INSIGHTS INTO THE ART OF DIGITAL AGENCY BRANDING ON A GLOBAL SCALE

Domagoj HRUŠKAR
RIT Croatia, Zagreb, Croatia
domagoj.hruskar@gmail.com

Nikola DRAŠKOVIĆ
RIT Croatia, Zagreb, Croatia
nikola.draskovic@croatia.rit.edu

Abstract:
In the digital marketing industry, trends are changing faster than ever, additionally the role of agencies is expanding and giving them the opportunity to perform on a global level. Traditional forms of marketing allowed agencies to establish themselves locally, but with digital transformation and newly developed digital techniques, agencies can target various regions of the world in a moment. The objective of this paper is to present a concrete business strategy for digital agencies that will serve as the main differentiator between themselves and the competition and a facilitator of potential business prospects. Analysis of relevant literature and author's first-hand experience from working in digital agencies lead to conclusions on the possible solution concerning agency branding on a global scale. These conclusions and propositions suggest an attainable business model that may shift an agency's positioning to the niche market where it will experience the process of specialization and optional target industry segmentation. Finally, those conclusions lead to an ever-trending strategic marketing approach focused on value creation for the digital community – content marketing.

Keywords: B2B marketing, global marketing, digital marketing, strategy, promotion

1. Introduction: stepping-stones to digital marketing

It is happening, the analog world is slowly disappearing and the digital environment is becoming our reality. We are living parallel lives within the space of various social media platforms. Essentially, it is all about binary numbers – a lot of zeros and ones. Although this analogy is overly simplified, it reflects the reality of the digital age we live and work in. The digital age can be considered a movement that is opening doors, creating new vistas, new lands to explore and worlds to conquer (Pont, 2013). This ever-changing progress and introduction of digital technology into all aspects of human society we have been experiencing since the 1990s to the present, is called digital transformation (Stolterman & Croon Fors, 2004). Although the beginning was promising, the whole process experienced some challenging times. In the late 1990s, numerous speculative investment and high-profile high-tech companies continued to rocket upwards. On the 10th of March, 2000, the Nasdaq index claimed an intraday high of 5,132.52 before settling to an all-time closing high of 5,046 points (Phillips, 2015). This all-time peak was then described as the 'new economy' triggered by a constellation of companies focused around Internet technology and its supporting fields. By April, the Nasdaq index began to fall drastically. The same thing happened to the railways in the 1840s, radio in the 1920s and transistor technology in the 1950s (Ryan, 2017). Suddenly, all speculative investment stopped, venture capitalists started to be more careful with their cash, and high-risk start-ups experienced a shortage of funding.

In 2015, the Nasdaq Composite Index again climbed above 5,000. Although many new concepts have arisen during this 15-year period, and completely changed the processes in the marketing and advertising industry, we can only truly introduce the connected, and social "economy" based on Consumer 2.0, today (Ryan, 2017). The term Consumer 2.0 is an altered version of Web 2.0, aimed to describe today's marketing and advertising trends (Khan, 2012). It acknowledges the transition of the focus from technology to people. In the very early stages of Web 2.0, it had very sudden impact on business practices all around the world. It is often compared with the Industrial Revolution which is described as one of the most important transitions in the modern human era. In a similar way to Industrial Revolution, which established new manufacturing processes in the period from the late 18th century to the early 19th century, Web 2.0 provided new capabilities and fostered new social norms (Hruskar, 2017). However, while centralization and specialization were the key concepts during the Industrial Revolution, Web 2.0 had completely opposite effect on society. It allowed large groups to self-organize and co-create value in a decentralized system (Lytras, Damiani & Ordonez de Pablos, 2009).

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of digital trends and global strategies of digital agencies. It represents an analytical view of the current practice among Croatian digital agencies and their intentions to internationalize their business. Furthermore, this paper also analyses various marketing techniques developed and applied by digital agencies.

2. An overview of the digital marketing environment

Marketers are able to track the online activity of their consumers and are able to, due to collected behavioral data, tailor online advertising to fit their needs and preferences. However, the vast amount of data available to marketers also causes some amount of headache. The complexity of data and online tools made some marketers feel helpless, so they need to hold on to agencies for advice. Therefore, digital agencies remain in demand wherever they operate in the world (The Economist, 2014). Although the digital-media business is still young and volatile, and it is hard to predict which social networks are destined to completely overcome others, companies need to invest efforts and resources to give their brands 'online personalities' (The Economist, 2015). With traditional forms of marketing, companies aimed to target audience locally, but digital allows them to easily target the global market. Hence, it is similar happening to digital agencies. In the early stages of their business development, the majority of agencies aligned with the saying 'think local, act local', but today's business world grants them the opportunity to develop relations and acquire clients outside their domestic market.

According to some forecasts (DeKare-Silver, 2011), nearly every visible thing will be catalogued and indexed in the near future, ready to be instantly identifiable and described to us. Since this process will be about the way humans communicate with brands, digital agencies will largely be in charge of designing and promoting the process. The reason why agencies will lead up-and-coming digital trends is a matter of resources. It is predicted that tech companies, such as Google, will not start to compete with agencies because they would need to hire thousands of new employees. Due to much lower gross margins in the marketing and advertising industry (17%) than in the technology and innovation sector (50%), that is not likely to happen (The Economist, 2014). Although margins have become slimmer, marketers and advertisers should remain brave with continually developed technology. It allows them to come up with innovative ideas and continue to be one of the most important members in the digital ecosystem. However, global operations now play a major role in the global business process implementation and strategic capability development (Caslione & Thomas, 2001). With the exporting of their services to larger and more prominent markets, digital agencies earn an important recognition and work references which serve as the main lure for acquiring new clients.

According to current statistics, we are witnessing an impressive growth in the world concerning digital trends. There are more than 3,42 billion internet users, equaling 46% global penetration, from which 2,31 billion are social media users, delivering 31% global penetration (Internet Users, 2017; Chaffey, 2017). Both the number of reported internet and social media users went up by 10% in comparison to 2015 global report. However, the most significant rise is related with mobile social media users. Today, there are more than 1,97 billion mobile social media users which equals 17% global penetration (Kemp, 2016). Along with the latest statistics, the competition on domestic markets for agencies is increasing. This is one of the most frequent drivers for agencies to go international and find new customers.

The main problem with an increasing number of agencies on the domestic (i.e., Croatian) market is the decreasing number of companies willing to create their own digital strategies. In order to create additional turnover and contribution margin, agencies move into another country (Barney & Hesterly, 2011). Still, local agencies are an essential part of any company's global, go-to-market strategies. According to the study conducted by Sapient Corporation (2012), around 67% of the companies involved believe that local agencies are necessary in successful implementation of digital strategies. However, 46% of surveyed companies also believe that global agency partners have a deep understanding of local needs and requirements, and they are able to perform all aimed strategies. In addition, 78% of companies believe that it is more cost efficient to utilize fewer agencies across multiple geographical realms. Because of new markets being accessible, agencies' fixed costs can be spread across more projects meaning that economies of scale will rise and decrease the high costs of development (Sapient Corporation, 2012).

Given this reality, the future of digital agencies will be very challenging. In the world with empowered consumers and ever-improving technology, it is not only about the expertise anymore, but rather we have put an emphasis on people. By branding agencies as valuable assets in the digital community, the chances for a prosperous future increase. Brands that are not authentic, transparent, honest, and respectful can be destroyed

(Brown, Wang & Jones, 2016). By adding value to all internal and external members in the stakeholders' chain, agencies' efforts claim more impact on potential clients. However, it is necessary to define the brand's common global goal and working framework that will bring the agency to life and achieve desired business outcomes.

With digital transformation, the emphasis in the marketing and advertising industry transferred to value creation, and this is where people came into the game instead of technology. Today, digital marketing is not about understanding technology, but rather about understanding people and their needs, wants, and desires. Also, it is important to understand how they are using a technology, and how can brands leverage that information into a meaningful and effective digital strategy. Since the very first stages of development, the future of digital predicted that it will impact social, local, mobile, and personal aspects of life and dissolve the boundaries between different marketing channels (Pont, 2013). Now, we can say that *digital* is at the heart of businesses, and it reflects of the fact that customer behavior is changing (Chalal, 2016). Since business goals are more complex today, brands need to search for more engaged service from the agencies which will ultimately differentiate them from their competition. The digital age is bringing a lot of responsibilities to agencies because speed and revenue opportunities of digital workflows are essential to business survival and growth. The main responsibilities disperse into two directions: creative marketing concepts and digital marketing techniques.

Although many marketing processes and techniques changed over the years, the very first basic process of fulfilling human desires by producing goods and services that people buy did not change (Wang, 2017). Marketing experts still have to create a fully human experience that will urge target customer to buy the product. Since most of the markets are flooded with oversupply and communication channels are often saturated, this is where the power of creativity comes into picture. Although execution and engagement are highly valued marketing aspects, creativity is the key because it allows marketers to easily relate with the target audience in an increasingly complex world (Wang, 2017). However, creativity is not what adds marketing agencies the prefix 'digital'. The main facilitators of the overall return-on-investment for the brand and the effectiveness of the campaign for the agency are multiple digital techniques. These digital marketing techniques include search engine optimization, search engine marketing, display advertising, content marketing and automation, social media marketing and optimization, and in recent times increasingly data-driven marketing, e-commerce marketing, native advertising, and influence marketing.

It can be concluded that all agencies that provide development of online activities for their clients, use various electronic devices and digital tools can be labeled as digital agencies. As the result of the digital transformation wave, even longtime-traditional agencies decided to develop digital departments focused on the online marketing communications. Ignorance of digital transformation may easily lead them to bankruptcy (Mazzone, 2014). With the growing trend of online marketing expenditure (Allen, 2016), it seems there is no place for traditional, offline agencies in this world. The majority of agencies should have experienced and implemented the main aspects of digital transformation, already. Although the process of rapid media fragmentation toughened the process of digital integration for agencies, all operating agencies today have aligned their services to the digital age. The main priority of today's digital business is to integrate offline and online marketing (Roberts & Zahay, 2013). This is the only path to leading successful campaigns. In addition, most agencies strive to broaden their services and become full-service digital agencies because this meets client's desires more easily. With the full-service approach, the agency is providing services to the clients in all desired marketing channels. Although, both the specialized and full-service approaches have their advantages, most clients today decide to utilize the benefits of the full-service agencies.

The simple digital value chain consisting of an advertiser, an agency, and a digital platform has evolved. This three-member ecosystem is expanding due to numerous factors, but the essence is that everything is getting more extensive, more important, and more complex. In the marketing and advertising industry, digital agencies are the main 'distributor' of the company's ideas to its target market. The role of agencies is considerably getting more significant because more companies are participating in digital activities. Accordingly, the competition among companies is more intense. This is one of the reasons why companies are forcefully looking for the right agency to create its digital strategy. Although in the past the relationship between the company and the agency was conditioned by location, recent trends in marketing and advertising are completely breaking this barrier. Researchers have concluded that successful agencies can only act as a relevant market player if they "see the future" (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994). In other words, they need to ensure that their digital strategy is ahead of the competition. To successfully differentiate from competitors, it is necessary to probe the issue of what forms of satisfaction have not yet even been recognized by the companies (Chaston, 1999). Digital agencies are here to *serve* companies, but the question is whether they are willing or able to fight with big players in the industry to do so.

3. Diamond model: an approach towards digital agency branding

It has never only been about doing the job, it is about always knowing your place and aiming to improve your performance. This is the reason why marketers should understand where their business fits in the market, vis-a`-vis the competition (McKechnie, Grant & Katsioloudes, 2017). First, it is important to recognize the reason why digital agencies should aim to become brands. In a business context, branding refers to the imposition of a distinctive identity, a brand, on goods and services (The Economist, 2014). Although it is indeed true that agencies develop brands for their respective clients, in the sea of digital agencies, only the best can survive and grab a satisfactory portion of a market share. The most efficient way to achieve this is to obtain the benefits of agency branding. This reassures potential clients about the quality of the service the agency is providing. If the digital agency is branded as a specialized web development agency, and its marketing effort is focused on that particular field within the marketing industry, potential clients will most likely choose that agency because of its core competences. In addition, when agencies establish themselves as a valuable brand in the market, they are able to expand their services more easily because the brand value and clients trust.

Figure 1: Diamond model of agency branding
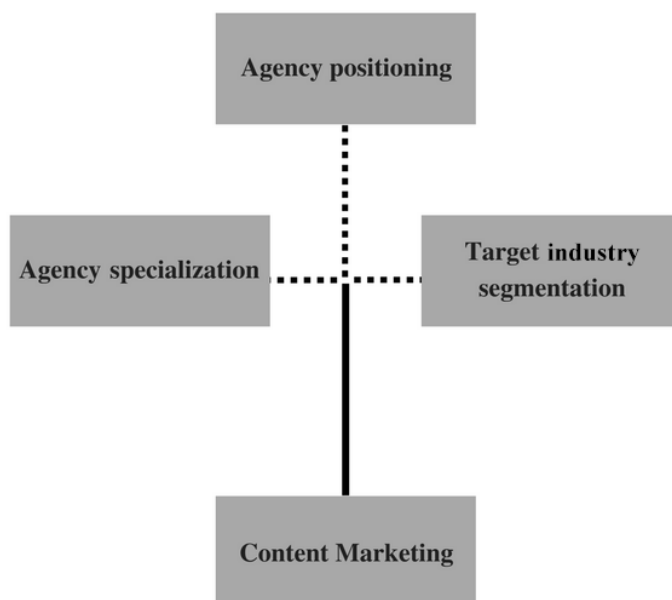
Source: authors' own creation.

Figure 1 provides an overview of four essential techniques available to digital agencies for their global branding efforts. By observing the core strategic verticals of digital agencies, we can distinguish several main management areas, such as services, lead generation or sales, and hiring potential talent. To stay persistently successful in these management areas, digital agencies must brand themselves on the market(s) where they have the strongest position in terms of business development and client portfolio. Whether the agency is aiming to drive sales or hire top talent, it will need to give meaningful value to that particular community. For example, if an agency wants to attract clients interested in investing in Facebook advertising for their company, the agency will need to position itself as a digital agency specialized in social media advertising, positioned in a domestic market as a service provider, and optionally segmented in a specific industry (e.g., fashion). This three-step prerequisite for a highly successful branding strategy can be portrayed with more than just one specialization, market position, or industry segment. However, when it comes to the final step (content marketing), the agency needs to distinguish itself as utilizing a specific specialization, market position and industry segment to establish its market value. For example, if an agency specializes in social media advertising and web development, it will need to assure that the content created for both specialized areas is distinguished. In other words, content needs to be communicated differently for each area, especially if the content matter is extremely professional. The same is applied to market position. For example, if an agency is operating in two or more different markets, and on industry segments, (e.g. websites for fashion brands and B2B retail companies) these agencies are

fundamentally different, according to web functionality as well as design. Today, content marketing is one of the most effective techniques to establish an agency on a global market. However, we will denote three main actions which need to be established before the core content marketing execution.

3.1 Agency positioning strategy

As in most industries, we distinguish four strategic market roles among companies – leader, challenger, follower, and niche marketer (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Both leaders and challengers tend to push boundaries and set the pace for the other participants in the market. However, as the leader has the largest market share among competition, its focus is on the inner-company relations whereas the challenger is focused on the actions of the leading competitor (McKechnie, Grant & Katsioloudes, 2017). The leader is company-focused while pushing the boundaries to acquire greater market share. The follower observes the competition while staying within its self-defined boundaries. In the majority of cases, its financial power is not deep enough to effectively attack the leader or the challenger. However, it may successfully acquire clients with lower marketing budgets. So, its focus is on the smaller fish. In the digital marketing industry, all three market positions can include full-service digital agencies which are providing clients with large variety of digital services. The last, but not least important, are the niche agencies which are completely specialized in the field of digital marketing business, such as content marketing, social media marketing, or e-commerce.

Today, these types of specialized agencies are potential global players. They cannot always predict the whole story, but they certainly have a few successful chapters saved for themselves (Kroeger, Vizjak & Moriarty, 2008). The right niche cannot be found with the help of a consultant – either the agency has a clear strategy to enter that niche or that niche industry is not the right choice for the agency. The real questions every digital agency should ask itself are related with the entry strategy to the niche market, the reasons why one should enter that specific market, and the up-and-coming challenges that niche market brings.

3.2 Agency specialization

To successfully overcome the entry strategy, the company should have a clear idea and choose the niche market in which it already has work references and experts already invested in the market. This is a preliminary condition for every company before considering entering the niche market. It is important to understand that every niche market can be profitable, but the agency's future in the niche market depends on many factors. The simplest way for an agency to find great ideas and create work worth sharing is to glance others in the market. Since other agencies are already successfully conducting business in that specific market, it is plausible to conclude that they are doing a good job and use them as a benchmark. By investigating other agencies' strategies and projects, an agency can mimic or, perhaps, adapt their strategy to improve its own performance and survivability. Some of valuable fields for glancing deeper into other company's business are services and past work references, especially in-house projects because they mostly introduce new, innovative, concepts. Every project conducted by other agencies has certain positive elements which can be combined into new solutions. In the same manner, many projects have weaker spots which an agency should aim to exclude in its future work. It all comes down to focusing the business towards excellence. By entering the market, an agency must have great knowledge of the general market situation and clients' needs, wants, and desires. Since an agency may completely focus its work towards one segment of the digital marketing business, the business model of employees' management, sales actions, and project development has to be adapted to the workflow of that particular market. This is the reason why there is often a need to establish cooperation with a local partner. However, in digital marketing, partnerships are often signed by agencies operating in different niche markets. For example, an agency which specializes in social media signs a partnership with an agency operating in content marketing. Since these digital fields are largely complementary, both agencies can offer their services to a larger number of potential clients.

The main reasons why to enter the niche market are straightforward. By specializing the agency's business, it observes a comparative advantage in that field among the competition. The main advantage is shown through the level of expertise. Depending on the project, the time and effort invested by a specialized agency in comparison to the full-service agency must be more efficient. Although global-level full-service agencies are equally able to successfully finish projects in all fields of their business, niche agencies are able to implement more complex solutions and to charge more for the projects. The reason why niche agencies earn more per project is due to their level of expertise. More complex solutions imply more financial resources. Also, in the niche markets, the competition is smaller, but not weaker. Although there are many fewer companies floating in the market, their

level of expertise is much higher. Depending on the market, the agency will come upon a smaller number of competitors, but it will need to fight more to acquire projects.

One of the biggest challenges in the niche market for a newly specialized agency is the lack of service offering. There are clients that are willing to pay for a higher level of service, but most of today's global and local companies are aiming to place their whole digital efforts under one roof. However, if the agency comes to the point where it can obtain clients, it must be careful in the pitching phase, especially in the foreign niche market. Since niche agencies are considered specialized in certain fields, clients are expecting a lot more preliminary research to be sure that the implementation of the project will go without many problems. Since capital investments are low in the beginning, agencies need to take every client with special care because future projects depend on the sales goals and results of the previous projects.

Another entry method is to research the niche market thoroughly and create a new or improved market segment. That implies extensively more research and work to conduct. For example, if the agency is specialized in e-commerce, and its current target market (Croatia) is not knowledgeable enough concerning this digital technique, the agency is able to educate the market. By informing potential clients about the new e-commerce trends, it is expanding its source of potential leads and positioning itself as the leader in the market very fast. This is where, along with agency positioning as a niche company and chosen agency specialization in the field of digital marketing, targeting comes into the picture.

3.3 Target industry segmentation

The next level that follows agency specialization and deepens the level of expertise is the industry segmentation in the niche market. In order for a company to adequately implement its clients' solutions, this step of the Diamond model for agency branding is not indispensable. However, with this differentiative step, the agency can become an ultimate leader in one digital marketing technique for one specific industry. For example, if the digital agency decides to take advantages of the niche market and specializes in e-commerce solutions, its market is getting substantially smaller, but on the other hand, the agency is becoming more significant in the market. The next level of their specialization would be to aim its service (e-commerce) to one industry, such as fashion. By leveraging its expertise to one specific industry, the agency is becoming more desirable among its competition to all fashion brands and companies in the market. Then, it is the matter of work references and sales actions the agency is willing and able to take.

The main advantage of target industry segmentation is the fact that the agency can spot and modify its sales efforts to suit the target segment. By knowing how the industry operates, the agency can facilitate realistic targets and priorities concerning the client's desires. Also, the sales force can identify new profitable up-sale opportunities which deserve a special attention and may result in increased revenue stream. In comparison to the competition, the agency can deal with clients more effectively in the pitching phase since it is able to collect more resources and references in that industry.

On the other hand, when the agency decides to enter the niche market, it has already thinned out its service offerings and its scope of potential leads. Accordingly, the cost of production rises and places the agency as a more expensive option in the market. After the second "thinning" of the niche market and starting to conduct business in one specific target industry, the agency has the potential to become a true expert in the market. This is where the creative and valuable strategic approach, *content marketing*, comes into the picture.

3.4 Content marketing

If digital advertising is the "pudding", then content marketing is the "proof" in that pudding. By using the right content marketing strategy, every agency rises above its competition, mostly due to the development of trust and credibility in the digital community. Also, by creating content, agencies are delivering more relevant information to desired markets and building more intimate relationships with potential clients, even before they make the first move and offer them their services. In the digital world, that is called value creation. The second important outcome of content marketing is that agencies have the power to deliver the most relevant piece of information to its target market in the most needed moment – when potential clients are looking for partners. We can say that content is your library, your store, and the center of your valuable business. The ten most significant benefits of content marketing are the following:

1. Customer-centric concept

As a term, customer-centricity, is not a vague concept anymore. It is intended to show potential clients how they can benefit from a concept or idea. In terms of content marketing, the agency should aim to present experience that potential clients will find useful for them and their business.

2. "One-size-fits-all" blast

Although there is not a certain solution that will fit all clients, content creation is a great start to bring the agency's expertise in front of the clients' eyes. This "one-size-fits-all" concept refers to the fact that content marketing shows all potential clients the level of expertise of the agency.

3. Two-way feedback-informed communication

Perhaps the most important aspect of content marketing is a two-way interaction between the agency and potential clients. After the agency publishes a meaningful piece of content to the digital community and its consumers, the potential client can always ask the agency about the benefits they will have by using a service or strategy.

4. Prone to ever-changing digital environment

Trends are changing yearly in the digital environment. At the beginning of every year, predictions arise and future trends start to persecute digital experts. Content is changeable, and with every new up-and-coming trend, it is a primary way how agencies are breaking down the key advantages and disadvantages of the trend. There are many sources on every trending topic in digital marketing in a written or visual form, and these sources are the main foundation for all clients' desires.

5. Economic conversion-oriented solution

Another reason why content marketing is so popular among agencies is the production cost. With numerous social media networks and blog websites, there is no need to invest a lot of resources into content creation. The biggest investment is in the people who are creating content.

6. Extensive audience reach

Unlike other business branches, marketing is allowing to target the world. Accordingly, with content marketing, every agency can reach the desired audience, even on the other side of the Globe. Besides viral marketing which is also the result of content marketing, written and visual content has the most extensive reach among all marketing fields.

7. Risk-averse tactic to attractive prospects

Although going into agency specialization can be very risk seeking, content marketing is a risk-averse tactic. Even to the point that a large audience sees the content, the agency has numerous possibilities to reduce the negative impact. However, the most proper way to deal with low-quality content is to prevent its publishing in the first place.

8. Prolonged shelf-time

Even though trends are moving very quickly in the digital industry, certain aspects, such as strategy development, digital advertising, data integration, are always popular. With prolonged shelf-time, every agency is able to recycle the content until the topic truly becomes tedious.

9. Straightforward measurement practice

Since today's emphasis in the digital marketing industry is on data integration and optimization, content is one of the most accessible ways to measure the agency's popularity and trending topics among potential clients.

10. Word-of-mouth referral maximization

With digital transformation sharing life moments, valuable business insights, or entertaining content has never been more developed and approachable. The agency should aim to get to the point where its content is being widely shared by its followers. At that point, the agency's voice has no boundaries, and is reaching the global level.

These ten powerful aspects of content marketing bring us closer to the final stage of agency branding according to the suggested Diamond model. In 2006, according to the research conducted by Hot to Trot Marketing (Jefferson & Tanton, 2013), it took six calls from a telemarketing company to reach one valuable lead. However, in 2010 the number skyrocketed to 41. Today, we can talk about hundreds of emails and calls to bring one potential clients. The reason why content marketing seems to be the right strategy today is the fact that customers value it. It does not feel like marketing, it feels like answers to their question in a very humanly way (ibid). Engaging prospects across the entirety of the purchasing process and customer lifecycle must become the goal of marketers (creating a continuum approach). By switching the focus from the way the agency inclines with the sales process to how clients engage in the buying experience, the agency will gain a more insightful information of how to attract potential leads. In the last stage of the Diamond model – content marketing, there are seven steps to creating valuable content:

1. Starting the agency blog

The best blogs are not necessarily written by those who know the most, but by people who care deeply about their subject and want to communicate with their audience (ibid). The more genuinely useful content the agency produces, the more potential clients will search for the content and position the agency higher in the searches and accordingly gain more traffic. The primary purpose of blogging for agencies is to provide an easy way to build credibility and trust with their potential clients. In comparison to paid advertising, blog content is longer-lived than any paid form of advertising. If it is as nicely and thoroughly written, as well as presented in a visually appealing way, it can attract traffic for weeks, months, and even years after it is published.

2. Cross-referencing the content through all relevant channels

For every agency to expose its content to wider audience, it is necessary to use the power of social media. The major digital networks for distribution of content are Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. We can conclude that valuable content creates a ripple effect on social media, spreading your ideas across your network and around the world (ibid).

3. Recycling the content and keeping in touch with obtained followers

According to Jefferson and Tanton (2013), only 2% of deals are struck during a first meeting. The other 98% only happens once a certain level of trust has been established (Jefferson & Tanton, 2013). When the agency puts emphasis and all its efforts on content production, it is recommended that it creates its own distribution channel. Along with cross-referencing to social media networks, the agency must open an email list and start gathering valuable followers. In the beginning, all efforts invested in content creations will seem useless, but in the long-run, every agency with the right people on the list has a powerful digital community. Social media platforms are effectively just public, rented spaces.

4. Positioning the agency high in searches

Getting to the top of search engine results means you will be found more easily by people you want to find you. By continually publishing and sharing high-quality, niche content on the agency's website, all major search engines will reward the agency's efforts by placing the agency's content on the top of its search indexes.

5. Adding deeper written content

By adding deeper content with a longer shelf life, such as white papers, business books, e-books, and reports, the agency is opening doors to a wider, more relevant audience. It is important to invest in deeper content because it shows the agency's authority in the niche market, capabilities of its employees, and engagement in the digital community. It is said that thoroughly crafted content is the best business card the agency will ever produce.

6. Diversifying and using different formats

The right words will certainly get the message far from the office, but today's trends are focusing on different formats, such as videos, webinars, infographics, podcasts, and mobile applications. However, it takes more time to create content in these formats. For instance, video captures the sense more quickly than 50 words could do, but is more costly and time consuming to produce. Also, all digital platforms, from search engines to social media networks, are developing algorithms tailored towards the promotion of video.

7. Widening the target audience

When the agency has overcome the first six steps to creating valuable content, it will certainly get noticed by, at least, the local digital community. At this point comes the time to widen the agency's reach and present its insights and expertise to a new and bigger audience. These actions are mostly related with public relations; however, as PR is largely related with digital marketing today, the efforts are still establishing the agency's authority in the niche market.

4. Conclusion

The discussed content marketing strategies are applicable on a global scale in the same manner as the suggested Diamond model for the purpose of agency branding. With positioning, specialization, target industry segmentation, and content marketing, an agency can potentially undergo the comprehensive process of becoming an opinion-maker in the desired industry. With all efforts focused on building a brand, it broadens its horizons and strengthens its position on a domestic, but also global market. In the digital marketing industry, trends are ever-changing, but digital agencies will most probably remain essential partners within the digital ecosystem. In the future, companies will increasingly need agencies to accomplish their digital goals, but the question is whether they will look for the full-service or specialized agencies. However, even to the point that companies start to take the advantage of full-service agencies more frequently, there will always be a certain portion of market share for specialized agencies due to the complexity of clients' desires. With that in mind, the suggested Diamond model and its four main pillars are worth investigating further, as the trends of higher customization and data-driven marketing will be the main drivers of digital marketing business.

References:

Barney, J. and Hesterly, W. (2011). *Strategic management and competitive advantage* (4th ed.), Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Brown, R., Wang, M. and Jones, V. (2016). *The New Advertising: Branding, Content, and Consumer Relationships in the Data-Driven Social Media Era* (1st ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Caslione, J. and Thomas, A. (2001). *Global Manifest Destiny* (1st ed.). Chicago: Dearborn Trade Publishing, a Kaplan Professional Company.

Chaffey, D. (2017). Global social media research summary 2017. *Smart Insights*. [online] Retrieved from: http://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/ [Accessed Jun 8, 2017].

Chalal, M. (2016). What does 'digital transformation' really mean. *Marketing Week*. [online] Retrieved from: https://www.marketingweek.com/2016/04/14/what-does-digital-transformation-really-mean/ [Accessed Apr 8, 2017].

Chaston, I. (1999). *New Marketing Strategies* (1st ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

DeKare-Silver, M. (2011). *E-shock 2020* (1st ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

The Economist. (2015). A brand new game. [online] *The Economist.* Retrieved from: http://www.economist.com/news/business/21662543-people-spend-more-time-social-media-advertisers-are-following-them-brand-new-game [Accessed Apr 8, 2017].

The Economist. (2014). Leaner and meaner. [online] *The Economist*. Retrieved from: http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21615867-technology-has-made-life-harder-admen-they-will-not-disappear-leaner-and-meaner [Accessed Apr 8, 2017].

The Economist. (2014). What are brands for. [online] *The Economist.* Retrieved from: http://www.economist.com/news/business/21614150-brands-are-most-valuable-assets-many-companies-possess-no-one-agrees-how-much-they [Accessed Apr 8, 2017].

Hamel, G., Prahalad, C. (1994). *Competing for the Future* (1st ed.). Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Hruskar, D. (2017). Understanding the Origins and the Future of Digital Agencies. *LinkedIn*. [online] Retrieved from: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-origins-future-digital-agencies-domagoj-hru%C5%A1kar / [Accessed June 8, 2017].

Internet Users (2017). *Internet Live Stats*. [online] Retrieved from: http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/ [Accessed June 8, 2017].

Jefferson, S., Tanton, S. (2013). *Valuable content marketing* (1st ed.). London: Kogan Page.

Jefferson, S., Tanton, S. (2015). *Valuable content marketing* (2nd ed.). London: Kogan Page.

Kemp, S. (2016). Digital in 2016. [online] We Are Social. Retrieved from: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/state-digital-2016-simon-kemp [Accessed Apr 8, 2017].

Khan, M. A. (2012). Consumer 2.0: How brands and retailers must anticipate the shopper behavioral shift in five years. *Mobile Marketer.* [online] Retrieved from: http://www.mobilemarketer.com/ex/mobilemarketer/cms/opinion/columns/12254.html [Accessed Apr 8, 2017].

Kotler, P., Keller, K. L. (2012). *Marketing Management* (14th ed.). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Kroeger, F., Vizjak, A., Moriarty, M. (2008). *Beating the global consolidation endgame* (1st ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lytras, M., Damiani, E., Ordonez de Pablos, P. (2009). *Web 2.0* (1st ed.). New York, N.Y.: Springer.

Mazzone, D. (2014). *Digital or Death: Digital Transformation: The Only Choice for Business to Survive, Smash and Conquer*. Mississauga, On: Smashbox Consulting.

McKechnie, D., Grant, J., Katsioloudes, M. (2017). Positions and positioning: strategy simply stated. *Business Strategy Series*, 9(5), 224-230.

Phillips, M. (2015). The Nasdaq is back to its dot-com bubble peak. *Quartz*. [online] Retrieved from: https://qz.com/932102/why-businesses-with-global-aspirations-are-looking-to-japan/ [Accessed Apr 8, 2017].

Pont, S. (2013). *Digital state* (1st ed.). London: Kogan Page Limited.

Roberts, M. L. and Zahay, D. (2013). *Internet Marketing: Integrating Online and Offline Strategies* (3rd ed.). Cincinnati, Oh: South-Western College Pub.

Ryan, D. (2017). *Understanding digital marketing* (1st ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Kogan Page Ltd.

Sapient Corporation (2012). Five Ways Agencies Are Grappling With Global Marketing. *SapientNitro Global Marketing Series*. [online] SapientNitro. Retrieved from: http://www.sapientnitro.com/content/dam/sapientnitro/assets/white-papers/1463.pdf [Accessed Apr 8, 2017].

Stolterman, E., Croon Fors, A. (2004). *Information Technology and the Good Life*. In Kaplan, B. et all. (Eds.) Information Systems Research: Relevant Theory and Informed Practice (p. 687-692). Berlin: Springer Science + Business Media.

Wang, B. (2017). Creativity and data marketing (1st ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Kogan Page.