

Preferred Channels for Information Dissemination in the Croatian Fashion Industry¹

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Abstract

The development of technology influences the ways in which society engages with media. Media users actively and interactively participate in the overall media process, and their criteria for selection, duration, scope of consumption, and participation are significantly increasing. The process of digitalisation, in certain media contexts, continues to retain traditional approaches—such as the digitalisation of print publications. Therefore, when observing the fashion industry and the magazines used for promotional purposes, the focus is placed on the context of both traditional and new media. Social networks have become a crucial factor in communication within this industry, not only for product promotion but also for business operations, thus altering the communication dynamics between (potential) clients and brand representatives.

The aim of this paper is to use interviews and qualitative analysis to determine the extent to which Croatian fashion designers utilise the opportunities offered by social networks, specifically examining how and through which communication channels they reach their target audience and the tools they use in dissemination processes. Furthermore, the study addresses the targeted audience's use of social networks and examines the extent to which respondents are familiar with Croatian fashion designers, and whether the choice of communication channels impacts the visibility of young designers. This involves comparing the role and significance of traditional media in relation to new media. The results indicate that Croatian fashion designers in the domestic market predominantly favor traditional communication channels, although they are aware of the relatively lower promotional value these channels provide in comparison to new media. This paper presents the research problem, methodology, and hypotheses, followed by a discussion of the results.

Keywords: Croatian fashion designers, traditional media, new media, digital channels, social networks, fashion and lifestyle magazines, influencers, information dissemination

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1. Introduction to the Context

The development of technology has transformed the ways in which the public engages with and accesses media. Today, users themselves are creators of content, distributing it to the public, and the criteria for capturing user attention are becoming increasingly demanding. Media can be viewed today as either traditional or new, with traditional media offering a specific type of service and fulfilling certain needs, whereas new media have shifted user expectations—primarily in terms of reporting speed, information richness, and multimedia features such as audio clips, video snippets, hyperlinks, and interactivity (Zgrabljic Rotar, 2020, pp. 22-23). The advantages of new media are primarily reflected in the ease of identifying target audiences, lower costs, greater reach, and the more accessible measurement of audience activity (Ferenčić, 2012, p. 44). A 2017 study conducted by RTL and the S.T.A.R. Digital Group revealed that more than 50% of companies had integrated digital strategies into their customer communications. More recent research by Facebook indicates that digital marketing strategies, hyper-localisation, and tools for connecting with customers will be key to brand presentation and promotion in the post-COVID-19 era, a time when much of business has shifted online (Bijakšić, Leko, Raguž, 2021, p. 169).

Social networks have become an essential factor in customer communication, product and service promotion, and mass information dissemination. However, despite the many advantages social media marketing offers, it is important to recognise the challenges that accompany it, as it demands a significantly higher level of engagement. Communication on social media is bidirectional, and customers expect prompt responses and personalised approaches.

Although fashion may initially appear to be a superficial topic for deeper discussion, it has historically been one of the primary indicators of societal conditions, its organisation, and the systems within which society operates. "With the emergence of fashion, during the Renaissance, we embraced the constant change of clothing as a symbol of freedom and social fluidity" (Biočina, 2016, p. 13). Since its inception, the textile industry has been linked to the development of industrialisation, and through its evolution, we can trace the social changes occurring over time. For example, we can observe the development of capitalism, as analysed by Marx and Engels. Furthermore, the fashion industry holds the title of the most globalised industry in the world, and discussions surrounding it often raise questions about gender rights, its impact on nature, and, as an ever-present issue,

human rights of those behind major fashion chains. Today, the majority of people experience fashion primarily in visual terms, following the latest trends set by influencers, fashion magazines, and prominent designers. Additionally, there are two main approaches to fashion: one consists of individuals who claim to have little connection with fashion, while the other includes those who engage with fashion on multiple levels. Biočina emphasises that fashion should be explored from within to uncover its essence, which can provoke questions that challenge the current world, its values, and even encourage self-reflection, potentially leading to actions that allow individuals to influence societal changes (Biočina, 2016, pp. 12-17).

The markets of Western Europe and North America have defined views on the economy, the role of fashion within that context, its relationship with consumers, their lifestyles, status, and societal roles, all of which determine marketing strategies for different markets and target audiences. Fashion and apparel are divided into three categories: haute couture, ready-to-wear collections, and high street fashion. Typically, designers are aware of the work of their peers, and smaller brands and fashion houses follow their creations, which become trends from season to season. In addition to major fashion weeks, textile fairs play an important role in the creation of these designs. After the initial concept, designers sketch, select and purchase fabrics, and then cut the garments. Once perfected, the clothing or accessories are ready for presentation, and the way in which they are presented can significantly impact the designer's recognition and success (Ujević et al., 2013, pp. 92-96).

2. Digital Fashion

Digital fashion can most aptly be described as the capability to try on clothing within a virtual environment, enabled by the integration of emerging technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Extended Reality (XR), and similar advancements. This sector witnessed its most significant growth and widespread adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that prompted shifts in consumer habits, with individuals increasingly engaging with fashion in digital spaces. Specifically, digital fashion refers to three-dimensional virtual garments that can be experienced in virtual environments, often facilitated by the use of avatars.

The advancement of technology and shifts in consumer behavior have gradually transformed designers into connoisseurs who bridge the realms of fashion and technology,

FIGURE 1. Examples of VR and AR in fashion industry and sales



SOURCE: Pavlov, 2024

thereby creating distinctive worlds that captivate users. Digital fashion was initially associated exclusively with the gaming industry, where protagonists often wore striking outfits that largely went unnoticed until the video game *Fortnite* garnered more revenue for the fashion industry than Amazon, as reported by *New York Magazine* in 2018. Pioneers of digital fashion include Atacac and The Fabricant, the latter of which famously sold a digital media dress for \$9,500. While the primary purpose of the dress's sale was to promote new technologies, this event marked a turning point for digital fashion, transitioning from the entertainment industry into a distinct sector with significant potential and growing interest from fashion designers (Särmäkari, 2021, pp. 1-5).

Veronica Arribas and José A. Alfaro conducted a case study on virtual 3D fashion design, considering the rapid technologisation that has primarily impacted the media and entertainment industries. These sectors are particularly susceptible to near-daily transformations, and the fashion industry can be seen as an intersection of both. The authors argue that the fashion industry is well-positioned to leverage technological advancements to enhance its efficiency. Their empirical case study from 2018 demonstrates that 3D modeling provides designers with significantly greater creative freedom, facilitates monitoring of each stage of development, and improves communication between designers and manufacturers. However, as a novel field, it is met with cautious adoption, with challenges arising from the lack of software expertise among most designers. Arribas and Alfaro propose the development of specialized 3D software tailored to fashion and design to address this issue (Arribas, Alfaro, 2018, pp. 240-251).

The fashion industry experienced its most significant shift from physical to virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic, when fashion shows transitioned to online platforms and social media, and e-commerce flourished. With fashion relegated to virtual spaces, its presence

became exclusively screen-based, likely confusing consumers about the distinctions between physical and virtual fashion. Additionally, digital fashion raises questions about ethics, overproduction of clothing, the material perception of garments, and the role of designers.

The concept of a non-fungible token (NFT) represents a cryptographically secure asset linked to artistic creations, fashion items, and unique objects. Unlike cryptocurrencies, which can be exchanged for one another or for money, NFTs are unique and non-interchangeable. NFT transactions are stored in digital wallets and executed via specialized exchanges. Once purchased, an NFT becomes the buyer's property, even though the digital image or video may remain visible to all internet users. Only the authorised buyer, or collector, can claim ownership. This form of property is considered highly secure, with minimal risk of theft, which appeals to affluent collectors of digital assets (Vrbanus, 2021).

AnamXR positions itself as the future of luxury brand experiences, empowering the creative economy and NFTs while connecting people and brands to virtual social worlds. Irene-Marie Seelig, co-founder and CEO of AnamXR, described the metaverse—a shared virtual space—as an ideal setting for fashion brands to enable users to "dress their digital personas." However, questions remain about how the metaverse could support brand storytelling and authenticity. While many fashion brands remain hesitant to embrace such ventures, their interest in revenues and new technologies suggests that an increasing number of designers will enter the metaverse. Given that many individuals build their identities in virtual spaces through videos and photos that reflect their interests, hobbies, and lifestyles, it is highly likely that fashion will find its niche in the metaverse. This trend is further supported by the growing emphasis on personal digital identities and the surge in online shopping, which increases the likelihood of brands showcasing their products in virtual environments (McKinsey, 2022).

3. Digital Channels and Their Role in Disseminating the Fashion Industry

From the advent of the internet, it was evident that its emergence would significantly influence media and its associated fields and professions. In response, the research group COST A20 was established in 2000, comprising 50 influential European media experts who explored the topic Impact of the Internet on Mass Media. Their objective was to assess the transformations that the internet would bring to print media, television, film,

music, and radio. The primary conclusion of their research highlighted that the internet profoundly impacted communication culture and media culture (Zgrabljčić Rotar, 2016, pp. 57–58). The fashion industry was not exempt from these shifts, as changes in primary media channels and approaches to reaching target audiences played a significant role.

Mass media is now an indispensable aspect of modern life. Despite often being used interchangeably, the terms "mass media" and "mass communication" are distinct, with the latter encompassing a broader scope. Michael Kunczik aptly encapsulates the essence of mass communication: "*Mass communication refers to all forms of communication in which information is publicly transmitted via distributional means (media), indirectly (with spatial, temporal, or spatiotemporal distance between communication partners), and unidirectionally (without role reversal between sender and receiver) to a dispersed audience (as opposed to a present audience).*" (Cited in Malović, 2005, p. 11).

Media remains inextricably linked to human existence, meeting enduring needs for information, knowledge, and entertainment. Malović emphasises that the global society of the 21st century operates at a rhythm dictated by the media, which not only informs but also employs techniques of manipulation and opinion shaping (Malović, 2005, p. 11). Mass communication, therefore, cannot occur without mass media; however, it also extends to personal and telecommunication media.

Black and Bryant classify media into three types:

1. **Mass media:** Includes books, newspapers, magazines, films, radio, and television.
2. **Personal media:** Distinct from mass media, these are operated by individual users and include computers, video games, cameras, and CD players.
3. **Telecommunication media:** Designed to connect individuals, these include mobile phones and other electronic devices.

While scholars agree on the significant power of media, some adopt a more cautious perspective, focusing on investigating this power rather than accepting it as absolute. Media theorists commonly regard media as the "fourth estate" alongside judicial, executive, and legislative powers, and occasionally as the "seventh estate" (Malović, 2005, pp. 51–53).

Each medium operates under distinct principles and rules for transmitting information. Newspapers, the oldest medium, have persisted despite competition from radio, television,

and, more recently, digital platforms. Media convergence has ensured that no medium is entirely supplanted; instead, each adapts to new contexts. Newspapers, for instance, maintain a niche by offering in-depth reporting, even as they face challenges related to speed compared to digital media. Today, newspapers commonly have online editions, which facilitate bidirectional communication and allow users to revisit past content.

Digital media has revolutionised interaction, enabling users not only to consume but also to comment on and contribute to content creation. This development has given rise to citizen journalism, where user-generated content increasingly gains recognition and, in some cases, monetary rewards. Previously, gatekeepers determined which news was disseminated. Today, algorithms play a crucial role in shaping journalism, a development that has raised concerns among scholars. While algorithms are often regarded as neutral distributors of information, their design can subtly distort the news-gathering process. Algorithms may incentivise journalists to prioritise stories that drive higher engagement, often at the expense of content that serves the public interest (Brake, 2017: 39). Furthermore, algorithms' focus on customer satisfaction can deprioritise issues of societal importance.

The emergence of digital media has fundamentally altered the role of audiences, positioning them from passive observers to active participants. Unlike traditional media, where audience reactions were limited to demonstrative acts such as changing channels or discontinuing subscriptions, digital media enables users to comment, share, and contribute to content. Researchers Manuel Jose Damasio and Carlos Poupa have identified three categories of online audiences:

1. **Basic internet users:** Engage with the internet primarily for music, social media, or browsing.
2. **Sophisticated online audiences:** Use the internet for learning, reading, or watching videos.
3. **Task-specific users:** Focus on a single activity online.

The first two categories dominate, though anonymity among users presents challenges, particularly in regulating content (Vilović, 2014, pp. 262–264).

Social media has become a pivotal platform for the fashion industry, offering direct access to target audiences and opportunities for experimentation with trends. Influencers play a central role in this ecosystem, bridging the gap between brands and consumers. Katz and

Lazarsfeld's research highlights that word-of-mouth communication is seven times more effective than magazine advertising and twice as effective as radio advertising (Kwiatek, Baltezarević, Papakonstantinidis, 2021, pp. 187). Today, influencer marketing can be seen as a digital evolution of this technique. Influencers are typically categorised into mega influencers, macro influencers, and micro influencers, each defined by their reach and engagement. While mega influencers, such as celebrities, command the largest audiences, micro influencers are noted for their authenticity and closer connections with their followers. Macro influencers, who specialize in specific niches like fashion or travel, balance reach with relevance.

The bidirectional nature of social media allows consumers to voice their opinions, both positive and negative, impacting brand reputation. Brands must actively monitor and respond to feedback, as transparent communication fosters credibility. Negative reviews, if mishandled, can significantly harm a brand's image.

Digital media saturation has led to the rise of Generation C, defined by shared interests and values rather than demographic factors. This generation prioritises two-way communication and active engagement over passive consumption (Biloš, Budimir, Jaška, 2021, pp. 58). Fashion brands targeting Generation C must emphasise authenticity and responsiveness, leveraging influencers and social media to foster meaningful connections.

The internet has reshaped media and communication, with digital platforms playing an increasingly dominant role. For the fashion industry, social media and influencer marketing offer powerful tools for engaging audiences and navigating a rapidly evolving landscape. However, these opportunities are accompanied by challenges, including maintaining credibility, managing algorithm-driven content, and addressing audience scepticism. As the digital media ecosystem continues to evolve, the interplay between technology, communication, and consumer behaviour will remain central to the industry's success.

4. Research Methodology

The objective of this preliminary research is to use a quantitative method to determine whether the Croatian audience is familiar with the work of domestic fashion designers, the role of influencers active on social media and other channels in dissemination, and the extent to which the selection of communication channels influences the visibility and presence of fashion designers. Conversely, the qualitative research aims to more precisely establish which communication channels are most frequently used by Croatian fashion

designers, how they reach their audience, how they engage with it, and whether Croatian fashion and lifestyle magazines are oriented toward digital editions and to what extent they are supportive of Croatian designers.

To determine the level of awareness among respondents—represented by a random sample—regarding the work of domestic designers, the role of influencer recommendations in purchasing decisions for specific fashion products, and the influence of communication channel selection on the visibility of designers, a preliminary study was conducted based on the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** Respondents are familiar with the work of Croatian fashion designers and follow their activities on social media.
- **H2:** Influencer recommendations influence decision-making when selecting fashion products.
- **H3:** The choice of communication channels can affect the dissemination visibility of emerging designers.

The research was conducted using a survey questionnaire that was designed and distributed between December 20, 2022, and January 15, 2023. The majority of responses were received in early January. The total number of respondents who participated in and fully completed the survey was 218, of which 179 (82.5%) were women and 39 (17.5%) were men. The largest group of respondents was aged between 18 and 24 years (171 respondents, or 78.4%), followed by 45 respondents (20.6%) aged 25 to 31, while only two respondents (0.9%) were in the 32 to 37 age group. Regarding educational attainment, 105 respondents (48.2%) had completed secondary school, 91 respondents (41.7%) had completed undergraduate studies, and 22 respondents (10.1%) had completed graduate studies.

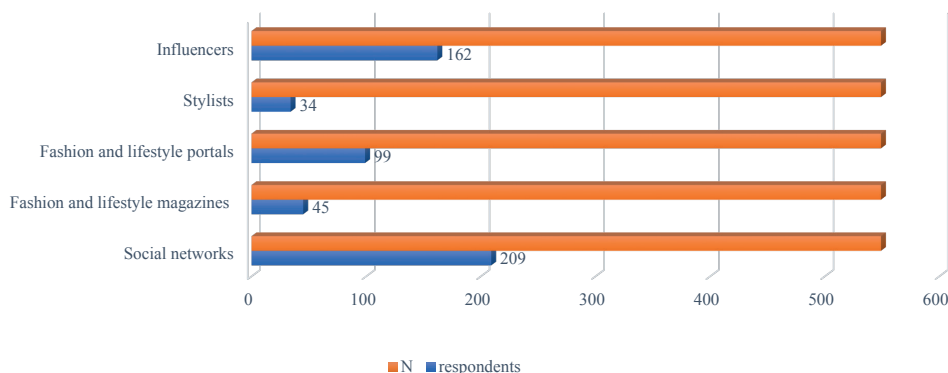
4.1. Respondents' Attitudes Toward Croatian Fashion Designers and Their Communication Strategies

Nearly three years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic brought much of the world to a standstill, prompting a significant portion of creativity, branding, and innovative ideas to transition to social media platforms. For Croatian fashion designers, this period revealed new pathways they could choose to explore or avoid. The question remains: how interested is the audience in such content? Do they follow designers' work? Is there interest in their clothing and fashion accessories? Following the collection of respondents' demographic

characteristics, participants expressed their familiarity with the Croatian fashion scene. The largest segment, 76 respondents (34.9%), rated their knowledge of the Croatian fashion scene as poor on a scale from 1 to 5 (from poor to excellent). Another 71 respondents (32.6%) considered their knowledge adequate, while 33 respondents (10.6%) reported knowing the Croatian fashion scene very well. Only 6 respondents (2.6%) claimed to be excellently informed about it. Regarding how Croatian fashion designers position themselves within the scene, the majority of respondents, 73 (33.8%), believed they do so well. Interestingly, none of the 218 respondents rated designers as excellent in their efforts to represent and position themselves on the fashion scene.

To reach their target audiences, designers must adapt their advertising and presentation channels in response to technological advancements and emerging trends. These channels are essential not only for connecting with niche audiences but also for building a broader public image and brand recognition. Numerous channels are available for this purpose, ranging from social media and print fashion and lifestyle magazines to digital editions, stylists, and influencers. According to Graph 1, nearly all respondents (209 or 95.5%) identified social media as the key factor for profiling young designers. Following social media, influencers ranked highly, with 162 respondents (74.3%) highlighting their importance. Fashion and lifestyle portals were deemed relevant by 99 respondents (45.4%), while only 45 respondents (20.6%) considered fashion and lifestyle magazines significant in this process. Notably, stylists were viewed as having the least impact on the profiling of young Croatian designers, with only 34 respondents (15.6%) considering them relevant.

FIGURE 2. Key Factors Responsible for the Profiling of Fashion Designers, According to Respondents



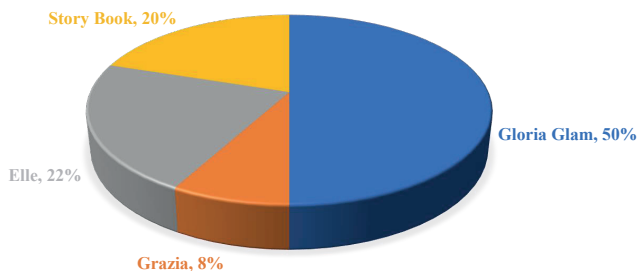
SOURCE: Author's research

Fashion and lifestyle magazines are now also available on online platforms, where their content is published on parent websites and subsequently shared on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Given that a significant portion of the audience for such content is active on social media, it remains to be seen how widely fashion and lifestyle magazines are actually read. According to data from a conducted survey, 6 respondents (2.8%) reported purchasing magazines, 37 respondents (17%) indicated they occasionally do so, while the majority, 175 respondents (80.3%), stated they never purchase magazines of this type.

Respondents' opinions, measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 – does not apply to me at all, 5 – fully applies to me), regarding the statement that they refrain from purchasing fashion and lifestyle magazines because they know all articles will eventually be published on the magazines' parent websites or social media platforms, revealed the following: 51 respondents (23.8%) agreed with this statement, while 45 respondents (21%) found it largely applicable. Conversely, 38 respondents (17.8%) stated that this claim does not apply to them at all.

As shown in Graph 2, among those who read or occasionally read these magazines, their preferred fashion and lifestyle publications were identified. The highest number of readers, 25 respondents (50%), expressed trust in *Gloria Glam*, followed by *Elle*, *Story Book*, and *Grazia*. Regarding whether Croatian fashion and lifestyle magazines provide sufficient opportunities or space for young designers and their creations, the majority of respondents, 138 (64.2%), were unable to assess this, while 11 respondents (5.1%) believed that designers receive adequate exposure.

FIGURE 3. Fashion and lifestyle magazines preferred by the respondents

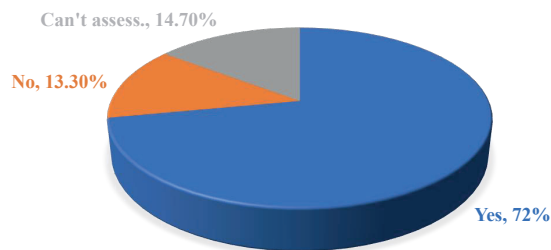


SOURCE: Author's research

Influencers are the modern opinion makers on social media, and their voice, a digital version of the most effective advertising tool—word of mouth—has a significant impact. To what extent are they oriented toward fast fashion, do they engage with the Croatian fashion scene, and do they provide visibility for young designers on their profiles? According to the conducted research, 88 respondents (40.6%) believe that influencers provide sufficient opportunities or visibility to Croatian young fashion designers, while 58 respondents (26.7%) perceive them as unwelcoming toward young designers. The remaining respondents were unable to assess whether influencers are adequately dedicated to the Croatian fashion scene.

Similarly, regarding the broader role of social media, the majority of respondents, 157 (72%), believe that social media platforms provide sufficient opportunities or visibility for young designers, while 29 respondents (13.3%) disagree with this assertion.

FIGURE 4. Respondents' views on social media: Do they provide sufficient opportunities and visibility for young designers and their creations.



SOURCE: Author's research

Given that respondents indicated they refrain from purchasing fashion and lifestyle magazines because they already know all articles will be published on their parent websites and social media platforms, it is unsurprising that the majority, 162 respondents (77.5%), obtain information about the world of fashion and trends primarily through Instagram. Following Instagram, fashion and lifestyle portals rank second, TikTok third, while only 2 respondents (1%) gather information about trends and the fashion world by reading fashion and lifestyle magazines.

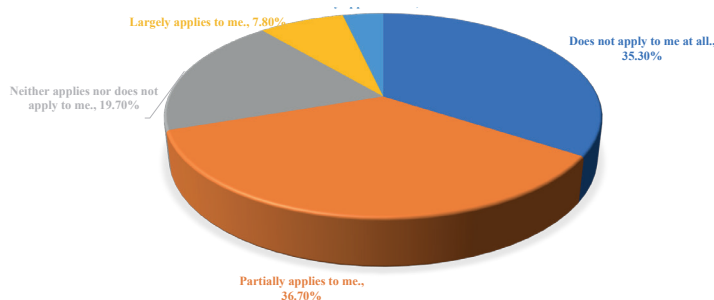
Considering that respondents are active on social media platforms where influencers dominate by promoting trends and products, it is expected that influencers may influence their style and fashion choices. However, responses suggest a nuanced perspective: an almost

equal number of respondents, 80 (36.7%) and 77 (35.3%), believe that this influence partially applies to them or does not apply to them at all. Furthermore, as illustrated in Graph 4, 43 respondents (19.7%) state that influencers neither influence nor fail to influence their style, while only 1 respondent (0.5%) believes influencers have a direct impact on their style.

Taking into account this relationship between respondents and influencers, it can be concluded that influencers are likely to have a limited effect on the selection and purchase of clothing items. Accordingly, 128 respondents (58.7%) assert that influencers have no influence on their clothing purchases, 45 respondents (20.6%) believe they have a partial influence, and only 3 respondents (1.4%) fully agree that influencers affect their choices when selecting clothing items.

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents obtain information about trends and fashion from Instagram, 133 respondents (61%) rated the statement "*I follow the work*

FIGURE 5. An indicator of the extent to which influencers influence respondents' style.



SOURCE: Author's research

of Croatian designers on Instagram" with the lowest value on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 – does not apply to me at all, 5 – fully applies to me). For 43 respondents (19.7%), this statement partially applies, while only 8 respondents (3.7%) fully agree and actively follow Croatian designers on Instagram.

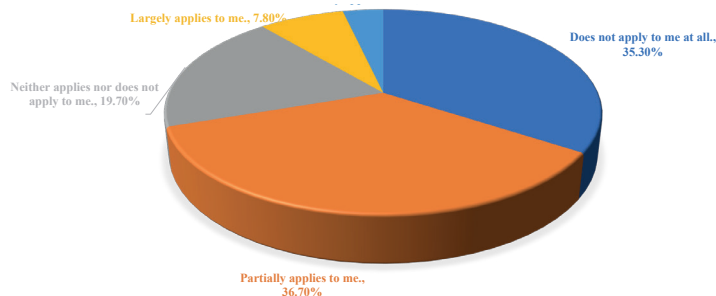
Brands that choose to promote on social media cannot reach their target audience solely through regular posting; investment in advertisements is necessary to increase product visibility and reach new customers. This undermines the common belief that social media platforms provide free advertising opportunities for brands. However, how relevant are

these advertisements, and do they truly reach an audience interested in them? Regarding the statement *"Instagram ads are useful to me and have led me to desired content on several occasions"*, 87 respondents (40.3%) partially agreed, 56 respondents (25.9%) disagreed, and only 10 respondents (4.6%) fully agreed.

The pandemic has also disrupted consumer habits. To what extent these habits have changed or remained the same can be inferred from responses to the question about shopping preferences. The majority of respondents, 106 (48.8%), shop using a combination of physical and online methods. As illustrated in Graph 5, a slightly smaller proportion, 81 respondents (37.3%), prefer shopping in physical stores or showrooms, while 27 respondents (12.4%) favour online shopping.

Through qualitative analysis and interviews with Croatian fashion designers, this study aimed to explore the strategies and methods designers employ in selecting distribution channels for disseminating information and promoting their work. Furthermore, it sought to understand how they conduct audience analysis and segmentation, as well as the proportion of reliance on social media and digital channels compared to traditional print media. Three hypotheses were proposed:

FIGURE 6. Respondents' preferences regarding the form of shopping.



SOURCE: Author's research

- **H4:** Conducting customer analysis and segmentation is a key prerequisite for disseminating content and information by Croatian fashion designers.
- **H5:** Designers prefer digital channels over traditional print magazine editions.
- **H6:** The selection of macro-influencers and the launch of online stores influence the future development of the fashion scene and the affirmation of fashion designers.

The study included five designers actively participating in the Croatian fashion scene. Among them, three were young designers who began their creative journeys between 2019 and 2020, while the remaining two have been established in the scene since 2014. The younger designers unanimously stated that they started showcasing their work and presenting their fashion pieces on social media platforms. One designer noted that she initially used Instagram as a portfolio rather than a platform to build her brand; however, audience reception transformed her efforts into a recognized brand, earning her the title of the best young designer.

In contrast, the two more experienced designers started their careers by showcasing collections at fashion shows, which led to sponsorships and further growth into well-recognized fashion brands. Reflecting on their success, both groups emphasised "slow and steady growth" as a reliable approach to brand development. The younger designers, who launched their brands during or shortly before the pandemic, faced significant challenges early in their operations. Two designers noted they balance running their brands while simultaneously developing new collections, while the third focused on rebranding her current visual identity.

All interviewed designers expressed a commitment to sustainability, opting for natural materials and minimizing overproduction to avoid unnecessary stockpiling of clothing and accessories. Fashion styles and audiences varied significantly by designer, segmented by style, age, gender, social status, and purchasing power. However, all designers agreed that their pieces target middle- to high-income individuals. Gender-wise, most designers cater primarily to women, with one designer focusing on unisex collections.

Despite the importance of client analysis and segmentation for effective business strategies, none of the interviewed designers conducted formal analysis or segmentation. A younger designer identified this as a future goal when she plans to invest more in marketing and PR. Meanwhile, an experienced designer tests the market by introducing more accessible products like scarves and bags to attract a broader audience.

Instagram emerged as the primary tool for client engagement among younger designers, with additional reliance on official websites and YouTube by more established designers. Most respondents also emphasized the power of word-of-mouth as the most effective method of acquiring new clients. Interestingly, one young designer successfully leveraged business cards as a branding tool, noting that people often collect them and use the contact details for subsequent purchases, fostering a more personal relationship with clients.

One designer reported that the online store integrated into their website generates most of their sales, with 95% of customers being new clients who later transition to direct communication for future orders. Collaboration with other brands and billboard advertising were also cited as effective for increasing brand visibility.

Designers primarily relied on digital platforms, with varying levels of engagement across Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest. One young designer exclusively uses Instagram, citing Facebook's limited audience potential, although she maintains a Facebook page as a secondary channel. Others adopted a more diversified approach, with usage ratios ranging from 60% Instagram to smaller allocations for other platforms. Most younger designers managed their social media independently but expressed interest in hiring specialists in the future to ensure more effective management. Experienced designers often delegated social media tasks to assistants or agencies, particularly for Instagram advertising and PR coordination. While digital advertising dominated as the most effective promotional tool, print media retained value for its prestige and as a lasting reminder of a designer's work. Designers rated the importance of featuring their collections in fashion and lifestyle magazines on a scale from 1 to 10, yielding scores of 4, 6, 7, 7, and 9.5. Those who valued print media the most viewed it as a matter of prestige but acknowledged that today's audience is more likely to resonate with street-style photography than high-fashion editorials. Contrary to assumptions, gaining exposure in Croatian fashion and lifestyle magazines was not deemed challenging, as editors and journalists were found to be open to collaboration. Designers emphasized that aesthetic appeal and professionalism were prerequisites for being featured. While print media contributes to brand credibility, its impact on sales remains limited compared to online content.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Croatian fashion designers predominantly rely on digital tools, particularly Instagram, to connect with clients and promote their brands. While print media still holds prestige, its role is increasingly overshadowed by the broader reach and measurable impact of online platforms and advertisements. This shift reflects broader trends in the global fashion industry, where digital-first strategies are reshaping traditional approaches to branding and customer engagement.

5. Conclusion

With the emergence of new media and the process of media convergence, audiences have shifted their role from passive recipients to active and interactive participants. Consequently, all brands in the market must adapt to increasingly demanding audiences. To develop a strong image and identity, the expertise of professionals behind the brand plays a crucial role. Fashion designers today cannot rely solely on simple advertisements in magazines or traditional campaigns presented on social media, as such approaches may fail to generate the expected audience engagement. Their task is to captivate audiences with unique content.

However, traditional media have not lost their influence in this chain; instead, they have enhanced their presence through online editions of magazines, radio stations, or news portals. Social media has become one of the most important communication channels for brands to reach their target audiences, promote products and services, and inform the public about brand updates. Therefore, it is essential for brands to maintain an active presence on social media and collaborate with experts to formulate communication and presentation strategies.

One of the significant advantages of social media and other online platforms is the ability to monitor competitors, which is essential for any brand aiming to grow and improve its content in today's market. This helps brands retain the attention and trust of their clients. Digitalization has brought social media marketing to the forefront, and it is up to brands to leverage this type of marketing to build a strong and recognizable identity.

In a conducted survey on a random sample, it was found that respondents were not familiar with Croatian fashion designers or their work and that influencer recommendations did not affect their decisions when choosing fashion products. Croatian fashion designers primarily use social media and websites to present their collections and communicate with clients. According to the survey, the choice of communication channels can influence dissemination visibility. Despite their presence in the digital world, most respondents were unfamiliar with their work, which may be linked to designers' admissions that they do not conduct client analyses or segmentations, prerequisites for effective content and information placement.

As social media advertising has become a standard practice, it was expected that influencers, who are now leaders in this type of advertising, would influence respondents. However,

respondents stated that influencer recommendations did not impact their purchasing decisions. On the other hand, Croatian fashion designers expressed openness to collaborating with influencers, provided these influencers meet certain aesthetic and value-based criteria.

It is evident that audiences have leveraged their presence and influence in new media, challenging brands planning to establish themselves online to invest more effort into content and presentation strategies. However, modern designers also face challenges within the fashion scene, as their role extends beyond designing to include strategizing the presentation of collections on social media and creating content that resonates with today's interactive audiences.

Additionally, digital fashion gained significant popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that also saw a boom in online shopping. Respondents indicated they were unfamiliar with the concept of digital fashion but shared the view with Croatian fashion designers that the ideal model of buying and selling combines online and in-person options.

This study and its findings also raised the question of the future of print magazines. Specifically, whether audiences are so influential and the future of journalism so audience-driven that all audience demands will be met, opening space for further research.

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Preferirani kanali za širenje informacija u hrvatskoj modnoj industriji

Sažetak

Razvoj tehnologije utječe na načine na koje društvo konzumira medije. Korisnici medija aktivno i interaktivno sudjeluju u cjelokupnom medijskom procesu, pri čemu se njihovi kriteriji odabira, trajanja, opsega konzumacije i sudjelovanja značajno povećavaju. Proces digitalizacije u određenim medijskim kontekstima i dalje zadržava tradicionalne pristupe—poput digitalizacije tiskanih publikacija. Stoga, promatrajući modnu industriju i časopise koji se koriste u promotivne svrhe, fokus je stavljen na kontekst tradicionalnih i novih medija. Društvene mreže postale su ključan čimbenik komunikacije unutar ove industrije, ne samo za promociju proizvoda već i za poslovanje, čime se mijenja dinamika komunikacije između (potencijalnih) klijenata i predstavnika brendova.

Cilj ovog rada je pomoću intervjua i kvalitativne analize utvrditi u kojoj mjeri hrvatski modni dizajneri koriste mogućnosti koje nude društvene mreže, posebno ispitujući na koji način i putem kojih komunikacijskih kanala dopiru do svoje ciljne publike te koje alate koriste u procesima diseminacije informacija. Nadalje, istraživanje se bavi korištenjem društvenih mreža od strane ciljne publike te ispituje u kojoj su mjeri ispitanici upoznati s hrvatskim modnim dizajnerima i utječe li izbor komunikacijskih kanala na vidljivost mladih dizajnera. U tom kontekstu uspoređuje se uloga i značaj tradicionalnih medija u odnosu na nove medije. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da hrvatski modni dizajneri na domaćem tržištu i dalje preferiraju tradicionalne komunikacijske kanale, iako su svjesni relativno niže promotivne vrijednosti koju ti kanali pružaju u usporedbi s novim medijima. Ovaj rad prikazuje istraživački problem, metodologiju i hipoteze, nakon čega slijedi rasprava o rezultatima.

Ključne riječi: hrvatski modni dizajneri, tradicionalni mediji, novi mediji, digitalni kanali, društvene mreže, modni i lifestyle časopisi, influenceri, diseminacija informacija

Od stihije do strategije: Obilježja kampanja za brendiranje poslodavaca u hrvatskom IT sektoru¹

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Sažetak

Rad analizira kako IT organizacije u Hrvatskoj planiraju i implementiraju svoje kampanje za brendiranje poslodavca. Autori su uz pomoć polustrukturiranih dubinskih intervjua sa stručnjacima za ljudske potencijale i komunikacije u odabranim IT kompanijama ispitali koje benefite IT kompanije ističu kao točke diferencijacije u odnosu na konkurenciju, planiraju li se kampanje za brendiranje poslodavaca strateški ili situacijski, kakav oblik i sadržaj komunikacije prevladava u provedbi takvih kampanja te na koje izazove i prepreke pritom nailaze. Ključni rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da IT kompanije u Hrvatskoj nemaju jasno definirane dugoročne strategije, već se kampanje planiraju situacijski, bez jasno postavljenih ciljeva. Analizirani primjeri također ukazuju na nedovoljnu sinergiju između odjela ljudskih potencijala i komunikacijskih stručnjaka, što za posljedicu može imati manjkavosti u kreiranju poruka i narativa. Time se previđa potencijal za održivu konkurentsku prednost, posebice kada je riječ o unutarnjem brendiranju usmjerenom na angažiranost i zadovoljstvo postojećih zaposlenika.

Ključne riječi: brendiranje poslodavca, korporativna kultura, IT kompanije, brendiranje, kampanja

¹ Rad se temelji na diplomskom radu „Brendiranje poslodavca kao alat u izgradnji korporativne kulture - primjer informacijsko-tehnoloških kompanija u Hrvatskoj“ kojeg je uspješno izradila i obranila mag. comm. et mag. soc. Irena Radoslav, pod mentorstvom prof. dr. sc. Danijela Labaša i komentora doc. dr. sc. Davora Trbušića (u Zagrebu, 19. rujna 2023.).

1. Uvod

Organizacije u informacijsko-tehnološkom (IT) sektoru u posljednjih se nekoliko godina sve intenzivnije susreću s izazovom potražnje zaposlenika koji će se prilagoditi njihovoj korporativnoj kulturi i poslovnim procesima. Sukladno toj težnji, planiraju i provode kampanje za brendiranje poslodavca (eng. *employer branding*) kako bi se ciljanoj javnosti predstavile kao poželjan poslodavac koji zaposlenicima nudi brojne pogodnosti i dobre uvjete rada. U kampanjama za brendiranje poslodavca kompanije nastoje istaknuti svoje temeljne vrijednosti, organizacijsku kulturu koju njeguju kao i stil interne i eksterne komunikacije, stoga je za očekivati da permanentno usavršuju upravo te segmente svog poslovanja.

Glavni cilj rada je istražiti kako IT organizacije u Hrvatskoj planiraju i implementiraju svoje kampanje za brendiranje poslodavca. U teorijskom dijelu rada objasniti će se koncepti i glavna obilježja korporativne kulture i brendiranja poslodavca. Osnovna je pretpostavka da korporativna kultura utječe na funkcioniranje poduzeća i na način na koji vanjski svijet doživljava poduzeće, ali isto tako može imati i važnu ulogu u stvaranju konkurentске prednosti u odnosu na druge organizacije. Upravo je analiza i definiranje korporativne kulture temelj procesa brendiranja poslodavca, čiji je glavni cilj stvaranje imidža organizacije kao poslodavca koji brine za interese i potrebe svojih zaposlenika, ulaže u njihovu edukaciju i profesionalni razvoj te prati trendove na tržištu rada.

U istraživačkom dijelu rada metodom polustrukturiranog dubinskog intervjua sa stručnjacima za ljudske potencijale i komunikacije u odabranim IT kompanijama ispitat će se koje benefite ističu kao točke diferencijacije od konkurencije, planiraju li se kampanje za brendiranje poslodavca strateški ili situacijski, kakav je oblik i sadržaj komunikacije, odnosno koje ključne poruke se komuniciraju, kojim javnostima i putem kojih kanala, te na koje izazove i prepreke pritom nailaze. Istraživanja na tom području (Dabirian i sur., 2019a; Dabirian i sur., 2019b; Tikhonov, 2019; Gregorka i sur., 2020) pokazala su koje vrijednosti u procesu brendiranja poslodavca trenutačni, ali i potencijalni zaposlenici najviše valoriziraju. Među njima se ističu socijalne vrijednosti (korporativna kultura koja je usmjerena na ljude i timski rad), vrijednost interesa (zaposlenici su posebno motivirani za poslove koji zahtijevaju inovativnost i otvorenost prema novim tehnološkim rješenjima), kao i vrijednost primjene (zaposlenicima je bitno da se njihove ideje, vještine i znanja prihvaćaju i primjenjuju na odgovarajući i smislen način). K tome, rezultati istraživanja govore i o učestaloj praksi IT organizacija da u svojim kampanjama za brendiranje poslodavca promoviraju vrijednosti poput privlačnosti projekata i zadataka na kojima rade, profesionalnog pristupa u radu zaposlenika i timova, mogućnosti profesionalnog razvoja i napredovanja, visine plaće te statusa tvrtke na tržištu rada.

2. Korporativna kultura – definicije, elementi i funkcije

Polazeći od šire perspektive i definiranja kulture neke skupine ili organizacije, Edgar Schein (2004) navodi kako se ona može objasniti kao obrazac dijeljenih osnovnih pretpostavki koje je određena grupa naučila rješavajući svoje probleme vanjske prilagodbe i unutarnje integracije. Pritom je obrazac dovoljno dobro funkcionirao da se smatra valjanim i, prema tome, treba ga prenositi novim članovima te ga interpretirati kao ispravan način percipiranja, razmišljanja i osjećaja u odnosu na te probleme. Obzirom da se i kompanije danas promatraju kao mikrodruštva (Smircich, 1983) s „vlastitim, karakterističnim obrascima kulture i subkulture“ (Morgan, 2006, str. 125), nastale su i brojne derivacije definicija korporativne kulture. I dok će je neki autori definirati kao „implicitnu, nevidljivu, intrinzičnu i neformalnu svijest organizacije koja usmjerava ponašanje pojedinca i oblikuje se na temelju njihova ponašanja“ (Scholz, 1987, str.80) ili jednostavnije, kao „specifičan stil ponašanja organizacije u kojem se izražavaju njezine temeljne vrijednosti“ (Bahtijarević-Šiber, 1992, str.30), korporativna kultura može se svesti na jedan zajednički nazivnik: ona predstavlja način kako se ljudi unutar kompanije ponašaju ili misle (Sušan, 2005). Miroslav Žugaj i sur. (2004) navode dva osnovna pristupa pri definiranju korporativne kulture: prvi, koji je usmjeren na one nevidljive komponente kulture kao što su etika, životni stil, osobine, karakter zaposlenika itd., te drugi pristup koji se odnosi na vidljive aspekte kulture, kao što je primjerice ponašanje zaposlenika u organizaciji.

Evidentna nemogućnost oblikovanja jedinstvene definicije organizacijske kulture može se djelomično pripisati i razvoju poimanja kulture u sklopu različitih znanstvenih disciplina, među kojima se najviše ističu antropologija, sociologija i psihologija. Postoje različite klasifikacije pojma organizacijske kulture, ali najšire prihvaćen pregled temeljnih teorija organizacijske kulture ponudila je Linda Smircich (1983), koja je identificirala pet glavnih pristupa pri definiranju kulture. Prva dva pristupa u antropologiji predstavljaju klasičnu funkcionalističku tradiciju. Oni tretiraju kulturu kao varijablu, s time da jedan od njih gleda na kulturu kao nezavisnu i eksternu varijablu, a drugi kao internu i zavisnu varijablu. Preostala tri pristupa gledaju na kulturu kao na osnovnu ili izvorišnu metaforu (eng. *root metaphor*). U tim pristupima, na kulturu se ne gleda kao na nešto što organizacija posjeduje, već ono što organizacija jest. Drugim riječima, dok se promatra kultura neke organizacije, zapravo se opisuje sâma organizacija (Sušan, 2005).

Korporativna kultura ima svoje integrativne elemente. Michael Armstrong (citirano u Žugaj i sur., 2004) ističe tri temeljna: organizacijske vrijednosti, organizacijsku klimu i menadžerski stil. S druge pak strane, Schein (2004) predlaže složeniji model prema kojem se elementi

korporativne kulture mogu raslojiti na tri razine: površinsku, srednju i „najdublju“ razinu. Pritom površinsku razinu čine artefakti koji uključuju sve vidljive aspekte organizacije (organizacijska struktura, jezik, način komunikacije itd.); na srednjoj razini su vrijednosti i uvjerenja, dok „najdublju“ i najmanje vidljivu razinu čine temeljne pretpostavke - neospor na uvjerenja i vrijednosti koji se zbog dugotrajnog učenja više ne nalaze na svjesnoj razini. Autori navode i različite funkcije korporativne kulture, među kojima valja izdvojiti postizanje ciljeva i vrijednosti, određivanje odnosa između pojedinaca i organizacije, uspostavljanje mehanizama za savladavanje izazova iz okoline (Žugaj i sur., 2004), ali i postizanje odanosti organizaciji te stvaranje stabilnosti (Smircich, 1983). Razina korporativne kulture ima i svoje konkretne implikacije na poslovnu izvrsnost i diferencijaciju u odnosu na konkurenciju u tržišnoj utakmici. U tom kontekstu Jay Barney (1986) navodi tri uvjeta koja je potrebno ispuniti: korporativna kultura mora stvoriti tvrtki „dodanu financijsku vrijednost“ (generirati veću prodaju, zadržati niske troškove i visoke marže); mora biti „rijetka“ ili bolje rečeno jedinstvena (sadržavati obilježja i karakteristike koje nisu uobičajene za kulture velikog broja drugih tvrtki) i naposljetku „nesavršeno oponašajuće“ (str. 658), u smislu da će konkurenti pri svakom pokušaju imitiranja korporativne kulture uvijek biti u nepovoljnijem položaju.

Korporativna kultura, unatoč svojim determiniranim elementima i funkcijama, različito se aplicira i treba biti prilagođena obilježjima pojedinog sektora ili industrije. Tako je primjerice istraživanje koje su proveli Amir Dabirian i sur. (2019b), pokazalo da zaposlenici u IT sektoru iznimno cijene korporativnu kulturu koja je „usmjerena na ljude i timski rad“ te da najviše interesa pokazuju prema poslovima koji zahtijevaju „inovativnost i otvorenost prema novim tehnološkim rješenjima“ (str. 84-86). Na sličnom je tragu i istraživanje Lee Gregorke i sur. (2020), prema kojem IT kompanije žele u javnosti biti prepoznate kao „jedinstvene“, ali i kao poslodavci koje karakteriziraju „inovacije i utjecaj“ (str.7).

3. Brendiranje poslodavca

Brendiranje poslodavca (eng. *employer branding*) zasniva se na kreiranju brenda poslodavca, koji su kao koncept osmislili Tim Ambler i Simon Barrow 1996. godine. Tada se prvi put koncept brenda ili marke počinje koristiti u području upravljanja ljudskim potencijalima (Mostarac, 2022). Ambler i Barrow (1996) tako definiraju brend poslodavca kao „skup funkcionalnih, ekonomskih i psiholoških pogodnosti koje se pružaju pri zaposlenju i poistovjećuju s organizacijom koja zapošljava“ (str. 187).

Drugi autori definiraju ga kao „skup opipljivih i neopipljivih pogodnosti koje organizacija nudi kako bi privukla potencijalne zaposlenike i zadržala postojeće“ (Tanwar i Prasad, 2017,

str. 392), kao upravljanje odnosom između poslodavca i zaposlenika, s ciljem zadržavanja sposobne radne snage (Biswas i Suar, 2016), kao „proces izgradnje prepoznatljivog i jedinstvenog identiteta poslodavca“ (Backhaus i Tikoo, 2004, str. 502) ili kao „dugoročni alat za privlačenje, učinkovito korištenje i zadržavanje talenata (Kucherov i Zamulin, 2016). Dakle, glavni cilj brendiranja poslodavca je stvaranje imidža organizacije kao poslodavca koji brine za želje i potrebe svojih zaposlenika, ulaže u njihovu edukaciju i razvoj njihove profesionalne karijere te prati trendove na tržištu rada. Jednostavnije rečeno, krajnji rezultat strateški usmjerenog brendiranja poslodavca je stvaranje pozitivne slike o organizaciji kao poslodavcu među ključnim dionicima (Mostarac, 2022). Osim toga, uspješan proces brendiranja poslodavca može dovesti i do smanjenja troškova zapošljavanja, može poboljšati odnose među zaposlenicima pa čak i omogućiti da tvrtka pridobije nove zaposlenike iako nudi nižu plaću od konkurencije, samo zato što je izgradila snažniji brend poslodavca (Berthon i sur., 2005).

Irena Figurska i Ewa Matuska (2013) navode nekoliko koraka u procesu brendiranja poslodavca. Prvo je potrebno definirati trenutačni brend poslodavca, na temelju toga kako organizaciju vide zaposlenici, potencijalni zaposlenici i ostali dionici. Zatim treba definirati kako bi brend poslodavca trebao izgledati u budućnosti, odnosno kako organizacija želi da je sadašnji i budući potencijalni zaposlenici percipiraju. Treći korak je definirati razliku između trenutačnog i željenog stanja brenda poslodavca, dok je četvrti korak izrada plana eliminacije tih razlika kako bi se trenutačno stanje što više približilo onom željenom. Na sličnom tragu, Simon Barrow i Richard Mosley (2005) navode dva pristupa u procesu brendiranja poslodavca. Prvi je *Brand Reality Model*, čija je svrha „sažeti kako brend poslodavca trenutačno percipiraju ključne ciljne skupine“ (str. 113-116), dok je drugi *Brand Vision Model*, čiji je cilj definirati željeni brend poslodavca u idućih tri do pet godina, kako bi organizacija bila privlačnija potencijalnim zaposlenicima te zadržala postojeće.

U kontekstu brendiranja poslodavca, potrebno je razlikovati unutarnje i vanjsko brendiranje. Unutarnje brendiranje poslodavca primarno je usmjereno prema sadašnjim zaposlenicima, a provodi se različitim razvojnim programima i izgradnjom korporativne kulture, poput pružanja mogućnosti zaposlenicima za profesionalni napredak, osiguravanja kvalitetnog radnog okruženja te brige o njihovoj motiviranosti i angažiranosti (Mostarac, 2022).

Vanjsko brendiranje poslodavca uključuje aktivnosti koje se provode izvan organizacije kako bi se organizacija predstavila kao najpoželjniji poslodavac i na taj način privukla najbolje zaposlenike. Pri tome je polazišna pretpostavka da osebnost brenda omogućuje

organizaciji da dođe do kvalitetnih i stručnih zaposlenika, a nakon što ih se privuče, oni stvaraju vlastitu percepciju o zaposlenju u toj organizaciji (Backhaus i Tikoo, 2004).

U tom je kontekstu Alexey Tikhonov (2019) analizirao koje su to najprivlačnije aktivnosti pronalaska i pridobivanja IT stručnjaka na ruskom tržištu, a rezultati su pokazali sljedeće: 67% IT kompanija privlači zaposlenike sudjelovanjem na različitim tehnološkim i sličnim konferencijama, 58% putem različitih aktivnosti na društvenim mrežama, 54% kroz suradnju sa sveučilištima, 33% ističe ulogu mrežnih stranica i blogova specijaliziranih za pronalaženje radnika, 29% promovira se na različitim sajmovima za zapošljavanje, 25% IT kompanija organizira vlastite susrete za zapošljavanje IT stručnjaka, njih 21% ima vlastitu programersku školu, 17% ima svoju mrežnu stranicu na tu temu te svega 8% IT kompanija objavljuje izvorni otvoreni softver za privlačenje stručnjaka.

Koncept brendiranja poslodavca u IT sektoru istraživali su i Amir Dabirian i sur. (2019a), koji su istražili što to čini „izvršno mjesto za rad“ (str. 1405) koje će privući IT stručnjake u određenu kompaniju. Rezultati su pokazali kako ključnu ulogu za privlačenje potencijalnih zaposlenika ima sljedećih osam vrijednosti: društvena, aplikacijska, interesna, ekonomska, razvojna vrijednost, uloga menadžmenta, imidž poslodavca i ravnoteža između profesionalnog i privatnog života.

Lea Gregorka i sur. (2020) zauzele su kvalitativan pristup ovoj istraživačkoj temi da bi ispitalo kako se provode različite aktivnosti brendiranja poslodavca u najatraktivnijim IT kompanijama u Portugalu. Rezultati su između ostalog pokazali da IT kompanije nude brojne benefite svojim zaposlenicima, kao što su primjerice financijski poticaji, stipendije, osiguranja, zdravstvene usluge na radnom mjestu, parking, usluge financijskih savjetnika, različite edukacije, visoko uređen uredski prostor i slično. Ipak, istraživanje je pokazalo i potvrdilo nalaze nekih drugih istraživanja koja govore o tome kako emocionalne, nematerijalne vrijednosti imaju veći utjecaj na zaposlenike od onih materijalnih. Posebno je to primjetno kod generacije Z, najmlađe generacije na tržištu rada, za što postoje empirijske potvrde. Tako primjerice generacija Z za razliku od prijašnjih generacija, umjesto novca, očekuje ekonomsku sigurnost i mogućnost napredovanja na poslu (Schawbel, 2014), traži i posao koji će im „pružiti osjećaj smisla, riješiti problem dosade i pružati uzbuđenje i zadovoljstvo“ (Rupčić, 2021, str. 53), ali istovremeno ne traže dugoročno zaposlenje kao prethodne generacije te se od njih „ne očekuje da ostanu raditi za istu tvrtku više od nekoliko godina“ (Sidorcuka i Chesnovicka, 2017, str. 810).

Zaključno, brendiranje poslodavca ima stratešku ulogu za organizaciju te je zbog toga potrebno da organizacija kao poslodavac osigura određene preduvjete kako bi se proces

brendiranja poslodavca mogao provesti što uspješnije. Neke od osnovnih strategijskih aktivnosti koje su potrebne za stvaranje odgovarajućih preduvjeta su jasno definiranje vizije, misije i vrijednosti organizacije, koje imaju ključnu ulogu u svakom procesu donošenja odluke (Brătianu i Bălănescu, 2008), zatim definiranje organizacijskih ciljeva i strategija te naposljetku provedba definiranih organizacijskih strategija (Mostarac, 2022).

4. Istraživanje o obilježjima kampanja za brendiranje poslodavca

Cilj ovog rada je ispitati kako IT organizacije u Hrvatskoj planiraju i implementiraju svoje kampanje za brendiranje poslodavca. U svrhu navedenog, autori postavljaju sljedeća istraživačka pitanja:

- **IP 1:** Koje benefite IT kompanije ističu kao točke diferencijacije u odnosu na konkurenciju?
- **IP 2:** Primjenjuju li IT kompanije strateški ili situacijski pristup kampanjama za brendiranje poslodavca?
- **IP 3:** Kakav je oblik i sadržaj komunikacije IT kompanija pri provedbi kampanja za brendiranje poslodavca?
- **IP 4:** Koji su najčešći izazovi i prepreke s kojima se IT kompanije susreću prilikom kreiranja kampanja za brendiranje poslodavca?

Istraživanje je provedeno metodom dubinskog intervjua jer ta metoda omogućuje otvaranje novih perspektiva i stjecanje uvida u dublje aspekte istraživanih područja (Milas, 2005). Polustrukturirani dubinski intervjui omogućio je da ispitanici govore što slobodnije, uz minimalne intervencije ispitivača, a sve s ciljem dobivanja što detaljnijeg i dubljeg uvida u to kako odabrane informacijsko-tehnološke kompanije u Hrvatskoj kreiraju svoje kampanje za brendiranje poslodavca, na što najviše usmjeravaju pozornost i čime se vode u tom procesu. Istraživanjem je obuhvaćeno sedam IT kompanija iz Hrvatske, koje su odabrane prema kriteriju velikih poduzeća. Prema vodiču koji je izdala Hrvatska gospodarska komora (Bobek, 2014), velike kompanije su one koje, prema kriteriju broja zaposlenika, prelaze brojku od 250 zaposlenika. Ispitanici koji su sudjelovali zaposlenici su u odabranim tehnološkim kompanijama te rade u odjelu za upravljanje ljudskim potencijalima ili u odjelu komunikacija jer upravo oni sudjeluju u kreiranju kampanja za brendiranje poslodavca u svojim kompanijama. Dubinski intervjui sastojao se od 15 otvorenih pitanja koja su bila unaprijed pripremljena te jednaka za sve ispitanike, a oblikovana su da potaknu ispitanike na detaljne i dubinske odgovore.

5. Rezultati istraživanja

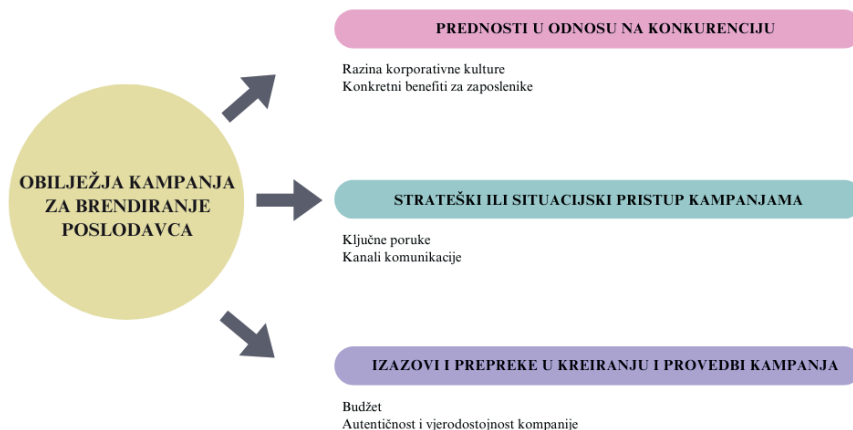
Nakon što su prikupljeni i analizirani odgovori ispitanika, autori su zauzeli induktivni pristup kodiranju izjava na temelju vlastitih predznanja i konceptualizacije odgovora ispitanika. Dobiveni rezultati kodirani su i grupirani prema sljedećim odrednicama (što je prikazano na Slici 1.):

- a) prednosti u odnosu na konkurenciju,
- b) strateški ili situacijski pristup kampanjama za brendiranje poslodavca,
- c) izazovi i prepreke u kreiranju i provedbi kampanja.

5.1. Prednosti u odnosu na konkurenciju

Na pitanje što bi naveli kao glavne karakteristike njihove kompanije koje ih izdvajaju od konkurencije, ali u kontekstu brendiranja poslodavca i privlačenja novih zaposlenika, ispitanici su davali nekoliko različitih odgovora koji su se uglavnom ponavljali. Troje od sedam ispitanika naglašava kako su njihove najveće snage i ono što ih izdvaja od konkurencije tehničko znanje i stručnost te kvalitetne i inovativne tehnologije i projekti koje mogu ponuditi svojim zaposlenicima. Troje ispitanika naglašava brigu za zaposlenike, dodatne aktivnosti i zajedništvo među zaposlenicima kao svoje glavne snage i prednosti. Dvoje ispitanika navodi kako ih od konkurencije izdvajaju brojni benefiti koje nude svojim zaposlenicima. Također, dvoje ispitanika navodi da je njihova prednost fleksibilnost koju

SLIKA 1. Pojmovi unutar kategorija i potkategorija



IZVOR: Rad autora

njihovi zaposlenici imaju, bilo da je riječ o mjestu rada ili radnom vremenu. Spominje se i transparentnost u poslovanju te stabilnost kompanije.

Svi se mi kao kompanije razlikujemo i svi imamo različitu kulturu i negdje će ti odgovarati, negdje neće. To je sve u redu, ali u principu ono po čemu smo specifični jest stvarno velik broj benefita te briga za zaposlenike. (I 1)

Definitivno treba istaknuti tu tehničku ekspertizu i to što imamo jako puno dodatnih stvari, pogotovo kad pričamo o tom engagementu: dodatnih aktivnosti, dodatnih mogućnosti za naše zaposlenike i to što uvijek gledamo što možemo još više i još bolje. (I 2)

Ja bih rekla da su širina, raznolikost portfelja i stabilnost korporacije naše glavne prednosti. (...) Možda bih još dodala mogućnost vrlo brzog testiranja novih načina rada i novih tehnologija. (I 3)

Kod nas je definitivno jako dobar work-life balance jer stvarno omogućujemo našim zaposlenicima fleksibilno radno vrijeme i uglavnom smo dosta opušteni po tom pitanju. Ne gleda se jesi li od doma ili u uredu, jesi li se spojio u 10 ili u 8 sati, zaposlenici imaju slobodne ruke, a ako trebaju nešto obaviti, ranije izaći ili nešto, to je uvijek u redu. (...) A druga je stvar ta neformalna kultura, odnosno zajedništvo, povezanost s ljudima u timu, prijateljska je atmosfera i svima se u svakom trenutku možeš obratiti za pomoć. (I 4)

Ono što je sigurno jest da je to jedna velika stabilna kompanija pa nema bojazni hoće li sljedeći mjesec doći plaća ili neće. (...) Drugo, nudimo razne benefite, od sistematskog pregleda do team buildinga. (I 5)

Jako je velika količina informacija i znanja koje ne možeš dobiti bilo gdje i to je jedna od naših najvećih snaga trenutačno. Osim toga, mi zaista prilično ulažemo u dodatno obrazovanje, certificiranje ljudi, tako da osim što uče kroz sâm rad s korisnicima i u ekipi u kojoj jesu, još i dodatno obrazujemo ljude besplatno. (I 7)

Treba spomenuti i da su ispitanici istaknuli kako njihova konkurencija više nisu samo hrvatske IT kompanije, već kompanije diljem Europe pa i cijelog svijeta. Također, napomenuli su kako je IT sektor vrlo specifičan jer mnoge pogodnosti koje su u drugim sektorima velika prednost, u IT su sektoru postale normalne i uobičajene što kompanijama dodatno otežava mogućnost da se izdvoje i pozicioniraju na konkurentskom tržištu, posebice u kontekstu privlačenja novih zaposlenika.

Kada je riječ o benefitima, odnosno pogodnostima koje kompanije nude svojim zaposlenicima, informacijsko-tehnološke kompanije i općenito IT sektor su po tome vrlo specifični jer, kao što je prethodno spomenuto, ono što je u drugim sektorima pogodnost, u IT sektoru je postalo uobičajeno.

IT industrija je baš specifična i brojni se benefiti ovdje podrazumijevaju. Tako da to nije nešto što je posebnost, to je uobičajeno da dobiješ takve stvari jer u drugim kompanijama naravno nije tako, ali IT je specifičan. (I 4)

Ipak, ispitanici su izdvojili neke benefite koje nude svojim zaposlenicima, a oni su većinom vrlo slični kod svih ispitanika. Izdvajaju se različiti zdravstveni benefiti kao što su primjerice sistematski pregledi, psihološka pomoć i zdravstveno te dopunsko osiguranje, *team building* za zaposlenike, hrana i piće u uredu te različite edukacije i profesionalna usavršavanja. Zatim različiti sportski benefiti, *MultiSport* kartica i sl. Također, postoje brojni benefiti za zaposlenike koji su roditelji te za njihovu djecu. Ispitanici su istaknuli i popuste koje u suradnji s različitim organizacijama nude svojim zaposlenicima.

Kad govorimo o zadovoljstvu, ali i o tome da su svi naši zaposlenici dobro, mislim da je jako bitna suradnja koju imamo sa psihoterapeutima. Imamo desetak psihoterapeuta i naši zaposlenici imaju deset financiranih odlazaka na psihoterapiju, što nam se pokazalo prilično popularno i kao jedan od boljih benefita. (...) Imamo one klasične benefite, poput financijske pomoći za rođenje djeteta, božićnice, plaćanje vrtića iz bruto plaće. (...) Imamo i MultiSport, budžet za dodatne edukacije tako da svi naši zaposlenici mogu odlaziti na edukacije. (I 2)

Imamo plaćenu naknadu za prijevoz, plaćenu naknadu za dječji vrtić za svakog zaposlenika, imamo u poslovnim prostorima kavu, čaj, voće. Imamo dodatno zdravstveno osiguranje koje uključuje sistematski pregled, dodatne dane godišnjeg odmora za zaposlenike koji iskoriste sav godišnji odmor od prošle godine itd. (I 4)

Imamo super edukacijski budžet, imamo male team buildinge koje ljudi mogu koristiti jednom u dva mjeseca, imamo veliki team building, velike božićne partyje. (...) (I 6)

Imamo redovito ispitivanje radne klime i zadovoljstva. Imamo neograničeno certificiranje i educiranje, imamo vlastiti centar za testiranja, MultiSport, voće, kave, sistematske preglede, interne wellbeing inicijative, edukacije. Osim toga, imamo darivanje krvi svako toliko, besplatno psihološko savjetovanje za zaposlenike. (...) (I 7)

5.2. Strateški ili situacijski pristup kampanjama za brendiranje poslodavaca

Rezultati su pokazali da IT kompanije u Hrvatskoj kampanje kreiraju prema potrebi i trenutnom interesu kompanije, da nemaju neku određenu shemu učestalosti provođenja, već je to prema potrebi ponekad češće, a ponekad rjeđe. No, općenito govoreći, komunikacija s ciljem predstavljanja kompanije i brendiranja same kompanije kao poželjnog poslodavca u očima javnosti vrlo je česta.

Mi smo u principu konstantno aktivni, u smislu suradnje s fakultetima, u smislu društvenih mreža, komunikacije onoga što se događa iznutra, u smislu nekih meet up-ova koje organiziramo, konferencija na koje idemo, priopćenja, odnosno intervjua koje radimo itd. (I 1)

Komuniciramo na dnevnoj bazi, baš zato što imamo jako puno lokacija. Dakle, moglo bi se reći da je sve jedna velika kampanja, jako je dinamično i zapravo nikad nemamo taj period kada se ne objavljuje. (I 2)

Mi ne radimo konkretno zakup medija i nemamo tu vrstu kampanja. Imamo određene employer branding strategije, koje trenutačno uključuju dosta događaja, suradnji s fakultetima, promotivna mjesta na Job Fairovima, priče sa zaposlenicima koje objavljujemo na mrežnoj stranici i na LinkedInu. (I 3)

Mislim da je jako bitno odrediti cilj i definirati u kojem stadiju rasta je kompanija te što želi dobiti s tim svim aktivnostima. Jer raditi nešto samo zato što svi drugi to rade nema smisla. (I 4)

Prije nego se uopće krene u employer branding, kompanija mora biti zdrava, kultura mora biti njegovana i tek onda kada je stvarno sve posloženo, može se razmišljati o employer branding. (I 6)

Ključne poruke i kanali komunikacije

Usklađenost između stvarne situacije u kompaniji i onoga što se prezentira u javnosti u središtu je pozornosti komunikacije većine ispitanih. Dvoje ispitanika istaknulo je kako najviše pozornosti obraćaju na to kome se obraćaju, odnosno koja je njihova ciljna publika ovisno o sadržaju koji plasiraju u javnost te, u skladu s time, koje komunikacijske kanale odabrati. Također, ispitanici ističu kako se vode time da budu autentični, svoji i kreativni te da imaju jasan cilj zašto plasiraju određenu kampanju.

Najveću pozornost pridajemo komu se obraćamo i što im želimo reći. Dakle, koje poruke, kome i kojim kanalima želimo komunicirati. (I 1)

Fokus je definitivno na tome kojoj se publici obraćamo, ali i na činjenici da su trenutačni zaposlenici jedan od najboljih employer branding. (...) (I 2)

Ono što radimo su native članci u medijima, novinama, na portalima, to su plaćene suradnje, a onda imamo i neplaćene suradnje kada je riječ o nekim projektima koji su od većeg značaja za zajednicu. (...) Što se tiče društvenih mreža, tu smo stvarno jako, jako aktivni, imamo recimo tri objave tjedno, većinom usmjerene na naše aktivnosti, edukacije, programe, ugovorene poslove itd. (...) Interno su to newsletter, koji ide svaka dva tjedan, koji se šalje svim zaposlenicima grupe i zapravo sadržava najbitnije informacije svih tvrtki članica. (I 4)

Svaka naša objava ide u tom smjeru. Mi se pohvalimo i nekim našim završenim projektom i promaknućem osobe u firmi, pohvalimo se da netko ima novi certifikat. (...) (I 6)

Komunikacijske poruke moraju biti ujednačene, i međusobno i kroz vrijeme. Važan je i taj aspekt da zapravo što više novca ulažeš u zaposlenike da se stvori dobra atmosfera u kompaniji i da stvarno komuniciraš na van sve ono što imaš unutra. (I 7)

Također, ispitanici su rekli kako su kroz godine iskustva primijetili što privlači potencijalne zaposlenike u IT sektoru pa i prema tome oblikuju sadržaj u svojim kampanjama za brendiranje poslodavca. Ističu kako ih najviše privlače novi, zanimljivi i inovativni projekti, fleksibilnost u radu, financijski aspekt te mogućnost učenja i daljnjeg profesionalnog razvoja.

Rekla bih da je to sigurno zanimljiv projekt na kojem će raditi. To je dosta visok kriterij. (...) Druga stvar je fleksibilnost. Mislim da su u današnjem vremenu i pogotovo u zadnje tri godine ljudi dosta navikli imati fleksibilnost. Onda definitivno financijski dio i četvrto bih rekla da je mogućnost učenja, pogotovo kad su to neki mlađi ljudi koji tek počinju u IT sektoru, onda im je jako bitno da znaju da će uz sebe imat mentora. (I 2)

Važni su im projekti i zato radimo na tome da dođu u kompaniju ili da im naši kolege prezentiraju projekte na kojima rade i prezentiraju ono što rade. Privlače ih i tehnologije na kojima radimo, projekti na kojima se radi, a naravno kad dođe do nekakvih konkretnih pregovora onda su im važni i uvjeti te fleksibilnost u poslu. (I 3)

Treba spomenuti da je pet od sedam ispitanika navelo da vrlo važnu ulogu u njihovim kampanjama za brendiranje poslodavca i općenito u procesu privlačenja novih zaposlenika ima sustav preporuka. Drugim riječima, znatan broj zaposlenika se zapošljava tako da postojeći zaposlenici šire pozitivne informacije o kompaniji, preporuča kompaniju svojim prijateljima i poznanicima. U slučaju da ti ljudi uspješno prođu selekcijski proces i budu zaposleni, osobe koje su ih preporučile dobiju nagradu, u obliku nekog poklona ili financijske naknade.

Mislim da je najkvalitetnija metoda word of mouth, da kolege međusobno dijele iskustva. (I 3)
Sustav preporuka se pokazao prilično uspješnim zato što su naši zaposlenici zapravo najbolji ambasadori naše kompanije i onoga čime se bavimo. (I 4)

Naši ljudi su naši najveći ambasadori i imamo bonuse za preporuke. Ljudi često koriste tu metodu preporučivanja svojih poznanika, bivših kolega, prijatelja i to nije nikakva protekcija i namještaljka jer ti ljude prolaze selekcijski proces kao bilo tko drugi. Međutim ako dobiju posao, onaj koji ga je preporučio dobiva novčanu nagradu. (I 7)

5.3. Izazovi i prepreke u kreiranju i provedbi kampanja za brendiranje poslodavca

U procesu kreiranja i provedbe kampanja za brendiranje poslodavca mogu se pojaviti neki izazovi, odnosno prepreke koje je potrebno nadvladati kako bi kampanja bila uspješna i kako bi kompanije ispunile svoj cilj plasiranja te kampanje. Jedan ispitanik je istaknuo

financijski problem, odnosno činjenicu da su kampanje ponekad ograničene budžetom i samim time su i zaposlenici ograničeni u svojoj kreativnosti. Jedan je ispitanik istaknuo to da ponekad nisu sve stvari za objavu u javnost, i iako bi priča možda bila vrlo dobra i kvalitetna za objavu, nekad se neke stvari moraju zadržati isključivo unutar kompanije. Dvoje ispitanika je istaknulo da je ponekad izazovno „targetirati“ pravu publiku s pravom porukom. Također, ispitanici ističu i to da je nekada teško u potpunosti vjerodostojno prenijeti u javnost vrijednosti i kulturu kompanije, a izazov mogu predstavljati i krive procjene u vezi određene kampanje.

Mislim da je izazov da živiš vrijednosti koje govoriš u javnosti, odnosno da si zaista takav iznutra. Jer kad imaš 2000 zaposlenika u kompaniji, možda će osoba doći baš u odjel gdje je loš menadžer ili gdje netko ne živi ove vrijednosti. Drugi izazov je jednostavno kroz šumu informacija postići nešto što tebe razlikuje od nekog drugog poslodavca. (I 1)

Ti problemi mogu biti različiti: od nedostatka ljudi, do nevidljivosti brenda, ali onda se oni rješavaju na različite načine. (I 3)

To je uvijek taj aspekt budžeta. (...) Jedna od većih stvari s kojima imamo problema jest da mi u kompaniji koliko god da smo veliki nemamo konkretan odjel marketinga, a zapravo za sve employer branding aktivnosti nam treba dosta velika podrška marketinga. (I 4)

Izazov je kreirati neku kampanju koja je stvarno realan odraz kulture koju pokušavaš komunicirati na van. Dogodi se da se trudiš oko neke kampanje, plasiraš je, a ona dođe do krive publike. To je nešto što ne možeš izbjeći. (I 7)

6. Rasprava i zaključak

U hrvatskom IT sektoru kampanje za brendiranje poslodavca dobivaju sve veću važnost, no rezultati ovoga istraživanja upućuju na niz izazova koji otežavaju njihovu provedbu. Jedan od ciljeva bio je utvrditi koje benefite IT kompanije ističu kako bi se diferencirale na tržištu rada. Istraživanje pokazuje da se naglasak uglavnom stavlja na tehničku stručnost, inovativne projekte, fleksibilnost radnog vremena i mjesta rada, kulturu usmjerenu na zajedništvo te različite dodatne pogodnosti, poput zdravstvene skrbi, sportskih aktivnosti, sustava nagrađivanja i profesionalnog razvoja. Premda se ovi čimbenici mogu povezati s različitim dimenzijama privlačnosti poslodavca (Dabirian i sur., 2019a; Dabirian i sur., 2019b; Tikhonov, 2019; Gregorka i sur., 2020), mnogi su od njih već postali standard u IT industriji, što otežava istinsku diferencijaciju na sve konkurentnijem tržištu.

Nadalje, istraživanje pokazuje da većina analiziranih IT kompanija nema jasno definiranu dugoročnu strategiju kampanja za brendiranje poslodavca, već ih provodi situacijski, bez precizno postavljenih ciljeva. Iako teorijski dio rada naglašava važnost strateškog planiranja i precizne razrade ciljeva, ispitanici uglavnom nisu naveli konkretne metode ni planove za njihovo definiranje. Rezultati također sugeriraju da kompanije koriste širok raspon komunikacijskih kanala: od društvenih mreža (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram) i internih *newslette- ra* do suradnji s fakultetima i sudjelovanja na sajmovima zapošljavanja. Uz to, snažno se oslanjaju na *word-of-mouth* i preporuke postojećih zaposlenika kao ključne načine privlače- nja novih talenata. Ipak, istraživanje otkriva kako se većina napora odnosi na vanjsko brend- iranje poslodavca, dok je unutarnje brendiranje, usmjereno na angažman i zadovoljstvo postojećeg kadra, u drugom planu. S obzirom na to da je *employer branding* dugoročni proces koji obuhvaća i privlačenje i zadržavanje talenata (Kuchеров i Zamulin, 2016), potrebno je dodatno unaprijediti unutarnje prakse. Među glavnim izazovima s kojima se organizacije suočavaju ističu se ograničeni budžeti, nedostatak strateškog pristupa, poteškoće u defini- ranju ciljne publike te osiguravanje konzistentnosti u komunikacijskim porukama.

Konačno, uočena je nedovoljna uključenost komunikacijskih stručnjaka u izradu kampa- nja za brendiranje poslodavca. Iako teorijski okviri (Drury, 2016; Itam i sur., 2020) ističu potrebu za sinergijom između odjela za ljudske potencijale i stručnjaka za komunikacije, rezultati pokazuju da u većini analiziranih IT kompanija kampanje vode isključivo struč- njaci za ljudske potencijale. Zbog toga izostaju ključna ekspertiza u kreiranju narativa i prilagodbi poruka različitim dionicima, što ostavlja prostor za daljnja istraživanja ove teme. Buduće studije mogle bi, između ostalog, ispitati percepciju utjecaja kampanja na odlučivanje o izboru poslodavca, analizirati različitost pristupa u različitim industrija- ma, razviti načine evaluacije kampanja te istražiti njihovu dugoročnu ulogu u poslovnom uspjehu organizacija.

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From Chaos to Strategy: Characteristics of Employer Branding Campaigns in the Croatian IT Sector

Abstract

This paper analyzes how IT organizations in Croatia plan and implement their employer branding campaigns. Drawing on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with human resources and communications specialists in selected IT companies, the authors examine which benefits these organizations emphasize as key differentiators relative to their competitors, whether employer branding campaigns are planned strategically or on an ad hoc basis, the predominant forms and content of communication, and the challenges and obstacles encountered in executing such campaigns. The key findings indicate that Croatian IT companies lack clearly defined long-term strategies, instead favoring situational campaign planning without well-established objectives. The analysis also reveals insufficient synergy between human resources departments and communication experts, potentially resulting in shortcomings in message and narrative development. Consequently, the potential for creating sustainable competitive advantage is often overlooked, particularly in relation to internal branding initiatives aimed at enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction.

Key words: employer branding, corporate culture, IT companies, branding, campaign