

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESS: THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Abstract: Nowadays, entrepreneurship plays an important role in the development of economy in the Republic of Serbia. However, in order for entrepreneurial ideas to really come to life and become successful, it is necessary for entrepreneurs to have an effective marketing strategy that will help them gain recognition and attract customers. Precisely in this context, digital marketing has imposed itself as an unavoidable factor in modern entrepreneurship. The modern era of digital transformation has changed the way entrepreneurs approach marketing. Today, digital marketing is one of the most effective ways to gain recognition, increase sales and attract new customers. Entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia increasingly recognize the importance of digital marketing, and apply different digital marketing strategies to improve their business. The goal of this paper is to investigate the importance of applying digital marketing in entrepreneurship in the era of the new digital economy. Through the analysis that was conducted, it was determined that entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia attach great importance to digital marketing. It was also concluded that those entrepreneurs who have been in business longer and have a larger number of employees, at the same time attach more importance to digital marketing channels.

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is gaining more and more importance year by year, both in the world and in the Republic of Serbia. In addition to the support of the state, which is necessary for the development of entrepreneurship, the digitization of business, and especially the possibility of

business promotion through digital channels, have greatly facilitated the process of starting a business by entrepreneurs. Today, entrepreneurs can advertise their business through various digital channels and thus reach business partners and customers. In addition, digital communication channels enable entrepreneurs to sell goods and services to their consumers through them. What is also particularly important for entrepreneurs, when it comes to digital communication channels, is that they give access to an unlimited market. This means that entrepreneurs do not have to concentrate only on a narrow local market, but can promote and sell the results of their work (products or services) much more widely. (Zahay, 2020)

This paper aims to determine how much importance entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia attach to digital marketing and to identify certain rules when it comes to advertising by entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia. For this reason, in the continuation of the paper, the structure of the entrepreneurial sector in the Republic of Serbia will first be pointed out, then a review of the literature of researchers who dealt with the field of digital marketing in entrepreneurship will be presented, and then the results and discussion of results of the research conducted in this paper.

2. Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Serbia

Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Serbia is developing and becoming increasingly popular in the last few years. There is an increasing number of people who decide to start their own business and become entrepreneurs. The legal framework for entrepreneurship in Serbia is regulated by the Law on Business Companies and the Law on Entrepreneurship. According to these laws, an entrepreneur can be any adult citizen of Serbia, as well as a foreign citizen who has a permit to stay and work in Serbia. An entrepreneur can register his company in the Agency for Business Registers.

The advantages of entrepreneurship in Serbia include a relatively simple procedure for registering and establishing a company, low establishment costs, favorable business conditions and a relatively low tax rate. Also, there are various programs and subsidies offered by the Government of Serbia to support entrepreneurship and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.

However, there are also several challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Serbia, such as lack of financial resources, lack of qualified workforce, bureaucratic procedures and high unemployment rate.

In any case, entrepreneurship represents a challenging, but also an attractive path for all those who want to start their own business and develop it into a successful company in the Republic of Serbia. A large number of entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia, as well as in the world, use digital marketing with the aim of improving their business, but before we point out the importance of individual digital marketing channels and their role for entrepreneurs, as well as the results of an empirical analysis, we will present numerical data about entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia and their structure according to the selected criteria.

Table 1. Number of entrepreneurs by year in the Republic of Serbia

Year	Number of entrepreneurs	Year	Number of entrepreneurs
2018	272969	2018	272969
2019	288308	2019	288308
2020	298279	2020	298279

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022

As can be seen from Table 1, the number of entrepreneurs in the observed period from 2018-2020 was increasing. This trend is certainly favorable and tells us that there are more and more people who are ready to start their own business and face the risk, that is, there are more and more people who are ready to realize their ideas. This further means a reduction in unemployment, but also a contribution to the economic development of the entire country.

When looking at the structure of entrepreneurs operating in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, according to the activity they belong to, as can be seen on the basis of Table 2, the largest number of them operate in the field of wholesale trade, retail trade and repair of motor vehicles.

Table 2. Number of entrepreneurs by year in the Republic of Serbia

Activity	Number of entrepreneurs
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	3020
Mining	167
Manufacturing industry	44054
Electricity, gas and steam supply	47
Water supply and waste water management	897
Construction	24441
Wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles	63818
Transport and storage	33529
Accommodation and catering services	25152
Information and communication	15582
Financial activities and insurance activities	1761
Real estate business	1321
Professional, scientific, innovative and technical activities	41566
Administrative and auxiliary service activities	8461
Education	2609
Health and social protection	6278
Art; entertainment and recreation	3323
Other service activities	23253

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022

What should also be noted is that the fastest growing trend has the activity of "professional, scientific, innovative and technical activities", in the period from 2018 to 2020. In the year, the number of registered entities increased by 10,000. In addition to this group of activities, there is a growth trend in the field of construction and the processing industry. When it comes to the activity in which there is the largest number of registered entrepreneurs, "wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles", the number of entrepreneurs is relatively constant from year to year, in this observed period.

Table 3. Structure of entrepreneurs according to the region in which they are registered in 2020

Region	Number of entrepreneurs
Belgrade Region	85708
Vojvodina	74062
Southern and Eastern Serbia	52814
Sumadija and Western Serbia	85695

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022

The largest number of registered entrepreneurs perform their activities in the Belgrade region and in the Šumadija and Western Serbia region, while the smallest number of registered entrepreneurs is in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, as can be seen from Table 3.

3. Literature review

Due to increasingly difficult conditions for finding a job, also due to the existence of creative ideas, an increasing number of people in the Republic of Serbia are unlearning how to start an entrepreneurial business. Previously, it was much more difficult for entrepreneurs to present their business and products/services to users who are their target group. Today it is much different. Digital marketing has revolutionized this segment. Especially, as in the previous period, digital marketing channels enabled business entities to advertise at significantly lower prices, compared to the prices that were valid for traditional marketing channels. Even today, digital marketing costs are lower than traditional marketing. But it should certainly be noted that they are slightly higher than in previous years, and this is the result of the growing demand for digital marketing platforms and tools.

Effective campaigns by entrepreneurs provide unique product value for consumers. Unlike the period 20 years ago, consumers are significantly more involved in the activities of business entities through digital channels, and the entrepreneurs themselves benefit from this. Digital marketing is a broad term that describes a set of marketing processes that encapsulate all available digital channels to promote a product or service or build a digital brand. (Chaffey & Smith, 2022)

Digital marketing channels are: Websites, social media platforms, banner placement, email marketing, mobile marketing, SEO, pay per click campaigns, Web TV, SMS, billboards and anything else with digital themes but not necessarily online. (Wanga et al., 2019)

Numerous studies have been conducted on the topic of the application of digital marketing in entrepreneurial business, and below we will present the results of those studies. These results will provide the basis for defining the methodology and the realization of the research, as well as the discussion in this paper.

Fattah & Khaled (2021), within their research, analyzed the impact of digital marketing on product purchase decisions of small entrepreneurs. The research was guided by specific objectives; to analyze numerous digital marketing platforms through which entrepreneurs have marketed products in Jordan, which can influence purchasing decisions and identify product categories that customers buy because they learned about them on social networks, i.e. on social profiles of entrepreneurs. Respondents gave answers to the questions asked in the survey. 300 questionnaires were distributed and 220 available samples were collected, excluding incomplete questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 73% for all those who chose to participate.

Descriptive analysis, reliability test, correlation test and multiple regressions were used in this research. Furthermore, the results of this study showed that digital marketing, such as social media marketing and mobile marketing, has a profound impact on consumer purchasing decisions of small business owners who have chosen to market their products through the platform. Therefore, business entities in Jordan should give great importance to social networks, if they want their products to reach consumers.

Wanga et. al. (2019) came to the conclusion in their research that digital marketing channels are dominant in the marketing of entrepreneurs that are aimed at business customers, i.e. in B2B marketing. In their analysis, among other things, they made a comparison between webinars and direct communication with product users through promotions and came to the conclusion that webinars are significantly more successful, so as part of their work they gave a

recommendation to entrepreneurs that if they want to successfully do business and sell their products and services to business customers, to focus on digital marketing channels.

In the paper Cvijetković, et al. (2020) presented research that aims to determine the impact of digital marketing communications on creating a competitive advantage in the market. The research results show that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables of digital marketing communications and the variables of sales promotion and customer relations. Through correlation analysis, it was determined that the level and quality of digital marketing activities have the greatest impact on the variables of product positioning and differentiation and brand strengthening.

A two-component solution was obtained by factor analysis, where the first component gathers the variables of the level and quality of digital marketing communications and the positioning and differentiation of products/services, and the second component gathers the variables related to the consumer and the training of staff for digital marketing. A strong correlation between these two components was found. This research confirmed the importance of digital marketing communications in improving business and competitiveness.

Using various statistical methods and tools, Krishnaprabha and Tarunika (2020) came to the conclusion that digital marketing channels have a great impact on binding a consumer to a specific brand.

Arunprakash (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of traditional and digital marketing channels and came to the conclusion that digital marketing channels are significantly more effective than traditional marketing channels. Unlike him, Todor (2016) pointed out the necessity to combine traditional and digital marketing and that digital marketing cannot succeed without traditional marketing channels, which still have primacy over digital marketing. Therefore, his study showed that digital marketing is necessary, but that there is no success without traditional marketing, i.e. that good traditional marketing is a prerequisite for successful digital marketing, but also that traditional marketing campaigns in the entrepreneurial sector contribute more to revenue from the sale of products and services than digital one's campaign.

Bizhanova et al. (2019) discussed in their research the impact of digital marketing on modern entrepreneurship, as well as the main tasks in the formation of a business structure. Predictions of the rise of consumer power in the digital age leading up to the turn of the century were reinforced by the advent of the Internet and then reignited by social media. Changes in consumer behavior require entrepreneurs to rethink their marketing strategies in the digital sphere. They indicated that most related research focuses more on the customer than on the entrepreneur. Their research used a business perspective to facilitate understanding of digital marketing and social media use, as well as its benefits and inhibitors. They indicated that the second generation of Internet applications improves marketing efforts by enabling entrepreneurs to introduce innovative forms of communication and to co-create content with their customers. Through their research, they indicated that it is necessary to improve engagement in digital marketing, and that entrepreneurs and marketers must focus on relationship-based interactions with their customers. They also pointed out that entrepreneurial business does not use all the benefits that digital marketing provides, but also that social networks are the most important digital channel of communication between entrepreneurs and consumers.

Bakri et al. (2020) came to the conclusion that product advertising through digital channels has an extremely large impact on consumers and on their satisfaction with both the product and the business entity that produces the product. Namely, in this way, a solid bond is created between the entrepreneur and his end consumer, which later manifests itself in consumer

loyalty. This importance of digital marketing on consumer satisfaction, they statistically proved in their research.

Hassan & Ibrahim (2021) indicated in their paper that entrepreneurs should be encouraged to use digital media, especially social networks, in an optimal way in order to achieve a more aggressive and innovative quality of business. Specifically, their research aimed to study the phenomenon of digital media seen as an increasingly powerful channel of information and marketing, as well as to test the impact of their use on entrepreneurial performance. Their study considered the aspect of powerful digital marketing in developing business performance of entrepreneurs. In this study, a quantitative approach based on a cross-sectional design was applied. The questionnaire form as a research instrument was based on the domains in the identified variables. The sample included 300 entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 55 who were conducting their business activities in the vicinity of Klang. Data were analyzed using SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and Smart PLS. The results indicated that business purpose, product advertising, marketing advantages and product reputation have a significant relationship with the business performance of entrepreneurs. The results of structural equation analysis showed that the power of digital marketing had a significant impact on business performance. Also in their research, they came to the conclusion that those entrepreneurs who have been in business longer and have a larger number of employees use digital marketing channels more and efficiently.

Dokić & Stojković (2020) concluded in their research that the digitization of the procurement process ensures good cooperation between entrepreneurs engaged in trading activities and manufacturing companies/other trading companies (suppliers) and that it creates positive implications for entrepreneurs. Brandon-Jones, Alistair & Kauppi (2018) came to similar results, who concluded through their analysis that it is necessary to digitalize communication between business owners and suppliers, and that this is a prerequisite for successful business and satisfaction and loyalty of consumers. Kovač, Bradarić & Lovrić (2015); Shwastika et al. (2021); Olivia (2021) came to identical results

Based on the presentation, which we gave in the literature review, both in the theoretical and in the applied part, we could see that digital marketing really provides numerous advantages for entrepreneurs and business subjects in general. But this is certainly the case only if the right digital marketing channels are used, in a timely manner, if trends and competition are followed and if the audience is correctly targeted. In order to check the situation with entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia, the methodology will be presented below, followed by the results of the statistical analysis.

4. Research methodology

The analysis that was carried out in the continuation of the paper, gave answers to the following questions:

1. Do entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia give enough importance to digital marketing channels?
2. Do entrepreneurs in RS communicate with their suppliers through digital platforms and apply new business models?
3. Which digital marketing channels are the most important for entrepreneurs in our country?
4. Is online commerce sufficiently accepted by domestic entrepreneurs and to what extent has the corona virus had an impact on the acceptance of digitization and the development of online commerce in the field of entrepreneurship?

5. Have entrepreneurs who have been in business longer adapted to the digital era more easily?
6. Does the number of employees have an impact on the acceptance of digital channels of communication with consumers in the field of entrepreneurship?

In order to be able to answer the previously defined questions, it was necessary to collect data, and then to conduct a statistical analysis using the collected data.

For the purpose of expression, a questionnaire was created. In the questionnaire, 12 questions were asked to which the entrepreneurs gave answers. Data collection itself took place via e-mail, visiting entrepreneurs and telephone conversations with entrepreneurs. Answers from 120 entrepreneurs were collected and all questionnaires were taken into account and there was no need to exclude any questionnaire from the analysis, because all questionnaires were completely filled out by the respondents.

The basic criteria according to which the respondents were selected are that they are registered as entrepreneurs, that they operate in the territory of the Republic of Serbia and that they operate for more than six years. The survey was conducted in the period from 10.10.2023. year, until 10.12.2023. years.

Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software package were used to process the collected data. The processing of data and their presentation in the paper was carried out through the creation of graphics that clearly show the answers of our respondents and through tabular presentations and determination of percentage participation for individual questions in relation to the total number of respondents.

In addition to this, with the aim of answering the defined questions of the paper, a correlation analysis was also conducted with the aim of examining:

1. The relationship between length of business and the use of digital marketing channels by entrepreneurs
2. The relationship between the number of employees and the use of digital marketing channels by entrepreneurs.

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to analyze the above relationships. This correlation coefficient can be represented by the following formula (Brunel University, 2024; Greene, 2002):

$$R = \sum xy / \sqrt{N \sum x^2 \sum y^2} \quad (1)$$

Where:

x and y deviations of the results from the arithmetic means of variables X and Y;

N – number of respondents

SX – arithmetic mean error for variable X;

SY – arithmetic mean error for variable Y;

The value of the correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1. Values that are negative represent a negative correlation, while those that are positive represent a positive correlation. If a value is obtained that is closer to zero, it indicates a weak connection between the observed variables. If a positive value is obtained and that value is close to unity, it indicates that there is a positive correlation between the variables. (Đorđević, 2006) In our case, the obtained value close to unity would confirm the hypothesis that the length of the entrepreneur's business and the number of employees have a positive effect on the acceptance of new technologies in communication with consumers.

5. Results

The results were collected from 120 entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia. Before the results of the survey were presented, the structure of the respondents according to the region and the activity to which they belong was first presented.

Table 4. Structure of respondents by region

Region	Number of entrepreneurs	% share
Belgrade Region	45	37,5
Southern and Eastern Serbia	28	23,33
Region of Vojvodina	22	18,33
The region of Šumadija and Western Serbia	25	20,83

Source: Authors

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that entrepreneurs from all regions are represented. The largest number of them is from the Belgrade region, 37.5%, and the smallest is from the Vojvodina region, 18.33%, that is, 22 of them. Let's look at the structure of the respondents according to the activity they belong to. We can see that the largest part of them belongs to the trade sector, which is expected, because the largest number of registered entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia is precisely in that area. In addition to trade, the largest number of respondents belongs to the processing industry, i.e. 20 respondents.

Table 5. Structure of respondents according to the activity to which they belong

Activity of entrepreneurs	Number of entrepreneurs
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	6
Manufacturing industry	20
Construction	4
Wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles	46
Transport and storage	18
Accommodation and catering services	4
Information and communication	4
Financial activities and insurance activities	3
Real estate business	2
Professional, scientific, innovative and technical activities	10
Administrative and auxiliary service activities	2
Health and social protection	1

Source: Authors

The corona virus had a great impact on the operations of business entities in all industries around the world. Entrepreneurs were also affected by its influence, and it is logical that one of the questions was, "has the corona virus had an impact on your business". The goal of this question was to get answers about the problems and challenges entrepreneurs faced due to the virus. Out of 120 entrepreneurs, as many as 105 entrepreneurs answered that there was influence, and within this question they were asked to state in what way. We have presented the most common answers in Table 5. As we can see from this table, the largest number of interviewed entrepreneurs pointed out that the importance of digitization of communication is of great importance for their business.

Table 6. The impact of the corona virus on the challenges faced by entrepreneurs - presentation of the most common answers

Answer	Number of entrepreneurs	% share
There was a drop in sales revenue	90	75%
We have seen that investing in digital communication channels is profitable	99	82,5%
Corona has shown that business models must change and that personalized communication with clients must be ensured in the future (cited as a positive lesson).	94	78,33%

Source: Authors

Also, the question that was asked to the respondents was "do they use digital marketing channels". When it comes to this question, considering that all digital marketing channels are included, a large part of entrepreneurs, even 83.33% of them that we took into account, declared themselves positively. This tells us that the majority of respondents use at least one social media, social networks, SMS marketing or some other form of digital channel of communication with consumers.

One of the questions asked in the survey was about which digital marketing channels are used by the surveyed entrepreneurs. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 7. From social networks, we included Facebook and Instagram, taking into account that they are the most dominant networks used in our country. But the results from the table show us that e-mail marketing is also very important for entrepreneurs in the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

Table 7. Type of digital marketing channels used by entrepreneurs included in the survey

Type of digital marketing channel	Number of entrepreneurs	% share
Facebook account	100	83,33
Facebook paid advertising	22	18,33
Instagram account	99	82,5
Paid advertising on Instagram	18	15
E-mail	88	73,33
SMS marketing	63	52,5
Viber marketing	44	36,67
PPC	40	33,33
Youtube channel	6	5
Paid advertising on Youtube	10	8,33

Source: Authors

In addition to digitization as a challenge, when it comes to relations with consumers, the paper also determined whether digital channels of communication with suppliers have been established, which enable the change of business models, with smaller stocks, quick response of suppliers, but also the transfer of information to suppliers about customer preferences and their requirements. For this reason, respondents were asked whether they use digital channels in communication with suppliers and how they rate the importance of these channels from 1 to 5.

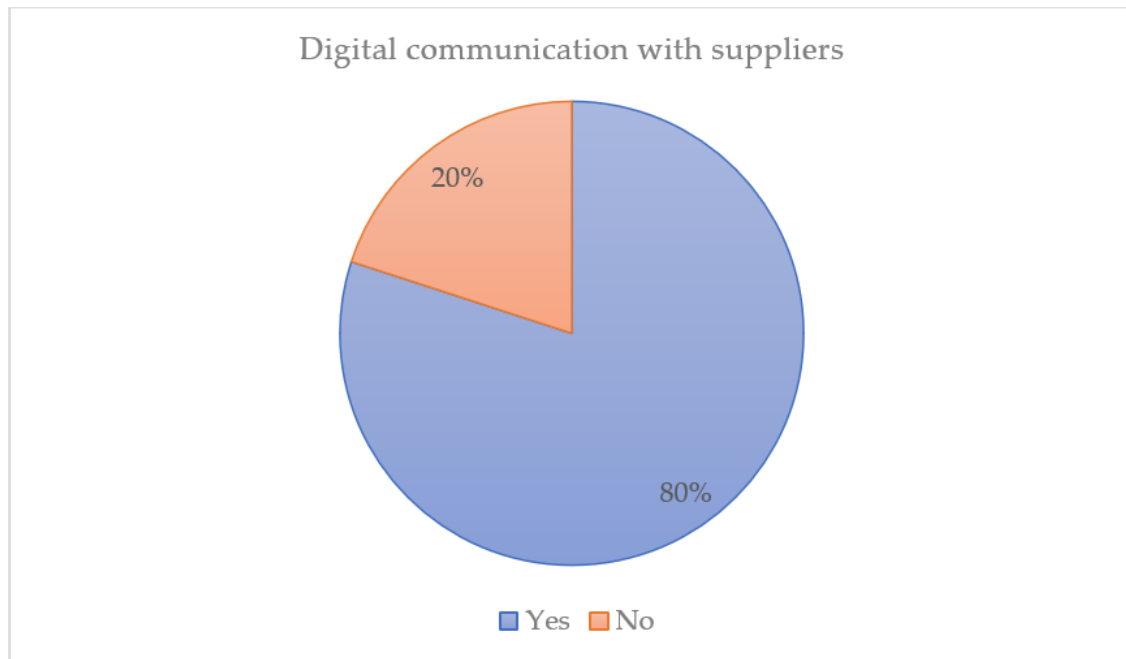


Figure 1. Percentage participation of entrepreneurs in the use of digital channels of communication with suppliers
Source: Authors

As Figure 1 shows, the participation of those entrepreneurs who have some form of digital channels of communication with suppliers is significantly higher. This shows us that digitization in business relations is extremely important for entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia. The following table shows how much they rate the importance of those communication channels, with grades from 1 to 5.

Table 8. Assessment of the importance of digital channels of communication with suppliers by the surveyed entrepreneurs

Mark	Number of entrepreneurs	% share
1	1	0,83
2	4	3,33
3	30	25
4	35	29,17
5	50	41,67

Source: Authors

Therefore, the answers from Table 8 indicate a high level of awareness of domestic entrepreneurs when it comes to establishing and maintaining digital communication channels. Certainly, the next step when it comes to the digitalization of the business sector is online sales. The respondents were asked whether they own an online store, that is, whether consumers can buy their products/services through the website and/or mobile applications. The result is shown in the following image.

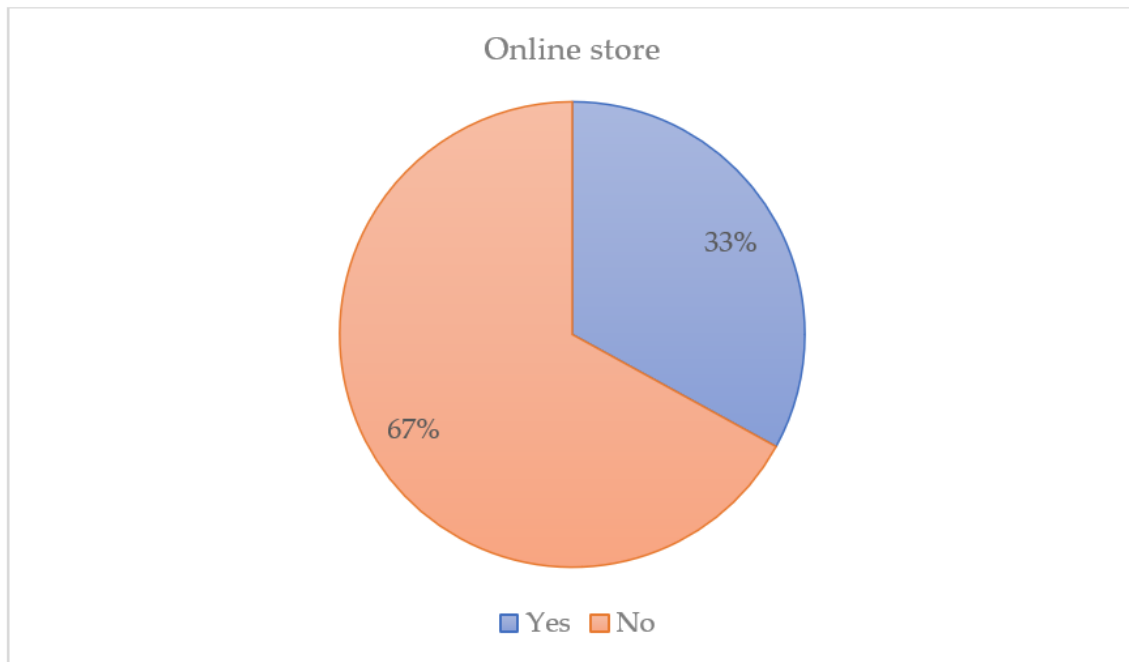


Figure 2. Answers to the question, whether the surveyed entrepreneurs have online sales through the website, mobile applications or social networks

Source: Authors

The next two questions are related to this question in the questionnaire. Namely, the next question referred to a rating from 1 to 5, about the impact of online sales on the income from sales of entrepreneurs. Based on the answers received, we can conclude that this impact is really strong, because we only got grades 4 and 5. That is, 20% of those who have online sales rated its effect on sales revenue as a 4, while as many as 80% of those that have online sales, rated its impact on sales revenue with a score of 5.

The answers of those entrepreneurs, who currently do not own an online store, showed that this kind of sales will gain more and more importance. Namely, out of 80 surveyed entrepreneurs, who do not have an online store, as many as 46 of them declared that they plan to start online sales in the future.

As we already stated in the definition of the research methodology, we determined the Pearson correlation coefficient between the length of the entrepreneur's business and the use of digital marketing channels. The results of this analysis are shown in the following table. The results indicate a strong positive relationship, and the value $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ shows us that this result is statistically significant.

Table 9. Results of Pearson's correlation between length of business and use of digital marketing channels

		DP	DKM
DP	Pearson Correlation	1	.767
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
DKM	Pearson Correlation	.767	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

Source: Authors

Also, by applying the same model, the relationship between the number of employees and the use of digital marketing channels was examined. The results of this analysis are shown in the following table.

Table 10. Results of Pearson's correlation between the number of employees and the use of digital marketing channels

		BZ	DKM
BZ	Pearson Correlation	1	.701
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	120	120
DKM	Pearson Correlation	.701	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	120	120

Source: Authors

The obtained results from table 10 are also statistically significant and show us a positive relationship between the observed variables. That is, the Pearson correlation coefficient obtained is 0.701, with a significance level of $p = 0.001 < 0.05$.

6. Discussion

The conducted analysis indicated that the challenges of digitalization of marketing channels and digitalization of communication with suppliers are the main challenges faced by entrepreneurs and that digitalization is one of the conditions for survival in the market. Without thinking about digitization and the digitization of business by entrepreneurs, it is extremely difficult to survive in the turbulent market as it is today and to create prerequisites for successful business.

Collected and processed data from entrepreneurs showed us that the corona virus had a great impact on speeding up the process of digitization of business in entrepreneurship and thinking about opening online stores. In this way, consumers can shop 24 hours a day, seven days a week and have the goods delivered to their home address. Unlike the previous period, data protection systems have been significantly improved today, so there are no obstacles to the development of online commerce. (Stojanović, Becić, 2022) In this way, we confirmed what Lukić et al. (2019) and Brandon-Jones, Alistair and Katri Kauppi (2018), namely that e-commerce has a positive impact on the business of entrepreneurs and that e-commerce will develop more and more, and we confirmed this by the fact that 80 respondents who do not have online sales, as many as 46 of them plan to start it in the future. Online stores give entrepreneurs the opportunity to address a wider audience, but also to produce offers at lower prices, as well as to offer a wider range of products compared to what they offer in traditional stores.

Digital marketing channels through which business entities reach their consumers and strive to satisfy their demands, communicate with them and ensure their loyalty are something that domestic entrepreneurs really attach importance to. This was shown by the analysis we conducted. The analysis itself indicated that 100 out of 120 surveyed entrepreneurs use digital marketing channels, and the most common digital marketing channels used by domestic entrepreneurs are Facebook account and Instagram account, but e-mail marketing is not far behind them either. In this way, we proved that digital marketing channels are of great importance for entrepreneurs, and this was also pointed out in the papers of Fattah & Khaled (2021), Wanga et al. (2019), Cvijetković et al. (2020), Krishnaprabha & Turunika (2020), Bizhanova et al. (2019), Omar et al. (2021) and Dokić and Stojković (2020).

In addition to good communication with consumers through digital channels, domestic entrepreneurs also pointed to good communication through digital channels with suppliers and that they value this kind of communication highly, because it is a prerequisite for good marketing and meeting the needs of end consumers. As many as 41.67% of surveyed entrepreneurs gave the highest rating to the importance of communication with suppliers. In this way, what was concluded by Dokić & Stojković (2020); Brandon-Jones, Alistair & Kauppi (2018); Kovač, Bradarić & Lovrić (2015); Shwastika et al. (2021); Olivia (2021) was confirmed. This certainly indicates to us that domestic entrepreneurs will accept more and more the new business model, which is based on smaller stocks and constant digital data exchange with suppliers.

Pearson's correlation coefficient showed that digital channels of communication with consumers are more accepted by entrepreneurs who have been in business longer. Certainly, this is the expected result, because entrepreneurs who have been on the market for a long time know their consumers better, know what consumers expect from them, know where consumers are and offer them what they need there.

Also, the correlation between the number of employees and the use of digital marketing channels is positive and high. Namely, this shows us that entrepreneurs with a larger number of employees are easier to accept, have more capital and can invest in digital marketing channels and online commerce. What should be emphasized is that, apart from creating strategies and campaigns, digital channels do not cause high costs for entrepreneurs, regardless of the type of activity they belong to. But it is certainly necessary to conclude that the costs of digital marketing have increased significantly compared to the years that are behind us (there has been an increase in the prices of advertising, website creation), but digital marketing channels are still cheaper than traditional marketing channels, such as for example television or radio commercials.

7. Conclusion

Digital marketing channels represent the present and future of business. Anyone who wants to maintain and develop their entrepreneurial business in modern conditions must use digital marketing communication channels in order to reach consumers, i.e. clients. The research carried out in the paper showed that entrepreneurs in the territory of the Republic of Serbia attach great importance to digital channels of communication, but also that there is significant space to improve this communication, especially when it comes to the sale of products through digital channels.

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