

**Hungarian University of Agricultural and Life Sciences**  
**Doctoral School of Economics and Regional Sciences**



**ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE MARKETING  
TOOLS IN THE SME SECTOR**

**Thesis**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

I chose to examine the effectiveness of online marketing tools as the topic of my doctoral thesis. In my research, I wanted to analyse the various online marketing tools, their operation and effectiveness, especially those that are most widely used by domestic companies. I also wanted to examine the advantages of using these tools in combination. My research is divided into two parts. In the first part, I use empirical research to explore the advantages and disadvantages of today's most effective online marketing tools, the latest trends, and their impact on marketing communication processes. In the second part of the thesis, I present my research on online marketing tools and its results.

In my dissertation, I seek to answer the question of which online marketing tools are the most effective today and how they can be used to further increase the success of companies by reinforcing each other.

Nowadays, the role of the internet in everyday life is becoming increasingly important, and with it, online marketing is also gaining greater prominence. The development of the internet and digital technologies has fundamentally changed the world of marketing. The use of online marketing tools is now an essential part of any company's strategy. There is a wide range of online marketing tools available, among which search engine optimisation, related link building and social media platforms are of particular importance. These tools not only help to increase the online presence and visibility of a brand, but also to build a committed and loyal audience in the long term and increase brand value.

Online marketing tools have many advantages, including providing small and medium-sized companies with an inexpensive alternative for communicating with consumers. Thanks to proprietary channels such as company websites and social media pages, there is no need to pay expensive media fees. With much less expenditure, it is possible to convey many more and longer messages to consumers if online marketing tools are used properly. The effective use of online marketing tools as part of an integrated content marketing strategy has many advantages. A well-designed and executed strategy not only increases brand visibility but can also deliver long-term business results.

Although the effective use of online marketing tools has many advantages, it is important to consider the challenges of integration, as well as other challenges of the Web 3.0 era, among which combating information overload stands out. There is constant competition for attention in the online space. , competing between different platforms and channels, it is difficult to stand out and capture the attention of consumers. Examining the effectiveness of online tools and

integrating them as part of inbound marketing and content marketing strategies is essential in modern marketing. Building a marketing system that focuses on solving consumer problems can be beneficial for both parties.

Since 1998, I have been involved in the development and implementation of marketing strategies for more than 500 companies. Over time, methods have continuously evolved and improved. One element of this was the method and accuracy of measuring the effectiveness of marketing work. With the growth of online marketing, this has become increasingly important. In the beginning, primitive analytical software only allowed us to measure visitors, which was sufficient in the era of ATL media: at least we knew exactly how many people we were reaching.

With Google's increasing dominance and expansion of its product range, tools appeared that helped us determine which marketing tools brought how much return on investment. Google Analytics, Google Ads and Google Search Console continue to help optimise the marketing strategies of everyone from the smallest businesses to large marketing agencies and multinational companies. Their data is accurate and relevant.

Before I started my doctoral work, our agency achieved success solely with the help of these analytical tools, relying on information extracted from the marketing systems of 97 companies. However, I wanted to supplement the analysis of the data with scientific methods to support the hypotheses we had applied successfully in practice. Together with my supervisors, we determined the basic methods and direction of the research.

### 1.1 The objectives of my doctoral research

During my doctoral research, I set the following research objectives:

#### **I. Objectives set during secondary research:**

1. Objective: To present online marketing tools, their characteristics and interrelationships, and to measure their impact.
2. Objective: To explore the latest trends in online marketing.
3. Objective: To explore the background of consumer behaviour and examine the latest models.

#### **II. Objectives set during primary research:**

4. Objective: To analyse and compare data from five different websites in order to examine the effectiveness of online marketing tools.
5. Objective: To map online consumer habits through focus group interviews.

6. Objective: To examine online consumer habits through a large-scale questionnaire survey.
7. Objective: To examine the impact of online marketing tools on brand value.
8. Objective: To establish an integrated online marketing strategic content model for the effective interconnection of tools.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

Based on my previous research, I created a relationship model for hypothetical online marketing tools (Figure 1).

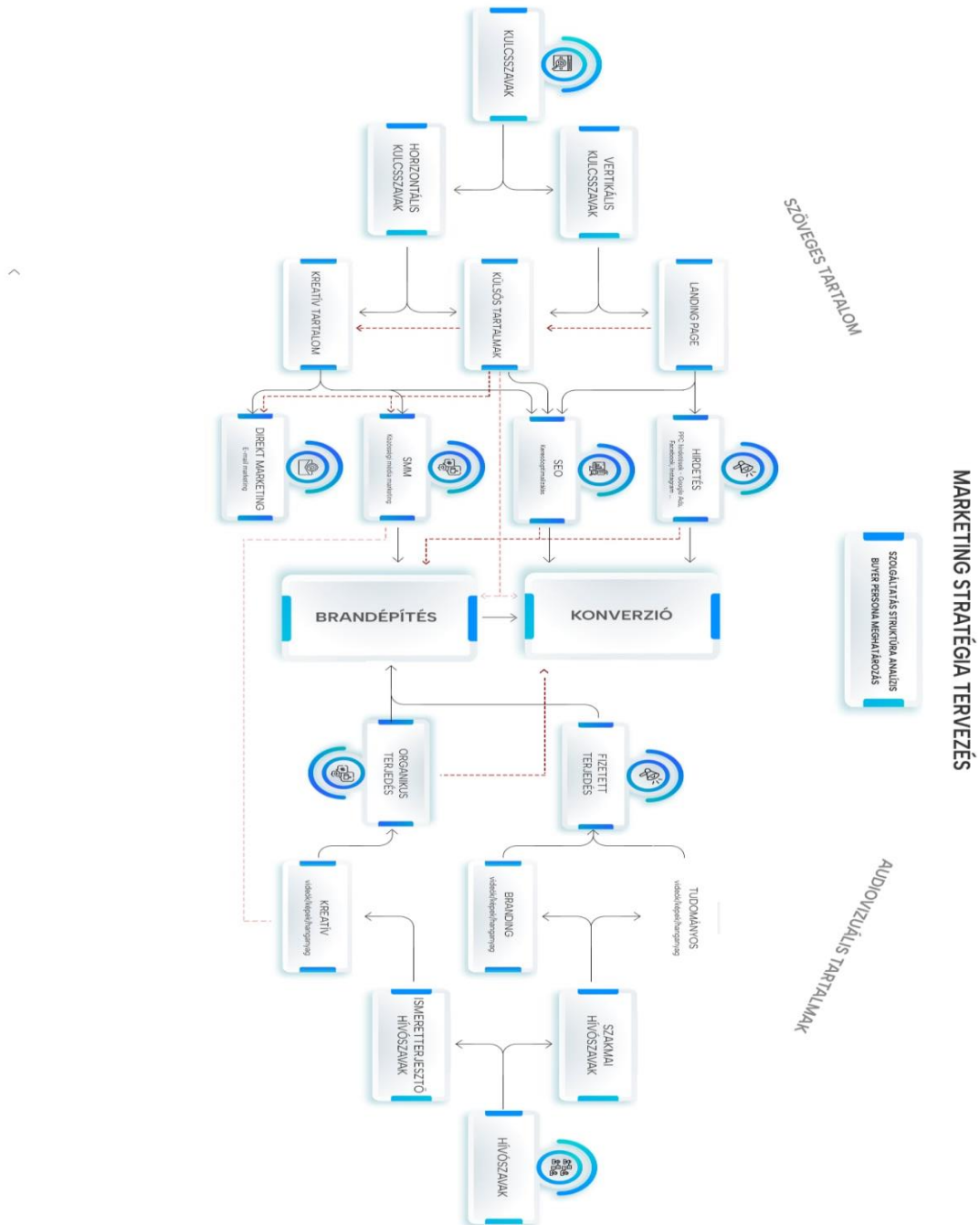


Figure 1: Relationship model of hypothetical online marketing tools

Source: Own research

## 2.1 Structure of empirical research

### 2.1.1 Hypothesis system of empirical research

H1: When used in a complex manner within a strategy, the marketing tools currently in use result in synergies that yield much better results than when used in isolation.

H.2.: The driving force behind the marketing tools included in the strategy is content, both audiovisual and textual. With extensive, horizontal keyword research and call-to-action words, both existing customers and potential prospects can be reached much more effectively.

H.3.: A general model of marketing tools can be established that describes their interaction and demonstrates their impact on conversions and brand building.

H4.: In the HORECA sector, the influential role of search engines is key to direct bookings, while social media has an indirect impact on the success of your business through brand building.

H5. The complex, strategically defined combined use of online marketing tools is significantly more effective than the separate use of these tools due to the synergies between them.

H6. Marketing strategy templates can be developed for each industry, in which the marketing tools to be used can be defined as buyer personas.

In order to achieve the defined objectives, I have set the following tasks:

- Review of the literature;
- Formulation of research hypotheses;
- Conducting quantitative research;
- Conducting qualitative research;
- Statistical analysis of research results;
- Formulation of conclusions and recommendations;
- Formulating new scientific findings;

### 2.1.2 Research based on secondary data sources

The literature review was mainly conducted using academic databases, the most frequently used of which were SCOPUS, Web of Science, and Researchgate. My research focused on the characteristics of online marketing, online marketing tools, consumer models, and the development of online marketing strategies.

### 2.1.3 Research based on primary data sources

#### 2.1.3.1 Focus group study of online consumer habits

I conducted a focus group study to assess the use of online tools and to better understand consumer online habits. Two studies were conducted, one in a large rural city and the other in Budapest, in order to compare habits in the capital and in rural areas. The studies lasted an average of 90 minutes. The rural focus group research took place at the Institute of Marketing and Tourism at the University of Miskolc, while the capital city research took place at the NJE Knowledge Centre. Eight people participated in the rural research and 12 in the Budapest research. I recorded the audio material and then analysed it using content analysis. I have included an outline of the focus group study in the appendix. I conducted a classic focus group study on two occasions, on 30 January and 13 February 2024. The aim of the research was to gain a deeper understanding of how users perceive online opportunities and various digital tools, and how they use them. The literature also points out that the online world has developed rapidly, so it is only natural that different users use these tools in different ways, for different tasks and with different functions. The available online marketing analysis systems provide a wealth of data on consumer behaviour and online conduct, but there are still many grey areas about which we often know nothing. My goal was to find out what online tools consumers use in their decision-making, how they use them, and how much they trust them. I wanted to examine the extent to which their decisions are influenced by search engine results, the criteria they use to analyse and organise these results, how they view different advertisements, and how they relate to content appearing on social media platforms. During my research, I was also curious to find out how regularly people use the internet in their daily lives, at work and for entertainment, and to what extent it is their primary tool when faced with a particular problem or need. During my research, I also touched on the use of artificial intelligence, as this is an unavoidable topic in today's world. I made audio recordings of the study and analysed them after listening to them several times. I have attached an outline of the focus group research in the appendix.

**The main topics of the focus group were as follows:**

- What online tools do they use, when, and for what purposes?
- What tools do they use for different problems: choosing a restaurant, installing air conditioning, choosing a dentist? What tools do they use during the different stages of decision-making (problem recognition, search, comparison, decision, post-evaluation)?
- How do online tools affect brand awareness?

- To what extent do they recognise and avoid advertisements? How do they respond to online advertising and advertisements?
- Use of artificial intelligence-based systems

### 2.1.3.2 Questionnaire survey: Measuring the effectiveness of online tools

After the focus group research and its analysis, I created a questionnaire consisting of several questions. I created and published the questionnaire using the LimeSurvey questionnaire creator. Survey period: 14 March 2024 to 31 June 2024. As the questionnaire consisted of more than 50 questions and took at least 15-20 minutes to complete, it was difficult to achieve a sufficient number of responses. I tried to share the questionnaire on several relevant online platforms, such as Facebook groups. The questionnaire included both multiple-choice and scale questions, with only one open-ended question. I examined habits and opinions related to online marketing tools on a six-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponded to "strongly disagree" and 6 corresponded to "strongly agree" in most cases. The online questionnaire was tested on a sample of 40 people. A total of 1,514 people completed the questionnaire.

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample, which served as the basis for analysing consumer behaviour in relation to the HORECA sector.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the questionnaire survey sample  
Source: Own research, n=1514

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency (persons)	Distribution (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	719	47.49
	Female	795	52.51
<b>Marital status</b>	Divorced/widowed	144	9.51
	Married / in a civil partnership	1257	83.03
	Single	113	7.46
<b>Age</b>	Under 20	10	0.66
	20-30	295	19.48
	31-40	283	18.69
	41-50	293	19.35

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency (persons)	Distribution (%)
	51-60	291	19.22
	61-70	215	14.20
	Over 70	127	8.39
<b>Place of residence</b>	Capital	529	34.94
	County town	289	19.09
	Town	505	33.36
	Village	191	12.62
<b>Highest level of education</b>	College/University	795	52.51
	Vocational school	93	6.14
	Secondary school / Grammar school	601	39.70
	Primary school	17	1.12

Complex, strategy-based online marketing is more effective than the separate use of tools due to synergies. Companies often use tools separately, either from internal resources or through external consultants, which is not effective. For companies offering complex marketing, complexity and synergies help: text and video content can be used in multiple places, and production costs are shared. Consumers use multiple tools to solve a problem. Content is the main driver of online marketing tools, with various types of text content playing a prominent role. With wide-ranging content, we can reach even those customers who do not know they are customers, but are looking for a solution to their problem. By addressing the problem and creating content designed to solve it, we can convert interested parties into customers (this can work with both text and visual content). Text content created for a specific problem area is also suitable for search engine optimisation, CPC advertising and social media. Buyer personas determine which tools and keywords work effectively, so this should be the basis of your marketing strategy . Different buyer personas need to be reached with different online marketing tools. Buyer personas are the most effective way to find the search terms and keywords to use.

I have summarised my secondary and primary research in Table 2.

Table 2: Methodological summary of the research process

Source: Own research

Research phase	Objective	Method used	Sample/database
<b>I. Secondary research</b>	Establishing a theoretical framework for online marketing trends, consumer models and strategies.	Synthesis of international and domestic literature, analysis of Google Trends data.	Academic databases (Scopus, WOS, ResearchGate, MTMT).
<b>II. Qualitative primary research</b>	Exploration of conceptual connections and spontaneous reactions, while simultaneously preparing for focus group research.	Word cloud method	n=20
<b>III. Qualitative primary research</b>	In-depth exploration of online consumer habits, trust factors and decision-making mechanisms.	Focus group interview (based on a semi-structured guideline).	2 groups (Budapest, Miskolc); n=20 (12+8 participants).
<b>IV. Quantitative primary research</b>	Measurement of actual user paths and conversion efficiency in practice.	Website audit, conversion path analysis (Google Analytics).	Annual database of 5 organisations (HORECA and healthcare) (01/09/2022 – 01/09/2023).
<b>V. Quantitative primary research (B)</b>	Testing the hypotheses and validating the specifics of the HORECA sector.	Large-scale online questionnaire survey (LimeSurvey). Decision tree models	n=1514 valid respondents; Likert scales
<b>VI. Synthesis and modelling</b>	Development of an integrated online marketing strategic relationship model and industry templates.	Hypothesis testing, inductive modelling, synergy analysis.	Aggregated data set of primary and secondary results.



attributes of the online space, there are still those who see it as a source of danger. The research observed that the use of internet tools was most prevalent among respondents in the capital, which, interestingly, suggests a higher level of awareness rather than scepticism. This suggests that residents of the capital have greater access to and knowledge of digital platforms, which allows them to find information more easily when choosing accommodation and restaurants. The use of online tools therefore reflects not only the existence of digital skills, but also the need for quick access to relevant information, which can be particularly important in urban environments, especially in the capital. Among respondents in the capital, some negative aspects of online shopping were also mentioned, pointing to potential problems associated with digital transactions. Several respondents mentioned that they often find the purchasing process cumbersome, especially when the purchased products, such as accommodation or restaurant services, do not meet their expectations, or when the sizes are not correct or the package does not arrive on time. In addition, some respondents highlighted the financial risks of digital transactions, such as concerns about the security of credit card details, which they linked to potential data protection and fraud risks when shopping online. These negatives suggest that although online shopping is convenient and fast, security and the reliability of the purchasing process remain important issues, especially for consumers in the capital. It is also worth adding that there are far more offline shopping opportunities in the capital than in rural areas, so people are not necessarily dependent on online stores when they want to buy something.

Based on the results of the focus group study, despite the fact that Facebook is currently the most popular social media platform according to statistics, many of the respondents expressed critical opinions about the application. Several respondents used explicitly negative adjectives to describe Facebook and emphasised that they do not like using it, finding it boring, especially for younger age groups.

Both rural and Budapest participants included those who consciously avoid using Facebook. The reasons for this included negative emotional effects ("I feel bad because of the negative comments, so I deleted Facebook") as well as information overload and the presence of unreliable content ("there is a lot of false information, rubbish on Facebook"). At the same time, others believed that with proper filtering and conscious use, useful information and relevant news are still available on the platform.

Several participants expressed ambivalence about Facebook: although they are fundamentally critical of the platform, they still consider its use necessary because of certain features. In this

regard, it was said, for example, that "I have to use it, for example because of the groups," and that although they encounter a lot of irrelevant or meaningless content, they simply ignore it while continuing to access information that is useful to them.

Several respondents highlighted the advantages of Facebook groups. These include organising class reunions, searching for flats to rent, school groups related to children, obtaining tourist information before travelling, and participating in various hobby and craft communities.

Respondents who do not use Facebook primarily mentioned Reddit and Google search as alternative sources of information, which they believe allow for more targeted and less noisy information gathering.

During the rural survey, it was mentioned that when problems arise, all respondents without exception turn to Google first and use the Google interface on a daily basis: "I feel that the more search terms I enter, the more accurate the answer will be, and the more it will show me." In the case of Google, positive words such as fast, informative, or simple were used in the survey, and information and news value were also mentioned several times in the responses. In the Budapest survey, the words used were also much more positive than in the case of Facebook, but some respondents highlighted the "distorted order", which they later justified with search engine optimisation.

Based on the rural survey, it can be said that the group was divided into two parts: young people, who mostly use the newer social media platforms. They prefer fast-paced, short content and often spend their free time on various internet platforms: they watch Instagram reels and TikTok videos, watch content on Twitch, listen to podcasts, or watch series online, use social media platforms on a daily basis, get their news from TikTok, and then look it up later, because they believe that news portals are full of unnecessary content and fake news. Although they primarily use Google to obtain information, they use video content to compare products.

The other group is middle-aged people who use online tools for work as well as for their daily tasks: keeping in touch with family, getting information, making appointments, checking opening hours, reading the news, reading emails, and watching online series. Some follow the news on TV or radio, while others do not follow it at all.

The Budapest survey found that many people use the internet for work, as well as for daily tasks such as checking timetables and solving various problems. Most people search on Google, but some also browse social media before choosing a hotel or restaurant, for example. They also mentioned Tiktok and the Instagram search interface, which has the great advantage of

presenting the location in video and image form, allowing you to see the atmosphere, while the description includes important information such as the address. They also mentioned Instagram's map search function and the use of hashtags. It turned out that they do not like newsletters and do not read them, but if they receive useful, relevant content and offers – dental tips, veterinary advice – they will read them. One respondent emphasised that it is important for the first newsletter to be relevant and not spam-like, so that they will open the next one and it won't end up in the bin.

### 3.2 Focus group study

After assessing internet habits, we tried to assess the online habits of the research participants through certain situations.

**Suppose you are faced with the following problem: It is your partner's birthday, and you want to surprise them with something. After much thought, you decide to treat them to a romantic dinner at a good restaurant, but you still need to find the right restaurant. What do you do?**

**Summary of the results of the first focus group:** Different people gave different answers, and it is clear that they use a variety of online tools to solve this particular problem. Most people would start by searching on Google, but some would look at nearby restaurants on a map, checking their star ratings (i.e. their review scores) and, in some cases, their text reviews. Others would search among the results; for example, someone searching for the keyword "best restaurants in location name" would read the top 10 list and use it to find a restaurant they like. Others would try several similar keywords in succession, such as "romantic restaurant, cheap romantic restaurant". When asked if they would search for a restaurant on social media, only one respondent answered yes, saying that they mainly look at Instagram for pictures and to find out information such as portion sizes. Another respondent said that restaurants' social media content, photos and videos are boring and inauthentic, and that photos uploaded by customers or content from food bloggers and vloggers are much better, but only if they are high-quality, honest and not overly promotional. Opinions were also divided on online booking: some people like to book online, while others find it much easier and more personal to book by phone. They usually read reviews, but rarely write them themselves. When travelling, they search on Google, but often open Booking because it lists all the accommodation options in one place and they trust this site. When choosing a hotel, they trust sites such as Booking, and to avoid this, a good reputation, such as a recommendation from a friend, is required. Several advantages of Booking

were mentioned: filtering options, additional services, the fact that it brings together several places, it is practical to use and reliable – which is why they are willing to pay a little more.

**Summary of the results of the second focus group:** Most would start solving this problem with a Google search, mentioning the following search terms: sky bar, Thai Budapest, best restaurants Budapest, romantic dinner Budapest, cheap fancy restaurant Budapest, restaurant Budapest programme, special restaurant Budapest. Several respondents said that they would enter specific, concrete terms into the search engine, not just the keyword "restaurant", because "everyone knows what you can do at home, for example, go to a skybar". Several respondents said that although they start their search on Google, they do not necessarily look for restaurant websites, but rather recommendation lists, and then search separately for restaurants that they like from these lists. "I read about it in a newspaper, I like it, then I search for it separately and look at the menu, for example." Others select from the restaurants that appear on the map, read reviews, look at pictures, and search for the menu. There were also respondents with special requirements who primarily decide based on the menu whether there is food suitable for them, or choose a restaurant based on recommendations, so search terms such as "dog-friendly" and "lactose-free" may also be important. Although many people read reviews, they rarely write them, mostly positive ones, on Google, Booking, and they also read reviews on szállás.hu and Tripadvisor. Sometimes they share their positive experiences on social media, e.g. they share good accommodation and restaurants on Instagram. If someone they know posts something like this, they will look at it.

**You have heard a lot about how efficient it is to heat with air conditioning. With the cold weather approaching, you start thinking that you could save on gas and that a heating system with air conditioning would be more efficient. What do you do?**

**Summary of the results of the first focus group:** Interestingly, the respondents would not primarily use the internet for this topic, but rather personal recommendations from family (father, son), acquaintances and colleagues. They would use Google at most to assess the situation, for example to compare prices, but this would not be their primary source of information. Some respondents said that this was because it was a matter of trust.

**Summary of the results of the second focus group:** Respondents chose the following search terms: cheap air conditioning installation, home heating with air conditioning, woman looking for air conditioning, heating with air conditioning, efficient air conditioning, and several also mentioned sustainable, efficient, and feature-based searches. By searching by feature, the respondent meant that they would conduct multiple searches, look into things, and in the case of air conditioning, look into all the features and compare the devices based on multiple pieces

of information. This woman's search for an air conditioner is certainly interesting, as it suggests that the respondent is looking for a service provider who can address her specific needs, not technical data, but practical things such as "my child won't catch a cold"; other female respondents did not agree with this.

**She has a dental problem that cannot be put off any longer. Although she does not know a good dentist, she definitely needs to make an appointment somewhere. What does she do?**

**Summary of the results of the first focus group:** Most respondents have a dentist they are happy with and would not change if, for some reason, their dentist was unable to see them (e.g. moving away), they would ask for a recommendation. There were one or two responses indicating that they would start a search on Google using the keywords "dentist Miskolc" and compare the results based on star ratings, or if they had a specific problem, they would search using the keywords "teeth whitening Miskolc".

**Summary of the results of the second focus group:** Respondents in Budapest are also reluctant to search for a dentist on the internet (Google). As this is a very important matter of trust, they do not trust the internet, but rather rely on recommendations from acquaintances. At most, they would start searching for a very specific problem, such as a modern treatment that their acquaintances have no experience with, but for toothache, they would rather search among family and friends, or perhaps in the phone book, and ask around.

**How well do they recognise and avoid advertisements? How do they react to online advertising?**

**Summary of the results of the first focus group:** In the first focus group research, I found that not everyone can distinguish between paid Google results and online results, but if they can, they prefer natural results. They often use the map function to compare the results in the results list. If they do search among the text-based results, relevance, the content of meta descriptions, and the recency of the date are also important. One respondent also mentioned that they do not like seeing advertisements on social media, as they do not belong there, and most agreed with this. There were also responses such as: "Advertisements are usually annoying, so I don't even look at them." "I usually skip ads because there are so many of them around us, but otherwise they are often a good thing, e.g. if you have a headache, you know what to take because the ad catches your eye, but my mind doesn't always accept it"; "I don't like ads, if something catches my eye when I'm reading on Google, then it catches my eye". Several respondents said that advertisements often have a negative effect, but when asked where they are most likely to be reached, they answered that it is through advertisements on social

media platforms. Most people do not like traditional influencers, but there are also many who follow content creators on TikTok, Instagram or YouTube, preferring to follow those whose main profile is not sponsorship and whose advertised products fit in with what they do anyway.

**Summary of the results of the second focus group:** In the second survey, everyone is aware of which Google searches are sponsored, and they always scroll past these results. It can be said that they consciously avoid advertisements, but not in all cases. Many of them also follow influencers, but rather on specific topics that interest them, such as skincare, sports, gastronomy, nutrition experts, and travel content. Some people also give their opinions and try out places because of them, if they can afford it. "I chose restaurants this way because I saw them on someone's page, but I wouldn't go to a resort on Lake Balaton this way." Many people also follow content creators on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. The responses revealed that sometimes they see something on an influencer's page, search for it specifically, and choose another similar service, such as a confectionery in Tihany or a winery in Tokaj.

#### **How do online tools affect brand awareness?**

**Summary of the results of the first focus group:** For respondents, appearing in Google search results and third-party recommendations are the most trustworthy. The majority of rural respondents trust Google's ranked results so much that most of them do not even scroll to the bottom of the results list. If the top results do not contain the right search, they start a new search with a different keyword. Those who do scroll down do so only for information purposes, so that they can compare several offers. One respondent said that, in the case of a dentist, for example, self-promotional Facebook posts are annoying and that social media presence cannot increase brand value. Several respondents said that they do not decide to purchase a product or use a service based on a Facebook post, but rather search for the brand or product on Google. However, professional articles can increase brand value and the appearance of expertise, and can even help with decision-making, as they inspire great confidence. If a dentist, hairdresser or other professional publishes expert advice in the form of articles, either on their own website or on a third-party website, it gives the impression that they love their profession and want to help their patients rather than sell to them, which inspires trust and sympathy in many people, who are then happy to turn to them with other types of problems. PR articles therefore have a positive effect on brand value and, if well placed, can also yield results. In addition, some respondents emphasised the power of word-of-mouth marketing, adding to my questions that the recommender does not necessarily have to be an acquaintance, but can simply be a third party, which draws attention to the role of influencer marketing.

**Summary of the results of the second focus group:** Several respondents in Budapest said that they prefer to click on familiar content, such as comparison sites for restaurants that they have used before. They usually scroll through the first list of results, with some respondents immediately looking at the map results, which they trust more, while others look for aggregator sites among the results. When spontaneously looking for a restaurant while out walking, they do not typically look online or read reviews, but rather trust their instincts and go to places that are crowded and popular with locals. In unfamiliar cities, they tend to search online in advance rather than making spontaneous decisions.

### **Use of artificial intelligence-based systems**

There were mixed responses regarding the use of artificial intelligence-based systems. Some respondents said they never use them, while others said they use them regularly. During the survey in Miskolc, one respondent who was still a student said that they use it to do their homework, for example to look up concepts, but they do not always trust the answers. However, in everyday life, they do not necessarily see it as useful for tasks such as searching for recipes or choosing a restaurant. During the rural survey, only one respondent had used ChatGPT for an everyday task, namely to plan a trip, but only out of curiosity, and the trip did not actually take place. During the survey in the capital, homework was also mentioned most often, and one or two people used it on a trial basis, but regular use of the programmes is not typical. One respondent said, "I don't use artificial intelligence because I don't trust it," and several admitted that they had found incorrect answers.

### 3.3 Results of the questionnaire survey

The primary purpose of the questionnaire was to examine the extent to which respondents use the internet when choosing accommodation (hotels) and restaurants (Figure 3). As the survey focused on a specific sector, the results do not reflect general trends in online shopping habits, but it is still clear that the vast majority of respondents use the internet in their decision-making process.

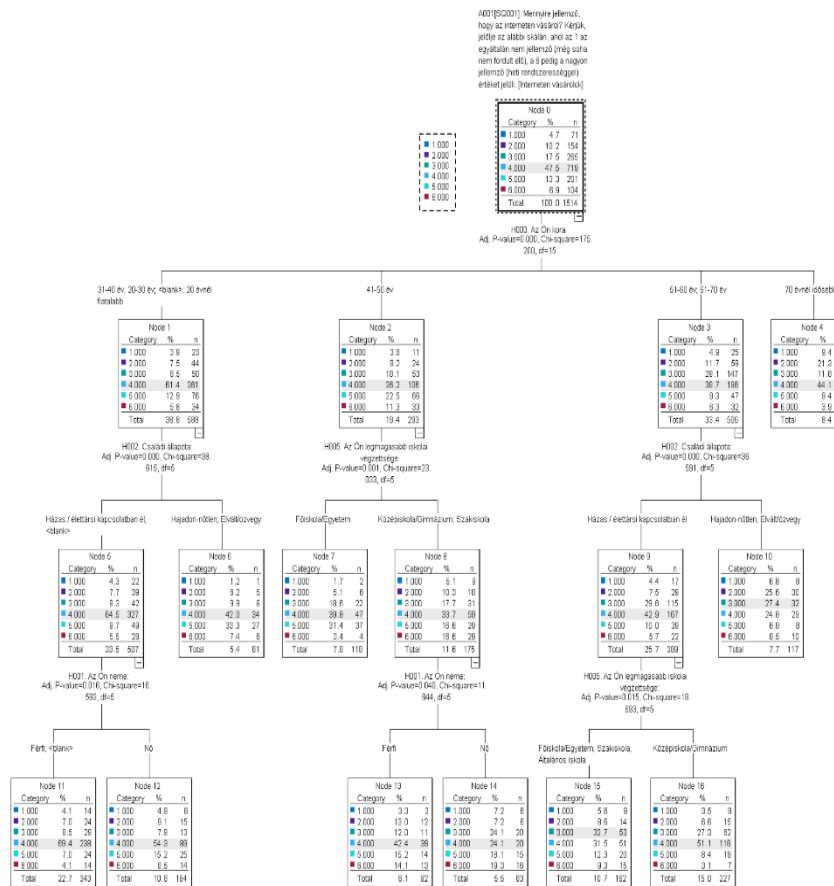


Figure 3: Use of the Internet in purchasing processes

Source: Own research, n=1514

The most important finding is that younger age groups, especially those between 20 and 40 years of age, use the Internet significantly more often to select accommodation and restaurants. This trend is particularly noticeable among respondents under the age of 50, who consider digital devices to be an essential part of the decision-making process. Furthermore, interestingly, even the over-70s overwhelmingly use the internet when making their choices, suggesting that older age groups are also increasingly present and active online when making these types of decisions. Furthermore, the use of internet tools is even more prevalent among respondents with higher levels of education (especially those with university or college degrees). For these groups, the internet is not only a useful tool, but an almost indispensable part of choosing accommodation and restaurants, which indicates a high level of use of digital tools and online resources. The next question (Figure 4) examined the search side of the hypothetical model and the use of Google, with a particular focus on the proportion of

respondents who use Google search when preparing for purchases.

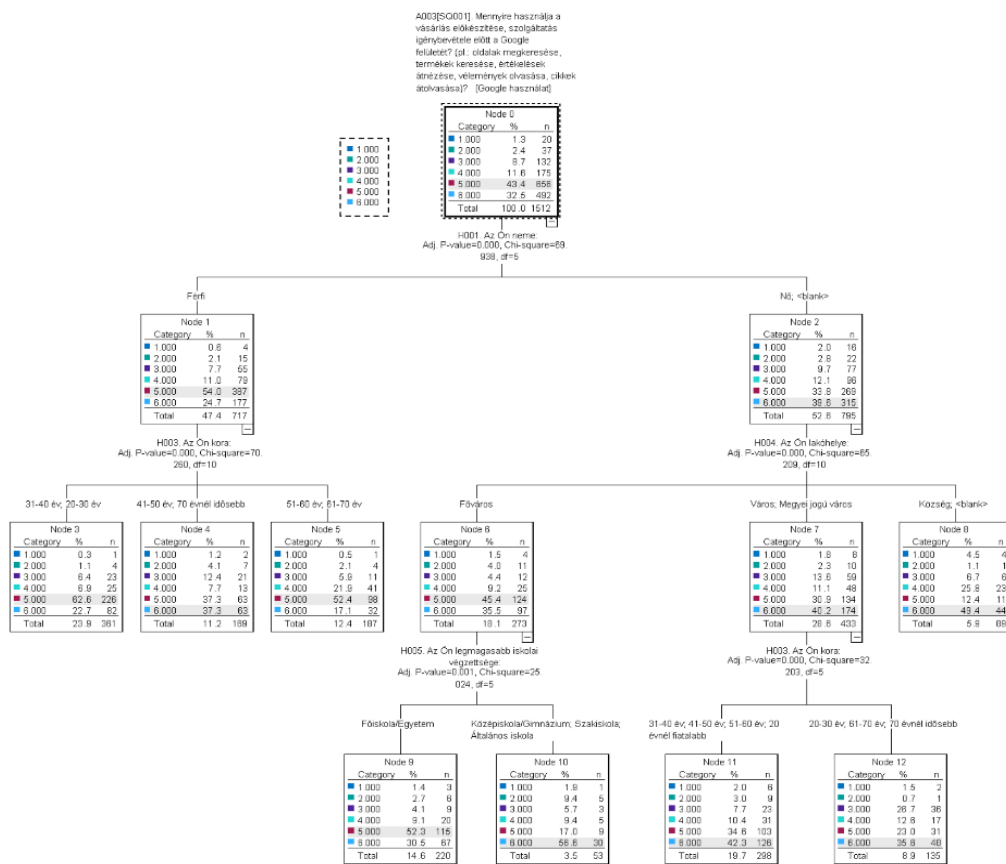


Figure 4: Use of Google during the purchasing process

Source: Own research, n=1514

The results of the questionnaire were consistent with our previous experience and measurements carried out by Google Analytics, which showed that the vast majority turn to Google for information before making a purchase. Based on the data, it can be said that the number of people who stated that they do not use Google search at all was negligible, especially among men (only 4 people). Google has a significant advantage over other online marketing tools, as it is primarily used for searching, meaning that users try to find products, services or other solutions using the internet search engine. This trend is particularly true for companies in the HORECA sector (accommodation, restaurants and catering services), as users are increasingly weighing up the offerings of local and global markets through their internet searches, meaning that players in the HORECA sector also need a more intensive digital presence. Google has therefore become a key player not only in terms of information gathering, but also in terms of making purchasing decisions in the preparation of processes. The next

question was specifically related to the HORECA sector, and its purpose was to map the habits of using Google search before choosing accommodation (hotels) and restaurants. The questionnaire was designed to find out how often respondents turn to Google when making such decisions. The aim of the question is to provide a more accurate picture of the role of the online presence of companies operating in the HORECA sector in the preparation of purchasing decisions. As Google is the most popular online tool for users, the results help HORECA providers better understand how internet searches influence the choice of accommodation and restaurants (Figure 5).

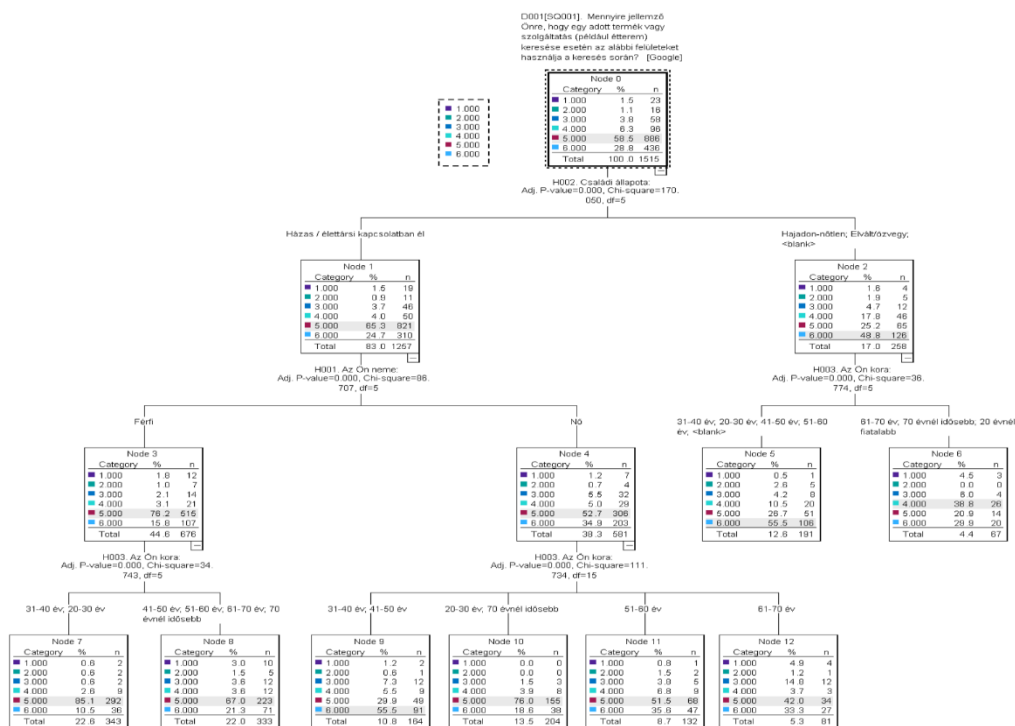
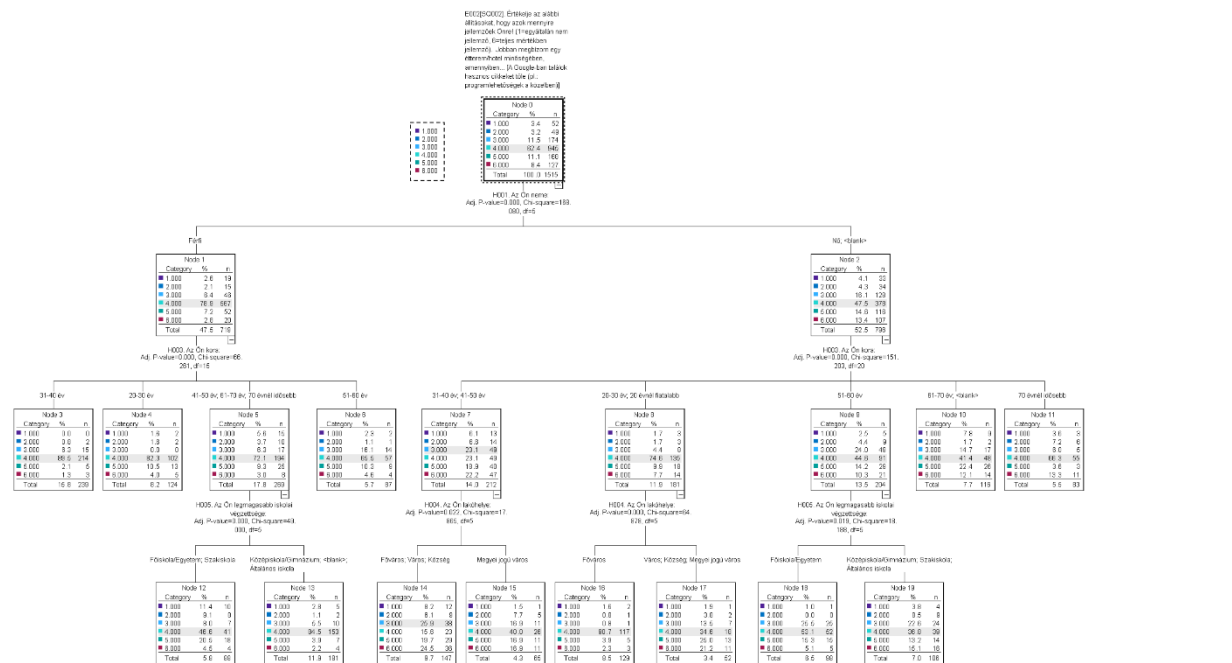


Figure 5: Use of Google when searching for restaurants, Source: Own research, n=1514

The results of the questionnaire show that Google was used significantly as a decision-making tool before choosing HORECA sector services, especially among the age group with purchasing power, i.e. those aged 20-60. This age group typically actively searches for information online, and Google plays a prominent role in the selection of accommodation (hotels) and restaurants, as the internet search engine provides quick and convenient access to the latest offers, reviews and ratings. The survey also clearly showed that among those who are married or in a relationship, the number of people who do not use Google search before choosing a restaurant

or hotel was negligible (only 19 people). This indicates that customers with families or in relationships also typically search for information online, and Google has become a key player in their decision-making processes. These types of users often choose services based on shared experiences, recommendations and reviews, so Google ensures that the necessary information is quickly and easily accessible. The next question in the survey aimed to assess the importance of search engine optimisation (SEO) in the HORECA sector and the extent to which horizontal search engine optimisation influences people's restaurant and hotel choices. The aim of the question was to clarify how SEO affects online presence and consumer decisions, particularly in the HORECA industry, where users often search for recommendations and reviews on the internet (Figure 6).



Horizontal search engine optimisation refers to a strategy that focuses on optimising sector-specific keywords and content so that potential customers can more easily find the services they are looking for, such as restaurants or hotels. This enables businesses to better reach their target groups and increases their chances of attracting the attention of potential customers. This part of the questionnaire helped us understand how players in the HORECA sector view the importance of search engine optimisation and how it influences the decision-making process of users searching for them, in particular how much they rely on SEO to reach customers when choosing restaurants and hotels. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the vast majority of

respondents felt that blogs on restaurant and hotel websites had a significant impact on their decision-making process. Blog posts, which often contain information about services, special offers, dining options or local attractions, play an important role in the decisions of potential guests, as they help them to get to know the place and what it has to offer better. People aged 20-30 living in cities in particular emphasised that they regularly read this type of content. This age group typically actively searches for information online, and blogs are a valuable resource for them, as they provide an opportunity to gain deeper insight into the services, offers and atmosphere of restaurants and hotels before making a decision. Blogs therefore not only serve as a source of information, but also as a tool that helps build customer trust and facilitate the decision-making process.

Based on how Google's algorithm works, we know that it favours extensive, relevant text content that enriches the website. However, we now see evidence that this content is not only important for search engine optimisation, but also plays a key role in convincing potential guests. The responses clearly showed that customers also appreciate it when a restaurant or hotel expresses itself in text form on a blog. This type of content allows hospitality businesses to not only showcase their services, products or rooms, but also offer more comprehensive information that helps visitors make decisions. Through text content, the business establishes a more personal, direct relationship with potential guests, which increases trust, similar to social media posts.

Therefore, it is important for restaurants and hotels not only to present their basic services, but also to include extensive and attractive content on their websites that offers valuable information to guests. Optimising this content with horizontal keywords can help businesses achieve better rankings in Google search results.

Google's search results are becoming increasingly complex, which poses new challenges for businesses. The first few results are often paid advertisements (Google Ads), and Google Maps results also play a particularly important role in the HORECA sector, as they can be especially valuable for local searches. For local businesses, therefore, not only text SEO optimisation but also appropriate map and local search engine optimisation are essential for potential customers to find them easily. With the following questions, I wanted to find out how familiar users are with Google's various tools, especially Google Maps. In the first question, I asked whether respondents use Google Maps when choosing a restaurant or hotel. The importance of Google is therefore clear, and it was important to ask respondents whether they found paid Google ads

(Google Ads) or free Google listings, i.e. search engine optimisation (SEO), to be more useful. I asked this question to find out how well respondents could distinguish between paid ads and organic results, as this can fundamentally influence the user experience and decision-making.

The difference between search engine optimisation and paid ads is an important consideration, as organic results achieved through SEO can be more sustainable and credible for users in the long term, while Google Ads campaigns provide quick results but are more expensive and short-term. Based on the responses, it can be observed that users are able to distinguish between the two types of results to a certain extent, but the line between SEO and paid results can often be blurred, especially for those who do not have a deeper understanding of the world of search engine optimisation (Figure 7).

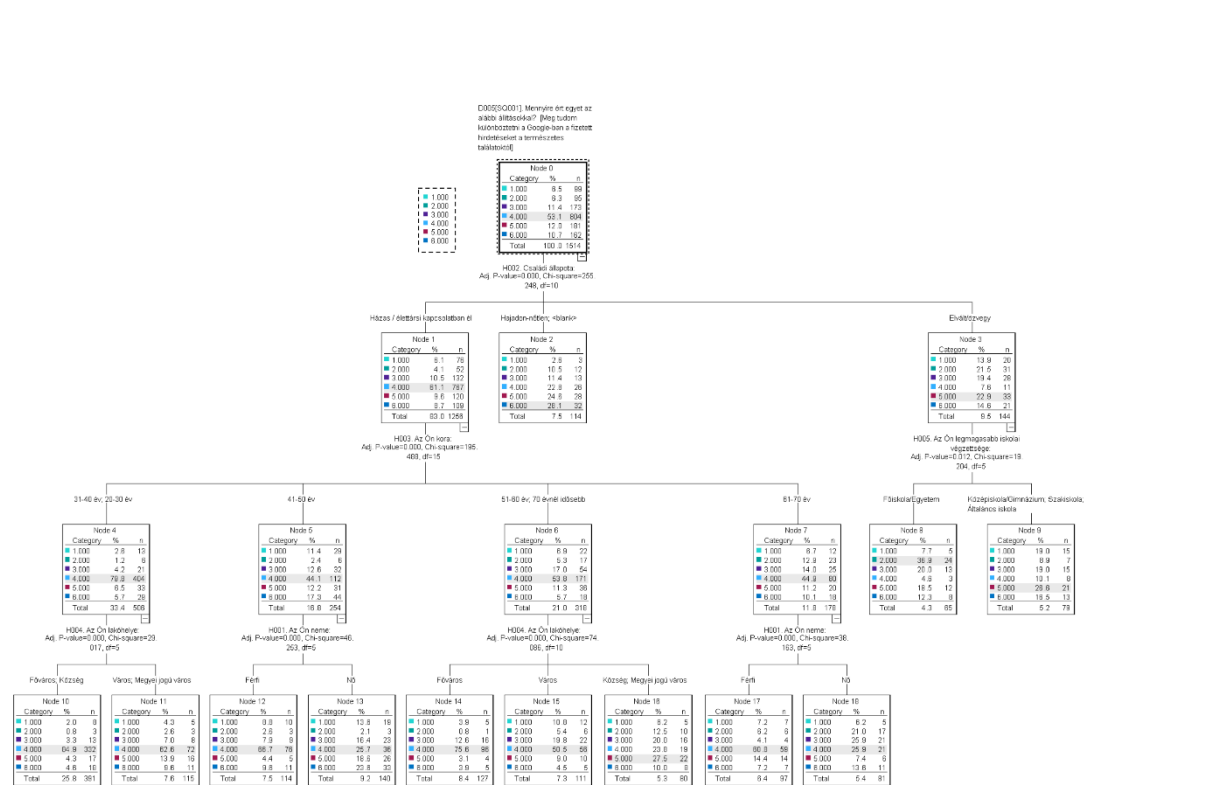


Figure 7: Distinguishing between paid Google results and organic results  
 Source: Own research, n=1514

The vast majority of respondents believed that they were able to distinguish between paid Google results and organic results, especially among users aged 31-50. This data suggests that the user segment with the strongest purchasing power is aware of this important distinction. However, the next question I asked was whether this awareness actually influences user

decisions. In other words, do they care whether a result is a paid advert or an organic search result?

This question helped us understand whether the difference between paid and organic results is really important to respondents and how it influences their purchasing intentions, especially when choosing accommodation or a restaurant. The responses gave us an idea of how conscious consumers evaluate different types of results and what factors play a role in their decision-making process (Figure 8).

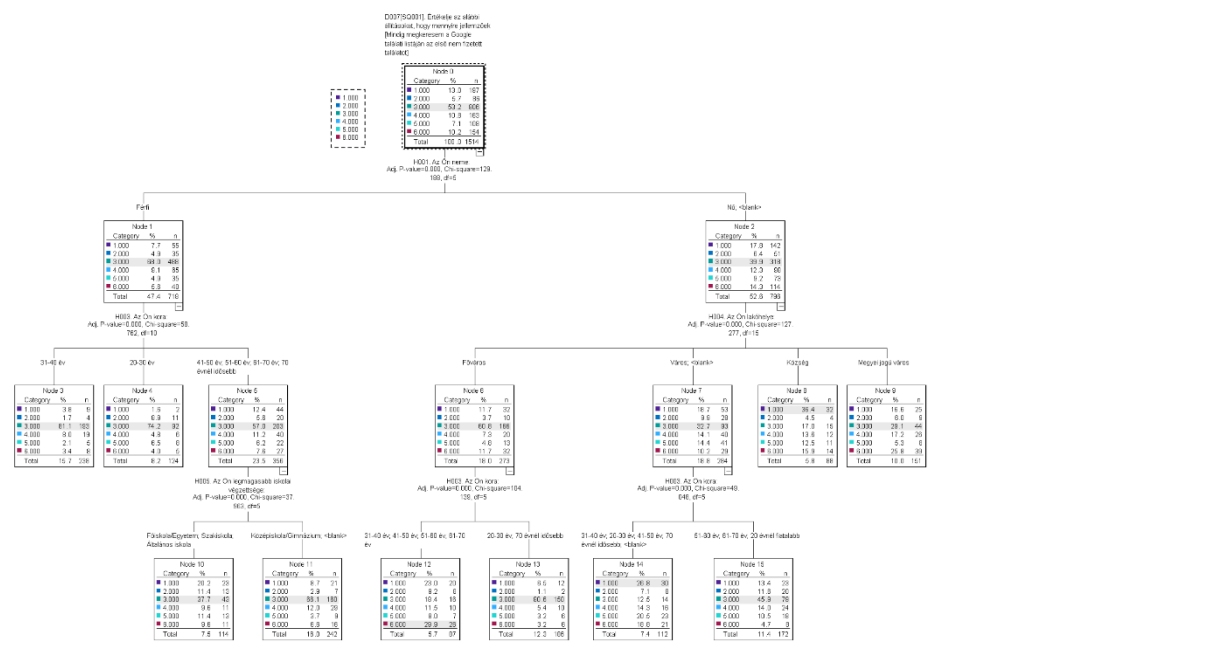


Figure 8: Avoiding paid results in Google search results

Source: Own research, n=1514

At the beginning of my research, I assumed that users would engage in ad avoidance behaviour to a greater extent. However, the results suggest that a significant proportion of respondents do take into account whether a result is a paid advertisement or an organic search result. There were also differences between men and women. The type of result was particularly important for women living in rural areas, for whom distinguishing between paid advertisements and organic search results was a key factor. Age differences were also observed among women living in the capital: women aged 20-30 and over 70 did not show any prejudice against paid advertisements, while those aged 30-70 tended to avoid them.

Among men, in addition to age, educational attainment also played a significant role in the choice between paid and organic results. Men with higher education preferred organic results, while respondents with lower educational attainment did not show a clear preference. Ad avoidance behaviour was also noticeable among men aged 30-70. These results clearly show that restaurants and hotels communicating with different *guest personas* need to use different marketing tools, taking into account the unique preferences and demographic characteristics of their target groups. Furthermore, these differences emphasise the importance of a complex marketing strategy that integrates various marketing tools, such as paid advertisements and search engine optimisation, in order for the business to effectively reach its target groups. We also approached the issue from the perspective of trust, as the hypothesis arose that users' decision-making is significantly influenced not only by ad avoidance but also by trust. Analysis of the responses showed that trust plays a fundamental role in which type of results users prefer and how paid ads or organic results shape potential customers' opinions about the service (Figure 9).

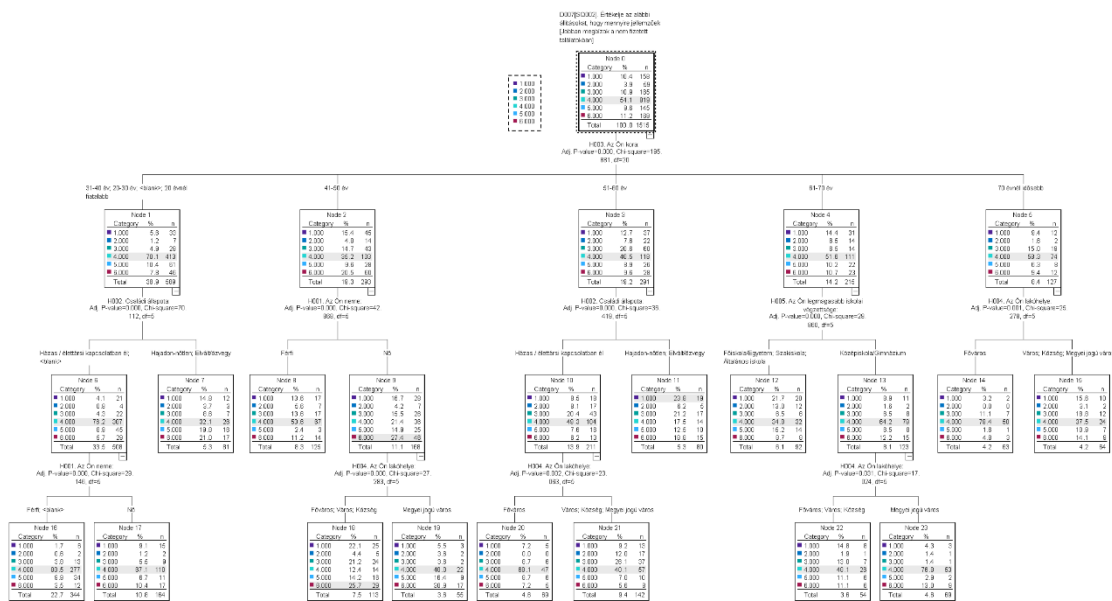


Figure 9: Trust in "unpaid" organic results

Source: Own research, n=1514

When asked how much more they trust organic results than paid ones, the proportion of yes answers is clearly higher. Women aged 41-50 living in county-level cities or the capital showed particularly strong trust in organic results. This result shows that users perceive organic results as more credible than paid ads, which are often perceived as advertisements. Based on the

responses, it is clear that it is not enough for players in the HORECA sector to rely solely on Google Ads campaigns; search engine optimisation (SEO) is at least as important for businesses to appear successfully in search results in the long term.

Considering how Google's algorithm works, whereby links to a website play a key role in its ranking in search results, it is essential that all marketers place great emphasis on link marketing. Nowadays, this activity is mostly carried out through online newspapers and blogs. The boundaries between these types of online media are often blurred, as in many cases certain blogs also play a newspaper-like role. There is no question that website owners need to purchase appearances in such media, but the question arises as to whether these appearances have an independent effect on conversion, and if so, to what extent. I examined this question with the following questions, which aimed to assess the extent to which external online appearances influence visitors' decisions and how they affect conversion rates (Figure 10).

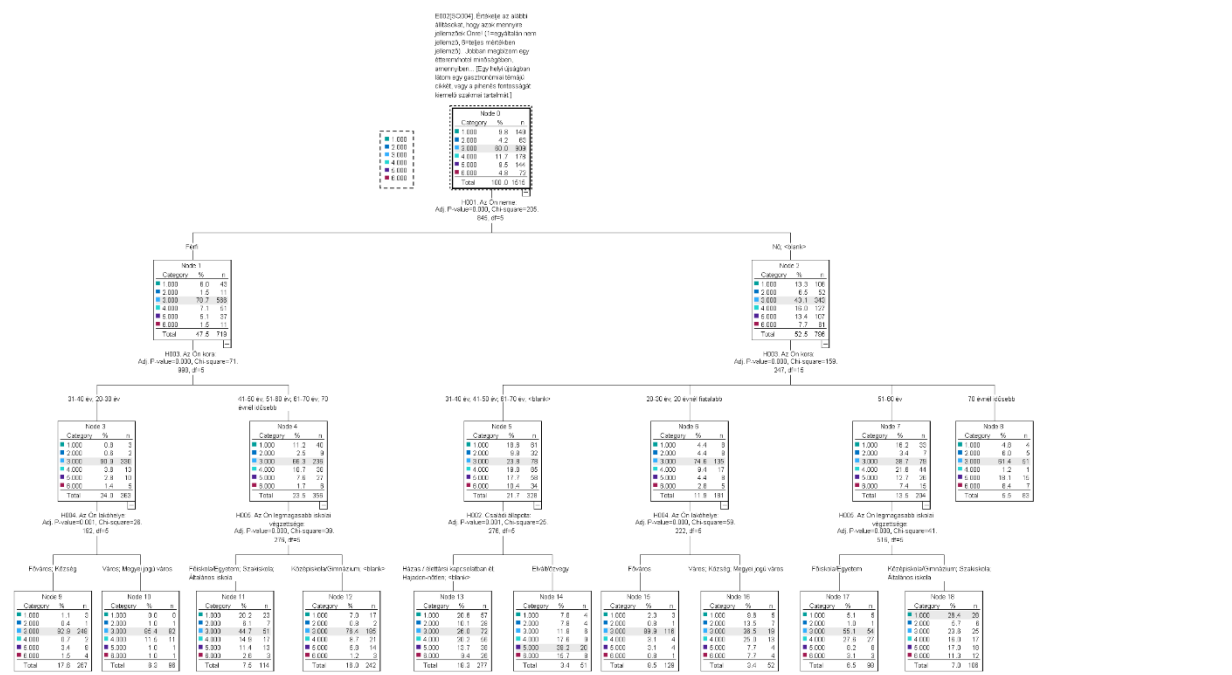


Figure 10: The role of PR articles in decision-making processes in the HORECA sector

Source: Own research

The marketing budgets of participants in the HORECA sector often allow for appearances in local newspapers, so the aim of the above question was to examine the extent to which these appearances influence the decision-making process in the choice of restaurants and hotels. Based on the results, articles appearing in local newspapers generally have little or no influence on consumer decisions. This is particularly true for male respondents, who consider this type

of publication to be the least important. In contrast, women are much more sensitive to these articles, so for them, appearances in local newspapers play a greater role in the decision-making process. A similar distribution can be observed in the case of blogs: although blog posts have a greater influence on women's decisions than on men's, their influence on the decision-making process is not as strong as in the case of other marketing tools. This phenomenon is particularly important for bloggers and online journalists to consider, as SEO support plays a prominent role alongside the content itself. Blogs and online newspapers that not only provide interesting content but also have proper search engine optimisation (SEO) will be much more valuable in the eyes of online marketing professionals, as their appearance can be useful not only for information but also for search engine optimisation. This recognition shows that it is not only the role of local newspapers and blogs that is important to marketers, but also the extent to which web content supports search engine optimisation. Without SEO optimisation, the impact of blog posts and newspaper articles on increasing conversions and visitor numbers remains limited (Figure 11).

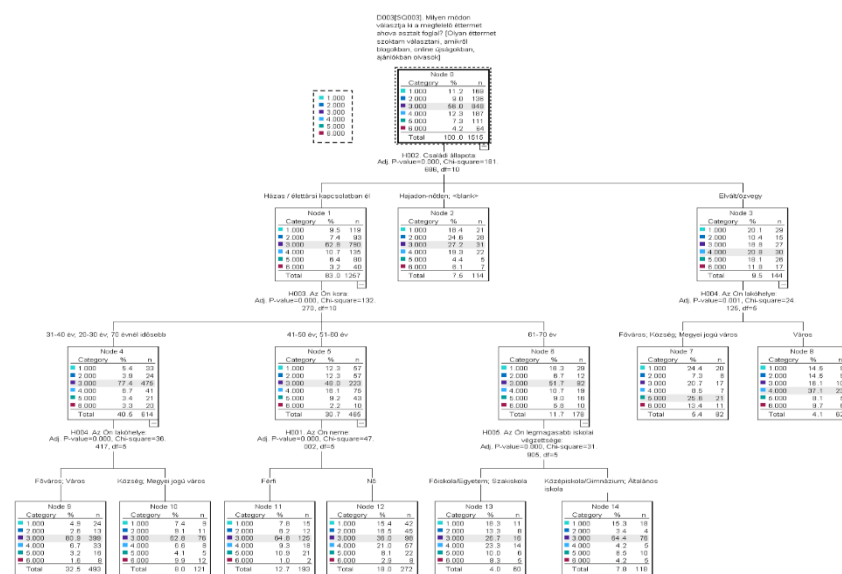


Figure 11: Impact of blog posts in the Horeca sector

Source: Own research, n=1514

Based on the results of the research, we can conclude that although articles and blog posts can influence restaurant and hotel selection decisions, they may not be cost-effective in increasing conversions in the long term on their own. In order for this type of content to generate a real purchasing effect, it is essential to take SEO (search engine optimisation) into account. Search

engine optimisation helps the accessibility and visibility of content , ensuring that potential guests can easily find the right information.

The power and synergies of a complex marketing strategy are also supported by the fact that when writing a newspaper or blog article, the content must be developed with search engine optimisation in mind. Restaurants and hotels must therefore ensure, not only in terms of content but also from a technical point of view, that articles and blog posts actually reach the target audience and contribute to the achievement of marketing objectives.

These results confirm the left side of the hypothetical model, which examined the synergies between the complex marketing strategy and the individual tools. The correlations are clearly demonstrable and the synergies are evident when a complex marketing strategy is applied. The proper integration of various marketing tools, such as SEO, newspapers and blogs, is essential for them to effectively support each other and contribute to the success of businesses.

#### **4.4.2. The use of social media in the HORECA sector**

On the right-hand side of the hypothetical model, we examined the use of social media. The direct impact of social media on purchasing is often overestimated by the general public, especially according to our Google Analytics measurements. The direct impact of social media on purchases can best be measured through paid advertising, as in organic social media posting, only Facebook allows links to be placed in the HORECA sector.

I considered it important to use the questionnaire to measure the guest-attracting effect of social media, especially in the case of restaurants and hotels. Based on the model and the data mentioned above, we found that the impact of social media is most evident through its indirect effect on the reputation of a given hospitality establishment, and this is where it has the greatest impact.

The purpose of the questions was to identify which social media platforms influence the choice of restaurants and hotels to varying degrees and how these tools shape the decisions of potential guests on different platforms. The following questions served this purpose (Figure 12):



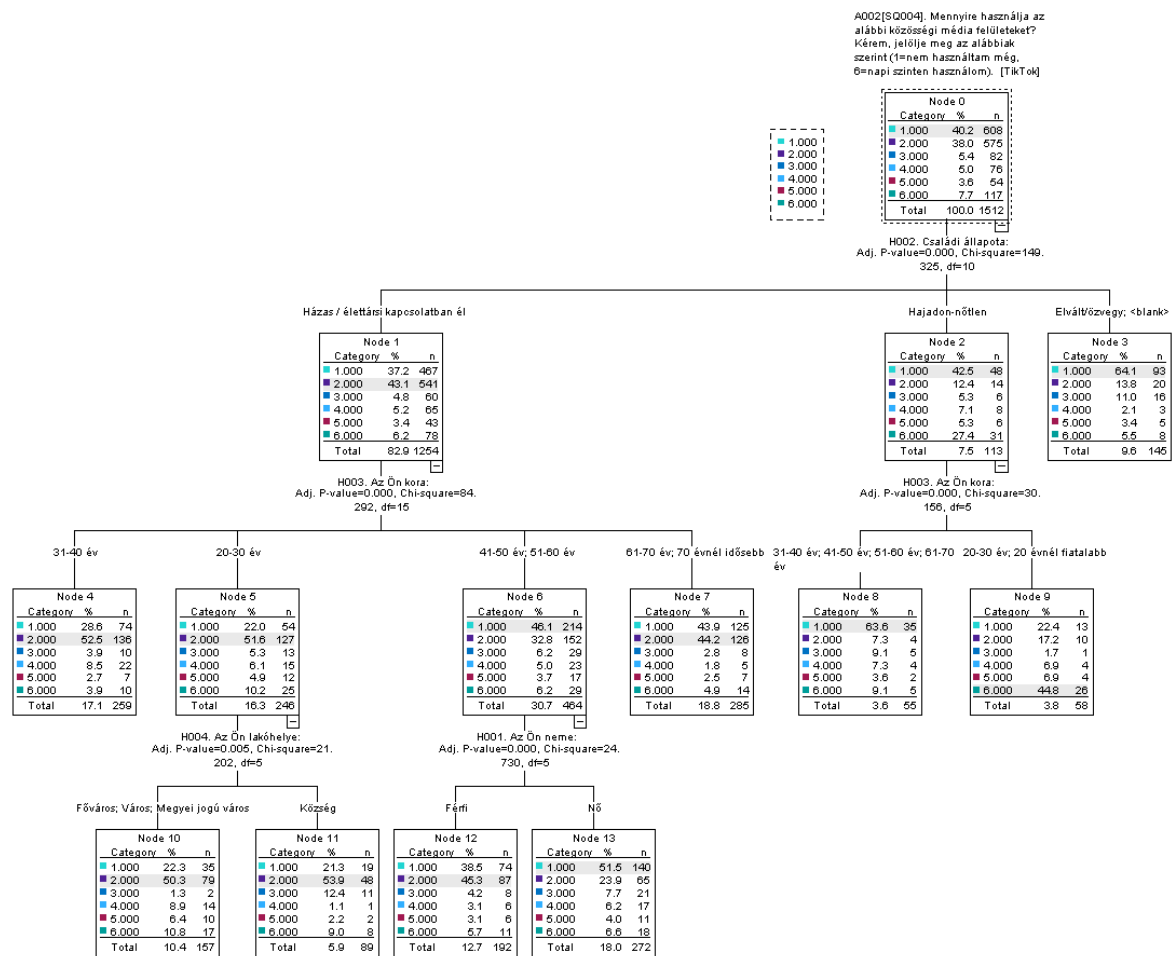


Figure 13: Use of TikTok in the HORECA sector

Source: Own research

The use of TikTok is not typical among respondents and is only relevant to a narrow target group. A significant presence on this platform can be observed among 20-30 year olds in particular. The majority of respondents do not actively use TikTok when preparing their purchasing decisions, which suggests that although TikTok is an increasingly popular social media platform, its impact on the HORECA sector is not yet as significant as that of Facebook, especially outside the younger age groups (Figure 14).

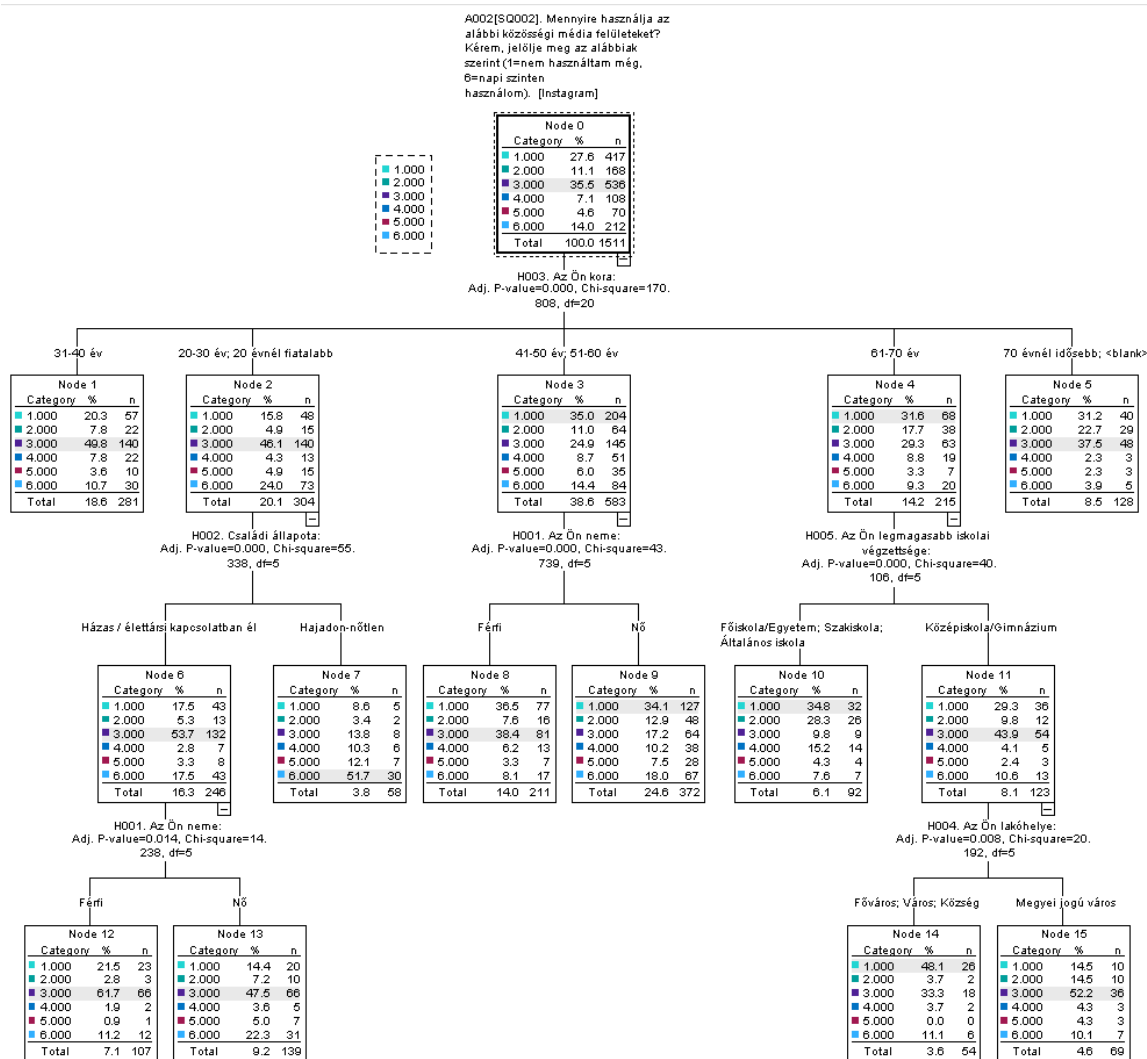


Figure 14: Use of Instagram in the HORECA sector

Source: Own research

When examining the use of social media, we found similar results for Instagram and TikTok. These platforms are relevant for young people under the age of 30, but they do not have as strong an impact on purchasing behaviour as Facebook does for the wider audience. This result is consistent with the conclusions of the focus group research that preceded the questionnaire, which confirms that the impact of social media is most significant among younger generations in the HORECA sector.

The next question examined consumer attitudes towards social media advertising: do people avoid advertisements and prefer organic, unpaid posts? At the same time, I also wanted to find out what impact influencers have on the restaurant and hotel selection process, as many believe that influencer marketing can be a useful tool in any marketing strategy. However, in my

experience, this tool is often used without a proper strategy behind it, so I was curious to see to what extent influencers have a real impact on consumer decisions.

Therefore, I tried to find out how advertisements, organic posts and influencer content on social media influence consumer decisions in the HORECA sector (Figure 15) by asking the following questions.

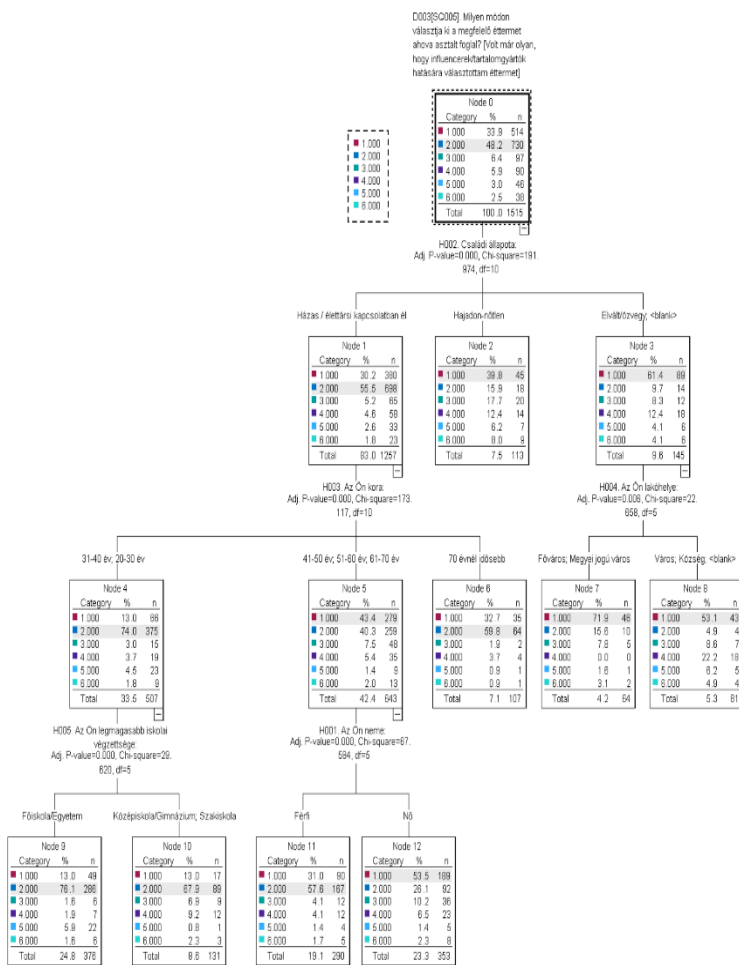


Figure 15: Use of influencer marketing in the HORECA sector

Source: Own research

One of the most striking results of the survey was that respondents in almost all age groups and demographic groups strongly rejected the assumption that they would choose a restaurant solely because an influencer recommended it. The least dismissive group was the unmarried/single people ( ), but even in this demographic group, the majority did not consider influencer recommendations to be a decisive factor.

I had already examined the organic impact of social media, and now the next two questions in the questionnaire concerned social media advertisements. First, I asked respondents how much attention they pay to advertisements on social media. The results show that the majority of respondents avoid social media advertisements, but not to a dramatic extent. This indicates that although rejection of social media advertisements is not always complete, organic, unpaid content is still preferred.

These data also support the trend that people are not inclined to blindly follow influencer recommendations or respond to every advertisement that appears on social media, and instead prefer more reliable decisions based on personal experience (Figure 16).

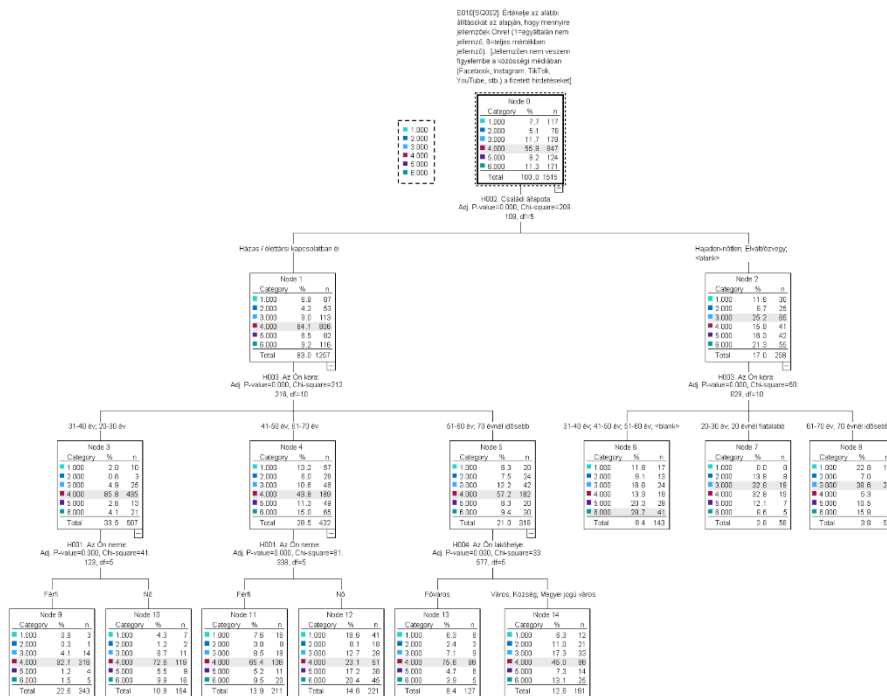


Figure 16: The effectiveness of organic social media in the Horeca sector

Source: Own research

In my further research, I sought to find out how much people are bothered by advertisements on social media. This type of question helps us gain a deeper understanding of how users feel about advertisements on social platforms and whether advertisements may hinder the customer experience.

This question may be particularly important for the HORECA sector, as if social media ads are annoying to users, this could have a significant impact on the effectiveness of marketing



secondary conversions such as newsletter subscriptions or remarketing list building, but it is much less effective at generating primary conversions (purchases, requests for quotes, room or table reservations).

Therefore, it is important for the HORECA sector to not only use social media advertising, but also to effectively integrate search engine optimisation into its marketing strategy. SEO can contribute more directly to customer decision-making processes, while social media plays a more complementary role in brand engagement and long-term customer loyalty.

Each marketing tool has its place in the hypothetical model I have constructed, and each tool serves different purposes at different stages. While social media and PR tools play a key role in brand building, relationship management and secondary conversions, SEO, or search engine optimisation, focuses on directly reaching potential customers when they are looking for specific information or solutions.

The most important common factor that connects all marketing tools is relevant and valuable content that is tailored to the target audience. Whether it's audiovisual material such as videos or social media posts, or text content such as blog posts, articles or search engine optimised website text, all marketing activities are based on high-quality, targeted content. Such content not only makes the company attractive to potential customers, but also helps to communicate the brand's credibility, expertise and accessibility.

Therefore, when using any marketing tool, be it social media advertising, influencer marketing or SEO-optimised content, it is essential to use all tools as part of a unified strategy, where the right content plays a key role. Well-written content that is relevant to the target audience makes every tool more effective and helps influence customer decision-making processes, either directly or indirectly.

#### 3.4. The relationship model of online marketing tools

The model (Figure 18) is based on the principle of "Content is King"<sup>1</sup>, which has developed over the past ten years in online marketing. In the early 2000s, it was considered innovative to operate a blog on company websites, focusing on problems that could be solved by the services provided by the company. In the mid-2000s, SEO, or search engine optimisation, became increasingly effective, meaning that websites appearing "for free" in search engine results, i.e.

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Gates

without advertising costs, became increasingly effective. SEO became the most cost-effective marketing tool. Blog content launched the era of "horizontal search engine optimisation".

#### Horizontal SEO is the basis of the model

The "direction" of search engine optimisation can be divided into two groups. Keywords belonging to target groups and buyer personas are determined by keyword research. Among these, we have named the direct keywords related to a specific activity, which are intended to reach "certain" buyers, as vertical keywords. These mostly refer to the services and products of the given company. For example, in the case of a mattress retailer, these would be the words "mattress" or "organic mattress". Anyone who enters these words into a search engine is looking for the given product and can be considered a sure buyer if the product (in terms of price, quality, etc.) suits them. The term vertical keyword comes from the fact that we want to get these words to the top of the search engine results list. It should be a basic requirement for a business to be among the first results on Google for the names of its services and products. We treat vertical keywords as a priority, monitor their positions on a daily basis and optimise the content related to them. They are usually placed in the drop-down menus of websites, which we call "landing pages".

Horizontal keywords are terms for which the products or services provide a solution. There can be a lot of them, so they cannot be given priority in terms of structure; their number must be constantly increased to reach a wide audience of people searching for solutions to their problems. This is why we call this branch of search engine optimisation horizontal SEO. The goal is for potential customers to find the site for as many terms as possible. Horizontal SEO can also appeal to those who do not even know that they need a particular product or service, but discover it on the website. The tools of horizontal SEO are creative content, articles and blog posts, which are much more colourful and interesting than landing pages. We were pioneers of horizontal SEO in Hungary, and then it gained widespread technical acceptance.

#### The context of the content-based model

Social media marketing began to gain ground in the late 2000s. After initial great success, social media gradually reduced the proportion of people who could be reached for free, so marketers had to present increasingly creative content to their audience. Posting about a product or promotion no longer yielded results, but creative blog posts and articles still reached a large audience. Thus, this content no longer served only as a horizontal SEO tool, but was also able to drive traffic from social media platforms to company websites, and continues to do so today.

In addition to appearing on the blog, this content is summarised in a newsletter, providing creative, non-sales-oriented content. This creative approach to newsletters results in a much higher open rate than emails about promotions and sales content.

One of the main elements of Google's leading search engine algorithm is to examine the number and quality of links pointing to websites: the more high-quality links a site receives, the more valuable it is to Google's search algorithm. This system is similar to the academic citation system, which probably formed the basis for it. Initially, any link was suitable for SEO, but as the algorithm evolved, only pages of increasingly high quality were considered suitable. Links found in forums and catalogues were pushed out, and the search engine also looked at the content of the linking page: a link to a website from a professional article or professional content counts more in search results. This led to a new direction in content production: articles, guest articles and guest posts written for external sites.

The media outlets that publish the content also have their own social media followers, where the given media outlet shares its content. PR articles and guest articles therefore serve both search engine optimisation and social media tools.

The above-mentioned tools interact with each other but also achieve their goals independently: they generate conversions, purchases and room bookings, build the image of the brand communicating them among the target audience, and thus also serve PR purposes. PR, on the other hand, will bring conversion results, albeit more slowly.



### 3.5.Hypothesis testing

Table 3: Hypothesis system of empirical research  
Source: Own research

<b>Hypothesis system of empirical research</b>	
<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Confirmed</b>
<p><b>H1: When used in a complex strategy, the marketing tools currently in use result in synergies that yield much better results than when used in isolation.</b></p> <p>My research confirmed that when I applied the tools not in isolation but as part of a unified strategy, cost-effectiveness and effectiveness increased due to the multiple usability of the content (e.g. videos, texts) and the mutually reinforcing effect of the tools.</p>	Accepted
<p><b>H2: The driving force behind the marketing tools included in the strategy is content, both audiovisual and textual. With extensive, horizontal keyword research and call-to-action words, both confirmed customers and potential prospects can be reached much more easily.</b> My analyses have confirmed that the principle of "Content is King" holds true. With the help of horizontal (problem-focused) keyword research, I was able to reach users in the upper part of the funnel who were still looking for a solution to their problem, thus broadening my reach.</p>	Accepted
<p><b>H3: A general model can be established from marketing tools that describes their interaction and demonstrates their impact on conversions and brand building.</b></p> <p>One of the main results of my research was the development of the "Relationship Model of Online Marketing Tools". This model illustrates in a practical way how vertical and horizontal SEO, as well as other tools, work together for brand building and sales.</p>	Accepted
<p><b>H4.: In the HORECA sector, search engines play a key role in influencing direct bookings, while social media has an indirect impact on the performance of your unit through brand building.</b></p> <p>In my sector-specific analysis, I showed that while search engines function as a direct conversion channel, social media plays a more significant role in building trust and long-term commitment.</p>	Accepted
<p><b>H5.: The complex, strategically defined combined use of online marketing tools is significantly more effective than the separate use of these tools due to the synergies between them.</b></p> <p>My results confirmed the statement in my hypothetical model that synergies offer real advantages. In particular, by examining the relationship between PR activities (newspaper articles, blogs) and search engine optimisation (SEO), I showed that</p>	Accepted

<p>content is less effective on its own, but when designed with SEO in mind, the technical and content elements reinforce each other and increase conversion potential. My research confirmed that an integrated approach results in higher levels of trust and better reach than isolated attempts.</p>	
<p><b>H6: Marketing strategy templates can be developed for each industry, in which the marketing tools to be used can be defined in principle as buyer personas.</b></p> <p>I have partially verified this. I have concluded that although industry templates (e.g. HORECA strategies) can be created, they cannot be completely rigid ("boxed products"). The template provides the basic framework for the strategy, but its content (the specific tools and messages) must always be adapted to the specific buyer (or guest) personas of the given business, so templatability can only be partially achieved.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

In practice, marketers often rely on their feelings and intuition when deciding whether to use or omit a particular marketing tool. In my research, I sought to develop a complex model based on scientific principles but also applicable in practice, which would serve the effective use of online marketing tools. I wanted to confirm and supplement the hypothetical model with my research in the HORECA sector so that the use of various marketing tools could be based on scientific decision-making.

During my research, I first clarified the basics of the hypothetical model through focus group studies, then verified the correctness of the model through questionnaire surveys and data analysis, and supplemented it with the necessary elements. It is essential for each unit belonging to the HORECA sector to identify a well-defined target group, taking into account the specific characteristics of the unit in question. Different demographic groups can be reached with different marketing tools, and there are no universally applicable tools that are effective in all cases. Accordingly, it is crucial to develop strategies tailored to the target groups.

The basic assumption of the model is that it is important for all target groups to take into account the complex marketing toolkit when planning the strategy and to adjust the amount of attention paid to each tool depending on the type of target group. When developing a strategy, the focus should be on the needs and preferences of the target groups, which can be aided by **buyer persona** or **guest persona** research. Accurate identification and modelling of these individuals and understanding their purchasing decisions and behaviours are essential for effective and personalised communication with them.

Continuing **guest persona** research and further developing and generalising them is an important next step for me. Based on my research, I believe that template strategies can be developed for different types of hotels and restaurants, which determine the attention and resources to be devoted to each marketing tool. Different marketing tools, such as social media, search engine optimisation (SEO), content marketing and influencer marketing, need to work together to be effective, and this must be taken into account in planning and decision-making.

One of the most important elements of HORECA marketing is continuous content production, which requires both audiovisual and text content. In addition to social media, it is also essential **to update content on the website**, which should be done in accordance with the principles of

horizontal SEO. In order to improve organic search results, it is recommended that every restaurant and hotel start a blog that not only contains basic information about the establishment, but also specifically addresses issues and questions that are relevant to potential guests (e.g. "best birthday venues in Eger"). This type of content not only provides information, but is also a valuable resource for search engines, as user searches are often related to specific locations and services.

In addition to blogs, **link building**, i.e. appearing on other websites, is also of paramount importance. It is therefore advisable for restaurants and hotels to establish cooperation with bloggers and online newspapers, where they can publish articles taking into account search engine optimisation considerations. Articles of this type are not only important from an SEO perspective, but can also increase the credibility and professional reputation of the establishment, which is key to gaining a competitive advantage in the market.

Opinion leaders, especially those who have blogs and update them regularly, are much more valuable from a marketing perspective than influencers who only appear on social media. While social media influencers generally reach a wide audience, long-term, content-based collaboration with bloggers is much more effective, especially in the HORECA sector, where target groups tend to make demand-based decisions.

Based on the results of my research, it is clear that opinion leaders with blogs and professional articles play a key role in getting restaurants and hotels to receive special attention from potential guests, thus building a more effective customer base. The direct impact of influencers on purchases or bookings is relatively low, while SEO-optimised articles appearing on blogs contribute much more to long-term success.

I began my research by examining several industries to gain a more general understanding of how the model works, but in order to obtain tangible, concrete results, I focused in detail on the HOREACA sector. The conclusions and recommendations also apply to this sector and can serve as a basis for further research into buyer (guest) personas in greater detail.

Overall, based on the results of my research, we can conclude that the success of the HORECA sector's marketing strategy is based on the right combination of tools. The various marketing tools – social media, SEO, blogging, link building and influencer marketing – must be tailored to the needs of the target group. When developing a complex marketing strategy, not only

traditional advertising channels but also organic search opportunities must be taken into account. It is therefore essential for restaurants and hotels to continuously produce content, which not only increases visitor numbers but also raises conversion rates by providing relevant information to potential guests.

In the future, it is recommended to continue **guest persona research** and develop template strategies for different types of HORECA units, which precisely define which tools to focus on and how to focus on them for successful marketing campaigns. Based on the results of my research, players in the HORECA sector can make informed decisions, thereby improving their competitiveness and achieving their business goals.

In practice, marketers often decide on a particular marketing tool or omit others based on hunches and intuition. With my research, I would like to establish a useful, complex model that can serve as the basis for a scientifically sound model that can be used in practice for the use of online marketing tools. I wanted to prove and supplement the previously established hypothetical model with my research in the HORECA sector.

Through focus group research, I clarified the basics of the hypothetical model and proved its validity with questionnaire surveys and analysis of the responses, with additions.

For a given unit, identify a well-defined target group based on the characteristics of the unit. Different demographic groups can be reached with different tools; there are no universally effective tools.

However, for all target groups, it is true that the complex tool presented in the model must be addressed when planning the strategy. The emphasis should be shifted based on the target groups. This should be determined through buyer persona or guest persona research. The development and generalisation of guest personas will be the subject of my further research. Based on my research, I believe that template strategies can be established for different types of hotels and restaurants, which determine the amount of attention and resources to be devoted to different marketing tools.

In HORECA marketing, continuous content production is essential, both in terms of audiovisual and textual content. In addition to social media, the website also needs continuous content, based on the principles of horizontal SEO. I recommend that all restaurants and hotels maintain a blog, which, in addition to a simple introduction, also addresses the problems of potential guests (e.g. birthday venue in Eger). This content will be the source for search engines when

potential guests search for information. In addition to the content on your own website, build partnerships with bloggers and newspapers, where you can publish articles about yourself that also take search engine optimisation into account. In terms of opinion leaders, those with blogs are much more valuable in terms of marketing results than influencers who only appear on social media.

## 5. NEW SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

1. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, I concluded that although articles and blog posts can influence restaurant and hotel selection decisions, they may not be cost-effective in increasing conversions in the long term on their own. In order for this type of content to generate real purchasing impact, it is essential to take SEO (search engine optimisation) into account.
2. During my research, I found that consumers in the Horeca sector in Hungary do not consider influencer recommendations to be a decisive factor.
3. I found that although rejection of social media advertising is not always complete, organic, unpaid content is still preferred.
4. During my research, I found that when used together in a strategy, online marketing tools create synergies that would not occur separately.
5. I created a relationship model for online marketing tools

## 6. SUMMARY

Based on my previous empirical marketing research results and the analysis of Google Analytics data, I have developed a complex provisional model of online marketing, which shows the interactions and synergies between tools through content. The rationale behind the model was clear to me, as I see every day how practical marketers give up on strategy and use marketing tools in isolation, foregoing synergies.

To prove the model, I used decision tree models, which I derived from the analysis of questionnaire data. Before compiling the questionnaire, I conducted two focus group studies, the responses of which shaped my thinking.

The decision trees largely confirmed the interactions and structure of the hypothetical model and even revealed new ones. Based on the responses, I divided conversions into primary and secondary conversions, thus making the impact of marketing tools more nuanced.

The model draws attention to the fact that content is the driving force behind online marketing. We distinguish between text and audiovisual content. Textual content is described using keywords, phrases and questions, while audiovisual content is described using catchphrases. Regardless of the type of content, its use must be preceded by buyer persona (Guest Persona in the case of HORECA) research. The buyer personas associated with the given business hospitality unit, we must explore in detail the buyer personas that can be assigned to the characteristics (e.g. in the case of a separate room, the buyer persona may be a 25-year-old female office manager organising management training, or a 40-year-old male sales director responsible for organising conferences, but also a 75-year-old gentleman organising a pensioners' meeting). Everyone is addressed by different keywords and catchphrases, and different marketing tools must be used to reach them.

Call-to-action phrases and keywords define content in the marketing tools associated with them. However, when considering a complex marketing strategy, this content cannot be used in just one place. This is described in the model. A blog post about spring programmes in Eger on the website of a hotel in Eger is perfect material for search engine optimisation in Google's organic search results, but it can also be a good landing page for a Google or social media ad, or it can be sent out in a monthly newsletter or shared on the hotel's Facebook page or Instagram story.

Based on the analysis of Google Analytics data, where only primary conversions were important to the business, social media appeared to be much less effective than search engines and newsletters. However, focus group research and questionnaires revealed that they can have a significant impact on secondary conversions, which will ultimately result in primary conversions.

The basis of effective and cost-efficient online marketing is therefore strategic planning, which begins with an analysis of the service or product structure and determines the potential buyer personas by examining the characteristics of the business. We assign marketing tools, keywords and call-to-action phrases to buyer personas, distribute the available resources among the tools, and create a content marketing strategy. We use the content to support multiple marketing tools and link the tools together (e.g. we post SEO-oriented blog posts on social media, etc.). Although our ultimate goal is primary conversion, we must not forget the usefulness of secondary conversions and the impact of marketing tools on the reputation of the business (PR).

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