

**SUCCESSFUL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS CONTENT
MARKETING APPROACH – THE CASE OF EYEGLASSES AND
SUNGLASSES RECYCLING**

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ABSTRACT

Nonprofit organizations in order to attract and to retain clearly-defined audience they use to apply the content marketing approach which leads to successful actions through the creation and distribution of a value which is relevant to consistent content. A successful case of a nonprofit organization based on content marketing is the Lions Club Organization eyeglasses/ sunglasses recycle activity. This activity does not only help to bring clear vision to millions of people but it also contributes to environment sustainable development.

This paper presents findings from a content marketing research project, concentrating on the determinants of eyeglasses/sunglasses recycling behavior amongst individuals in the area of Thessaloniki (Greece) and involves both qualitative research using focus groups and quantitative research using face to face interviews. The aim of the research was to understand what makes people recycle eyeglasses/ sunglasses. The project contains four areas of research: a) awareness and interpretation, b) beliefs, attitudes and behavior, c) relation between individuals and service provision and d) basic influence factors and trusted information resources. One of the clearest messages of the research was the need of information about sunglasses/ eyeglasses recycling. This influences the rate of eyeglasses and sunglasses recycling. All the individuals that took part in this research agreed that: a) eyeglasses and sunglasses recycle need to be or to become a habit for them, b) to receive more information about this activity and c) collection boxes to be near them.

Keywords: content management, recycling, Lions clubs eyeglasses and sunglasses recycling, environment sustainable development

1. INTRODUCTION

Content marketing is the marketing and business process for the creation and distribution of relevant and valuable content in order to attract, acquire and engage a clearly defined target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action. In content marketing the “content” is not only an educated one but is the “object” that inspires consumers-audiences to take action. Content marketing requires to understand the setting goals and to set a mission statement. In accord, content marketing is not only creating, distributing and sharing content in order to engage audiences but it also leads to branding improvement and other marketing goals that can serve with content marketing.

Nonprofit organizations are trying hard to plan their content marketing approach in order to be connected with the target audiences. Nowadays, the concept of creating content that leads to engagement with the target audience is becoming a key factor for nonprofit organizations and this happens because they try to achieve online success. During 2013 a research conducted in U.S.A showed that from 92% of nonprofit organizations, that are using online content marketing, only 25% believed that they were effective. According to this research they were using video (80%), articles on other websites (59%), blogs (58%), infographics (43%) and online presentations (43%) (Pulizzi, 2013).

Content marketing is not a new marketing approach as its application has started during the beginning of the 20th century; its appearance was through content marketing campaigns from profit and nonprofit organizations. Some of the nonprofit organizations content marketing campaigns had a great influence on government policies and people lives (Morpus, 2017). It is obvious that content should never be created for its own sake but it has to support, at least, one core marketing or business goal.

Through Recycle for Sight activity, Lions Clubs International collect since 1930 new and gently used eyeglasses and sunglasses in collection bins at a variety of locations in their communities including libraries, doctors’ offices, schools, sidewalks, banks and retail stores. The collected glasses are then shipped to the nearest Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center, where volunteers sort the glasses, clean them and determine their prescription strength. After carefully packaging the refurbished spectacles, Lions store them until they can be distributed, usually through humanitarian missions to developing nations.

In Greece Lions is the only organization that recycles eyeglasses/sunglasses. The other way to recycle them is to recycle them as plastics (category 7 -other). This paper presents results from a

content management research project towards to the determination of recycling behavior amongst individuals in Thessaloniki (Greece). This research involves both quantitative based on individual's attitudinal survey data and in order to provide qualitative data it elaborates with a range of focus groups. The aim of the research was to gather baseline information of the attitudes and behavior of persons towards eyeglasses/sunglasses recycling in the area of Thessaloniki, ahead of the campaign by Thessaloniki's Lions Clubs. The research will provide an informed analysis of attitudinal and behavioral change that can be associated with the public communication and education campaigns in order to evaluate campaign effectiveness. It also shows the results and analysis of the attitudes, motivations and behaviors of 265 persons from Thessaloniki, in order to try to interpret how behavioral change can be achieved in this area. This year Lions eyeglasses/sunglasses content marketing campaign is aiming to increase eyeglasses/sunglasses recycle.

In Thessaloniki during the last ten years the number of collected pairs is about 1.000 per year. Except the year 2012 where a large optical company donated 160.000 pair of eyeglasses and sunglasses. Thessaloniki's Lion Clubs extensive communication and development campaign is aiming to dramatically increase the number of collected eyeglasses and sunglasses per year.

2. CONTENT MARKETING AND LIONS EYEGLASSES AND SUNGLASSES RECYCLING

Content marketing strategy effectiveness to nonprofit organizations is based on a well documented content marketing, frequent content marketing team meetings and organizational clarity on what content marketing success looks like. Content marketing tactics include: infographics, social media content, blogs, e-Newsletters, in-person events and illustrations/photos (Pulizzi and Barry, 2016).

Impaired vision is actually the most widespread disability in the world. It affects 4.2 billion people around the globe, but according to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that 108 million people worldwide have impaired distance vision (Bourne et al., 2013) while nearly five times as many (517 million people) have impaired near vision (Holden et al. 2008). Vision is an important process in the growth, development and performance of children (Gesell, 1998). The raised awareness of eyeglass and sunglasses recycled process of Lions Clubs has gained through the creation of content that is rooted to the Organization's story and explains through leaflets, print outs, social media and websites the activity benefits and operation performance. Lions clubs presents in their website their International face and their website is enriched with articles and examples about eyeglass and sunglasses recycle activities.

Their website is structured and well documented by defining the existing problem “...The World Health Organization estimates that more than 150 million people suffer from blurred vision due to uncorrected refractive errors, such as nearsightedness or farsightedness...”. They raise the awareness consequences of this problem “...The inability to see clearly can prevent children from learning in school, adults from finding work or staying employed and older adults from living independently...”. The recycle of eye glasses and sunglasses process is clearly defined “...The glasses are then shipped to the nearest Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center, where volunteers sort the glasses, clean them and determine their prescription strength... Lion volunteers and eye care professionals screen thousands of children and adults during sight missions, providing them—free of charge—with prescription lenses, frames and ultimately a better quality of life. Lions also provide recycled glasses to nonprofit organizations focused on eye care, as well as to optometry college groups, religious organizations and military assistance groups, which also distribute to people in need...” and finally gives success stories of this activity “...Each year, Lions collect about 30 million pairs of glasses. Clubs in Australia and Japan annually send 500,000 pairs of glasses to six recycling centers in Australia. Over the past decade, more than 3.5 million pairs of eyeglasses from these centers have been shipped to locations including India, Middle East and the smallest islands in Indonesia...”. (Lions, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki (ATEI-Th - Greece) and qualitative research used for three focus groups. The total number of participants were 265 and they were divided in three groups: a) Individuals (125; 47%), b) Students (120; 45%) and c) Optical Shops and shops that sell eyeglasses/sunglasses (20; 8 %) (Figure 1).

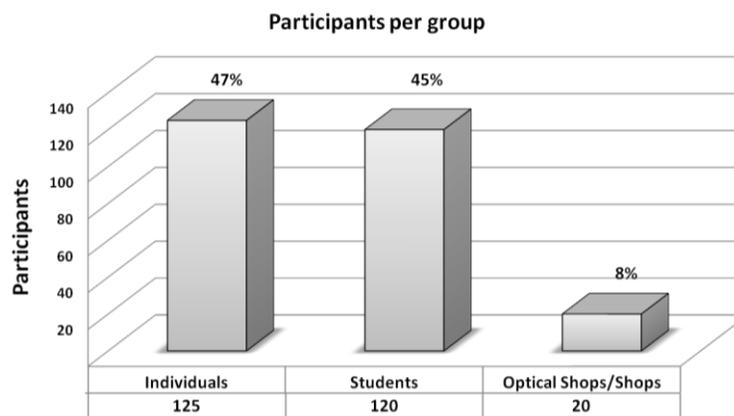


Figure 1: Participant’s groups.

The identified profile was based on students ATEI-Th (aged between 18 and 25), individual citizens of Thessaloniki (aged over 25) and optical shops or shops that sell eyeglasses/sunglasses (aged over 25), (Figure 2).

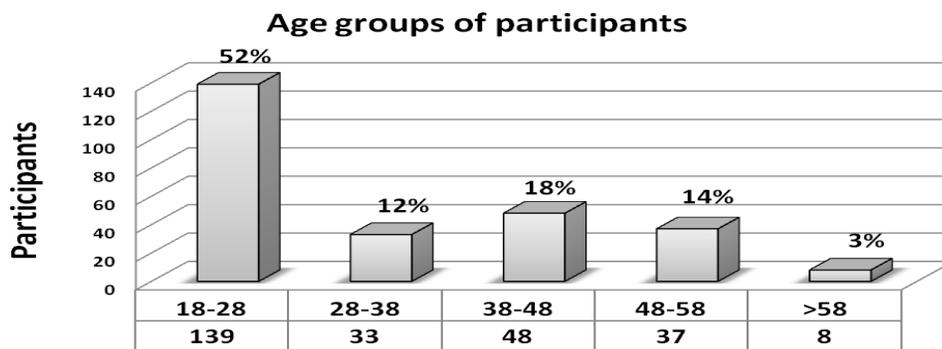


Figure 2: Participant’s age groups.

The quantitative research used face-to-face interviews for setting baseline attitudes and behavior (Bonoma, 1986). The overall aim of the research was to evaluate the impact of the Lions eyeglasses/sunglasses content marketing campaign, in terms of its influence on the following issues:

- 1) Awareness and understanding of eyeglasses and sunglasses waste and recycling issues.
- 2) Beliefs and attitudes towards eyeglasses and sunglasses waste and sunglasses recycling.
- 3) Type of service provision that people want.
- 4) Key influencing factors and trusted information sources.
- 5) Current behavior and responsibility of individuals based on eyeglass and sunglasses disposal and recycling.
- 6) Opinion that individuals have about the campaign relative to awareness, attitudes, reactions and campaign’s branding (including the campaign’s message).

The aim of the qualitative research was based on exploring in depth the interpretation of the attitudes of the individuals through the translation of their attitudes to behavior change. Additionally, questions about “what brings change? or what are the barriers that individuals see in this activity?” were set.

There were five categories of questions that have been addressed to focus groups. The question categories were: interpretation, perception, information, service and actions. Interpretation deals with current actions on eyeglasses/sunglasses recycling. Perception deals with attitude and behavior, Information deals with knowledge of eyeglasses/sunglasses recycling process, Service

deals with the provided means and Action deals with decisions to stop or to continue this action (Figure 3).

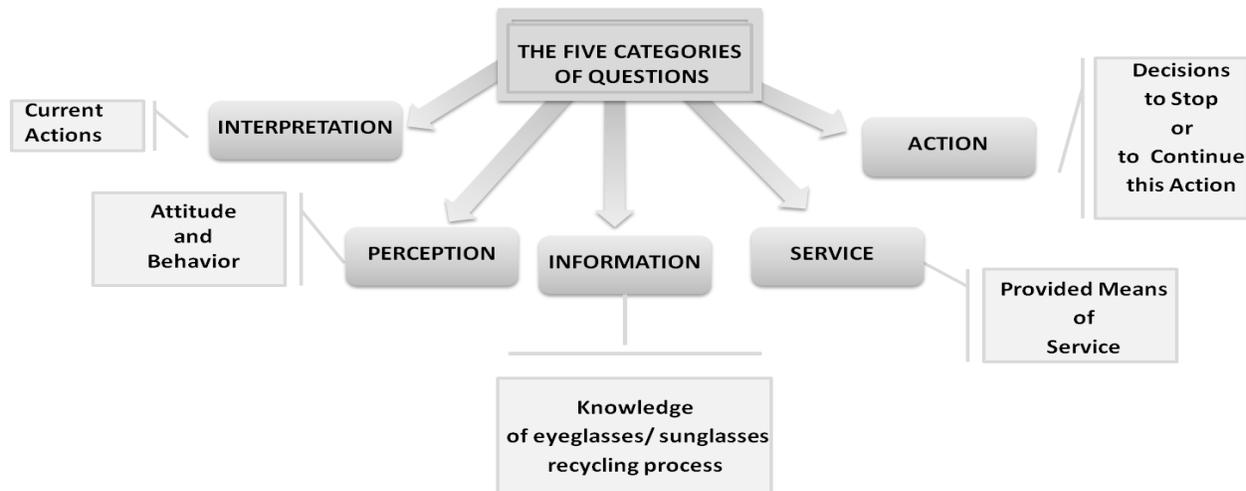


Figure 3: The five categories of the questions

Additionally it was included participants reaction on the campaign’s Greek logo “The old glasses give the new life” which is a free translation of the Lions Clubs logo “Recycle for Sight”.

What this research tried to do is to explore the opinions, practice and attitudes of Thessaloniki’s individuals, picked to represent certain sections of the population but not necessarily able to represent the views of the population of Thessaloniki area as a whole. In this research it was tried to explore the attitudes and behaviors of groups of similar types of recyclers. For each group the time spent on the process was half an hour and the discussion was based on the five categories of the questions and on the campaign’s leaflet. In this process notes have kept for analysis.

There were slightly more female. In general the participants were persons with different recycling behavior. The first step is to identify participants recycling behavior and especially their eyeglasses/sunglasses recycling behavior. The group selection was based on the inclusion of a very cross-section of gender and age. According to their given responses the participants divided in two main categories: general recyclers (159; 60%) and non recyclers (106; 40%). The recyclers were divided in two categories non-eyeglasses/sunglasses recyclers (136; 86%) and eyeglasses/sunglasses recyclers (23; 14%), (Figure 4).

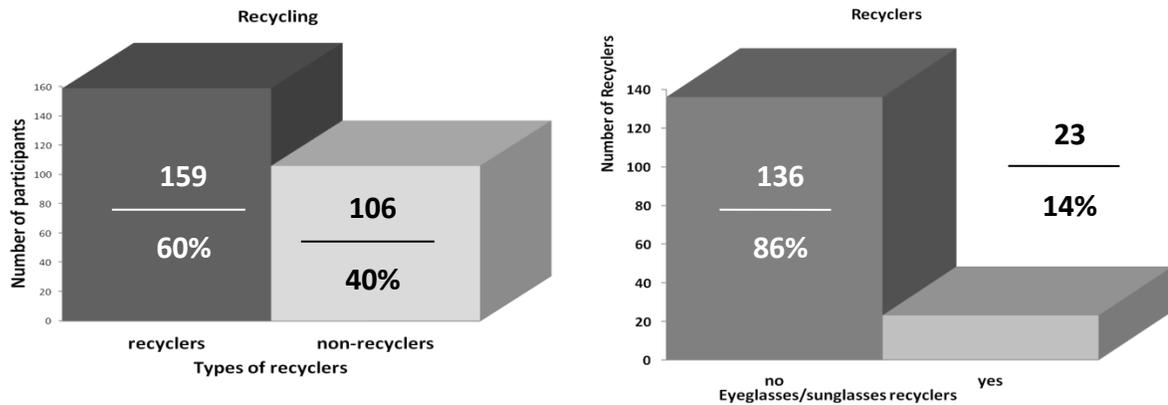


Figure 4: Participants and recycling categories

For each group followed the same script or question guide and the discussions were analyzed qualitatively through coding. The comments were grouped according to the five categories of the questions and issues that stemmed from the question guide.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented together with the five categories: interpretation, perception, information, service and action which are used to answer the question “what makes persons recycle eyeglasses and sunglasses”.

According to the quantitative findings only 9% say that they are recycling eyeglasses/sunglasses. The research shows that this recycling activity behavior in Thessaloniki area is static as the persons who are recycling this year eyeglasses and sunglasses is about the same during the last two years. This pattern is the same for the three groups. It is obvious that from the collected data the need of information about the activity of eyeglasses/sunglasses recycle process is required. The lack of information is the factor that influences the low rate of this recycling activity. In accord it is obvious that the “awareness/information” is the key factor for at least 40% of the persons that did not recycling eyeglasses/sunglasses. The levels of recycling from the participants that are following the recycle process: 10% recycles them as plastics (16 participants), 4% give them to Lions (7 participants) and 86% do not recycle them at all (136 participants).

An important message that is required to be communicated about this activity is to point its benefits. According to the research 70% of the participants have never heard about this activity. Another factor relative to the low percentage of recycling is that 55% did not know about the

provided service by Lions, they wanted more information about this type of recycling process and mentioned that this campaign has to be spread.

The issue that appears is not about a lack of concern for the people that need eyeglasses or about the environment, but more a lack of awareness and consideration on a regular basis. In other words eyeglasses/sunglasses recycling have to become a common behavior.

The participants that they did not recycle them did not know where the Lions' recycle boxes are placed and they wanted to know if there is any list about the place where the boxes are placed. Furthermore there were complaints about the lack of advertising of this activity. Also, there were comments from the participants that eyeglasses/sunglasses recycle campaign should not be only under Lions Clubs responsibility but it has to be a shared responsibility of Municipality of Thessaloniki and of Chamber of Commerce too.

Both the optical shops/shops group and the students group proposed hard-hitting messages as more effective than personalize messages and engaging directly with communities. The individual group pointed that face to face campaigns are better than leaflets, and also that a long term consistent campaign is needed. Also they proposed that recycle boxes have to be in more locations.

Worldwide there are a number of approaches that some commercial firms are using in order to increase the recycle process on a number of products. A good example is the H&M firm where if its customers take a bag to H&M to be recycled then these customers will get a 15% discount voucher to use off their next purchase (Campbell, 2017). A similar approach may follow the eyeglasses/sunglasses optical shops in Thessaloniki and through this approach it is possible to convince more persons to recycle their eyeglasses/sunglasses.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this research the results from these three focus groups and the quantitative survey work, highlights a number of similarities and differences between these three groups. Their common base was that awareness is an important factor for the involvement of more people in this recycling activity. According to the level that recycling is part of their life the participants of these three groups wanted different information. This information has to be analyzed prior to the establishment of a new content marketing campaign. The most popular means to support the content marketing campaign is television, local newspapers, radio and social media and which one was the most suitable one depends on their age. For example television is more preferable for ages over 45 and social media for ages below 25 and for ages between 25 and 45 television and social media were nearly equal. However what came across from the three groups that took

part in this research is that the provision of information and the creation of awareness without having a list of the locations of the recycle boxes then the content marketing campaign will fail.

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