Using RSS in Advertising: Regional Trends and Global Issues

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Abstract: - This paper presents an analysis of regional experience in advertising via RSS (Really Simple Syndication) channels and the Internet. The regional experiences of Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro are presented. This paper addresses how society is ready to accept new forms of communication with advertisers in these regions. The authors analyzed the number of Internet users in order to select appropriate strategies and optimal models for advertisers via RSS aggregators and to determine a possible course of activities associated with this type of advertising on the Internet. In applied research, the tools for measurement, analysis and information gathering were gemiusTraffic and Google Analytics and they are analyzed in the form and extent of the uses of RSS to local and global markets. The applicability of that in the paper, especially in the category of creating viable options for further development of RSS, given the technology, cultural phenomena of use and marketing capabilities, will be the main strategic guidelines for the development of RSS in these regions.

Key-Words: Internet, Web 2.0, advertising, marketing, new media, RSS, regions, trends.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the nineteen nineties, marketing and advertising on the Internet were created by the emergence of the mass use of Internet broadband connections. Broadband connection access enabled marketing and advertising on the Internet through the development of interactive and multimedia applications and services. These applications and services created new markets, which, in turn, promoted and introduced the development of more service offerings.

High speed Internet access via broadband communications opens the way for the fulfillment of the vision of an information society. Insufficient availability of broadband Internet access, on the other hand, leads to the digital divide. This means a gap in the availability and utilization of development potentials for information and communication technologies between individuals, businesses and geographic areas.

"Power" or the potential of the Internet to achieve the vision of the information society is reflected in the technological development called Web 2.0. Web 2.0 represents a generation of technology solutions where interactive content is incorporated in the website. The subject of this paper is a specific tool that has emerged in a vast array of Web 2.0 technologies - RSS (Really Simple Syndication). Like any IT area, RSS technology is often developed haphazardly with most research focused on RSS practice. The possibility of using RSS technology in advertising rests on fundamental questions about the society in which we live, such as the society's philosophy and research methodology as it relates to mutual issues in the areas of technology, education and marketing. [1]

II. RSS AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION

RSS and RDF Site Summary (Rich Site Summary) are collections of Internet formats used for writing and updating portals, blogs, forums and websites with frequently changing content (from changes of more than once a day to a few changes per second). Reading an article written using RSS can be more precisely understood than opening dozens of windows in an Internet browser to obtain the same information.

RSS information is a short message with a link that leads to the original (source) page of the site's owner. When a user reads information via RSS, the user can read all the information that has to come to the source page or just the updates of information published using RSS. This feature increases traffic and the number of Internet users who visit these sites looking for desired information. The research in this paper studies characteristic of RSS information applicable to advertising.

III. RSS AND ITS APPLICATION THROUGH THE INTERNET FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADVERTISING

Developing marketing is largely motivated by the need to analyze the relationships between the behavior of sellers and buyers. Prior to the 1950s, the marketing objective was primarily to sell more products and services, regardless of what the customers really wanted. Now a key factor in any successful marketing is to understand the needs and wants of customers. Therefore, the increase in the number of Internet users in the world is a strong argument for the use of Internet tools to understand these needs and wants. [2]

Date	Users (Millions)	World Population (%)
1995	16	0.4
1996	36	0.9
1997	70	1.7
1998	147	3.6
1999	248	4.1
2000	361	5.8
2001	513	8.6
2002	587	9.4
2003	719	11.1
2004	817	12.7
2005	1018	15.7
2006	1,093	16.7
2007	1,319	20.0
2008	1,574	23.5
2009	1,802	26.6
2010	1,971	28.8

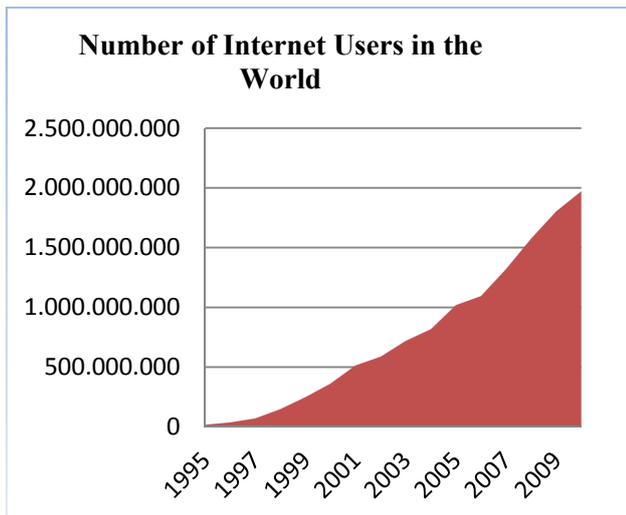Table 1 - Number of Internet Users in the World

Fig. 1 - Number of Internet Users in the World

The Internet is an independent media; it cannot be fully controlled, so it is the most open of all the mass media.

In modern market conditions characterized by an extremely strong level of competition and by the maturity of most markets, the competitiveness and adaptability of the market, more than ever, are becoming important issues of performance, as well as survival. In the last four decades, in an effort to find the "recipe for success" there has been a significant paradigm shift in business - strategic focus once was oriented to predominantly the individual and to attract new customers. Now the paradigm has shifted and is oriented to develop and focus on profitable long-term customer retention. [3]

Despite rapid growth rates, use of the Internet in Croatia is still not at the level of the European Union and the United States. This fact implies a lack of information to the average customer. However, even with the perception of security issues, it opens the possibility of using the Internet as a distribution channel in modern society.

There are positive examples of individual state systems that effectively use the Internet in business. To establish this overall system operation in Croatia, it is particularly important to find and define adequate and appropriate goals, strategies and implementation plans. Thus reflecting the Croatian situation, this can establish a sound and sustainable system to support the Internet in business.

Using software called an "RSS reader", users can read articles whereby they select a topic of interest and monitor all new developments. For example, businesses, schools, and ministries can offer an RSS feed for their site daily with the latest information. Users will receive the information through the RSS feed and be informed of the latest developments. RSS feeds are becoming an increasingly popular way to read and search for new information. Big companies like Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft integrate RSS into their browsers. Today, RSS forms part of the new versions of Windows and Office applications. RSS feeds are becoming richer in content, using video in RSS feeds. More and more services, such as those delivering weather forecasts, lottery results, and sports scores, use RSS feeds. RSS feeds are downloaded to the user's RSS reader where they stay until the user decides to view them. This means the user need not miss important information.

Some developers and vendors are trying to use the key parts of RSS technology and philosophy to develop better programs. Blogosphere and Internet news pages are not the only ones who want to expand the functionality of RSS to make information more accessible. BioCaster is a system that asks for and provides information about health risks, epidemics and other data relevant to health. One of the key technologies used by BioCaster is RSS newsfeeds. The program's components read more than 1,700 RSS feeds (channels) specifically related to health care. The RSS feeds are automatically allocated to topic based on the relevant content. The idea is that the user, with an RSS reader, gets the information as close to real time as possible.

Since programs such as browsers and operating systems increasingly support RSS technology, it has the potential to become the primary tool through which users interact with the Internet. Also, RSS can offer an alternative to e-mail notification, alleviating concerns related to privacy and spam.

IV.   RESEARCH INTERNET MARKET IN CROATIA

Although RSS technology is relatively new and the application and use of RSS newsfeeds and readers are only in their infancy, the new technology can be applied in Croatia. The reason for this is the growing number of Internet users in Croatia, as well as the increase in the number of smart phones through which users can connect to the Internet.

Choices and preferences of user's accessing the web on Croatian territory, as well as models for the transfer of these experiences, can be adapted to the specific conditions and needs of advertisers. This can be of direct benefit to advertisers by expanding possibilities for their

development and long-term success. Market competition on the Internet requires programmers of websites to continue education on RSS technology and learn how this can be adapted to the specific conditions and needs of advertisers.

In 2007, gemiusAudience study, whose goal is to gather and update data with a view to optimizing online advertising campaigns, created a partnership with Valicon, a marketing research and consulting company. According to the results of gemiusAudience research, 49% of Croatians use the Internet on a monthly basis or more. Users report frequent use of the Internet for research and educational purposes.

According to data from January 2010, there were 1,503,688 Croatian Internet users older than 12 years of age. Of 268 Internet sties shown in this survey, the largest number of vistors were to sites such as www.net.hr, www.index.hr, www.tportal.hr, www.forum.hr, and www.24sata.hr. The top level domain name , '.hr'. represents the Croatian Academic and Research Network located in Zagreb, Croatia. (Note: most American servers use three-letter top level domains (e.g. '.com', '.edu'), while countries other than the USA commonly use two letters, or combinations of two letters (e.g. '.au', '.hr', '.co.jp')). All of the Internet sites mentioned previously are sites for the latest Croatian and world news, politics, sports, entertainment, psychology, lifestyle, etc.

Within this target group, the greatest portion was made up of students at 33% of the total. Those employed in the private sector made up 22% while public sector employees made up 18%. Also, according to this data analysis, 53% were women, who, on average, spent almost nine hours per month on the Internet. Men make up 47% , but are a more active target group, spending an average of 12 hours per month on the Internet.

Among these Croatian users, 77% use the Internet monthly or more frequently to search for information, while 66% use the Internet once a week or more to search for information. To search Croatian Internet space, 48% of Croatian customers use Microsoft Internet Explorer, 42% use Mozilla Firefox, followed by Google Chrome with 6%, and Opera at 3%. Less than 1% of users use search engines Safari, NetFront and Netscape. [4]

V. ANALYSIS OF RSS CONTENT GENERATED BY REGION

Fig. 2 and table 2 show the number of unique visits to RSS portals by region. Regions that are involved in the research are the regions of the former Yugoslavia (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro). According to the analysis of data for the period January 1, 2010, through December 31, 2010, it can be seen that the best results were achieved with Croatia, which had the highest number of visitors. Bosnia and Herzegovina were ranked second in the number of visits while Montenegro had the lowest number of visits. According to the number of users of this

type of technology, the most profitable investments available in the market would be in Croatia.
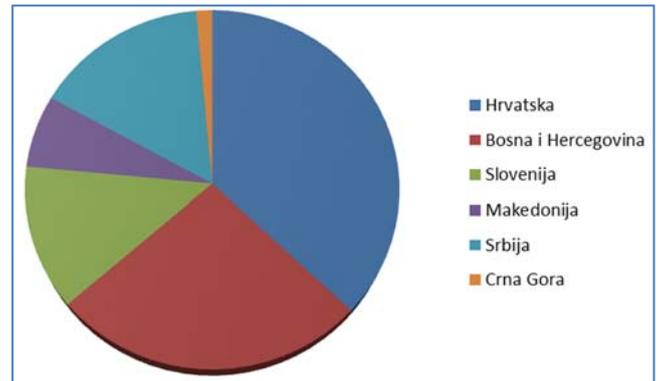

Fig 2 - Number of Unique Visitors, RSS Portals by Region

Number of Unique Visitors, RSS Portals	
Croatia	1,368,398
Bosnia and Herzegovina	977,576
Slovenia	476,081
Macedonia	241,402
Serbia	572,681
Montenegro	52,298

Table 2 - Number of Unique Visitors, RSS Portals by Region

VI. ANALYSIS OF INTERNET BROWSER BY REGION

Table 3 shows the five most used Internet browsers. Internet browsers Firefox and Internet Explorer are most accepted by users according to Google Analytics statistics. This information is essential for the development of access to Internet applications and testing products on the Internet. Each Internet browser has a different way of showing the content of the page. It may happen that the Firefox content would be displayed correctly, while in Opera or Chrome, the content is not in the visible part of the page, or is not presented in the way the concept of the page was designed. For this reason, the developers of Internet applications test display pages in all Internet browsers that are most likely to be used by the user.

	Croatia	Bosnia and Herzego-vina	Slovenia	Mace-donia	Serbia	Monte-negro
1.	Firefox	Firefox	Firefox	Firefox	Firefox	Firefox
2.	Internet Explorer	Internet Explorer	Internet Explorer	Internet Explorer	Internet Explorer	Internet Explorer
3.	Chrome	Chrome	Chrome	Chrome	Chrome	Chrome
4.	Opera	Opera	Safari	Opera	Opera	Opera
5.	Safari	Safari	Opera	Safari	Safari	Safari

Table 3 - Analysis of Internet Browser by Region

VII. ANALYSIS OF RSS INTERNET PAGE LOCATION PORTALS USED, BY REGION

Table 6 shows the analysis of RSS Internet page location portals used by the regions covered by the survey. Through this analysis, it is evident which state Internet page location regional users prefer to generate information. According to these parameters, one can see that the most used RSS Internet page location portals are Croatian and thus the best market for marketing and advertising.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Although RSS technology is relatively new and the application and use of RSS newsfeeds and readers are only in their infancy, the new technology can be applied in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. It is understood that there are no ready-made strategies; everyone needs to participate. Looking from the position of the owner or editor of Internet sites or portals via RSS, it can be concluded that every author of the article, news or other information that goes through the RSS feeder primarily has to answer the questions:

- What kind of information do the users want to receive? - Information viewpoint,
- How will this information be displayed and accepted? - Technological viewpoint,
- What is the target group of users to whom the information is intended? - Cultural viewpoint and
- What is the best business model to use, what kind of benefit does the website or portal expect, and what, if any, financial gain is expected? - Business viewpoint.

Based on these questions, as well as an analysis of research visits to the media by region, development strategies can be set up for RSS in four dimensions - information, technological, cultural and business. Each of these has a different point of view with regard to the types of information that the Internet site or portal contains. As the types of information related to the RSS can be divided into technical details or general information, each of the four dimensions has a different response to the defined type of RSS information.

Table 4 shows the development strategy for RSS in four dimensions, and describes each dimension with respect to the type of information (Professional data - Model 1 and the General Data - Model 2), as well as their possible applications.

Strategy for RSS in Four Dimensions		
Viewpoint Covering		**Model 1 – Professional Data**	**Model 2 – General Data**
Information	What' kind of information does the user want to receive?	Professional data that the author has published.	General information that the author of the published article possesses.
Technology	How will this information be displayed and accepted?	RSS reader on the Internet or program on user's PC.	RSS reader on the website or portal, RSS reader on the Internet, or program on user's PC.
Culture	What is the target group of users to whom the information is intended?	A small number of customers, specializing in a particular topic, or a small group of people.	A large number of users, publicly available to all users who follow the latest developments in the country and/or the world.
Business	What is the best business model to use, what kind of benefit does the website or portal expect, and what, if any, financial gain is expected?	Subscribe to a certain category of content, advertising space through images, pop-ups or sponsored articles.	Ad space through images, pop-ups or sponsored articles.

Table 4 - Strategy for RSS in Four Dimensions

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	Internet Access (%)			Broadband Connection (%)		
	2006	2009	2012	2006	2009	2012
EU27	49	66	76	30	57	72
Belgium	54	67	78	48	63	75
Bulgaria	17	30	51	10	26	51
Czech Republic	29	54	71	17	49	68
Denmark	79	83	92	63	76	85
Germany	67	79	85	34	65	82
Estonia	46	63	75	37	62	74
Ireland	50	67	81	13	54	65
Greece	23	38	54	4	33	51
Spain	39	54	68	29	51	67
France	41	69	80	30	63	77
Italy	40	53	63	16	39	55
Cyprus	37	53	62	12	47	62
Latvia	42	58	69	23	50	67
Lithuania	35	60	62	19	50	61
Luxembourg	70	87	93	44	71	68
Hungary	32	55	69	22	51	68
Malta	53	64	77	41	63	77
Netherlands	80	90	94	66	77	83
Austria	52	70	79	33	58	77
Poland	36	59	70	22	51	67
Portugal	35	48	61	24	46	60
Romania	14	38	54	5	24	50
Slovenia	54	64	74	34	56	73
Slovakia	27	62	75	11	42	72

Finland	65	78	87	53	74	85
Sweden	77	86	92	51	79	87
United Kingdom*	63	77	83	44	69	80
Iceland	83	90	95	72	87	91
Norway	69	86	93	57	78	86
Croatia**	41	50	66	23	39	60
Montenegro	:	:	55	:	:	52
Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia	14	42	:	1	34	:
Turkey**	20	30	47	17	26	43

Table 5 - Percentage of Households with Internet Access and Broadband Connection

Data not available.
* United Kingdom: 2011 instead of 2012, the EU27 for 2012 is calculated using United Kingdom data for 2011.
** Croatia and Turkey: 2007 instead of 2006. [5]

	Croatia	**Bosnia and Herzegovina**	**Slovenia**	**Macedonia**	**Serbia**	**Montenegro**
1.	Croatia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Slovenia	Macedonia	Serbia	Serbia
2.	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Croatia	Serbia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro
3.	Serbia	Serbia	Serbia	Bulgaria	Montenegro	Croatia
4.	Slovenia	Germany	Germany	United States	Croatia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
5.	Germany	United States	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Germany	Macedonia	United States
6.	United States	Slovenia	United States	Italy	Slovenia	Slovenia
7.	Montenegro	Montenegro	Italy	Croatia	Germany	Macedonia
8.	Macedonia	Austria	Austria	Undefined	United States	Germany
9.	Austria	Macedonia	Macedonia	Switzerland	Austria	Undefined
10.	Undefined	Switzerland	France	Greece	France	Austria

Table 6 - Analysis of RSS Internet Page Location Portals Used, by Region