

A STRATEGIC COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ONLINE MARKETING GROWTH.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

Through this paper, we aimed to highlight the significant growth of online marketing compared to traditional marketing. We used both books and scientific studies as sources of information, but most importantly, we analyzed the market and got in touch with marketing agents. We wanted to see how a video posted on social media can influence the sale of a product compared to a banner or a poster on a billboard.

Keywords: marketing, digital, economie, publicitate, profit

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INTRODUCTION

The case study aims to provide a broad and up-to-date overview of the digital marketing landscape in Romania, with a focus on analyzing an emerging trend and how it is perceived and adopted by the local audience. In a constantly expanding digital environment, the study specifically examines the differences in adaptation between younger generations digital natives accustomed to the fast and fluid interactions of online platforms and older generations, who have gradually begun to integrate technology into their personal and professional lives. (Chakraborty, 2024) This comparative analysis highlights the distinct adaptation rhythms, content preferences, and levels of trust in new digital tools. Another important objective of the research is to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the activity and profitability of marketing agencies. (Larina et al., 2023) The pandemic forced many businesses to rethink their online presence, leading to increased demand for digital marketing services, but also to challenges related to adaptability, limited budgets, and the redefinition of communication priorities. The study explores how agencies responded to this crisis and what strategies they implemented to remain competitive in an unstable economic environment. Essentially, marketing is the strategic process of creating, promoting, and delivering a product or service to consumers, with the main objective of meeting their needs while generating economic value for the business. Although this definition is fundamental, it is constantly being

reinterpreted under the influence of technology, consumer behaviour, and global economic dynamics.

Between 2024 and 2025, marketing is undergoing a rapid transformation, marked by the emergence of innovative directions that redefine the relationship between brand and consumer: Artificial Intelligence and personalized automation; Conversational and interactive marketing; User-Generated Content (UGC) and authenticity; Sustainability and social responsibility; Advanced SEO, powered by AI and visual search. (Tunca, 2017)

Through this research, we aim not only to observe trends but also to understand how marketing is evolving in response to the current technological, economic, and social context, while also offering entrepreneurs and professionals in the field practical tools for adaptation and innovation. (Farrell, 2021)

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To carry out this study, we used a wide range of information sources intended to provide a solid knowledge base and support the validity of the conclusions drawn. Among these are works from the specialized literature, scientific articles relevant to the field of digital marketing, niche websites, as well as digital magazines that discuss current trends in online promotion. However, the most valuable resource proved to be the market itself – a dynamic, ever-changing source that reflects the realities and needs of today's entrepreneurs. To gain a clearer and more applied understanding of promotional strategies, we evaluated the costs associated with advertising on various social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. This

analysis allowed us to identify the available options for entrepreneurs based on budget, target audience, and marketing campaign objectives, thus offering a practical and useful perspective to those interested in efficiently promoting their business or idea. (Brown, 2006) The research methodology was based on two main approaches: Quantitative research through a questionnaire: We designed a set of 16 carefully formulated questions intended to capture both digital consumption behaviors and user perceptions regarding online promotion. The questionnaire was widely distributed via social media and digital platforms to ensure a diverse and representative sample. (Njegomir, 2019) After collecting the data, we performed a statistical analysis of the responses, identifying major trends, user preferences, and potential points of interest for future marketing campaigns. This phase provided essential insights into audience behavior and the effectiveness of promotional channels.

Qualitative research by directly contacting marketing agencies: (Swami, 2023) To gain a detailed understanding of the promotional services market, we contacted several digital marketing agencies, requesting personalized price offers as well as additional information about the services offered, recommended strategies, and the performance indicators they use. (Stokes & Lomax, 1995) This approach enabled a concrete comparison between the various solutions available on the market and provided a realistic picture of the costs involved, the adaptability of strategies to different types of businesses, and the price-quality ratio. By combining theoretical research with real market analysis and user feedback, this study provides a comprehensive and well-founded perspective on digital promotion, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities entrepreneurs face in making their business known in the online era. (Kotler & Levy, 1969)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to Philip Kotler, recognized as the “father of modern marketing,” the effective promotion of a business idea is not just about making the product visible it must aim to create genuine value for consumers and clearly differentiate itself from the competition. In his view, a solid marketing strategy begins with a deep understanding of market needs and continues with building an offer that stands out

through relevance, innovation, and consistency in communication. (Kotler et al., 2007)

The Marketing Mix (4Ps), a fundamental approach, yet one in transformation. Kotler defined the four essential pillars of marketing as the foundation of any commercial strategy. However, in today’s context, these components need to be recalibrated to meet new consumer expectations. For example: Product must come with a brand experience, not just a utilitarian function. Price is perceived in relation to delivered value and the brand's sustainability efforts. Place (distribution) must be omnichannel, accessible both physically and digitally. (Hauser, 1980) Promotion involves more than advertising—it entails building a continuous relationship with the audience through content, interaction, and engagement.

In Kotler’s updated vision, the traditional mix is complemented by modern elements such as customer experience (CX), emerging technologies, and digital transformation. Digital marketing and storytelling – building relationships through emotion and technology. Kotler emphasizes that, in the digital age, simple commercial messages are no longer enough. The audience seeks stories they can relate to, content that engages them emotionally, and experiences that deliver value. (Kireev et al., 2016) Thus, storytelling becomes a key tool in the promotion process, allowing brands to create authentic and memorable connections. Effective use of social media is essential in this context. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook offer not only visibility but also a space for direct interaction with the audience. Through video content, interactive posts, and influencer campaigns, entrepreneurs can build a community around their brand—leading to loyalty and organic promotion.

The questionnaire was designed with the purpose of highlighting the level of interest and attitudes of people, regardless of age or generation, toward advertising, both in digital and traditional media. Its structure was carefully crafted to include 16 relevant questions that allowed the collection of complex and useful information about how different categories of consumers perceive and interact with advertising messages. Some of these questions were marked as mandatory to ensure complete and coherent data collection, thereby guaranteeing a rigorous and representative analysis.

Through this questionnaire, we aimed to investigate both the degree of receptivity and

interest in digital marketing as well as how traditional advertisements are currently perceived. We sought to discover the public's preferences regarding promotional channels, how effective they consider social media and classic ads to be, and to what extent these influence their purchasing decisions. The responses were collected over a set period, and in total, we received 124 valid completions. This number represents a solid basis for data interpretation and the formulation of relevant conclusions that reflect the diversity of opinions and experiences within a varied sample of individuals. Analyzing the results will enable us to better understand current trends in advertising and to identify opportunities and challenges in marketing strategies tailored to different demographic segments.

The data collected during the research support the relevance of this approach: Nearly half of the respondents report using their mobile phones for more than 3 hours daily, indicating a

growing dependence on the digital environment. 78% of respondents use social media as their main activity, confirming that these platforms are strategic channels for communication and influence. The main reasons for usage, entertainment and personal development, show that the audience seeks not just information but also experiences and inspiration, emphasizing the importance of creative, valuable, and well-contextualized content.

In light of Kotler's principles and the data obtained, it is clear that promoting a business idea in 2025 requires an integrated approach: a deep understanding of the marketing mix, constant adaptation to the dynamics of the digital market, and empathetic communication based on authenticity and relationship-building. Entrepreneurs who understand these aspects and build their strategy accordingly will gain a real competitive advantage in an increasingly saturated and volatile environment.

Table 1

| Hours spent online daily | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Mai puțin de o oră | 1-2 ore | 2-3 ore | Mai mult de 3 ore |
| 3,2 % | 20,2% | 33, 1% | 43,5% |

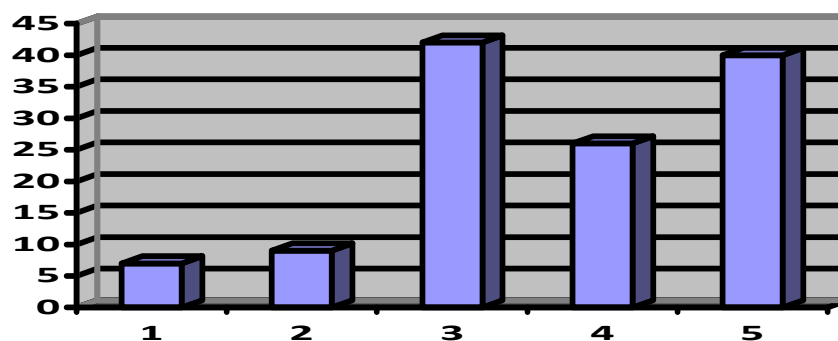


Figure 1, How frequently media platforms are used on a scale from 1 to 5

Analyzing the first figure (Fig. 1), it can be observed that the majority of respondents use social media with high frequency, with responses mainly concentrated in the "Often" and "Very Often" categories. This trend indicates intense digital behavior and a constant presence on social platforms—an essential insight for understanding media consumption habits and for building effective digital marketing strategies. This conclusion is

also supported by the data from the first table, which shows that a large portion of respondents spend more than 3 hours a day on their mobile phones, with 78% stating that they primarily use this time to browse social media. Correlating this information highlights the importance of social platforms as the main communication and influence channel among the surveyed audience, providing a strong argument for their intensive use in modern business promotional campaigns. Regarding

the second figure (Fig. 2), respondents were asked to what extent they trust promotional videos that appear in their online feeds while browsing their social media pages. Responses were expressed on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). The collected data shows that approximately 42% of respondents selected option 3, which reflects a medium level of trust in such advertising content. This neutral positioning suggests that, although users are frequently exposed to online ads, their level of skepticism is relatively high, and the decision to interact with a promotional video likely depends on factors such as authenticity, relevance, and presentation.

This conclusion is essential for entrepreneurs and marketing professionals, as it emphasizes the importance of creating credible and well-contextualized advertising materials. Videos that fail to appear authentic or relevant to the target audience risk being ignored, regardless of how frequently they are displayed.

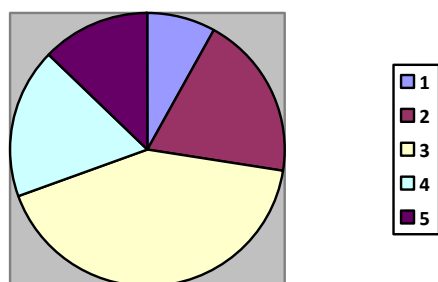


Figure 2, **Credibility of promotional videos seen on social media pages, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much)**

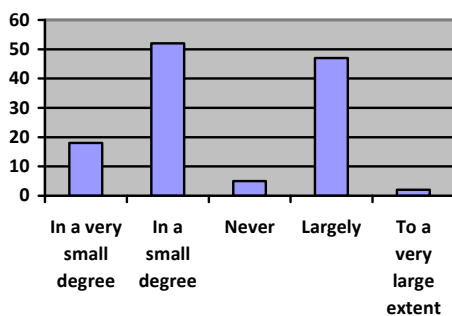


Figure 3, **Purchasing products just because they appeared on social media platforms**

When analyzing the extent to which promotional videos influence consumer behavior specifically, the progression from viewing an ad to actually purchasing the promoted product respondents

provided a range of answers, revealing a notable diversity in how individuals engage with video content. The most common response was "To a small extent," selected by just over 50 participants, which represents approximately 42% of the total. This suggests that while video advertising does leave an impression, for a significant segment of the audience, it does not have an immediate or decisive effect on purchasing behavior. These viewers may be interested or entertained by the content but remain cautious, possibly due to skepticism, budget constraints, or a lack of immediate need. Interestingly, the second most frequent response was "To a large extent," with 47 respondents around 40% of the total indicating that promotional videos do, in fact, hold substantial persuasive power for a considerable portion of the audience. For these individuals, video content appears to create a compelling enough message to influence their buying decisions, suggesting a higher level of engagement, emotional connection, or perceived value. This relatively even distribution between the two main options points to a nuanced landscape in which promotional videos have varying degrees of effectiveness depending on multiple factors. These include: The quality and creativity of the video content. Well produced videos with clear messaging, strong visuals, and emotional appeal tend to perform better. The level of personalization Ads that are tailored to a viewer's preferences, interests, or previous behavior are more likely to convert. Brand recognition and trust. Consumers are more likely to act on a video ad from a brand they know and trust. The consumer's current needs or buying readiness. Even the most compelling video might fail to convert if the viewer has no immediate need for the product or service.

Ultimately, the results emphasize the strategic importance of crafting video campaigns that go beyond simply showcasing a product. To truly drive action, promotional videos must engage emotionally, build trust, and create a clear sense of relevance. This includes using storytelling, highlighting benefits over features, and incorporating a strong call-to-action. Moreover, the balance of responses underscores that while video ads can be influential, they are most effective when integrated into a broader, multi-channel marketing strategy that reinforces the message and nurtures the buyer's journey.

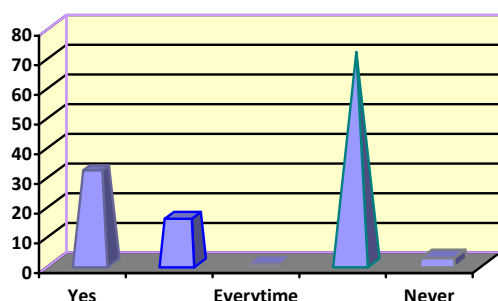


Figure 4, **Paying attention to products or services that appeared online**

Analyzing Figure 4, it is easy to observe that online advertisements reach a significant number of consumers. When drawing a parallel between Figure 3 and Figure 4, it becomes evident that users are paying increasing attention to digitally promoted products and services, which confirms the effectiveness of these promotional methods. This conclusion is supported by the data in Figure 3, where a significant percentage of respondents stated that they had purchased products after watching online ads. In Figure 4, this trend is reinforced by the fact that approximately 58% of participants reported that they “sometimes” pay attention to ads, while another 26% confidently stated that they follow advertising content with interest. A key reason for this openness to online advertising is convenience. Users appreciate the ease with which they can access information about products and services directly from the apps or platforms they use daily. Thus, promotional videos become not just a source of information, but also a real driver of purchasing behavior.

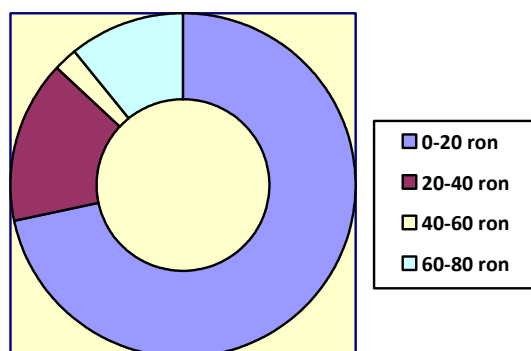


Figure 5, **Financial investment in a promotional video or post on social media pages**

Analyzing the responses of those who completed the questionnaire, it emerges that

most users who promote their posts do so with the aim of facilitating and accelerating the sale of certain products or services. This behavior highlights a growing understanding of the potential that digital promotion offers, even at the individual or small entrepreneurship level. Regarding the budgets allocated for promotion, most people declared that they invested amounts between 0 and 20 lei, which translates to approximately 60%. This indicates a tendency to test paid promotion options with minimal costs. The second largest group consists of respondents who invested between 20 and 40 lei, representing just over 12%, followed by those who allocated amounts between 60 and 80 lei, about 9% of the total participants. These data suggest that although interest in online promotion is high, budgets remain modest, most likely due to a desire to evaluate the effectiveness of ads without risking large sums. At the same time, it is notable that digital platforms have become accessible and attractive even for users with limited resources, thanks to promotional opportunities with low budgets. (Hromova, 2024) The results highlight that online promotion has become an accessible tool for the general public, including those with modest budgets. Users are willing to invest even small amounts to gain increased visibility and faster sales, which confirms the positive perception of the effectiveness of digital ads. This trend emphasizes the scalable potential of digital marketing: starting with minimal investments, users can test the effectiveness of various promotion formats and, depending on the results, gradually increase the allocated budgets. For small entrepreneurs, freelancers, or independent sellers, this model represents a pragmatic and sustainable strategy that can lead, over time, to increased brand awareness and profitability without requiring major initial investments.

Table 2

Credibility of ads distributed on social media

| Do you believe in the effectiveness of ads distributed on social media? | |
|---|-------|
| YES | NO |
| 79,8% | 20,2% |

Analyzing the second table, it emerges that the overwhelming majority of respondents consider ads distributed on social media to be effective. Out of a total of 124 participants, 99

responded affirmatively, representing almost 80% of the respondents. They believe that social media ads have a real potential to influence consumer behavior, either through increased visibility or through the attractive presentation of products and services. On the other hand, only 25 respondents, just over 20%, answered negatively, citing various reasons such as a lack of trust in sponsored content, previous unpleasant experiences, or the perception that ads are too intrusive or irrelevant. These data highlight that despite some degree of skepticism, trust in the effectiveness of social media advertising remains high. This promotional channel continues to be one of the most accessed and influential tools for companies and entrepreneurs seeking to increase their visibility and sales.

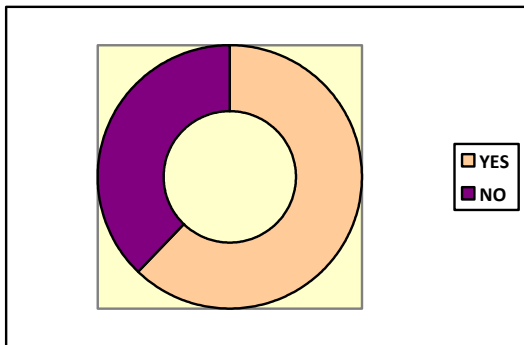


Figure 6. **Marketing agency or creating an advertisement individually**

Evaluating the responses to the final question in the questionnaire reveals a clear and consistent trend among young entrepreneurs: a strong preference for creating their own promotional videos rather than outsourcing this task to specialized marketing agencies. The primary driver behind this choice is financial limitation. Many of these entrepreneurs are in the early stages of building their businesses, operating on tight budgets where every expense must be carefully considered. The cost of professional video production often seen as a high-end service can be prohibitively expensive for a startup. For instance, in a conversation with the marketing agency “Vols Design” based in Oradea, it was noted that the price for producing a one-minute promotional video can range from 600 to 800 RON. While this may be a fair market rate considering the technical expertise, equipment, and time involved, for an emerging entrepreneur with limited capital, such an investment can seem excessive

especially when weighed against other pressing business needs like inventory, website hosting, or product development.

In contrast, today’s digital landscape offers a wealth of low-cost or even free tools for video creation. Platforms such as Canva, CapCut, InShot, and Adobe Express provide intuitive interfaces, pre-made templates, customizable effects, and music libraries that empower users with no formal training to produce content that is visually appealing and professionally polished. This democratization of content creation is particularly advantageous for startups, enabling them to maintain control over their branding and messaging while remaining agile and resourceful.

Beyond cost savings, this DIY approach also reflects a deeper shift in mindset among young entrepreneurs a desire for creative autonomy, authenticity, and direct audience engagement. Creating their own promotional videos allows them to maintain a personal touch in their communications, speak directly to their audience in their own voice, and iterate quickly based on feedback or performance analytics. This flexibility is crucial in today’s fast-paced digital marketing environment, where trends shift rapidly and the ability to adapt can determine a brand’s relevance and success.

Moreover, relying on in-house content production aligns well with the broader entrepreneurial trend toward lean startup methodologies, where the emphasis is placed on minimizing costs, testing ideas quickly, and optimizing based on real-world results. For many young entrepreneurs, self-produced videos serve not only as a budget-friendly alternative but also as a strategic asset in building a brand identity that feels genuine, relatable, and dynamic.

In conclusion, while professional agencies offer undeniable expertise and production quality, the current ecosystem empowers young business owners to take a hands-on role in marketing their ventures. This trend underlines the importance of accessibility, creativity, and financial pragmatism in modern entrepreneurship and signals a broader cultural shift toward self-reliant, tech-savvy business practices.

Table 3

Marketing Agency Costs

| Nr. | Marketing Agency | Costs | Promotion period |
|-----|--------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 1. | Vols Design | 600-800 ron | 1 min/ forever |

Table 4
Minimum costs for five days of promotion on social media pages

| Nr | Social media platform | Costs | Promotion period |
|----|-----------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. | FACEBOOK | 45 RON | 5 DAYS |
| 2. | TIKTOK | 43 RON | 5 DAYS |

Comparing the most popular social media platforms, Facebook and TikTok, reveals significant differences in campaign efficiency and reach. Analysis shows that TikTok offers a much higher exposure potential, targeting a broad audience especially younger generations, though not exclusively. A promoted video on TikTok with a minimal budget of only 5 RON per day can reach up to 18,000 people over five days, with a total cost of 43 RON. This high efficiency makes it an extremely attractive tool for entrepreneurs with limited budgets who want rapid and widespread visibility. In contrast, Facebook remains a strong and relevant platform but has a more moderate impact in terms of reach. With a budget of 45 RON over a similar five-day period, a Facebook ad campaign can reach approximately 2,000 people, with the platform recommending a total budget of 70 RON to maximize effectiveness. This difference reflects different algorithmic approaches and distinct target audiences, where engagement tends to be more focused but less explosive than on TikTok. Thus, TikTok proves to be a platform with a very favorable cost-impact ratio, ideal for campaigns seeking quick and wide visibility, while Facebook may be better suited for more targeted campaigns aimed at a mature and segmented audience.

CONCLUSIONS

For young entrepreneurs, digital platforms have become increasingly accessible and user-friendly, offering them the possibility to promote their businesses, products, or services without relying exclusively on traditional methods or the high costs of marketing agencies. Thus, they can build a personal brand and reach their target audience directly, using intuitive online tools that do not necessarily require advanced technical knowledge. A major advantage of digital marketing is its significantly lower costs compared to the services offered by traditional advertising agencies. Through well-targeted campaigns on social networks or content marketing, young entrepreneurs can achieve considerable exposure without investing large sums of money. Additionally, the time spent on digital platforms, often perceived as a distraction factor, can become an asset in the hands of those who know how to strategically leverage it to interact with potential customers, understand their needs, and build lasting relationships. Digital marketing plays an essential role in attracting and maintaining public attention, and for this purpose, tools such as social networks, blogs, newsletters, and videos are invaluable. Authentic communication, based on transparency and empathy, creates a strong bond between the entrepreneur and the consumer, differentiating the business from competitors. Quality and relevant content thus becomes a powerful vector for customer loyalty and for turning occasional visitors into enthusiastic brand supporters. Adaptability and innovation are two of the most important assets in promoting a business in the digital age. Modern technologies, from artificial intelligence to data analytics and marketing automation, can amplify a business's visibility and create personalized experiences for consumers. This flexibility allows young entrepreneurs to quickly test various strategies, respond promptly to market changes, and continuously optimize their messages and offers. In conclusion, the success of a business in today's competitive environment largely depends on a well-structured digital marketing strategy based on thorough market research, personalized communication, and the efficient use of digital channels. By combining creativity with technology and deeply understanding the target audience, young entrepreneurs can transform their ideas into sustainable

successful projects, making the most of the opportunities offered by the digital economy.

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