CREATING TARGET GROUP FOCUSED CONTENT IN AN DIGITAL INFORMATION OVERLOAD ENVIRONMENT – A COMBINED SEGMENTATION APPROACH

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Abstract

The growing amount of digital media and the permanent accessibility of the world wide web are offering a broad range of opportunities for marketers and brands to get in touch with their potential target groups. Nevertheless, this development also created a digital information overload environment in which consumers actively allocate their attention on specific media and use deliberately or unconsciously set filters to avoid advertising and information which is considered as not relevant. If the content of an advertisement or the transferred information is seen as irrelevant consumers will filter it even though they are located in the right target group. The creation of digital media content that meets its target group and is considered as relevant or valuable information is an often discussed topic as there are several approaches. The following article uses the model of psychographic segmentation in combination with a recently developed model called DRMABS (Decompensation and Re-assembly of Markets by Segmentation) used for competitive revelry strategies and analyses of large markets. This article aims to create insights in those two models and the combination of them to form a theoretical approach which shows new findings in how target group relevant content can be designed.

Keywords: *content creation, digital media, attention fragmentation, psychographic segmentation, marketing strategy, targeting, DRMABS*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketers often use the phrase "*content is king"* referring to the widely spread opinion that the content of an advertisement is the most critical issue regarding getting attention by consumers and potential target groups. However, what will happen if just pure content is not king anymore as consumers are setting conscious and unconscious filters and avoid certain media outlets as a reaction to an increasing amount of digital information? What if consumers allocate themselves in niches and sub-channels and specialize their consumption patterns in order to avoid an information overload environment?

Several approaches are focusing on those questions from different scientific points of view. They all agree that there are changes in consumption patterns and consumer reactions to advertising - positive and negative ones. Changes in the environmental structures of how information is communicated in a digital age and the usage of not adapted marketing methods and tools to this developments lead to phenomena like attention and audience fragmentation both mainly generated and cause by information overload (Webster and Ksiazek, 2012; Riles, Pilny and Tewksbury, 2018). Information overload itself can be attributed to the usage of marketing methods, such as advertising clutter, which aim mainly for a big spread of information; also target group focused with a broader range of used media outlets which enlarges the overall output of digital information (Schumann, von Wangenheim and Groene, 2014). Another critical topic regarding content creation is the overall information quality as it has a significant impact on how the information will be accepted by the user and spread in user-to-user communications, e.g., in social networks (Zheng, Zhao and Stylianou, 2013). Besides the short outlining of the impacts caused by audience and attention fragmentation and information overload, this article focusses on the explanation of psychographic segmentation and lifestyle and value approaches which allow an in-detail understanding of target groups as well as their needs. Psychographic segmentation methods e.g., AIO measures, the VALS™ model or LOV (Liu *et al.*, 2019) as analyzation tools will be integrated into the DRMBAS model (Ringel, 2017) to create a theoretic approach on how intelligent target group aiming and from the point of view of consumers relevant content can be developed. This approach also provides answers to the mentioned questions above. The outcome of the combination and manipulation of the segmentation concepts shows how a deeper understanding of the target groups and their segmentation

helps to create and deliver content which appears as added value or delighters regarding the overall product features.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Information overload, audience and attention fragmentation, information quality

Information overload and the accompanying phenomena audience and attention fragmentation have a significant impact on how consumers react to digital information and how it will be processed and saved in their cognitive system (Webster and Ksiazek, 2012).

Information overload refers to a not processable amount of information which negatively affects the users/consumers and has a significant impact on the quality of the saved information in the cognitive system (Eppler and Mengis, 2004) as well as on their psychological and physiological health (Drössler *et al.*, 2018). Information overload in digital media is caused by the usage of advertising clutter methods, and the marketing theory that spreading information over several media outlets enlarges the reach of potential consumers and the target groups, e.g., a particular product (Schumann, von Wangenheim and Groene, 2014). The targeting in that clutter is focused on a broad majority of consumers. The increasing amount of digital media outlets also enlarges the overall amount of digital spread information, which influences the consumers choice quality (Lee and Lee, 2004). This growing amount of available requested or unrequested information, media outlets, and the permanent accessibility to the World Wide Web leads to changes in consumers consumption patterns.

Audience fragmentation describes one of those noticeable changes as it describes the behavior of users in a growing information channel and media outlet environment. In general, it means that users have a broader range of opportunities and outlets where they gather their information from and where their needs regarding information get satisfied the best. Nevertheless this does not mean that those users who are focusing some parts of their attention in niches are not present on the popular media outlets as consumers allocate themselves in niches and media outlets where they find useful information for specialized consumption preferences but also gain information in more prominent media outlets (Webster and Ksiazek, 2012). Depending on the informational content, the relevant niche and media outlet, the marketing strategy and relevant content must be adapted to the specific consumption patterns and spread on channels preferred by a particular target group.

Attention fragmentation is another common effect when consumers are dealing with information overload. Due to a limited amount of attention span (Miller, 1994) and time to spend on a specific media outlet or in a niche which provides a specialized information users limit the time they spend on one of those in general (Leroy, 2009). This development, enhanced by the growing possibilities to be connected to the world wide web with several devices parallel and the amount of media outlets, subchannels and niches leads to a reduced attention span, attempted multi-tasking and split-attention (Slava Kalyuga, Sweller and Chandler, 1999).

Information quality has a direct impact on all three mentioned phenomena as it directly influences the perception of the transferred information. This means that if there is a directly noticeable added value the information is more likely to be gathered and processed than if it is unclear if the content has a relevance for the consumer and his needs what also influences the user-to-user communication and the spread of information among them as it will only be shared from one to other members of the same community and niche if it offers apparently a certain delighter (Zheng, Zhao and Stylianou, 2013).

In sum, this means that content must provide information which communicates the added value for a specific target group in order to get noticed and be processed by the consumer. The creation of this high-quality informational content requires, besides a knowledge of the channels, media outlets, and niches where the aimed for target group is located, an into deep understanding of the target group needs. If advertising content fulfills this conditions, it is more likely that it reaches its aimed for target group even though the competition in an information overload environment is high and consumers specialize their consumption patterns and allocate in niches. To understand direct needs and expectations of such

specialized target groups, depending on the related and advertised product, a psychographic segmentation approach provides significant insights.

2.2. Psychographic segmentation

In contrast to several market segmentation theories and methods which all focus on identifying, getting in touch and transfer information to a specific target group, psychographic segmentation offers an into deep understanding, as it focusses not just on personality but on lifestyle and value system approaches which are more definable and precise (Liu *et al.*, 2019). The most commonly used ones are VALS™, LOV, and AIO (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, 2001) offering insights in the preferences of a particular target group. Those methods are applicable in big markets but also niches and sub-channels as they are highly adaptable. The assessment of values and lifestyle shows, besides the mentioned preferences, changes in behavioral and consumption patterns (Peterson and Sharpe, 1973) and thus makes it easier for content developers to adapt certain advertising information to those (Liu *et al.*, 2019). Besides the analysis, those methods are also used as predictive models regarding the mentioned changes in consumer behavior (Weinstein, 1994).

Subsequent two lifestyle and value approaches are explained to outline how psychographic segmentation is applied.

2.2.1. LOV (List of Values)

The List of Values (LOV) lifestyle segmentation method is, compared to VALS™, an approach to make fundamental values measurable and outline able and consists of eight key values (Kahle and Kennedy, 1989).

Sense of belonging	Warm relationships with others	Self-fulfillment	Being well respected
Fun and enjoyment of life	Security	Self-respect	Sense of accomplishment

Table 1. LOV key values (Kahle and Kennedy, 1989)

The LOV segmentation is used for a more comprehensive and not in detail defined target group as the measures/needs described in Table 1. are very generalizing. This is a consumer-focused approach, e.g., for popular daily consumer goods and their contribution to users basic perceptions. It does not offer in detail niche segmentation opportunities nor explains behavioral patterns of the user and how those change. However, as an overall segmentation approach, the LOV can be implemented as a channel and media outlet selection method. This is possible as the allocation of users over those, and the communication in those often refers to those fundamental values (Sudbury and Simcoek, 2009). Creation of relevant and target group focused content for a broader range of customers, which transfers more superficial information that still has relevance for a majority of the target group can be permuted with this approach. Especially for large consumer markets, the combination of LOV and DRMABS, which is a segmentation approach for those, this offers new findings on crucial value distribution. Nevertheless, as this article focusses on media outlets with a more niche character, the defined and detailed VALS™ model offers more insights. Another point is that relevant content in niches requires a narrow definition of the target group and its needs.

2.2.2 VALS ™ (Values and Lifestyle System)

The Values and Lifestyle System is a further development of psychographic study approaches and integrates lifestyle as a marketing measure. "Lifestyle, then, is a system of individual differences in the habitual use of declarative and procedural knowledge structures that intervene between abstract goal states (personal values) and situation-specific product perceptions and behaviors" (Brunsø, Scholderer and Grunert, 2004). Figure 1. outlines the dimensions of the Values and Lifestyle model and shows the sophisticated approach on segmentation by using three main motivations ideals, achievement, self-expression and the availability of resources which defines the target group regarding their traits (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, 2001).

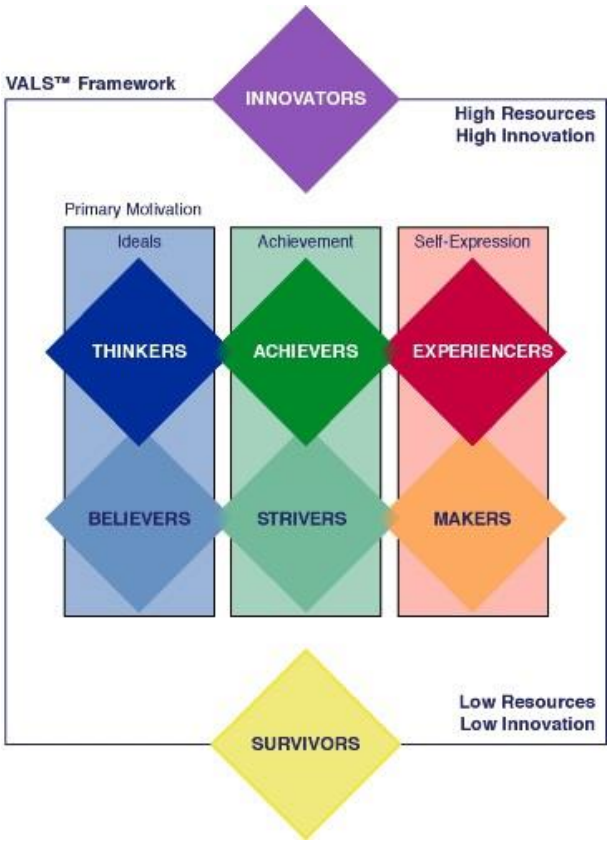


Fig. 1. Values and Lifestyle System (Bhasin, 2017)

Using the VALS™ model to segment a target group which allocates itself in a niche or subchannel, to avoid information overload or uses this strategy as a consciousness or unconsciousness set filter system, by focusing on traits and available resources which are revealed by usage and consumption patterns, offers into detail insights and a high segmentation level. The segmentation level with a primary focus on personal values in a specific lifestyle environment and connected to the measure of resources and involvement willingness shows which content has to be created to meet the needs of this specialized consumption group. The degree of specialization, of course, varies depending on available resources which are not mandatory limited to monetary values but also demographic and regional circumstances.

2.3. DRMABS (Decompensation and Re-assembly of Markets By Segmentation)

The DRMABS model developed in 2016/17 is a new approach to the analysis of large markets with a high amount of asymmetric and in general competitive rivalry. It combines and adapts several market segmentation and analysation methods and restructures those to a dynamic tool as it is a big challenge for managers to analyze the competitive rivalry in one market and make direct and indirect competitors visible in first and second ones for one product, in relation to same or similar ones and former approaches

still focus on smaller markets with a manageable amount of competing companies and products (Ringel, 2017).

To understand how the DRMABS model can be applied, it is essential to understand how the whole approach was developed. Figure 2. shows the phases of the DRMABS development with step 4 being the actual model, which is explained afterward.

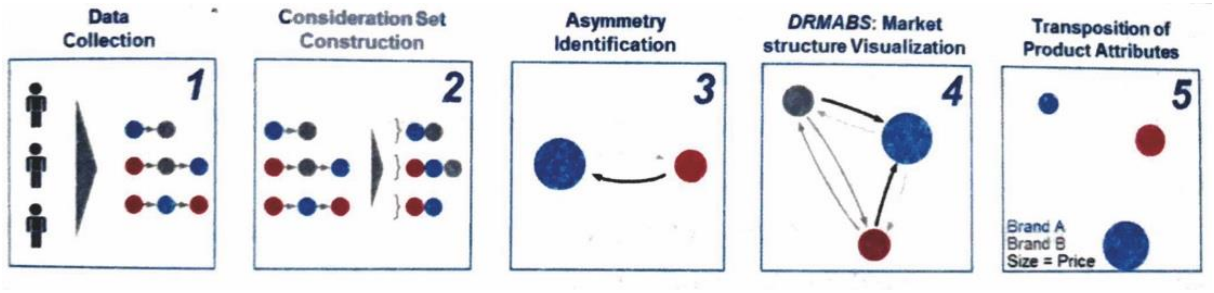


Fig. 2. DRMABS approach development (Ringel, 2017)

In the course of this article, step 4, the DRMABS market structure visualization has an accentuated role. Due to this, a short explanation is followed by the actual model.

Step 1 is a necessary data collection which generates content out of, e.g., cookie or click behavior tracking. This gained data information is considered into sets in step 2, which reveals competitive appearance from the user perspective, e.g., users comparing products to each other as a database. Those sets can also be used as a predictive or analyzing tool as they disclose competitive market structures regarding substitution of a specific product by a not yet as competitor seen one. Step 3 is a data and consideration set based identification of asymmetric market and direct market competition comparing all kinds of "own" products with competitive and substitutional ones. When talking about a market, it compares all products on an overall level (global competitive asymmetry) while the asymmetric competition between pairs of products is directly compared in a particular environment (local competitive asymmetry). (Ringel, 2017)

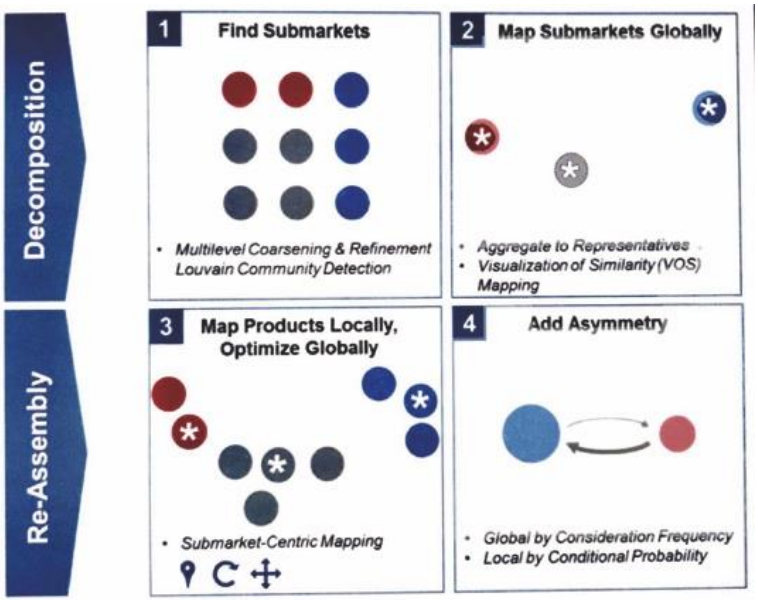


Fig. 3. DRMABS model (Ringel, 2017)

The DRMABS model shown in Figure 3 is a combined network analysis and graph theory approach using adapted extended models from different fields of research. This enables the model to visualize asymmetric competitive markets, global and local. Especially this visualization was not realizable before as products were overlapping due to the competitive amount in specific markets and submarkets what inhibited accurate modeling. It was not possible to analyze and compare submarkets and niche markets with big markets nor prove their existence, in an appropriate competitive environment. Step 1 identifies and connects submarkets to create an overview regarding the competitive environment, including submarkets and niches. In step 2 a segmentation for an individual product in a particular market takes place what leads to an aggregated submarket consideration and shows similarities which reduce the overall network of products and focusses on submarkets and their in-between connections. The identified submarkets are outlined to each other based on a weight scale of aggregated attributes. The submarket-centric map in step 3 shows all local and global submarkets across all product categories. This reveals all conjunctions between them, makes them scalable and comparable with each other. Adding asymmetry in step 4, global modeling of the relevance of submarkets in the markets and regarding the competition to each other is represented by bubble size (global) and weighted arrows (local). This creates a full asymmetric competitive market overview. (Ringel, 2017)

In sum this approach offers an in-detail analysis of large markets and discloses the asymmetric competition in submarkets global and local measurable what provides a more defined understanding of how consumers give relevance to certain substitutes which in the first sight are not considered as competition and how competing products have different market shares in different global markets, submarkets, and niches.

2.4. Research design

The applied research method is an external secondary literature research in a triangulation approach to capture different dimensions on the topic. Therefore in the form of desk research, several data from different fields of research are analyzed, and similarities pointed out which are conjunction able with the topic of content creation in the context of digital information overload. The purpose is to gain more theory and methodology findings on a new approach regarding content creation to clarify the research question and accompanying questions on combining market analysis and target group research. This segmentation approach compares in particular two methods.

To approximate both models to each other, manipulation in the form of a combination of them and to determine relevant values and levels from the perspective of information overload and gathers findings on phenomena accompanying is made. This means that the dependant and independent variables are on purpose limited to create a theoretical model consisting of both previous explained.

3. COMBINED SEGMENTATION APPROACH

The outlined combined segmentation approach is a combination of the VALS™ psychographic values and lifestyle segmentation method and the DRMABS method. The hypothetical developed model should help marketers to precisely define their target group by detecting relevant markets and their niches where potential customers are located. Figure 4. shows the DRMABS model in total for the market of LED-TVs while Figure 5. offers a detailed submarket focused point of view on 46" LED-TVs in one submarket where only one brand is dominant. Both figures are supposed to visualize the DRMABS model to create a fundamental understanding of outlining the combined segmentation approach.

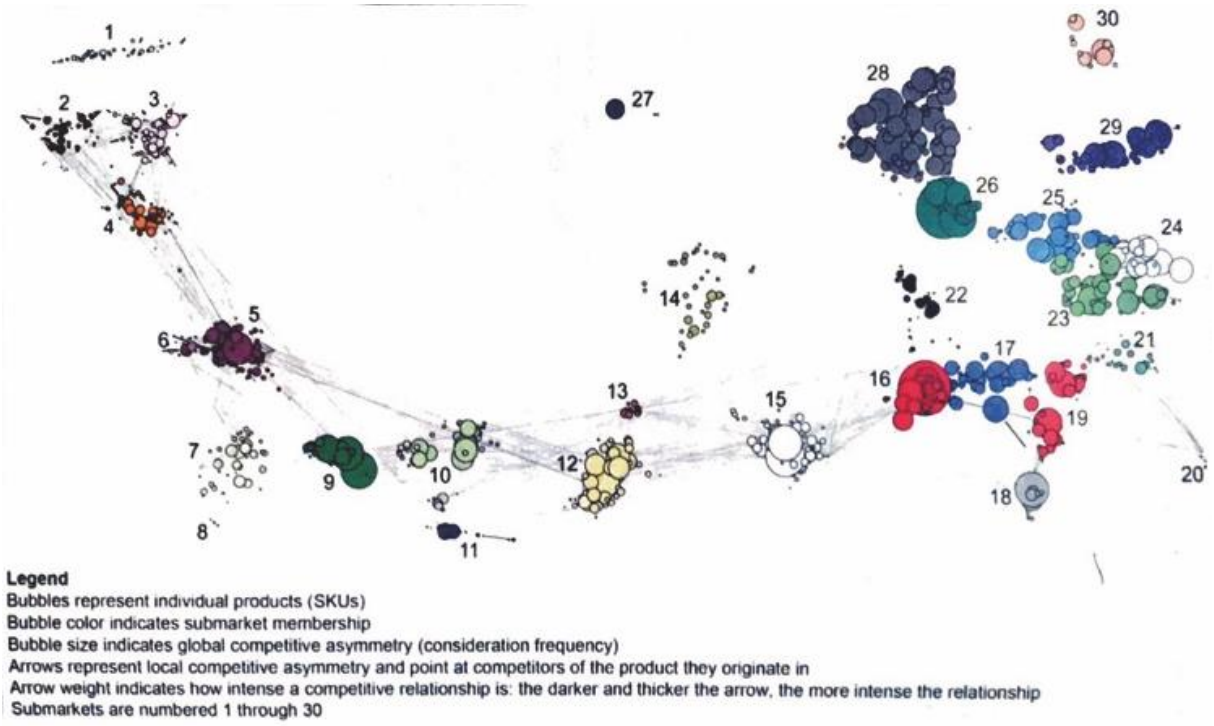


Fig. 4. DRMABS model LED-TVs (Ringel, 2017)

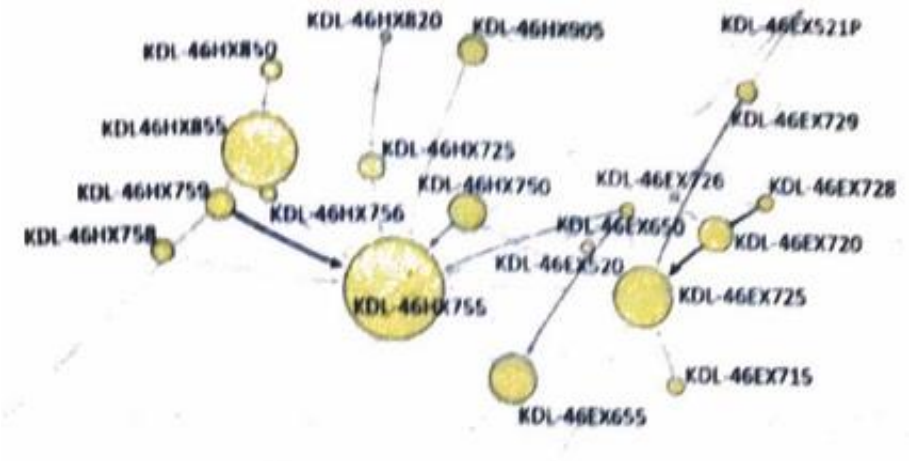


Fig. 5. DRMABS submarket visualization 46" LED-TVs (Ringel, 2017)

The visualization of a global market (all products out of a specific product category) and a local market (competition between two products which are considered as substitutes by the consumer and their relevance for each other shown by arrows) creates an approach where niche markets in certain product fields can be pictured more in detail. Figure 6. outlines the combined model and is followed by an explanation.

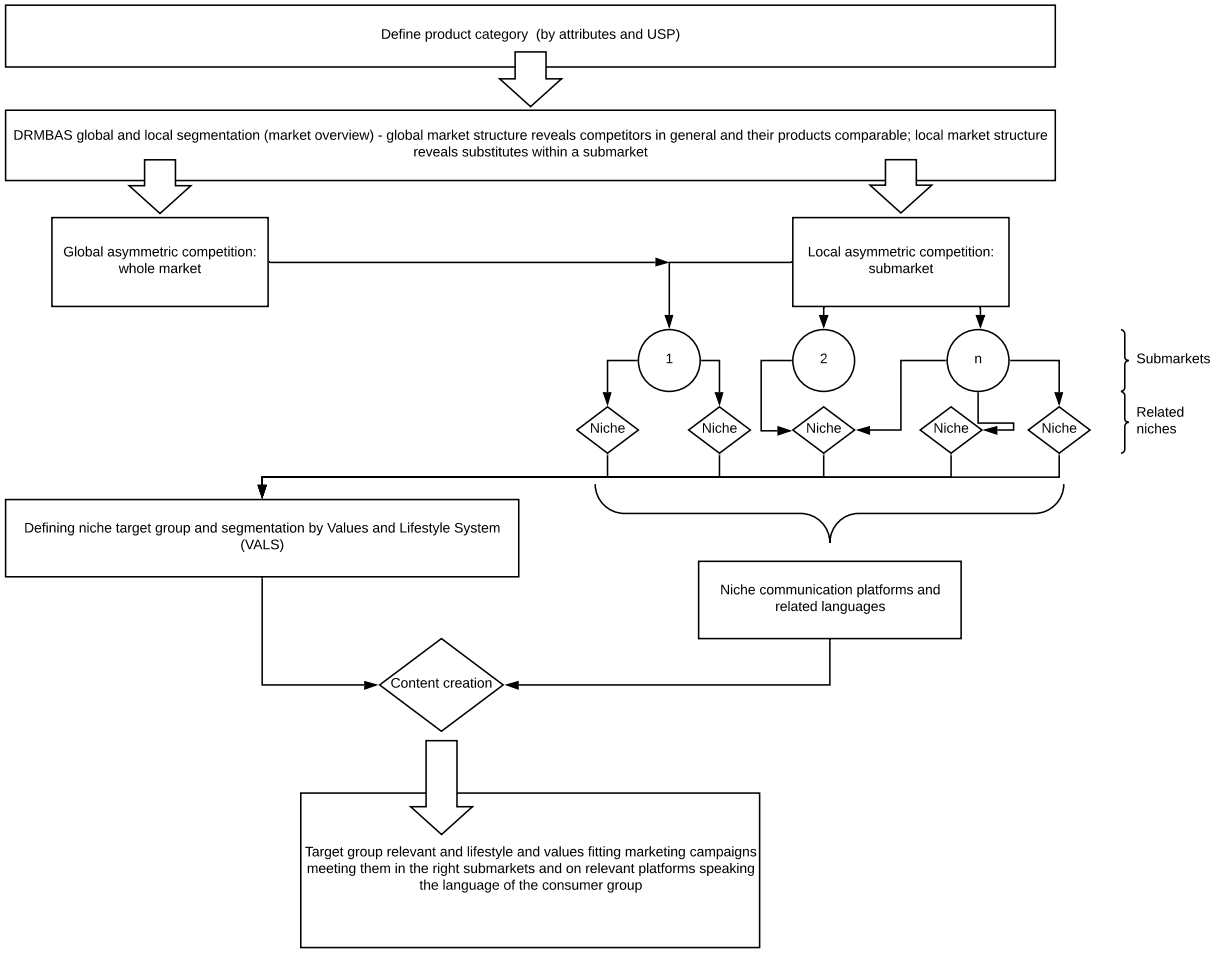


Fig. 6. Combined segmentation approach (Own Research, 2019)

The main intention behind the development of the combined segmentation approach was to enable a user, product and market-centric view to create target group focused content which has a relevant character as it meets the customers on the right platforms transferring content which provides an added value at first sight, so the information is assumed to be essential and due to this is processed even though the consumer is located in a high informational or information overload environment. Figure 6 is an outlining of how the mentioned relevant content creation can be structured and organized. The definition of the product category is mainly responsible for how further steps perform as it creates a basic understanding of the segmentation. Depending on the product category, the global or local asymmetric segmentation discloses the submarkets out of which the niches can be deduced. The deduction of the relevant niches leads to two parallel steps. One is to analyze the users in those niches with the VALS™ model while the other is to uncover niche relevant platforms and the languages are spoken there. Language refers to how users communicate with each other within this platform. Results out of both steps lead to input on the content creation. With the findings from the two steps previously, a basement for the target group and communication channel/platform fitting content is established. This content is integrated into the target group, appropriate marketing strategies, and spread on the detected consumer preferred communication channels.

4. DISCUSSION/CRITIQUE

Regarding the hypothetical model in figure 6, several steps are, of course, more complicated than shown. The model, therefore, can be seen as a rough overview on how to create target group relevant content in an information overload environment and sure needs an in-detail view especially for the usage of

DRMABS and VALS™. Nevertheless, the combination of both segmentation approaches opens a sales, marketing-driven, consumer-centric point of view which identifies relevant niches instead of clutter advertising-driven marketing strategies which are not meeting certain parts of the assumed but not niche grouped target group.

Another annotation regarding the accuracy of the model is that there is a need for data collection as DRMABS is a data-based approach revealing asymmetric competition by analyzing consumer behavior by clicks. This could be a limitation as the data from price comparison sites might not be available for certain niche products or consumers from one of those are gathering information regarding products from different sources which are not trackable. The primary and before the model needed step of data collection has a significant impact on the results. How to collect niche data in an appropriate amount, so the DRMABS model is generating a beneficial outcome for this combined segmentation approach might be a barrier in the overall application.

Finally, of course, the question arises why to use an approach which is designed for the creation of insights on large markets to figure out niche target groups. The necessary procedure is essential, and this is a segmentation of the markets and by this of the target groups, niches and channels what offers findings in those markets as they follow partly own regulations. The disclosure of niches, the spoken languages, and what is relevant for those target groups who allocate themselves there offers new insights on consumer behavior by using know approaches like psychographic lifestyle and values segmentation. Those findings on consumer behavior can be analyzed, adapted, and transferred to larger consumer groups, which are also allocating themselves in consumption niches that are larger in their quantity. The approach is scalable to every size of market and group as long as the required data is available. It offers a hypothetical view on niche markets and the consumption patterns there, especially regarding how buyers gather their information on products.

5. CONCLUSION

The outlined approach offers detailed insights on consumer behavior patterns, their changes, how they allocate themselves in niches, which information is considered as added value and therefore will be processed or used to consume. It reveals avoidance strategies by using consciousness and unconsciousness set filters which directly impact their consumption and shows specialization in it. Due to the content focused concept, those findings offer marketers more details on how to structure and present content, so the aimed for target group deems the information as relevant, and it breaches set filters what means that it will be processed by the consumer. Nevertheless, the model first is a theoretical idea of intelligent content creation. Content creation itself becomes more and more relevant due to the overall amount of digital information as the quality of it defines its relevance for the target group. Psychographic segmentation and extensive market considerations are a solution to meet the target group at the right place with the appropriate content and addressing to them with the language spoken on a niche platform. Defining it for niches, it reveals findings relevant to all markets.

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