# Russian Digital Market Overview 2021

Complete Guide to Create a Digital Marketing Strategy in the Russian Market

Review 3.0, Edition 2021

# Introduction

Russian online market is developing at an unbelievable pace, and today an online presence in Russia alone is not enough for global companies—they also need to be at great pains to promote their products. We created this White Paper specially for those who aspire at understanding the specifics of the Russian online market and its target audience deeper and at effective promotion of their business online.

# RMAA Agency

Founded in 2008 and based in Moscow, the RMAA marketing agency creates for its clients a detailed and extensive understanding on how to increase sales, improve their marketing techniques and grow businesses and brands in Russia and the CIS. Not only do we create plans, we implement them as well. Through consulting, technology, design, and communication, we give our clients an innovative competitive advantage. Our success is based on a unique, detailed and scientific approach in each of the industries we serve.

# Contents
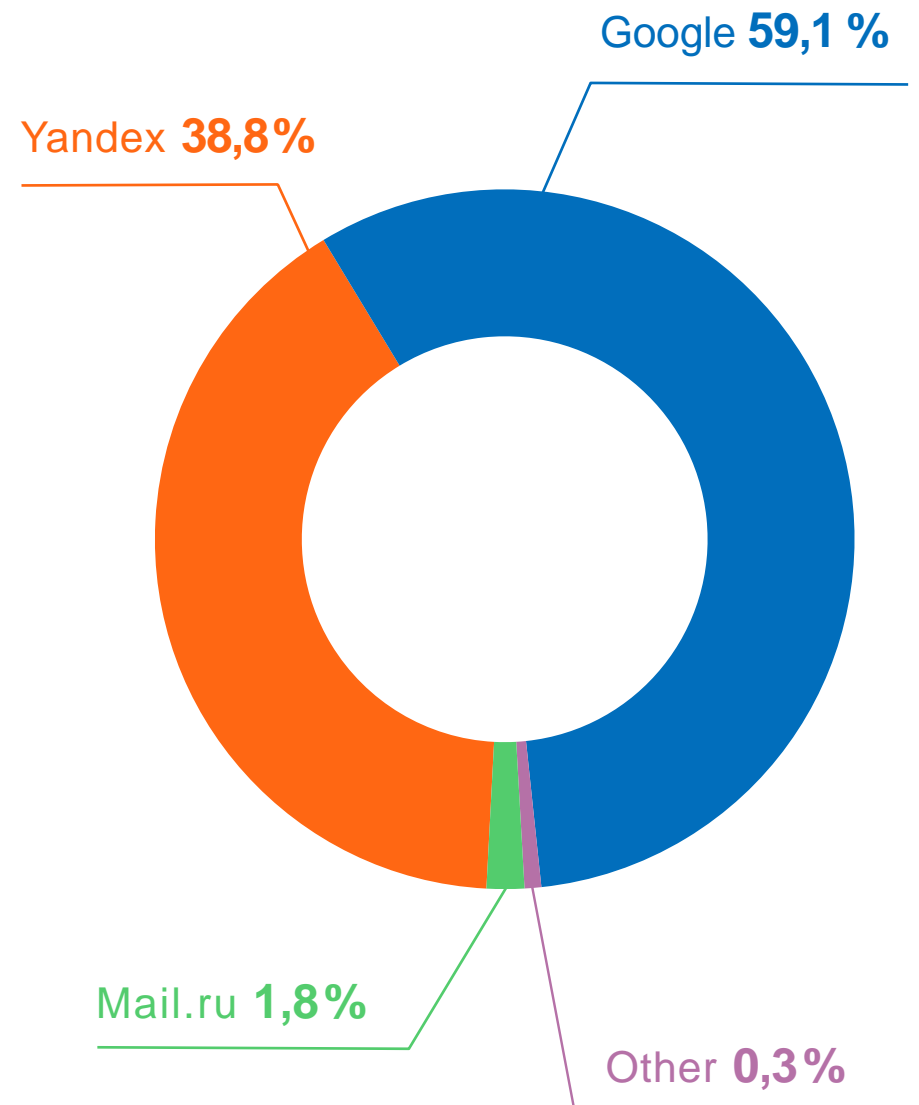
# Russian Digital Market Overview

# General view of main search engines

The most popular search engine in Russia from 1997 until 2016 was Yandex. The second most popular search engine in Russia was Google, the world's leading search engine, which entered the Russian market in 2006. However, since 2016 Google has been the most popular search engine in Russia.

In the third place, there is Mail.Ru search engine. For a long time, Mail.Ru had been using third-party search engines, namely Google and Yandex, simultaneously developing its own search algorithm. Mail.Ru switched to its own search engine in 2013.

In Russia, the audience is almost completely divided between two search engines: Yandex and Google. According to the Russian company Liveinternet, this is how the market was distributed among the search engines as of February 2021.

Source: Liveinternet, February 2021

Google **59,1 %**

Yandex **38,8%**

Mail.ru **1,8%**

Other **0,3%**

# Audience of Russian Social Media

**facebook.com**
36,1 mln users
percent of Russian
popularity 30%

**vk.com**
73,4 mln users
percent of Russian
popularity 60%

**ok.ru**
45,9 mln users
percent of Russian
popularity 38%

**my.mail.ru**
4,9 mln users
percent of Russian
popularity 4%

**youtube.com**
79,2 mln users
percent of Russian
popularity 65%

**instagram.com**
60,2 mln users
percent of Russian
popularity 53%

**TikTok**
29,3 mln users
percent of Russian
popularity 24%

YouTube and VKontakte are the most popular social media sites in Russia. More than 33 million Russians visit the VK and more than 27 million visit YouTube every day.
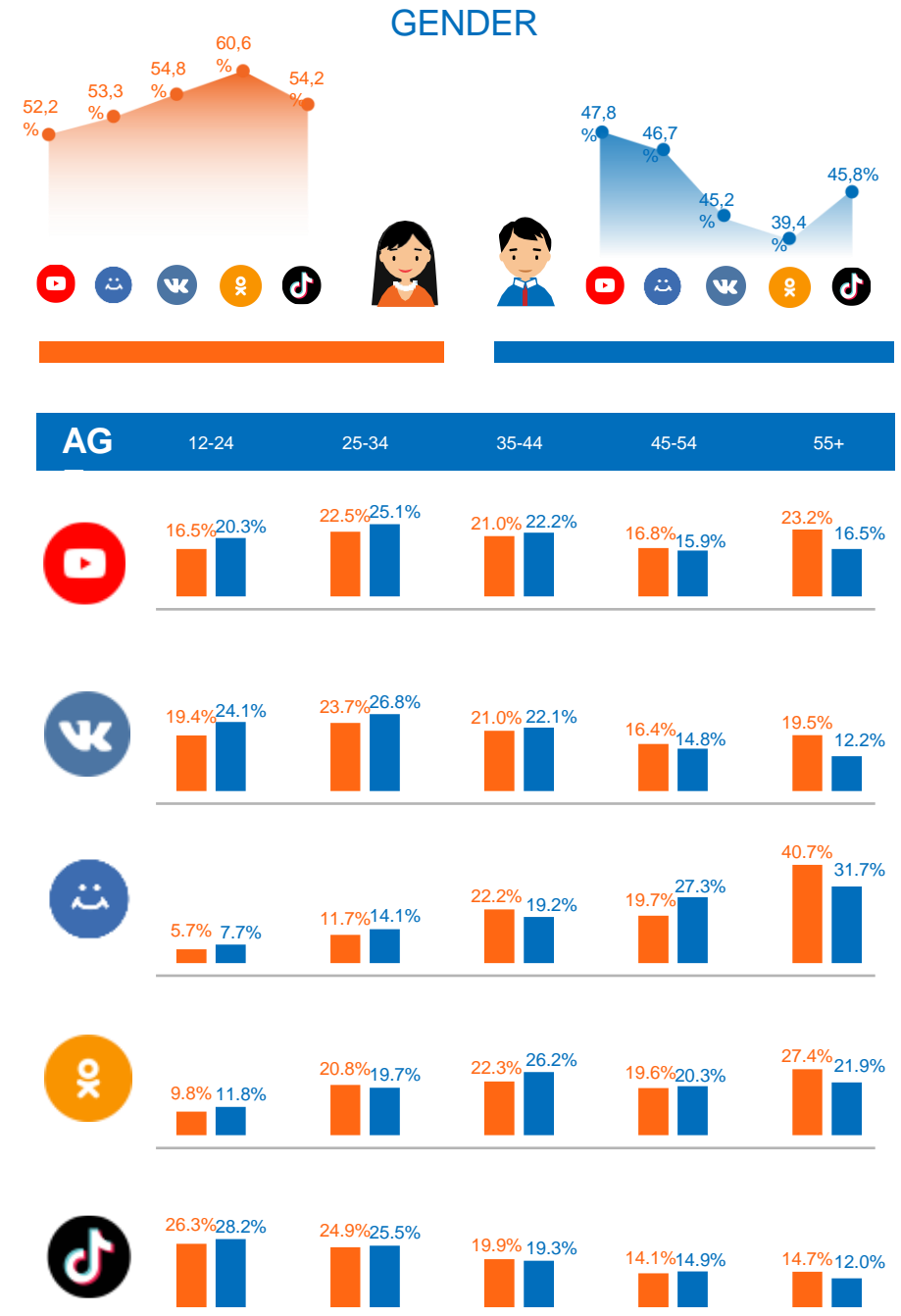
Voice-only social media Clubhouse is becoming more and more popular in Russia. According to Statista in February 2021 Clubhouse has been downloaded 867 thousands times in Russia.

Source: Mediascope, Russia, monthly active users, cities with a population of 100 thousand, 12+, December 2020

# Audience of Russian Social Media

Images are proven to be very effective in capturing the attention of women and Instagram being almost entirely image-based naturally attracts more female users – 58,5%.

Source: Mediascope, Russia, monthly active users, 12+, December 2020

## GENDER

Female: 52,2% · 53,3% · 54,8% · 60,6% · 54,2%

Male: 47,8% · 46,7% · 45,2% · 39,4% · 45,8%

| AG | 12-24 | | 25-34 | | 35-44 | | 45-54 | | 55+ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| YouTube | 16.5% | 20.3% | 22.5% | 25.1% | 21.0% | 22.2% | 16.8% | 15.9% | 23.2% | 16.5% |
| VK | 19.4% | 24.1% | 23.7% | 26.8% | 21.0% | 22.1% | 16.4% | 14.8% | 19.5% | 12.2% |
| (smile) | 5.7% | 7.7% | 11.7% | 14.1% | 22.2% | 19.2% | 19.7% | 27.3% | 40.7% | 31.7% |
| OK | 9.8% | 11.8% | 20.8% | 19.7% | 22.3% | 26.2% | 19.6% | 20.3% | 27.4% | 21.9% |
| TikTok | 26.3% | 28.2% | 24.9% | 25.5% | 19.9% | 19.3% | 14.1% | 14.9% | 14.7% | 12.0% |

# Audience of Russian Messengers

**Discord**

5,1 mln

**Skype***

6,8 mln

**Telegram**

34,1 mln

**Viber**

37,6 mln

**WhatsAPP**

74,9 mln

WhatsApp is the most popular mobile messenger in Russia. About 49 million Russians use this App every day.

Telegram, despite the attempts to ban it in Russia, is the country's third most popular messaging app after WhatsApp and Viber. 10,7 million people use Telegram in Russian daily.

Source: Mediascope, Russia, monthly active users, 12+, December 2020; *December 2019

# Data Collection and Analytics

The strategy is built on audit and research data on the market, demand, target audience, product, sales, and competitors. To build a comprehensive digital strategy, it is not enough to have common knowledge about the Russian market—one needs to understand what share in the market is taken by goods of your particular segment and whether there is any actual demand for an offer that is similar to yours.

Below we made a list of the most important questions, the answers to which will help you determine:

■ your audience in the Russian market,

■ competitors, and

■ distributors.
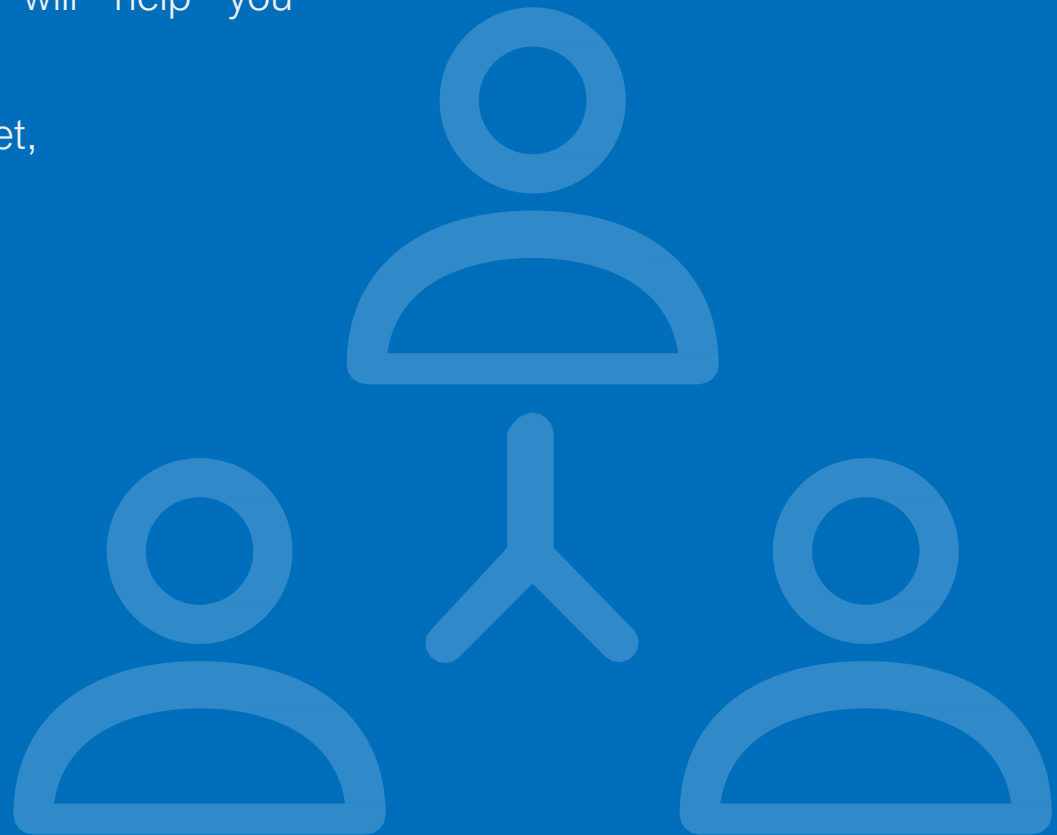
# Audience analysis and segmentation

- Who is your client? (Sex, age, social status)

- Where does he/she live?

- What is he/she interested in?

- Does he/she buy your goods or use services that are similar to your offer?

- Why does he/she need to buy your goods or use your service?

- How much is he/she ready to pay?

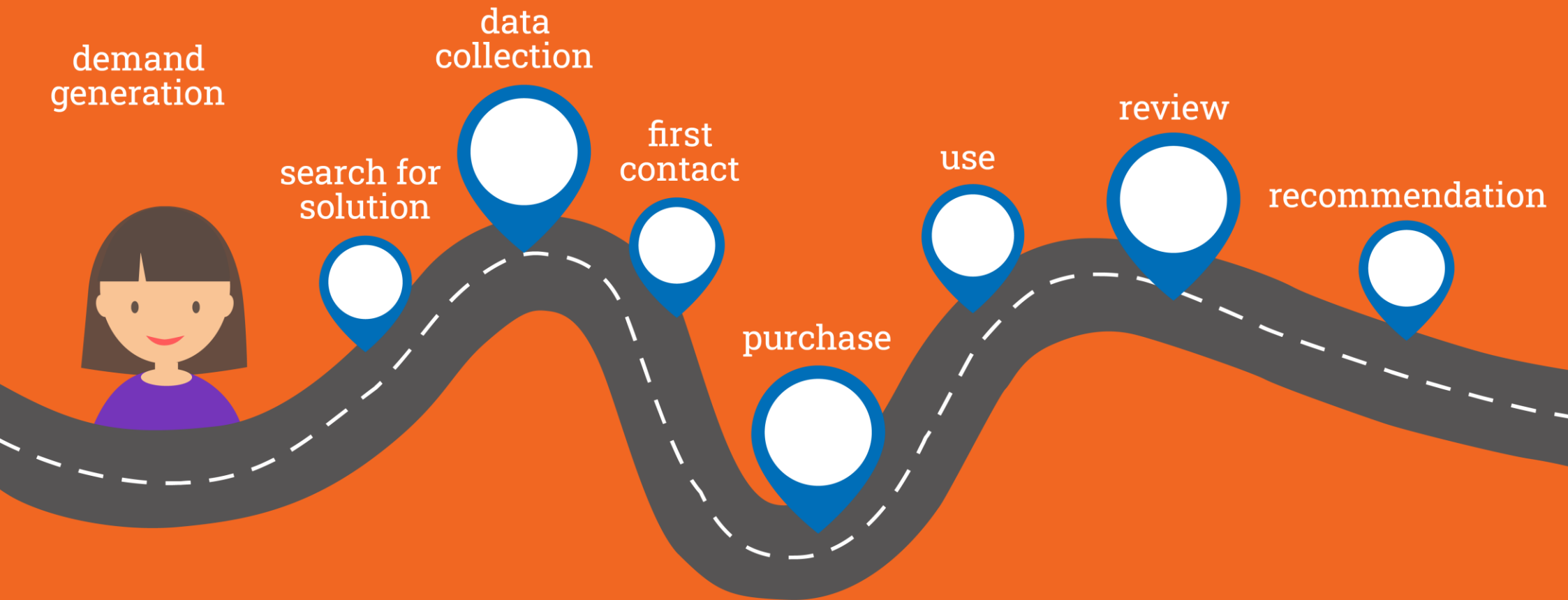- How does he/she look for goods and where does he/she buy them?

# Analysis of competitor

- Who are your direct competitors?

- What market share do they occupy?

- How do they promote themselves in the market?

- What regions are they present at?

- What target audience do they concentrate on?

- What channels do they use to interact with clients?

- What advertising and marketing tools do they use for promotion?

- What are their creatives and key message? Do they change by target audience and region?

# Analysis of distributors

- What distributors are there in the market who work with your segment?

- What regions and cities do they cover?

- What is an active client base of a distributor and what share does it take from the whole base in the market?

- What is a distributor's portfolio like?

- What goods and brands does he work with?

- Whom out of your competitors does he cooperate with? On what items?

- Does he have a warehouse and developed logistics?

- Does he have a service department?

- What channels does the distributor work with (online and offline)?

- Does he work with chain stores?

demand generation

search for solution

data collection

first contact

purchase

use

review

recommendation

Elaboration of a Promotion Strategy in the Russian Market on the basis of Customer Journey Mapping

The necessity to create a map showing a customer journey appeared at the time when customer communications became systemic: there is no more isolated perception of a website, social media, context ads, targeting as separate, independent tools. Today they all should work as a whole.

The whole customer journey is infused with points of engagement—this is when a marketer has a chance not only to interact with a user, but also to influence him or her to the advantage of him or her making one or another decision.

Let us see what key stages compose a customer journey and what digital channels can be involved on each stage to interact with potential buyers in the Russian market.
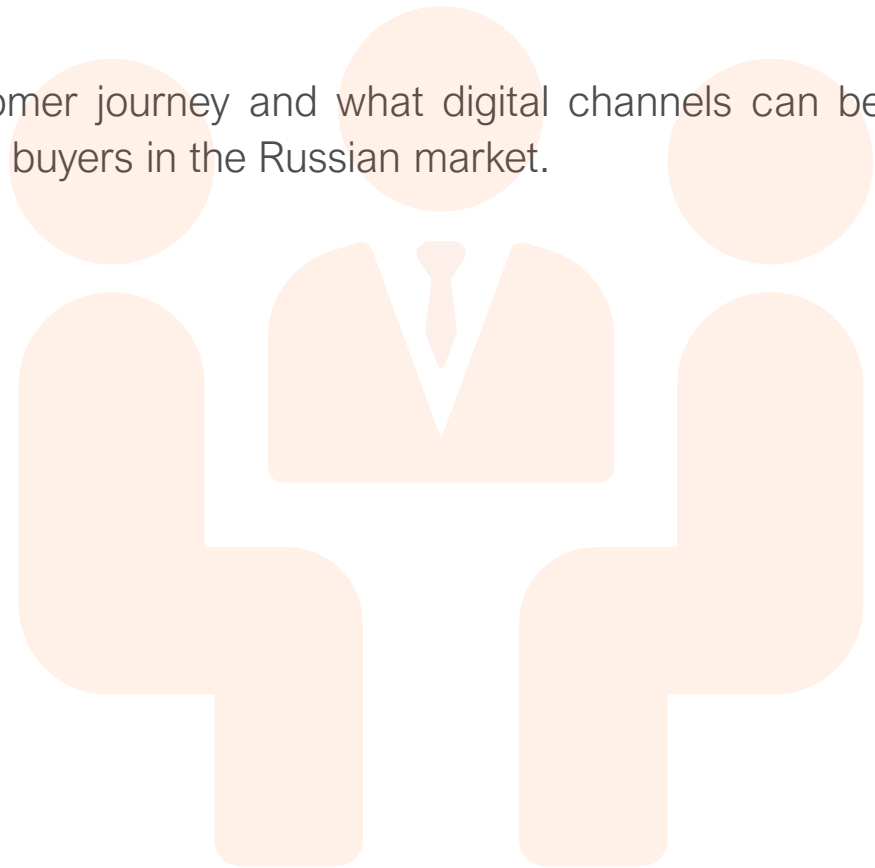
demand
generation

# Demand
# generation

**Goal** – pushing a user to recognize a need in a product/service

**KPI** – % expansion of demand and market/segment increase

Actions:
- Special projects
- Contests
- Viral video
- Tests
- Partner marketing
- Media advertising

Points of engagement
- Groups in social media (own and themed)
- Specialized portals
- Own website
- Mail-out

At the stage of demand generation, there is a fight for choice of 'big decisions' that a potential buyer makes. Let us figure out the whole customer journey at the example of clients in the foreign real estate industry (real estate developer from UAE).

Many Russians save money and mostly keep it either in a bank deposit account or in a jar at home. Suggest an idea to a potential client: depreciation and inflation devalue saved money— isn't it right time to invest it into something more reliable?
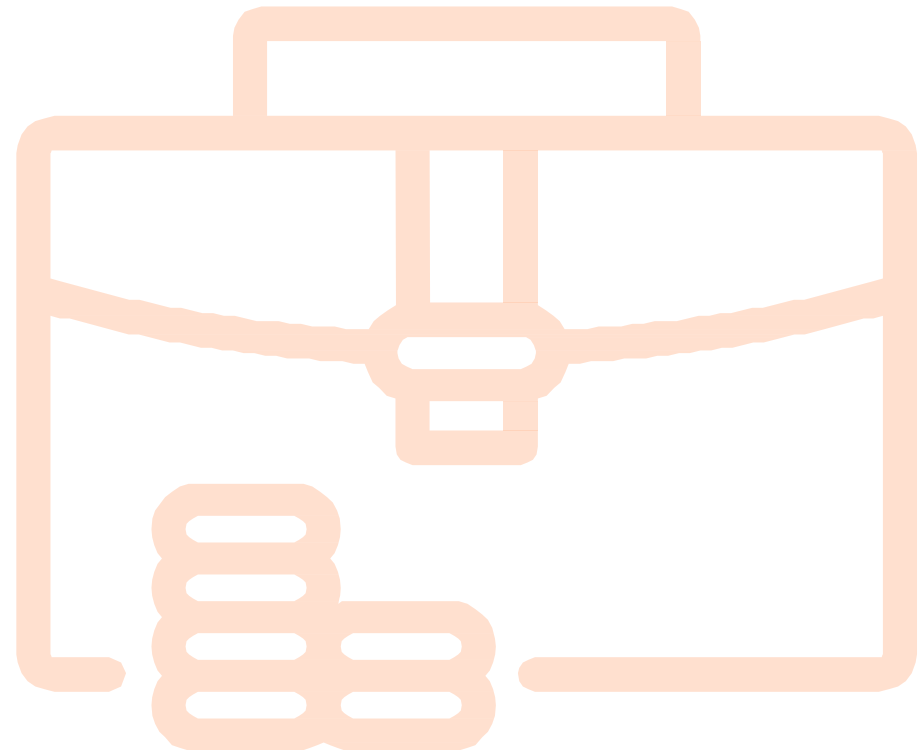
# Search for solutions

**Goal** – giving a reply to a request, show expertise, get a contact

**KPI** – % reach of the interested target audience from the previous stage

## Actions:
- Setting retargeting to useful content
- Maintenance of own blog, video channel, conduction of webinars, publication of WP devoted to a particular problem to be accessed by filling in a form (collection of potential clients' data)

## Points of engagement
- Mail-out
- Groups in social media (own and themed)
- YouTube channel
- Slideshare  channel
- Specialized  portals
- Own website

search
for solutions

So, now a person decides to invest his or her savings, standing at the parting: 'where do I invest my money?'

At this time, the client is already being fought for by a bank that proposes a deposit with an even more profitable rate, a broker with a tempting offer to invest in a stock market, other finance organizations, and, of course, construction developers who propose to invest money into a house/apartment/commercial real estate in Russia or abroad. At this stage, content marketing works again—give a nudge to a client that it is investments in real estate that are more profitable and reliable that investments in any finance organizations.

data
collection

# Data
# collection

**Goal** – demonstrating reliability and competitive advantages

**KPI** – targeted traffic in points of engagement

**Actions:**
- Competitive traffic capture
- Not selling, but teaching
- Leading to third-party sources
- Active handling of reviews

**Tools:**

SEO; context ads; media ads; targeted ads; RTB etc.

**Points of engagement**
- Social media
- Mail-out
- Company's website
- Call center
- Aggregator websites

At the data collection stage, a user does not only study offers, but also compares them, that is why it is so important to:

- show how you differ from competitors: for real estate in UAE — why a Russian should invest in real estate not in his/her city and even not in popular Europe, but exactly in UAE — there must be clearly stated USP and competitive advantages by various audience segments and competitors.

- demonstrate reliability of your company: pay attention to reviews and discussions, handle objections. In addition, it can be comments both about you and your competitors. For example, in a forum where people discuss purchase of real estate in Europe, you can offer real estate in UAE as an alternative (surely, with description of advantages).

# First
# contact

Goal – leading a client to sale

KPI – conversions vs. rejections

Actions:
- Show a product 'in its best light' (pictures of high quality, video, tour, 3D model)
- Show the use
- Offer to buy
- Retargeting to the product

Points of engagement
- Feedback forms in the website
- Call center
- Message communication in social media

first
contact

First contact is a stage where a user makes a final purchase decision. It is important to  simplify the process of direct reach of your company as much as possible: a feedback form,  a call from a  website,  an  online  consultant—provide  an  interested  user  with  an  opportunity  to  quickly clarify any issues on the goods and its purchase. For real estate in UAE, an online  overview of an apartment offered and adjacent infrastructure can become a great idea.

purchase

use

review

# Purchase- Use-Review

**Goal –** making clients happy, calming the dissatisfied, selling to those whom you did not sell

**KPI –** sales (+ delayed ones), LTV – Lifetime Value, actions leading to sales, negative and positive balance

### Actions:

- All buyers who addressed the company but did not buy goods should be attributed to a separate segment. Decide on costs on their attraction; works should be started on potentially valued

- Handling the negative. Elaborate a handling algorithm, review monitoring, and negative mitigation.

- Cross-sell & Up-sell for all well-disposed clients – email marketing, calls in the manner 'along with this product, people buy…'

- Handling reviews. Collection and use of positive reviews in promotion: placement in the website, mail-outs etc.

# Recommendation

**Goal** – receiving recommendations and new clients through already existing ones

**KPI** – after-sale cycle, CRV – customer recommendation, Value – how much money earned, from clients obtained through recommendations

**Actions:**

- Collection of recommendations. Prepare mechanisms for recommendations – email messaging, invitation to a group via social media, or a prepared post for social media
- Partnership program

recommendation

**Advertising Systems and Tools in the Russian Market. Brief Overview**

It is important for companies to understand clearly how and through what channels they can attract new audience. For this, they need not only to know the whole customer journey and make a full scheme of connections and crossings of promotion channels at his/her every step before the purchase, but also to understand specifics of online tools in the Russian market.

In this part, you will find answers to major questions related to online advertising tools in the Russian market:

- What search systems should be used for setting context ads targeted on Russian buyers?
- What social media should be used?
- What programmatic platforms and CPA networks are popular in the Russian market?
- Do you need to place video ads?
- How do you find influencers in Russia?

# Targeting in social media

Targeting works best for special offers (discounts and specials, time limited offers, exclusive offers etc.). In addition, apart from abstract objectives such as getting new page subscribers (if you actually have any), contributing to brand awareness, and generally stimulating promotion of your goods or services in social media, you should definitely set a more specific objective such as, for instance, getting a certain number of leads within the allocated budget

Targeted ads systems in Russia:

- VK Ads Manager

- Facebook Ads Manager (for targeting ads to Facebook and Instagram audience)

- Mytarget (for placement of ads on Odnoklassniki, My World, VK, and other projects of Mail.ru Group)

- Twitter Ads Manager

We did not put Linkedin on the list because it has been blocked in Russia since 2016.

# Paid search ads systems

Promoting in the market of Russia, you need to launch ads in two search systems: Yandex and Google. When adjusting context ads in the Russian market, it is worth paying special attention to specification of location (ad impression geography). This is caused by the fact that the area of Russia is huge (more than 17 million sq. km.), and clients from different regions of the country can make up totally different segments of target audience for your business.

Yandex.Direct is the biggest provider of context ads in the Russian Internet. In general, its functionality is very similar to one offered by Google Ads. The main operating principle is showing relevant search results (context ads) and Yandex ad network (media or banner ads).

Major context ads systems in Russia:
- Yandex.Direct
- Google Ads
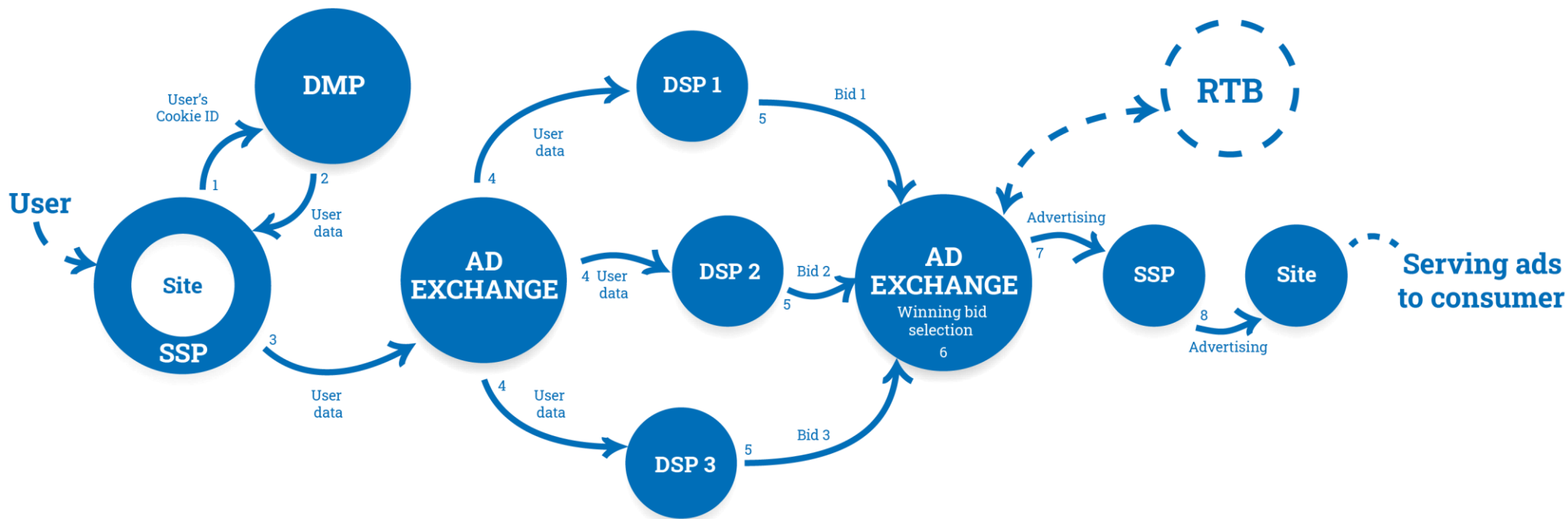
# Programmatic

Programmatic is sort of improved targeting when artificial intelligence algorithms analyze data received from pixels, calculate user and ad interaction probability, and select the most relevant audience for show.

Programmatic platforms in Russia:

- MediaSniper
- Soloway
- Relap.io.
- Auditorius.
- Getintent
- Programmatic.ru

# Video ads

According to Mediascope, YouTube is consistently in Top 3 leaders as per monthly reach of the Russian Internet audience. Notably, first two places are taken by such RuNet giants as Yandex and Google (ru+com).

YouTube monthly covers more than 65% Russian Internet users. Nearly 33 million watch YouTube in Russia daily.

Almost half of the YouTube audience in Russia consists of users aged 25-44 (45%).

From the marketing point of view, YouTube has quite a solvent audience—71% users have an average and higher income. At the same time, a bit more than 16% audience are specialists, while more than 10% are managers.
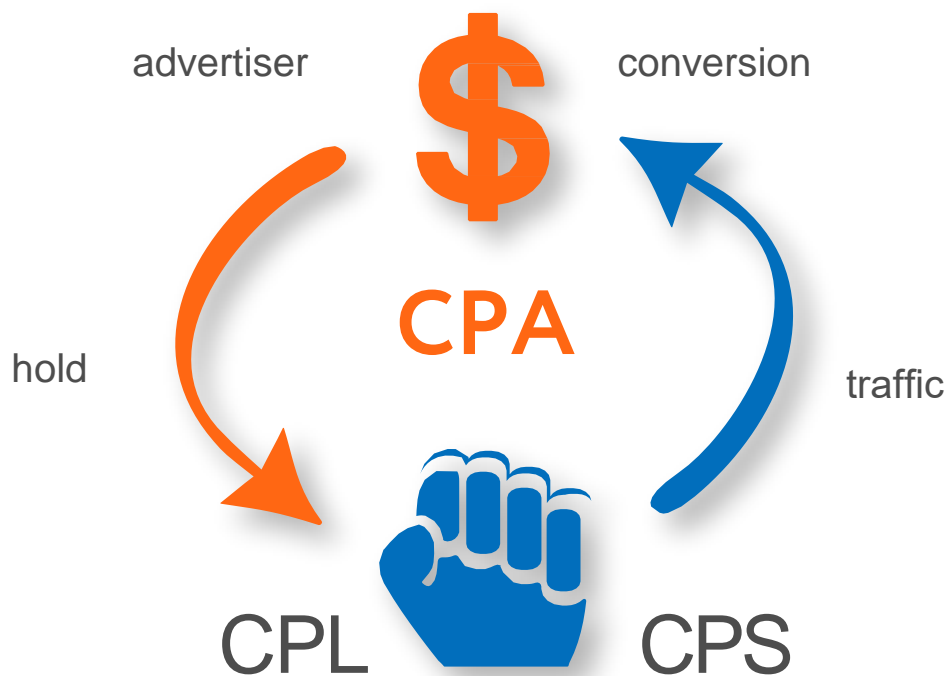
Placing ads on YouTube, you get an opportunity to reach not only the majority of users of social media that are popular in Russia, but also a huge lot of unique audience that uses only video hosting.
Ads in Russia are also placed on YouTube through Google Ads.

advertiser

conversion

$

**CPA**

hold

traffic

CPL

CPS

COST PER ACTION

# CPA
# networks
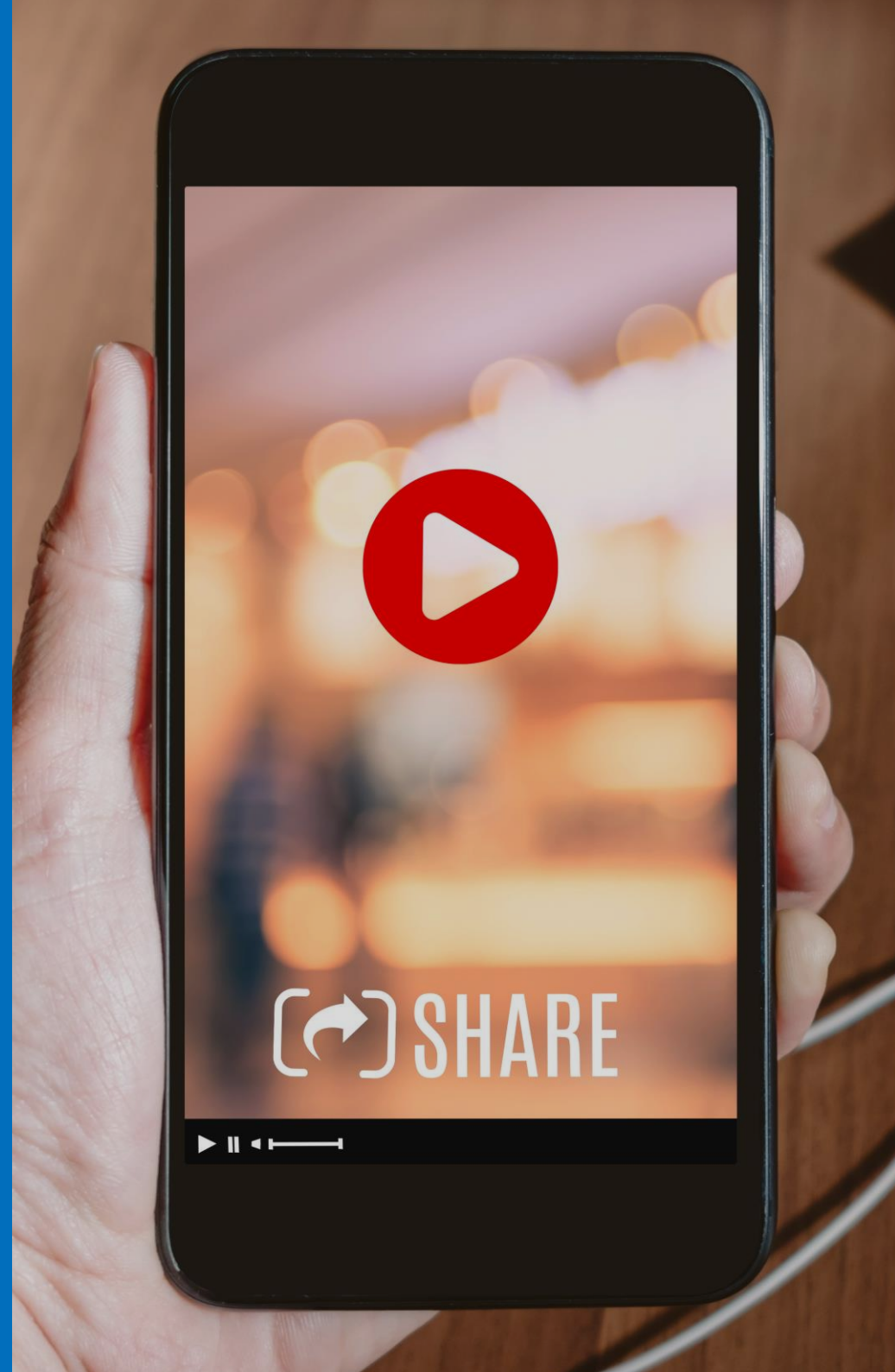
You pay not for clicks or impressions, which ROI is not always predictable, but for desired actions. It means that you can clearly plan your marketing budget, like, investing 1,000 dollars and getting 100 registrations. As a rules, such networks charge for such actions as registrations, video views, first pay, reaching a certain level, sales of goods, account activations.

CPA networks in Russia:

- CityAds
- Admitad
- Otclick-ADV
- OFFERRUM
- Actionpay
- Everad
- Shakes.pro

# Influencer marketing

One of 2020s key trends is promotion through publications of microbloggers (whose number of subscribers is nearly 10,000). Their publication price, as a rule, is lower, while their audience is more loyal.

How do you find bloggers in Russia?

**Option 1.** Click on thematic tags in social media. Look through thousands pictures and profiles, analyze them, and choose ones of the highest quality (pictures, texts with content of high quality and good engagement, and it is best to evaluate comments by hand, etc.).

**Option 2.** Look for certain thematic blogs via search on your own, which may take an enormous amount of time because you need not only to find, but also to study blogs and to understand how much an author is suitable particularly for your business objectives.

**Option 3.** Address to a marketing agency that will select the best Russian bloggers, taking into account the specificity of your offer and wishes.

"Every company
is a media company"

© Gary Vaynerchuck

# Content marketing

Today, content creation and distribution lets you get a higher reach for less money.

Share content that will catch, teach, address problems and 'pains' of users, suggest solutions:

- Tips and life hacks;
- Reviews of products and services;
- Instructions and operation manuals;
- Studies and cases;
- Comments and recommendations.

If you do not create content and do not tell about your company digitally, you do not exist!

If you do not build customer communications online, your competitors will do it!

# Distribution

It is not enough just to create content—you also need to distribute it. For this, it is important to use all channels that a company has.

Owned media:

- company's website,
- company's YouTube channel,
- company's social media accounts,
- directors' social media accounts,
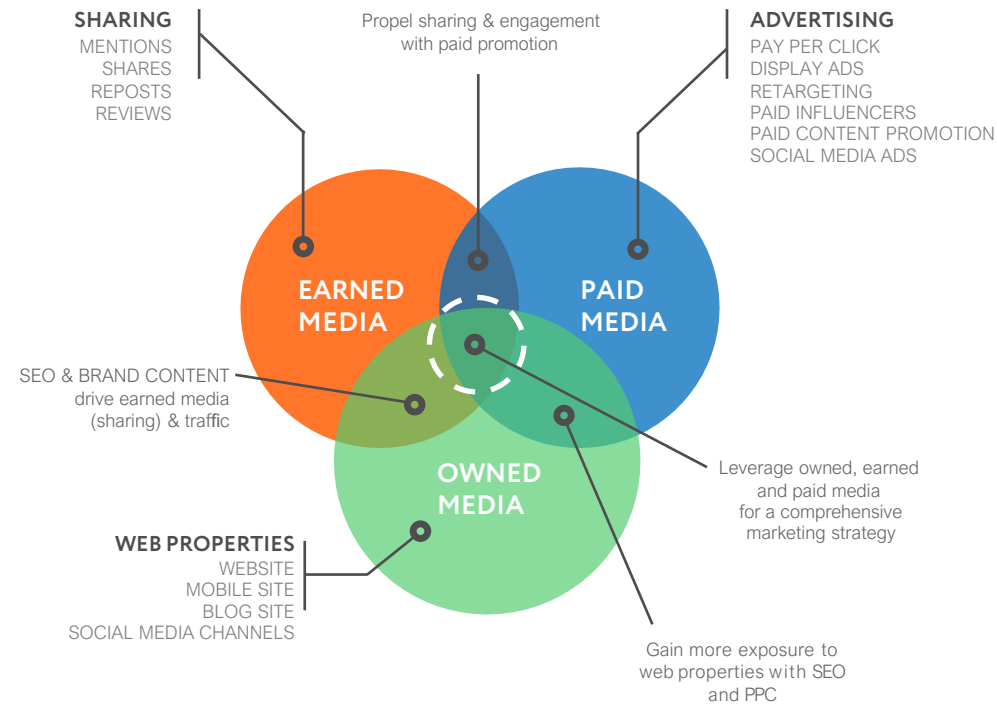- employees' social media accounts.

Earned media:

- clients' reviews,
- mentions in mass and social media,
- shares and reposts in social media

combined with ads placement in paid media that we considered in the previous part.

Today, not only every company, but every single person is media!

Create viral-oriented content—involve users into a dialogue, encourage them to share, repost, write reviews and recommendations.

## DIGITAL MARKETING TRIFECTA
### EARNED, OWNED & PAID MEDIA

**SHARING**
MENTIONS
SHARES
REPOSTS
REVIEWS

Propel sharing & engagement with paid promotion

**ADVERTISING**
PAY PER CLICK
DISPLAY ADS
RETARGETING
PAID INFLUENCERS
PAID CONTENT PROMOTION
SOCIAL MEDIA ADS

**EARNED MEDIA**

**PAID MEDIA**

SEO & BRAND CONTENT drive earned media (sharing) & traffic

Leverage owned, earned and paid media for a comprehensive marketing strategy

**OWNED MEDIA**

**WEB PROPERTIES**
WEBSITE
MOBILE SITE
BLOG SITE
SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Gain more exposure to web properties with SEO and PPC

# Advertising Campaign Effectiveness Analysis

If you only have statistics of an advertising campaign (Direct, VK or alike), you only see CTR, CPC, a number of impressions etc. Yes, you can optimize ads by their click through rate and cost per click, but you will not know how it all really affects sales.

Inclusion of analytics systems lets you get more data. With their help, you can track online conversions: calls, online orders, filling in forms etc.

However, a complex 'Call Tracking + Web Analytics + CRM' will give you the maximum peak. End-to-end analytics lets you estimate every source (to every key word) in terms of lifetime value (CLV or often CLTV), showing what tool brings more 'valued' clients.

# Automation

When working with several advertising systems, automation services let you:

- track advertising campaigns for context and targeted ads in a single window,
- manage hundreds of campaigns and advertisements by a couple of clicks: rates, budgets, links, texts, and other settings.

Popular Russian platforms for automation of context and targeted ads:

- Aori
- eLama
- Garpun
- Alytics
- Origami
- Marilyn

# Analytics

Connecting Google Analytics and Yandex.Metrics meters is what you need to do first to estimate effectiveness of website promotion activities. Ideally, they need to be connected upon launch of a website.

Website analytics systems let you understand the following:

- What is the duration of visit? What
- pages are most popular? What
- links do visitors click most?
- How much time do visitors spend on the website?
- Do website visitors become your clients?
- Do they do any desired actions (order, filling in forms, file download)?

Major website analytics systems in Russia:

- Yandex.Metrics
- Google Analytics

# Call tracking

Call tracking helps:
- track call sources as accurately as possible (up to a key word);
- estimate efficiency of a call center (record of all talks to operators, analysis of incoming calls) and improve customer experience);
- integration with CRM and Metrics and Analytics systems expands opportunities of accurate tracking of the journey sale.

Russian call tracking services:
- Calltouch
- CoMagic
- Callibri

# End-to-end analytics

While Yandex.Metrics and Google Analytics system let you define an application source, end-to-end analytics systems track a customer journey up to a purchase, and you can estimate costs of clicks and other actions of users (calls) in terms of sales.

End-to-end analytics systems let you understand the following:

- What channel brings more sales? What is their quantity and quality?
- Where should you invest more, based on your ROI?
- What is lifetime value of your clients?

Most popular end-to-end analytics systems in Russia:

- Calltouch
- CoMagic
- Roistat

# RMAA Agency

Marketing Agency

Comprehensive Digital Marketing Solutions in Russia: we handle everything from development of a marketing strategy and market analysis to ads production, digital and online advertising that fits your specific needs. For more information, contact RMAA team via e-mail:

office@rmaa.agency