



Social Media and Marketing Application in South-Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina Region The Practical Use of Social Media by New-portals in South-Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina Region

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Abstract. Social media, as a special type of new media, have made mediamorphosis of traditional media based on Web 1.0. Due to its interactivity and throughput of messages, as well as acceptance of the codes, social media have become an indispensable factor in the communication and marketing strategies. Applicability of social media, especially networks like “Facebook”, in the northeastern region of Bosnia and Herzegovina is recognized by many news portals and they have incorporated marketing and advertising functions in their everyday advertising. The research quoted in this paper confirms that the visibility (or rather, number of visits) of news-portals is directly correlated with their presence on social networks and, regarding this, the lack of news-portals advertising on these networks entail the fall of attendance (and there is also an imminent decline in advertising companies on these portals). There are indications that, even when in a short period portals do not actively use the potentials of advertising on social networks, the presence of a message has a prolonged effect – “social media marketing” performs its role even when “communicator” is not activated. The study also showed that most users of social media are students and the population under the age of 35 and that 92% of respondents use social media in the range of at least twice a day. Every second person surveyed uses this form of media every day. Nearly one in five respondents pleaded that they visit news-portals exclusively through links on social networks. The analysis also shows that in economic terms (profit from ads and other marketing services), the portals use “*Facebook statements*” to find advertisers

who are sent to the same target group as the portal. "Facebook" (in this context) conducts a marketing analysis in the real world. Instead of surveys, analysis, testing, statistical calculations etc. "Facebook" visitors are becoming your pattern for marketing analysis (to which you are a source of information) and providing establishing business cooperation with other sites (companies) with similar profiles.

Keywords: social, networks, marketing, Facebook, advertising.

Popularity of the social networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Pandemic of the social media and networks based on Web 2.0 didn't miss the Western Balkans, or the countries in transition, primarily Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, considering the population, can boast that every third inhabitant¹ is registered on the planetary popular Facebook. YouTube, MySpace, Twitter, Hi5 and other social networks (media) also have their supporters, and it is not unusual that one person has more profiles (accounts) on several social media at the same time.

How did the social media become so popular? If we take into consideration the transformation of one political system into another, the war which has substantially destroyed the economy and the post-war state of transition, in which the average citizen wasn't able to provide the basic necessities for life, nor did he/she have the possibility to travel abroad (which was allowed after the visa abolishment at the end of 2010), we can say that the perfect conditions were created for a virtual freedom or virtual public (Osmančević, 2003).

The new freedoms, along with the poor financial situation of most of the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the influence of traditional media and aggression of the Western culture, mostly expanded through the on-line forms and internet, and *in vivo* meeting and getting closer received its realization in the form of social networking.

Pro and counter arguments of social networking (or media, networks) have been explained on several occasions (common passive behavior of social media, possibility of illegal use of data or information disseminated via social media, changing focus of attention and energy from the daily activities to the addiction of users vs. socially improved possibilities, establishing friendly, business and intimate relationships, free advertising etc.).

¹ As stated on the web-site Socialbakers.com that specializes in tracking only Facebook statistics, in early 2011 Bosnia and Herzegovina has exceeded the number of one million users. Currently the figures are somewhere around 1.031 million with a tendency to increase; on average more than half of the users fall into the category of young people (18-34 years) <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/bosnia-and-herzegovina/last-week#chart-intervals> 25th February 2011

The subject of this paper is the use of social media to promote news-portals or content of information disseminated through social media by news-portals. News-portals often owe their popularity to the social networks which can produce, due to their way of business and through just one user, thousands of links to one web page, which was originally set up as a link on a social network.

What are the Social Media?

The social media, in their broader definition, are “the media that enable anyone to communicate with everyone. In other words, the content generated by consumers, distributed through the easy access internet tools” (Sterne, 2010: 20).

However, the definitions that leave a lot of space for subjective, and specifically individual interpretations, can often lead in a wrong direction; that was the case with the book *The Bible of social media* of 1000 interviewed professionals in the field of social media and media in general; 66% of them said that they cannot define what the social media are (Safko, 2010: 11).

In the same book the definition of social media is similar to the already mentioned one: “social media are the media which we use for socialization” (Safko, 2010: 25). Although this answer covers all the possibilities, forms and contents of the social media, it is necessary to point out that, traditional media such as radio, newspapers and television can also be used for socialization, since the basic functions of those media was to inform, educate, entertain and socialize. Anyhow, the nature of traditional media limits to a significant degree the possibilities of socialization of individuals, as compared to the nature and possibilities of social media, such as the networks like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube.

In the book *New rules of marketing and PR* (Scott, 2010: 38) there is also this definition: “Social media are the media which enable the way for people to share their ideas, content (of something), thoughts and relationships on-line. The social media are different from the so called ‘mainstream media’, by the possibility for anyone to create, comment and add the content on the social media. They have the form of text, sound, video, photo and communities.”

Differentia specifica of social media in opposition to all other media forms of communication (without the ‘in person’ communication) is that users communicate on social networks with the main goal to disseminate information linked to the users themselves: whether it is about personal information (affinities or attitude about something), or there is a need to share a thought, attitude, opinion, moral doubt, favorite song, video or multimedia. Rarely, the users of social networks are focused on profitable activities, and more often on self-promotion (unless the private users create their own web-groups with a goal of promoting their own products, services or anything that they want to offer).

As for every way of communication, it is important to know your target group as well as the answers to Quintilian's questions that he raised 2000 years ago: who are we, what are we doing on the social networks, for how long do we plan to do that, to whom do we plan to focus the communication and what are we hoping for? The audience of the social media is hard to categorize: the age structure is from teenagers to retired, education level ranges also between two extremes: from persons with no formal education (children in elementary school) to intellectuals with master's and doctoral degree. Also, on social networks there are no limitations in regard to the individual's affinity: here once again we see religious workers, professors and academics, doctors, lawyers, politicians, fashion and nutritionist gurus together with construction workers, entrepreneurs and unemployed, drivers, waiters and students to deviant individuals focused on pedophilia, racism, sadism or violence, pyromania, kleptomania or other forms of socially not acceptable behavior.

However, what is common for everybody who visits and uses social media is that they are not immune to the marketing and other types of messages posted by the users. The marketing experts are also aware of that, and they underestimate the fact that the marketing on social media holds 10% of all the money spent online – 2.9 milliards of dollars – (Tracy, 2008: 9) and nobody wants to miss the chance for free advertising and promotion via the social networks.

Correlation of use of the Social Media and visits of the info-portals in Bosnia and Herzegovina

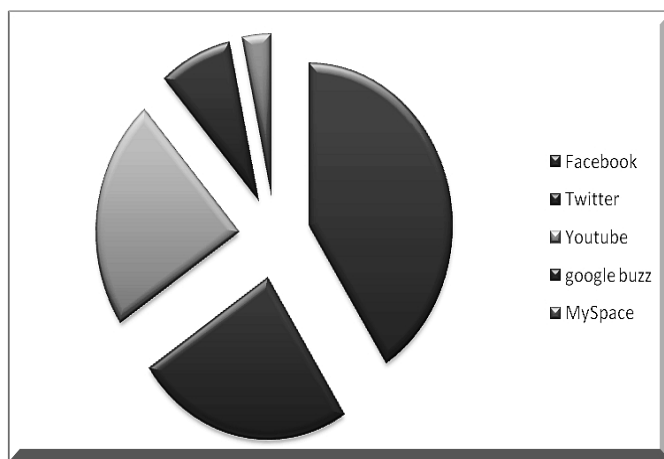
Facebook is the most popular social network/media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while YouTube is still not considered social media.² Twitter, MySpace and other social media are mostly on the margins and, for relatively small number of users, don't represent indicative form of social media. In comparison, Facebook is the social media that has the most advertising from informative and news-portals, especially the ones which are just starting the business. Most of the news-portals owe a big part of their popularity exclusively to the social networks as confirmed in the second part of this paper.

According to the information taken from the web-site alexa-ba.com, among 50 web-sites that are most visited, informative portals are prevailing³ (about half of the 50 that are most visited in Bosnia and Herzegovina are news-portals). Sports

² Although on YouTube every user has the possibility to open their own video-channel, to set contents which were created as creative work or the video-contents that he/she prefers and to comment his/her own and other's video-contents or to mark a specific detail on the video, for most users, YouTube is just a video-channel where they can find what they want to see and by that be passive consumers of the most popular channel for video-hosting (remark Š.H.).

³ <http://www.alexaba.com/> 25.2.2011.

and entertainment portals follow, and then the portals focused on business and employment (like pik.ba, posao.ba, market.ba etc.). From the total of 50 most visited web-pages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 50% have their own account on Facebook, and 14 out of 50 analyzed portals use YouTube as link for videos. The third most popular social network among these 50 most visited web-portals is Twitter, followed by Google Buzz and MySpace. The first chart represents the use of social networks via the most visited Bosnian web-portals.



Graph 1. The use of social networks via 50 most visited Bosnian web-portals
(Authors' computation based on www.alexa-ba.com)

Analysis of visits of the portals and use of social networks

During March 2011 (from 14th to 24th March 2011) I have conducted a research with the goal of finding out the correlation between the number of visits on the informative portals during their regular advertising on social networks (especially Facebook) and number of visits when they weren't using the social media to promote content of their portals.

Four news-portals have been randomly chosen based in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina: www.tip.ba, www.zivinice.ba, www.infobrcko.com, www.tuzlainfo.ba. All analyzed portals have their own production of news content such as reports, news, columns, service information and agency's news and are registered as news-portals. All analyzed portals use social media for marketing such as:

- Fan-groups through which they disseminate links that lead straight to their portal

- Sending private messages to users of social networks who agree to receive that sort of messages
- Marketing from the users of social media (users who send links of news-portals to other users for which they think that it would be interesting)

Monitoring visits of web-portals was enabled via Google Analytics as follows: management of portals regularly used social networks for the purpose of marketing throughout 10 days when the average visit rate was monitored. In addition to the above mentioned, there was a test-period lasting for 48 hours when the portals editors shut down the advertising on social media (16th and 17th March) in order to record the extent to which the visit numbers would decline on the monitored portals.

Research results

Web-portal brckoinfo.com⁴ is the informative portal of the city of Brcko and it is one of the most visited info-portals in Brcko district. During the monitoring of 10 days (the results from the test-period of 48 hours were not counted) the average daily visit rate of this portal was 5,241 visits (in total 52,415 visits for the whole period)⁵ and the visitors have opened in total 127,498 pages during the visit to web-site infobrcko.com.

The number of unique visits made via social media⁶ was 18,677 during the 10 days monitoring (33.19% of the total number of visits came via Facebook).

The test-period of 48 hours (16th and 17th March 2011) during which the portal infobrcko.com didn't advertise on the social networks shows the following: the total number of visits during this period was 3,852 (about 1,926 daily) which shows that the visitation in the test-period in relation to the previous period decreased with more than a third (in the test-period with no advertising on the social media, only 36.74% of visits was recorded as compared to the periods when the advertising was regular).

Web-portal zivinice.ba⁷ is one of the most visited informative portals in the city of Zivinice.⁸ During the period of 10 days (not counting the test-period), 10,105 of unique visits were recorded (1,263 visits daily), and the visitors spent in average 2:21 minutes on the portal. In total 46,914 pages were opened on the portal. The number of unique visitors during the period of 10 days via social networks was 2,365 (18.94% of the total number of visits). The total number of

⁴ For more info, please visit <http://www.infobrcko.com/v3/> 28.3.2011.

⁵ The average time of duration of visit on the portal infobrcko.com is 2:24 minutes

⁶ Primarily the social network Facebook

⁷ For more info, please visit <http://www.zivinice.ba/> 28.3.2011.

⁸ Despite this claim the zivinice.ba is not on the list of the 1000 most visited portals recorded by alexa.ba – remark Š.H.

visits on zivinice.ba is based primarily on research (Google with 41.38%), secondly via direct links (38.06%), and on the third place is Facebook as the social media (12.47%).

During the test-period of 48 hours (without advertising on Facebook) the results were recorded as follows: the total of 2,379 visits (1,189 visits daily) of which almost 9% was via Facebook (209 visits). Total visitation decrease was 5.82%. The primary channels via which the users used to get to the portal zivinice.ba remained: google.ba, direct links and on the third place Facebook with 8.79% of visits.

The web-portal tuzlainfo.ba⁹ is one of the few most visited informative portals in the city of Tuzla.¹⁰ During the period of 10 days (not counting the test-period), 9,379 of unique visits were recorded (1,172 visits daily), and in total 12,532 pages were opened on the portal. The visitors spent in average 1:13 minutes on the portal. According to the number of sources which have led the users to the web-portal tuzlainfo on the first place is the browser Google with 46.22%, followed by the social media Facebook with 44.09% (3,038 visits). In other words, almost a half of total visits recorded on the web-portal tuzlainfo.ba came thanks to the social media!

During the test-period, the following results were recorded: a total of 815 visits (407 visits daily) were recorded; almost 60% of users were led to this portal by the web-browser, while Facebook was on the second place and less than 30%. On the third place are the visitors who got to the address by typing in the web-address of this info-portal.

The total number of visits decreased by 65.23% during the test-period (compared to 1,172 unique visits on days when the advertising was recorded, there were 400 visits less than in days when there was advertising on the social networks). Also, significant information is that Facebook, regardless of the lack of advertising from the portal tuzlainfo.ba, kept the second place in number of visitors during the test-period, even though the divergence of almost 16% less number of visitors which came via Facebook during the days without advertising indicates that the lack of activity on social media leads to the significant number of visitors on the original web-site.

The web-portal tip.ba¹¹ is the most visited informative portal in the city of Tuzla (it holds the 40th place on the list of the most visited Bosnian sites recorded by alexa). During the period of 10 days (not counting the test-period) 40,163 of unique visits were recorded (5,086 visits daily) and the visitors spent in average

⁹ For more info, please visit <http://www.tuzlainfo.ba/> 28.3.2011.

¹⁰ At the time of writing the article (Spring 2011) tuzlainfo.ba is on the 689th place on the list of the most visited Bosnian sites recorded by alexa.ba (remark Š.H).

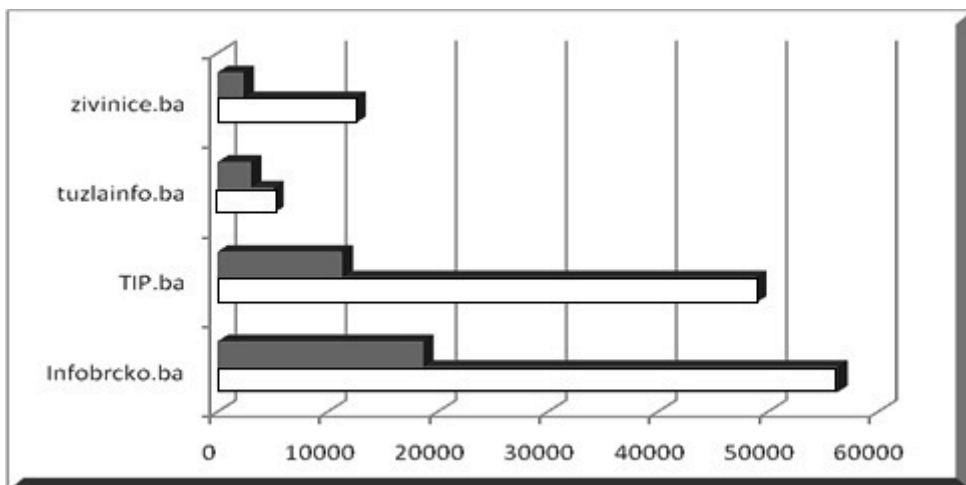
¹¹ For more info, please visit <http://www.tip.ba/> 28.3.2011.

9:31 minutes on the portal. In total, 153,380 pages were opened during the monitoring period.

The social media are responsible for 9,681 visits (1,210 visits daily) on this info-portal, which is in total 24.1% of the total number of visits. In other words, Facebook directed every forth visitor to the web-portal tip.ba.

During the 2 day test-period without the advertising of content and links on the social networks that direct users to the web-portal tip.ba¹² the results were recorded as follows: the total number of visits in that period was 8,729 (4,365 visits daily), which is around 15% less visits daily compared to the days with advertising on Facebook. During the test-period, 1, 635 visits (817 daily) were recorded via Facebook, which decreased by 32.48% in relation to average percentage. In other words, in the days when there was no advertising on Facebook, there were almost a third of the visitors less on the web-portal tip.ba.

The results of the analysis of visitation from all four informative portals are presented in the second chart.

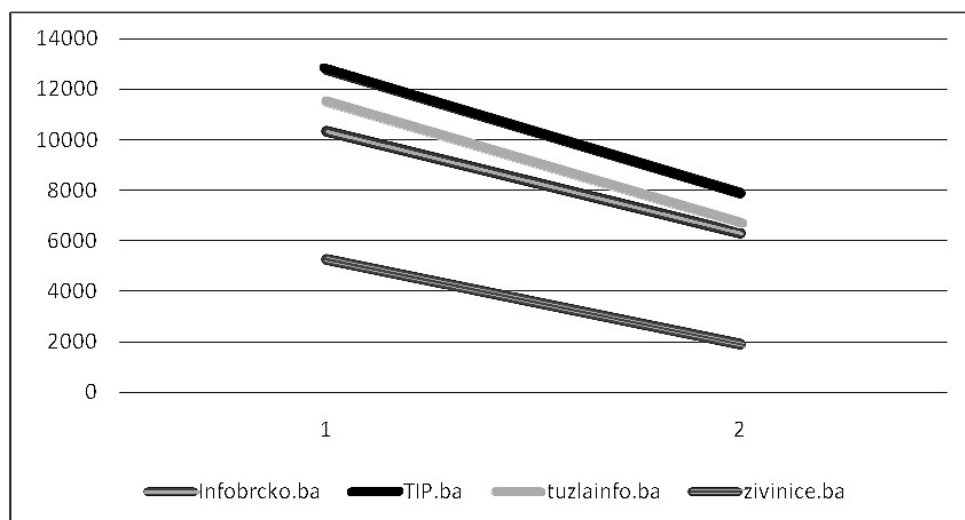


Graph 2. Visits of the four sites

(Longer bars represent the total number of visits on the portals. Grey color represents the number of visits that came via social media) (Authors' computation)

¹² Due to delayed reaction on the portal tip.ba, we were forced to start the period with no advertising the day after, instead of initially planned 16th and 17th March, the test-period started 17th and lasted through 18th March 2011– remark Š.H.

The difference between the average number of visits in the test-period (without advertising) in relation to days with advertising on social media is presented in the third chart.



Graph 3. Number of visits of the monitored sites
(Every portal is marked with a shade of grey. All monitored portals have shown a decrease in visits during the 2-days test-period)
(Authors' computation)

As seen from the third chart, the number of visits declined on every monitored portal, but in different percentage (depending on the previous amount of usage of social media in advertising, the regular users independent from social networks, the marketing actions of each portal etc.). The decrease in visits varies from “almost not recordable”, barely 6% (web-portal zivinice.ba), to a significant 15% on the web-portal tip.ba, and then to really significant 36.74% on web-portal infobrcko.com and even to 65% on the web-portal tuzlainfo.ba.

An also significant fact is that regardless of the *possible lack of advertising* info-portals on the social media, a number of users still use social media for access to informative and other contents on the portals which have their own accounts on Facebook (whether they are members of groups or they use “old” links on informative portals, via their own web-sites or via web-sites of their friends on the social networks.)

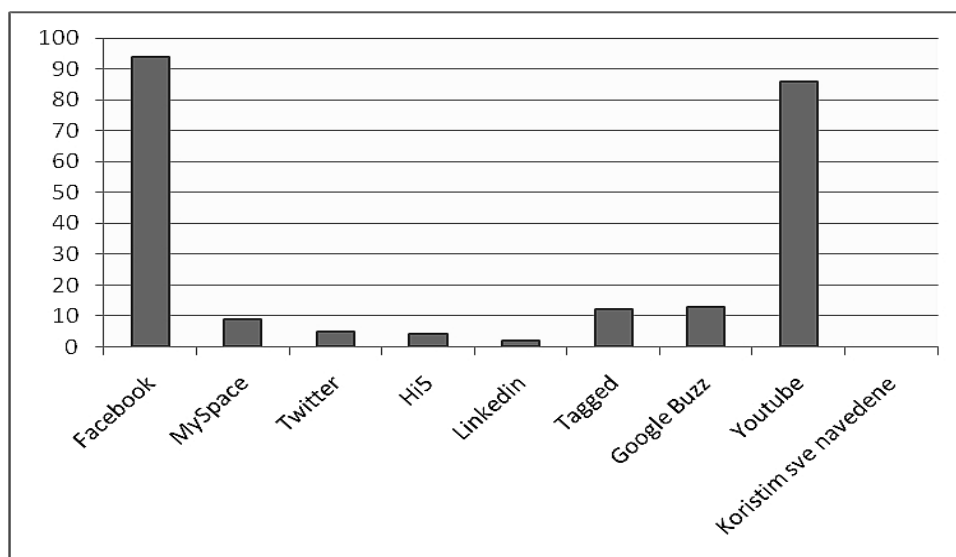
You can say that the social media have the role of advertiser even when we don't use them actively!

What did the questionnaires show?

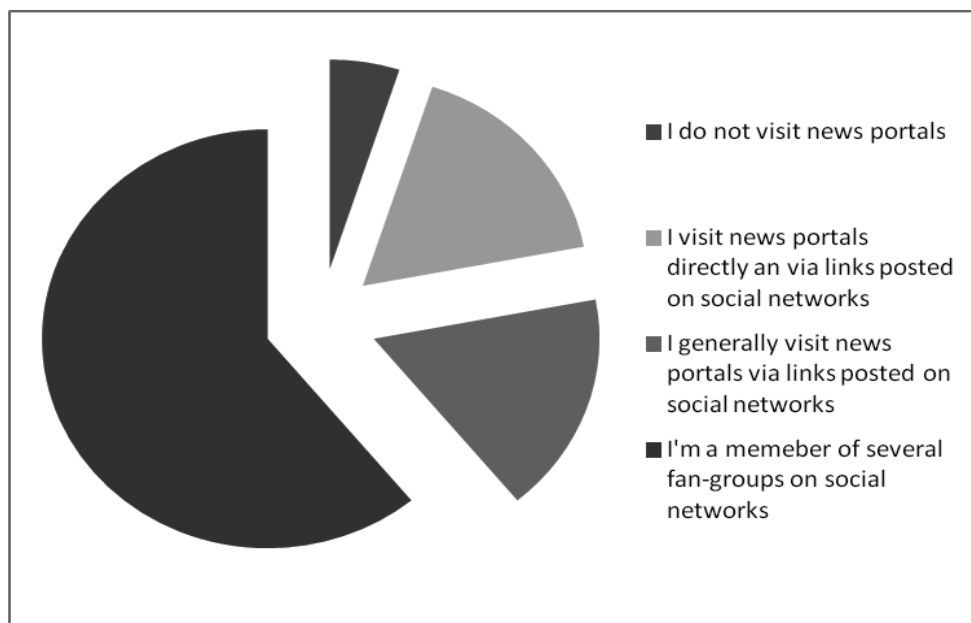
The questionnaire answered by 100 anonymous users of internet in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina showed the following:

- out of the 100 respondents 67 were women and 33 were men;
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of users fits the category of younger users (76% of users were between 18 and 25 years old). 23 users also fits the category of relatively young users (age from 26 to 35) and only 1 user was older than 36 years;
- The average level of education is high school degree (81 were students, and 6 users stated to have graduated from high school). Other 12 users had university degree and 1 owned master's degree;
- The most popular social media/networks were Facebook (94%) and YouTube (86%), far behind are Google Buzz (13%), Tagged (12%), MySpace (9%) and Twitter (5%), (see graph 4);
- The popularity of social media is shown by the fact that 50% of users use social media every day, 32% of them use social media almost every day, and just 10% use social media only 2 days a week;
- Informative and news-portals are visited almost every day in 47% of cases and 17% of users visit them every day;
- Users visit most commonly news and info-portals via direct links and via social networks – 61% of users. Other 17% come directly via links posted on social networks, and 17% are members of the info-portal groups created on the social networks. Only 5% of the questioned individuals don't visit news-portals¹³ (see graph 5).

¹³ Research was conducted in February and March 2011 via online questionnaire www.surveyconsole.com



Graph 4. Results of 100 questioned internet-users in North-Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of the popularity of the Social Media (Authors' computation)



Graph 5. Results of the ways by which the users visit news and info-portals (Authors' computation)

The economic approach to Social Media

Analytic approach to the possibilities of the new media involves optimization of investment in the use of the social media, analysis of the online market, the new perspectives for development of advertisers, local and regional moderators of information, and informative networks focused on the target audience. Concretization of the audience via new media, in new conditions by sending information through horizontal connections, and the possibility of permanent insight into the reactions of audience to the published information enable local, regional and global online information ‘dealers’ to make a precise evaluation of audience characteristics, and also a possibility to correct content and profiles if they don’t receive the wanted feedback.

Social networks, especially in that segment that brings together users on different bases, enable the monitoring and testing of the market, analysis of existing conditions in the field of informative business, and clear division between the online and offline market in the new terms of economy via internet. The focus of the analysis of management of information via local and regional informative agencies, portals and online editions of traditional media, which at the same time advertise via social networks, is on the optimization of use of the most valuable mechanisms of advertising, in conditions which offer countless possibilities to get to the end-user (buyer).

Internet economy considers that managers bring the final decision in terms of flexible network infrastructure, and the buyers unrestrictedly dispose of a wide range of choices as they never did before. Changed game rules demand greater knowledge in management, faster reaction, flexibility and creativity. It is not the one who cuts down the costs of business who makes greater profit, but it is the one who reduces most and fastest these expenses and adapts best to the demands of buyers (users). Internet and digital media open new possibilities for making profit and for employment (Cerovic, 2010).

By analyzing these forms of the economy of communication via new media (social networks, online editions, marketing campaign on internet etc.), the logical steps towards the economic success in the network of the new media is finding the way to the buyer, who, in online world, is overwhelmed by an enormous choice of messages, new products and information, most of which is maximally marketing-organized.

Local and regional moderators of informative content can turn communication via social media into ‘materialization’ (profit) by gathering their clients into “private” social networks, created along the global interest of audience, and by “publishing” via social network according to their own informative needs using media as their own tools for informative services.

Local information and global channels

Directing the local informative interests via social network is (based on the example of local media in the region of the city of Tuzla) realized by gathering their own audience in integral target groups, which are later used for insight into the work of media, and by this enhancing advertisement via social networks. Social networks are the ground for organizing their own communication with the audience, identifying the most acceptable content, and the content that initiates the most interaction with the audience, and influencing communication between the members of the audience.

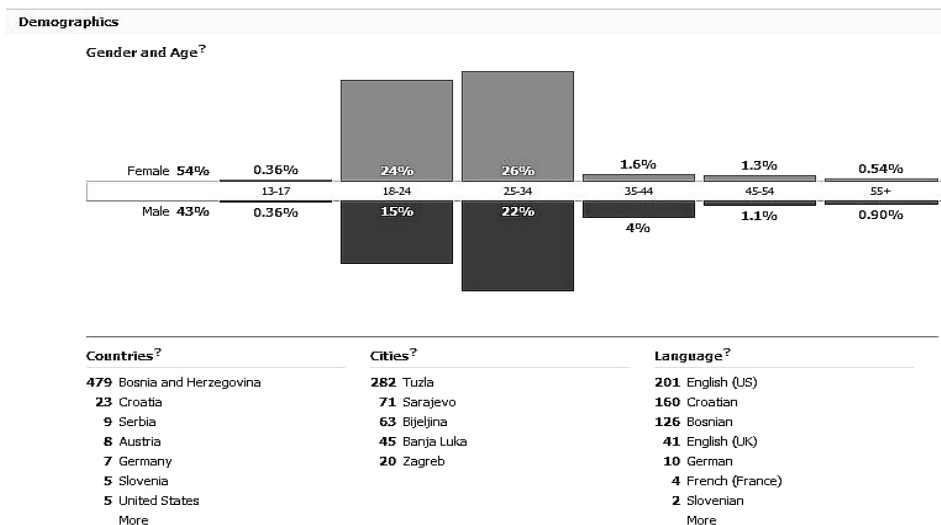
Informative content, placed on any online platform (portal, web edition of daily newspapers, television or radio program), and promoted via social networks, open the space for testing the reactions of audience which is involved in the interested network, and at the same time use concrete media (informative services) and social media. New media enable testing one's reputation through the interaction with the different users of some given information over a short period of time. The analytics of social media bring several results by interpretation of the campaign's success through the channels of social networks. Firstly, it is important to make a decision about the way of communication, dynamics of sending the promotional messages, and then analyzing the achieved effects.

What is gained by monitoring the social networks?

After deciding the key words, numerous means may be used:

- The basic function is the supervision of impressions about the analyzed brand. How often is it mentioned? What is the attitude about some actions and the brand in general? What are the attitudes in relation to competition? Etc.
- It is possible to evaluate the attitudes on the wanted concepts, which, seen globally, after one week or a month can be actually used in collected reports.
- From the generated posts, it is possible to conclude different ideas, suggestions and unexpected opinions that can be very significant for selection of the future business moves.
- The one thing that makes the greatest difference from collected media announcements is the possibility of the reaction. The posts are collected really quickly (in about 5 minutes), and it is possible to react in real time and communicate with people who directly make your target audience. A good community manager with this possibility can make a lot of good for your brand, and of course, a bad community manager

can make significant damage. This possibility brings press clipping to a level 2.0 (Salopek, 2011).



Graph 6. The example of monitoring the characteristics of audience of the online media (Authors' computation based on ehomagazin.com)

Monitoring enables recording the advertisers' reputation, continuous measuring of the public's reactions to sent messages and correcting communication to fit the needs of the advertiser. Local informative portals (original or online editions of traditional media) use social media for gathering the audience in groups through which they place, every day, promotional messages of the activities of web pages. An important element of this management via communication is the audience involving into the interested network. That way, the messages aren't organized into the classic campaign (guerrilla-campaigns, constant source of information); it's rather the mutual upgrade between the advertisers, network-moderators and users of the social media, through the mutual complementarities of information and reaction-measurement.

Communication with the social network users involved in groups for information exchange enables the organizer (administrator, advertiser, source) to use the data base with good monitoring of this communication for economic cooperation with other organizations, especially if these primarily use traditional

channels of mass communication (television, radio, newspapers), this way offering space for advertising to other companies.

The attraction of social media

The key factor for marketing use of the new media (social media) lies in their prominent presence, or in the enormous number of users connected via social networks on any territorial level. Users love this way of communication, it's familiar to them and it is always located within the frame of communication needs that fits them. The users share with each other every message which is received this way. That offers unlimited possibilities for marketing communications via social media.

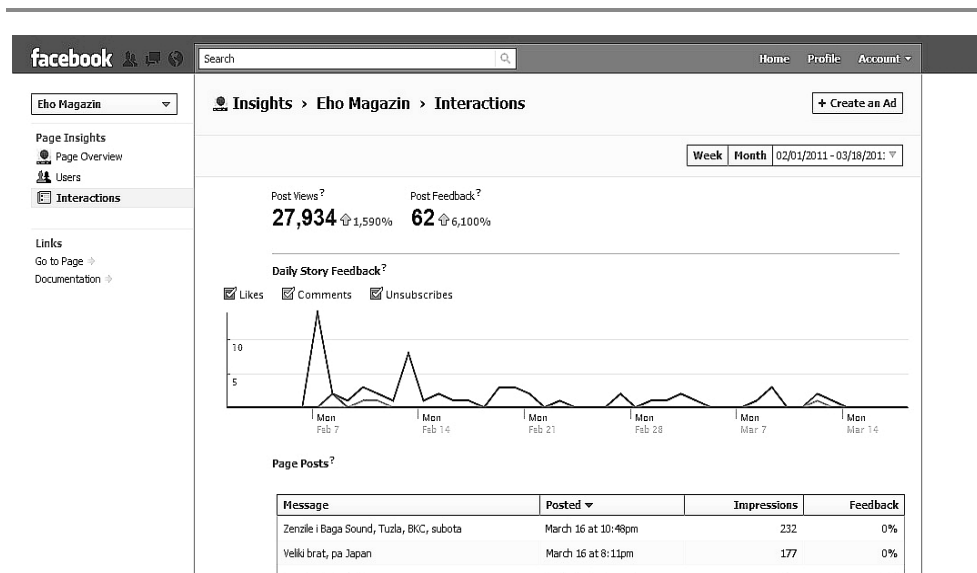
Social media is the place where clients spend a lot of their time. The truth is that a lot of people use web-browsers to find out something new about the product. A lot of people will agree with this, but there are a lot of those who don't do that. As a company, you have to stand out from the mass and draw those individuals that don't search actively and to get them to know your product.

Online PR

With the assistance of good online PR you can make the buzz of what your company works on. The goal is that people start to talk about you and to lead them to share your information with their friends. The content which users share can reach your potential users.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

The browsers love the content that comes from the social networks (for example blog articles, commentaries, statuses). The browsers decide on how the web-site will be ranked according to the results of the search in relation to measuring the credibility. The more links that lead to your site, the more credibility you have got and the presence on the social networks can lead to an increase of the links that lead to your site (Miroslavljević, 2010).



Graph 8. Statistical overview of post views and post feedback on analyzed web-portal

Conclusions

Taking into consideration the dynamics of social media development, and the tools of communication via social media, this marketing approach to the audience (users of any services) becomes an inevitable model of the approach to the marketing project (sale).

New media development history – from networking, horizontal cross-linking, equality on the network, to the new technical requirements for communication – shows that this type of communication becomes a real mechanism of promotion, sale and profit, of any product and especially information.

The speed, accessibility, multiplicity of the communication channels, and the attraction of this communication to companies on any level enables the current insight into their own potential targeted audience, and reactions of the same audience to received messages. At the same time, these parameters can be regulators for future communication with the users, and also for measuring the reputation of the advertisers, which is input for development of cooperation with other business partners. Economic use of promotion via social media is reflected primarily in choosing the way for communication, the faster approach towards users and clear evaluation of the advertiser's reputation.

The main thesis of the corporative communication is the image of the organization, so according to that, it is clear that the social media represent the future of building the image of the company in the eyes of the consumers (users of social media).

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