

# WHAT CHALLENGES IN INTERNET MARKETING COMMUNICATION ARE RECOGNIZED BY CROATIAN MARKETING AGENCIES?

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## ABSTRACT

It is indisputable that the internet leaves an indelible mark on many changes in the world every day. But what is important to us as marketers is what changes the internet leaves on communication between businesses and consumers. It is certainly important to point out that, from a business perspective, the internet marketing communication is the one that takes their business to a whole new dimension, which they, on a daily basis, must adapt to, given the challenges they face if they want to survive on the market. But they also must adapt to that challenges to gain some form of competitive advantage. This paper provides an insight into which challenges marketing agencies are facing on the Croatian market in this most dynamic field of marketing discipline. In addition to the theoretical basis that this paper shows, the paper also presents the results of quantitative research conducted using a questionnaire on digital marketing managers of Croatian marketing agencies.

**KEY WORDS:** internet, internet marketing communication, challenges, marketing agencies.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Development of digital technology has played a major role in the development of marketing branch. Thus, with traditional marketing, an area of internet marketing has emerged which has become a significant and indispensable part of modern business. Due to the fact that this branch of marketing is often more profitable than the traditional one, as is shown by previous research, it also offers better results. But for this to be the case, it is crucial to manage quality communication with consumers. Internet marketing communication is in many ways different from the traditional one, so choosing one itself is a challenge for businesses. The internet helps globalization, so saturation creates a lot of pressure for businesses. It is not easy to survive, much less to be the best and to be competitive, so businesses need to respond to new situations in a timely manner. However, the question is whether internet marketing is the right choice for all businesses with respect to their target groups. Therefore, it is extremely important to predict the future, and as the pace of technological development increases with age, it is necessary to assume the characteristics of future generations, as well as the new characteristics of already existing target groups. There are therefore many challenges facing businesses that communicate with their consumers on a daily basis, and this paper aims to investigate and present the current challenges of internet marketing communication that businesses should consider to survive on the internet, but also in general. This paper was created as a presentation of the results of the conducted research for the purpose of writing a final thesis on graduate study. Given that trends in internet marketing in general, are the focus of interest for both authors, reason for conducting this research and writing this paper was to gain insight into internet marketing communication trends and their impact on business from the perspective of digital marketing managers. So, the paper covers current challenges that arise in internet marketing communication. The first part of this paper presents a theoretical overview of the secondary data research and introducing challenges related to internet marketing communication, while the second part presents results of qualitative research conducted on marketing agencies to gain a better understanding of what is happening on the Croatian market.

## 2. CHALLENGES OF INTERNET MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Internet marketing communication is based on features that differentiate it from the traditional one. These characteristics often, by themselves, present the challenges that businesses need to deal with when communicating with consumers via the internet. Based on existing literature (Abashidze, 2017; Broderick and Pickton, 2005; Chaffey et al., 2009; Dehghani and Tumer, 2015; Hofacker and Belanche, 2016; Leeflang et al., 2014; Okazaki and Taylor, 2013; Quraishi et al., 2017, Stokes, 2009) the challenges related to internet marketing communication, which were later covered by research, are divided into six categories: target groups, consumer activity, internet marketing communication management, changes, security and characteristics of the internet marketing communication. Each category consists of several sub-challenges, which actually represent the characteristics of internet marketing communication.

### 2.1. Target groups

The target group category refers to the challenges posed by the consumer groups that represent the intended recipients of the company's internet marketing communication messages. These challenges are relating to: customer tracking (Leeflang et al., 2014), cultural factors (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013), new audiences (Abashidze, 2017), and generations (Quraishi et al., 2017).

Technology intelligence and the development of the same gives online marketing communication a new dimension that enables businesses to deeply monitor their customers. Creating and exploiting rich and effective insights into customer traits, behaviors, wants and needs becomes a necessity for competition (Leeflang et al., 2014). Because the use of technological intelligence requires specific knowledge and involvement of users in the development of the same, not all businesses are ready to monitor clients the way the internet allows them to.

Consumers' desires and needs are influenced by the environment, so cultural factors also affect their behavior on the internet. This is related to cultural dimensions such as individualism or collectivism, a tendency to seek novelties, communal or agentic tendencies in friendship, and monochrome or polychromatic consumer orientations. Cultural factors make it a particular challenge for businesses using international promotion. Significant differences are evident in consumer behavior on social networks, and even when using standardized strategies, marketing communication must be tailored to individual groups (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013), and a situational analysis is required for each country (Chaffey et al., 2009).

Although cultural factors influence consumer behavior when using social media, social media itself has an impact on consumers, and so new groups of them have evolved. Young consumers and those who use new technologies, regardless of culture, similarly respond to certain marketing communications via social networks and the internet in general. Also, these groups have similar reactions for certain product categories equally advertised in different countries (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013). Abashidze (2017) cites three groups of consumers related to their behavior on the internet: hyper-active consumers, active consumers, passive consumers.

In the category of target audience challenges, in addition to these new groups, the challenge of online marketing communication is also posed by certain generations of people. There are still many consumers who are not adept at using the internet, so a corporate focus solely on internet marketing can cause consumer loss (Quraishi et al., 2017), but also the omission of these potential target groups that need to be addressed through traditional media.

### 2.2. Consumer activity

The category of challenges related to consumer activity consists of several features of internet marketing communication. These characteristics are described below as types of challenges, relating to: managing customer creation and engagement (Leeflang et al., 2014), word of mouth, reviews (Abashidze, 2017), and ad blockers and pop-up blockers (Stokes, 2009).

As online consumers take an active role in brand building, another challenge for businesses is managing their online reputation. Governance becomes even more challenging in a marketing environment where social networks play an important role (Leeflang et al., 2014). It also means merely encouraging consumer activation around products, such as encouraging customers to buy via Facebook (Harris and Dennis, 2011). Whether it is advertising, sales, direct marketing, or public relations, and since customer negative reactions can result in a campaign or even brand breakdown, businesses should first test their online marketing communications on focus groups and do extensive research (Abashidze, 2017). Managing customer creation and engagement involves a process whose stages need to be elaborated to help the company cope with potential crises or avoid them altogether.

Oral messaging with consumers plays a big role in traditional marketing, and in the internet it is taking on a new dimension that further empowers this role. Spreading the message of consumers can reach immense proportions, so monitoring and managing them becomes a big challenge for businesses. According to Campbell et al. (2011, retrieved from Abashidze, 2017), consumers have three basic motives for creating and disseminating such messages: inner pleasure, self-promotion, and change in perception.

Reviews are the ratings of customers to whom they share their view of a product, brand, or businesses globally, with the aim of alerting other potential customers. This can easily influence others' opinions, so businesses need to be aware of their customers' reviews. They can also be seen as quantitative or qualitative analytical data for comparing businesses. Because negative reviews can be shared around the globe around the world, the horn effect (the opposite of the halo effect) occurs, which can affect many people's perceptions, and thus further business development. Negative reviews of one product affect the perception of the other products of that company and thus the overall image (Abashidze, 2017).

As the internet became saturated with numerous ads, users were offered the option of installing programs that block those ads, appearing as ad blockers and popup blockers. Internet browsers offer extensions that behave in this way, and internet users who follow technology developments are increasingly using these methods to limit visible promotion (Stokes, 2009). Businesses need to discover the extent to which their target groups are using such tools and how to reach potential customers with their use.

### 2.3. Managing of internet marketing communication

Because internet marketing communication itself is a challenge for businesses, once selected, managing it becomes a new challenge. This category thus applies to: choosing the internet over traditional media (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013), adapting to reactive marketing management (Hofacker and Belanche, 2016), relationship building, monitoring (Quraishi et al., 2017), collecting and measuring results, campaign management (pay per click) (Stokes, 2009), budgeting (Broderick and Pickton, 2005), message design, multimedia and integrated internet marketing communication.

Whether the company chooses the internet as the sole or main medium of marketing communication depends primarily on the characteristics of the target group, and the task of the businesses is to do in-depth research that will discover whether, regardless of all the advantages it carries, it is the internet medium that they need to use. It is necessary to find out if global social media has greater brand building potential than traditional media (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013), and if so, whether the company is prepared to cope with the other challenges of online marketing communication.

Internet marketing communication is often initiated by consumers, which speaks to their active position, as opposed to the passivity that characterized them before the development of the internet as a medium. As this has caused a massive dissemination of information, businesses need to become reactive and apply this characteristic to managing internet marketing.

Internet marketing lacks the presence of a man who makes an important part of selling live products. This prevents businesses from building a special type of customer relationship that is of particular importance in recurring sales (Quraishi et al., 2017). Businesses need to figure out how to replace the role of online marketers in order to give them a special touch with their customers.

Tracking, collecting and measuring results is extremely important in all marketing activities, and especially in field of internet marketing. The internet provides numerous tools that make it easy to collect and analyze data. However, businesses can easily just fix themselves on numbers instead of using them to optimize campaign growth. The results should always be analyzed statistically, without assumptions, and decisions should be made based on them (Stokes, 2009).

Campaign management is generally a challenge for businesses, and the internet is usually a pay per click campaign that requires quality management. As the campaign grows, more time is needed to manage it. Pay per click campaigns can provide an exceptional return on investment, but sufficient time must be allocated to such a campaign before entering such a campaign (Stokes, 2009). There are also a number of tools available today to help you manage your pay per click campaign, as well as other types of online campaigns. Nevertheless, this still poses a potential challenge for online marketing communications for businesses.

Costs on the internet can vary depending on various factors, so they are low for some businesses and high for some. In any case, the challenge is to determine the budget of internet marketing communication. For example, when it comes to websites, they can be extremely cost effective and efficient, but the real cost of developing and updating a quality site

can be high (Broderick and Pickton, 2005). Yet, as is often the case with public relations, online marketing communication is sometimes considered free (Broderick and Pickton, 2005). It is important for businesses to be aware of the potential costs of this form of communication when choosing the internet as a medium.

If a company chooses to communicate online, it is necessary to consider what form of message will produce the best results. Whether the message is formal, informal, written, visual, or combined depends largely on the target group.

When the decision is made to use the internet as a medium of marketing communication, the challenge is the decision to use other media. The combination depends on various aspects, so it is extremely important to conduct research that will answer the question about multimedia. Integrated marketing communication refers to the use of multiple tools, so when using the internet, it is also important to determine whether it is integrated internet marketing communication or whether only one communication tool will be used. So the company has to decide between social networks, online public relations, Google ads, a website or a combination of these and other tools.

## 2.4. Changes

The development of technology has brought a number of changes to the world and has thus affected marketing. The change category poses the challenge of: adapting to the changing buying process, the challenge of adapting to a changing set of marketing skills (Hofacker and Belanche, 2016), and the challenge of rapid technological change (Quraishi et al., 2017).

The traditional buying process is usually described through several typical phases, which change with the advent of online purchasing. The traditional steps according to Hofacker and Belanche (2016) are: problem recognition, search, evaluation, purchase, post-purchase evaluation. With the development of social networks, the act of consumption becomes public, and as such it must be included in the above steps. Consumers share their experiences in the form of photos and videos, whether in restaurants, shops or other places of consumption. Businesses need to be aware of this step, but also of a new approach to post-purchase engagement that includes reviews and other ways of disseminating business information (Hofacker and Belanche, 2016).

Internet marketing communication requires continuous monitoring of trends and changes, which is why it is challenging for businesses to adapt to a set of new marketing skills. Theoretical knowledge is only the foundation of internet marketing, and professionals need the skills to use new tools and study digital data, which is important to businesses, except in textual, image and video formats (Hofacker and Belanche, 2016).

Businesses are faced with the challenge of rapid technological change, which constantly needs to be kept up to date, and often only ahead of time. Changes require constant attention and management so that the company does not use outdated marketing strategies (Quraishi et al., 2017).

## 2.5. Security

Although systems are constantly being promoted for improving internet security, this category is still a challenge for internet marketing communication. In doing so, it consists of challenges relating to: trust (Broderick and Pickton, 2005), others' fraudulent (fake) activities (Quraishi et al., 2017) and data protection (Chaffey et al., 2009, p. 137).

From former push promotional strategies, the development of online marketing communication has resulted in trust-based promotion (Dehghani and Tumer, 2015). Such online marketing communication is needed because of the conservative nature of customers who do not trust online sales, which is a major stumbling block for businesses (Broderick and Pickton, 2005). Many customers still use the internet solely to inform the product, but prefer to buy it in physical stores (Quraishi et al., 2017). This is a problem of intangibility, and it is up to businesses to overcome this challenge with potential new solutions.

The biggest drawback to internet marketing according to Quraishi et al., (2017) is the vulnerability due to fraudulent activities. This applies to hackers as well as to public activities such as fake websites that can mislead customers and thus affect the businesses and image of businesses. Businesses also face click fraud in frequently used pay per click campaigns. Because a business pays for each click on an ad, competitors can organize deliberate ad opening, which can cause huge costs (Stokes, 2009). Therefore, it is important to continually monitor the campaign and report any suspicious activity on time.

Every company needs to be well versed in data protection laws and regulations since any failure to do so is detrimental to consumers and thus potentially to the image of the company. But, because it is a complex area with frequent changes, policy monitoring and compliance is a challenge of internet marketing communication, which must be based on data protection. This refers to socially acceptable ethical behavior, the use of which can prevent potential losses arising from non-compliance with laws and regulations. In order for businesses to comply with data protection and privacy laws, they must properly collect, store, use and delete personal information (Chaffey et al., 2009, p. 137), since these laws address more thoroughly all internet tools marketing communications, monitoring and following them can be a challenge for businesses.

## 2.6. Characteristics of internet marketing communication

Although internet marketing communication is characterized by features that often present advantages over traditional ones, these characteristics can also present challenges. This category thus presents challenges related to loss and response (Quraishi et al., 2017), creating attractive and profitable interactions (Hofacker and Belanche, 2016), technology dependency (Quraishi et al., 2017), automated interactions (Leeflang et al., 2014), a bilateral mode of communication (Abashidze, 2017), internet saturation (Stokes, 2009), and search (Broderick and Pickton, 2005).

Internet marketing communication can manifest itself in losses in terms of poor consumer response. It is normal for certain losses to exist, but the goal of such communication should still be interactivity. In order to avoid excessive losses, the company should apply an accurate targeting strategy before initiating communication. This is done using parameters such as location and keywords, and losses can also be avoided by eliminating constraints on interaction creation (Quraishi et al., 2017).

In internet marketing communication, it is possible to combine audio and video technologies to present the message with sound, music and image (Quraishi et al., 2017). It is important that the message is attractive in order to be profitable, and for this purpose to make good use of interaction based on techniques and game elements. Such an approach results in a hedonistic experience with rapid response, clear goals, and undisturbed communication (Hofacker and Belanche, 2016).

Although the technology of marketing communication has many advantages, the dependency of internet marketing communication has its disadvantages. This refers to failures and errors that, regardless of progress, occur with technological devices. An example of such an error is when a potential buyer opens an ad, but a technical failure does not allow the purchase of the product. The prospective buyer is likely to make their purchase with a competitor because of dissatisfaction (Quraishi et al., 2017).

When planning online marketing communications, the company should consider the automated interaction option and the real interaction option. The decision, on the one hand, depends on the characteristics of the company and the product, and on the other, on the characteristics of the target group. In any case, automated customer interaction management services can lead to customer dissatisfaction and thus undermine the value that the company provides them (Leeflang et al., 2014).

As consumers on the internet take an active role in communicating with businesses, this changes the type of communication from traditional monologues used by businesses to reach consumers, to bilateral communication in which consumers play an important role. Regardless of customer loyalty, there is always a risk of unexpected behavior, so businesses need to choose the right communication style (Abashidze, 2017). It is up to them to overcome the challenge of the bilateral mode of communication and to discover the benefits that such marketing communication brings.

Using the internet, one receives a great deal of information in a short period of time as it is presented with different contents. The internet is saturated with various forms of internet marketing communication and is increasingly ignored by consumers (Stokes, 2009). As more and more businesses use the internet as a medium, there is a problem of standing out from the competition. Nevertheless, a proactive internet search that characterizes many consumers increases the likelihood of visiting a company website (Broderick and Pickton, 2005), and so does the likelihood of responding to communication.

It is the saturation of the internet that makes it difficult to search, so businesses need to make sure they are in a good position among the results. Particularly for casual users, searching for certain information or websites can be difficult, time consuming and frustrating (Broderick and Pickton, 2005). However, with the saturation of the internet, search engine optimization and content optimization tools have emerged that allow businesses to stand out. It is important to continuously monitor the position of the company in order to optimize it in a timely manner.

### 3. RESEARCH

Conducting desk research to collect secondary data, by searching and analyzing relevant literature that covers the research problem (identifying the challenges of online marketing communication for businesses operating in an online environment), a questionnaire as a research instrument was created so we can conduct empirical study to gain a better understanding of the extent to which these challenges occur. The questionnaire was sent to the emails of 107 marketing agencies in two waves (between the beginning of July and the end of August 2019). A total of 11 marketing agencies (10.28%) answered all the questions asked in the survey questionnaire and the statistical analysis was made on the obtained results, which are presented below. It should be noted that this is a non-probability sampling technique, a judgemental sampling (sampling of experts), since it was the digital marketing managers of the contacted marketing agencies who offered the answers to the questions.

The first identified challenge by conducting desk research is related to the internet marketing target audience. This challenge is divided into four sub-challenges: customer monitoring, cultural factors, new audiences and different generation. From Table 1 can be seen that the highest mean score (4.82) was given to the statement that "The company is more able to research and monitor the characteristics, desires and needs of consumers through the internet as a medium of online marketing communication than through traditional media.", which means that respondents on average agree that online consumer monitoring is always a challenge for their company as opposed to traditional consumer media monitoring. On the other hand, the lowest rating (3.09) was given by the statement "People who use certain social networks can be seen as groups of consumers with the same characteristics in certain aspects." According to this, respondents are, on average, undecided when it comes to new target groups.

**Table 1.** Statements according to target group as a challenge of internet marketing communication

STATEMENT	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	9 Don't know/ don't want to answer/ can't answer	Medium grade
The company is more able to research and monitor the characteristics, desires and needs of consumers through the internet as a medium of online marketing communication than through traditional media.	0	0	0	2	9	0	4,82
Cultural factors influence consumer behavior related to internet marketing communications with businesses.	0	0	1	3	7	0	4,55
People who use certain social networks can be seen as groups of consumers with the same characteristics in certain aspects.	1	3	3	2	2	0	3,09
Internet marketing communication of each company depends on the generation that represents their target group.	0	1	1	3	6	0	4,27

Source: research

The second basic challenge is related to consumer activities. This challenge of internet marketing communication is also divided into four sub-challenges: management of customer creation and engagement, word of mouth, reviews, and ad blockers/pop-up blockers. Table 2 shows the statements related to consumer activity as a challenge of internet marketing communication. According to the results, the statement "The transmission of information about a company or a product by consumers has become more intense with the emergence of internet marketing communication." has the highest mean score (4.82) from which it can be concluded that the respondents on average information transfer about a company or a product on the internet always consider as a challenge, that is, they completely agree with that statement.

**Table 2.** Statements according to consumer activity as a challenge of internet marketing communication

STATEMENT	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	9 Don't know/ don't want to answer/ can't answer	Medium grade
Consumers often create marketing content for a particular business, brand or product online.	0	0	3	6	2	0	3,91
The transmission of information about a company or a product by consumers has become more intense with the emergence of internet marketing communication.	0	0	0	2	9	0	4,82
Consumers often rate online a business, brand, or product through reviews.	0	1	0	5	5	0	4,27
Consumers are quite honest in their online reviews, whether they are positive or negative reviews.	0	0	5	4	2	0	3,73
Consumers often use ad blockers and pop-up blockers.	0	1	2	4	4	0	4,00

Source: research

The next challenge of internet marketing communication, recognized from secondary data, is related to the management of internet marketing communication itself. This challenge has nine sub-challenges, and in table below can be seen the degree to which the expert's assertions are related to these statements according to recognized sub-challenges. Sub-challenges in this group are: brand management; adaptation to reactive marketing management; relationship building; monitoring, collecting and measuring results; managing a pay-per-click campaign; budget; formatting message; multimedia and integrated internet marketing communication. Table 3 shows that all experts fully agree with the statement that "The internet makes it easier to monitor and measure the results of marketing communication over traditional media." While the lowest average rating in this group of challenges was given to the statement "Through the internet, for a company is more difficult to build a relationship with the consumer than live (in the store).", so respondents, on average, disagree with this statement.

**Table 3.** Statements according to target group managing internet marketing communication as a challenge of internet marketing communication

STATEMENT	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	9 Don't know/ don't want to answer/ can't answer	Medium grade
Consumers are more attached to the brand if the online marketing communication of that company prevails over the traditional one.	0	1	2	2	5	1	3,73
Consumers are transitioning from a passive to an active position by switching from traditional media to the internet as a medium of marketing communication.	0	0	2	2	7	0	4,45
Consumers' position in internet marketing communications requires businesses to reactively manage their communications.	0	2	2	0	7	0	4,09
Through the internet, for a company is more difficult to build a relationship with the consumer than live (in the store).	2	4	3	0	2	0	2,64

The internet makes it easy to monitor and measure the results of marketing communications over traditional media.	0	0	0	0	11	0	5,00
When searching on Google, consumers are more inclined to open ads at the top of the search than other search results that are not advertised in this way.	2	1	1	1	6	0	3,73
Consumers recognize businesses that invest more money in online marketing communications.	0	1	4	3	3	0	3,73
Internet marketing communication is generally more financially viable than communication through traditional media.	0	0	1	2	8	0	4,64
For consumers the form of message in a company's online marketing communication is very important (for example, whether the message will be formal, informal, written, visual, and so on).	0	0	2	3	6	0	4,36
Consumers are more attached to businesses, brands or products that, in addition to the internet, are using other marketing communications media.	0	1	2	4	4	0	4,00
Consumers are more attached to businesses, brands or products that use multiple online marketing communication tools (social networks, PR over the internet, Google ads, and so on).	0	0	3	1	7	0	4,36

Source: research

A new group of challenges of internet marketing communication are changes of internet marketing communication. This challenge has three sub-challenges: adapting to the changing buying process, adapting to the changing set of marketing skills, and rapid technological change. An analysis of the results obtained by marketing agency experts was performed on these sub-challenges. All the surveyed experts in the sample fully agree with the statement that "Businesses should constantly work on new marketing skills related to internet marketing communication." Also, on average, respondents fully agree that technological change has a significant impact on increasing consumer demands, needs and desires (4.82), and also on average they agree that "Company and consumer communication in the online buying process is significantly different from communication in the traditional buying process." (4,00). Therefore, according to the results obtained, it can be concluded that changes in internet marketing communication are one of the key challenges that a company must constantly monitor.

**Table 4.** Statements according to changes as a challenge of internet marketing communication

STATEMENT	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	9 Don't know/ don't want to answer/ can't answer	Medium grade
Company and consumer communication in the online buying process is significantly different from that in the traditional buying process.	0	1	3	2	5	0	4,00
Businesses should constantly work on new marketing skills related to internet marketing communication.	0	0	0	0	11	0	5,00
Rapid technological changes have a significant impact on increasing consumer demands, needs and desires.	0	0	0	2	9	0	4,82

Source: research

The penultimate challenge is related to internet security. Trust, other people's fraudulent activities and data protection are the three recognized challenges in this category, and their impact on businesses has been analyzed in the opinion of experts. On average, experts disagree with the statement "Consumers are mostly aware of their data protection rights on the internet." This is the statement in this category of challenge that they gave the lowest mean score (2.09). Other results can be seen in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Statements according to security as a challenge of internet marketing communication

STATEMENT	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	9 Don't know/ don't want to answer/ can't answer	Medium grade
Intangibility as a feature of online buying significantly reduces consumer confidence in the buying process.	1	2	4	3	1	0	3,09
For the most part, consumers recognize fraudulent online activities aimed at harming a businesses, brand or product (for example, a fake website aimed at selling products other than originals).	2	4	2	1	2	0	2,73
Consumers are generally aware of their data protection rights online.	4	4	2	0	1	0	2,09

Source: research

The last challenge identified by secondary data search is related to the characteristics of internet marketing communication. This challenge has seven sub-challenges: losses and response, creating attractive and profitable interactions, dependency on technology, automated interactions, bilateral communication, internet saturation and search. Table 6 shows that respondents gave the lowest mean score (2.00) to the statement "Consumers prefer automated interactions with businesses over the internet than actual interactions with employees of businesses over the internet.", Which means that respondents disagree on average. with the stated claim. No other claims in this challenge group received much higher mean scores, i.e. respondents either disagreed or were hesitant on average.

**Table 6.** Statements according to characteristics as a challenge of internet marketing communication

STATEMENT	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	9 Don't know/ don't want to answer/ can't answer	Medium grade
Consumers are more likely not to respond to company-initiated online marketing communications, rather than to respond.	0	4	4	2	1	0	3,00
Consumers are attracted to certain internet marketing communications by their quality characteristics, regardless of their wishes and needs.	1	0	3	4	3	0	3,73
The dependency of communication on technology as a key mediator of internet usage makes it difficult for online businesses communication between businesses and consumers.	2	1	3	4	1	0	3,09
Consumers prefer automated interactions with businesses over the internet than actual interactions with businesses over the internet.	5	3	2	0	1	0	2,00
Consumers are more inclined to negotiate with businesses over the internet than they do the traditional way.	1	2	2	2	4	0	3,55
Internet consumers often come across ads and other online marketing communications tools from businesses that are not related to their wants and needs.	1	2	1	5	2	0	3,55
Internet consumers often ignore the various tools of a company's internet marketing communication.	0	4	5	1	1	0	2,91
The consumer quickly abandons the purchase if the search on the internet does not give them the results they want.	0	2	2	3	4	0	3,82

Source: research

## 4. CONCLUSION

By systematically summarizing the literature, six categories of potential challenges were identified, and further empirical research was based on them. The study found that the challenges identified were based on various characteristics of internet marketing communication, but also on general marketing influencing events. To emphasise once more, according to conducted research and the experts (digital marketing managers of Croatian marketing agencies) as it's sample, the most common challenges for businesses are monitoring the characteristics, desires and needs of consumers online, the use of ad blockers and/or pop-up blockers by consumers, consumer distrust, the loss of not getting a response from consumers, and the challenge of managing content about a business, brand, or product created by consumers on the internet.

Given that this paper is based on a field closely related to technological development, although an analysis of secondary and primary data has been conducted with the development of the internet, and thus internet marketing communications, the challenges businesses face is emerging on a daily basis. Therefore, the paper, which emerged as a product of presentation the results of conducted research for the purpose of writing a final thesis on graduate study, probably does not cover all the challenges, so this may be one of the limitations of the research. On the other hand, the number of experts who are part of the sample (10.28%) could be larger to obtain more relevant data. So, for future research, the idea is to repeat the research on secondary data sources in order to identify new challenges, adapt the questionnaire as a research instrument, and try to reach more experts. It would also be a good idea to make a comparison with consumers to see what they see as challenges and how they accept them. But for now, and with the existing results we think that this paper can be useful to marketing community (both to scientists and practitioners), especially those in field of internet marketing communication, as some guidelines to which factors they might be more focused on if they want to be successful and recognized in this area.

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## KOJI SU IZAZOVI INTERNETSKJE MARKETINŠKE KOMUNIKACIJE PREPOZNATI OD STRANE HRVATSKIH MARKETINŠKIH AGENCIJA?

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### SAŽETAK

Neupitno je kako internet svakim danom ostavlja neopisiv trag na brojne promjene u svijetu, no ono što je za nas kao marketinške stručnjake važno jest kakve promjene internet ostavlja na komunikaciju između poduzeća i potrošača. Svakako je važno istaknuti kako iz perspektive poduzeća upravo internetska marketinška komunikacija dobiva jednu potpuno novu dimenziju njihova poslovanja kojem se oni svakodnevno moraju prilagođavati s obzirom na izazove koje im se javljaju ako žele opstati na tržištu, ali i ostvariti neki oblik konkurentskih prednosti. Ovaj rad upravo pruža uvid u izazove koji se nalaze pred marketinškim agencijama na hrvatskom tržištu u najdinamičnijem području marketinške discipline. Osim teorijske osnove koja pretraživanjem sekundarnih podataka prikazuje koji su to izazovi, u radu se prikazuju rezultati kvantitativnih istraživanja provedenih pomoću anketnog upitnika na menadžerima hrvatskih marketinških agencija.

**KLJUČNE RIJEČI:** internet, internetska marketinška komunikacija, izazovi, marketinške agencije.