly, and Jean-Luc Vaillant. The company has now become the biggest dream of startups, and has played and continues to play a major role in the emergence of professional life paths on social media platforms. Compared to previous founders, the primary goal of the founders of Linkedin was to show people new opportunities to do business. In ten years, it has grown into an international company with more than 3,700 employees (Gyöngyösi, 2013). The company currently has 590 million users, half of whom are active monthly users (Csoma, 2019).

The importance of social media in business is growing at an extremely rapid rate. As more and more businesses feel the need to connect to social media platforms and use these websites regularly and effectively, the social media industry is expected to become increasingly popular in the coming years. It is vital for companies to take advantage of websites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn in case they want to stay competitive or just build an advantage over their competitors. The next step is to examine the importance of social media in business by analyzing their benefits. The first notable benefit is the promotion of community advertising. As more and more businesses experiment with digital advertising, they are realizing that this type of advertising strategy has enormous benefits. These include significantly lower advertising costs, targeted, targeted, and real-time performance analysis, meaning you can continuously monitor your ad performance. The next big benefit of social media is that it proves to be an effective tool to increase brand awareness. Communication is also important, as social media is about building conversations. It is important that their goal be to establish two-way communication (Keran, 2019). Regarding social media, Hungary is characterized by two important numbers. According to the NRC's research, 84% of Hungarian Internet users use the Internet every month, while 73% use the Internet every day, of course in different proportions by age group. The proportion of Internet users in the 15-34 age group is almost 100%, while the over-50 age group is significantly behind. Furthermore, the research prepared for NMHH shows that the average time spent in Hungary is 3.8 hours per day. 97% of users are considered active social media users, and in terms of popularity, Facebook is the leader with 89% (Lévai, 2019). Nowadays, social media itself is the most significant marketing communication tool. The reason for this is that companies and users have the opportunity to use a large amount of social platforms where two-way communication is dominant. From a corporate point of view, it can be said that presence on social media is more cost-effective, all marketing tools are available (Ryckposter, online). Marketing campaigns designed by businesses will only be successful if their strategy focuses on triggering activities. This is necessary because, on the one hand, it is the basis of the transformation, i.e. the consumer most often buys online, in which he contacts the brand in advance, and on the other hand, the algorithms of each platform support content that encourages consumers to be active. For example, sweepstakes, opinion polls. Today's influential online personalities, the influencers, can be of great help in this. If the target audience of the company coincides with the target audience of the influencer of its choice, only then will the marketing message be successful. A key factor is also for the company to offer a "story" to its consumers, as the greatest emphasis in today's world is on human relationships. If a company is able to transfer this kind of interaction and content to a branded environment,

it can become a market leader. Although compliance may seem like a difficult task, if a company is able to incorporate a story into its strategy, it meets these criteria (Szatmári, 2019).

2 Purpose of the research

The main goal of our research is to provide insight into the role of social media within the marketing strategy of small and medium enterprises. The choice of topic is related to the interest of the SME sector in the marketing strategy, the knowledge acquired so far, and the relatively large amount of used literature. In our research, we would like to point out the important role of social media as a marketing communication tool in the life of small and public enterprises, and what opportunities it provides for them in terms of positive development. Regarding the practical part of the dissertation, keeping in mind the achievement of the main goal of the research, the following hypothesis was formulated in connection with the examined problem:

- The vast majority of marketing costs for medium-sized businesses can be attributed to their presence on social media.

3 Research methodology and methods

In conducting their research, the authors examined the role of social media in the marketing strategy of small and medium-sized enterprises. As a first step, a research plan was developed, which included the method of examining the SME sector in the research topic, and a hypothesis related to the topic was formulated. In the theoretical part of our dissertation, the development, spread and role of social media in relation to enterprises were presented with the help of domestic and international literature. To perform our practical research, we performed primary data collection. The query lasted from November 2019 to February 2020, and the implementation took the form of direct mail. With the help of a questionnaire, we examined the small and medium-sized enterprise sector for the two regions of Hungary. In the first part of our method of quantitative analysis, we were primarily interested in demographic data. Then we looked for answers as to exactly what the company uses social media for, which website is most important to it, how important it is for it to be present on the platforms mentioned earlier, and whether they monitor their competitors in this regard. In the third part of our questionnaire research, we placed great emphasis on giving the reader an answer to the question of what percentage of their marketing activities and marketing costs are spent on social media presence and future plans. As the next step of our research plan, we examined the Western Transdanubia

and the Central Transdanubia regions separately with the help of secondary data collection. As a final step, the evaluation process followed, in which we compared the information obtained during the primary and secondary data collection and performed a regional study for the two regions. The PSPP program we used was a great help to us in the evaluation process. During the examination of the formulated hypotheses, we used descriptive statistical methods, and within that, our assumptions were analyzed with the help of cross-tabulation analyzes. A significance level of 5% was determined during the evaluation. During the analysis of each variable, we performed a Chi-square test, within which Pearson's Chi-square Asym was taken into account. sig value, with the help of which we determined that the null hypothesis or the alternative hypothesis is accepted taking into account the specified 5% significance level.

4 Research results

The Central Transdanubia region with an area of 11,116 km² is located in the central part of Transdanubia. The region consists of Komárom-Esztergom, Fejér, Veszprém counties, and after the 2004 micro-regional amendments, 26 micro-regions. Furthermore, it can be said that it can be considered the third most developed region of Hungary (Térport, online). From the point of view of economic development, due to the infrastructure of the regions of Komárom and Fejér counties, it has been favorable for foreign investors so far. In the future, it can be expected that current industrial capacity will produce at a higher intensity. The long-term goal is also to build Hungarian centers connected to logistics centers in Europe. In terms of human infrastructure, the region is characterized by shortages of care associated with dynamic development and immigration, and unfortunately the health and education systems are struggling to keep up with innovation, and some parts are struggling with local crisis problems (Arcanum, online). The Western Transdanubia region, covering an area of 11,328 km², includes Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas and Zala counties. The uniqueness of the area is that it is bordered only by four countries: Slovakia, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia. As a result, it can be said to have a large international turnover. Its uniqueness is further enhanced by the fact that it has five cities with county status, and in addition it consists of 25 micro-regions. Its characteristics include significant tourism and the important role played by forestry in its economic life, which results in serious tourism, wood processing and renewable energy. With an extremely large number of settlements (655), it is the region with the largest number of settlements in Hungary (Térport, online). Future developments in the region include, for example, the mechanical engineering (automotive component manufacturing), the

establishment of various supplier networks, the establishment and development of incubators and technology centers for the small and medium-sized enterprise sector. In order for the Western Transdanubia region to have research and education centers, the significant development of Győr, Sopron and Szombathely is absolutely necessary. In addition, with government subsidies, Sopron and Győr would have the opportunity to build logistics centers that would be connected to the European network. The role of tourism in the region is significant, which means that the development of infrastructure also plays an important role, and its future role is largely determined by the cross-border cooperation. In terms of human infrastructure, almost the same can be said as in the Central Transdanubia region, ie there are shortages of care associated with dynamic development and immigration, and the health care system is unable to keep pace with the pace of development (Arcanum, online).

4.1 The problem that is waiting to be solved

In our view, it is essential to address the current global health crisis. The coronavirus epidemic COVID-19 has hit its head everywhere, and its topicality is ambivalent, as not only is the market completely reorganized and its current outcome uncertain, but the role of community platforms will be enhanced. Its impact not only threatens our health, but also poses a long-term economic threat that affects and will affect the lives of all of us! We can draw some consequences from our studies so far in that history repeats itself, which is well illustrated from an economic point of view by the so-called economic world clock, the essence of which is that the economic crisis at certain intervals completely reorganizes. Let us examine the most severe economic consequences of the coronavirus in chronological order of epidemic spread. Clearly, tourism, hospitality and the various related service industries are clearly involved. The world will also suffer a huge loss in terms of unemployment, because if we take Hungary as an example, it can be said that hundreds of thousands of jobs will be lost. In addition, work in car factories, which make up a significant part of Hungary's GDP, has stopped indefinitely. In addition, the construction industry is in an extremely difficult position due to delays, mainly caused by border closures and delayed freight transport. As a result, the forint weakened significantly, and a huge change took place in a short time (Portfolio, online). Due to the crisis, there has also been a big change in the way you manage your day-to-day shopping. Visiting and using online webshops is increasingly replacing the usual daily routine. The role of food delivery companies has greatly increased, which has led to more consumer needs being met than usual. The main problem, however, was the lack of preparation. At the same time, interest in webshops dealing with manufactured goods has come to the fore (Thurzó,

2020). Based on the data of the Hungarian webshop ShopRenter 400, it examined the current and expected effects of the virus on e-commerce. In Hungary, it can be stated that consumer habits have completely changed, as due to the introduction of emergency provisions, some people started to panic and others sought a solution online. Based on this, companies need to develop a new e-commerce strategy that takes into account maintaining consumer confidence. Growww Digital encourages businesses to re-evaluate their ads on social media and to place great emphasis on so-called remarketing campaigns. According to research, another strategy for surviving this difficult period is hiring labor. By this we mean that webshops that observe a decrease in traffic share their freed server capacity with web stores that are heavily congested. The uncertainty that can be discovered between the coronavirus and e-commerce is unfortunately very complex. One would think that online shopping could be a good solution, but issues around the supply chain as well as changing uncertain consumer needs are a big problem. Digital Commerce conducted a survey asking businesses how much they think the current situation will affect their future. 47% of e-retailers say it will have a big impact on revenue, 33% say it is too early to answer this, but 58% of retailers say they will all affect consumer confidence (Szávai, 2020).

4.2 Hypothesis Analysis

After the preparation of the theoretical part of our study, the next indispensable part of our research plan was the setting up of the hypothesis and the examination of its correctness.

Based on the topic under study, the following hypothesis was formulated:

- The vast majority of marketing costs for medium-sized businesses can be attributed to their presence on social media.

The hypothesis was evaluated using the method of descriptive statistical analysis. The two variables selected are significant, so there is a relationship between them because the value of the Pearson's Chi-square is less than the significance level with a defined value of 0.05.

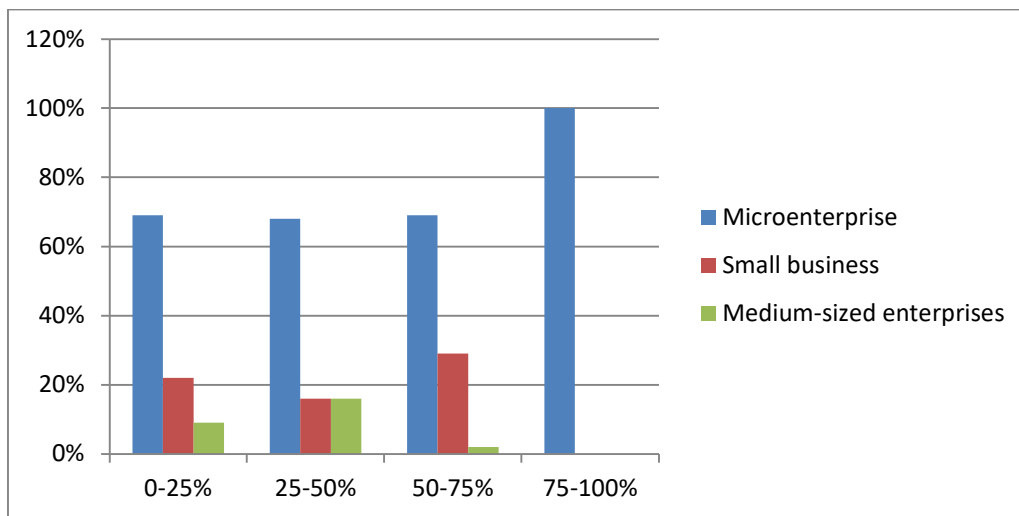
Table I: Chi-square tests and symmetric measurements for Hypothesis 1.

Chi-square rehearsals					
Statistics	Value	df	Asszimp. szig.		
Pearson's Chi-square	608,56	18	,000		
Likelihood ratio	35,99	18	,007		
N/number of valid cases	588				
Symmetrical measurements					
Category	Statistics	Value	Aszimp.sztd.f ault	Approximate T.	Approximate szig.
Nominal-nominal	Phi	1,02			
	Cramer's V	,59			
	Contingency coefficient	,71			
N/érvényes esetek		588			

Source: Primary data collection based own editing

With the help of symmetric indicators, it can be stated that there is a positive, one-way relationship between the variables, which can be said to be moderately strong based on Cramer's V and stronger than average based on the contingency coefficient. Based on these, it can be said that a large part of the costs of micro-enterprises are used for their presence in social media. This is further evidenced by Figure 1, which shows the distribution of marketing costs in the comparison by small and medium enterprises, i.e. the presence on social media is an extremely important aspect for them.

Figure 1: Comparison of marketing costs by SME groups



Source: Primary data collection based own editing

Conclusion

The questionnaire for the research shows that the majority of the small and public enterprise sector in the regions studied (70%) is present on a social media platform, however, the remaining 30% still do not have the opportunity to take advantage of social media. gave opportunities. In our opinion, the reason for this is that they are afraid of change, do not want to innovate, are satisfied with old, proven methods, and are unaware of the benefits provided by social media. For them, the authors suggest that they take advantage of these opportunities. Make the first impression in the hands of the business. Having an online presence makes your business visible, makes your target audience easy to find, communicates with potential customers, and provides up-to-date information about changing consumer needs. Internet advertising contributes greatly to the growth of a company, but for this they need to constantly analyze the results, which they need to use. It is often heard that advertising is expensive, but in our opinion, advertising and online advertising are even more expensive in the long run, and that is nothing more than if the organization does not advertise. For them, the cost of advertising placement is about 150,000 HUF per month. In order to achieve continuous improvement, they need to set more and more goals. We also recommend companies to use the platforms on which they have the largest target audience. For young people, we recommend using Instagram. However, LinkedIn is best suited for creating professionally relevant content. Among the critical remarks, it is worth mentioning that, based on data collection, most companies do not monitor the presence of their competitors on social media at all. This is a problem because it often happens that a business could learn from the mistakes made by the competition, or even

from their successes. With regard to feedback from the target audience, we recommend that feedback be taken into account and used in all cases, as they need to adapt to ever-changing consumer needs if they want to be present in the market, and this step contributes to efficiency. takes into account and uses the suggestions, in the long run it will also have the opportunity to increase the existing consumer base. Monitoring is free of charge, and the change in use contributes to achieving market leadership. The authors concluded that businesses are not fully satisfied with the benefits of being present on social media platforms because they do not spend a sufficient percentage of their marketing costs or marketing activities on this factor. As a result, most of them believe that no level of change is taking place since they have been present in the online space. This short-term thinking suggests that most of them will have a negative opinion and thus will not reap the benefits, returning to the marketing and advertising tools previously used. From this, we conclude that most of them are simply afraid to spend time, energy and capital on each platform due to uncertainty, and many think that the current situation is right for them and they do not want to change. This is clear from the fact that nearly 50% of respondents do not plan to expand their presence in social media. We recommend that they also appear on other social platforms and, in terms of implementation, involve so-called influencers (apply influencer marketing), which are a great help, for example, in launching a targeted media campaign. This, in turn, will only be a successful activity if the company incorporates the selected influenza into its current campaign. From a budgetary point of view, consider two examples. According to research released in 2020, a Facebook ad shared by a person with nearly 10,000 followers reaches 2,000 people. In the case of most influencers with such a large following camp, a post comes out to about HUF 2,000. In the case of the second most popular platform, Instagram, sharing a person with a similar follower reaches 5,000 people. For Instagram stories, that usually means 2,500 people. In this case, he comes out for a postage of about 3,750 HUF for an influenza with a follower base of 10,000. However, we recommend that business leaders should not be afraid to move into the online space, and it is not too late to start an active presence on social media. With the acceptance of the criticisms and suggestions, this part of the SME sector can undergo significant development.

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