

Martyna Michalik

Senior Account Executive, Ogilvy, Warsaw, Poland
e-mail: martynamichalik@hotmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-4243-8452

Ryszard Kleczek

Wrocław University of Economics
e-mail: ryszard.kleczek@ue.wroc.pl

ORCID: 0000-0001-9327-3515

SOCIAL PRESENCE OF AN AFFILIATE MARKETER IN AN ONLINE PRODUCT PHOTO, CONSUMER'S CLICKTHROUGHS AND SALES

SPOŁECZNA OBECNOŚĆ MARKETERA AFILIACYJNEGO W KOMUNIKACJI WIZUALNEJ PRODUKTU, KONWERSJA ONLINE I SPRZEDAŻ

DOI: 10.15.611/pn.2019.6.15

JEL Classification: M3, M31, M37

Summary: The goal of this article is to answer the question: what actions in the area of communicating online social presence increase the consumer's clickthroughs and online sales of the promoted offer in the affiliate marketing context. Six cases that concern visual communication of social presence, consumer's clickthroughs and sales have been analysed in the study. A replicable relationship between visually communicating social presence on a Facebook fan page and on the affiliate's blog, consumers' clickthroughs and sales value have been identified. Managerial implications of the research results are that affiliates should communicate: 1) product in use, 2) photo made by the affiliate, and expect a positive impact on both clickthroughs in the tracking link and sales. New knowledge from this study is the identified impact of social presence in visual communication on sales, while the authors of earlier studies checked the impact of social presence only on trust, purchase intent or likes, comments and conversion online.

Keywords: affiliate marketing, social presence, blog, fan page, visual communication, case study research.

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytanie: jakie działania w zakresie komunikowania obecności społecznej *online* zwiększają liczbę kliknięć konsumentów i sprzedaż promowanych ofert *online* w kontekście marketingu afiliacyjnego. W badaniu przeanalizowano sześć przypadków dotyczących wizualnej komunikacji obecności społecznej, kliknięć klientów i sprzedaży. Zidentyfikowano powtarzalny związek między wizualną komunikacją

obecności społecznej na fanpage'u Facebooka i blogu partnera afiliacyjnego, kliknięciami klientów i wartością sprzedaży. Jeśli komunikacja wizualna oferty zawiera: 1) produkt w użyciu, 2) zdjęcie wykonane przez partnera afiliacyjnego, to można oczekiwać pozytywnego wpływu na kliknięcia w link przekierowujący na stronę reklamodawcy i na sprzedaż. Nową wiedzą z przeprowadzonego badania jest zidentyfikowany wpływ obecności społecznej w komunikacji wizualnej na sprzedaż, podczas gdy autorzy wcześniejszych badań sprawdzali wpływ obecności społecznej tylko na zaufanie, zamiary lub upodobania, komentarze i konwersję *online*.

Słowa kluczowe: marketing afiliacyjny, obecność społeczna, blog, fan page, komunikacja wizualna, badania przypadków.

1. Introduction

Researchers agree that social presence affects positively the decisions of online buyers, but 1) the results of research on which dimensions of social presence influence online buyers decisions are not consistent, 2) there is no empirical research on how the social presence affects sales value, 3) there is no research in the context of affiliate marketing, and 4) the interpretations of such impact are not clear and questionable.

Researchers suggested different definitions of social presence in online media and different ways to create it. Fulk et al. (1987) define social presence as the extent to which a medium makes users experience others as being present. Short et al. (1976) characterize the social presence of a medium as its capacity to transmit facial expressions, silhouettes and other nonverbal cues. Heeter (1992) defines a social presence as the extent to which other beings in the world appear to exist and react to the user. Straub and Karahanna (1998) and Sproull and Kiesler (1986) suggest it is the interactivity of the media. Yoo and Alavi (2001) posit that a medium is perceived to be warm if it conveys a feeling of social contact. Miranda and Saunders (2003) and Van der Heijden et al. (2003) suggest that e-commerce is more impersonal, anonymous and automated than traditional commerce, therefore it is considered low as to social presence.

Lombard and Ditton (1997) and Kumar and Benbasat (2002) suggest that human audio and human video increase social presence on the website, respectively. Gefen and Straub (2003) argue that personalized text can do this.

The authors of this article examine social presence in the context of affiliate marketing. Capano et al. (2016) define affiliate marketing as a practice whereby a publisher promotes online the products or services of a seller in exchange for a commission based on the generated sales.

Brown (2009), Chai et al. (2006) and Afrina et al. (2015) define affiliate marketing as an online practice in which the company rewards its affiliates for generating sales that arise as a result of their online activities. The affiliate receives a financial benefit as compensation for attracting online buyers to the offer on the company's shopping

website. The affiliate is paid when he or she brings the online user to the company's shopping website and the user makes a purchase (Edelman and Brandi, 2015).

The Amazon online store has more than one million affiliates and more than one-quarter of Amazon revenues are generated by the affiliate program (Benediktova and Nevosad, 2008).

Fiore and Collins (2001) suggest that affiliate marketing enables a company or website to reach various, even outermost markets, and gain an online presence. The result of such activities is the increase of brand awareness and income for both consumers and owners.

Previous research defines what affiliate marketing is, but does not answer the question of its effectiveness.

The goal of the article is to contribute to answering the question of what activities in the area of communicating online social presence increase the consumer's clickthroughs and online sales of the promoted offer in the affiliate marketing context.

In its 2018-2020 Research Priorities, the Marketing Science Institute (MSI) called for work on defining the communication message and to measure the effect of content and adapt campaigns accordingly (MSI, 2018, p. 6). The article is an answer to this call.

The rest of this paper is structured in the following way: the first section contains the literature review and research question, the second presents the method and research results and the last one suggests managerial implications and the limitations of the research.

2. Literature review, formulation of the research question

Researchers agree that online social presence affects online buyers' decisions positively but the research results are not consistent and incomplete.

Miyazaki and Fernandez (2001) classify the difficulty in contacting customer service personnel creates as one of the elements of inconvenience in online shopping. Hassanein and Head (2007) suggest that electronic commerce lacks social presence compared to face-to-face interactions. Karimov et al. (2011) suggest (based on literature review) that website design elements like human-like cues (faces or other cues that give a feeling of human contact) affect the trust of online consumers towards unfamiliar Web vendors, but empirical research devoted to this problem is scarce.

Furukawa (2017) suggests that product photography really comes to life when it includes people using the product. According to Herman Miller Photography Brand Standards (2016, p. 38), detail shots are used to show the function or use of a product. They should have a human presence and feel like the product is in use. The ConversionXL (2018) blog suggests that products should be shown in the context of their use. Jacobs (2018) suggests product-only shots with one or two in-context shots mixed in, designed to create further emotional bonds with the promoted product.

2.1. Social presence and perceptual outputs

The authors of the article identified the stream of research on relation between social presence and perceptual dependent variables. Gefen and Straub's (2003) experimental study provided empirical evidence that social presence (a perceived human contact, warmth, and sociability in the website) affects positively both consumer perceived trust in an e-vendor and purchase intentions in a B2C environment. Hassanein and Head (2007) in their experimental websites study, provided empirical evidence that products shown online as being worn by people in emotional, dynamic settings affect positively the perceived usefulness of the product, trust in the seller, enjoyment and customers' attitudes to online shopping websites. The authors suggest further research into real e-buyers' behaviour in natural conditions. Cyr et al. (2009) found in their experiment that increasing the presentation of the human image (from the absence or presence of human figures in the websites, through displaying human figures with no facial characteristics, to human figures shown including their facial features) on websites improves the trust perceived by consumers. Moon et al. (2013) found in their experimental research that perceived social presence mediates the influence of virtual salespeople and peers on users' perceived shopping enjoyment, brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

Kim (2015) found in a survey based research that consumers do not perceive social presence as helpful in improving performance in online buying, and that social presence is more related to enjoyment than usefulness in online purchasing.

The limitation of the above mentioned research is the usage of perceptual (brand attitude, trust, usefulness) or declarative (purchase intention) dependent variables.

2.2 Social presence and real online behaviour but not sales

The authors of the article also identified research on relation between social presence and online behaviour dependent variables. Bakhshi et al. (2014) suggest that human faces are powerful channels of nonverbal communication and found that the number of faces in a picture relates positively the Instagram users engagement (likes and comments). Li, Wang and Chen (2014) found the causal relationship between the social presence (measured by number of human faces in product photos) and customers' responses to the product photos in purchase intents (measured by the number of likes on shopping websites). The authors suggest to employ sales as an dependent variable to fully investigate the relation between image factors and customer purchase.

Scalera (2015) suggests using DIY instead of stock images on branded websites, because they humanize the brand. Dean (2016) supplied empirical evidence (based on the A/B online test) that user-generated fashion and apparel images (when real people upload pictures of themselves wearing products) increase the conversion rate from Facebook and Instagram to the destination URL three to four times in comparison with stock-photos.

The authors of the above mentioned research use another type of dependent variables (number of likes, comments, conversion), but sales value as a dependent variable is missing.

We can summarize the above review in the following points. Firstly, we can say that social presence is conceptualized in terms of: 1) visibility of human figures or faces, 2) user-generated content and 3) the context of the product in use. Secondly we can divide the research into two groups from the point of view of the dependent variables used: 1) the experimental research with the perceptual (brand attitude, trust) or declarative (purchase intention) dependent variables and 2) online research with online characteristic dependent variables (likes, comments, conversion rate).

One of the limitations of all the research quoted above is that no previous research used sales value as the dependent variable. Due to both the discrepancies in the understanding of social presence (human figures, faces, product in use) and the limitation as to the explained variables in previous research, the authors of this article formulated the following research question.

RQ: What activities in the area of communicating online social presence increase the consumers' clickthroughs and online sales of the promoted offer?

3. Method and results

This part presents six cases of online affiliate activities regarding the visual communication of social presence, along with their impact on users' activity and sales.

The study was conducted according to methodological principles of case study research suggested by K. Eisenhardt (1989). Bourgeois and Eisenhardt (1988) used this method in their classic article, in which they identified eight replicable relationships between the categories of actions and business performance based on four observations (cases).

The cases were selected from www.estillmag.com, to provide polar examples of the relation between explanatory and explained variables; www.estillmag.com is an online magazine about sneakers and street fashion for women. It focuses mainly on sharing information about clothes, shoes and accessories. The affiliate writes news about new products and articles in the form of tests and product reviews, sharing their own photos and texts. The following six cases were selected from a population of over 3600 posts the affiliate published over four years at www.estillmag.com (the affiliate shares 3-5 posts per day). The authors of the article chose six cases to: 1) provide examples of polar types in which the relationship of interest is clearly identified, 2) contribute to the theoretical category of the online social presence, 3) suggest that the identified dimension of social presence has a replicable effect on both customer's clickthroughs and sales.

Case 1: February 10, 2017. Photo made by the affiliate for the thumbnail of a blog post and their fanpage on Facebook.

On February 10, 2017, an article about a popular model of Nike sports shoes along with a photo on the thumbnail of the blog post was published on the blog www.estillmag.com and on its fanpage on Facebook. In 30 days the publication generated 434 clicks on the link directing to the article page on the blog and 176 clicks on the tracking (affiliate) link. The affiliate conversion rate, meaning the number of clicks that ended with sales to clicks on tracking (affiliate) link was 1.70%. The result of redirecting the reader to the Nike store website was three sales with a total value of PLN 677.50.

Case 2: February 23, 2018. Photo made by the affiliate for the thumbnail of a blog post and their fanpage on Facebook.

On February 23, 2018, an article about a new model of Nike sports shoes and a photo on the thumbnail of the blog post was published on the blog www.estillmag.com and on its fanpage on Facebook. In 30 days it generated 378 clicks on the link directing to the article page on the blog and 94 clicks on the tracking (affiliate) link. The affiliate conversion rate, meaning the number of clicks that ended with sales to clicks on tracking (affiliate) link, was 2.13%. The effect of redirecting the reader to the Nike store website was two sales with a total value of PLN 733.67.

Case 3: February 22, 2018. Photo made by the affiliate on the thumbnail of a blog post and fanpage on Facebook.

On February 22, 2018, an article a on Nike sports shoes model popular among women, along with a photo on the thumbnail of the blog post, was published on the blog www.estillmag.com and on its fanpage on Facebook. In 30 days it generated 516 clicks on the link directing to the article page on the blog and 129 clicks on the tracking (affiliate) link. The affiliate conversion rate, meaning the number of clicks that ended with sales to clicks on tracking (affiliate) link, was 2.32%. The effect of redirecting the reader to the Nike store website was three sales with a total value of PLN 1030.71.










Case 4: March 27, 2018. Product catalogue picture on the thumbnail of the blog post and fanpage on Facebook.

On March 27 2018, an article about a popular Nike sports shoes model was published along with a catalogue photo on the thumbnail of the blog post on the blog www.estillmag.com and on its fanpage on Facebook. In 30 days the publication generated 159 clicks on the link directing to the article page on the blog and 24 clicks on the tracking (affiliate) link. The affiliate conversion rate, meaning the number of clicks that ended with sales to clicks on tracking (affiliate) link, was 0%, due to no sales. None of these activities translated into sales, which amounted to PLN 0.

Case 5: May 1 2018. Product catalogue picture on the thumbnail of the blog post and fanpage on Facebook.

On May 1, 2018, an article about a popular model of Nike sports shoes with a catalogue photo on the thumbnail of the blog post appeared on the blog www.estillmag.com and on its fanpage on Facebook. In 30 days it generated 289 clicks on the link directing to the article page on the blog and 59 clicks on the tracking (affiliate)

Table 1. Visual communication of social presence in a post, clickthroughs and sales value – six cases

Presentation		Clicks and sales		Presentation		Clicks and sales	
Case 1: photo made by affiliate, 10.02.2017 Link: https://www.facebook.com/estillmag/posts/1839018019647798		434	677,50 PLN		159		
	<p>ESTILL MAG Dziś na spacer znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 10.02.2017 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p> <p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 10.02.2017 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p>	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value		
	<p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 10.02.2017 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p> <p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 10.02.2017 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p>	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	0,00 PLN	
Case 2: photo made by affiliate, 23.02.2018 Link: https://www.facebook.com/estillmag/posts/199873567007575		378	677,50 PLN		289		
	<p>ESTILL MAG Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 23.02.2018 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p> <p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 23.02.2018 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p>	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	0,00 PLN	
	<p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 23.02.2018 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p> <p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 23.02.2018 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p>	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	0,00 PLN	
Case 3: photo made by affiliate, 22.04.2018 Link: https://www.facebook.com/estillmag/posts/2025032941046304		516	733,67 PLN		193		
	<p>ESTILL MAG Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 22.04.2018 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p> <p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 22.04.2018 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p>	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	339,57 PLN	
	<p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 22.04.2018 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p> <p>Dziś znowu znowu Martyna Michalik! 📸 22.04.2018 ☺ Moim zdaniem, mogą wygłosić i jeszcze wygłoszą! 📸 Ważne info!</p>	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	Number of clicks on the link directing to the blog	Sales value	339,57 PLN	
Case 4: Catalogue photo in a post, 27.03.2017 Link: https://www.facebook.com/estillmag/posts/185761186778413		176	677,50 PLN		24		
		3	677,50 PLN		0		
		378	677,50 PLN		289		
Case 5: Catalogue photo in a post, 01.05.2018 Link: https://www.facebook.com/estillmag/posts/2028822044000727		94	677,50 PLN		59		
		2	677,50 PLN		1		
		516	733,67 PLN		193		
Case 6: Catalogue photo in a post, 08.05.2018 Link: https://www.facebook.com/estillmag/posts/2031703653712566		129	677,50 PLN		29		
		3	677,50 PLN		0		
		1.030,71 PLN	677,50 PLN		0,00 PLN		

Source: original research.

link. The affiliate conversion rate, meaning the number of clicks that ended with sales to clicks on tracking (affiliate) link was 1.69%. The result of redirecting the reader to the Nike store website was one sale with a total value of PLN 339.57.

Case 6: May 8, 2018. Product catalogue picture on a blog post and fanpage on Facebook.

On May 8, 2018, an article about a popular model of Nike sports shoes was published along with a catalogue photo on the thumbnail of the blog post on the blog www.estillmag.com and on its fanpage on Facebook. In 30 days it generated 193 clicks on the link directing to the article page on the blog and 29 clicks on the tracking (affiliate) link. The affiliate conversion rate, meaning the number of clicks that ended with sales to clicks on tracking (affiliate) link was 0% due to no sales. The number of clicks on the link to the article did not translate into the quantity and value of sales, which amounted to PLN 0.

Table 1 presents six cases of blog posts containing articles and photographs, and their results after 30 days. For the same amount of time cookie files are stored for readers who clicked on the tracking link.

The three posts in the left column contain a photo made by the affiliate. The three posts in the right column contain a photo from the catalogue, or what is known as a packshot, made on a plain white or coloured background.

Each of the six posts directed consumers to review the product. The reviews did not differ in structure or content, so the authors suppose that the posts did not affect either consumers' clickthroughs or sales.

A replicable relationship between visual communication of social presence, consumer's clickthroughs and the sales value is shown in Table 1. This relationship is the basis for answering the RQ of this paper, and it reads as follows: two dimensions of social presence, 1) presenting the product in use and 2) photos made by the affiliate increase both the consumers' clickthroughs and the sales of the promoted offer.

4. Discussion and implications

The results of this study are consistent with previous studies which show that: 1) products shown online as being worn by people in dynamic settings affect positively online consumers decisions (Hassanein and Head, 2007), 2) user-generated pictures increase the conversion rate from Facebook and Instagram to the destination URL better compared to stock-photos (Dean, 2016) and 3) pictures showing silhouettes of people positively affect buyers' decisions even when not presenting human faces (Cyr et al., 2009).

The results of this study are not consistent with previous studies which suggest that social presence, measured by the number of human faces, affects the online buyers decisions. In this study, the number of faces is an invalid measure.

New knowledge from this study is the identified impact of the social presence in the visual communication on the value of real online sales, while the authors of earlier studies checked the impact only on trust, purchase intent or number of "likes"

online (Hassanein and Head, 2007; Cyr et al., 2009; Li, Wang, and Chen, 2014) and conversion rate to destination URL (Dean, 2016). The study was conducted on an affiliate blog, while previous research was conducted on websites belonging to companies representing services (e-commerce websites).

4.1. Implication for the theory

The authors of the article suggest two interpretations of the results obtained. The first interpretation is that online buyers need a social presence on websites, because they got used to it when they were shopping for the branded products offline. The second interpretation is that the catalogue pictures do not communicate social presence and can be perceived by buyers as a signal of a fake offer or a scam, impression which the social presence reduces.

Social presence reduces anonymity of the websites, which is one of the signals that a website can be a scam or the offer can be fake. If social presence reduces the signal, it reduces the scam risk and consequently affects positively the buyers trust. Consequently, from the point of view of the second interpretation, the findings of this study reinforce the arguments of the researchers who stated that social presence affects positively trust (Hassanein and Head, 2007; Cyr et al. 2009, Li et al., 2014) and conversion rate to destination URL (Dean 2016). This study does not reinforce the argument that social presence is more related to enjoyment than usefulness in online purchasing (Kim, 2015).

4.2. Implication to practice

The results of the study carry the following practical implications: affiliates should communicate two dimensions of social presence: 1) presenting a product in use, 2) use photos made by publishers (not catalogue-like photos) and expect a positive impact on click-through and sales via reducing the scamming risk.

4.3. Limitations and future research

The study contains several limitations. The first limitation is that the analysed cases took place at different times throughout the year. Because the sales of sports shoes change throughout the year, seasonal fluctuations can be a hidden variable affecting the sales' value in the conducted study. Future studies need to investigate the effects of posts published at the same time.

The second limitation is the lack of access to data on the number of abandoned shopping carts. Perhaps in the examined cases there was an obstacle in the consumer's purchasing path in the form of, for example, the lack of a convenient payment solution, delivery or an insufficiently understandable store layout that prevented finalizing the transaction. This may also be a hidden variable affecting sales in this study. Future research should include data on variables affecting the abandonment of the shopping cart by online buyers.

5. Conclusions

The study provided both corroboration and new knowledge about the positive influence of a visually communicated social presence on the number of clicks on the tracking and directing link, and consequently on the online sales. In general, consumers prefer to buy a product presented with a social presence in the picture. The study provided new knowledge – the fact that the presence of a person in a photo does not necessarily require that their face is visible. Elements of the human figure should be sufficient to facilitate the presentation of product in use and signal that the content was generated by the user. Such communication of social presence reduces the perceived scamming risk rather than contributes to the enjoyment of online shopping.

Affiliates and online sales managers should take into account the above elements of social presence when creating a product's visual communication, and expect results in the form of more clicks by buyers in the tracking and directing links, and more sales.

Acknowledgements

The project is financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland under the programme "Regional Initiative of Excellence" 2019 - 2022 project number 015/RID/2018/19 total funding amount 10 721 040,00 PLN.

Bibliography

- Affiliate marketing programs: A study of... Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267248701_Affiliate_marketing_programs_A_study_of_consumer_attitude_towards_affiliate_marketing_programs_among_Indian_users_Affiliate_marketing_programs_A_study_of_consumer_attitude_towards_affiliate_marketing (accessed Aug 17, 2018)
- Affiliate Marketing. (YEAR). Retrieved November 30, 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.azam.info/affiliate-future-advertisers-survey-reveals-positive-attitude-towards-affiliate-marketing/> (accessed Aug 18, 2018)
- Afrina, Y., Sadia, T., and Kaniz, F. (2015). Effectiveness of digital marketing in the challenging age: An empirical study. *International Journal of Management Science and Business Administration*, April, 69-80.
- Azam Marketing Team. Advertiser survey reveals a positive attitude to affiliate marketing. Retrieved from: <http://www.azam.info/affiliate-future-advertisers-survey-reveals-positive-attitude-towards-affiliate-marketing/> (accessed Aug 15.08.2018)
- Bakhshi, S., Shamma, D. A., and Gilbert E. (2014). Faces engage us: Photos with faces attract more likes and comments on Instagram. Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 965-974, Retrieved from <http://comp.social.gatech.edu/papers/chi14.faces.bakhshi.pdf>.
- Benediktova, B., and Nevsad, L. (2008). Affiliate marketing – perspective of content providers. Department of Business Administration and Social Sciences, Lulea University of Technology.
- Bourgeois, L. J., and Eisenhardt, K. M. (1988). Strategic decision processes in high velocity environments: Four cases in the microcomputer industry. *Management Science*, 34(7), 816-835.

- Brown, B. (2009). *The Complete Guide to Affiliate Marketing on the Web*. Atlantic Publishing Group.
- Capano, A., et al. (2016). *Affiliate Marketing Handbook*. IAB Australia. October. Retrieved from: <https://www.iabaustralia.com.au/guidelines-and-best-practice/guidelines-best-practice/item/3-guidelines-and-best-practice/2192-iab-affiliate-marketing-handbook-2016> (15.08.2018)
- Chai, K., Potdar, V., and Chang, E. (2006), A survey of revenue models for current generation social software's systems, Springer, Berlin, *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, 4704/2007, 724-738.
- ConversionXL. (25 July 2018). How Images Can Boost Your Conversion Rate. Retrieved from: <https://conversionxl.com/blog/how-images-can-boost-your-conversion-rate/> (accessed Aug 21, 2018)
- Cyr, D., et al. (2009). Exploring human images in website design: A multi-method approach. *MIS Quarterly*, 33(3), 539-566.
- Dean, T. (2016). The battle for conversion rates – user generated vs stock photos. 18 October. Retrieved from: <https://blog.blush.com/research/battle-conversion-rates-user-generated-content-vs-stock-photos-data/> (accessed Aug 19, 2018)
- Edelman, B., Brandi, W. (2015). Risk, information, and incentives in online affiliate marketing. *Journal of Marketing Research*, LII (February), 1-12.
- Eisenhardt, K. L. (1989). Building Theories From Case Study Research. *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532-550.
- Enough of stock photos: See how adding real photos... Retrieved from <https://vwo.com/blog/stock-photos-reduce-conversions/> (17.08.2018).
- Fiore, F., and Collins, S. (2001). *Successful Affiliate Marketing for Merchants*. Que, Indianapolis.
- Fulk, J., et al. (1987). A social information processing model of media use in organizations. *Communication Research*, 14(5), 529-552.
- Furukawa, G. (2017). DIY lifestyle product photography for ecommerce sellers. December 12. Retrieved from <https://www.junglescout.com/blog/diy-lifestyle-product-photography> (27.08.2018)
- Gefen, D., and Straub, D. W. (2003). Managing user trust in B2C e-Services. *e-Service Journal*, 2(2), 7-24.
- Hassanein, K., and Head, M. (2007). Manipulating perceived social presence through the web interface and its impact on attitude towards online shopping. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 65(8), 689-708.
- Heeter, C. (1992), Being there: The subjective experience of presence. *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*, 1(2), MIT Press, 262-271. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/200772979_Being_There_The_Subjective_Experience_of_Presence
- Herman Miller Photography Brand Standards Global Brand Standards Photography. (2016). Retrieved from https://www.hermanmiller.com/content/dam/hermanmiller/documents/brand_guidelines/herman_miller_photography_brand_standards.pdf
- Jacobs, R. (2018). How to master product photography on a tight budget (We did it with less than \$50). Retrieved from: <https://www.bigcommerce.com/blog/how-to-rock-product-photography-on-a-budget> (22.08.2018)
- Karimov, F. P. et al. (2011). The effect of website design dimensions on initial trust: A synthesis of the empirical literature. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 12(4), 272-301.
- Kim J. B. (2015). The mediating role of presence on consumer intention to participate in a social commerce site. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, (14), 425-454.
- Kumar, N., and Benbasat, I. (2002). Para-social presence and communication capabilities of a Website: A theoretical perspective. *e-Service Journal*, 1(3).
- Li, X., Wang, M., and Chen, Y. (2014). The impact of product photo on online consumer purchase intention: An image-processing enabled empirical study. PACIS, Proceedings. February, 325.
- Lombard, M., and Ditton, T. (1997). At the heart of it all: The concept of presence. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 9(3:2).
- Miranda, S. M., and Saunders, C. S. (2003). The social construction of meaning: An alternative perspective on information sharing. *Information Systems Research*, 14(1), 87-106.

- Miyazaki, A. D., and Fernandez, A. (2001). Consumer perceptions of privacy and security risks for online shopping. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, (35), 27-44.
- Moon, J. H., Kim, E., Choi, S. M., and Sung, Y. (2013). Keep the social in social media: The role of social interaction in avatar-based virtual shopping, *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 13(1), 14-26. DOI: 10.1080/15252019.2013.768051
- MSI. (2018). Marketing Science Institute Research Priorities 2018-20. Cambridge, MA. March 2018. Retrieved from https://www.msi.org/uploads/articles/MSI_RP18-20.pdf (14.01.2019)
- Scalera, B. (2015). Say No to Stock Photography and Create Authentic Images June 22. Retrieved from <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2015/06/create-authentic-images> (23.08.2018)
- Short, J., Williams, E., and Christie, B. (1976). *The Social Psychology of Telecommunications*. London: Wiley.
- Sproull, L., and Kiesler, S. (1986). Reducing social context cues: The case of electronic mail. *Management Science* (32), 1492-1512.
- Straub, D. W., and Karahanna, E. (1998). Knowledge worker communications and recipient availability: Toward a task closure explanation of media choice. *Organization Science* 9(2), 160-175.
- Van der Heijden, H., et al. (2003). Understanding online purchase intentions: Contributions from technology and trust perspectives. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 12(1), 41-48.
- Yoo, Y., and Alavi, M. (2001). Media and group cohesion: Relative influences on social presence, task participation, and group consensus. *MIS Quarterly*, 25(3), 371-390.