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**THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING  
ON THE COMMUNICATION OF FOOTBALL CLUBS**

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**Abstract**

The digital revolution has dramatically changed the way companies view the consumer. Thanks to the Internet, the user has the opportunity to analyze the price, and sometimes even dictate it. With the development of digital technologies, the cyber user and the cyber business have emerged. The sports industry is a large sphere in the world. Sport is unique in the unpredictability factor. The most popular and largest sport in the world is football, which the teams playing and their clubs generate the highest revenue from broadcasts, sponsorship and other commercial income. The digital revolution allows us to implement new models in relation to the consumer – which is a challenge for companies that want to increase their market share. Smartphones and social networks have influenced the dynamic development of digital marketing. Aim of the research: To analyze the impact of digital marketing on the communication of football clubs and to make suggestions for the improvement of communication. An analysis of the scientific literature has shown that digital marketing is a very broad concept, encompassing many different online tools such as social networks, websites, online TV. Various authors argue that the emergence of digital marketing has brought benefits to both the consumer and the business. It has become easy for businesses to reach the customer, and the consumer can more easily search for the information and their needs are satisfied. It has been observed in the literature that there are so many and so diverse digital marketing tools that the most important task for companies is not to lose sight of the variety of tools, but to create an accurate strategy for their products and use the functions provided for it. When working with digital marketing tools, it is important not to be afraid to experiment. After all, without trying a certain tool and its benefits for the organization, you will not know whether it works or does not work. When testing tools or using a certain tool for more time, it is important to analyze the data. Monitor whether users get involved, what content drives them to engage, what's interesting to them. By analyzing the data, it is possible to make a decision on the further actions of the field of communication and marketing.

**Keywords:** digital communication, football clubs, digital marketing.

**Relevance of the topic.** The sports industry is a large sphere in the world. Sport is unique in the unpredictability factor. The most popular and largest sport in the world is football, which the teams playing and their clubs generate the highest revenue from broadcasts, sponsorship and other commercial income. The main product of football clubs is matches, their broadcasts and tickets. True, in an ever-improving world, fans do not have enough just matches – they need more products, such as: paraphernalia, meetings with players, events. Football clubs expand their product line year after year, thereby generating income, giving consumers

satisfaction. They do this through digital marketing and traditional marketing tools.

**Work research issues.** The possibilities of digital marketing are very large, and the methods of application are quite wide, so often organizations have difficulties in properly reaching the consumer and meeting his expectations. It is not uncommon for companies to invest a certain part of the budget in advertising without delving into which tools are most effective. So, the main problem of this work is reflected in the question: in what ways and means can football clubs best reach their fans?

**Objective of the study.** To analyze the influence of digital marketing on the communication of football clubs.

**Literature analysis.** The digital revolution is most visible in the field of marketing. Currently, marketing cannot be considered a “persecution of customers”. Today, the role of marketing is to satisfy the consumer's

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curiosity through transparent and valuable content (Sawicki, 2016). Digital media and technology aren't new – it's actually been over 25 years since Sir Tim Berners Lee created the internet. However, during this time, we have seen huge changes in digital media and marketing technologies, giving companies the opportunity to communicate in new ways throughout the entire life cycle of customers. More than 3 billion people around the world regularly use online services to find their products, entertainment, friends and even romances, and customer behavior and how companies sell their products to both consumers and businesses has changed a lot (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). To understand the growth of the Internet over the past fifteen years, it is enough to say that in 2016, 3.5 billion people used the Internet, and in 2000 this figure reached only 400 million, which recorded an 875 % growth. As the use of the Internet has grown, so have related activities such as digital marketing. The main difference between traditional and digital marketing is that digital marketing is customer-centric, offering them a personalized message and a response to their request (Ištvančić, Crnjac Milić, & Krpić, 2017). Digital marketing is an integral part of the digital business transformation process. It includes new marketing methods based on information and communication technologies. For this reason, its application in practice is a prerequisite for the successful development of business in modern market conditions (Veleva & Tsvetanova, 2020). Digital marketing involves promoting products and services through a variety of digital channels to reach customers at the right time through the channel they like. Digital marketing has become a vital business move and they strive for every innovation that can be incorporated into modern business to maximize business revenue (Kamal, 2016). Given the importance of creating early and fast transactions, digital marketing as a concept emphasizes a set of profile processes that include all digital channels that can promote a product or service or create a digital brand. (Minculete & Olar, 2018).

Marketing is part of the current world, without which most companies would no longer imagine their presence. Even the smallest companies often already have their own marketer or even an agency. The term collectively refers to activities that encourage the purchase or sale of a product or service. These include advertising, sales and product delivery to consumers or other companies. The sphere is wide, so it is divided into two types: digital and traditional. Experts distinguish these species by individual

advantages and disadvantages. According to Tsai and Men (2016), the advantages of digital marketing are:

Table 1

#### Advantages of digital marketing.

Cost-effectiveness	Compared to traditional marketing, digital has a much lower price and in many cases, websites can generate traffic even for free.
Interactivity	Once logged in, users can choose when and for how long to have a contact.
Endless audience	Pages can reach the whole world, but if necessary, a campaign can be customized to reach only the local network.
Empowering effect	One of the advantages of online marketing is related to its enabling impact, especially on small businesses, since "the Internet can expand the market reach and operational efficiency of small and medium-sized enterprises" (Dholekia, 2004).
Duration	Information on the Internet is constantly available.
Attitude of active users	The online content offered is offered to users on an ongoing basis, and they choose to consume it or not (Wsi, 2013).
Dialogue with and between users	Online marketing allows consumers to cooperate and gives them the right to freely express their opinions about the product/service.
Rich content	Digital marketing offers virtually unlimited content and the ability to easily update when needed.
Easy to measure	Digital technologies make measuring impact much easier than traditional marketing.
Customizable	It is easy to change online content according to user reviews.
Personalization	Digital marketing can be customized or personalized based on profiles or consumer behavior and their preferences.

Thus, digital marketing has an advantage over traditional means of being able to reach a wide range of users in an efficient, personalized way flexibly and at any time. In addition, we live in the digital era, and as the use of the Internet grew, the world has switched to a highly digital environment. But there's an ongoing debate about whether digital marketing wins and outperforms traditional marketing or not.

**Methodology. Research methodology.** To assess the influence of digital marketing on the communication of football clubs, literary analysis and empirical research were chosen. The questionnaire was compiled based on a questionnaire from Vale

& Fernandes (2018) “Social media and sports: driving fan engagement with football clubs on Facebook”. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-five questions, four of which were demographic, and 5 questions using the Likert scale. In this part of the questions, respondents had to assess their connection to digital marketing tools and their involvement in using them. In the consumer behavior part, fans are asked about the communication channels they use, about the advertising tools that they have encountered when observing the communication of their favorite football club.

**Organization of the study.** Respondents who identify themselves as football fans were invited to fill out a survey on social media. The invitation to fill out the questionnaire announces that this will be carried out anonymously. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the purpose of the investigation is indicated and confidentiality is guaranteed. The respondents were only those who attributed themselves as fans of Lithuanian football clubs, they chose to participate in the survey of their own free will, with the intention of helping football clubs to improve. The study is organized [https://docs.google.com/forms/ website](https://docs.google.com/forms/website), the data was processed in MS Excel and SPSS programs. The obtained data is presented in tables.

**Sample selection.** Respondents are only those persons who follow Lithuanian football clubs on social networks. The size of the survey sample depends on the population, which we calculate in this way – summing up the audience of all the soc. networks of all the clubs that played in the highest Lithuanian football league (2021 season). The total population size is 155, 326 consumers. Paniotto’s sample of sample sizes (Kinder et al., 2011) was used to obtain a sample of those who responded purposefully in the study, in order not to exceed the 5 percent error.

**Analysis of the results of the study data.** A total of 451 respondents participated in the survey. The distribution of respondents by sex showed that the percentage of male representatives (66.3 %) was higher than that of female (33.7 %).

Of the big 5 football leagues, French clubs (19.8 %) also have a significant number of fans, while the highest number of respondents supports the German (8.1 %) and Italian (5.9 %) teams. Respondents had the option of adding an additional country if the choices did not include the state represented by their favorite club. Several respondents recorded the names of the countries of Finland, Turkey, Greece, Poland, the Netherlands

and Norway. All these countries were recorded once (the fans of each of them make up 0.2 %).

The data obtained in the news and information issues section of football clubs and teams. When asked in what ways they follow the team’s news, almost all football fans who filled out the questionnaire singled out social networks (as much as 90.3 %). I must emphasize that there are many ways to follow the news, so respondents could choose several options and record their own.

Table 2

**News trackers and frequency of football teams**

Question	Option	Dasneer	Percent
By what means do you follow the club’s news/ information?	Social networks	364	90.1
	On the website	139	34.4
	During broadcasts	146	36.1
	Stadium	2	0.5
	Internet news portals	1	0.2
	Live	1	0.2
	Anywhere		
How many times a month do you visit the club’s news feeds?	1 time	18	4.5
	2–3 times	36	8.9
	4–5 times	48	11.9
	More than 5 times	126	31.2
	Daily	159	39.4
	I’m not visiting	17	4.2

The responses showed that the vast majority of respondents say they like sports-related information (89 %, and the standard deviation shows that respondents answered unanimously) and wonders what others think of their favorite club (76 %), with averages of 4.19 and 4.05 ratings of these statements. Also, 88.25 % of respondents agree that the Internet provides all the necessary information to follow and be interested in a football club (the average of this statement is 4.22, the standard deviation indicates that opinions were quite unanimous), and 79.75 % say that the same information from the Internet also helps them form an opinion about their favorite team (the average of the statement is 4.04). The standard deviations of the statements, with the exception of the first and third are quite significant, so it can be said that the respondents were not unanimous in this category.

Other results shows similar statements related to the role of football fans on social media. Respondents say that social media gives them the opportunity to feel closer to a supported club (3.81 points out of 5) and rate this statement at the highest level, while the standard deviation indicates that in this statement their opinions are the most unanimous compared to other statements. I think it can be argued that the second

highest score (3.80 out of 5) is the reason for the above statement: fans say that with the help of social networks they can discuss with other supporters of the same football club. It gives you the opportunity to get more involved in the activities of the club, the discussions give the feeling of being closer. The standard deviation of this statement is also one of the smaller ones, so the opinions certainly coincided.

The most divided opinions were the “I want to influence” statement, whose answers have the only standard deviation above the unit, it is equal to 1.036, and the lowest rating is 3.27. Analyzing the evaluations of these statements, it can be said that social networks are certainly a helper for football fans, as they provide an opportunity to feel closer to the club they love, to be part of the community, to feel less lonely, to share ideas and rejoice when they are approved or shared, and even to encourage the club to take action, which is one of the most important aspects of being in the community.

Analyzing the answers to these questions is not at all surprising in the predominance of social networks. This position dominates throughout the survey, so it's normal for respondents to label it as the tool with the greatest influence.

**Conclusion.** Analysis of the scientific literature has revealed that pricing involves promoting products and services through various digital channels to reach customers at the right time through the channel they like. This is a broad area that includes more than one tool. Digital marketing has many advantages such as cost-effectiveness, interactivity, audience, empowering impact, duration, dialogue with consumers, rich content, easy to measure and others. The concept of digital marketing fits into the following tools – content and partnership marketing, email marketing, pay-per-click, marketing automation, search engine optimization, incoming marketing and social networks.

When working with digital marketing tools, it is important not to be afraid to experiment. After all, without trying a certain tool and its benefits for the organization, you will not know whether it works or does not work. When testing tools or using a certain tool for more time, it is important to analyze the data. Monitor whether users get involved, what content drives them to engage, what's interesting to them. By analyzing the data, it is possible to make a decision on the further actions of the field of communication and marketing.

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## ВПЛИВ ЦИФРОВОГО МАРКЕТИНГУ НА КОМУНІКАЦІЮ ФУТБОЛЬНИХ КЛУБІВ

### Анотація

Цифрова революція кардинально змінила погляд компаній на споживача. Завдяки Інтернету користувач має можливість аналізувати ціну, а іноді навіть диктувати її. З розвитком цифрових технологій з'явився кіберкористувач і кібербізнес. Спортивна індустрія є великою сферою у світі. Спорт унікальний фактором непередбачуваності. Найпопулярнішим і найбільшим видом спорту у світі є футбол, у який команди та їхні клуби отримують найбільший дохід від трансляцій, спонсорства та інших комерційних доходів. Цифрова революція дозволяє нам впроваджувати нові моделі по відношенню до споживача, а це завдання для компаній, які хочуть збільшити свою частку ринку. Смартфони та соціальні мережі вплинули на динамічний розвиток цифрового маркетингу. Мета дослідження: проаналізувати вплив цифрового маркетингу на комунікацію футбольних клубів та внести пропозиції щодо покращення комунікації. Аналіз наукової літератури показав, що цифровий маркетинг – це дуже широке поняття, яке охоплює багато різних онлайн-інструментів, таких як соціальні мережі, веб-сайти, онлайн-телебачення. Різні автори стверджують, що поява цифрового маркетингу принесла переваги як споживачам, так і бізнесу. Підприємствам стало легко зв'язатися з клієнтами, а споживачам легше шукати інформацію, і їхні потреби задовольняються. У літературі було зазначено, що існує так багато та настільки різноманітних інструментів цифрового маркетингу, що найважливішим завданням для компаній є не втрачати різноманітність інструментів із поля зору, а створити точну стратегію для своїх продуктів і використовувати надані функції. Для нього. Працюючи з інструментами цифрового маркетингу, важливо не боятися експериментувати. Адаже не спробувавши певний інструмент і його переваги для організації, ви не дізнаєтеся, працює він чи ні. Під час тестування інструментів або використання певного інструменту протягом тривалого часу важливо аналізувати дані. Відстежуйте, чи залучаються користувачі, який контент спонукає їх до взаємодії, що їм цікаво. Аналізуючи дані, можна прийняти рішення щодо подальших дій сфери комунікації та маркетингу.

**Ключові слова:** цифрова комунікація, футбольні клуби, цифровий маркетинг.

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