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ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES OF HUNGARIAN ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS AND CATERING SME'S FROM THE ASPECT OF LEAN PRINCIPLES

Анотація. Концепція Lean-менеджменту може розглядатися як підхід, що організовує та керує бізнес-процесами, зосереджуючись при цьому на кількох основних принципах, таких як максимізація цінностей для клієнта при мінімізації витрат, що призводить до створення більших цінностей для споживача за рахунок використання меншої кількості ресурсів. Leanмислення успішно може застосовуватися в галузі маркетингу соціальних мереж, коли мова йде про розуміння логічного процесу окремих операцій та підвищення загальної ефективності кампаній при одночасному покращенні ключових показників результативності. Основні принципи Lean («ощадливі» принципи) можуть служити основою у будь-якій системі та бізнесі, зокрема враховуються і на стратегічних рівнях. Різноманітні платформи стали смарт (розумними), рекламні альтернативи можна налаштовувати відповідно до індивідуальних потреб бізнесу, що також призводить до більшої загальної ефективності. За допомогою доступних платформ соціальних мереж, бізнес може не тільки залучати власну цільову аудиторію, але й вимірювати успіх окремих кампаній. Основна мета дослідження полягає у пошуку відповіді на питання, які паралелі та зв'язки можна виявити між онлайн-маркетингом та Lean-теоріями. Дослідження розкриває процес створення та підтримку стратегій маркетингу соціальних мереж з точки зору Lean-мислення, зосереджуючись на виявленні впливу окремих кампаній – внутрішніх або зовнішніх - на ступінь використання принципів Lean. У процесі дослідження проведено анкетування постачальників послуг розміщення та малих підприємств кейтерингу, які функіонують в різних містах Угорщини, з метою оцінки ефективності їх процесів маркетингу в соціальних мережах. Дослідження показало, що 70% активності соціальних медіа в досліджуваному регіоні було передано аутсорсингу, а переважна більшість компаній (57%) не контролюють ефективність своєї маркетингової діяльності регулярно. Проведено моніторинг потенційної присутності Lean у маркетингових процесах.

Ключові слова: Lean-менеджмент, маркетинг у соціальних мережах, сектор малого та середнього підприємництва.

JEL Classification: M31, M11, L86



Absztrakt. Absztrakt: A leanmenedzsment olyan attitűdként fogható fel, amely megszervezi és irányítja az üzleti folyamatokat, miközben néhány fő vezérelvet fókuszban tart, mint például a vásárlói érték maximalizálása a veszteségek minimalizálása mellett, ami kevesebb erőforrás felhasználásával megnövelt ügyfélértéket eredményez. A lean gondolkodás sikeresen alkalmazható a közösségi média marketing területén az egyes műveletek logikai folyamatának megértésében, a kampányok általános hatékonyságának növelésében, a fő teljesítménymutatók javítása mellett. A lean alapelvei minden rendszer és vállalkozás működési hatékonyságnövelésében fundamentumként szolgálhatnak, ezért ezeket az alapelveket stratégiai szinten is figyelembe veszik. A különböző platformok okossá váltak, a reklámalternatívák a vállalkozások egyedi igényei alapján nagymértékben testreszabhatók, ami egyben magasabb összhatékonyságot is eredményezhet. A rendelkezésre álló közösségi média platformok segítségével a vállalkozások nemcsak a kívánt közönséget érhetik el, hanem egyéni kampányaik sikerét is mérhetik. A kutatás fő célja, hogy választ találjon arra, milyen párhuzamosságok és összefüggések fedezhetők fel az online marketing és a lean elméletek között. A kutatás arra a kérdésre kíván választ adni, hogy a közösségi média marketingstratégiák létrehozásának és fenntartásának folyamata miként jellemezhető a lean gondolkodás szempontjából, annak felderítésére összpontosítva, hogy az egyes kampányok indítása – akár házon belüli, akár kiszervezett – van-e hatással arra, hogy milyen mértékben alkalmazzák a lean elveket. A kutatás során különböző magyarországi városokban található szálláshely-szolgáltatókat és vendéglátóipari KKV-kat kerestünk fel, hogy kérdőív segítségével felmérjük az adott egységek közösségi média marketing folyamatait. Kérdések sorozata segített többet megtudni arról, hogy a vállalkozások hogyan tervezik és használják a közösségi média marketing gyakorlatait.

Kulcsszavak: leanmenedzsment, közösségi média marketing, KKV-szektor

Abstract. Lean management can be viewed as an attitude that organizes and directs business processes while keeping a few main guiding principles in focus such as maximizing the customer value while minimizing losses, resulting in the creation of increased customer value by using fewer resources. The lean thinking can successfully applied in the field of social media marketing when it comes to understanding the logical process of the individual operations and to increase the overall efficiency of the campaigns while improving the key performance indicators. The basic principles of lean can serve as the basis in any system and in any business, and for this reason, basic principles are also taken into consideration at strategic levels. The various platforms have become smart, the advertising alternatives can be highly customized based on the individual needs of businesses, which can also result in higher overall efficiency. With the help of the available social media platforms, businesses are not only able to reach their desired audience but can also measure the success of their individual campaigns. The main goal of the research is to find an answer to what parallels and connections can be discovered between online marketing and lean theories. The research aims to answer the questions of how the process of creating and maintaining social media marketing strategies can be characterized from the aspect of lean thinking while focusing on discovering whether the origin of the individual campaigns – either in-house or outsources – have any effect on the extent of how well the lean principles are applied. During the course of the research, accommodation providers and catering SMEs located in various Hungarian cities were visited in order to use a questionnaire to assess the social media marketing processes of the given units. The research proved that 70% of the social media activity in the examined region was outsourced and the vast majority of businesses (57%) do not track the effectiveness of their marketing activities regularly. The potential presence of lean in marketing processes had been monitored.

Keywords: leanmanagement, social media marketing, SME sector

Problem statement. Online marketing had been increasingly gaining ground in the hospitality industry recently. Examining the efficiency of the service sector is an increasingly important topic. A wide range of researchers are looking for ways to

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measure the efficiency of this constantly changing sector. In this research, the aim is to find an answer to what parallels and connections can be discovered between online marketing and lean theories. The application of lean by accommodation providers was researched by Pankotay [18], who concluded that the principles are indeed present to a certain extent, but they are not consciously applied. In terms of innovational potential, the Hungarian companies are behind those of Western Europe. If Hungary wants to be competitive, companies will need to get down to some serious thinking, for it is continuous renewal which brings the world forward. It is to be feared that foreign country investments will not increase in the sector while the domestic companies will not be able to make additional investments because of their efforts to overcome the crisis [8].

The megatrends that can be observed in the current crisis-ridden world, such as Industry 4.0 [11], the advancement of digitalization and sustainability aspects, require continuous adaptation.

The importance of financial institutions in global and national economic perspectives is well known, and the current uncertain economic situation also requires business organizations to manage the assets and resources entrusted to them responsibly and transparently during their operations. This requires, among other things, sustainable and safe, regular operation [15]. Sustainability, i.e. development that also takes environmental and social aspects into account, is increasingly becoming a daily reality both at the level of individuals and organizations.

There is an increasing number of research results related to sustainability, however, the steps taken in the direction of sustainability do not always provide satisfactory answers to practical questions. It is difficult to see all aspects of a decision or development, the cause-and-effect relationships of social are not well-defined yet in environmental and economic aspects. The other difficulty is the measurement of the effects, the question of how important the selection of metrics is and how specific measurement and reporting should take place [5].

Considering the current global financial situation and the energy crisis, all businesses must focus on increasing the efficiency of their operations. By "going lean" it is possible to achieve greater overall efficiency while reducing expenses The goal of lean is to create a production system that can respond flexibly to changes in customer needs. Costs are reduced by uncovering and eliminating losses [13].

From this point of view, lean management is nothing more than an attitude, a way of thinking that organizes and directs business processes while keeping a few main guiding principles in focus [1] [10]. The basic idea of lean is to maximize customer value while minimizing losses, that is, to create more customer value by using fewer resources. Lean operations aim to eliminate all forms of waste. Loss-free processes are faster, more reliable, more transparent, result in better quality and can be operated at lower costs. Loss-free processes on the supply side lead to higher customer value on the demand side [16].

Literature review. Internet caused a shift in paradigm both in the everyday communication of ordinary people and in corporate processes [4], one of its' most significant global trends is the social media. The basic condition for this phenomenon



is the appearance of the technological background of web 2.0, which provides the technical infrastructure for the creation, sharing, and exchange of Internet content, and the user interfaces that enable the existence of communities [19]. One of the most important general characteristic of social media platform is that the consumer and the company can interact directly, and in addition to the content creation, opinions can also be exchanged [7].

Tsimonis & Dimitriadis [19] stated several external factors that can motivate companies to use social media such as the monitoring of the trends, conveying brand messages, responding to the pressure of cost effectiveness and the presence of competitors. In case the company is able to successfully implement the previous activities, they can have their current and potential customers, and also other additional users gathered in online brand communities, which can further deepen the cognitive, affective brand engagement of the given individuals through points of contact and the exchange of experiences with individuals with similar interests and behavioural dimensions [9].

In the basic principles of lean management, value means the creation of customer value, i.e. the provision of a product or service that meets the needs of the consumer in the right quality, quantity, price, time and place [16]. During the analysis of the value stream, the goal is to examine value-creating and non-value-creating activities and to uncover waste that can be eliminated. The flow ensures the continuous path of a given product by removing all obstacles and placing value-creating steps next to each other. In a pull system, the customer initiates the processes of the company, satisfying the needs of the customers determines the pace of production. Continuous development is part of the application of these principles, which also highlights the critical importance of human resources. At the operational level of lean, Koloszár and Pankotay [12] highlighted the complexity of the connections between tools.

The five principles serve as a basic principle in any system (logistics, production, service), in any business, and for this reason, basic principles are also taken into consideration as a strategic level. The implementation of lean must be started from two directions at the same time [14]. Like Kotter, Hines et al. [6] also identify the strategic level of lean management with the five basic principles, while the operational level with the LM tool system. While Pankotay [18] searched for the answer to whether lean is present in the service sector with a latent examination of lean tools, in this research, the main goal is to find parallels by exploring the basic principles.

Based on the findings, the authors suggest that the length of the value stream of social media activities lead to significant losses in the hospitality industry. The extent to which social media operations are outsourced significantly affects the turnaround time of the processes, and although content producers follow up-to-date trends, they still tend to not achieve the desired effect. Consumers have recently become to favour personal and authentic content over traditional advertisements. The analysis of consumer feedback is not received directly by the company, but rather by the operator of the social media interface, therefore, in many cases, the flow of information is distorted or delayed. In other words, the company does not create the customer value and value is not defined by the company. Thus, it does not comply with the lean 3GEN



principle. This results in a difficulty in separating value-creating and non-value-creating processes.

The findings show that companies outsource not only the marketing activity, but also the creation of the marketing strategy, it can generally become a static external process for them, with minimal intervention points. With this step, the company excludes the possibility of continuous development and moves away from customers to the installation of an intermediate actor. In addition to increasing the costeffectiveness of social media marketing activities, Deng et al. [3] also emphasized how smart the different platforms have become, and advertising alternatives can be highly customized based on the individual needs of businesses, which can also result in higher overall efficiency.

The lean thinking can be also successfully applied in the field of social media marketing when it comes to understanding the logical process of the individual operations and campaigns, including the creation of an action plan for each project, focusing on the results, defining and understanding the customer segments, finding the key influencers and the opinion leaders and measuring the project efficiency and improving the key performance indicators. Lean can also enable entrepreneurs, business owners and managers to enhance the efficiency of their current processes and to significantly decrease their advertising expenditures [20].

Research aim and objectives. This research aims to answer the questions of how the process of creating and maintaining community marketing strategies can be characterized. The following assumptions serve as bases for the research:

- Social media marketing activities aimed at young people are mostly outsourced. The company which orders the service is not familiar with the exact processes, the continuous flow of information and activities do not take place.

- Companies that implement their social media marketing activities in-house, within the company, pay closer attention to checking its effectiveness as well as to monitoring the metrics.

Results and discussions.

Methodology. During the course of the research, accommodation providers and catering SMEs located in various Hungarian cities were visited in order to use a questionnaire to assess the social media marketing processes of the given units. A series of questions helped to discover more about how businesses plan and use social media marketing practices. The questions included both single- and multiple-choice versions, but in some cases, participants had the option to answer freely in order to express their feelings. Medium-sized Hungarian cities with 50,000 to 75,000 inhabitants were chosen for the research, online channels and phone calls were used in order schedule personal meetings with the owners, managers, and key decision-makers in terms of the marketing practices of the given businesses. The individual visits took place in between September 2022 and March 2023. The research was completed after a total of 148 questionnaires were filled out, distributed among the cities located in the Western-Transdanubian region (Figure 1).

Results. The questions of the survey were based on the research of Nyikos [17] regarding the degree of application of the lean methodology. In examining the extent



of lean adaptation, the first two questions focused on general information about social media marketing practices in order to find out which platforms are currently being used and who is responsible for the content. The first question aimed to explore which social media platforms the visited institutions use. Participants mentioned the four most frequently used alternatives. Comparing the data with the global popularity of the channels, Facebook was also ranked in the first place: it was mentioned 148 times, meaning that every institution uses it for its marketing activities. Instagram usage is also relatively high at nearly 77%, while TikTok and Snapchat came in 3rd and 4th with 25% and 9% respectively.



Figure 1. Distribution of the completed questionnaires *Source: Own research and editing*

The next question assessed who is responsible for advertising activities on social media. Participants had the option of choosing from a range of alternatives and could also provide an 'other' option for their responses. The numbers of the given answers were very similar to each other, but at the same time, the option "all in-house" was chosen most often (55 times), in 47 cases an external company performs the tasks, while "all by a contracted individual" proved to be the least popular advertising method with 70% among the surveyed institutions.

The second group of questions focuses on the planning process behind the activities. The third question helped to assess the frequency with which actual action plans are prepared before marketing campaigns appear on social media.

Based on the results, it can be said that nearly 74% of those who took part in the questionnaire (109 businesses) do not usually prepare an action plan, since all social media marketing activities tend to be outsourced. Only 13 companies (8.8%) said that they always prepare and participate in the development of the plan before their campaign are launched.



The next question in this category aimed to understand how the content creation process works from design to publication. Participants were asked to indicate how often they participate in the process using a Likert scale from 0 to 5 (never-always). The responses resulted in an average of 1.8, which was barely above the " occasionally " level. Nearly 55% of respondents never participate in content creation and only 5% of them said that they always participate in content production (Figure 2).





Source: Own research and editing

The purpose of the last question in the category was to find out how involved companies are in content creation. 73.6% of the participants never take part in the process, business owners only occasionally (18.9%) share their ideas with the responsible person or team. It should also be noted that only 26.4% of managers, decision makers and in-house employees follow the practices of competitors and only a small group of participants (9.5%) follow the current social media marketing trends.

The subject of the next category with two separate questions was to discover whether the participants could identify who the key influencers were in the market and whether they had ever worked with one of them. Only 21 of the 148 participants (14.19%) know the local influencers, and an even smaller number, only 7 of them (4.73%), have already worked with them. Regarding actual partnerships, 6 said that they occasionally offer free drinks or food to influencers in order to get them to create content and share it on their page. Only one participant claimed to have an ongoing and contractual relationship with a local influencer for periodic advertising.

Active monitoring of the metrics was observed only among those who entrusted the operations to the company responsible for content production, however, in their case, only 6.42% did so. For those who reviewed the metrics at least every two weeks, a different picture emerged. 25% of content producers based on their own ideas, 18% of those using benchmarking and 8.3% of those using an external partner do so. Almost 57% of the responses do not check their metrics, so they do not have any (kind of) feedback on the effectiveness of their campaign.

Almost 57% of the responses do not check their metrics, so they do not have any feedback on the effectiveness of their campaign. However, when they were asked to rate their personal satisfaction with their current social media marketing practices, it resulted in an exceptionally high average of 4.42.



Finally, participants were asked whether they are able to list anything that needed to be changed regarding their current practices. 14 of the participants said that in order to reduce their expenses, they are forced to carry out all their activities in-house, rather than keeping the currently outsourced practices. It should also be added that all the institutions introducing changes in their activities are completely satisfied with the current state of marketing activities, meaning that they all gave a rating of 5 to the previous question.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Lean thinking can be applied in various areas of business activities. Social media marketing can also be considered as a field that has proven to be highly suitable for applying the main principles in order to achieve higher overall efficiency.

All 148 participating institutions have Facebook pages. When it comes to other alternatives, Instagram is considered a relatively popular alternative (75.7%), however, TikTok (37%) and Snapchat (8.8%) are only used by smaller groups of companies. Despite the fact that experts consider the preparation of an action plan to be extremely important before the marketing campaign, 74% of businesses have no information on whether a detailed program is actually being prepared. Only 13 participants stated that an actual action plan is always prepared before the campaigns.

Getting to know social media influencers is one of the most important principles of lean social media marketing. However, only 14.2% of participants actually know who the key local opinion leaders are, and only 7 of them have ever worked with one of them, which accounts for less than 4,7% of the research participants. When it comes to actual partnerships with influencers, 6 out of 7 businesses said they occasionally offer free drinks or food in exchange for shared content. It was a single business that has an ongoing and contractual relationship with an opinion leader.

In terms of continuous measurement of the success of individual marketing campaigns in social media, the participants examine the measurements carried out on different platforms with an average frequency of 1.80 on a scale of 0-5, which is between the levels "rarely" and "occasionally".

Although they are not very familiar with the measurements and the specific effectiveness of the contents, the average of 4.42 measured on the scale indicates that they are very satisfied with the current practice. Despite this, however, due to the current financial situation and rising energy prices, they are no longer able to pay for outsourcing in 14 facilities, therefore, they are forced to deal with social media marketing operations within the company itself.

The research was successful, based on the results, it can be concluded that despite the fact that some of the participating institutions already apply the lean methodology to a certain extent, they are not consciously applied.

The research assumptions led to the following results:

Assumption 1: Social media marketing activities aimed at young people are mostly outsourced. The company which orders the service is not familiar with the exact processes, the continuous flow of information and activities do not take place.



Result: The research proved that 70% of the social media activity in the examined region was outsourced. The companies are not involved in the design of the process. Based on the result, assumption 1 is accepted.

Assumption 2: Companies that implement their social media marketing activities in-house, within the company, pay closer attention to checking its effectiveness as well as to monitoring the metrics.

The vast majority of businesses (57%) do not regularly review their marketing activities. Although there are quantifiable efficiency indicators, they are not monitored. The quality of active follow-up is realized by 6.42% of the respondents. However, they burned with their milk production. The respondents gave an average value of 4.42 on a 5-point scale for their satisfaction with their social media activities. Therefore, based on the result, assumption 2 is accepted.

In the service industry, within the field of marketing, there is still a small number of research available that focuses on the examination of the lean management. In this study, the potential presence of lean and the nature of marketing processes had been monitored. The screening of these processes according to lean were also considered, both within the organization and in the case of outsourced activities, an additional possibility for research.

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