

Brtan, I. Social media marketing in Croatian consumerism - Appendix 1.

Theoretical background

Definition of Social Media

The term social media is not easy to define due to its partial overlapping in definition with other terms such as Web 2.0 or User Generated Content (UGC). The former was defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) as a “platform where content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion”, whereas the latter is regarded as “the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media.” Based on these definitions, the same authors (2010, p. 61) addressed social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.”

Dann and Dann (2011) claim that social media is composed of three interconnected elements: social interaction, content and communication media. Social interaction has the purpose of connecting one user with another through the site (e.g. Facebook), content (e.g. text, photos, videos) attracts new and tends to keep old visitors on the site, whereas communication media provides a coexistence between the other two components in the same virtual space (e.g. YouTube).

Types of Social Media

According to Rupin (2015), there are five different types of social media platforms – social networks, social news and bookmarking sites, media-content sharing sites, microblogging, and blogs and forums. Each of these platforms has its unique features and offers different experiences for individuals, targeted towards different target audiences.

Social networks

Social networks, or social networking sites, are defined as “sites that are used to connect users with similar backgrounds and interests” (Weinberg, 2009, p. 149). People who decide to join a social network start by creating a profile containing their personal information, after which they “build a network by connecting to friends and contacts on

the network, or by inviting real-world contacts to join the social network” (Mayfield 2008, p. 14). With 2.32 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2020), Facebook is the leading social network. It is user-oriented and allows sharing thoughts, uploading photos and videos, participating in lively discussions and forming groups based on common interests and backgrounds.

Social news and bookmarking sites

Zarella (2010) claims that social news sites refer to a quite personalized form of news display, as it enables users to be in control of their news streams. Platforms such as Reddit or Digg create very targeted and personalized content for its users by interacting with them through liking, commenting and sharing. Bookmarking sites enable users to save and organize links (“bookmarks”) to a myriad of online websites and resources. The most popular social media of this kind is Reddit, also known as the front page of the Internet used by more than 330 million people and composed of more than 5 billion pages (Rupin, 2015) called subreddits.

Media-content sharing sites

Media sharing sites, such as, YouTube, Instagram and Flickr, are platforms where users can upload, store and share multimedia files with other individuals on the site. According to Mayfield (2008), media-content sharing sites are focused on sharing a particular type of content. Two main forms of these sites are video-sharing and photo-sharing platforms.

YouTube, with more than 1.8 billion registered users and over 5 billion uploaded videos (Iqbal, 2021) is the world’s largest free video-sharing service available in more than 50 different languages. The most used photo-sharing site with more than 1 billion of active users every month is Instagram (Instagram, 2020), considered to be a simplified version of Facebook.

Microblogging

The microblogging sites enable users to publish short written statuses, from brief comments on a certain topic to links to certain websites. Upon posting, the short entry is then visible on the wall or news feed of every person subscribed to that user’s account. The most popular microblogging platform is Twitter, with approximately 326 million active users (Statista, 2019). This free microblogging platform enables users to share

short posts called tweets, of which 500 million are sent worldwide every day. Tweets mostly contain one or more tags (often referred to as hashtags as well), which Zarrella (2010, p. 81) defines as “a word assigned to a piece of content that helps describe it”.

Blogs and forums

It is estimated by Google that there are over 500 million blogs created worldwide (Ch., 2020). Safko and Brake (2009) define blogs as online journals maintained mostly by individuals or larger groups, featuring comments, ideas, and suggestions for a vast audience interested in the topic.

An online forum is a platform similar to blogs, which lets users get engaged in discussions on various topics. Safko and Brake (2009, p. 165) claim that “forum is intended to promote an ongoing dialogue on a specific subject, which differs from the idea of a blog, since the owner of the blog is the one who posts a thought and allows comments, and then moves on to another thought.”

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