Online Evaluation Platforms as a Tools for Enhancing Competitiveness in Healthcare Sector

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the issue of utilization of the major online public evaluation platforms as Facebook and Google, more specifically describes the methods and ways of their utilization in the field of healthcare provider with aim to increase competitiveness on subjects operating on this specific sector. The issue of increasing the efficiency and quality of health services has long been proclaimed. There is no coherent plan for measuring the quality and efficiency of healthcare facilities in general. The increasing importance and demands for efficiency and quality is leading to an increase in importance of accurate and specific marketing concepts, desirable also in the process of specific health programs. By thorough and complex analysis of online presence of selected health care providers, represented by the Slovak Teaching Hospitals, relationships between factors were examined in order to identify and describe facts affecting online presence of those entities in the hyper competitive market environment of the Internet. The findings identified by the analysis of online environment were compared between selected platforms. The results of analysis thus providing a comprehensive view on the issue of utilization of online evaluation platforms to increase competitiveness.

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The problem of building and subsequent maintenance of a good image (in general) is hundreds of years old. In the eighteenth century, Benjamin Franklin, a wise man, nowadays mostly known only as the face of the one-hundred-dollar bill, or an inventor of the lightning rod, described the process of building of a positive image as an extremely fragile system. He

used to say that it takes many good deeds to build a good image, but only one bad one and the good image is immediately lost. Today, his words are more up to date than ever before. As already mentioned, the problem of building of an image in the traditional "brick and mortar" world has been known for centuries, we know how to build a good image, or more precisely how to help in building of a good image. Even if we are a target of various half-truths and slander, we are aware that if that are only spoken words, their durability over time is quickly fleeting. However, written text is different from spoken words, its life durability over time is much longer. In our work, we bring the overview of what happens if we must suddenly face the problem of building and maintaining of a good image in the virtual world of the internet, more specifically, in the field of social media.

In order to be able to describe the changes, which the process of effective marketing communication undergone from the traditional physical world to the virtual internet environment, we firstly have to describe and define basic fundamentals of the problem. In the following subchapters, we will define the fundamental concepts of the submitted study, particularly an image in general and the traps and specifics of building a positive image by the social media.

Image

Firstly, it is necessary to define the difference between a corporate identity and image. These two basic concepts are often confused, but their meaning is not the same. There are often mistakes in its understanding and perception, it is usually confused with the corporate design and with the image in general, but as a terminological concept it is not new (Vysekalová & Mikeš, 2009). In our opinion, the corporate identity is one of its basic pillars. A company without forming of its "self" is soulless, basically it does not exist, it is not able to fully carry out its activities. The corporate identity is an essential part of corporate strategy, and simply said, it represents a way how a company presents itself through individual elements, which then create a single, comprehensive picture of the whole functioning (Kiráľová, Štefko, & Mudrík, 2015). It represents uniqueness, similarly as every person carries his/her own characteristics and specific features. It includes a corporate history, philosophy and vision, people who belong to a company, its ethic values, visual style, which is a sort of virtual – real package of all activities of a company (Pollák, 2015, Pollák, Dorčák, Račeta, & Svetozarovová, 2016). It is a picture of what is a company like or what it wants to be, while the image is a public projection of this identity (Vysekalová & Mikeš, 2009).

According to Nový and Surynek (2006), the corporate identity means a purposeful formation of strategic concepts of the internal structure, functioning and external presentation of a specific enterprise in the market. The elements, which create it and are a part of it, generally include corporate communication, the above mentioned corporate design and acting (Gottschalk, 2011; Helm, Liehr-Gobbers, & Storck, 2011). The priority of a customer, on the other side, is a directly dependent decision based on the "overall personality of a product", which principally consists of more parameters. It is usually seen as a holistic concept, a complex and multi-dimensional system, which is, despite some signs of stability and permanency, and suggestible (Vysekalová & Mikeš, 2009). The associated understanding of the company's image is usually defined as a result of the interaction of all knowledge,

opinions, impressions and experience, which the public has in relation to a given firm, company or organization (Lukášová & Urbánek, 2000). Thus, based on the facts stated above we can simply assume why an abstract concept, such as the image of a company, is so important for organizations. It is because it influences our behavior (Lajčin, Frankovský, & Štefko, 2012). The public is attuned to a subject in a certain way based on information it spreads about itself. A positive image forces or leads people to positive behaviour demonstrated by positive signs, on the other hand, a negative one causes that target groups are not attuned to a desired acceptable impression (Vysekalová & Mikeš, 2009). It can be generally stated, that building of a positive image is not an easy task, but when a company already has it, it is extremely easy to be thwarted by one deed, act or step and thus a company may reverse its corporate image by 180 degrees. And correcting is then extremely difficult (Balmer & Greyser, 2003).

Image- Traps and Specifics
Gossips and slander – as it was already stated, trust but also an image by its nature belong not only to the issues solved by marketing, but they can be undoubtedly assigned to the spectrum of social environment and elements of recognition of psychological contexts. Trust gained in a relationship and a built image are easily influence able elements, they are difficult to obtain and they are easily lost or undermined in case of failure. In the end, the stability of a company also shows outside how it will behave in critical situations. Nevertheless, in an online environment it is even easier to lose prestige due to the spread of unsubstantiated information, and therefore it is more fragile. Top leaders are obliged to communicate with media and face the public, when their organizations make crucial decision or if they end up in crisis, which impacts the surrounding organizations. This responsibility is valid for heads of enterprises, non-profit organizations, healthcare, educational institutions, government and all other organizations, which take care about their relationships with the public. It can happen anytime, that an organization, despite the years of efforts, will be suddenly forced to face adverse guesswork, falsehoods, public slender or gossips, whether it contributed to it or not (Cultip, Center, & Broom, 2000 as cited in Žáry, 2018).

Gossip is information of a certain, usually negative character about an object or subject, which, along potential true elements, contains also falsehood and it is usually aimed at reduction or affection of the social prestige in direct relevance. The process of distribution can be realized, for example, through informal sources such as oral speculations or tabloid press. They are the trigger for emergence of rumors, and in the end, this impact is contained in four dimensions: emotional, cognitive, cultural and social. However, the final attitude, which the public takes, is crucial. It can be a critical attitude – when a receiver verifies the given information, uncritical – when a receiver does not use the abilities to verify and transmitting – when critical abilities during the spread are irrelevant (Blaho & Bratská, 2010).

Turbulent Environment
Nowadays, the term online image is growing in significance more than ever before. Despite it, understanding of how the online image is created, developed and spread is far from the word "easy". And in this era of enormous focus on social media, we may witness how

individual information spread not within days but within hours and seconds (Schiller, 2010). Additionally, people use tools of social media for various purposes. One of them is investigation of who they can trust and who they can rely on in the decision-making process. In the end, they more incline to people or organizations with the best image and trustworthiness, and do not take the wealth or nominal power into consideration too much. It is logical, because for normal decisions we often turn to those who we trust (Tovey & Masum, 2011). Thus, what does an image mean in the online community? From the content side, it is in the spirit of image as such, but it additionally takes into account the elements related to the web, social networks, relationships in them, boom of information technology and it contains ways how to survive in this world and maintain an image stable at the desired level (Farmer & Glass, 2010).

The internet, as we all know it from own experience, is inundated by a quantity of words, pictures, photos, blogs and articles, which unfortunately or fortunately, have the power to influence the reputation in the positive as well as negative sense, and the contest of such information can say a lot about a company. We cannot neglect the fact, that even specialized interest groups may either strengthen or completely destroy a company's image, its brand or individual products (Beal & Strauss, 2009). It is obvious, how the internet changed the dynamics of creation and management of corporate image. In the growing trend orientated on a customer and individual media, companies are gradually finding out, that it is increasingly difficult to make their voice, or more specifically, opinion to be heard, because in the online community every user can anytime change into a journalist by writing of reviews, blogs or simple publishing of own experience with a product, he/she can judge a company as well as a brand. Thus, the internet switched the balance of powers by the creation of new communication channels. The result is that image of companies is not defined by what companies do or how they present themselves but also by the fact, how others perceive them, react to their activities and expressions. Therefore, except for PR and promotion, companies must take into account effective management of online image and development of new online relationships and their systems, which are nowadays far away from the initial "top down" model (Bunting & Lipski, 2001).

Methods
This paper discusses the issue of utilization of the major online public evaluation platforms as Facebook and Google, more specifically describes the methods and ways of their utilization in the field of healthcare provider with the aim to increase competitiveness on subjects operating on this specific sector. The issue of increasing the efficiency and quality of health services has long been proclaimed. There is no coherent plan for measuring the quality and efficiency of healthcare facilities in general. The increasing importance and demands for efficiency and quality is leading to an increase in importance of accurate and specific marketing concepts, desirable also in the process of specific health programs. By thorough and complex analysis of online presence of selected health care providers, represented by the Slovak Teaching Hospitals, relationships between factors were examined in order to identify and describe facts affecting online presence of those entities in the hyper competitive market environment of the Internet.

Used Approaches

Based on the current state of the issue, theoretical knowledge and bases were accumulated, that provide knowledge base for the subsequent empirical research. A thorough analysis of image in the virtual world of the Internet was conducted on a specific sample of entities, all 11 Slovak Teaching Hospitals sorted by up to date non-profit organization INEKO rating (2016), compared to their rankings on major social media. Given the various business fields entities operate in, image determinants cannot be clearly defined in advance. In terms of advantage quantification, it is possible to approach individual image determinants by unification of partial rankings, for the purposes of our study, Google and Facebook ranks the subjects on a scale of 1-5. For the purpose of further analysis, we needed to unify reputation determinants by recalculating the percentages.

Relations among factors (indices of image offered by the main Internet players, such as Facebook and Google) were then examined in thorough statistical testing using Kendall rank coefficient, in order to identify and describe basic facts affecting online image of selected entities in the hypercompetitive market environment of the Internet, more specifically, environment of social media.

Results

Each of the set of selected entities, in this case all 11 Slovak Teaching Hospitals, try to shape their image both within real and virtual world through their management. For the purposes of our research, we focused on the virtual world of the Internet. The findings identified by the analysis of online environment were compared between selected platforms. The results of analysis thus providing a comprehensive view on the issue of utilization of online evaluation platforms to increase competitiveness.

Overview Table of Partial Score

Considering the previous research in the field of healthcare, we identified the following determinants of online image/ online evaluation platforms of healthcare entities, in particular:

•   Facebook (reviews on the scale 1-5),
•   Google (reviews on the scale 1-5).

Each of these determinants has five-point scale system which determines the overall score. For the purposes of further analysis, the scores of partial determinants were unified and converted into a percentage. Before we analyze the results by statistical testing, it is necessary to expound the specific values and partial score for the analyzed subjects through the overview table. Table 1 presents partial results - measured values of individual determinants.

Table 1
Overview Table

No.	Subject	FB rating (%)	Google rating (%)	Number of pages indexed by Google
1	Faculty Hospital Nitra	72	80	77,200
2	Faculty Hospital F. D. Roosevelt Banská Bystrica	90	80	27,400
3	Central Military Hospital SNP Ruzomberok	100	70	25,200
4	University Hospital Martin	80	0	67,000
5	Faculty Hospital Nove Zamky	76	74	30,300
6	Faculty Hospital J.A.Reimana Presov	74	74	22,700
7	Faculty Hospital Trencin	66	66	62,700
8	Faculty Hospital Trnava	66	60	58,700
9	University Hospital Bratislava	84	80	157,000
10	University Hospital of L. Pasteur Kosice	78	80	160,000
11	Faculty Hospital Zilina	60	70	61,000

In general, we analyzed image of the subjects calculating their ratings using the following: reviews on Facebook and Google. Interestingly enough, the studied subjects got better reviews on the first two mentioned websites than they achieved in the study carried out by the institute INEKO (brick world reference indicator). We also appreciate the fact that all of the analyzed subjects received such positive reviews. This shows that they have penetrated into the market. Since these are university hospitals, this is not surprising at all. The winner of the evaluation carried out by the institute INEKO University Hospital Nitra achieved the rating of only 72 % on Facebook and 80% on Google, vox populi vox Dei. Brick world and the world of internet lives by its own rules.

Figure 1 points out some interesting outcomes of the analysis: It is clear that values measured on Facebook and Google are almost the same, expect for the University Hospital in Martin which at the time of the analysis did not have any review on Google.
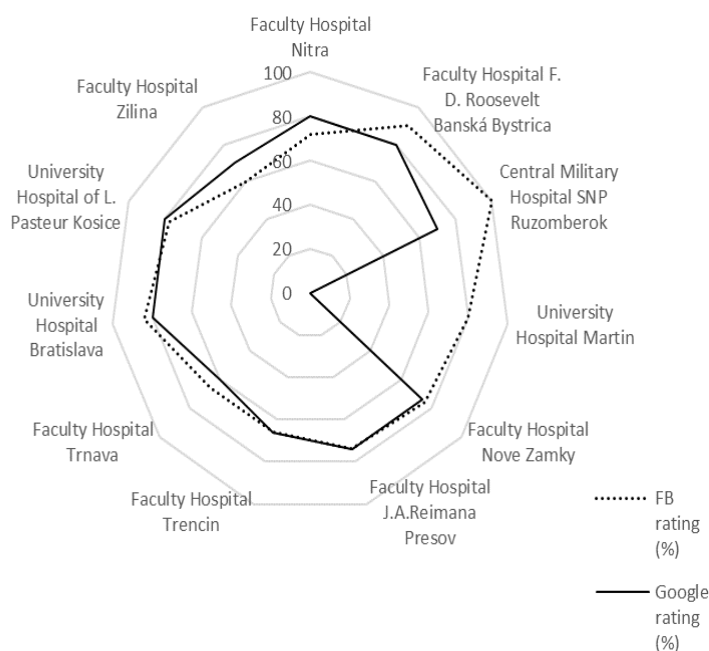

Figure 1. Ratings on VSNs

We consider it necessary to examine the correlation between those online evaluation platforms. Partial scores of entities from individual determinants were statistically tested in order to determine whether on the chosen significance level there is a statistically significant correlation between scores of entities achieved with those two platforms.

Table 2
Link between Facebook and Google Rating

Variables	Valid N	Kendall Tau	Z	p
Facebook & Google rating	11	.23	1.01	.30

Note: Kendall Tau Correlations, Level of significance: p < .05

On the selected significance level of 5% the p value is much higher than .05. Statistically significant link between the Facebook and Google ratings was not confirmed. As a final step we analyzed the connection between the two above mentioned ratings and the total number of Google index pages of the subject.

Table 3
Link between Ratings and Absolute Number of Pages Indexed by Google

Variables	Valid N	Kendall Tau	Z	p
FB rating & Google index	11	-.07	-.31	.75
Google rating & Google index	11	.09	.42	.67

Note: Kendall Tau Correlations, Level of significance: p < .05

On the selected significance level of 5% the p value is much higher than.05, absolute number of pages indexed by Google which include usual name of the given entity as a keyword does not have any statistically significant impact on the ratings from mayor social media. The proven argument for the necessity of quality over quantity applies here as well.

Discussion

We agree with the authors, who states, the active online communication management utilizing platforms like Google, Facebook and YouTube can greatly facilitate active communication with the public, help in acquiring and evaluating feedback or speed up implementation of measures related to a crisis marketing communication. However, a wide variety of platforms requires a comprehensive approach. Image is about perception and reality reflecting the total sets of components of the most complex asset of an organization. Knowledge and understanding are considered one of the major contributions for sequences of connected factors, determinants, standardization, and formation of a systematically exhaustive exploration. In general, it would seem that the most effective model of the comprehensive online marketing communication is to focus on dominant platform, namely Google reviews and active management of the profile on one of the social networks. Doing so may be have positive effect only in the short term, users will demand content from platforms unused by/ or presenting the entity, regardless of who is the content manager of the profile on these platforms. In this way, selected entities presenting themselves as official profiles can attract (or not) a large number of customer base. As indicated above, active instruments of the online marketing communication can greatly facilitate active communication with public,

help in acquiring and evaluating feedback or speed up implementation of measures related to a crisis marketing communication. Without a strong base of users none of this is possible, not with a significant result. Search results on Google in the form of links to fan pages, community forums, catalog portals or local media can reveal even smallest imperfections in marketing communication. In combination with Facebook and Google ratings in the form of stars a single person can destroy reputation of an organization. The strength of that person's "marketing" message is enforced through authenticity that this message carries and making it look legit. The results (processed graphically) bring interesting findings worthy of greater consideration.

The findings identified by the analysis conducted on the local market (in this case, used as a model example), can be effectively used in any market for the purpose of increasing competitiveness of (not only) selected entities.

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