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## **Content Generation in Social Media Based on Consumer Behavior**

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**Abstract:**

*The paper identifies general trends of social media development, reveals the essence of consumer behavior, shapes a content plan for brand communities in social media subject to the main types of consumer behavior.*

*The research applies a social media user questionnaire and the form 'Motivation of Consumer Behavior in Social Media' with a sample of 107 people between the ages of 18 and 35.*

**Keywords:** *Social media, consumer behavior, content plan, informatization of economy.*

**JEL Classification Codes:** *M30, M31, M37.*

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## **1. Introduction**

The concept of modern marketing is based on effective consumer interaction. The study of consumer behavior is gaining in significance with each passing day, especially with the consumer stampede toward virtual environment, approval of new communications as social media, informatization of economy in whole.

Human behavior transformed substantially with the emergence of social media in the early 2000s, which inevitably had an effect on organizational behavior and company marketing. More than half of the Earth's inhabitants now live online. This unique population increased by nearly a quarter of a billion during 2017 alone. Social media audience shows a similar growth. The 2017 year saw an everyday increase by nearly one million of new users on the most popular social platforms. More than 3 billion people interact with social media every month, and 9 out of 10 access them from mobile devices.

The number of social media users daily grew at more than 11 people per second during 2017 (Kemp, 2018). Despite the impressive statistics, there is an apparent contradiction between the high demand for online social platforms among users and businesses, on the one hand, and the available knowledge of consumer behavior in this area, on the other hand.

Most theories and approaches addressing consumer behavior rest upon obsolete laws, features and paradigms of behavior. Today's consumer is not just an individual affected by the company advertisement that prompts him to purchase some product. This is a hyper-informed sceptic as to any offers (Kumar, 2009).

A consumer integrates his real life into online environment by distorting the classical models of consumer behavior (Kotler, 2014; Blackwell, 2007; Veblen, 2007; Lambin, 2014 ; Hoffmann, 2007; Engel, 2007). New components are coming to the fore. They change the very understanding of the consumer behavior which ignorance precludes from efficient marketing in social media. In turn, generation of demanded content can be treated as the core of marketing cooperation in social media. It is a formidable task without sufficient insight into personal behavioral characteristics of consumers. The goal of the research is to theorize a consumer behavior model and shape a content plan for brand communities in social media subject to the main types of consumer behavior. Here are theoretical and empirical research tasks according to the goal:

- 1) to analyze social media development trends in Russia and the world;
- 2) to develop a model of consumer behavior in social media in line with today's realities;
- 3) to shape a content plan for brand communities in social media subject to the main types of consumer behavior distinguished at previous research phases.

## 2. Methods

The research involved 107 people being social media users who were divided into two age groups:

group I (18-25 years), 62 people in all (44 women and 18 men), higher education students and young professionals;

group II (25-35 years), 45 people in all (32 women and 13 men), vocational education and employed people.

To achieve the goal of the research and accomplish the given tasks, we used the dedicated methods such as a social media user questionnaire and the form 'Motivation of Consumer Behavior in Social Media' (Voronina and Pokul, 2014).

The social media user questionnaire contains 20 questions that allow identifying the key user characteristics, engagement in social media, motivation of behavior, and attitude toward content. The form 'Motivation of Consumer Behavior in Social Media' is meant for identifying the relation of pivotal motives of personal consumer activeness in social media. The test allows measuring the intensity of four motives: information acquisition, social interaction, entertainment, personal identification. The test passed psychometric validation during its development. The internal scale consistency was from 0.79 to 0.83 of Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , which was a sufficient indicator for questionnaires.

The statistical treatment comprised parametric and nonparametric methods of comparison by Student's  $t$ , Fischer's  $\phi^*$ ; Pearson's  $r$  and Spearman's  $r_s$ ; multivariable data analysis methods (factor, cluster analysis). The data was processed using SPSS-20 statistics package.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 The key development trends of social media in the world

Available smartphones and cheap mobile Internet rates were among the key drivers of growth of Internet audience in 2017. Over 200 million people became the owners of mobile devices for the first time. Two thirds of the world's 7.6 billion people have a mobile telephone now. More than half of mobile devices used today are classified as smart therefore it is becoming easier for people to access all the opportunities offered by the Internet, wherever they may be (Kemp, 2018). Here are the most significant indicators in the digital sphere in 2018:

- the number of Internet users has reached 4.021 bln people in 2018, which is a 7% increase compared to the same period last year;
- social media audience has amounted to 3.196 bln people in 2018, which is 13% more than last year;

- 5.135 bln people have used mobile phones in 2018, which is 4% more than a year ago.

According to the report of Social Media Examiner, companies only add to their entry into social media from year to year. A significant 87% of all marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. Increased traffic was the second major benefit, with 78% reporting positive results. These top two benefits have remained virtually unchanged for 4 years (Stelzner, 2018).

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were the top three platforms used by marketers, with Facebook leading the pack by a long shot. Other platforms lag behind these top three. For B2B marketers the most significant platforms are Facebook (91%), LinkedIn (79%) and Twitter (70%) (Stelzner, 2018). It's worth noting that every year B2B marketers are increasingly using the social media platforms totally undemanded in this segment initially (Forrester Consulting Study, 2017).

As to the Russian user, Youtube (63%) and Vkontakte (61%) are the most popular among Russian users according to analysis reports of Statista international portal (Penetration of leading social networks in Russia as of 4th quarter 2017 – The Statistics Portal, 2018). Importantly, user engagement remains one of the highest although the percentage of Instagram users is not at the top in quantitative terms. For instance, users open Instagram about 16 times a day on average.

Table 1 contains characteristics of the Russian social media user according to the data from We Are Social and Hootsuite. Almost half of the population in the RF is social media users. They use mobile devices as the major traffic source and spend over 2 hours per day on average in social media, which is one of the highest engagement rates in the world (Social Media Trends, 2018).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the Russian social media user according to the data for the first six months of 2018 (according to Kemp, 2018; Statistics Portal, 2018; Social Media Trends, 2018)

Characteristics	Data
Percent of social media users (of the total population)	47%
Traffic source for social media	71% are mobile devices, 29% are desktop PC and notebooks
Average time spent in the Internet (per day)	6.5 h
Frequency of going online	85% every day
Average time spent in social media (per day)	2 h 19 min
The most popular platforms	YouTube (63%), Vkontakte (61%), Odnoklassniki (42%)

### 3.2 Theoretical justification of the model of consumer behavior in social media

Besides statistical and analytical data on the use of social media, the remaining issue is features of user behavior in this environment. First of all, more in-depth analysis of the term ‘consumer behavior’ is required. Notwithstanding that the construct ‘consumer behavior’ is commonly found in numerous publications of both Russian and foreign researchers, it is quite difficult to find clear definitions of its key components (consumer and behavior). The components of the construct are typically inconsistent or sometimes conflicting with practically accepted understanding of the phenomenon.

Terminological confusion occurs also because there are several related terms which are often blurred and used freely. Authors use the concepts ‘consumer behavior’, ‘economic behavior’, ‘consumers’ behavior’ and ‘buyer behavior’ as synonyms while understanding the same phenomenon by them. However, these concepts are essentially different and require to be further differentiated for some fields of activity and subjects of research.

The consumer behavior is now interdisciplinary as the subject of research and combines economic, marketing, social, and psychological knowledge. In economic terms, consumption is the use of products in the satisfaction of wants. Economic science identifies consumption with receiving benefits or services and renders it possible due to acquisition of income or spending of savings (Gushchina, 2012).

Some psychologically oriented researchers (Deyneka, 2000; Verkhovin, 2015; Posypanova, 2012) distinguish a separate type of behavior, economic behavior, meaning the behavior caused by economic incentives and activities of an economic entity. The works of the above authors consider the economic behavior as a subject of economic psychology. It is a modern division of psychological knowledge aimed at studying the processes and mechanisms underlying consumption or other types of economic behavior and first of all preferences, choices, decision making, and influencing factors.

Deyneka (2000) considers the economic behavior in three aspects (components) of its manifestation: cognitive (perceptive component); affective (emotional component); conative (actionable dynamic component). Verkhovin (2015) defines the economic behavior as *“a system of social actions which are, firstly, associated with the use of limited economic values (resources) different in functions and purposes and are, secondly, oriented toward gaining benefit (advantage, reward, profit) of their circulation”*.

As can be seen, the consumer behavior is a simple form of the economic behavior, and the main subjects of economic behavior are companies and buyers (not consumers). In terms of modern marketing, there are three basic fundamental works used to teach marketers and people of marketing-related disciplines. These are works

of Kotler, the book of Blackwell, Miniard and Engel 'Consumer Behavior', the chapter 'Market-Driven Management' of Lambin's book 'Analysis of Buyer Needs'. We have analyzed the approaches examined in these studies to mark the following most significant, to our opinion, aspects:

Firstly, according to Blackwell *et al.* (2007) consumer behavior science answers the question 'why do people buy?' and is defined as 'actions taken by people to acquire, consume products and services and dispose of them'. The key actions of this approach are acquisition (the actions leading to purchase and including product purchase or order); consumption (how, where, when and under what circumstances consumers use products); disposal (how consumers dispose of products and packing) (Blackwell *et al.*, 2007).

Secondly, Lambin (2014) reports over 20 different concepts explaining the consumer behavior. It is however essential that the authors of the concepts have never studied the phenomenon and have examined quite different regularities in the context of psychology, psychodiagnostics, and even physiology. Psychological theories and tools should be adapted for marketing with regard to their original psychological basis, which is not discernible in the book. It is highly questionable whether to apply humanistic, psychoanalytic, psychological concepts of the twentieth century to the consumer behavior category without additional empirical studies. Indeed, the new twenty-first century has become an arena for development of mass consumption not only in all its traditional forms but also in new ones resulting from informatization and widespread adoption of the Internet.

Thirdly, Kotler's views have been known to be a recognized classic of marketing in the last thirty years. Kotler (2014) describes the consumer behavior as 'the process of selection, acquisition, usage, and disposal of products, services, ideas or experiences by individual buyers, groups and organizations to satisfy their needs and desires' (Kotler, 2014). Kotler's consumer behavior model shows that behavior is not determined from the primary behavior formula proposed by behaviorism: S-R (Stimulus-Response). Marketing or other irritants (stimuli) do not directly contribute to the selection process and much less to a buying decision. In the middle of these two blocks there is a consumer personality with his psychological peculiarities, cultural, social, personal characteristics.

Sociology interprets the consumer behavior as a series of interdependent social acts committed by an individual, including the perceived public interest and needs, information search (a service or product), assessment of alternatives and the purchase itself (Romashkova, 2003). In terms of economic sociology, behavioral motives can go beyond the scope of economic purposes (satisfaction of needs). Thus, the consumer is considered as an institutional man taking active part in the business process rather than an economic man relying on rational choice alone (Inshakov, 2008).

Turning to the key term of the construct concerned, behavior, it must be certainly explained in the tradition of modern psychology. A concise psychological dictionary edited by Petrovskiy *et al.* (1998) defines behavior as ‘a set of directed actions of a person implemented by him pursuant to the patterns of his inner development and interaction with the environment’ (Concise Psychological Dictionary, 1998). It should be noted that social and economic psychology pays most attention to the study of the consumer behavior. For example, Deyneka refers to basic microeconomic categories with regard to the consumer behavior (law and types of demand, exceptions to the law of demand, etc., by adding psychological components to justify various irrational (in economic terms) acts of a consumer. And primary focus is on products and actions of a person around them (Deyneka, 2000).

The above approach of Blackwell *et al.* (2017) underlie the understanding of the consumer behavior in Posypanova’s monograph (2012). The author regards it as a type of social activeness directly associated with acquisition, use, and disposal of products, services, ideas (including decision processes before and after this activeness) (Posypanova, 2012). One can see from the proposed definition that the author broadens understanding of this category by incorporating after-purchase interaction with a company and, even more interestingly, the processes before the product acquisition activities. However, the monograph does not address the question what these actions include while product acquisition remains the focus of the consumer behavior concept. Inspired by the approach of Deyneka (2000), Posypanova (2012) offers to take account of the cognitive, affective, and conative components for psychological insight into the consumer behavior too.

From a legal standpoint, the consumer is ‘an individual, intending to order or acquire, or one ordering, acquiring or using products (works, services) exclusively for personal, family, domestic, and other needs unrelated to entrepreneurial activity’ (Civil Code of the RF, 2017). In other words, the consumer is a person not only acquiring products (implementing buyer behavior) but also having intention to do so. At that, the concept, limitations, and time constraints of the intention are not defined and substantiated anywhere. So, even for legislative purposes, the consumer is not always a buyer whilst having some relation to a company.

Politics uses somewhat different interpretation of the consumer. The concepts of elector and consumer are very often equated during election campaigns and in political marketing theory, despite the obvious fact that consumers of political information influence and electors of a certain candidate can be worlds apart. The findings show objective interdisciplinary interpretation of the concept ‘consumer behavior’ attaining an increasingly pronounced categorical status in economic, political, human including psychological sciences. The high attention to scientific analysis of such phenomenon confirms the relevance of its comprehensive research studies.

The earlier analysis (Pokul, 2013) proves that it is pointless to extrapolate psychological features of the consumer behavior in real life to its understanding in

social media since only a few aspects of Internet behavior are identical to the consumer behavior in real life. Many of them are completely opposite and some bear no relationship to the behavior considered in classical marketing theory. Informatization of economy transforms understanding of the consumer behavior at theoretical and methodological as well as practical levels as follows. Firstly, it is axiomatic today to maximize utility at the much higher level of its satisfaction than 20-30 years ago.

Secondly, technology factor begins playing a crucial role whereas it is practically ignored as a predictor of the consumer behavior by classical marketing theory.

Thirdly, it must be acknowledged that there is no model integrating the above aspects as of today. However, such model has a high expository potential to understand psychological features of the consumer. In terms of economic, personality, general and social psychology, the most promising areas of study of the consumer behavior are the study of motivational sphere and cognitive components determining consumer's marketing activeness, the study of the relationship of social, personal, gender identity of an individual and his sphere of consumer interest (Pokul, 2018).

Most definitions and approaches to understanding the consumer behavior put the emphasis on product acquisition and a purchasing decision. At the same time, some scientists are seen to expand the actions around a product included into the consumer behavior definition. Meanwhile, most approaches substitute the consumer behavior for the buyer behavior. According to our reckoning, the priority of the methodology for studying the consumer behavior is to determine limits and forms of conversion from one type of behavior to the other when a person interacts with a company.

We can refer to the experience of Marketing Science Institute (MSI) to demonstrate the validity of this approach. MSI specified in 'Research Priorities 2010-2012' that one of the key aspects of the study of the modern consumer was the study of behavioral outcome of the consumer actions beyond purchase with respect to a brand or company (MSI research priorities, 2010). According to Vivek and Morgan, the study of the consumer behavior beyond purchase is of interest and importance for focusing on the people who interact with a brand without mandatory purchase or purchase planning (Vivek, 2012). Thus, economic activeness is not of top priority in social media. The user implements uneconomic behavior in the first place i.e., there is no economic component among his motives.

Yet, it is a fact that the presence of companies in social media is first of all motivated by economic interest. We believe that the conceptual model of consumer behavior includes these two facts. One could speak of the consumer behavior when the facts overlap only, specifically when a company starts anyhow interacting with the user and he becomes the consumer.

There are four types of needs motivating user activeness in social media. They are named after the content of the major factor forming the appropriate motivational



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complex: information search (factor 1), need for social interaction (factor 2), search of entertainment (factor 3), and personal identification (factor 4) (Voronina and Pokul, 2014). It should be pointed out that this data is consistent with the statements of Muntinga and Moorman (2011). Based on the outlined motives, it is reasonable to define the uneconomic behavior in social media as follows. It is a type of personal activeness aimed at satisfying conscious or ulterior motives in the course of information acquisition, social interaction, personal identification, entertainment through communications and online interaction in social media. This user behavior can be called the consumer behavior after the user faces any interaction with a company (any forms of content somehow associated with a brand).

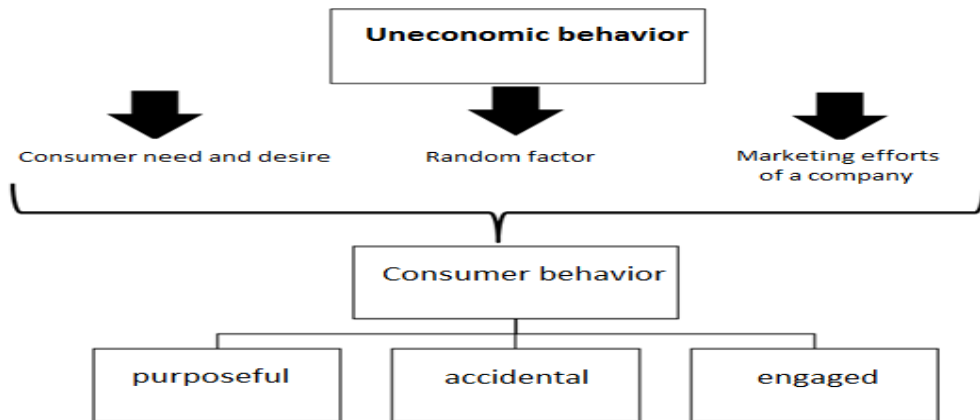
Moreover, this behavior does not have to transform to the buyer behavior. In as much as social media are used by companies of various sectors apart from electronic commerce (in this case communication efforts are much easier to assess since a brand community is always connected with a site, and one can easily monitor click-through traffic), it is inadvisable for markers to concentrate on promoting sales and converting the user behavior from consumer to buyer behavior. Companies will gain much more than the buyer if brand interaction effect satisfies the consumer and complies with his personal motives of being in this environment. This will be a loyal consumer who will be able to become a buyer as well as exert influence (both information and communicative) on other users.

It is undoubtedly important to bear in mind that uneconomic behavior of the social media user can transform into the consumer behavior through three different mechanisms (Figure 1).

- 1) Purposeful behavior. The user himself searches for any content associated with a company and begins interacting with a brand community;
- 2) Accidental behavior. The user encounters brand content accidentally and becomes interested in product (brand);
- 3) Engaged behavior. The user is engaged in interaction with a brand through marketing tools and communications.

When transformed, the purposeful consumer behavior in social media is treated as the economic behavior i.e. the economic component of motivation moves up to the first place to satisfy demand. As far as user interaction in social media is inextricably linked with content generation forms and methods, the consumer behavior in social media can be implemented at several levels: consuming, contributing, and creating (depending on the level of brand-related activeness). The conceptual model of consumer behavior in social media was first published in the international advertising magazine by Muntinga in 2011 and was named COBRA (consumer's online brand related activities) (Muntinga and Moorman, 2011).

**Figure 1.** Ways of transformation of the uneconomic behavior in social media into the consumer behavior

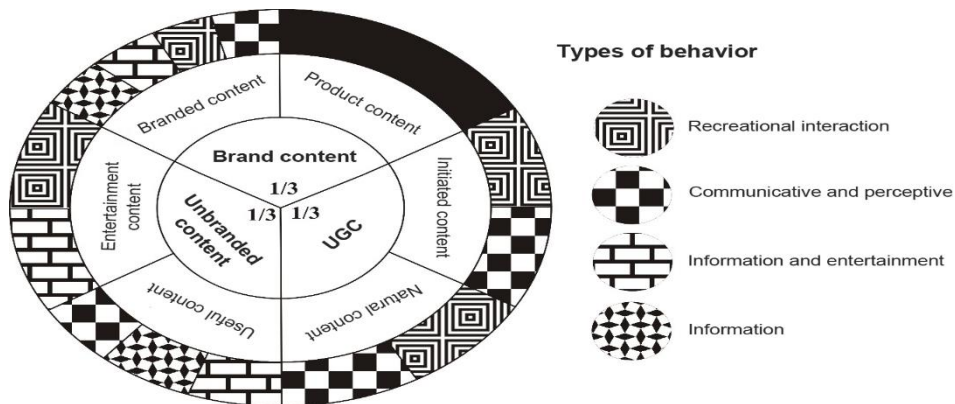


### 3.3 Feasibility of the content plan for brand communities in social media subject to the main types of consumer behavior

Marketing communications in social media are distinctive in that one-time marketing message translation has extremely low effect unless it is integrated into a content management plan by a brand community. There are a variety of approaches to shaping a content plan based on the specifics of information perception by consumers within different hours, days of week, etc. We believe that the primary factor should be the consumer behavior within a brand community under development. Understanding the motives of the consumer behavior enables to generate demanded content. The cluster analysis distinguished four types of behavior according to the responses to the form ‘Motivation of Consumer Behavior in Social Media’:

- communicative and perceptive (information acquisition and social interaction);
- information and entertainment (information acquisition and entertainment);
- information (information acquisition);
- recreational interaction (social interaction and entertainment).

Cumulative results of the analysis make it possible to propose a content plan for brand communities in social media subject to the specified motivational types of consumer behavior (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Structure of the content plan subject to the consumer behavior

Practitioners of marketing and Internet communications professionals have quite different and sometimes even conflicting visions of the structure of the content plan in brand communities in social media. Alongside with that, the analysis proves that content should be divided into three equal groups:

- 1) brand content;
- 2) unbranded content;
- 3) UGC.

It makes sense to divide, in turn, the brand content directly into product and branded content. The product content includes messages, advertisement, product description of a company. The branded content contains company news, overview videos of organization's activities, photographs, everyday working life, holiday greetings, advice, new events, and promotions i.e. any official site-related or site-reference information on behalf of a company. The unbranded content means entertainment and user-relevant content. This can be any information of various formats, the primary purpose of which is to entertain or be useful for the user.

One third of the information in a brand community of a company must be user generated content. The user content includes any formats of user generated content. This type can be divided into initiated and natural content. The natural content is generated solely by users of their own free will and in any format. The initiated content is artificial prompting of user activeness by community management. These can be both inbound marketing tools and artificial users registered by community management to prompt user activeness. Besides, as shown in Figure 2, the designed structure of the content plan includes empirically determined types of consumer behavior motives. The product content is the only type of content which is not based on any type of motivation since it is entirely initiated by a company for advertising purposes. In contrast, the branded content can be generated for any type of consumer

behavior. Its target orientation results from the customary format of content and applied marketing tools.

UGC will be required by the users pursuing the communicative and perceptive as well as recreational interaction behavior as far as the main motivation of these types is the key element of this content – social interaction. The entertainment content may be relevant for the users following the information and entertainment as well as recreational interaction type of motivation of the consumer behavior. The useful content will be first required by the consumers with the predominant motivation of information type although two other types (information and entertainment as well as communicative and perceptive) have the information component.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Two key factors determine scientific and practical interest in the study of regularities of the user behavior in social media in terms of marketing. First, more and more consumers switch to online by creating special interest communities. This can significantly streamline the process and improve efficiency of segmentation and targeting. Secondly, consumer interaction in social media is a low-cost (per client) or completely free marketing tool. That is why the traditional models and approaches to consumer behavior must be reconsidered and corrected with regard to technical factors and capabilities of a particular platform, on the one hand, and psychological motivators of behavior, on the other hand.

The designed approach to content generation subject to the identified features of consumer behavior may contribute to the effectiveness of marketing communications in social media, brand interest, engagement, and loyalty as well as streamline the work of a SMM specialist when shaping a content plan. The proposed content plan for brand communities in social media subject to the main types of consumer behavior can be used not only in social media marketing but also in the Internet and digital marketing generally, including content generation in e-mails, mobile applications, etc.

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