



The impact of internet media on video marketing in Serbia

Aleksandra Belačić^{a*}, Slavko Alčaković^a

^a Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia

Article info

Original scientific paper

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.46793/ICEMIT23.035B>

UDC/ UDK:

658.8:004.738.5(497.11)

Abstract

The aim of the conducted study was to determine Serbian consumers' preferences related to the consumption of video-based content. The study was carried out through the execution of exploratory research relying on a survey. The quantitative analysis of the responses and the subsequent assessment of descriptive statistic measures showed that the hypothesis (video marketing efforts should be geared towards the digital realm due to the increasing consumption of brand and user-generated online video content) should be accepted since the respondents unquestionably prefer to consume video content in the digital environment. The research also provided valuable findings regarding the respondents' predilections for specific video platforms, formats, and trends. The overall findings of the study have significant potential for practical application while at the same time, they contribute to the deepening of academic knowledge in the areas of video marketing and digital marketing.

Keywords: digital marketing, online video marketing, video platforms, social networks, new video trends

1. Introduction

Diverse cultures around the world recognize a common saying that states that a picture is worth a thousand words, signifying that it is far simpler to convey complex concepts visually rather than verbally. Following the given analogy, it can be concluded that video is worth significantly more than a picture since it encompasses a sequence of images (frames) that are accompanied by corresponding audio. Such form of presenting ideas provides immense opportunities for capturing the attention of the target audience and fulfilling companies' marketing objectives.

Throughout the twentieth century video marketing was closely tied to television and the broadcast of traditional commercials that were inherently classified under the category of push marketing. In said marketing strategy, the company takes an active role in pushing the products to the market, targeting consumers directly (Susilowati et al., 2022). Therefore, when implemented to its most extreme degree, the push marketing strategy centers on creating offerings solely based on the organization's perspective of what is suitable for its interests, overlooking and disregarding the customer's preferences and needs (Grundström, 2015).


The emergence of fast Internet connections and the advancement of digital communications have resulted in the migration of marketing efforts to the online sphere, giving rise to numerous new forms of video marketing, such as short video advertising and user-generated online videos (Addo et al., 2022).

Contemporary video marketing is based on the pull strategy, which entails focusing on market needs, meaning that products are developed and offers tailored to serve the specific chosen customer segments (Grundström, 2015). Digital video marketing facilitates the achievement of pull strategy objectives through engaging content and storytelling techniques. Nowadays, video marketing essentially revolves around online platforms, with content as the core and creativity as the orientation, utilizing meticulously planned video content to achieve product marketing objectives and facilitate brand communication (Dong et al., 2023).

Digital video marketing is more cost effective than traditional television-based approaches, with the advertiser's ultimate goal being to achieve a viral effect – the situation in which satisfied users decide to share the content with their contacts,

*Corresponding author

E-mail address: aleksandra.belacic.22@singimail.rs

This is an open access paper under the license 

recommending both the video and the product or service itself. The viral effect refers to the positive reputation termed as "word-of-mouth," "creating a buzz," "leveraging the media," and "network marketing" in the offline world (Raja, 2012).

The evolution of online video is closely related to other digital marketing trends, intertwining with them to create and provide a superior quality user experience. At present, the main trends in the digital domain, besides video marketing, revolve around social networks, influencers, native advertising, chatbots, artificial intelligence, voice and mobile search, and personal data protection (Al-Ababneh, 2020). In the realm of video marketing, the prevailing trends primarily revolve around short videos presented in a vertical format. Exploring and understanding these emerging tendencies holds utmost importance for companies, as they facilitate the expansion into untapped markets, thus potentially increasing both profits and corporate reputation. Additionally, failing to implement the latest video marketing trends would signify lagging behind the competition, possibly leading to the decline of already established businesses.

While traditional television remains popular, there is a growing preference for online streaming platforms. The constant increase in the number of World Wide Web users, along with the increase in Internet usage time and the number of people utilizing two, three, or more devices for information and entertainment purposes, highlights the complexity of online video marketing. The increasing significance of the digital domain, coupled with enormous investments in online advertising, has inspired the authors to examine the preferences of Serbian consumers regarding the consumption of video-based content in its various forms.

The present paper consists of six consecutive sections (seven, including the introduction) that visualize the theoretical framework and the exploratory research conducted by the authors. The first three sections form the literature review: the first section presents the vertical video format, the second discusses the expansion of short video content, and the third explains new trends in video marketing. Afterward, the fourth section addresses the methodology, while the fifth section contains research results and its discussion, ultimately ending the paper with the sixth section that displays the conclusion.

2. The rise of vertical video format

At first, the online video content adhered to a horizontal aspect ratio, a practice that was inherited from television. The most prevalent formats were 4:3 and 16:9, and while many social networks and video platforms allowed the uploading of vertical videos, the majority of users, including individuals and organizations, chose not to utilize this option. Authors Mulier, Slabbinck, and Vermeir noted that until just a few years ago, vertical videos were viewed as unconventional, amateurish, aesthetically displeasing and wrong. This perception stemmed from the fact that video platforms like YouTube were originally designed for horizontal viewing and would display black bars on either side of the video when playing vertical content (Mulier et al., 2021).

Despite the initial skepticism, it has become apparent over time that the vertical video format is indispensable, mainly because an increasing number of users access the internet through mobile phones and tablets, which are ergonomically designed for vertical holding. Video professionals highlight the convenience and user-friendly nature of vertical video, emphasizing that holding smartphones vertically has become a natural and habitual practice for consumers (Canella, 2018).

According to the available statistics, mobile devices contribute to 57% of worldwide video plays, with smartphones being held vertically about 94% of the time. Moreover, it has been found that users tend to watch up to 90% of vertical video ads, compared to only 14% for horizontal ads, and that less than 30% of them make the effort to rotate their phones sideways for ad viewing (Drummond-Butt, 2019).

Several studies conducted by Mulier, Slabbinck, and Vermeir focused on investigating the effectiveness of mobile vertical video marketing. The results they obtained proved that mobile vertical video ads significantly increase consumer interest and engagement when compared to horizontal video ads. Furthermore, their research revealed that mobile users find it easier to process vertical video ads, a format that requires less effort as it eliminates the need for phone rotation. Nonetheless, their results were influenced by the respondents' age, showing that the fluency in processing mobile vertical video ads is notably higher among younger mobile users (Generation Z) when compared to older individuals belonging to Generations X and Y (Mulier et al., 2021).

The rise in cellphone and tablet usage has led to the universal adoption of vertical formats by all major social networks and video platforms. YouTube showcased the industry's acceptance of vertical video framing by introducing an update to its Android app in early 2015, enabling full-screen playback of vertical videos. Soon after, an iOS upgrade was introduced as well (Neal et al., 2018).

Nowadays, all widely popular social networks and video platforms consider vertical videos as an important aspect of their functionalities and thus provide exceptionally vertical video-friendly interfaces. Vertical video clips can be showcased through various forms, such as live streams, stories, or feed content.

3. The expansion of short video content

The popularization of vertical video formats has resulted in the emergence of mobile applications whose functionality is entirely based on the 9:16 aspect ratio. The most well-known among these video platforms are undoubtedly Snapchat and TikTok. The majority of already established platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, have also adjusted their functionalities to align with current consumer preferences. While Snapchat enjoyed considerable momentum, Instagram introduced its own Stories feature, which received even more positive responses. Within only eight months, Instagram Stories overtook Snapchat in daily active users and became a crucial component of Instagram's advertising framework (Wang et al., 2021). However, no growth can be compared to the growth of TikTok, which has exceeded all marketing projections. The platform's expansion was significantly faster than that of Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, driving TikTok to expand the commercialization possibilities for short videos (Ibidem).

As TikTok's user count skyrocketed, competing platforms and social networks had no choice but to upgrade their functionalities to address the market challenges. Facebook's first countermove involved the launch of Instagram Reels, a short-form video app, in the US and more than 50 other countries and territories worldwide (Ibidem).

TikTok managed to set itself apart from other social media by emphasizing content creation and consumption rather than user connections and community building. The authors Cuesta-Valiño, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, and Durán-Álamo pointed out that TikTok's strength lies in the feature that allows users to create, share, and discover short, user-generated videos (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022). According to Bhandari and Bimo, TikTok can be perceived as the most recent evolution of a rising trend in social media, where video creation and sharing through live-streaming and short looping videos have become widely popular (Bhandari et al., 2022).

While the concept of short videos was already in existence before TikTok, the tremendous success of this platform skyrocketed their importance, compelling all rival social media to include them in their offerings. As a result, short videos have become the dominant trend in video marketing. It has also been argued that short video formats are becoming a fresh channel of communication between companies and their consumers (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022) and that they have become a vital tool for brand promotion among numerous prominent enterprises (Peng et al., 2023). Researchers have also pointed out that most short videos are typically less than a minute long and possess traits like being informative and humorous (Addo et al., 2022). Another crucial characteristic of the short video marketing method is its capacity to interact with consumers, boost their engagement, and influence purchasing behavior, resulting in an enhanced consumer experience (Zhao, 2023).

In addition to popularizing short video content, TikTok has also pioneered a user-friendly algorithm, ensuring that displayed content precisely aligns with individual users' interests. Authors Xu, Yan, and Zhang have outlined that TikTok utilizes powerful algorithm technology to analyze user preferences and provide precise recommendations for short video content. Consequently, users frequently encounter similarly labeled content, leading to a perception of content homogenization (Xu et al., 2019).

A cross-sectional study was conducted to gain insights into the factors that attract users to TikTok and retain their engagement on this platform. The results indicated that millennials are highly influenced by sharing behavior and content-creation possibilities, exhibiting a much stronger preference for these factors compared to centennials (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022).

YouTube has also recognized the significance of short vertical videos and has therefore introduced a new feature called YouTube Shorts. This feature was first launched in India in September 2020 and then rolled out globally (Beveridge, 2022). YouTube Shorts are vertical videos that run for 60 seconds or less, encompassing either a singular minute-long video or a combination of multiple 15-second clips (Ibidem).

4. New trends in video marketing

The online video marketing realm is filled with new trends, such as employing influencers, using camera filters and effects, exploiting the power of hashtags, and drafting and editing videos with the help of AI-powered programs. Artificial intelligence can be utilized to generate specific parts of video clips, such as scripts, voiceovers, titles, tags, and similar components. Some software also has the ability to generate dynamic content based on textual inputs. These new technological advancements undoubtedly have enormous potential, but, up until now, the most significant impact in the business world has been achieved through influencer marketing – the practice of employing popular individuals with a substantial social network following to endorse specific brands or their products and services. Depending on their marketing knowledge and editing skills, advertising agencies and brands perceive social influencers in one of two ways: as content creators to whom they can delegate tasks and grant full creative freedom, or as paid promoters who follow scripts and directions when reaching their audience (Kapitan et al., 2021). Researchers have noted that the correlation between influencer marketing and social media is undeniable: influencers depend on social media platforms to gain

exposure and recognition, while these platforms derive appeal from the engaging content posted by influencers (Haenlein et al., 2020).

Upon recognizing the potential of employing the influencer strategy, companies all around the world have raised their investments aimed at having their offerings promoted by popular individuals in the online realm. The majority of promotional campaigns are based on video formats, considering they are the most informative and most likely to go viral.

According to official statistical indicators, the value of the global influencer marketing market has more than doubled since 2019 and reached a record estimate of 21.1 billion U.S. dollars in 2023 (Dencheva, 2023). While there is no information on the value of influencer marketing in Serbia, there is no doubt that internet users in our country also, to a large extent, follow the posts of opinion leaders. The most popular influencers regularly appear in mainstream media, receiving extensive coverage of their online activities. Researchers Vukmirović, Kostić-Stanković, and Domazet have explored the attitudes of young Serbs belonging to Generation Y and concluded that they follow influencer posts but also have a significant level of distrust, doubting the reliability of their online content (Vukmirović et al., 2020). Those who mistrust influencers, perceiving their recommendations as insincere and profit-driven, prefer to make purchase decisions based on user-generated content. The product or service-related material generated by true end-users may lack quality but is perceived as much more genuine, given that publishers with a small audience size are unlikely to get paid for their advocacy.

5. Methodology

The research had an exploratory nature and was undertaken through the survey technique. The data collection lasted from April 22, 2023, to May 3, 2023, and was conducted via a Google Forms questionnaire that was digitally delivered to the participants, chosen according to the means of convenience sampling. The main criterion was that participants had to be adults (18 years or older), meaning that they could make purchase decisions based on the video content they consumed. As each question was denoted as obligatory, all questionnaires were completed without any omissions. The survey was undertaken by 151 individual respondents, who were asked to share their demographic information and provide answers to a set of questions concerning their habits regarding the consumption of video content via traditional means and the Internet.

The demographic analysis of the participant pool showed that there is a balanced representation of both genders, leaning slightly towards a higher presence of females (56,3%). The majority of participants fall within the working-age demographic (21.9% aged 26-35, 35.8% aged 36-45, 21.2% aged 46-55, and 7.3% aged 56-65). In contrast, the proportion of young adults of university age constituted only a small fraction, while older adults were also significantly less prevalent compared to working-age individuals. A significant majority (48.3%) specified Belgrade as their place of residence, while a total of 21.9% of them indicated that they live in two second-biggest Serbian cities, Novi Sad (15,9%) and Nis (6%). A total of 21.2% of participants stated that they live in other Serbian cities and municipalities, while 8.6% of them indicated that they live abroad.

After the demographic analysis, the respondents were presented with questions related to their routines when it comes to the consumption of different formats of video content and the posterior purchasing behavior. Once the process of gathering responses was concluded, the data was coded by allocating numerical values to all response options (1 for very often, 2 for often, 3 for occasionally, 4 for rarely, and 5 for never). The statistical analysis was performed using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

6. Results and discussion

Provided below is a table listing the descriptive statistics calculated for all questions whose response options were formulated according to the Likert scale:

Table 1. Demographic structure of respondents

Question	Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Min	Max	M	SE	SD
How often do you watch TV commercials?	151	1	5	3,44	0,089	1,099
How often do you watch brand-related videos on the Internet?	151	1	5	2,97	0,088	1,077
How often do TV commercials influence your willingness to purchase a specific product?	151	1	5	3,50	0,087	1,070
How often do online videos influence your willingness to purchase a specific product?	151	1	5	2,95	0,088	1,079
How often do you watch short, vertical video clips (reels, shorts)?	151	1	5	2,08	0,086	1,055
How often do you watch longer video clips in horizontal format?	151	1	5	2,34	0,094	1,160
How often do you watch live stream video content (live event broadcasts via the Internet)?	151	1	5	3,09	0,103	1,267

Table 1. Continued

Question	Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Min	Max	M	SE	SD
How often does user-generated and brand-related video content impact your decisions?	151	1	5	3,20	0,077	0,952
How often do the opinions and suggestions of influencers impact your decisions?	151	1	5	3,23	0,091	1,115
How often do you create and distribute online videos?	151	1	5	3,80	0,093	1,137
How often do you share videos that have captured your attention?	151	1	5	2,28	0,099	1,219

N=number of subjects, Min=minimum, Max=maximum, M=mean, SE= standard error, SD= standard deviation

Source: Authors' calculation based on SPSS 26.0

The arithmetic mean values showed that respondents engage in watching online brand-related videos more frequently compared to viewing TV commercials. The calculated measures of descriptive statistics also showed that online videos, compared to TV commercials, have a greater impact on respondents' willingness to buy particular products. This result can be explained by the global phenomenon of the increasing popularity of Internet communications and the declining status of television, as well as by the continuous increase in time spent online, alongside the rise in the number of digital devices available to each user. An additional substantial factor that contributes to respondents' preference for online videos lies in the fact that the digital sphere encompasses not just video material, but also user comments that can serve as an indicator of the content's value and credibility.

Through a comparison of the arithmetic means, insight was also gained into preferences for specific video formats. Respondents unequivocally show a preference for short videos, with longer videos coming next in popularity, and live broadcasts taking the third position. This finding can be attributed to the abundance of available video content, a situation that prompts respondents to favor formats that minimize time consumption and offer essential information about products and brands quickly and concisely.

Furthermore, descriptive statistics indicators have demonstrated that respondents favor content sharing over content creation, a predilection that can be explained by the time-consuming nature of video content production and the requisite skill set in video editing. The impact of video content published by end-users and influencers on respondents' purchase decisions is nearly equal, with a very slight edge in favor of user-generated brand-related video content.

The respondents were also presented with additional questions that served to gain more insight into their video consumption habits. Among them, 79.1% indicated that they watch television for three hours or less daily, whereas 79.4% reported spending over three hours daily on the Internet. When inquired about their preferred device for internet access, 72.2% of respondents stated that they use a mobile phone or tablet, reaffirming the significance of vertical video formats. Answering the query about the number of devices used for internet access, 20.5% of respondents indicated reliance on a single device, while 52.3% mentioned using two devices, and 27.2% indicated using three or more devices. Among the most favored social networks for video content consumption, Facebook led the way with 86.1% of respondents utilizing it, followed by Twitter, with 45.7% of them having accounts. Regarding video platforms, respondents expressed their inclination toward utilizing YouTube (75.5%), Instagram (64.2%), and TikTok (39.7%).

7. Conclusion

The analysis of arithmetic means has unequivocally shown that the respondents prefer online brand-related videos over traditional advertising messages conveyed through television. Additionally, the arithmetic mean values have indicated that they find online video content more credible in terms of obtaining information and subsequently making purchase decisions. Given this result, along with the fact that the vast majority of respondents use social networks and video platforms, spending significantly more time on the Internet than in front of the television, a decision to accept the hypothesis has been reached. Such a decision aligns with formal statistical benchmarks that reflect a consistent growth in the number of Internet, social network, and video app users among the Serbian population.

Considering the ever-growing popularity of Internet videos, it can be concluded that the future business success of companies will greatly depend on their ability to identify emerging trends in video and influencer marketing and to effectively present their offerings to the target audience via the strategic use of social networks and mobile video applications. Nonetheless, additional research using a larger sample size would be necessary to fully understand how specific digital communication channels and video formats affect brand perception and consumer behavior.

References

- Addo, P. C., Akpatsa, S. K., Ohemeng, A. A., & Kulbo, N. B. (2022, April 25). Digital Analytics Approach to Understanding Short Video Advertising in Digital Marketing. *The Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 30(2), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2022.2056487>

- Al-Ababneh, H. A. (2020). Modern Trends of Digital Marketing Development in the World. *Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(8), 21-139.
- Beveridge, C. (2022, September 20). *How to Make YouTube Shorts: Everything You Need to Know*. Retrieved from Hootsuite: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/youtube-shorts/>
- Bhandari, A., & Bimo, S. (2022). Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media. *Social Media + Society*, 8(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221086241>
- Canella, G. (2018). Video Goes Vertical: Local News Videographers Discuss the Problems and Potential of Vertical Video. *Electronic News*, 12(2), 75-93. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1931243117705417>
- Cuesta-Valiño, P., Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, P., & Durán-Álamo, P. (2022). Why Do People Return to Video Platforms? Millennials and Centennials on TikTok. *Media and Communication*, 10(1), 198-207. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v10i1.4737>
- Dencheva, V. (2023, May 10). *Influencer marketing market size worldwide from 2016 to 2023*. Retrieved from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1092819/global-influencer-market-size/#:~:text=The%20global%20influencer%20marketing%20market,record%2021.1%20billion%20U.S.%20dollars>
- Dong, X., Liu, H., Xi, N., Liao, J., & Yang, Z. (2023). Short Video Marketing: What, When and How Short-Branded Videos Facilitate Consumer Engagement. *Internet Research, ahead-of-print*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-02-2022-0121>
- Drummond-Butt, S. (2020, November 11). *Don't Flip That Phone: Vertical Video Is a Must for Marketers [Infographic]*. Retrieved from Impact Plus: <https://www.impactplus.com/blog/vertical-video-in-marketing-infographic>
- Grundström, C. (2015). Push/Pull Marketing Strategy. In C. L. Cooper (Ed.), *Wiley Encyclopedia of Management* (Vol. 9). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118785317.weom090206>
- Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Huggo, H., Hunichen, J., & Welte, D. (2020). Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing: How to Be Successful On Instagram, TikTok, & Co. *California Management Review*, 63(1), 5-25. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0008125620958166>
- Kapitan, S., Van Esch, P., Soma, V., & Kietzmann, J. (2021). Influencer Marketing and Authenticity in Content Creation. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 30(4), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18393349211011171>
- Mulier, L., Slabbinck, H., & Vermeir, I. (2021). This Way Up: The Effectiveness of Mobile Vertical Video Marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 55(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2020.12.002>
- Neal, D., & Ross, M. (2018). Mobile Framing: Vertical Videos from User-Generated Content to Corporate Marketing. In M. Schleser, & M. Berry (Eds.), *Mobile Story Making in an Age of Smartphones* (pp. 151-160). Cham: Palgrave Pivot. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76795-6_15
- Peng, H., Mengni, Z., Yang, L., Juanatas, R., Niguidula, J., & Huiliang, H. (2023). Research on Brand Marketing Strategy on Tik Tok Short Video Platform. In S. Cheo-Chun, & A. Belém Nunes (Ed.), *2023 International Conference on Language and Cultural Communication (ICLCC 2023)*. 159. SHS Web of Conferences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202315902024>
- Raja, V. A. (2012). The Study of E-commerce Service Systems in Global Viral Marketing Strategy. *International Journal of Marketing and Human Resource Management*, 3(1), 9-18. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2190787>
- Susilowati, M. W., Wahyuningdyah, R. Y., & Kurniasari, W. (2022). The Pull and Push Marketing Strategy for Sustainable Ecotourism: The Study of Ecotourism of Kabalong, Pekalongan Regency, Indonesia. *7th ICBE, March 18-19, 2022* (pp. 1-7). Soegijapranata Catholic University.
- Vukmirović, V., Kostić-Stanković, M., & Domazet, I. (2020). Influencers as a Segment of Digital Marketing Communication – Generation Y Attitudes. *Marketing*, 51(2), 98-107. <https://scindeks.ceon.rs/Article.aspx?artid=0354-34712002098V>
- Wang, C., Gu, M., Wang, X., Ong, P., Luo, Q., & Li, Y. (2021). Research on the Challenge of the New Short Video Platform TikTok on the Traditional Internet Social Media Facebook. In X. Zhou, & P. Wang (Ed.), *2nd International Conference on the Frontiers of Innovative Economics and Management (FIEM 2021)* (pp. 58-66). Boya Century Publishing.
- Xu, L., Yan, X., & Zhang, Z. (2019). Research on the Causes of the "Tik Tok" App Becoming Popular and the Existing Problems. *Journal of Advanced Management Science*, 7(2), 59-63. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18178/joams.7.2.59-63>