

Exploring attitudes towards digital advertisements on social networks: The case study of the Nišava and Pčinja districts

Istraživanje odnosa prema digitalnim oglasima na društvenim mrežama: studija slučaja na teritoriji Nišavskog i Pčinjskog okruga

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the importance of paid advertising on social networks in the territory of Nišava and Pčinja districts. For this reason, a survey was conducted, which included 294 respondents. Data were processed in the SPSS software package, using tests of independence, contingency, one-factor analysis of variance, and post-hoc tests. The results showed that the majority of respondents from the south of Serbia ignore paid ads on social networks. Also, the study led us to the conclusion that paid advertising affects men and women equally, but also that it has the greatest impact on the population over 50 years old, while it has the least impact on respondents up to 30 years old, as well as that there is a strong connection between the level of education and clicks on paid ads. The results showed that respondents who do not open ads do not do so because they do not notice them, but also that highly educated people open ads for informative reasons and to get to know the advertised business.

Keywords: paid ads, advertising, social networks, consumers

Sažetak

Cilj ovog rada je da izvršimo analizu značaja plaćenog oglašavanja na društvenim mrežama na teritoriji Nišavskog i Pčinjskog okruga. Iz tog razloga sprovedena je anketa, kojom je obuhvaćeno 294 ispitanika. Podaci su obrađeni u softverskom paketu SPSS, korišćenjem testova nezavisnosti, kontigencije, jednofaktorske analize varijanse i post-hoc testa. Rezultati su pokazali da većina ispitanika sa juga Srbije, ignoriše plaćene oglase na društvenim mrežama. Takođe studija nas je dovela do zaključka da plaćeno oglašavanje podjednako utiče na muškarce i žene, ali i da najviše utiče na populaciju iznad 50 godina, dok najmanji uticaj ima na ispitanike do 30 godina, kao i da između nivoa obrazovanja i klikova na plaćene oglase na društvenim mrežama postoji snažna veza. Rezultati su pokazali da ispitanici koji ne otvaraju oglase, to ne čine zato što ih ne primećuju, ali i da visoko obrazovani ljudi otvaraju oglase iz informativnih razloga i sa ciljem upoznavanja biznisa koji se oglašava.

Ključne reči: plaćeni oglasi, oglašavanje, društvene mreže, potrošači

1. Introduction


People's lives today cannot be envisioned without the usage of the Internet and social networks, in both their personal and professional life. Businesses deliver their messages to consumers through the channels their consumers use. Previously, consumers were more attached to traditional forms of advertising, but today this is not the case, due to the increasing acceptance of digital technologies. (Dwivedi et al., 2015) This does not imply that businesses have shifted their marketing messages entirely to digital marketing channels, but it does indicate

that more and more money is being allocated to digital marketing as opposed to traditional marketing, with the goal of sending messages through the appropriate channels, i.e. those on which the target audience is located.

Social networks are very important nowadays. Social networks are websites and applications that give users and organizations the opportunity to connect, communicate, share information and establish relationships. (Simerpreet, 2016; Nadda et al., 2015; Sharma, 2018) People can connect with other people in the same area,

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with family, friends and those who share the same interests with them. Social networks are not a novelty. The first social networks were created in 1997, by Bolt and Six Degrees (Hines, 2023; Alalwan et al., 2017; Kapoor et al., 2018; Kim and Kim, 2018; Shareef et al., 2019) Today there is a large number of social networks. Facebook, Youtube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Wechat, TikTok SnapChat, Sina Weibo, QQ, Telegram, and LinkedIn have the largest number of users per week (Lua, 2023; Buttle, 2023). According to the official data, the dominant social network in the Republic of Serbia is Facebook, which is used by 78.84% of the total number of social network users in the Republic of Serbia.

A large number of users, as well as the data that social networks collect about their users, have attracted business entities and made them appear on social networks. Today a large number of business entities have their page on social networks where they share content related to their products and business, but also other content attractive for their users, or customers. (Keegan and Rowley, 2017; Shareef et al., 2017). Companies share the so-called organic content on their profiles. Organic content in the context of digital marketing refers to non-paid, spontaneously occurring internet content created and shared by businesses or individuals. This content is not paid for, and its reach and visibility are determined by audience involvement and algorithms. Organic content is frequently recognized for its genuineness, as well as its function in creating relationships with followers and customers. (Aydin, 2019). It's not easy to attract a customer, make the customer like a page, keep ahead of the competition and reach the top position. This is why a large number of companies decide to use paid advertising on social networks.

Paid ads on social networks are shown to consumers according to their interest. (Knoll, 2015; Alalwan et al., 2017; Nova, 2019) Social networks have information about what the users are interested in (based on searches), how old they are, what they do, what pages they like and similar information, which helps with audience targeting. Therefore, the users to whom an ad is shown can see exactly what they are interested in, which increases the chance that they will visit the site and buy a particular product, like a profile on a social network or leave their data with the advertising company, which all depends on the location where the ad leads them. (Knoll, 2015; Madlberger & Kraemmer, 2020; Zahai et al., 2022)

Paid advertising on social networks has not been sufficiently explored from an empirical perspective in the Republic of Serbia. However, when it comes to works that conduct an analysis of theoretical perspectives, they are present. All of these papers underline the increasing importance of sponsored advertising on social networks. (Đurićanin et al., 2021; Ognjanov, 2016; Kovač, 2022) For this reason, we will conduct empirical analysis and come up with certain significant data, which can contribute both to scientists dealing with this topic and to the companies, by pointing out the importance of paid advertising for consumers, and by defining the group of consumers social networks paid ads have the greatest

impact on. This topic has been the subject of empirical analysis of a large number of foreign authors, which is not the case with Serbian researchers.

Duffet (2015) proved in his study that paid advertising on social networks has a positive influence on consumers to visit the ad and buy the product/service advertised. He came to the conclusion that, when it comes to gender and age, there is no statistically significant difference in the impact of paid ads on social network users. The same results were reached by Vranjes et al. (2019), who analyzed paid advertising on Facebook. Elgun & Kaya (2023) confirmed that men and women respond equally to paid ads on social networks. Also, they came to the conclusion that persons with the highest level of education most often make purchases under the influence of the paid ads they see on their social networks. Banister, Kiefer, & Nellums (2013), on the other hand, came up with the result that women are more responsive to paid advertising, and that the age is not a significant factor that determines if the person to whom the ad is shown will click on it.

eMarketer (2023) came up with the result that paid advertising is effective and pointed out that one in five people who see a paid advertisement on a social network, visit the advertiser's website to buy the product. Yang (2012), through his analysis, also pointed to the importance of information that consumers receive through paid advertising on Facebook, and their decision to purchase a product advertised through a paid advertisement. Voorveld et al. (2018) have also concluded that advertising on different social media platforms is effective. Similar conclusions were reached by Halide et al. (2018), Berman (2018), Lou & Koh (2018) and Hamounda (2018). Persuad (2013) analysed only the younger population and came to the conclusion that paid advertising is not effective enough. Similar results were obtained by Banister et al. (2013) who analysed students in the USA and Bilgin (2018).

In addition to gender, age and education factors, the authors have also explored the social network users' motives to click on a paid ad. Zhang and Mao (2016) pointed out that the reason why social network users click on a paid ad is primarily their informative character, that is, in this way they provide information about a product/service (their decision whether to buy a product or not depends on the information received after the click). The users also click on paid ads because they are interesting and lead them to the products they need. Finding products which they cannot find in any other way, is one of the motives highlighted by Marvin (2019). Ervina et al. (2020) and Mao & Zhang (2015) came to the conclusion that consumers often click on paid ads on social networks to fill their free time and learn some new information.

Lennartsson & Zeka (2021) came to the conclusion that paid ads, and organic content as well, encourage impulsive customers to click and buy products. They proved that the emotional motive has a huge impact on consumers to visit the advertisement displayed to them on social networks.

Unlike those who indicate that paid advertising on social networks is effective, there is a large number of researchers who indicate that users of social networks are not enthusiastic about paid ads. In their works they tried to find out what these motives are. Kelly et al. (2010), Mollenar et al. (2021), and Nyu et al. (2021) indicated that when consumers feel they are invaded by paid ads, they ignore them. They pointed out that there are more people who would not open paid ads than those who would click on the ads. And as the basic motives they identified are the lack of creativity of paid ads, showing paid ads too often, but also the lack of interest in paid ads that are shown to them on their social network profiles.

2. Materials and methods

With the aim of conducting research on the influence of gender, age and education on the impact of paid advertising, as well as on the motives to click or not click on a paid ad, we designed a survey and collected data.

The research sample included 294 respondents who, before filling out the questionnaire, declared themselves to use social networks and live in the territory of Nišava or Pčinjaa districts. In this way we confirmed that the research is based on a representative sample of respondents, who correspond to the profile of the participants that we requested for the survey. The decision to take into account only the respondents from the south of Serbia was made based on the fact that no such research was done in this area. Conducting this kind of research can provide important conclusions, both scientific and practical. The process of distributing the questionnaire was completed by sending the questionnaire to the e-mail addresses of potential respondents, as well as via Facebook Messenger. The period during which the questionnaire was distributed and the data were collected from the respondents was March 02, 2023 - July 02, 2023.

This phase of the research was preceded by the analysis of the available literature and the results of empirical research dealing with this topic. Based on this research, a questionnaire was created. It included general questions about the demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, education, occupation) and the question how many times a week they visit a website of a business based on its paid (sponsored) ad on a social network. (Zhang & Mao, 2016; Ervina et al., 2020; Mao & Zhang, 2015; eMarketer, 2023; Judgment, 2013; Elgun & Kaya, 2023; Dufet, 2015) After filling out the general part of the questionnaire, the respondents who have declared that they never visit a paid ad, are given the opportunity to give a more detailed explanation of the reasons why paid ads do not influence their decision to visit the website of the business being advertised. Those respondents who declared that they visit websites based on what they see in paid advertisements were asked to rate seven statements about paid advertising on social networks on a scale from 1 - I completely disagree to 5 - I completely agree. The statements they evaluated were defined on the basis of the analyzed literature. (Lennartson & Zeka, 2021; Kelly et al., 2010; Molennar, 2021; Nyu et al., 2021)

The data was first encoded in the SPSS software package before applying descriptive statistics, the contingency test, the independence test, a one-factor analysis of the variance, and the post-hoc test. To examine the statistical variations in respondents' perspectives on the influence of social network paid advertising on the visit of a business website, Facebook page, and so on, depending on where the paid ad leads to and who clicked on it. The conclusion that these tests are suitable for carrying out this kind of analysis was based on the analysis of representative statistical literature. (Pallant, 2009; Baarda et al., 2019; Rovay et al., 2013)

The research defined in this way, the analysis of the available literature and the mentioned tests allow us to test the following hypotheses:

- H1. Paid social media advertising has the same effect on men and women's click-through rates;
- H2. Education level influences the likelihood of clicking on a paid social media ad;
- H3. Age influences the decision to click on a paid social network ad;
- H4. The desire for new information is the most powerful motivator for users to click on paid social media advertisements;
- H5. Users with more free time are more likely to click on paid adverts on social media;
- H6. There is a greater participation of those users of social networks who ignore paid ads, than those who visit sites to which paid ads lead them.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents (n=294)

	N	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Men	102	34.69
Women	192	65.31
<i>Age</i>		
Less than 30	114	38.78
31 - 49	101	34.35
50 and more	79	26.87
<i>Education</i>		
High School	91	30.95
College	52	17.69
Faculty	101	34.35
Master, Ph.D	50	17.01
<i>No of visits to the website/Fb page/Instagram page... based on paid ads</i>		
Never	154	52.38
1-5	86	29.25
6-10	36	12.24
10-15	11	3.74
More than 15 times	7	2.38

Source: Authors' calculation

As we have already mentioned, 294 respondents participated in the survey, 65.31% of which were female. If we look at the age structure, most respondents are under the age of 30 (38.78%,) but the participation rate of respondents aged 31- 49 is also high (34.35%) When it comes to the level of education of the respondents, 151 of them declared that they have completed university, master or PhD studies and they account for 51.36% of the total number of respondents. The lowest number of participants

are those who have completed a college (17.69%) of the total number of respondents. When it comes to the number of weekly visits to websites based on the paid advertising seen on social networks, the largest number of respondents stated that they do not visit any site based on paid advertising (52.38%). The highest number of those who have visited a website on the basis of paid advertising, are the people who do it 1-5 times a week (29.25%).

3. The results of the research

Table number 2 shows us that out of the total number of women surveyed, 91 of them click at least once on a paid ad on social networks on a weekly basis, while 101 women surveyed never click on a paid ad on social networks on a weekly basis with the aim of visiting a company's website, its Facebook page (that is, the location to which the paid ad leads), based on company ad on social networks. When it comes to men, 48.04% of them declared that at least once a week a paid ad takes them to the destination location of the paid ad, while 52.6% of men ignore paid ads, that is, they do not encourage them to click on the ad.

Table 2. Paid social networks ad engagement by gender

		Visit location based on paid ad on social networks		Total	
		Yes	No		
Gender	Man	Count	49	53	102
		% within Gender	48.04%	52.96%	100.0%
		% within Visit website	35%	34.41%	34.69%
	Woman	% of Total	16.67%	18.03%	34.69%
		Count	91	101	192
		% within Gender	47.4%	52.6%	100.0%
	% within Visit website	65%	65.58%	65.31%	
	% of Total	5.9%	39.1%	65.31%	

Source: Authors' calculation

The answer to the question, whether gender has an influence on whether someone will visit the website/Facebook profile/Insagram profile of the business being advertised based on a paid ad on social networks, is given in table number three, where the results of the independence test are shown (Sampling realization of the test statistic and the p-value).

a paid advertisement on a social network will decide to click on it.

Table 3. Independence between gender and ad engagement

	Value	df	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	1.691 ^a	1	.181
Continuity Correction ^b	1.359	1	.216
Likelihood Ratio	1.698	1	.178
Fisher's Exact Test			
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.696	1	.184

Source: Authors' calculation

Considering that $p = 0.191 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that gender has no influence on whether a person after seeing

Table 4. The tendency in paid ad clicking by age

		Visit location based on paid ad on social networks		Total	
		Yes	No		
Age	Until 30	Count	46	68	114
		% within Age	40.35%	59.65%	100.0%
		% within Visit location	32.86%	44.16%	38.78%
	31-49	% of Total	15.65%	23.13%	38.78%
		Count	51	50	101
		% within Age	50.5%	49.5%	100.0%
50 and more	% within Visit location	36.43%	32.47%	34.35%	
	% of Total	17.35%	17.01%	34.35%	
	Count	43	36	79	
	% within Age	54.43%	45.57%	100.0%	
	% within Visit location	30.71%	23.38%	26.87%	
	% of Total	14.63%	12.24%	26.87%	

Source: Authors' calculation

Table 5 shows the results of the test statistics (Sampling realization of the test statistic and the p-value). Considering that the implementation of Sampling test statistics is 41.524 with the realised level of significance $p = 0.001 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that there is a strong and the statistically significant correlation between age and clicks on paid ad on social networks.

Table 5. Independence between age and tendency in paid ad clicking

	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	41.524 ^a	2	.001
Likelihood Ratio	38.099	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	36.201	1	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 26.29.

Source: Authors' calculation

Table 6. Contingency coefficient of age and tendency in paid ad clicking

		Value	Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.219	.000
	Cramer's V	.229	.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.232	.001

Source: Authors' calculation

The high degree of dependence of these two variables can be seen on the basis of the value of the coefficient of

contingency, which amounts to 0,232 to the realised level of significance $p = 0.001 < 0.05$, as can be seen from and Table 6.

Table number 7 shows us that 68.13% of those respondents, who have completed high school, click on the paid ad shown to them at least once a week. The lowest number is among faculty-educated individuals who click on paid advertisements at least once a week, with 31.68% or 32 out of 101 respondents who have a college degree.

Table 7. Paid social media ad engagement by education

		Visit location based on paid ad on social networks		Total	
		Yes	No		
Education	Secondary School	Count	62	29	91
		% within Education	68.13%	31.87%	100.0%
		% within Visit location	44.29%	19.83%	30.95%
		% of Total	21.09%	9.86%	30.95%
		Count	25	27	52
		% within Education	48.08%	51.92%	100.0%
		% within Visit location	17.86%	17.53%	17.69%
		% of Total	8.5%	9.18%	17.69%
		Count	32	69	101
		% within Education	31.68%	68.32%	100.0%
		% within Visit location	22.86%	44.81%	34.34%
		% of Total	10.88%	23.47%	34.35%
	Count	21	29	50	
	% within Education	42.00%	58.00%	100.0%	
	% within Visit location	15.00%	18.83%	17.01%	
	% of Total	7.14%	9.86%	17.01%	

Source: Authors' calculation

Table 8 shows the results of the test statistics (Sampling realisation of the test statistic and the p-value) between Education Structure and website visits based on Paid Ad on Social Networks. Considering that the implementation of Sampling test statistics is 44.673 with the realised level of significance $p = 0.002 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that there is a strong and the statistically significant correlation between education and web site visits based on paid ad on social networks.

Table 8. Test of independence between education and tendency of clicks

	Value	df	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	44.673 ^a	3	.002
Likelihood Ratio	39.188	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	37.196	1	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 26.29.

Source: Authors' calculation

The high degree of dependence of these two variables can be seen on the basis of the value of the coefficient of contingency, as we did for age structure. This coefficient amounts to 0,244 to the realised level of significance $p = 0.002 < 0.05$, as can be seen from Table 9.

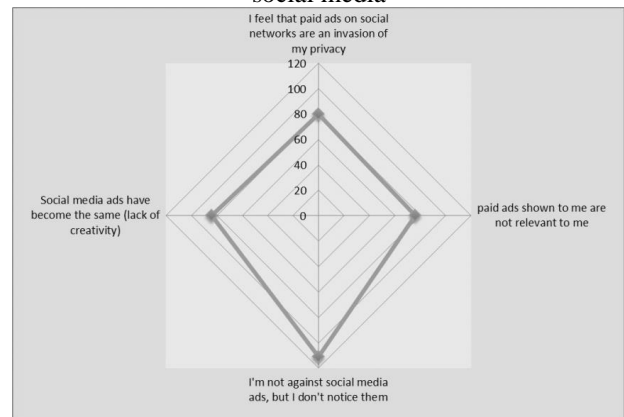
Table 9. Contingency coefficient of education and tendency of clicks

		Value	Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.226	.000
	Cramer's V	.235	.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.244	.002

Source: Authors' calculation

As mentioned in the methodology section, respondents who indicated that they never visit a business website/Facebook or Instagram page based on a paid advertisement shown to them on a social network were asked to provide one or more reasons for not doing so. The most common reasons for not visiting the advertised business website are shown in Figure 1.

Image 1. Reasons for ignoring paid advertisements on social media



Source: Authors based on the results of the survey

The results of the conducted analysis show that 111 respondents, or 72.1% of those who stated that paid advertisements have never prompted them to visit the advertised location on a weekly basis, emphasized that they are not opposed to paid advertising but simply do not notice paid ads when they enter their social media

platforms. Additionally, 84 respondents from this group believe that the ads displayed to them are becoming increasingly uncreative and less attention-grabbing. Furthermore, respondents cited the irrelevance of the ads shown to them and considered paid ads as an invasion of their privacy, which is why they choose not to visit them.

When it comes to respondents who stated that a paid advertisement on a social media platform prompts them to

click at least once a week, they were asked to rate the provided statements on a scale of 1 to 5 in the survey questionnaire. Table 10 presents the results of the descriptive analysis of respondents' attitudes regarding what motivates them to click when it comes to paid ads on social media. The reliability of the measurement scale was tested using Cronbach's coefficient, which in this case is 0.946, indicating high reliability and responsiveness between the observed variables.

Table 10. Results of descriptive statistic analysis

Click on a paid ad on a social network ($\alpha= 0.946$)	M	SD
I open paid advertisements on social media to fill my free time	3.20	1.224
Paid advertisements provide me with information	4.30	1.198
I enjoy looking at offers from businesses that advertise	3.92	1.176
Paid advertisements enable me to find products/services that I need	4.01	1.151
I'm someone who buys on impulse, so paid ads encourage me to click	3.11	1.261
Paid ads on social networks are interesting to me	4.06	1.152
I am shown products/services that I cannot find elsewhere	4.22	1.165

Source: Authors' calculation

The highest average ratings were calculated for the second and seventh statement, indicating that respondents who stated that they visit the location advertised in paid ads on social media do so in order to obtain additional information about the advertised content. They also visit these locations because the products/services advertised on social media are difficult to find in stores or through search engines. More specifically, in this way, they find it easier to locate what they need but have difficulty finding through other means. The statement about impulsive

buying behavior prompting social media users to click on ads received the lowest average rating.

In order to find out whether gender has an influence on the assessment of the above statements, the t test of independent samples was applied. The results showed us that there are no significant differences in the opinions of respondents about the motives that influence them to click on a paid ad on social networks.

Table 11. Results of one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) according to age of respondents

Click on the paid ad on social networks	Average values			F	p
	Until 30	31-50	51 and more		
I'm someone who buys on impulse, so paid ads encourage me to click	4.02	3.17	2.14	2.397	0.034

Source: Authors' calculation

When it comes to the difference in the opinions of respondents by age, it can be noticed but only in one statement, and the results are shown in Table 11. Therefore, when it comes to age, the existence of statistically significant differences was determined in the case of only one of the total seven statements, which the

respondents evaluated in the survey. The results of the subsequent measurements, which were performed with a post-hoc test, showed us that there are differences between the attitudes of respondents up to 30 years of age and those over 51 years of age.

Table 12. Results of one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) according to education

Click on the paid ad on social networks	Education				F	p
	Secondary school	College	Faculty	Master, PhD		
Paid advertisements provide me with information	4.29	3.69	4.41	4.38	2.475	0.031
I enjoy looking at offers from businesses that advertise	3.87	3.25	4.00	3.89	2.798	0.019
I open paid advertisements on social media to fill my free time	4.01	3.24	3.19	3.21	3.269	0.008
I'm someone who buys on impulse, so paid ads encourage me to click	3.99	3.07	3.12	3.08	3.187	0.021

Source: Authors' calculation

The results of the one-factor analysis of variance showed us that there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of respondents of different levels of education in four of the seven statements that they assessed in the survey. By applying a post-hoc test, it was examined which groups of respondents had statistically significant differences in attitudes. The results of this test

have shown differences in the attitudes of respondents who have completed secondary school and those with a university degree regarding the first two statements, as well as between those who have completed high school compared to those who have completed a master's or doctoral degree regarding the remaining two statements. This indicates that the level of education motivates social

media users to click on paid advertisements for various reasons.

4. Discussion and recommendations

Looking at the gender structure of respondents, who declared that they click on a paid ad at least once a week, we can see that the participation of women in absolute terms is significantly higher. But that is not surprising, because the participation of women in the total number of respondents is also significantly higher. But if we look at the contingency table, we can see that even when it comes to percentage data, women are more likely to click on a paid ad on social networks. By conducting a test of independence, however, it was found that the gender structure does not have a statistically significant effect on whether someone will click on a paid ad on social media or not. This proved the hypothesis H1 that "Paid advertising on social networks equally encourages women and men to click". This confirms the results obtained by Duffet (2015), Vranješ et al. (2019) and Elgun & Kaya (2023), and opposite results were obtained from Bannister, Kiefer & Nellums (2013) who concluded that paid advertising on social networks affects women more.

Education level also influences whether or not someone will decide to click on a paid ad on social media. Namely, through our analysis, we came to the conclusion that in the territory of Nišava and Pčinja districts, people who have completed high school are particularly interested in paid ads on social networks. Namely, 62% of the respondents, who have a secondary education, declared that they click on a paid ad at least once a week, while people with a university education were least interested in paid advertisements. Conducted tests indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between the education structure and clicks on paid ads. This proved the hypothesis H2 in the paper and confirmed the results of Elgun & Kaya (2023) about the existence of a connection between education and the acceptance of paid advertising on social networks by users. However, in contrast to them, who proved that the university-educated population visits paid ads the most, we came to the result that these are persons with completed secondary education, when it comes to the Nišava and Pčinja district.

Paid ads on social networks do not affect respondents of all ages equally. These are the results of the analysis. Namely, the conducted tests showed that the click on a paid ad by the respondents depends a lot on the age group to which they belong. Respondents over the age of 50 stated that they are more willing to click on a paid ad than respondents under the age of 50, and especially those under the age of 30. In this way, we came to opposite results from Bannister, Kiefer & Nellums (2013), who indicated that age structure has no influence on whether someone will click on a paid ad on social networks. Persuad (2013) and Bannister et al. (2013), like us, came to the result that the younger population responds less to paid ads on social networks. In this way, hypothesis H3, which reads, "Age has an influence on the decision to click on a paid ad on a social network by the user", was confirmed.

As we have already said, 154 respondents declared that they never open paid ads on social networks. And as the most common reason, they stated that they are not against paid ads, but that they simply do not notice them, that paid ads are not creative enough, that they are shown ads that are not relevant to them, and that they feel the invasion of paid ads and an attack on their privacy. Similar results were obtained in the research by Kelly et al. (2010), Molennar (2021) & Niu et al. (2021). Certainly, these results tell us that there is a space for influence on this group of social network users through paid advertising. But in order to achieve this, it is necessary to increase the creativity of paid ads and their uniqueness, to target the audience well, so that the ads that are shown to them are relevant for them, but also to have a measure when it comes to paid advertising, so that they do not feel invaded by paid ads. Also, through user education, that the goal of paid ads and their display on users' social network profiles with the aim of their better user experience can help in greater acceptance of paid ads, more clicks and, in the end, greater sales of products, or services.

The goal of our research was also to find out what are the key reasons why respondents opened paid ads on social networks. By evaluating the statements that were offered to them, we came to the conclusion that the most common reason for clicking is information, i.e. the need to learn more about a product or service that is being advertised, as well as the interest of paid ads for users. With this, we confirmed the results reached by Ervina et al. (2020), Mao & Zhang (2015) and Zhang & Mao (2016), about visiting paid ads with the aim of obtaining information, but also proved our hypothesis H4.

With the aim of determining the influence of the age structure on the ratings of the above statements, as explained in the paper, a one-factor analysis of variance was conducted. The results showed that only the impulse purchasing motive is not evenly represented in all age groups as the cause for the click. The younger population who declared that they visit paid ads rated this statement much higher than the older population. Lennartson & Zeka (2021) are researchers who indicated that impulse buyers visit paid ads on social networks more than those who do not.

Also, a one-factor analysis of variance and a post-hoc test were applied in order to determine whether there is a difference in the evaluation of the findings when it comes to the educational structure of the respondents. In 4 statements, as already mentioned, differences in evaluations were observed. The conducted tests proved to us that leisure and the need to fill free time is a particularly important motive for clicking among the surveyed population with secondary education, and the importance of this motive was discussed in papers by Ervina et al. (2020) and Mao & Zhang (2015), while the informative aspect of paid ads is especially important for the more educated population. For this reason, the hypothesis H5, which reads, "Users with more free time are more likely to click on paid adverts on social media", cannot be accepted, because the informational motive is rated much higher among the population surveyed through the

questionnaire. Therefore, it is important to know the target group well, as well as the motives that make them open or not open paid ads, in order to design adequate strategies for paid advertising, by companies, or by marketing agencies which perform digital marketing campaigns for them.

On the territory of the Nišava and Pčinja districts, where respondents, who are included in the research, live, it has been proven that there are more people who ignore paid ads on social networks than those who are encouraged to click on paid ads. Namely, 140 respondents declared that they click on a paid ad at least once a week when visiting their profiles on social networks, while 154 respondents declared that they never click on a paid ad. In this way, we reached results similar to those reached by Kelly et al. (2010), Molennar (2021), Niu et al. (2021), Bannister et al. (2013) and Persuad (2013), and the opposite results to the results reached by Duffett (2015) and eMarketer (2023). In this way, hypothesis H6, which reads, "There is a greater participation of those users of social networks who ignore paid ads, than those who visit sites to which paid ads lead them," was proven. However, it should be emphasized that the participation of 47.62% of those who click on a paid ad at least once a week is high, so paid advertising should not be neglected as a way to reach customers, when it comes to the Nišava and Pčinja regions.

5. Conclusion

Paid advertising on social media is nothing new. However, the constant growth of the number of users of social networks has had the effect that paid advertising has gained more and more importance over time. The growth of paid advertising was also influenced by changes in the way social networks function, which are increasingly focused on the user experience. Marketers have recognized social networks as a powerful tool in digital marketing, both through organic content and through the placement of content in the form of paid ads.

The research we conducted on the territory of Nišava and Pčinja districts showed us that there is a greater number of social network users in this area who ignore paid ads compared to the number of users who will click on a paid ad that can lead them to a page on the site of company, Facebook page, Instagram page, to a blog, etc. However, identifying the reasons for the lack of ad clicks, gives companies that advertise on social networks a chance to work on creativity, security, but also on a slightly less aggressive campaign when it comes to that population. Also, the realization that gender does not have a statistically significant influence, and that the educational and age structure of respondents influence the clicking of paid ads on social networks, as well as the different motives for which people with secondary education and those with a university degree click paid ads, establish the basis for more precisely defining the target groups, as well as the content that should be offered to them through paid advertising.

Like any research, this research has some limitations. Namely, if a larger number of respondents or a different group of respondents had been present, there is a possibility that different results would have been obtained. Also, the unavailability of domestic sources when it comes to this topic makes it difficult to check the relevance of the results we have reached through research. When it comes to future research on this topic, researchers should focus on identifying the reasons why participants in our study do not engage with paid advertisements on social media. They should also aim to identify the types of advertisements participants expect and thereby gather information on what types of ads to place on social media, as well as how to properly target users.

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