

Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behaviour Towards Marketing Communication on Social Networks: A Comparative Study of the Two CEE Countries

Denis Tomše, Ljubljana School of Business, Slovenia*

Boris Snoj, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Borut Milfelner, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Maribor, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the article is to find out whether there are differences in users' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours towards marketing communication on social networks in two neighbouring countries, namely Slovenia and Croatia. The results of this research clearly show that the Slovenian users' attitudes and behaviours towards marketing communication on social networks are not significantly different from the Croatian users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks. The results of these research have a great value for marketing experts, who are communicating with users in Slovenia and Croatia. According to the results of this research, in general, marketing experts, responsible for marketing communication on social networks, do not need to adjust their messages when communicating with the audiences in Slovenia and Croatia. However, regarding the results of this research, they still need to pay attention to adjust messages according to gender and some demographic, social, or economic factors.

KEYWORDS

Attitude, Behaviour, Beliefs, Communication Channel, Croatia, Internet, Marketing Communication, Slovenia, Social Networks, User

1 INTRODUCTION

Trends, such as fierce competition caused by globalization which produces the continuous flow of innovation, and the fact that the balance of power in developed market-based economies has moved from the company to the user (Baer, 2010; adopted from Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012), are among the reasons for new approaches in marketing to satisfy increasingly demanding and informed users. The most effective communication channels might be social networks, mainly because they have a very large reach, are very affordable and recognized as trusted source of information. Therefore, one can believe that social networks have definitely changed the way that business, especially marketing communication, is done.

According to Tomše et al. (2015), the use of the term »social networks« is heterogeneous and inconsistent. Following the logic of diverse and definitions of individual concepts, »social networks«

DOI: 10.4018/IJESMA.2022010101

*Corresponding Author

This article published as an Open Access Article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and production in any medium, provided the author of the original work and original publication source are properly credited.

can be briefly defined as web pages based on web 2.0, enabling the generation and exchange of contents among their users. Since the co-creators of these pages are their users, these pages belong to everybody that uses them, to the society in general. »Web 2.0« are network platforms where the content is generated by the users (Tomše et. al, 2015). Gunelius (2011) defines social networking as online networking that occurs through various websites for content sharing, interaction and development of interest communities. Each social network has a different level of interaction and collaboration between users (Safko and Brake, 2009). As types of social networks, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define collaborative projects, blogs and social networks for content sharing, social networking sites, virtual online games and virtual social worlds. Tomše (2014) has added microblogs and forums to the previously mentioned types of social networks.

According to Zarrella (2009), social networks are a very suitable channel of marketing communication since they provide numerous options for interacting with users. Many previous studies examined the users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards advertising. Pollay and Mittal (1993) examined users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards advertising in general. They found Bauer et al. (1968) two-factor model inappropriate, therefore they defined a seven factor model. In addition, they divided the seven belief factors into two groups, namely personal factors (product information, social role/image and hedonic pleasure) and social economic factors (good for economy, materialism, value corruption and falsity/nonsense). Later on, Wolin et al. (2002) upgraded Pollay and Mittal model and adapted it for the use in internet advertising. The results of their study show that users' beliefs about factors »product information«, »hedonic pleasure« and »social role/image« have positive impact on their attitudes towards internet advertising, while users' beliefs about factors »materialism«, »falsity/nonsense« and »value corruption« have negative impact on their attitudes towards internet advertising. Users' attitudes towards internet advertising have certain impact on the users' behaviour. Wang et al. (2009) examined the beliefs and attitudes of some Chinese consumers towards internet advertising and the impact of their attitudes on the costumers' behaviour. They found out that users' attitudes have positive impact on ad clicking and internet shopping. Fornazarič (2010) examined the impact of internet advertising on the behaviour of some young internet users. She realized that adolescents as well as non-adolescents recognize the informative nature of internet advertising, enjoy the interactive nature of internet ads and recognize the social importance of internet advertising.

Also, some comparative researches of differences of consumers' attitudes towards advertising have been done in different countries. Wang and Sun (2010a) investigated the relationship among consumers' beliefs about online advertising, attitudes towards online advertising and consumer behavioural responses in three different nations, namely the USA, China and Romania. Their major findings are that all five belief factors (i.e. information seeking, entertainment, economy, credibility and value corruption) are statistically significant predictors of attitudes towards online advertising, which in turn, significantly predicts online ad clicking and frequency of online shopping, and that consumers' beliefs, attitudes and behavioural responses towards online advertising, and relationships thereof, vary across countries.

The Romanians have the most positive attitudes towards online advertising and are most likely to click on advertisements, while the Americans, however, do the most online purchases. Wang and Sun (2010b) find out that the Romanians tend to hold more positive attitudes towards online advertising than the Americans, and are more likely to click advertisements, while the Americans are more likely to buy online than the Romanians. Dianoux and Linhart's research show that the French in general like advertising more than the Czech people do. Dianoux et al. (2014) research has been done in three countries with different economic and cultural backgrounds, namely in Germany, Ukraine and the USA. The differences between advertising in general were confirmed, the differences between brand intention have confirmed orthodox and atheist religions as the source condition when asking generally about advertising. No confirmed differences between hard-sell and soft-sell ads deny the effect of these subcategories of advertising in general. According to research, the respondents from Germany are more optimistic in general. This difference was explained by the significant difference of Orthodox

and Atheist religions compared to some other religions (Dianoux et al., 2014). Differences in attitudes towards websites were also revealed in a study conducted by Castañeda et al. (2019). Comparing two countries, that differ in their educational systems' capacity to develop skills related to digital information management (the UK vs. Spain), their results show that tourists educated in a country with low digital information literacy (Spanish tourists) develop poorer attitudes towards the website and associated promoted destination when they are exposed to high information load. Conversely, tourists educated in a country with higher digital information literacy (British tourists) do not exhibit significant differences in the mean level of attitudes generated by varying the information load.

Lately, many researchers have also focused on users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. Mir (2012), who conducted his study on a sample of some South Asian students, found out that only belief factors »information« and »good for economy« are the significant predictors of the users' attitudes towards advertising in social networks. Kamal and Chu (2012) research showed significant positive relationship between users' beliefs and attitudes towards social networks advertising and the users' attitudes, and behaviour towards social networks advertising. Natarajan et al. (2013) examined differences in beliefs towards marketing communication in social networks between students and employed users. The results of their research show that the most differences between mentioned populations are in belief factors »falsity/nonsense«, and »social role/image«, while moderate differences are also in belief factor »good for economy«. The results clearly show that those who are responsible for marketing communication on social networks must adjust their messages to target audience. Tomše et al. (2015) improved the seven-factor model made by Wolin et al. (2002) by adding the new belief factor »good for individual«. The results of their research show that in the model personal belief factors »product information«, »entertainment«, »good for individual« and also social belief factor »good for economy«, display positive influence on the users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, while social belief factors »falsity/nonsense«, »materialism« and »value corruption« display negative influence on the users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks. Gender and education also show statistically significant influence on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks. Users' level of education show negative influence on their behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. According to the results of the research made by Tomše et al. (2015) age, income and gender of social networks users do not have influence on their behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. Their findings have been the basis for the present research. Muk et al. (2016) investigated attitudes and social influence that may affect consumers to like brand pages on social networking site. They have investigated the differences between the American and the South Korean consumers. Their findings reveal that both, the attitude and the social influence variables, are significant predictors of the American and the South Korean consumers' intentions to become fans of brand pages. To the South Korean consumers, both, the informational (utilitarian) and pleasurable (hedonic) aspects of accessing social networking sites advertising, enhance their positive attitudes towards brand pages. On the other hand, some utilitarian values have much stronger effect on motivating the American consumers to follow brands on social networks. The positive attitude-intention relationship suggests that the more consumers like to access social networking sites advertising, the higher the likelihood they will become fans of brand pages on social networking sites. The findings also suggest that the American and the South Korean consumers' intentions to join brand pages are positively related to the social influence exerted on them by their important referents. The South Korean respondents' attitudes towards brand pages are significantly different from those of the American respondents. The results imply that young American perceptions towards the brand pages seem more positive than those of their South Korean counterparts. Kumar and Pandey (2016) research revealed a positive impact of informativeness, entertainment, credibility and user-generated-content belief factors on attitudes and behaviour of respondents. The findings also suggested that user-generated content had significant impact on attitude and behaviour responses towards advertising on social networking sites. It was also found that attitude towards advertising on social networking

sites played a mediating role between social media advertising beliefs and behavioural responses of consumers. Qazi et al. (2018) adopted Pollay and Mittal model. They divided the belief factors into three constructs, namely »infotainment« (product information and entertainment), »invasiveness« (annoyance/irritation) and »integrity« (falsity/nonsense).

Although many researches have already been done, it is still unknown how certain users perceive marketing communication on social networks. In the presented study, the authors compare users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks in the two CEE countries, namely Slovenia and Croatia. The authors designed a questionnaire, based on previous research of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour toward advertising (Pollay and Mittal, 1993, Wolin et al., 2002), beliefs, attitudes and behaviour toward internet advertising (Fornazarič, 2010) and beliefs, attitudes and behaviour toward marketing communication on social media (Tomše et al., 2015). Final sample is n=247 (113 Slovenian users and 134 Croatian users).

Until now, some researchers (e.g. Mir 2012, Kamal and Chu 2012, Natarajan et al. 2013, Tomše et al., 2015) have examined users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. However, the authors of the present research have tried to enhance the knowledge derived from some previous researches. Namely, the previous studies of users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks examined the users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour only in one country, while this presented research is the first comparative study of the same issue carried out in two different countries.

Slovenia and Croatia are two neighbouring countries with similar past. Both countries used to be part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for almost 50 years. At the beginning of 90s, after the breakdown of Yugoslavia, both republics became independent states. As they share mutual history, getting independent from the same federal state, Slovenia and Croatia have remained closely economically related. This means that companies in both countries are still targeting users in another country. Therefore, it is very important for marketing experts in both countries, who are responsible for marketing communication on social networks, to know if they need to adjust their messages on social networks based on the country of users they are targeting. In this presented research, the authors deal with the comparison of users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication in both countries, so one can expect the results will provide the answer to the question.

Despite the fact that Slovenia and Croatia are neighbouring countries, similar in many aspects, there are some differences in cultural, religious, political etc. dimensions and in economic dimension of the two countries. As far as economy is concerned, the authors of the presented research emphasise certain differences in the economic impact and structure of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which are the main drivers in communication with users on social networks. Obadić and Aristovnik (2020) found out that although the share of SMEs in total number of enterprises in Slovenia and Croatia is similar, the Croatian SMEs provide lower share of total employment and lower share of total value added than Slovenian SMEs. Moreover, an in-depth comparison between the structure of SMEs in Croatia and Slovenia reveals the following fact. Regarding the number of enterprises, Croatia has a lower share of micro enterprises and larger shares of SMEs than Slovenia. What is also important for the present study, Oblak et al. (2020) discovered the important differences in consumer buying behaviour in Slovenia and Croatia. The results of their research serve as the useful basis for wood sector companies to design more successful marketing strategies, which will help them achieve their goals in different target markets. Furjan (2020) found out that the analysis of export trade generally shows poor export results of Slovenia and Croatia, and that smaller countries, such as Slovenia and Croatia, need to increase their exports to ensure economic growth. Marketing communication on social networks, when it is done in the appropriate way, could be a very good tool for companies, especially SMEs, to expand their sales abroad. Differences in intrapersonal emotional competences, which have influence on users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour, are lower in Croatia, compared to Slovenia (Avsec et al., 2020).

Keeping the quoted differences between Slovenia and Croatia in mind, the main goal of the present research is to find out whether there are also differences in users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks between these two countries. The results will be of great help to those who communicate with users via social networks. They might get an answer whether they need to adjust their messages to users they are addressing in a particular country.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the past researches, regarding certain differences between the consumers' attitudes towards advertising in different countries, done by Wang and Sun (2010a 2010b), Dianoux and Linhart (2012), Dianoux et al. (2014), Mir (2012), Kamal and Chu (2012), Natarajan et al. (2013) and Tomše et al. (2015), and considering the fact that Croatia and Slovenia are two neighbouring countries, this paper is intended to provide answers to the following research propositions (i) RP1: The same belief factors of the Slovenian and the Croatian users have certain influence on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks. (ii) RP2: Both, the Slovenian and the Croatian users' attitudes have positive influence on their behaviour toward marketing communication on social networks. (iii) RP3: Users' gender in both countries, Slovenia and Croatia, has influence on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks. (iv) RP4: The same demographic, social and economic factors of the Slovenian and the Croatian users (age, education, income, gender) have influence on their behaviour, when exposed to marketing communication on social networks. The authors have also tested two null hypothesis (v) H01: the Slovenian and the Croatian users' have the same mean value of attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks and (vi) H02: the Slovenian and the Croatian users' have the same mean value of behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks.

Regression modelling was applied to test the research propositions and hypothesis in the study. Simple linear regression was used for testing the influence of users' beliefs about individual factors on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, for testing the influence of users' attitudes on their behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks and for testing the influence of individual social economic factors on users' behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. The authors used multivariate analysis, primarily the multiple regression analysis methods, for testing the model of influence of users' belief factors on their attitudes toward marketing communication on social networks. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimators, which is also suitable for the analysis of discrete ordinal data, such as Likert scale and other rating scales, were used (Kromrey and Rendina-Gobioff, 2003).

Shapiro-Wilks nonparametric test was used for assessment of differences between Slovenian and Croatian subsample concerning the attitudes and behaviour. Statistical analyses were performed with SPSS 21.0.

2.1 Research Instrument

The authors designed a questionnaire, based on previous research of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour toward advertising (Pollay and Mittal, 1993, Wolin et al., 2002), beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards internet advertising (Fornazarič, 2010) and beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social media, which was made by Tomše et al. (2015). First, the authors conducted an online survey among some Slovenian and Croatian full-time and part-time students. An online survey was conducted at the end of 2019. Based on the obtained data, the authors used linear regression to test the influence of some individual Slovenian and Croatian users' belief factors on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, the influence of Slovenian and Croatian users' attitudes on their behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks, the gender influence on Slovenian and Croatian users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, and the influence of the Slovenian individual demographic, social and economic

factors on users' behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. Final sample is n=247 (113 Slovenian users and 134 Croatian users).

2.2 Dimensionality, Scale Validity and Reliability

The exploratory factor analysis, with the principal component analysis method and varimax rotation, was deployed to test the dimensionality of the constructs. Three analysis were conducted separately believe factors, attitudes, and behaviour constructs. In regard to the original scales, five items were excluded for believe factor construct and one for behaviour construct due to low loadings or cross-loadings.

The final factor structure is presented in Table 1, together with Kayser-Meyer-Olkin coefficients (KMO), percentage of variance extracted (VE) and loadings for single indicators. As it can be observed, all KMO coefficients and percentage of VE are in the prescribed intervals higher than 0.6 and 60%. Table 1 shows only loadings on the belonging factors. All are higher than the minimum value of 0.5. According to this, it can be concluded that the convergent validity of the scales was achieved. Concerning the construct validity, the calculated Cronbach alphas were all higher than 0.6 indicating the appropriate reliability of the scales.

Table 1 shows the average values and coefficients of variation (CV) of individual variables.

Table 1. Values of individual variables

VARIABLE	Loadings	Mean Slovenia	Coef. Var. Slovenia	Mean Croatia	Coef. Var. Croatia
Attitudes (KMO = 0.739; p<0.001; Variance extracted = 65.22%; α = 0.820)					
Overall, I consider marketing communication on social networks: 1 very bad – 5 very good.	0.838	3.31	0.25	3.37	0.20
Overall, do you like or dislike marketing communication on social networks? (1 do not like at all – 5 like very much)	0.852	3.20	0.31	3.27	0.25
I consider marketing communication on social networks as follows: 1 very insignificant – 4 very significant.	0.708	2.96	0.23	2.94	0.22
To me, marketing communication on social networks is: 1 very insignificant – 4 very significant.	0.823	2.22	0.37	2.44	0.33
Believe factors (KMO = 0.844; p<0.001; Variance extracted = 66.23%)					
Product information (α = 0.818)					
Social networks are a valuable source of information about products, brands, etc. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.792	3.72	0.28	3.94	0.23
Social networks tell me which products, brands etc. have the features that I am looking for. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.816	3.71	0.29	3.68	0.25
Social networks help me keep up to date with products' brands etc. which are available in the market. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.822	3.30	0.32	4.20	0.20
Entertainment (α = 0.754)					
It sometimes makes me pleased thinking about what I saw or heard in marketing communication on social networks (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree).	0.569	2.92	0.34	3.56	0.29
Certain marketing communication on social networks is sometimes even more enjoyable than the rest of the content. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.831	3.11	0.40	3.02	0.37

Table 1 continued on next page

Table 1 continued

VARIABLE	Loadings	Mean Slovenia	Coef. Var. Slovenia	Mean Croatia	Coef. Var. Croatia
Attitudes (KMO = 0.739; p<0.001; Variance extracted = 65.22%; α = 0.820)					
Some marketing communication content on social networks makes me feel good. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.783	2.78	0.41	3.08	0.36
Good for economy (α = 0.635)					
Marketing communication on social networks improves people's standard of living. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.659	2.72	0.39	2.98	0.30
People need marketing communication on social networks to support the social networks. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.631	3.25	0.35	3.55	0.25
If necessary, I could use marketing communication on social networks to get in touch with someone that I might have some benefits from. (help in searching for a job etc.) (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.622	3.52	0.36	3.50	0.31
Materialism (α = 0.785)					
Marketing communication on social networks makes you buy things you do not really need. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.761	3.66	0.30	3.93	0.23
Marketing communication on social networks produces materialistic society– interested in buying and owning things. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.812	3.76	0.25	3.87	0.23
Web advertising makes people buy unaffordable products just to show off. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.718	3.86	0.22	3.86	0.23
Showing products which some users cannot afford, marketing communication on social networks increases dissatisfaction among users. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.689	3.34	0.32	3.45	0.28
Social role (α = 0.752)					
One can put more trust in products that occur on social networks than in those that do not occur on social networks. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.748	2.14	0.44	2.30	0.38
Certain products play an important role in my life, and marketing communication on social networks reassures me that I do the right thing using these products. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.648	2.21	0.42	2.43	0.38
From marketing communication content in social networks, I learn what is in fashion and what I should buy for keeping a good social image. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.565	2.59	0.42	3.22	0.30
Marketing communication on social networks helps me know which products will or will not reflect the sort of person I am. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.638	2.25	0.45	2.63	0.38
Value corruption (α = 0.756)					
There is too much sex in marketing communication on social networks. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.508	2.45	0.44	2.77	0.36
Marketing communication on social networks takes undue advantage of children. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.861	3.89	0.24	3.96	0.22

Table 1 continued on next page

Table 1 continued

VARIABLE	Loadings	Mean Slovenia	Coef. Var. Slovenia	Mean Croatia	Coef. Var. Croatia
Attitudes (KMO = 0.739; p<0.001; Variance extracted = 65.22%; α = 0.820)					
Marketing communication on social networks leads children to make unreasonable purchase demands on their parents. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.785	3.87	0.93	3.96	0.21
Marketing communication on social networks sometimes makes people live in the world of fantasy. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	0.683	3.80	0.24	4.05	0.23
Behaviour (KMO = 0.652; p<0.001; Variance extracted = 64.98%; α = 0.729)					
Ignore it (1 never – 4 always)	0.850	2.90	0.22	2.05	0.31
Pay close attention to it (1 never – 4 always)	0.836	2.09	0.29	2.09	0.31
Click on it to find more information (1 never – 4 always)	0.727	2.06	0.31	2.10	0.34

3 RESULTS

To test the RP1, suggesting that the same belief factors of certain Slovenian and Croatian users have impact on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, the authors have conducted multivariate regression analysis. Since the dependent and independent variables have been measured on the ordinal scales, the main proposition was that the interval between the answers (such as the interval from 1 to 2 is equal to the interval from 2 to 3 etc.) were the same. To acquire lower number of variables factor scores have been calculated for single factors with the regression method.

The results are shown in Table 2. The R^2 values indicated that 63.0% of the variance in the dependent factor can be explained by all independent factors' variance for the Slovenian users, and 58.9% for the Croatian users. Both coefficients were significant at $p<0.001$.

Table 2. The influence of some individual Slovenian and Croatian users' belief factors on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks

		Slovenian users			Croatian users	
	β parameters	t	p-value	β parameters	t	p-value
Product information	0.414	6.905	0.000	0.220	3.754	0.000
Materialism	0.030	0.505	0.614	-0.051	-0.875	0.383
Value corruption	-0.170	-2.827	0.006	-0.301	-5.167	0.000
Social role	0.195	3.255	0.002	0.405	7.017	0.000
Entertainment	0.497	8.312	0.000	0.444	7.694	0.000
Good for economy	0.351	5.878	0.000	0.387	6.673	0.000

The first research proposition RP1, suggesting that the same belief factors of certain Slovenian and Croatian users have influence on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social

networks, has been rejected. In both countries, individual belief factors »product information«, »value corruption«, »entertainment«, »social/role/image«, and »good for economy« have statistically significant influence on users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks at $p < 0.01$ level. On the other hand, belief factor »materialism« of both, the Slovenian and the Croatian users, has no statistically significant influence on users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks. Authors note that the belief factors for the Slovenian and the Croatian users have very similar influence on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks.

To test the RP2, the authors have tested the influence of users' attitudes on their behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks separately for the Slovenian and the Croatian users. The second research proposition was supported ($\beta = 0.579, p < 0.001$), for the Slovenian users, and $\beta = 0.649, p < 0.001$ for the Croatian users). The overall model fit was significant for both countries at $p < 0.001$. The Croatian users' attitudes have stronger influence on their behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The influence of the Slovenian and the Croatian users' attitudes on their behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks

		Slovenian users			Croatian users	
Model	β parameters	t	p-value	β parameters	t	p-value
Attitude	0.579	7.477	0.000	0.649	9.807	0.000

The fact that social networks' users in both countries have statistically significant positive influence on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks was highly expected, since many previous research show similar results (e.g. Mir, 2012, Kamal and Chu, 2012, Tomše et al., 2015, etc.).

To test the RP3, suggesting that users' gender in both countries, Slovenia and Croatia, defines their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, the authors' additional regression analysis was employed. According to the results in Table 4, among other impacts, there are differences between male and female Slovenian users in their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks according to gender, but this is not the case with the Croatian users. Therefore, the authors have rejected the third research proposition RP3.

The RP4, suggesting that the same demographic, social and economic factors of the Slovenian and the Croatian users (age, education, income, gender) impact their behaviour when exposed to marketing communication on social networks, has been rejected. Table 4 shows the impact of individual demographic, social and economic factors (age, education, income, gender) on the Slovenian and the Croatian users' behaviour. The overall model evaluation showed that only the model for Slovenia was significant at $p < 0.10$ with rather low coefficient of multiple determination ($R^2 = 0.03$). The model for Croatia proved to be insignificant. The results show that in case of Slovenian users, only gender influences behaviour when exposed to marketing communication on social networks. On the other hand, the Croatian users, only education influences behaviour when exposed to marketing communication on social networks. Surprisingly, users with higher education have more positive behaviour when exposed to marketing communication on social networks. This is contrary to some previous researches (Wolin et al. 2002, Akar and Topcu, 2011, and Tomše et al. 2015).

Table 4. The impact of some Slovenian individual demographic, social and economic factors on users' behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks

	Slovenian users			Croatian users		
	β parameters	t	p-value	β parameters	t	p-value
Gender	0.256	2.755	0.007	0.006	0.072	0.942
Age	-0.061	-0.575	0.567	0.100	1.038	0.301
Education	-0.001	-0.010	0.992	0.115	1.217	0.226
Income	-0.106	-1.032	0.304	0.022	0.237	0.813

Table 5. Group statistics of the Slovenian and the Croatian users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks

	Country	N	FS Means	FS Std. Deviation	FS Std. Error Mean
Attitudes	Slovenia	113.000	-0.070	1.069	0.101
	Croatia	134.000	0.059	0.938	0.081
Behaviour	Slovenia	113.000	0.002	0.956	0.090
	Croatia	134.000	-0.002	1.039	0.090

As presented in Table 5, the factor score mean value of the Slovenian users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks is lower than the factor score mean value of the Croatian users. Additionally, results show that the average factor score mean value for behaviour towards marketing communication in Croatia is nearly the same as it is in Slovenia.

Table 6. Shapiro-Wilks test of differences between Slovenian and Croatian subsample concerning the attitudes and behaviour

	Country	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	p-value
Attitude	Slovenia	113	119.06	13453.50	
	Croatia	134	128.17	17174.50	0.317
	Total	247			
Behaviour	Slovenia	113	124.61	14081.00	
	Croatia	134	123.49	16547.00	0.898
	Total	247			

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that both variables were non-normally distributed, since the p value for both samples was significant at $p < 0.01$ for attitude, and at $p < 0.001$ for behaviour construct. Therefore, the Shapiro-Wilks nonparametric test has been used for the assessment of differences between the Slovenian and the Croatian subsample concerning the attitudes and behaviour.

H01 states that the Slovenian and the Croatian users have the same mean value of attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, and H02 states that the Slovenian and the Croatian users have the same mean value of behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. Since for both cases the p -value was higher than the selected significance level ($p > 0.05$) it may be concluded that the mean value of the Slovenian users' attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks is not significantly different from the Croatian users' attitudes and behaviour towards the same issue. Therefore, both hypotheses have been supported.

4 CONCLUSION

Numerous authors studied users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards advertising, towards internet advertising and towards marketing communication activities on social networks. Their results were the basis for this presented research. Despite the fact that many authors studied users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication, the authors of this research, according to their knowledge, are the first ones to investigate users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks, specifically comparing the two different countries, namely Slovenia and Croatia. The results of this research clearly show that the Slovenian users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks are not significantly different from the Croatian users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks. In addition, the Slovenian users' behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks is not significantly different from the Croatian users' behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. This is not surprising because Slovenia and Croatia are the two neighbouring countries, having similar past.

Despite this historical fact, there are some differences in users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks, and users' behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. In both countries, individual belief factors »product information«, »entertainment«, »social/role«, »good for individual«, »good for economy« and »falsity/nonsense« have statistically significant impact on users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, while belief factor »materialism« of both, the Slovenian and the Croatian users, does not have statistically significant impact on users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks. Besides that, the results show that in case of the Slovenian users, only gender has certain impact on their behaviour when exposed to marketing communication on social networks, while in case of the Croatian users, only education has certain impact on their behaviour when exposed to marketing communication on social networks.

The results are not surprising since previous research (e.g. Mir, 2012, Kamal and Chu 2012, Natarajan et al 2013, Tomše et. al. 2015) show that in general, users' beliefs have impact on their attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks and that users' attitudes have impact on their behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks. However, it is still unknown, why the research findings so far were not homogeneous, namely in different studies one or more belief factors do not have statistically significant impact on users. When talking about the differences of users' attitudes towards advertising in different countries, it is hard to compare the results of this research with the results of the Wang and Sun (2010a), Wang and Sun (2010b), Dianoux and Linhart (2012) and Dianoux et.al. (2014). Firstly, the presented research was made in two very similar countries, while the other researches were made in politically, religiously and in other aspects different countries. Secondly, the presented research has focused on social media as the channel of communicating, while the other researches targeted the internet in general as the channel of communicating. However, based on the results of the presented research, one can conclude that despite some minor differences, the Slovenian and the Croatian social media users have the same attitudes and the same behaviour towards marketing communication on social media. The other mentioned researches however showed different results.

According to the results of this research, in general, some marketing experts, responsible for marketing communication on social networks, do not need to adjust their messages when communicating with the audiences in Slovenia and Croatia. However, regarding the results of this research, they still need to pay attention to adjust messages according to gender and some demographic, social or economic factors. The authors of this research strongly recommend the professionals, responsible for marketing communication on social networks, to do research on users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks before they start communicating on social networks with the target audiences when they plan to launch important communication campaign in a particular country. Doing so, they will not waste their valuable resources.

The main limitation of the paper is the fact that the research was made only in the two neighbouring CEE countries, namely Slovenia and Croatia, which are similar in many aspects. The question arises, whether the results of users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks in Slovenia and Croatia would still be the same, if the survey were made in two (or more) not so similar countries. The second limitation of this paper, as predicted by the authors, is the fact, that relatively small sample has been used to test the users' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks in Slovenia and Croatia. Nevertheless, the authors believe that the sample is still big enough to confirm the results. Even more, the authors believe that a bigger sample gathered, would give the same results.

In the light of these findings, the authors recommend further research in several different countries, especially in the countries with different cultural, social and economic background. As the past studies have not produced the same results, always one or more belief factors producing statistically significant impact on users' attitudes towards marketing communication on social networks, the authors of this research also recommend further comparative representative studies that would follow basically the same frame to produce more robust results.

REFERENCES

- Akar, E., & Topçu, B. (2011). An Examination of the Factors Influencing Consumers' Attitudes Toward Social Media Marketing. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 10(1), 35–67. doi:10.1080/15332861.2011.558456
- Andzulis, J., Panagopoulos, N., & Rapp, A. (2012). A review of social media and implications for the sales process. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 32(3), 305–316. doi:10.2753/PSS0885-3134320302
- Avsec, A., Belasheva, I., Cenek, I., Khan, A., Mohorić, T., Takšić, V., & Zager Kocjan, G. (2020). Cross-Cultural and Gender Measurement Invariance of the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Emotional Competence Questionnaire. *Psiholgijske Teme*, 29(1), 305–316. doi:10.31820/pt.29.1.10
- Bauer, R. A., Greyser, S. A., Kanter, D. L., & Weilbacher, W. M. (1968). *Advertising in America: The Consumer View*. Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University.
- Castañeda, J., Frías-Jamilena, D. M., & Rodríguez-Molina, M. A. (2019). Online Marketing Effectiveness - the influence of information load and digital literacy, a cross-country comparison. *Electronic Markets*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1007/s12525-019-00372-9
- Dianoux, C., & Linhart, Z. (2012). *The Attitude toward advertising in general and Attitude toward specific ads: is it the same influence whatever the countries?* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281448511_The_Attitude_toward_advertising_in_general_and_Attitude_toward_specific_ads_is_it_the_same_influence_whatever_the_countries/link/55e81a3f08ae65b638996e21/download
- Dianoux, C., Linhart, Z., & Vnoučková, L. (2014). Attitude toward Advertising in General and Attitude toward a Specific Type of Advertising – A First Empirical Approach. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 6(1), 87–103. doi:10.7441/joc.2014.01.06
- Fornazarič, M. (2010) *Stališča do spletnega oglaševanja in vpliv na vedenja mladih* [PhD Thesis]. Univerza v Ljubljani, Ekonomska Fakulteta, Ljubljana.
- Furjan, S. (2020). *Primerjava mednarodne trgovine Republike Slovenije in Republike Hrvaške*. <https://dk.um.si/IzpisGradiva.php?lang=slv&id=75664>
- Gunelius, S. (2011). *30 - minute social media marketing*. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Kamal, S., & Chu, S.-C. (2012). Beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours toward advertising on social media in the Middle East: A study of young consumers in Dubai. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 7(3), 237–259.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 53–68. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003
- Kromrey, J. D., & Rendina-Gobioff, G. (2003). An Empirical Comparison of Regression Analysis Strategies with Discrete Ordinal Variables. *Multiple Linear Regression Viewpoints*, 28(2), 30–43.
- Kumar & Pandey. (2016). Indian Consumers' Beliefs, Attitudes and Behavioural Responses towards Advertising on Social Networking Sites. *Media Watch*, 7(2), 244–255.
- Mir, I. A. (2012). Consumer Attitudinal Insights about Social Media Advertising: A South Asian Perspective. *The Romanian Economic Journal*, 15(45), 265–288.
- Muk, A., Chung, C., & Kim, J. (2016). A Cross-National Study of Consumer Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Liking Brand Page. In *Marketing Challenges in a Turbulent Business Environment. Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science*. Springer. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-19428-8_130
- Natarajan, T., Balasubramanian, S., Balakrishnan, J., & Manickavasagam, J. (2013). Examining Beliefs Toward Social Media Advertisements Among Students and Working Professionals: An Application of Discriminant Analysis. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 7(8), 697–705.
- Obadić, A., Ravselj, D., & Aristovnik, A. (2020). Administrative Barriers in the Field of Employment in the EU: Empirical Evidence from Croatia and Slovenia. *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, 8(2), 533–553. doi:10.35808/ijeba/480

Oblak, L., Glavonjić, B., Pirc Barčič, A., Bizjak Govedič, T., & Grošelj, P. (2020). Preferences of Different Target Groups of Consumers in Case of Furniture Purchase. *Drvena Industrija*, 71(1), 79–87. doi:10.5552/drvind.2020.1932

Pollay, R. W., & Mittal, B. (1993). Here's the Beef: Factors, Determinants, and Segments in Consumer Criticism of Advertising. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(3), 99–114. doi:10.1177/002224299305700307

Qazi, M. A., Muhammad, M. R., & Abeera, B. G. (2018). 'The Impact of Consumer Beliefs on Consumers' Attitude: A Social Media Advertising Perspective'. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 26(1), 77–104.

Safko, L., & Brake, D. K. (2009). *The Social Media Bible*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Tomše. (2014). *Vpliv prepričanj uporabnikov družbenih omrežij na njihova stališča in vedenje do marketinškega komuniciranja v teh omrežjih* [PhD Thesis]. Fakulteta za komercialne in poslovne vede, Celje.

Tomše, D., Dumičić, K., & Snoj, B. (2015). Beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour towards marketing communication on social networks – the case of Central and Eastern European country. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 9(4), 286–302. doi:10.1504/IJIMA.2015.072883

Wang, Y., Sun, S., Lei, W., & Toncar, M. (2009). Examining beliefs and attitudes toward online advertising among Chinese consumers. *Direct Marketing. International Journal (Toronto, Ont.)*, 3(1), 52–66.

Wang, Y., & Sun, S. (2010a). Assessing Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behavioral Responses Toward Online Advertising in Three Countries. *International Business Review*, 19(4), 333–344. doi:10.1016/j.ibusrev.2010.01.004

Wang, Y., & Sun, S. (2010b). Examining the role of beliefs and attitudes in online advertising: A comparison between the USA and Romania. *International Marketing Review*, 27(1), 87–107. doi:10.1108/02651331011020410

Wolin, L. D., Korgaonkar, P., & Lund, D. (2002). Beliefs, attitudes and behavior toward Web advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 21(1), 87–113. doi:10.1080/02650487.2002.11104918

Zarrella, D. (2009). *The Social Media Marketing Book*. O'Reilly Media, Inc.

Denis Tomše received his Doctoral thesis in Business Sciences (PhD) at the Faculty of Commercial and Business Sciences Celje in the field of marketing communication on social networks. He is the author of many contributions in scientific conferences, mostly from the field of marketing communications on social networks. His main teaching and research areas are customer behaviour, digital marketing, interactive marketing, and informatics in communication.

Boris Snoj is a Full Professor at the University of Maribor. His current teaching experience is in the area of different marketing courses in the postgraduate study programs. His research focuses on the areas of services marketing, new products development, brand management, internal marketing, perceived value, perceived quality, market orientation, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and the link between marketing resources and company performance. He is an author or co-author of over 30 published textbooks and books, including four abroad, of about 70 scientific articles in Slovenian and international scientific journals. He has had over 100 contributions mainly at international scientific conferences.

Borut Milfelner is a full professor of marketing and assistant professor of tourism at the University of Maribor, Slovenia, Faculty of Economics and Business. He received his PhD degree at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics in 2010. His research interests include the areas of marketing research, internal marketing, consumer behavior, tourism marketing, and the resource-based theory. His scientific bibliography consists of authoring and co-authoring 40 published scientific articles (14 of them in JCR indexed journals), 38 scientific conference contributions, and 18 scientific monographs and chapters in monograph publications. He participated in several research projects for the Ministry of education, science, and sport, Slovenian Research Agency, Ministry of Economic Development, and Technology, Slovenian Tourist Board, and in European Union founded projects. He is also a member of Editorial board of three scientific journals in the field of business science and a reviewer for several domestic and international scientific journals.