

The Usage of Emotional Content in Digital Communication: The Case of Lithuanian Charitable Foundation

This paper analyses the use of emotional content in digital communication of the charitable foundation. The theoretical part of the article discusses the concept of digital communication, the peculiarities of using emotional content in digital communication and the influence of emotional content on consumers. After summarizing the theoretical insights, the article presents the research results based on expert interviews. This research aims to analyse the use of emotional content in the digital communication of the charitable foundation. The research results revealed that emotional content is effective in digital communication due to the content's greater suggestiveness, memorability, identification, ability to create connections and associations, its role in problem-solving for consumers, and its influence on changing personal attitudes and behaviour.

Keywords: emotional content, digital communication, charitable foundation, consumer behaviour.

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojamas emocinio turinio naudojimas skaitmeninėje labdaros ir paramos fondo komunikacijoje. Straipsnyje teoriniu lygmeniu aptariama skaitmeninės komunikacijos samprata, emocinio turinio naudojimo skaitmeninėje komunikacijoje ypatumai ir emocinio turinio įtaka vartotojams. Apibendrinus teorines išvalgas, straipsnyje pateikiami tyrimo rezultatai, paremti ekspertų interviu. Šiuo tyrimu siekiama išanalizuoti emocinio turinio panaudojimą skaitmeninėje labdaros ir paramos fondo komunikacijoje. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad emocinis turinys yra paveikus skaitmeninėje komunikacijoje dėl didesnio turinio įtaigumo, įsimenamumo, identifikavimo, gebėjimo kurti ryšius ir asociacijas, vaidmens vartotojų problemų sprendimo procese, įtakos keičiant asmens požiūrį ir elgseną.

Raktiniai žodžiai: emocinis turinys, skaitmeninė komunikacija, labdaros ir paramos fondas, vartotojų elgsena.

Introduction

Digital communication has drastically transformed how organizations transfer information, pushing traditional means of communication into the background. For the vast majority of organizations

striving to keep pace with technological advancements and meet the rapidly changing needs of consumers, digital communication tools have become the primary channels used in various ways and for various purposes: building relationships, increasing awareness, seeking support, improving sales,

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communicating with target audiences, and updating goals, among others. However, alongside the wide variety of tools, interactive capabilities and convenience, challenges occur. Perhaps the most significant challenge is to attract and maintain attention in an overwhelming flow of information, where consumers are exposed to hundreds of pieces of content in the digital space daily.

Distinctiveness and uniqueness have become critical aspects of digital communication. These qualities can be achieved through various strategies: demonstrating exceptional values, creating shocking content, offering highly unique advertisements or slogans, or, perhaps most effectively, leveraging emotional content. Emotional content is especially beneficial for non-profit organizations, as their activities focus on addressing social issues that often do not directly affect the majority of society. To inspire positive change, it is crucial to make these issues resonate personally with individuals. For non-profit organizations, emotional content in digital communication is instrumental in capturing attention, raising awareness of issues, prompting consumer action, and fostering behavioural change.

For non-profit organizations to thrive and remain competitive, they must be managed almost the same way as for-profit organizations (Wiggill, 2011). Non-profit organizations also carry significant responsibility as they are financially accountable for their donations and must demonstrate value to donors for the funds received (Wiggill, 2011). For this reason, communication strategy and the distribution of communicated

messages become particularly important for non-profit organizations.

Researchers such as P. Deshwal (2015), X. Wang, J. Guo, Y. Wu and N. Liu (2019), and J. Dennison (2023) have analysed the characteristics of emotional content, its impact on consumer behaviour, its benefits for organizations, and the emotional attachment it fosters among consumers in the digital space. Although the literature explores the use of emotional content in digital communication, there is a notable lack of research on its application at non-profit and charitable organizations and its influence on consumer behaviour. This leads to the **research problem**: how can emotional content be used in the digital communication of the charitable foundation?

The object of the research is the use of emotional content in the digital communication of the charitable foundation.

The aim of the research is to analyse the use of emotional content in the digital communication of the charitable foundation.

The objectives of the research are as follows: (1) to theoretically define the concept of digital communication; (2) to theoretically distinguish the features of the use of emotional content; (3) to theoretically define the influence of emotional content on consumers; (4) to prepare and justify research methodology; (5) to provide results from expert interviews on the use of emotional content in the digital communication of the Lithuanian charitable foundation.

Research methods. In order to address the research problem, a theoretical analysis of scientific literature was conducted. The empirical research employed

a qualitative research method, namely a semi-structured expert interview.

The concept of digital communication

The communication process in all cases consists of two parts – the object that transmits information and the recipient of that information. This process is also called “<...> interaction in the social context” (Fatimayin, 2018, chapter 2, para. 2) from a general research point of view. Communication can also be defined as a set of codes that society perceives as one or another due to social constructs. U. Madhow (2008) also defines communication as “<...> the transfer of information between different points in space or time, where the term “information” is used loosely to include all the standard formats we know, such as voice, audio, video, data files, web pages and etc.” (Madhow, 2008, p. 1). According to U. Madhow (2008), transferring information between different points would be equivalent to communicating on the phone, and an example between time points would be storing information on a hard drive.

While emphasizing the differences between traditional and digital communication, it is useful to mention the tools used in both forms of communication. The development of technology has led to changes in communication not only in everyday life, but also in the professional environment, and this metamorphosis is especially reflected through newly emerging communication tools in the digital space, such as social networks and search engines (Cizmeci and Ercan,

2015), as well as various integrated elements such as artificial intelligence. F. Cizmeci and T. Ercan (2015) single out the interaction between users and content as the main difference between traditional and digital communication. It should be noted that traditional communication channels include television, radio and printed information (Istijanto and Purusottama, 2023). In traditional communication, users play the role of a passive participant in the process, while in digital communication, users become active participants who can openly share content, express their opinions, expectations or criticize (Cizmeci and Ercan, 2015). For this reason, it can be argued that digital communication has reduced the separation between content creators and users and thus became more personal.

Digital communication has also become a fast communication space for businesses, organizations and consumers to exchange information, create, evaluate and otherwise interactively participate in the digital process of communication to achieve the goals of digital communication (Shankar et al., 2022). These targets include companies, organizations and consumers, e.g. information provision, search, product review, complaints and alerts (Shankar et al., 2022). V. Shankar et al. (2022) give an example with an *Apple* mobile phone, where the information stage would occur when the company announced the release of the latest mobile phone to the market, the search stage would reflect an interested user who started looking online for the latest mobile phone model, the product review would occur for the user after purchasing a mobile phone, the complaint stage

would occur if the user was dissatisfied with the mobile phone and the final warning stage would occur when a consumer would post online about a product that did not meet expectations (Shankar et al., 2022). All these five stages in digital communication are characterized by faster and more effective dialogue than in traditional communication.

The importance of digital communication became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, and due to the disruption it overtook traditional communication (Shankar et al., 2020). A survey of Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) showed that due to the impact of the pandemic, as many as 80 percent of consumers value the quality of offers seen in the digital space and communication with companies (Shankar et al., 2020). Arguably, the pandemic has opened up a large number of opportunities, especially in the field of marketing communication and, according to V. Shankar et al. (2020), changed consumers attitude towards the digital space, encouraged the diffusion of digital technologies and gave companies and organizations the opportunity to transform their strategies and adapt in the digital space.

Thus, digital communication has become a field for fast and complex communication. It is characterized by a faster dialogue between the sender and the recipient, establishment of close relations between the organization and consumers, and rapid transfer of information. Digital communication also helps to create an image in the online space and promotes user interaction (Tiago and Verissimo, 2014).

Digital communication of non-profit organizations

Digital communication in the context of non-profit organizations allows for increased social visibility (Mano, 2012). This type of communication also increases productivity by allowing resources to be focused on emerging trends (Mano, 2012).

E. Eisenberg and B. Eschenfelder (2019) state that the activities of non-profit organizations are characterized by a commitment to promoting social good and maintaining donors. They also argue that many researchers observe that nonprofit organizations reflect dimensions of social capital, such as building relationships and trust, creating a shared vision and norms among others (Eisenberg and Eschenfelder, 2019), which shape the tone of communication. The authors E. Eisenberg and B. Eschenfelder (2019) also present the main dimensions of non-profit organizations:

Goals and interests:

- Maximize social missions;
- Set own goals;
- Satisfy the client, customer, or associate needs;
- Preferred providers for certain services to treat all citizens fairly.

Stereotypes:

- Considered softer and kindhearted, able to mobilize voluntary effort, linked to communities, and driven by enduring prosocial values.

Key Relationships:

- Must establish relationships with a multitude of constituencies: clients, employees, governments, business

competitors, neighborhoods, and other nonprofits.

Fiscal Resources:

- Services are supported through government and private grants and donations;
- Although an operating budget must be maintained, profit is irrelevant because of the organization's nature;
- May subsidize charitable work by providing services to populations more willing or able to pay.

Influences and Decision-Making

Structures:

- Political forces influence human services policies and practices through intergovernmental
- Dynamics;
- Because of complex nonprofit partnerships, executives and board members must apply a range of relationship management skills and practices.

Organizational Concerns:

- Deal with concerns similar to both for-profit businesses and governments;
- Vulnerable to societal changes and levels of controls and mandates imposed by funders.

The author H. Li (2017) raises the question of the messages created in the communication of non-profit organizations and discusses whether certain information should be communicated more often than others. H. Li (2017) argue that information provided to consumers about performance is less attractive than information about the organization's financial data, so author H. Li (2017) argues that devoting more resources to communication about performance would be an inefficient waste of resources. However, author H. Li (2017)

states that donors are motivated by different aspects of action, so the elimination of certain information can have a negative impact on potential donors. For this reason, communication strategies play an important role in reaching donors motivated by different communication (Li, 2017).

The peculiarities of using emotional content

Consumers are exposed to a wide variety of content every day. According to P. Deshwal (2015), multi-functional products have become particularly popular in postmodern marketing, but the physical properties of the product no longer attract consumers, so marketing experts began to look for ways to impress and attract the attention of consumers. It is often said that emotion activates the mind 3000 times faster than rational thought (Deshwal, 2015). Emotions can often determine the choices of each of us and, in the era of postmodern marketing this is especially important. P. Deshwal (2015) states that in the current context, in order to create demand for the product and sell it, it is necessary to understand the basic emotions that create a connection between the audience and the product, and evoke consumers feelings. This is called emotional marketing. Basic emotions distinguished in the literature are: sadness, happiness, fear, anger, surprise and disgust (Cherry, 2022).

Emotional content is defined as the characteristics of feelings that create strong emotions and are represented in various types of communication

(American Psychology Association, n.d.). M. Schreiner and R. Riedl (2018) argue that organizations need to create emotional content in order to gain consumers' attention and feedback. The effectiveness of marketing communication is determined by what is already encoded in social media – the higher the involvement of consumers, the more successful the communication (Schreiner and Riedl, 2018). It is also claimed that content based on emotions has a strong influence on consumers' engagement (Schreiner and Riedl, 2018).

One of the main goals that companies try to achieve by creating emotional content is consumer engagement (Schreiner and Riedl, 2018). Consumer engagement is defined as a psychological state resulting from an interactive, co-creative customer experience with a primary agent or entity (e.g., a brand) in a primary service relationship (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, and Ilic, 2011). From the fact that the creation, use and result of emotional content is a consequence of the psychological state, theories explaining the causal relationship between emotional content and the result arise.

Emotional factors help explain certain aspects of consumer behaviour (Deshwal, 2015). When the concept of marketing began to be seen through the prism of relationships, marketing began to focus not only on the product, but also on consumer emotions and the influence of those emotions on decision-making (Deshwal, 2015). Companies and organizations have begun to understand that creating emotional connection and selecting proper communication channels are critical factors in gaining trust and two-way

cooperation (Deshwal, 2015). Perhaps the most important dimensions in today's context are the created emotions and established connection with the organization that are communicated through the emotional content and conveyed through the product (Deshwal, 2015). An example would be luxury goods. Prestige, uniqueness and the emotional added value often overcome the rational components in decision making. This proves that functional elements, like price, are less important, compared to emotional value. Consumers often want to feel part of a certain community, and certain purchased products or brands can provide that feeling.

The influence of emotional content on consumers

In order to successfully exploit the benefits of emotional content, it is important to understand the meaning and influence that emotional content has on consumers, and how it affects their actions and choices. To properly understand the influence of emotional content on consumers, it is essential to explore the influence that emotions have on consumers in general. According to J. Dennison (2023), emotions are mental states that control behavioural reactions to certain stimuli and are common to all people, only the stimuli are different for each person and cause different emotions. Emotions are short-term factors and can be broadly classified as pleasant or unpleasant, thus providing insight into the motivation behind why we feel one way or another (Dennison, 2023). This

allows us to draw conclusions and decide on further behaviour – to experience a pleasant emotion, we repeat actions; to avoid unpleasant emotions, we change our behaviour.

According to empirical research data, communicators who use emotional content in their communication are more likely to motivate and persuade the audience than those who do not (Dennison, 2023). Research also shows that consumers' decisions to perform actions are determined by emotions, which play the role of information in the decision-making (Dennison, 2023). Emotions have also been shown to play an important role in strategic communication, as the activation of emotions counteracts worry, encourages rethinking of information, and aids reasoning, which is particularly helpful for persuasive strategies (Dennison, 2023).

Different emotions drive different consumer actions. In marketing, emotions are not always categorized, but the most common ones include joy, fear, anger, and surprise. This is because all the aforementioned emotions are part of the six basic emotions and form the foundation for all other emotions. For example, M. Matson (2020) claims that content that evokes the emotion of happiness and joy spreads much faster on the internet than any other. This means that people not only find satisfaction in this type of content, but also more willingly share this emotion with others. Additionally, spreading positive emotions allows organizations to create a positive image, which ensures that consumers will pay attention, making this the first stage in the consumer behaviour process (Matson, 2020).

A negative, sad emotion can help establish an emotional connection and become a successful communication strategy (Matson, 2020). This is because people in grief seek fellowship and compassion. Such content can naturally arouse curiosity, which leads to greater consumer engagement with the content.

Another negative emotion is fear, which is not universally effective for all brands, but when used appropriately, it can become a strong communication strategy and influence consumer actions. According to M. Matson (2020), research has shown that the target audience tends to be more loyal to a brand when they encounter emotional content in a frightening situation. This is thought to be associated with feelings of comfort and reassurance.

Anger and disgust are emotions often avoided in marketing because of the intense reactions they can provoke in consumers. According to M. Matson (2020), it is a mistake to think that the audience needs to be motivated with angry phrases or universally repulsive, disgusting topics. This communication strategy often involves controversy that provokes dialogue, encourages content sharing, and attracts attention without additional effort, such as in advertising campaigns. The emotions of anger and disgust prompt users to take action, which, in the digital realm, manifests in the sharing and promotion of content (Matson, 2020).

In summary, it can be stated that emotional content in digital communication has a strong influence on consumers' actions and encourages them to act. Emotional content motivates consumers and

convinces the audience. Although it is often believed that negative emotions lead to negative actions, research shows that, in marketing communication, negative emotions are often not only harmless but also useful. Anxiety, fear and anger are emotions that drive audiences to engage with content, discuss it, and remain loyal. Meanwhile, positive emotions such as happiness encourage content sharing. While the benefits of negative emotions are clear, companies should use this type of content carefully, as it can provoke anger and mistrust. Emotions are an important component of digital communication strategies because they directly influence consumer attitude and behaviour.

Research methodology

The analysis of the scientific literature showed that emotional content and its use in the digital communication of charitable foundations has not been analysed by Lithuanian researchers, as scientific articles on this or similar topics could not be found. For this reason, research results provided in this paper provide valuable insights in the field. Noting the relevance and usefulness of non-profit and charitable organizations in solving social problems and emphasizing that charitable foundation “Maisto bankas”, started in 2001 (Maisto bankas, n.d.), continues its activities until now, and is “the most famous non-governmental organization” in Lithuania (Ilgius, 2018, p. 6), it can be stated that results from this research on the use of emotional content in the digital communication of charitable foundation „Maisto

bankas“ is significant and valuable to other organizations of this type as well. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to analyse the expert opinion of the use of emotional content in the digital communication of the charitable foundation “Maisto bankas”.

In order to analyse the expert opinion on the use of emotional content in the digital communication of the charitable foundation “Maisto bankas” (hereinafter referred to as “Maisto bankas”), qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with the communication manager of the charitable foundation “Maisto bankas” and, external marketing and communication experts. The application of the interview method to collect qualitative data allows gathering meaningful data by learning the informants’ “attitudes, assessments, and opinions” (Bitinas, Rupšienė and Žydzūnaitė, 2008, p. 152). According to the authors, during the interviews, the researcher aims to understand the verbally expressed experiences and opinions of the informants in relation to the researched phenomenon and obtains essential data from the “statements of the informants” (Bitinas, Rupšienė, and Žydzūnaitė, 2008, p. 153). R. Tidikis (2003) describes that the type of interview is classified according to the form and method of conducting information, the type of interviewees, and the procedure. The type of semi-structured interview was chosen due to the several advantages. According to B. Bitinas et al. (2008), this type of interview, compared to a structured interview, provides structured and detailed data, a flexible order of questions, is informal, questions are foreseen, but additional questions may be added during the interview, and this

type of interview is also considered as the most acceptable for conducting qualitative research. Expert interviews were chosen according to the type of interviewed subjects. Experts are considered to be those persons who have extensive professional and personal experience in a certain field and have the greatest competence to provide reliable and detailed information about the object under study (Tidikis, 2003), as a result of which this data becomes important for the study.

In order to obtain detailed evaluations and attitudes from the experts who participated in the research, corresponding to the field and nature of their activities and to respond to their category ("Maisto bankas" representative and external experts), two research instruments were compiled for the research. The interview questions for the representative of charitable foundation „Maisto bankas“ were divided into four groups: digital communication of "Maisto bankas", the effect of emotional content of "Maisto bankas" on consumer behaviour, features of emotional content of "Maisto bankas", and specifics of digital communication of "Maisto bankas". The interview questionnaire prepared for the external experts in the second category was also divided into four groups: the use of emotional content in digital communication, the peculiarities of emotional content in digital communication in the case of charitable foundations, the effect of the use of emotional content in digital communication on consumer behaviour, and the specifics of "Maisto bankas" emotional content in digital communication. Such groups of semi-structured interview questions were

chosen in order to qualitatively compare the data collected by the representative of "Maisto bankas", which reflects the internal experience of the organization, and the data collected by marketing and communication experts, which reflects external expert opinion.

The choice of experts

Interviewee 1. Education – Master's degree. Position – Head of Communications at the charity and support fund *Maisto Bankas*. Expertise – over 7 years in the *Maisto Bankas* communication department, 4 of them as Head of Communications.

Interviewee 2. Education – PhD at Vilnius University (VU) Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. Position – Associate Professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Vilnius University. Main research areas include brand psychological accessibility and brand significance. Expertise – academic experience at VU EVAF since 1998, about 10 years of experience in marketing.

Interviewee 3. Education – Master's degree in Advertising Management and a PhD in Social Sciences (Management) at VMU. Position – Marketing Project Manager and Lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Management, VMU. Academic interests: content marketing, innovative marketing solutions, digital advertising, creating value for the consumer. Expertise – 10 years of experience in marketing and more than 5 years working with services (public sector, non-profit organizations).

Interviewee 4. Education – Master’s degree in E-commerce at VMU. Position – partner at *Choco Agency* advertising agency and Head/Lecturer of the Digital Communication Strategy course at *The Atomic Garden Vilnius*. Expertise – 18 years of experience in the advertising industry, including 5 years as Sales Manager at *Gaumina*, 2 years as Business Development Manager at *Inspirado*, 3 years as Head of *The Chocolate*, 1.5 years as Marketing Manager at *MoQ*, and 8 years as a Partner at *Choco Agency*.

Interviewee 5. Education – PhD in Social Sciences at VMU. Position – Associate Professor at VMU Faculty of Economics and Management, Marketing Department. Research areas include consumer loyalty management and consumer behaviour change. Expertise – 17 years of expert experience.

Research results from representative of charitable foundation

In order to find out and understand how emotional content is used in the digital communication of the charitable foundation “Maisto bankas”, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the communication manager of “Maisto bankas” (Interviewee 1), who explained in detail the specifics of the organization’s digital communication and what it is based on, the use of emotional content, its features and benefits, and the impact of content on consumers behaviour.

When asked about the content that prevails in the digital communication of “Maisto bankas”, Interviewee 1 told

that the content of digital communication directly reflects the four strategic directions of the organization’s activities, which consist of food waste, poverty, volunteering and fundraising. Interviewee 1 also mentioned that two of these strategic directions, the themes of food waste and poverty, are purposefully related to the organization’s mission, and the attraction of donated finances and volunteers reflects the characteristics of a non-profit organization’s activities.

Interviewee 1 explained that the content of digital communication attracts a large and diverse part of society, but extremely big involvement is felt in relation to volunteering. Interviewee 1 added that the main field of activity of the organization is work with food, which takes place through several sectors, in which businesses, volunteers, and donors play their role. The organization also promotes direct communication with engaged users in digital communication and identifies this as its distinctive feature. In this way, the aim is to create a connection with the audience, to maintain transparency.

Asked to name what drives user engagement in digital communication, Interviewee 1 singled out a clearly communicated direct invitation. Interviewee 1 noted that the organization considers the involvement of users in digital communication content on social networks as high and claimed that it is also influenced by the content on other channels.

When asked about the impact of digital communication content of “Maisto bankas” on consumers, Interviewee 1 explained that research is being conducted to investigate the impact of the organization on the topic of not wasting

food and awareness about it. In addition, Interviewee 1 stated that in the charitable foundation's digital communication content the first message to consumers is to clearly indicate the mission of charitable foundation "Maisto bankas" and the social problem to be solved. Interviewee 1 mentioned that in addition to communicating about the change in terms of wasted food, with the help of digital communication the organization also promotes public solidarity through volunteering and various campaigns. Interviewee 1 also emphasized that the availability and details of digital content are important in making a change in society.

Interviewee 1, talking about the differences in digital communication between profit and non-profit organizations, mentioned several important aspects. First and foremost are differences in content that serve different communication purposes. The second difference is raising and using different emotions for different users. A third difference is the nature of the content produced, which is non-entertainment and typical of most non-profit organizations.

Speaking about digital communication trends of "Maisto bankas", Interviewee 1 emphasized changes of digital communication of non-profit organizations. One of them is creating and using professional content. However, Interviewee 1 stated that although the possibilities of using professionally created content are wide and accessible, users tend to identify such content as advertising and this can lead to less involvement and identification, compared to organic content with realistic everyday images.

When asked about successful channels of digital communication, Interviewee 1 mentioned that the social networks that have the target groups of "Maisto bankas" are the most successful, for example social network "Facebook". Interviewee 1 also mentioned television, but the theoretical analysis revealed that television is not considered digital, but a traditional communication channel.

When asked to distinguish what kind of consumer behaviour is expected as a result of digital communication and how it is going to be achieved, Interviewee 1 said that the desired behaviour is purposefully related to the organization's activities, so it would be volunteering, donating and not wasting food. In addition, all three directions are purposefully measured to evaluate results. Interviewee 1 also mentioned that the aspect of volunteering is assessed by the number of questionnaires received, while consumer behaviour is measured by questionnaires. Interviewee 1 emphasized that the behavioural aspect of not wasting food or wasting less is difficult to assess, especially in the context of households. Also, behaviour of manufacturing companies and businesses is investigated on a national scale, so there is no need for the organization to initiate them.

When talking about the use of emotional content in the digital communication of "Maisto bankas", Interviewee 1 mentioned that in most cases users associate emotional content with raising positive emotions, but the organization tends to use unusual emotional content, for example, to evoke an emotion of disgust. Interviewee 1 also stated that the organization does not tend to create

content based on sad stories and mentioned that emotional content is combined with rational messages in order to motivate the audience to take action and change behaviour.

When asked if, in order to evoke different emotions by means of emotional content, audience differences are taken into account, Interviewee 1 stated that the characteristics of the different emotional content units created are directly related to the directions of strategic activities. Interviewee 1 also mentioned that the goal of the organization is to create emotional content based on raising unusual emotions compared to other non-profit organizations.

When asked about evoked emotions that motivates the audience the most to perform actions, Interviewee 1 stated that the experience of “Maisto bankas” and the results of global research on this topic do not match. In addition, according to Interviewee 1, a communication message based on emotional content, in order to motivate the performance of the audience’s actions, can be presented from two sides and cause different emotions.

Interviewee 1 claimed that the emotions that motivate the audience to perform actions in the digital communication of “Maisto bankas” are negative. Interviewee 1 says that the content used in the digital communication of “Maisto bankas” often becomes emotional due to the type of activity of the organization, while social networks are intended for everyday communication, which is mostly organic. Interviewee 1 also mentioned that content that is created professionally is based on stronger emotions.

When asked about the factors that determine the choice of the planned

emotions for consumers, Interviewee 1 says that it would be the desire to stand out, which is determined by competition.

According to Interviewee 1, the effectiveness of emotional content in digital communication can be measured and assessed with specific actions, usually using surveys. Interviewee 1 emphasized that emotional content units that have failed in digital communication are in the form of banners.

When asked to name the reasons and factors that motivate consumers to change their behaviour in relation to food waste after seeing the emotional content, Interviewee 1 identified three aspects that are strengthened by emotion: the social significance of not wasting food, understanding the extent of environmental problems, and saving. Interviewee 1 highlighted the saving aspect as the one that will lead people to change their behaviour in the context of food waste, considering personal finances, even though they have no connection with the organization.

Research results from external experts

To examine the use of emotional content and its characteristics in the digital communication of “Maisto bankas” from the perspective of communication and marketing experts, four interviews were conducted with specialists in the field:

- Interviewee 2: Associate Professor in the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at Vilnius University

- Interviewee 3: Lecturer in the Faculty of Economics and Management at Vytautas Magnus University
- Interviewee 4: Partner at the advertising agency Choco Agency and lecturer at the Atomic Garden school of advertising and creativity
- Interviewee 5: Associate Professor in the Faculty of Economics and Management at Vytautas Magnus University.

When asked to share evaluation of the use of emotional content in digital communication, the experts' opinions differed. According to Interviewee 2, brain sensors capture emotional content more easily than the one that does not cause any emotions. This is influenced by the emotional connections and connections that are created with the consumers with the help of emotional content. Such content becomes memorable, which is why emotions play a very important role in digital communication. Interviewee 2 also emphasized the differences between emotions and feelings, mentioning that feelings can be controlled by consumers, but emotions cannot, moreover, the latter have no content and are the result of interaction with information, which is effective in achieving communication goals. Interviewee 3 stated positive view towards the use of emotional content in digital communication, but it must be moderate, reasonable and combined with the desired results. In addition, Interviewee 3 stated that over time, consumers become resistant to stereotyped emotional content and emphasized that creating exceptional emotional content is a complex but rewarding process. Interviewee 4 evaluated the use of emotional content in digital communication

negatively due to the high emotional load on consumers and the binary effect but claimed that the use of such content is reasonable for non-profit organizations.

When asked why emotional content is an effective communication tool, experts emphasize different aspects of impact. Interviewee 2 claimed that effectiveness is correlated with primary attention-grabbing during passive content consumption and memorization of the content message, which leads to communication efficiency. Interviewee 3 also stated that emotional content does not require the consumers' thinking effort, and moreover, such content helps to create connections and associations. According to Interviewee 4, the impact of emotional content varies depending on the personal needs of consumers.

When asked about the content of digital communication, Interviewee 3 stated that shocking and fear-inducing content can successfully attract the audience's attention, but it is often aimed at biased emotional assessment. Meanwhile, Interviewee 5 named the content about people and their experiences, which is presented according to the principle of storytelling.

When talking about emotional content, experts unanimously agree that such content is effective in achieving goals. According to Interviewee 2, it is faster and easier to achieve goals with the help of emotions, but efficiency may decrease due to financial considerations. Meanwhile, Interviewee 3 claimed that emotional content is effective at the stage of attracting attention, but it cannot necessarily lead the consumer to the desired goal of communication – the performance of an action. Interviewee 3

of social problems, and claimed that the use of emotional content is a natural phenomenon for the aforementioned organizations, arising from the nature of their activities. Meanwhile, Interviewee 3 claimed that emotional content can encourage the performance of actions. According to Interviewee 3, such content also draws society's attention to social issues, promotes their understanding, empathy and appeals to feelings. Interviewee 3 also claimed that the use of emotions helps to connect content with greater social, non-personal benefits and goals.

When asked why non-profit organizations use emotional content in digital communication, experts named several reasons. Interviewee 3 stated that communication in the digital space provides an opportunity to monetize the attention received, and the use of non-standard emotions and appeals to feelings strengthens this. Interviewee 3 identified negative emotions, such as fear, as extremely effective, which can lead to consumer actions, and mentioned that emotional content can be used to create a universal appeal. Interviewee 3 also mentioned that emotional content is useful for transforming society's opinion and creating new standards and added that for non-profit organizations. Moreover, emotional content is more useful and valued more favourably than for-profit. Meanwhile, Interviewee 4 claimed that the use of emotional content for non-profit organizations is mandatory due to the nature of the activity as it helps to create a sense of ownership of the problems.

Experts were asked to share what emotions affect consumers the most when it comes to non-profit organizations in

digital communication. According to Interviewee 4, content that evokes negative emotions gets more attention from consumers, but according to the basics of communication, the created content must correlate with one of the eight basic desire categories described by Eugene Schwartz in order to satisfy the consumers' needs. However, the same principle of basic desires can cause a strong negative reaction to consumers. Interviewee 4 added that more reactions are provoked by content that evokes negative emotions, but content that evokes positive emotions often acts as a message that provides a sense of support and compliments. Meanwhile, Interviewee 5 claimed that negative emotions, such as fear, anger or disgust, have a greater power to shock and excite.

According to Interviewee 4, emotional content can help in creating a connection between the organization and the consumers, but connection occurs when the consumer has trust in the organization, and the trust comes from the type of the problem solved by the organization for the consumer.

When discussing the impact of emotional content on consumers, experts unanimously agree that content based on emotions is impactful. Interviewee 2 claimed that content characterized as raising emotions is less likely to get boring for consumers and arouses greater interest. Therefore, it maintains relevance, promotes engagement and in the long term can lead to the performance of desired actions. Meanwhile, Interviewee 3 stated that the emotional content has an effect in the phase of drawing attention and consideration but does not ensure the performance of consumers'

actions and added that it is possible, but depends on the amount of effort required and the situation.

When asked about the impact of emotional content on changing consumer behaviour, experts unequivocally agreed that behaviour change communication is the most complex compared to other types, but such content has the greatest impact on consumer behaviour. Interviewee 2 stated that it is extremely difficult to change behaviour because looking through the prism of marketing, people do not change. Consumers are addicted to routine, and anything that disrupts routine leads to frustration and problems, but emotional content can help change behaviour in the long term. Insights of Interviewee 3 on this issue coincided. Interviewee 3 also stated that the impact of consumer behaviour initiation is shocking content, but the results require time and other components of the communication strategy. Meanwhile, Interviewee 5 stated that the content, which creates motivation and inspiration with the help of emotions, can encourage consumers to take the desired actions to change their behaviour. Moreover, Interviewee 3 emphasized that it is extremely important to reach the target audiences and promote their involvement.

When asked whether emotional content drives consumer action in the case of "Maisto bankas", experts provided several insights. According to Interviewee 2, emotional content is more easily established in long-term memory, so certain actions will be performed in a real-life situation after remembering the content due to the caused emotion and putting effort. According to Interviewee 3, emotional content can encourage the

performance of consumers' actions, but it depends on how much effort the consumers will have to put in.

When naming the evoked emotions that most influence consumer behaviour, experts share that it is important to use content based on both negative and positive emotions. Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 3 stated that negative emotions, such as fear or shock-inducing content, provide the primary incentive to act, as they provoke a strong reaction that encourages action, but in order to achieve a long-term effect, it is important to demonstrate positive emotion-inducing content.

When discussing the specifics of the emotional content of "Maisto bankas" in digital communication, experts distinguished the reasons why consumers would like to change their behaviour after seeing the emotional content of "Maisto bankas". Interviewee 2 named the awareness of the magnitude of the problems and fear for personal or loved ones' well-being. Interviewee 3 also named the perception of problems and added that consumers do not see the emotional content of "Maisto bankas" as encouraging consumerism and therefore evaluate it more favourably. Experts also identified the emotional content used in digital communication by "Maisto bankas", as a non-profit organization, as an extremely important and fundamental part of the communication strategy. Meanwhile, Interviewee 5 stated that the organization is well-known and widely recognized in Lithuania, so the emotional content helps to remind consumers about the organization's mission and goals. According to Interviewee 4, emotional content

helps to actualize long-standing and familiar problems with creative solutions.

Experts were also asked to share their opinion whether the public is affected by the emotional content of “Maisto bankas”. All experts’ opinion on this issue were positive. Interviewee 5 stated that part of the public willingly contributes to the organization’s activities, but she appreciated that this is the result of long-term, not isolated campaigns and complex work. Interviewee 4 said that it is possible to solve all problems, but in order to achieve public impact, appropriate creative solutions, purposeful efforts and their quantity are important. Interviewee 4 also mentioned that historically non-profit organizations are characterized by bold, award-winning projects that are extremely impactful to society.

Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 5 also shared their assessment of the emotional content of “Maisto bankas” on society. Both experts evaluated the impact positively, Interviewee 3 named the organization as a leader in the context of image and visibility, and Interviewee 5 mentioned that there should be more communication, and it should be more visible.

Conclusions

The results of the interview with the communication manager of charitable foundation “Maisto bankas” revealed that the organization’s digital communication is based on four strategic areas of activity. These directions also determine the use of emotional content, taking into account the differences in audiences and the desired consumer behaviour. Digital communication content also attracts a

large and diverse segment of the public. The charitable foundation uses social networks for direct communication with target audiences. In the charitable foundation’s digital communication, high engagement is determined by a call to action. Digital communication is used as a primary tool for defining the charitable foundation’s social mission and promoting solidarity. The charitable foundation uses emotional content to promote awareness and support the activity’s importance in the fight against food waste and poverty. The charitable foundation uses professionally produced and organic content in digital communication, which becomes emotional because of the activity of the organization and provides greater user engagement. Professionally created content aims to evoke stronger emotions in consumers, such as surprise or disgust, and this leads to the consumers actions. The charitable foundation tends to use unusual and unique emotional content to distinguish itself from other non-profit organizations’ communication, which is dominated by pity and compassion. In the process of changing consumer behaviour, emotional content helps to convincingly present the social meaning of food waste, the environmental problems and the aspect of wasted finances.

The results from interviews with external experts showed that emotional content is an effective tool of communication, which is useful due to the content’s greater suggestiveness, memorability, identification, ability to create connections and associations, roles in the process of solving consumers’ problems, influence in the process of changing personal attitudes and behaviour.

According to experts, consumers, seeing the emotional content of charitable foundation “Maisto bankas”, will want to change their behaviour due to the awareness of the charitable foundation’s activities, problems and their magnitude, fear for their own or their loved ones’ future, and awareness of general well-being. The use of emotional content can also help draw consumers’ attention to a social issue, understand the importance of the issue and encourage action, help to create a connection with the audience, increase awareness, monetize received attention, transform society’s opinion and be useful for the creation of new standards. Emotional content must be used reasonably, moderately, have an ethical and social context, and be combined with communication goals and rational messages without aiming for a binary effect, antagonizing the audience for attention. Emotional content has been shown to be effective at the stage of attracting attention, actualizing the issue, in order to stand out in the same category of non-profit organizations, but the effectiveness may decrease due to financial considerations and increase due to the benefits of the content provided to the consumers. The effectiveness of the stimuli is also determined by unconventional solutions, the nature of the content, the personal characteristics of consumers, the ability to identify and polarizing topics, uniqueness, aesthetics, storytelling and raising unconventional emotions, such as fear or surprise. Experts also

distinguished that the use of content for non-profit organizations is organic and follows from the nature of the activity, therefore it is necessary to use it to actualize the problem at the personal level by creating a sense of ownership, which is why this content is much more effective than rational argumentation. It turns out that the use of emotional content leads to greater attention, interest and engagement of consumers, which can lead to action and behavioural changes in the long term. But it is important not to do it in a didactic tone and not to encourage a defensive reaction of consumers. Content based on the promotion of negative emotions provides the initial impulse to act, while positive emotions are useful for promotion and maintenance of motivation and repetition of actions by providing additional benefits. Combining negative and positive emotions is also useful aiming to influence consumer behaviour. Experts emphasized that non-profit organizations are starting to use emotional content more boldly, creatively and intelligently, thus increasing the suggestiveness of the content. This is also noticeable in the digital communication of charitable foundation “Maisto bankas”. In summary it could be stated that the effectiveness of the emotional content used by the organization can change due to the economic considerations of the country, but due to the awareness, relevance and long-term work of charitable foundation “Maisto bankas”, the effect remains stable.

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EMOCINIO TURINIO NAUDOJIMAS SKAITMENINĖJE KOMUNIKACIJOJE: LABDAROS IR PARAMOS FONDO ATVEJIS

S a n t r a u k a

Emocinio turinio naudojimas skaitmeninėje komunikacijoje yra naudingas visų tipų organizacijoms. Nepriklausomai nuo veiklos tikslų, emocinis turinys padeda atkreipti dėmesį, didina vartotojų įsitraukimą, kuria ir stiprina organizacijos ir vartotojų ryšius, skatina veiksmų atlikimą ir elgsenos pokyčius. Kadangi ne pelno organizacijų veikla paremta socialinių problemų sprendimu, o didžiosios visuomenės dalies tokio tipo problemos neliečia asmeniškai, siekiant daryti teigiamą pokytį, svarbu jas aktualizuoti asmeniniu lygmeniu.

Emocinio turinio naudojimas ir skaitmeninė komunikacija kaip pamatinės straipsnio temos mokslinėje literatūroje plačiai analizuojamos verslų kontekste, rečiau – pelno nesiekiančių organizacijų kontekste. Visgi šis turinys suteikia itin didelę naudą ne pelno organizacijoms, nes dėl emocinio veiklos pobūdžio didindamas komunikacijos efektyvumą, tačiau apie tai mokslinėje literatūroje randama nedaug informacijos. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama išanalizuoti emocinio turinio panaudojimą skaitmeninėje labdaros ir paramos fondo komunikacijoje. Siekiant išsikelti tikslo, suformuluoti tyrimo uždaviniai: (1) teoriškai apibrėžti skaitmeninės komunikacijos sampratą; (2) teoriniu lygmeniu išskirti emocinio turinio naudojimo ypatumus; (3) teoriniu lygmeniu apibrėžti emocinio turinio daromą įtaką vartotojams; (4) parengti ir pagrįsti tyrimo metodologiją; (5) pateikti ekspertų interviu rezultatus

apie emocinio turinio naudojimą skaitmeninėje labdaros ir paramos fondo komunikacijoje.

Apibendrinus tyrimo rezultatus galima teigti, jog emocinis turinys labdaros ir paramos fondo „Maisto bankas“ skaitmeninėje komunikacijoje naudojamas atsižvelgiant į strateginės veiklos kryptis: maisto nešvaistymą, lėšų pritraukimą, savanorystę ir nepriteklį. Nuo jų priklauso keliama emocija ir turinio pobūdis. Emocinis turinys naudojamas siekiant atkreipti dėmesį į problemas, skatinti veiksmų atlikimą ir elgsenos pokyčius, aktualizuoti socialines problemas vartotojams asmeniniu lygmeniu, gebėti kurti ryšius ir asociacijas, vaidmenį vartotojų problemų sprendimo procese, daryti įtaką asmeninių nuostatų ir elgesio keitimo procese. Tokio turinio naudojimas ne pelno organizacijoms yra organiškas ir išplaukiantis iš veiklos pobūdžio, todėl būtina jį naudoti, siekiant aktualizuoti problemą vartotojų asmeniniu lygmeniu, sukuriant nuosavybės jausmą. Dėl to šis turinys yra kur kas paveikesnis nei racionali argumentacija. Emocinis turinys yra efektyvus dėmesio atkreipimo etape, o jo dirgiklių efektyvumą sąlygoja netradiciniai sprendimai, turinio pobūdis, vartotojų asmeninės savybės, gebėjimas susitapatinti ir poliarizuojančios temos. Vartotojų dėmesį atkreipia išskirtinumas, estetika, istorijos pasakojimas ir netradicinių emocijų kėlimas, tokių kaip baimė ar nuostaba.

