

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER'S THESIS

**THE USE OF WEBINARS
AS A PART OF AN EFFECTIVE SALES FUNNEL**

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AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Marina Kholina, a student at the University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, (hereafter: SEB LU), author of this written final work of studies with the title “The use of webinars as a part of an effective sales funnel”, prepared under supervision of prof. dr. Mateja Bodlaj, PHD

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDA - Attention, Interest, Desire, Action

CRM - Customer Relationship Management

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

INTRODUCTION

We live in an era that confirms the validity of the universal concept that man is the basis of all economic activity and that any technology devoid of aesthetic values is of secondary importance without the human factor. In this era of low economic growth, increasing competition in the marketplace, and rapid pace of information dissemination, the content of communications aimed at the consumer is becoming increasingly important. Today, in order to generate customer interest in an offer or service, a simple schematic message is not enough; we need the one that will provide the customer with the kind of benefits that will satisfy their needs, expectations and, therefore, encourage them to interact.

Traditional marketing in its classic form no longer delivers the results that business people could get just a few years ago. With the advent of the Internet, customers now have the ability to find and choose more profitable terms in the marketplace. The forms of interaction between companies and buyers are changing rapidly. That's why the classics have been replaced by info marketing. It is a theory that allows businessmen to increase sales and profits in the enterprise respectively through the use of information products. One of such is a webinar. Info marketing uses it as a tool to build credibility and demonstrate expertise. This growth model has long been used by many Western corporations. However, in the Russian market only a dozen companies use it. The rest are currently discovering the possibilities of info marketing (Provorotov, 2019).

Info marketing can be considered as a kind of classical marketing or its offshoot, but only to a very remote extent (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). Classic marketing is based on creating a competitive product and communicating its advantages to the target audience through advertising and public relations (Alexandrescu & Milandru, 2018; Todorova, 2015). The problem is that such a product is initially already unique. However, the higher the originality of the product, the more difficult it is to deliver its benefits to the audience, which leads to significant amounts of expenditures on advertising and marketing, which often exceed the cost of the product itself. Info marketing relies on something else - on investments in sales and minimization of product costs: in this case, the value is formed through the delivery of information in a certain way.

Info marketing consists of a multi-step sales system, which is also called a sales funnel. The main goal is to attract customers' attention to the company and product, to obtain an interest of potential customers in its useful features and to convince them of the need for a deal. If we consider info business, then the main task of the funnel is to motivate as many customers as possible to register for receiving a free product (Zverev, 2020). To make it work for the company, and not against it, it is necessary to take into the account several mandatory steps in its development: the first contact with a cold audience, offer of the useful lead magnets that will answer the pains of the target audience and argue to possible objections, maintain interest for the online seminar, conduction of the webinar itself and

afterwards communication (Solodar, 2018; Tsekhomsky, Vakulenko, Kasumova & Okhotnikov, 2022).

The main goal of info marketing, in addition to increase in sales and profits through the use of information products, is to get the client's contact information in exchange for a free lead magnet (it can be useful written material, video, etc.) and webinar. The problem of quality webinars has always been particularly acute in the field of education. With the outbreak of the scientific and technological revolution in the 1950s, economically developed countries faced a clear shortage of new technology experts, and at the same time the limited number of places in classical universities could not greatly increase "productivity" (Siddiqui, 2016). In the United States, it was planned to solve this problem with the help of computerization and digital data networks (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). The result of many years of research in this direction was the emergence of PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations), which was created by a group of specialists from the University of Illinois and Control Data Corporation (Cunningham, 2015). It can be called the prototype of modern online seminars.

Other similar solutions began to appear. Approximately in the same years, the term "webinar" (a merger of the words web and seminar) started to be used in the professional world. In the late 1990s and early 2000s there were even attempts to appropriate this name - Eric R. Korb registered the WEBinar trademark (Ruiz-Madrid & Fortanet-Gómez, 2017), the rights to which were transferred to the company InterCall. Later on, in 2006, Learn.com tried to register the term webinar as a trademark, but did not succeed, requests were not approved. Since then the word webinar in all variations has been in the public domain (Timurkhanovna, 2022).

Currently, the online education industry is experiencing tremendous development. According to Research & Markets, the sector is expected to grow from \$187.877 billion to \$319.167 billion by 2025. It means that over time this market will become highly competitive and creators of educational programs, who have already managed to firmly enter the niche or just going to find their first customers, will make a lot of effort to defend the territory and compete with hundreds of other businessmen.

There are practically no foreign studies on this topic. Therefore, Russian sources are considered, as well as materials from related topics, such as info marketing, online sales funnels, tools for conducting online seminars and conferences.

The main purpose of this master thesis is to contribute to the body of knowledge on the effectiveness of webinars as one of the most frequently used selling channels in the Russian market of info business and online education. The main objective of this master thesis is to explore the relationship between various stages of the sales funnel and its impact on the change in the number of customers and product sales in general.

Through my research, I wish to get the answers to the following research questions:

1. How to attract the attention of the customers and motivate them to attend the webinar?
2. What materials should be shared with the audience to satisfy their interest?
3. What selling offers should be developed to awaken the viewer's desire to buy the product?
4. How to conduct afterwards communication to acquire the additional purchases?

For this master's thesis, the methodology is based on the analysis of primary and secondary data sources. The theoretical part of the thesis has been formed by researching already existing academic literature in the field of marketing, specifically info marketing. The empirical part is based on primary research, which has been conducted by the methods of qualitative data collection - critical case study and semi-structured interviews.

Overall, the master's thesis consists of four chapters, including introduction, conclusion and all related supplementary information respectively. The first chapter is about the sales funnel as a mechanism for increasing sales. It explores all of the four stages of the AIDA Model. The second chapter is about webinars as a marketing tool. It examines the choice of online conference services, the structure of presentation, methods of attention retention and various proposal options of favorable purchase conditions. The third chapter is devoted to empirical research on the relationship between various stages of the sales funnel and its impact on the change in the number of interested customers and product sales in general by the means of critical case study and semi-structured interviews. Finally, the fourth chapter summarizes all the research results through the discussion of implications.

1 SALES FUNNEL AS MECHANISM FOR INCREASING SALES

Grabozdin, Denisova and Tatarovsky (2021, p. 1439) define a classical sales funnel as “a marketing concept model that describes all stages of the sales process, taking into account the number of remaining and retired customers”, based on a scientific study conducted by Banerjee and Bhardwaj (2019). In other words, a series of events aimed at promoting a product or service, passing through which customers make the final purchase decision. Accordingly, during this "journey" through the funnel, the number of primary interested clients becomes significantly less. And only a small percentage of the initial amount performs the final target action. It is important to note, that this concept focuses not only on the change in the number of customers, but also on the stages through which they pass. Markina (2021, p. 89) gives such definition: “a tool or process, which shows the way a potential customer takes from the moment when he is not even interested yet and until he makes the purchase”, therefore representing the set of actions that marketers need to develop to turn a potential client into a real one.

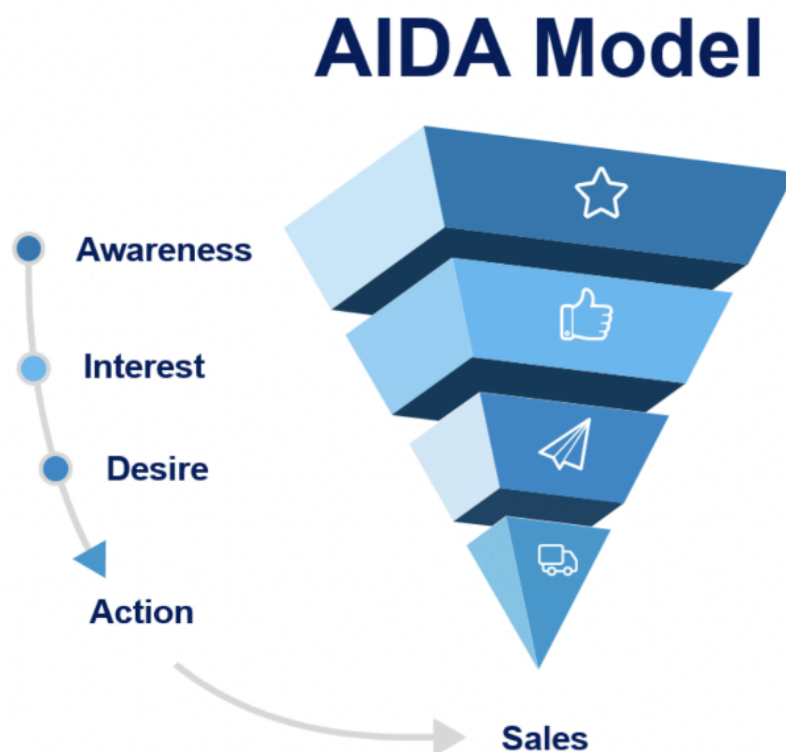
So, the sales funnel is a model for visualizing the path customers take from the point they are attracted to an offer to the moment they make a final action. In professional

interpretations, it is a marketing model that describes all stages of the purchase (Venermo, Rantala, & Holopainen, 2020). The ability to build a sales funnel correctly, implement it in a CRM system and analyze the effectiveness of interaction with the client is a reliable mechanism for multiple profit increases. This concept is equally valid in both online and offline commerce with the only difference being that online more often uses "automatic" sales funnels (Glushakov, 2018).

1.1 AIDA - the model of consumer behavior

Although the concept of the "acquisition funnel" was formulated more than 110 years ago, its basic provisions are still used today. These provisions are successfully combined with the well-known model AIDA (Rehman, Nawaz, Ilyas & Hyder, 2014; Nuutinen, 2015; Polk, 2018; Langett, 2018). Despite the fact that it was presented to the public centuries ago and it managed to go through various changes, the fundamental principle remains unchanged and still relevant. AIDA model was based on the assumption that "consumers progress through a number of stages from cognitive and affective to behavioral" (Song, Ruan, & Jeon, 2021). It describes 4 stages that precede the purchase, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The AIDA Model



Source: ThimPress (2022)

Despite living in a world in which people actively use social networks and prefer interactive online communication to live, users still need to find out about the appearance of new products somehow, show interest in them based on information, related to the benefits of the items, they were able to obtain, express a desire to have these goods because they meet individual's needs, and be determined to take action to make a purchase decision (Michaelson & Stacks, 2011). This model helps to build deep relationships with potential customers, increasing their interest and satisfaction by promoting a product or service (Manafe & Pramita, 2022). Nowadays, AIDA model plays a fairly important role in the development of a company's marketing strategy (Roohi, 2019).

A proper understanding of the algorithm of potential buyers' movement through the sales funnel is of paramount importance for the effective implementation of business goals and strategy. At each of these stages of the buying decision, the best tool for unobtrusive influence on the buyer is content: engaging infographics, educational articles, detailed step-by-step guides, etc. By developing materials tailored to the needs of the buyer at all points of contact, managers can create simplified conditions to move the potential customer through the sales funnel, increasing his motivation to purchase and reducing the time for decision-making (Lepkaya, 2021).

Therefore, in order to fully understand the sales funnel, its structure needs to be explored and better analyzed. This will provide sufficient information on how the AIDA Model (as seen in Figure 1) can be implemented in practice. In other words, how exactly the potential customers get interested in the product or service and what happens between the moments they become aware of the product/service and they make a purchase. There are awareness (first stage), interest (second stage), desire (third stage) and action (fourth and final stage) (Williams, 2018; Nusem, Matthews, & Wrigley, 2019; Abdelkader & Rabie, 2019).

1.2 First stage of the AIDA model – awareness

Starting the process of interaction with potential customers within the stages of the mentioned model of consumer behavior (AIDA), it is necessary to prioritize attracting the attention of the desired audience. At this phase, in most cases people already know what their problem is, so they start looking for solutions to it. The main goal is to get attention from those who are in search of products or services that will help make their lives easier (Kiniulis, 2022). To make potential customers aware of the good that company provides, targeted advertising can be used. Social media targeting is a set of methods that can be used to "filter out" the entire existing user base, leaving only ones who meet pre-set parameters (Farahat & Bailey, 2012; Ben Elhadj-Ben Brahim, Lahmandi-Ayed & Laussel, 2011).

The main task of a specialist is to segment the audience and set up an advertising company in such a way as to get a good conversion (the required number of likes, comments, reposts, subscriptions, etc.). After studying the needs of potential customers and analyzing

their pains, fears and desires, a strategy for effective communication is being developed by providing essential information about the product. Since clients do not have a clear idea of an item or service yet, several online and offline approaches can be used to raise awareness (Dugar-Zhabon & Simakina, 2019).

These offline and online approaches are often used by many companies and corporations and Fatma (2009, p. 1) argues that over the years online marketing has become known as a more cost-effective way of doing business. A lot of customers are surfing the Internet to find products and services, which they are going to purchase offline later. Most clients compare features and prices of items in order to get the best product at the favorable place. Searching online can help with this process. The integration of online and offline strategies is a very important factor for the success of any business strategy.

There are three key awareness raising online and offline tactics that might be of interest for this thesis and they are content marketing, interviews and articles, and product presentation. When it comes to content marketing, it is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience, and ultimately to stimulate profitable customer actions (Milaeva & Rostovskaya, 2017). How content marketing functions is that the potential customers are able to see content in forms of blog posts, consisting of photos and videos, or any other form of multimedia that will allow the company or service provider to allow interested clients to learn more about the product.

There is also an option of lead generation – publication of articles in thematic online and offline media on the sale of items or services. This channel will attract potential customers who already have a certain interest in the area in which the product is developing, and will allow them to get to know the company and its CEO a little closer. Plutalova (2015) argues that this method is more precise than content marketing, but the number of people reached via it is significantly lower.

Product presentation is an offline method of getting the audiences familiar with the brand/goods/service. Company managers organize presentations in which they introduce their products and their unique features to the general public. It can be anything from a seminar, a one-on-one presentation and many more. With the development of modern media, product presentation has stopped being a popular choice and companies/product providers rarely go for this option, unless the product is specifically designed for a limited base of customers (Yoo & Kim, 2014).

1.3 Second stage of the AIDA model – interest

Once the awareness was raised, some people might become interested in the product or service someone is providing. The main purpose of this stage is to convince the client that the proposed item will be useful for him and to inform how exactly it will respond to a person's need and how it will solve the problem that has arisen. A multi-page website or a

single-page landing is used to present the characteristics and functionality of the product or service.

Various companies and individual entrepreneurs use this method of communication with a potential buyer to motivate him to perform a targeted action, for example, to click the "buy", "register", "order a callback" buttons, etc. The main requirements for creating such a website are: determining the purpose of the page, clarification of the advantages of the product or service, development of the structure (a mind map or a written plan for the placement of information, buttons, various feedback forms, etc.) (Makarov, Slutsky & Portnova, 2019).

The second stage of the AIDA model has little to do with the service providers, but more with the potential customers or people who are willing to engage in purchasing a certain product. However, the role of the company's managers does not stop there – in the awareness page, only the important details about the product should be added by specialists and once someone gets interested, they should be able to learn more about the product (Jeannet, 2021). This is done mostly via websites that follow a certain principle in several steps. For instance:

1. Why should someone be interested in what the company offers? To answer this, enterprises focus on the most basic of details. They keep it simple and concise in explaining what the product does. The description should respond to the "pains" of customers and offer a solution to their problems. This section can contain trigger questions or statements that will help clients to realize the need to own a product that they are considering buying (Makarov, Slutsky & Portnova, 2019).
2. What can we as a company do to bring our products/services closer to the people who might be interested in them? Social evidence is the key. Reviews of real clients can be provided on the main webpage. This will not only demonstrate that the company has a customer base and experience working with people or other businesses, but also helps to establish the confidence of a potential buyer in the product (Makarov, Slutsky & Portnova, 2019).
3. How to make people desire our products? This step is crucial since desire comes right after interest in the AIDA model. What companies or service providers often do is make the interested parties believe that their product or services will make their lives easier. The benefits that a product will deliver or results that will be achieved with a help of it should be mentioned in one of the site's parts. Therefore, the focus should be on the profit that will be gained after the purchase, as Makarov, Slutsky and Portnova (2019) argue.

The result of this stage will be (Chugunova & Koroleva, 2017):

- potential customers, who have left their contact information (leads);

- returning users who do not leave their contacts but continue to visit a company or product page to get more information in a comfortable, measured way.

By observing the activity of clients, it is possible to define which part of them is involved in the process of communication and which part does not show a pronounced interest in its continuation. In the course of such segmentation, it is easy to determine which information is the most valuable for the customer, so that afterwards you can send much more relevant messages.

The following tools are usually used at this stage (Solodar, 2018):

- email-marketing in the form of a series of emails representing the brand and clearly describing the benefits of using a particular product or service;
- an engagement metric that measures and evaluates customer activity based on their interaction with the messages they receive;
- analytical services, which allows to track visitor's actions on landing pages and subsequently create customized remarketing campaigns based on their behaviour;
- push notifications, which do not require an email address, so the company can quickly deliver messages to all site visitors.

1.4 Third stage of the AIDA model – desire

At this stage, a person already has sufficient information about the company and its product and is interested in its characteristics, but may not be ready to take the next step. Therefore, it is necessary to direct all the effort to awaken a desire in himself to own the item and motivate him to decide on its purchase. One of the most effective tools for that is to demonstrate the advantages of the product through a webinar.

The organization of a webinar is one of the most important steps in the entire chain of actions to increase the number of customers and eventually profits, which is the main goal of any business. According to CloudIncome.com (2023), more than 70% of marketers consider online seminars as one of the most effective ways to acquire high-quality leads. Managers will have to deal with the choice of online conference services, the structure of the presentation, the methods of attention retention, the proposal of favorable purchase conditions and so on (Veselov, 2010).

A webinar is often used as a method for businesses to learn more about their target audience. During the broadcast, it is possible to understand the problems and needs of the participants, which subsequently allows them to create more effective advertising campaigns and interesting offers (Volkwyn, 2022). Feedback received during the webinar allows you to assess whether the audience likes the content, offer or even the way the material is presented. This kind of analysis helps to develop the business, taking into account the needs of the client and allows to create a variety of content, which the company can use to promote products and services, even after the end of the event.

Webinars are one of the few online marketing tools that allow businessmen to communicate with the audience in real-time. Potential customers will be able to get the necessary answers to their questions directly from the speaker (CEO or top manager of the company), to understand his views and values. The unique experience and expertise of the specialist demonstrated at the webinar will help to arouse the audience's trust, which can "convert" viewers into buyers later (Durzynska, 2021). Working with objections in this case is one of the components of lead generation and deal closing, and is a key process of the sales funnel.

1.5 Fourth and final stage of the AIDA model – action

At this stage, the potential customer has finally “ripened” and is mentally ready to buy the item he or she is interested in. The last, simplest and most logical step to take, not only in this formula, but in any sale in general, is to call for action. The call must be clearly formulated. It is necessary to specify what the consumer needs to do to purchase the product: place an online order, subscribe to the newsletter, and so on. In addition to direct calls to buy, sales managers can also use intermediate stages: “receive a commercial offer”, “get a free trial batch” or “go for a test drive” (Lorente Páramo, Hernández García & Chaparro Peláez, 2021; Manafe & Pramita, 2022).

In order to push a client to action - closing the deal - the following stimulating methods are usually used (Solodar, 2018):

- sales letters to convince the buyer that now is the best time to buy (flash sales, holiday sales and discounts are appropriate in this case);
- special conditions, for example, early payment (the earlier the client completes the transaction, the more profitable is the price);
- various bonuses: additional products as a gift for purchase in a certain period of time or for a certain amount of money spent;
- push notifications about abandoned cart series, to remind customers of items they previously marked as liked or added to check the total price and delivery details.

Moreover, it is important to continue making an effort to "close" the client's objections. It is necessary to come up in advance with the answers to potential refusals from the purchase: justify the high cost of a product or service by describing the advantages, offer price splitting, demonstrate licenses and feedback received from past customers, unfavorable and controversial aspects of the deal for the clients should be compensated with clearly defined guarantees. The FAQ section on the landing page can be used to provide all the necessary information related to the purchase and return of goods (Veselov, 2010). The end goal for most service providers is to get a steady supply of customers so that their businesses will increase over time. Once the action part has been achieved, the AIDA model has proven to be successful.

2 THE WEBINAR AS A MARKETING TOOL

2.1 Brief history of webinars and their advantages

The history of webinars begins in the late 1980s. It was the time when the Internet was in its infancy and the webinar's predecessors only appeared. At first, they were real-time text messaging apps, but in the mid 1990s, web chats and instant messaging apps were developed. From its early beginning, the webinar had been used to introduce the audiences to the materials, most commonly related to business (Shah, Tokas, Naik, Rai, Bres-Niewada & Somani, 2021). The first time the term webinar was used in 1998, with Eric Korb registering the trademark (Safko, 2012). A year later, in 1999, a company named Cisco created a software called WebEx Meeting Center which allowed for around 1000 people to be present during an online seminar (Molnár & Sik, 2020). Keep in mind that at the time hosting a server with 1000 people present was an astonishing feat and the webinars would only develop more and more. Since 2000, there were multiple companies and broadcast service providers who had decided to take the webinars to the next level. Thus, nowadays, it is possible to host this kind of event with as many people as the server capacities allow.

Ever since webinars have been created with the purpose of engaging audiences across a large platform (the internet), they have started becoming an integral part of modern life (Burstein, 2014). A webinar is a concept that made life easier for info marketers, business owners, educators, presenters, and many more who found use in its design. Hosting seminars online was a method to save time (they can be attended at home), prevent geographical barriers (everyone around the world can host/participate), host more participants (seminars in person can only accept as many participants as the location allows), and spread the word about it better (it is easy to send e-mails or other means of notifications about an event) (Gegenfurtner & Ebner, 2019; Manea, Macavei & Pribeanu, 2021).

Analyzing the advantages of the webinar in comparison with other marketing tools, it is also worth noting the minimal costs of organizing such an online event (the price of platform services, payment to technical specialists and invited experts, preparation of presentation and other materials), which will be several times less than the results that are going to be obtained (Volkwyn, 2022). And although webinars have started to be used relatively recently, past years have shown that this is an effective way to communicate with real customers and attract new ones (Miller, 2012).

This format of communication with clients helps to solve the following problems faced by business owners (Zverev, 2020):

- growth of brand awareness. Since webinars are held and promoted online, information about them is distributed over the Internet, which allows companies to increase the reach of potential customers;
- increasing the base of interested clients due to the uniqueness of the offer. In this case, the regular organization of webinars allows the company to stand out and differentiate itself from competitors;
- gaining the trust of the audience, which is one of the key factors that can attract loyal customers. A webinar with useful and high-quality content helps to form an image of an expert who can be asked for help afterwards;
- increasing sales by expanding geographic reach. Since representatives from different cities and countries can participate in webinars, it is easier for the brand to enter new markets.

Thus, the webinar is a perspective and unique instrument in a complex multi-level marketing mechanism, which improves the process of promoting educational services (Miller, 2012). An integrated approach to the organization of which, its proper planning and conduction allow business owners to use the most effective promotion channels, increase the customer base several times and be a few steps ahead of their competitors.

2.2 Choice of online conference services

The main criteria when choosing a webinar platform are: the maximum number of speakers who can simultaneously participate in the live stream; the limitation of the number of viewers; the quality of the video connection; simple and intuitive interface in different languages. Apart from that, the additional functionality of the service should allow the host to demonstrate, as well as send, all the materials that are necessary for the client to decide about the purchase of the product (for example, useful guides, banners, sales buttons, push notifications, email newsletters), and to receive feedback on the spot (with a help of forms, surveys, chat) (Gharis, Typhina, Bardon & Gonzalez-Jeuck, 2014).

Despite a similar set of functions, each web service has its unique characteristics. Therefore, the choice is based not only on the features of the platforms, but taking into account the financial capabilities of the company, the specifics of the audience, etc. A comparative analysis of 5 popular service's paid versions was carried out: Zoom, Webinar.ru, Getcourse, MyOwnConference, Bizon365. For a more detailed study, analysis of these platforms in terms of the number of users and their market share will be useful: at the moment, Zoom is used by 300 million people around the world (<https://zoom.us>). 1 100 000+ monthly participants attend events on the Webinar.ru platform (<https://webinar.ru>). Getcourse managed to get 85 million registrations on its website (<https://getcourse.ru>). Webinars held on the MyOwnConference are viewed by more than 10 million viewers annually (<https://myownconference.com>). Bizon365 is not such a popular service, several hundred thousand users visit the site per month (<https://bizon365.ru>). The criteria for identifying companies for further study was: frequent mention of the chosen platforms in

the articles of the largest online publications about marketing and business in Runet, user reviews, and the speaker's subjective opinion (Table 1).

Table 1: Runet user reviews and statistics

	Zoom	Getcourse	My Own Conference	Bizon365	Webinar.ru
The cost of the paid version	from €13.99 per month	from €50 per month	from €24 per month	€0,03 per viewer	from €17 per month
Platforms	Mac, Windows, Linus, iOS, Android	Main functionality - web, mobile app - iPhone, Android	Just web	Just web	Main functionality - web, mobile app - iPhone, Android
Number of viewers	up to 10000	unlimited	up to 10000	unlimited	up to 10000
Number of speakers	up to 100	a few	up to 10	up to 15	up to 8
Own broadcast system	✓	via YouTube	✓	via YouTube	✓
Analytics tools	✓	✓	using Google Analytics	✓	using Google Analytics, Yandex Metrika and other CRM systems
Branding	×	✓	✓	×	✓
E-mail newsletter and push notifications	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Record	✓	✓	✓	automatic saving on YouTube channel	✓

(table continues)

Table 1: Runet user reviews and statistics (continued)

Chat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Screen demonstration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
File transfer	✓	✓	✓	×	✓
Sales buttons and banners	×	✓	✓	✓	✓
Surveys	×	✓	✓	✓	✓
Languages	14 languages	5 languages	16 languages	Russian only	Russian only
Limitation of the free version	40 minutes of recording, 40 minutes of group conferences for up to 100 participants	14 days free trial period with full functionality, a limit of up to 1000 users and 50 emails to send per day	20 participants, recording duration up to 20 minutes, recording formats: SD, HD	30 days free trial period with full functionality	up to 30 participants, duration up to 60 minutes, 0.5 GB for files

Sources: Zoom (2023), Webinar.ru (2023), GetCourse (2023), MyOwnConference (2023), Bizon365 (2023)

The table shows an analysis of the above-mentioned platforms for conducting webinars by such important characteristics as: the cost of using the paid version of the services, the platforms on which they can be used, the number of viewers who can simultaneously attend the broadcast, the number of hosts who can simultaneously conduct a webinar, whether they have their own broadcast system or they use some other softwares, whether there are built-in analytical tools, whether it possible to make a webinar room branded (change the colors of the design, add logos, etc.), whether it possible to create an email newsletters through the services, whether it possible to record broadcasts, whether there is a chat in the webinar room, can the host demonstrate the screen during the webinar, can he send files to everyone present at the online event, whether it possible to add selling buttons with redirection to another site, whether it possible to conduct surveys, which languages are available to use at the services, what is included in the free package of using the platforms.

After analyzing the table, such conclusions can be made: Zoom has the most profitable tariff for using the service; Getcourse and Bizon365 differ from other sites by the ability to add an unlimited number of viewers; Zoom, MyOwnConference and Webinar.ru have their own broadcasting system; only MyOwnConference and Webinar.ru do not have built-in

analytics, instead these services use Google Analytics; all platforms have an ability to record the performance, a screen display function and chat; most languages are supported by MyOwnConference.

Online conference services have both, advantages and disadvantages. According to a research conducted by Misyurova (2020), they include the following (Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6).

Table 2: Zoom's advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple interface with lots of webinar room settings	Limitations on functionality in the free version
Training sessions	Expensive to use
Integration with Facebook Live, YouTube and third-party services	Unstable communication quality (according to user reviews)
Marketing automation and integration with different CRM systems	Low level of protection

Source: Misyurova (2020)

After analyzing the information, it can be concluded that Zoom attracts new users with a simple interface. At the same time, the webinar room can be customized in terms of settings individually for each event. Integration with various video hosting services and CRM systems is also possible. All these functions are presented in the paid version, which may seem quite expensive.

Table 3: Getcourse's advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
A big number of different tariff plans	High prices for tariffs, lack of a free version
A dashboard system	No webinar platform
Tools for monitoring and multi-level user management	Outdated interface
Thee ability to create auto-webinars	Complex functionality

(table continues)

Table 3: Getcourse's advantages and disadvantages (continued)

Ready-made sales forms and a full-fledged CRM	Frequent bugs
Segmentation of the database for mailing lists	Slow support service

Source: Misyurova (2020)

On one hand, Getcourse has a variety of tariff plans which will satisfy any customer, a dashboard system and tools for multi-level user management. On the other hand, there is no free version or period and the prices are a bit too high. Besides, users are complaining about difficult interface, numerous bugs and slow support service.

Table 4: MyOwnConference's advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple and intuitive interface	Limitations of functionality of the trial version
Flexible tariff system	No mobile application
Good technical support service	No convenient long-term storage system
The ability to customize the webinar room design	Each tariff plan contains only one webinar room
Training sessions	
Selection webinar elements for recording	
Auto-webinars	

Source: Misyurova (2020)

MyOwnConference has also a simple interface and a flexible tariff system, but also other additional features that customers will find useful and a great support service that is able to help with any technical issues. As for the drawbacks, there is no mobile version of and no convenient long-term storage system. This should be taken into account when making a decision.

Table 5: Bizon365's advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
No standard subscription	Outdated, complex site interface
The service combines webinars, courses, tests and a payment system in one place	No mobile application
Auto-webinars	

Source: Misyurova (2020)

The biggest benefit of Bizon365 is that platform combines webinars, courses, tests and a payment system in one place. However, the interface is quite outdated and there is no mobile application.

Table 6: Webinar.ru's advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
A free tariff is unlimited in time	The cost is quite high
Customizable registration forms	Frequent technical problems and unstable communication quality
The possibility of processing payments on the platform	The absence of the state 24/7 technical support

Source: Misyurova (2020)

Webinar.ru offers its users a free version of the service for an unlimited time. But if they want additional features, they have to pay a lot. Besides, there are many reports about frequent technical problems and lack of customer support.

2.3 The structure of the webinar presentation

Research conducted by Miketerr (2021) claims that the structure of the webinar presentation is of key importance. Given the vast amount of information that exists nowadays, almost all companies in the world have to fight for the attention of the consumer every day in all aspects of interaction with the customer. Everything that the company broadcasts to its potential clients should stand out and arouse sincere interest in relation to what product or service is provided by this manufacturer. Therefore, one of the most important conditions for conducting an effective sales webinar is to prepare a high-quality presentation. There are four distinct parts of the webinar presentation – title, content, final part, contact information and Miketerr (2021), as well as Kufley and Dmitrienko (2016), describes them as follows:

The title (and introduction): The first element in the structure of the presentation is the title slide, which will be visible in the webinar room before the start of the broadcast, to help the viewers understand what online event they get to. It should contain the topic of the discussion, date and time, information about the webinar author or the name of the company. At the very beginning of the webinar, the speaker greets the audience and arranges a connection check. At this point, which takes approximately 5 minutes, he needs to make sure that the broadcast is turned on correctly and establish a connection with the participants. It is acceptable here to conduct a conversation in the "small talk" technique, when the host easily and naturally, using informal vocabulary, introduces himself and asks the viewers to write a "+" in the chat if the audio and video work satisfactorily.

The next few slides tell briefly about the tasks of the webinar, as well as about an exclusive bonus for viewers. Thus, the speaker creates some kind of intrigue, increases the interest of the audience and motivates them to stay until the end of the event. The participants of webinars usually empathically perceive the modest, not pretentious presentation of the speaker, who tells about the difficulties in building a business, the mistakes made on the path of development, and what helped to achieve success. Besides, it will not be superfluous to show photos from the period of becoming a professional in the desired field from a personal archive in order to personalize the broadcast and establish trusting relationships with viewers, preparing them for the next part of the performance.

At the end of the introductory part, the speaker asks the audience to write in the chat what their names are, what cities they are from and how they are related to the topic of the webinar (whether they engaged in some kind of business or just want to start). This allows to switch from the "talking head" mode to the interlocutor one, track the mood of the audience and remove the 4th wall between the specialist and the participants of the event.

The content: These slides reveal brief information relating to the subject of the discussion, describe the techniques and tools used in the course of the webinar, and explain the basic concepts that are addressed during the event. The content should be clear, concise, and straight to the point in order to keep the participants of the webinar interested and not confused with the amount of information that the presenter shares with them.

In theory, the content part should be the longest part of any webinar. This part revolves around everything the audiences need to hear and it can be further divided into 6 distinct categories, according to Miketerr (2021):

1. Exercise, which allows to involve each participant in the webinar through his personal experiences, actualizes his personal problem and correlates it with the topic of the broadcast,
2. Debunking myths and prejudices, which makes the audience overly skeptical and do not give it a push to buy. By collecting a list of the most relevant queries, it is worth helping to discard the false ideas of the participants,

3. The first appearance of the product, just to give a hint what it is all about,
4. Product preview. Photos or videos that demonstrate the good or service. Speaker can also give an oral information summary about the product: tell about the key features, clarifies organizational aspects, etc,
5. The offer, which consists of several levels of participation to choose from. The presence of a few packages allows to cover a larger number of requests from different customer segments, thereby increasing profits (Tsygankov, 2019),
6. The price reduction, which means presenting the more realistic prices in comparison with initial ones, which usually are twice higher. This practice is popular in Russian info business. Many experts use it when selling their courses and there is no law prohibiting this. In contrast to the European Union, where such practice according to EUR Lex (2022) is forbidden and is generally considered as incorrect communication based on lies or dishonest attitude towards its customers.

The final part: At this point participants should have a crystal-clear picture of achieving a result or solving a problem with the help of a promoted product or service. In the end, the host can perform chaotic actions: make calls to action, remind about various packages to purchase, repeat information about privileged conditions for webinar viewers, tell stories from practice, summarize what clients will receive if they pay for the purchase of the product right now.

The contact information part: The last slide, which will remain on the screen after the speaker finishes talking, should contain contact information, in case the viewer would want to ask a question or leave feedback.

2.4 Methods of attention retention

According to a study by 1080 Group, LLC (Courville, Anderson, & Jackson, 2013), which surveyed more than 400 professionals around the world, the most common reason participants leave an online event early is boring, non-interactive content presentation. To conduct a high-quality webinar, it is important to take into account some features of virtual communication (Baltezarevic & Jovanovic, 2015).

For example, no matter how hard the specialist tries during an offline conference, the same emotional connection cannot always be achieved during online contact. This is quite a crucial aspect on which the success of the webinar depends. In particular, the speaker does not see the reaction of viewers, which may cause a bond loss with the audience. In addition, not everyone has enough skills to participate in the online seminar. Performing any actions may require a lot of time and distract them from the course of the narrative (Kufley & Dmitrienko, 2016). During the COVID times, the concept of "zoom fatigue" attracted a lot of attention. Since no empirical studies have yet been conducted examining this problem, there are still areas of research that can help theoretically justify "social media fatigue and on interpersonal interaction and nonverbal communication" (Fauville,

Luo, Queiroz, Bailenson & Hancock, 2021). In the article by Riedl (2021, p. 157) there is a clear definition of "zoom fatigue": "somatic and cognitive exhaustion that is caused by the intensive and/or inappropriate use of videoconferencing tools, frequently accompanied by related symptoms such as tiredness, anxiety, burnout...".

So that the audience does not feel uncomfortable and still wanted to be engaged during the webinar, it is worth sticking to these five distinct methods of attention retention (Miketerr, 2021):

1. Video clips and audio recordings. An unexpected change in the format of the material presentation will awaken some curiosity in the audience about what the host is showing and how it is related to the topic of the online event,
2. A request to share participants' opinions and express their emotional reaction to a particular thought,
3. Polls. The speaker can ask a question and make viewers write answers in the chat,
4. Interactive whiteboards. The use of this tool will motivate viewers to offer their ideas and watch their implementation at the same moment on the screen,
5. Additional materials for download during the broadcast. This is going to awaken some curiosity in the audience and force them to do an action.

Moreover, the information presented at the webinar should be valuable, useful and interesting. The bare theory and the abundant use of professional terms will kill all the desire to dive into the topic of the online seminar. For an effective webinar and constant connection with the audience, the moderately entertaining nature of the material is necessary, accompanied by a high-quality visual component for better understanding. This implies the preparation of the webinar script, the text of the speaker's speech, as well as the right psychological attitude of the specialist and his ability to interact with the participants (Raschupkina, 2021).

2.5 Proposal of favorable purchase conditions

As a rule, sales are determined by three factors: a marketing campaign, a target audience and a unique sales offer (Wellington, 2021). The effectiveness of the webinar as a sales channel largely depends on the terms of purchase of the product or service, which will be presented by the host in the final part of the speech. If the speaker managed to win the trust of the audience, awaken their interest in the topic and make them understand the value of the good, then the probability of concluding a deal will be high. And if they are still in doubt, then beneficial purchase conditions will be used as leverage (Kreutzer, 2019). For example, a time-limited discount on a product, which implies a low cost in the first days of sales (sometimes this is called a special offer for early birds) (McQuilken, Robertson, Polonsky & Harrison, 2015). Another way to increase sales of a product or service, instead of reducing the price for a certain period, is to offer additional bonuses that will not be

available for receiving after the expiration of the purchase period (some useful material – instructions, checklist, etc.).

Post-webinar actions that will help bring the customer to the purchase (Solodar, 2018):

- sending a recording of the webinar to those who attended the event for re-viewing and to those who were not there to familiarize themselves with the material,
- sending emails to the leads immediately after the end of the webinar, which contain a brief and clear description of the offer, so they could consider purchase again;
- a follow-up message with data about how many people have already bought the product, how many accesses are left with a discount and how long they will be available for purchase.

The final step is to call all the viewers, who were presented on the webinar, with the purpose to receive feedback on the organization of the event, the content of the presentation and the speech of a specialist in order to further improve it, increase the volume of the audience involved, and, accordingly, future profits (Ismail, Syafrinal, Salam & Hajriyanti, 2022).

3 THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WEBINARS AS A PART OF THE SALES FUNNEL

In previous chapters, I explained the mechanism of the sales funnel, focusing on the AIDA model. The influence of its different levels on the final performance, the number of interested customers who made a purchase, was analyzed. Then I reviewed various steps of preparing a webinar as one of the marketing tools: choice of online conference services, the structure of the webinar presentation, methods of attention retention, and proposal of favorable purchase conditions. The second half of the thesis is respectively devoted to an empirical study, in which I investigate the ability of selling webinars to have an effect on the final profit. The research has been carried out with the help of several tools, which are described in detail in the following sections.

3.1 Research methodology

As was earlier introduced, the main purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship between various stages of the sales funnel and its impact on the change in the number of customers and product sales in general. The findings of the study would serve as a contribution to the literature in the field of marketing and sales. The information presented in this thesis will help different specialists from the marketing and sales field to avoid certain mistakes when organizing webinars for the purpose of selling online educational products. The objective of this thesis is supported by the following research goals, some of which have already been covered and the others are to be achieved further:

- To analyze the most effective methods of creating a sales funnel, which includes conducting a webinar;
- To examine the necessary organizational steps for the successful conduction of an online seminar;
- To identify and review the main mistakes of using this sales tool by studying the case of the company “MexSchool”
- To gather and analyze the experience of different marketing specialists, who attracted customers and sold goods with the help of these means.

Respectively, achieving every goal will help answering the main research questions of this study, such as:

1. How to attract the attention of the customers and motivate them to attend the webinar?
2. What information should be shared with the audience to satisfy their interest?
3. What selling offers should be developed to awaken the viewer’s desire to buy the product?
4. How to conduct afterwards communication to acquire the additional purchase?

The empirical part of this master’s thesis is based on primary research, which has been conducted by these qualitative methods of data collection and analysis: critical case study and semi-structured interviews. The case study method is used to gain insight into a particular phenomenon, such as a business, organization, or individual. It involves an in-depth exploration of a particular case or situation. The goal is to identify the factors that led to the particular outcome, as well as to identify the underlying dynamics at play (Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir & Waseem, 2019; Florenthal & Ismailovski, 2019). It allows the researcher to carefully examine the data in a certain context (Khachatryan, 2018; Yin, 2017). I immersed in the process of organizing the webinar by the company "MexSchool": studied in detail every step on the way to its successful conduction, analyzed how emerging problems were solved, paid attention to what they may have forgotten about, and reviewed what results all these actions led to.

An in-depth interview is a verbal and communicative method based on the respondent's direct answers to the researcher's questions. It not only expands the possibilities of collecting more accurate and reliable information, but also allows to get deeper into the problem of research (Zaharia, 2008; Chekhovskiy, 2009; Baker & Charvat, 2008). I conducted 5 interviews with CEOs and top managers of marketing agencies and other experts from related fields. Specialists who have had experience in organizing selling webinars were invited to the conversation. In the end, the suggested combination of methods provided the most detailed results and sufficient answers to the proposed research questions. The data obtained can be used to develop new hypotheses that can be used for further research.

3.2 Critical case study analysis

3.2.1 About the company

MexSchool is a Russian school of design and fur craft, founded in 2014 by entrepreneur Irina Beletskaya. The company's head office is located in Balashikha, Moscow region. At the moment, the staff consists of 8 specialists: the CEO, founder and inspirer of the company, Irina Beletskaya herself, a project manager who is in charge of the implementation of various ideas into life; a technical specialist who is responsible for creating websites, setting up mailings, customizing a webinar room, etc.; a copywriter who is writing texts for websites, newsletters, presentations and social networks; a web designer who is responsible for creating visual components (advertising banners, lead magnets, etc.), an advertising manager who promotes the brand on different platforms, depending on the goals of the project; as well as 2 experts who are engaged in training people. The author of this thesis has been the project manager of the company for the past few years. This means that I have access to all the required information, including descriptions of audiences, internal processes, statistics, etc., as well as some other data which is the result of my work, since I was responsible for organizing the webinar.

The company's mission is to preserve well-known craft technologies and practices for working with natural fur and leather. Ideology is based on recycling (the transformation of raw materials into products of approximately the same quality as it was before) and upcycling (the transformation of raw materials into a more valuable item than it was before) of products. This is not only a recycling trend, but also support of environmental friendliness, awareness, care and creativity.

At the moment, the company's products which are based on these concepts, are online courses for beginners and professionals:

- in fur business: <http://mex-school.ru/>
- in leather craft: http://mex-school.ru/leather_course

Relying on the information from above mentioned websites, the course programs consist of two blocks:

1. The first block includes comprehensive information on such topics as: the creation of patterns, the selection of materials, the skills of working with tools, the features of technology, the secrets of mastery. After studying them, as well as receiving answers to all questions of interest, it will not be difficult for the students to create their own accessory.
2. In the second block, students learn how to earn in the segment they have chosen. In the beginning, they receive detailed feedback on the created piece from the course expert,

then they learn the prospects of their preferred direction and, finally, they successfully start with a new product under the guidance of school specialists.

Both courses are designed for needlewomen and designers who plan to open or expand their business, for fashionable girls, who like to stand out from the crowd with an original look or want to make a unique gift with their own hands, as well as for fur and leather professionals: sellers of natural materials (fur pelt / leather), manufacturers of outerwear from certain segments, owners of ateliers for the repair and production of custom products, owners of small showrooms and microbrands.

The experts of the courses are: Elena Korableva, an expert with more than 20 years of experience. In the past, she worked as a leather and fur tailor, a furrier-cutter, a technologist for sewing and developing fur products. At school, she is a master at creating fur accessories. And Andrey Grishin, an expert in the creation of genuine leather products, developer and CEO of the sports brand "Favorit". The school's experts not only teach how to create fashionable things from natural fur and leather with your own hands, but also start a business and earn money in promising segments.

The main tools for attracting customers were targeting in such social networks as Facebook, Instagram and VK, as well as contextual advertising in Yandex. In advertising campaigns, users' attention was focused on the fact that the online courses provided by the company are suitable for absolute beginners, since they do not require any experience working with natural materials. And also, on the fact that the experts who are in charge of teaching them are ready to provide support during the lessons and even after, helping in the subsequent development in the industry. They are interested in raising excellent specialists who will then become full-fledged members of the fur or leather community.

It is difficult to judge the company's position in the market, since this direction is not popular, respectively, the competition is quite small. Speaking of the MexSchool's performance: the company's profit over the past year has grown by 12% percent, sales of the fur training course have risen by 10%, and the leather course by 5%.

Thus, having immersed myself in the company's work and studied its products, it was decided to focus on promoting online courses. As a project manager of MexSchool, I have determined that a sales funnel should be implemented, the final step in which will be conducting a webinar.

3.2.2 Generation of customer interest

3.2.2.1 *Landing page*

A landing page is a tool for attracting the attention of potential customers and informing them about a product or service (Teodorescu & Vasile, 2015). In most cases, the site contains: the characteristics of the item being promoted, a description of the audience that will benefit from the purchase, information about the manufacturer, and a part that

encourages them to take an action (depends on the company's goals: to increase sales, collect a contact base, etc.).

Let's review the structure of the landing page (Appendix 1), which was used to collect contact information of those who were interested in attending the webinar organized by MexSchool company (<http://mex-school.ru/mk>).

1. The home screen. It contains the topic of the webinar, the date and time of the event, a unique offer for those who register “right now” (a document with 5 profitable ideas of fur accessories), a registration form with a help of which visitors can leave their contact details (email and phone number) for subsequent communication and a button with a call for action (in this case, “to participate”). Bright graphics and promising headings on this website are added to motivate the user to scroll through the landing page further.
2. Identification. A structured description of the target audience, thanks to which a person will understand whether the webinar is suitable for him or her:
 - needlewomen who know and love to sew, knit, do handmade and even earn money on it, but do not work with fur yet,
 - aspiring designers who want to implement fur accessories in their own brand,
 - owners of small businesses thinking about expanding the range and entering new segments,
 - those who are thinking about opening an original business for themselves and looking for a profitable niche.
3. Description of the content that will be discussed during the webinar, namely:
 - how to learn the creation process of a stylish fur accessory in just 1 month,
 - how to master the prestigious fur segment and unleash your creative potential if you have reached the ceiling of development in working with textiles and other materials,
 - where to get materials and tools, and most importantly, ideas for unique fur accessories,
 - how to enter a new niche and earn more on authentic fur products.
4. Information about the competencies of experts, who are going to host the webinar. This section describes their professional path and gained experience, achievements in the professional field, as well as links to their articles in various media or blogs in social networks. Thus, a potential client has the opportunity to find out more about the opinion of a specialist on certain issues, as well as to study his manner of presenting the material, and understand how comfortable it is for him.

5. The lead form is for those who have received sufficient information about the event and would like to sign up for attending it. The form must be as simple as possible: a field for a phone number and email, that is it. Besides, it is necessary to make a note below the button: “By clicking on it, you consent to the processing of personal data and agree to the privacy policy”.
6. Website footer. This block contains contact information (including links to the company's pages on social networks) and privacy policy.

On the websites of other webinars organized by the same company, there were also such information blocks as presentation of the partners of the event, photos or videos of the factory where the company do the creation of its products, social proof in the form of feedback from participants of past broadcasts.

Thus, the landing page was created according to the template of the selling one, providing the user with all the necessary information about the promoted product: the offer itself, the description of the target audience, the plan of the upcoming webinar, information about the competencies of experts, as well as a registration form (Meesala, 2022). The design of the site was simple and concise, with not irritating visuals, but quite attractive. When analyzing other sites promoting free webinars, a pattern was revealed: on many pages there was also a section with the results that viewers would achieve immediately after the presentation, as well as a block with frequently asked questions.

3.2.2.2 Mailing

Mailing is one of the most effective tools to warm up the interest of the subscribed audience and keep their attention on the upcoming event (Chaparro-Peláez, Hernández-García & Lorente-Páramo, 2022). The company's managers chose the SendPulse service for sending informational and sales letters, as it has a simple and intuitive interface. It has a number of functions that allow to create and configure mailing campaigns, manage subscriber lists, as well as analyze the results. This made it possible to optimize the process of communication with potential viewers and increase the efficiency of this instrument. In addition to this, the SendPulse service offers free support and various payment plans (<https://sendpulse.com>). This gives managers flexibility when setting up a budget and allows them to use the service with maximum impact. The text of the letters was written according to the rules of email marketing, using a certain structure: a bright title, the main message - the purpose of sending (a reminder of the broadcast, an offer of useful material, etc.), a call to action (download a lead magnet, put a notification about the time of the webinar, etc.). As for the visual component, it should be made for the audience, not for designers. This means that it is worth taking into account the preferences of people interested in the product, and not relying only on the taste of the company's employees. MexSchool has chosen a laconic style in corporate colors with the company logo.

The mailing process was conducted in this way:

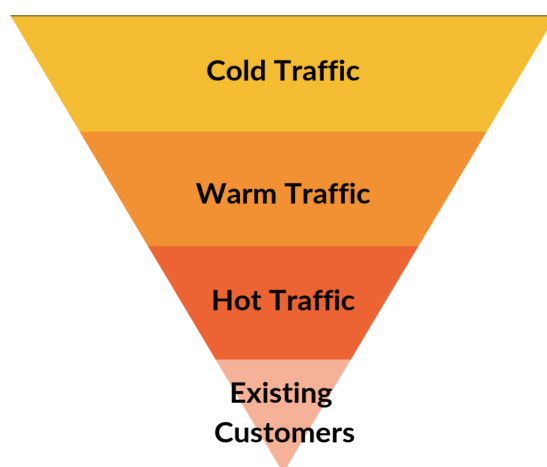
1. First, the user registered on the landing page of the webinar (left the contact details, email and phone number, in the form). After a couple of minutes, he received the first letter with gratitude for his interest and the promised lead magnet (“a list of ideas for stylish and simple fur accessories that can be made without special training”).
2. Then the main stream of emails was launched, which were sent at different intervals (depending on the number of days or weeks before the start of the webinar). They contained: interesting facts about working with fur, useful documents (“what items will be required to create a fur accessory, professional tools and how to replace them”, “how to understand whether a fur product that you currently do not need or remnants from it is suitable for making a product?”, “secret sources of inspiration - the developments of a 3-year study by Irina Beletskaya (the founder of the company)”), motivating phrases for success in the craft, as well as reminders about the day and time of the broadcast.
3. Then, a few hours, as well as an hour and 15 minutes before the start, letters were sent with a link to the entrance to the webinar room.

As a result of all stages, 400 letters were sent. The percentage of opening letters was 74%, the percentage of opening documents from emails was 59%, the percentage of attendance at the events was 50%.

3.2.3 Targeted advertising as an instrument to attract leads

In order for as many people as possible to come to the webinar, the company's managers have developed a sales funnel. But even the most thoughtful funnel will not work if you do not attract traffic to it. Therefore, it was necessary to interest the representatives of our segment. There are 3 different types of the audience, which you can see at Figure 2.

Figure 2: Different types of audience



Source: Zakowski (2019)

The cold audience are those who were not previously familiar with the company, its products or services. Such customers are the most difficult to attract, as they require more work and effort to turn into buyers. The warm audience are those who have a formulated request — and now they are looking for a brand that is able to satisfy it. They may have already seen the company's competitors, but for some reason they were not satisfied with them. The hot audience, on the other hand, are those who are already familiar with the brand. They may have seen ads, visited a website, or interacted with products or services in some way. Such customers are more likely to turn into buyers because they have already spent time learning more about the company and its offers. Marketing for a cold and hot audience can be different. The cold audience needs more education and persuasion to make them think about buying, while the hot audience may need more incentives and promotions to get them to act (Digi Leap, 2021).

There are various ways to make potential clients interested:

- contextual advertising — ads that are shown to a potential client at the moment when he demonstrates interest in the product or service. Let's say a user is looking for information about fur training. As soon as he types the query "how to learn to sew from fur", the search engine, along with the usual results, will show ads paid for by the company (Zhang & Katona, 2011).
- advertising through social media influencers — looking for bloggers whose content is close to the topic and provide them with a clear technical task, what they should say and show in order to interest their audience to go to a website with the sale of a product or service or the landing page of a webinar (Belanche, Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2021).
- social media management — having a page in Instagram, Facebook and other platforms increases brand awareness and forms a loyal audience that trusts you, is ready to recommend you and contact you when they feel the need. In addition, social media management allows to bring stable traffic to the site, which helps pages to be indexed and increases their search visibility (Zuhdi, Daud, Hanif & Nguyen, 2019).
- targeted advertising — ads that are shown to users based on their behavior in the Internet, place of residence, interests and data in profiles in social networks. This is how it differs from contextual, which primarily focuses on search queries (Kim, Barasz & John, 2018).

The organizers chose targeted advertising because it is shown to users who meet the specified characteristics: gender, age, geographical location, interests, behavior. Thus, in Facebook Ads, ads will be shown to an audience that is more likely to perform the action specified as the campaign goal (Ullah, Boreli & Kanhere, 2020).

Besides, the presence of these features helped managers to make a decision in favor of this tool for attracting customers:

- the advertiser can set up retargeting and show ads to users who have already had contact with your brand — for example, they visited your website / subscribed to a newsletter, etc. (Lambrecht & Tucker, 2013),
- the Lead Ads advertising format allows to get leads directly from social networks (if there is no website): by clicking on the ad, the user gets to a form in which he can leave contact details (Cirillo, 2022).

To launch targeted advertising on Instagram and Facebook, it was necessary to find an experienced specialist. The decisive factor in choosing a targetologist was his experience in the required field, the results of his cases, understanding the specifics of our audience and faith in success.

In the process of working on the project, a targetologist:

1. Analyzed the project. The specialist studied in detail all the sites and pages in social networks created by company's marketers, various materials (texts for mailing and lead magnets), as well as the results of past advertising campaigns to draw the respective conclusions.
2. Identified 3 segments of the target audience for testing:
 - the first group: needlewomen and designers who plan to open or expand their business, who want to master new skills, enter a promising segment and increase revenue. Interests: design, fashion trends, creativity, business, earnings.
 - the second group: fashionable young girls who like to stand out from the crowd with an original look or who want to make a unique gift with their own hands, who want to complement their image with a stylish accessory or help friends with this matter. Interests: handmade, fashion, style, stars, self-care, beautiful things.
 - the third group: fur professionals, sellers of skins, manufacturers of outerwear made of natural fur, owners of fur or multidisciplinary ateliers who want to earn extra money on fur accessories and reduce losses on residues and waste. Interests: self-development, professional growth in the fur industry, upcycle, additional earnings.

From 3 to 5 ads were launched for each audience. In total, about 15 ads were tested in two social networks. The best result was shown by ads of 2 formats: texts that trigger the "pain" of the clients; stories on behalf of former students who took the course and changed their lives. As for the visual side of the question, bright creatives with a focus on transforming the images of girls with the help of products created at the courses, as well as

creatives with works that were created by expert craftsmen with an appeal to make something similar, but with your own hands, achieved the greatest results.

A deep analysis in the context of each ad gave us an understanding of which ones work out and give returns, and which ones "drain" the advertising budget. After the examination, ineffective ads were disabled, and efficient ones were scaled.

With the help of 4 effective advertisements, we managed to achieve the following indicators for the promotion of one webinar within a few weeks (Table 2).

Table 7: Indicators of targeted advertising

The amount of money that was spent	500€
Number of impressions	10000
Number of site visits	2000
Cost per click	0.25€
Number of newsletter subscriptions	400
The number of people who came to the webinar	150 + 50 watched the recording
Subscriber cost	1.25€
Viewer cost	2.5€

Source: own work

In total, 200 people were attracted to watch the webinar. With a small budget, it was possible to reduce the price per click to 0.25€ and the cost of the viewer to 2.5€. After analyzing the results of the advertising campaign, it can be concluded that this tool turned out to be an effective way to attract customers, since it led to a large number of ad impressions, site visits, newsletter subscriptions, webinar visitors and those who watched it recorded. Accordingly, the budget of 500 euros used on product promotion was not spent in vain.

3.2.4 Conducting a webinar

3.2.4.1 Choice of a webinar platform

When choosing a webinar platform, it is important to consider the features that will best suit a company's needs. The service should offer a variety of instruments, which allow to: customize the look of the webinar room, record and store broadcasts, host multiple presenters, easily manage and track viewers, create polls and surveys, show videos and play audios, share files and documents, provide a secure and reliable connection. It is also essential to consider the cost of the platform, as well as the availability of the support

service. Some services offer free trials and discounts for long-term users, while others offer paid plans that may include additional features. Finally, the user experience should be reviewed too: what advantages and disadvantages were highlighted by clients who have already managed to use the platform.

After testing several sites, and discussing with colleagues, as well as specialists from related fields, it was decided to choose the MyOwnConference platform. MyOwnConference is a modern multifunctional full-cycle service for the preparation and conduction of webinars. This platform turned out to be convenient and informative, on the one hand, for companies, since it allows to work in interactive lecture mode, connect speakers, use a presentation, arrange surveys and collect statistics, and on the other hand, for users who will be able to connect to the stream from anywhere in the world in a matter of seconds just using their browser on any the device without installing additional programs.

The following characteristics were important for the company MexSchool:

1. Flexible price (the cost of using the service depends on the functions that the organizers need),
2. Using the interface in Russian,
3. Ease of working on the platform (the presenters had no previous experience in conducting webinars and also were not well-trained computer users).

The recording of the webinar, analytical tools, as well as various other functions useful for broadcasting turned out to be a valuable bonus.

3.2.4.2 Speaker's performance

When drawing up a speech and presentation plan, the company's specialists used a selling template and clearly adhered to the chosen structure (Appendix 2).

1. Introductory part. The first slide contains the name of the company, the topic of the webinar, its date and time, and the names of the hosts. In the beginning, it is required to check the technical side of the event: is everything alright with the connection quality, can viewers hear the sound, is the video being interrupted? This step will contribute to the first interaction with the audience, will force them to get in touch with an expert. Then it is necessary to announce what the viewers should expect during the online event. In order for them to be motivated to stay until the end, a bonus is offered. In the case of a MexSchool webinar – it was a pattern of mittens that students will need for the training or independent work.
2. Getting to know the expert. It is important to tell the story of a specialist who conducts the webinar: how she started working in this industry, how her professional path developed, how the idea of creating her own company arose, and what results were

already achieved at that time. It is also crucial to confirm a person's expertise with successful cases and reviews from his clients or students, because in this way it will be easier to gain the trust of users.

3. Getting to know the audience. It's time to check the activity of the viewers and get to know them better. The host of the webinar did this through such questions as what city are you from, what are you doing for a living, are you creating any hand-made things at the moment, what brought you to our event today and why do you want to learn how to work with fur?
4. An exercise that addresses the pain and fears of viewers. The whole process will be connected with the emotions that the viewer suppresses in himself. To start with, a person had to imagine his "starting point" (what is missing to achieve success, what doubts are present at this stage, etc.). After to understand and speak out the feelings that arose from the idea that nothing is going to work out, because there is not enough knowledge/experience. And finally, to visualize that after completing the course, the set goals were achieved. What emotions would prevail then? The purpose of this exercise is to involve the webinar participant in the process and form the value of the knowledge offered, and therefore a positive attitude towards the company as a whole.
5. Description of the audience for whom the webinar will be useful and valuable.
6. The destruction of myths about fur. In this part of the performance, the host analyzed in detail several of the most popular prejudices about working with fur, so that the participants of the webinar would feel more confident about this process.
7. Demonstration of a video with brief course content to let the audience know what awaits them in full-fledged training.
8. Presentation of the course. The presenter spoke about the key features of studying at MexSchool and shared the curriculum. And also made the audience think, are they ready to fully immerse themselves in the process of getting acquainted with the fur craft? In some way challenged them, are they motivated enough for this?
9. Sales. First, the contents of the training packages and the price for them without a discount were announced. 3 options for every taste and budget. Then the participants of the webinar were offered special purchase conditions that were valid for 48 hours. New prices with a 50% discount were displayed - a more attractive offer for those who lasted until the end of the event.
10. Answers to questions from the audience. The speaker spoke about matters that she did not have time to talk about in the main part of the speech, dispelled any dreads of the audience, and tried to motivate them to make a decision "here and now".

11. Completion of the webinar. Sending the bonus promised at the beginning of the broadcast.

3.2.4.3 Methods of attracting attention

One of the most significant features of communication in the digital environment is the specific mechanisms of attracting and retaining attention. According to statistics (BigMarker, 2018), the duration of the webinar should be at least 30 and no more than 45 minutes, since a long presentation may not be watched or perceived by the audience and a too short speech may not appeal to the audience at all and leave them unsatisfied. The study by Philippe Guo (2014) says that it is important to switch from the "speaker" mode to the "interlocutor" one every 10 minutes, namely to start direct communication with the audience (for example, ask them questions on the topic and offer to express their opinion, thereby starting a dialogue). Besides it says that the presentation of the speaker should be no more than 6-9 minutes. It is important to take this into account, because probably after that short period of time viewers will begin to rapidly lose their interest.

These methods were used at the MexSchool webinar:

1. Checking the connection (feedback on the quality of communication),
2. Announcement of a gift for those who will stay until the end of the broadcast,
3. Getting to know the audience (motivating them to write some information about themselves in the chat),
4. Discussion of typical audience problems, their fears, desires and motivation. Everything that hinders them on the path of development or, on the contrary, forces them to act,
5. Switching to another format: demonstration of a short dynamic video,
6. Offer of unique conditions for the purchase of a course,
7. Trigger questions or statements that motivate viewers to perform an action, for example, "if you're waiting for a sign from above, then here it is!",
8. Close of an objection in the form of answers to questions.

3.2.4.4 Special offer for webinar participants

At this stage, the presenter announces the training packages and their initial cost. This is important so that potential buyers understand the value of the course and its significance for themselves. And only then a special offer was made for those who came to the webinar and stayed till that exact moment: a 50% discount, which will be valid for 48 hours from the end of the broadcast. The host used a time-limited discount trigger, pointing out that they would not have another opportunity to purchase the course for such an amount of money.

In order to meet the needs of different target audiences and help them achieve their goals, several training packages with different content were offered:

1. Package — "I want to start". It consists of one block "creating an accessory", which includes such theoretical and practical topics as creating patterns, selecting raw materials, developing working skills with professional tools, learning about technology features, revealing secrets of mastery and providing answers to the questions.
2. Package — "I want to earn money by doing hobbies". It includes the entire first block, as well as feedback on the created products, topics related to earning on fur, a lecture about the successful launch of a new business in a fur segment, an online meeting with a sales coach, a discussion of the current global problem known as upcycling and recycling.
3. Package — "I want to develop a business". It includes the entire first and second blocks, as well as the support of the course experts on an individual request: 3 online consultations, and monthly access to a chat, where students can discuss any questions through messages. It was important for the members of the MexSchool team that each viewer found a solution to their challenges.

3.2.5 Post-webinar communication

After the end of the webinar, the company's managers performed actions aimed at maintaining contact with the participants of the event and subscribers to the newsletter, increasing their loyalty and motivation to purchase the course:

1. A thanks letter has been sent. It is important to be grateful to the audience that they could find some time to spend with the host and organizers of the event. And also the results of the webinar were summed up: the questions that were discussed during the broadcast were written in the abstract,
2. A recording of the webinar was sent so that participants could return to the information received at any time, and those who did not have the opportunity to attend the event, immerse themselves in the topic of fur craft and learn more about the course,
3. A survey of participants was conducted by filling out online feedback forms to take their opinions into account when conducting the following webinars,
4. Also, in all letters, a reminder was added about the special conditions for the purchase of the course, which was valid for only 48 hours.

3.2.6 Results of the webinar

Conduction of the webinar definitely had a positive impact on the sales of the course, as well as awakened audience interest in a new product and achieved the set target indicators. The final figures are presented in Table 3.

Table 8: The results of conducting a webinar in numbers

The number of people who have registered for the webinar	400
The number of people who watched the online broadcast	150
At the peak of the webinar, the number of viewers was...	80
The number of people who watched the webinar to the end	58
The number of people who watched the webinar in the recording	50
During the webinar, the course was purchased:	Package 1 — 7 people, package 2 — 3 people
There were more sales after the webinar:	Package 1 — 10 people, package 2 — 4 people, package 3 — 2 people

Source: own work

The potential reasons for the low attendance of the webinar can be diverse. The most common are the following: the lack of sufficient interest among users in the proposed topic of the webinar to attend the broadcast itself, registration solely for the sake of receiving the announced lead magnet, any technical problems, as well as failures in the process of receiving information from the mailing (including filtering emails as spam). In addition, some participants may simply forget about the event or change their plans at the last moment. Perhaps because of this, the percentage of attendance to the webinar organized by MexSchool was 37.5%. According to Gurkova (2023), in the info business, the average reach to webinars is 10%. In the case of other areas, it can reach 20, 30 and even 50% (it all depends on the topic of the online event and stimulating actions, which are taken to attract as many viewers to the broadcast as possible). Thus, the webinar confirmed its effectiveness as an element of the sales funnel and met the expectations of the company.

3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Since the purpose of this study is to collect as much information as possible about the experience of various marketing and sales professionals in conducting selling webinars, the interview method will serve as one of the most suitable data collection tools. I decided to use a semi-structured type of interview, because it offers a more flexible approach to conducting research, unlike, for example, a standardized interview, in which the wording, the order of questions and other conditions of the procedure are strictly regulated (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009).

A semi-structured interview is based on the use of two types of questions. Some of them are mandatory (main) - must be asked to each respondent; other "sub-questions" (clarifying) - are used in the conversation or excluded from it by the interviewer, depending on the answers of each participant to the main questions. Thus, on the one hand, a certain variability of the way in which the discussion takes place is achieved, considering the possibility of taking into account the individual characteristics of interviewees and changes in the communicative situation, on the other hand, the information obtained in this way retains significant comparability (McIntosh & Morse, 2015; Blandford, 2013). I can actively manage the dialogue, if necessary focusing the interviewees' attention on any additional aspects of the issues being discussed, without going beyond the pre-compiled list of questions.

The quality of the data obtained (including its reliability) significantly depends not only on the content of the respondents' answers but also on the composition of the questions themselves. The structure of the interview corresponded to the objectives of this study, was based on a review of the literature on the topic and data that were received during the organization of a webinar for the company "MexSchool" and the analysis of their case.

3.3.1 Preparation of the interviews

The preparation of the interview was divided into two stages (Lune & Berg, 2016):

- the first consisted of the ideological and intellectual readiness of the interviewer for the conversation with respondents. It was necessary to study in depth the topic "webinar as a sales tool" in order to correctly set the purpose of the interview, form a base of key questions and determine the approximate course of the discussion.

An unbiased attitude to the opinion of participants, regardless of their occupation, worldview, etc., is also one of the most important factors in the effectiveness of the interview,

- the second consisted of selecting respondents for an interview, drawing up a plan, formulating specific questions, preparing the place, time and technical means necessary for the study.

3.3.1.1 Sample characteristics

In the process of searching for potential candidates for an interview, it was decided to invite colleagues from the marketing field to participate in the study, with whom I had established close professional ties within the framework of promoting online educational services, including conducting selling webinars. In order to form the most balanced sample, they were asked to take a short preliminary test in the form of answers to questions in a written format. This technique is used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton,

2002; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). Using this method, I was able to determine whether the applicants meet the following criteria: age over 18, knowledge of the marketing basics, experience using webinars as a sales tool, and experience in promoting online educational products. The number of respondents was determined by the purpose of the study, so 15 potential interview participants were asked to take this test. Of these, only 7 candidates, who met the above requirements, were selected. For my research, I chose 5 stories of specialists for analysis, since some of the information was repeated and did not carry much practical significance.

The interviews were conducted in October 2022. The sample included 3 women and 2 man aged 25-37 years. All the interviewees permanently reside and work in Russian Federation. All respondents have completed higher education. The interview was attended by: the head of a marketing agency; a marketer of a company specializing in the promotion of online products; a freelance marketer; a producer of online courses; a copywriter specializing in writing selling materials. Thus, the sample includes specialists who directly used the webinar in marketing activities (Table 4).

Table 9: Summary of sample characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Years of marketing experience	Number of webinars organized
A	Female	25	Russia	2 years	10+
B	Female	37	Russia	12 years	300+
C	Female	27	Russia	3 years	30+
D	Male	32	Russia	5 years	50+
E	Male	28	Russia	7 years	50+

Source: own work

3.3.1.2 Data collection

After conducting the primary preparation for the interviews, I started collecting data. Since the difference in geographical locations and time did not allow conversations to be organized offline, online services such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Telegram were used to communicate with the selected respondents. Interviews lasted from 25 to 40 minutes, with an average of 30 minutes, and, with their permission, each talk was recorded for the purpose of further, most accurate analysis of the information received. The recordings of the discussions were subsequently transcribed. Online interviews were conducted individually, which made it possible to better interpret nonverbal signals, improving the overall understanding of the respondent's thoughts (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009). Despite the short duration of the interviews, the research goals were achieved.

Respondents showed a high openness to discussing a given matter and their experience related to it. Careful and systematic formulation of questions allowed the participants to stay focused on the main direction and avoid deviations from the topic under discussion.

The interviews were conducted in Russian, as it was native to all respondents. Before the discussion, each participant was given introductory information about the subject and goals of the thesis I am working on right now and it was also clarified how the information they are going to say will be used in this study.

Each interviewee was asked several basic questions, as well as secondary sub-questions based on the topic under discussion and the course of the interview (Appendix 4). The first questions were of a general nature, they were aimed at obtaining information about the respondents' experience in marketing and sales, as well as about the goods and services they promoted. Then we went on to discuss the experience associated with the organization of selling webinars: the frequency of using this tool, the preparation process, advantages and disadvantages as one of the instruments used in the sales funnel. Transcripts of all interviews are presented in Appendix 5.

3.3.1.3 Analytical techniques

For further work with the data I gathered during the interviews, content analysis was used. This method is aimed at assistance in understanding of the information received in different forms (texts, audio data, etc.). Moving from unstructured text to answers to the research questions, strict procedural rules are used, namely, coding. This is relevant for my research, as several experts with various professional backgrounds were invited, and it is essential to pay attention to the context where their messages and opinions are mentioned (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017). Before carrying out the main analysis procedure, I needed to convert the raw data into encoded (Lune & Berg, 2016). To be more precise, to highlight subtopics in transcribed interviews for easier information retrieval. Several sheets were prepared, which included basic data about the respondents, their quotes related to the topic of the study, as well as about their experience of conducting webinars. As audio materials were converted into text, these sheets were filled with relevant statements for the upcoming analysis. To facilitate the formulation of conclusions, I have reduced the information so that it becomes accessible and understandable to everyone.

The next stage of data analysis consisted in a detailed review and comparison of the obtained material. Since each interviewed specialist has his own personal experience of organizing webinars, first I studied their opinion of the research on this topic. Every story of the respondents is important, as they help to understand the reasons for a certain attitude to the studied sales tool. The evaluation of their expertise helped me in further searching for similarities and differences in their views on the webinar as a component of the sales funnel.

3.3.2 Findings from interviews

Due to the excellent organization of the interviews: the development of a conversation script, the composition of a large number of questions, as well as the friendly atmosphere and openness of the respondents, I was able to collect a lot of data. Subsequently, this information was divided into subtopics, since such a structure will highlight the key ideas of each conversation and not forget crucial details. The mentioned subtopics raise such issues as preparation for the webinar (attracting the target audience and maintaining its interest), conducting a webinar (presentation structure, attention retention tools, first sales), post-webinar communication and subsequent sales. As well as the advantages and disadvantages of webinars as a sales tool and general recommendations for building an effective sales funnel from specialists with many years of experience.

3.3.2.1 Preparing for the webinar

The first questions in the interview were related to the preparation for the webinar. Obviously, such events, even if they are in an online format, can not be held spontaneously. In the beginning, it is necessary to decide on the topic and date of the broadcast, prepare materials, set up the platform and check the equipment, and, no less important, gather listeners. All respondents agreed that any webinar should have a relevant topic for discussion and a goal since it largely determines the audience to which the expert will speak. Ideally, the participants should have approximately the same level of training. Otherwise, an undesirable situation may arise when a lecture is incomprehensible to some listeners, while others consider time wasted because obvious things are being stated. "Expert won't be able to tell equally interesting stories for a kindergarten graduate and a PhD candidate at the same time. The group should be whole - with the same level of knowledge and understanding. You can also do input testing if we are talking about a whole training course. But for the sake of one lecture, it hardly makes sense" said Participant D.

Participant E, as well as others, advised using the website in order to gather an audience with similar interests and a level of involvement in the profession: "It is easier to work with interested users than with those who have no idea about the product or service you are promoting. That is why I always recommend giving a hint about the presentation that an expert is going to have: write on the landing page to whom the webinar will be useful, what topics will be discussed, what knowledge viewers will receive, etc. And then the person, having all the data, will decide for himself whether he wants to attend the event or not." For those who do not like the option of creating a website or landing page, participant A and participant C offered worthy alternatives: publishing the announcement of the webinar on special pages in social networks or on the websites of event-gathering services.

By attending a webinar, people spend time hoping to learn something new and valuable for themselves. Therefore, it is worth paying great attention to the preparation of content. If

several experts are involved in writing materials, then at this stage it is important to discuss expectations - not just the subject that the speakers will talk about, but how they see the whole process of carrying out the event. Most of the respondents mentioned that it is necessary to determine not only the main points that are supposed to be revealed during the speech, but also inspiring and motivating information. For example, to tell about the acquired experience of students, about their ups and downs, so that the audience understands how the knowledge gained will help them achieve their goals or solve existing problems. Participant C thought: "A speaker can be a great professional in the field, but if his speech is not exciting, then most likely the audience will not like the performance. It is necessary to focus on the interests of the listeners, as well as on the oratorical skills of the speaking expert."

Also, a well-chosen date of the event will reduce the risks of failure. Participant A talked about how she picked the time for the webinar by monitoring user activity on the Internet: "We analyze the list of site visitors over the past 3 months and, realizing at what hour the largest number of people visited the page, determine the time. The analysis of social networks also helps us: we track at what time of the day the profile activity increases." Participant E and his colleagues decided to stick to a different strategy, namely to hold several webinars to increase the number of potential viewers, offering them a choice of various broadcast times: "Opinions about the date of the webinar were diverse, so it was decided to hold 3 events a week: Tuesday at 19.00 for those who preferred to join on a weekday after work, as well as on Saturday at 12.00 and 18.00, for those who are willing to allocate time for this only on weekends. This would allow more people to participate in webinars."

In order to attract listeners, most of the specialists acted according to the standard scheme for the info business: they created a landing page through which they invited those, who are interested in the sphere, to register for attending the webinar by filling out a contact form in exchange for some helpful material (lead magnet). All the leads, potential viewers, were attracted to the page of the event mostly by the means of targeted advertising, contextual advertising or just inviting own audience. Participant B said: "Our main vector is collecting new leads. That is why it is important to make the landing page informative and as enticing as possible. In my opinion, it should consist of such information: what the webinar is about, who it is for, what benefits the participant will receive, the name of the speaker and a small information summary of him, reviews from past viewers, and, finally, the registration form. To encourage users to register, for example, we usually display a countdown timer to the event on the first screen. This serves as a visual indicator that the chance to attend the webinar will soon expire. This urgency effect on the landing page increases the conversion rate by an average of 30%." Participant D claimed that lead magnets are also successful in attracting new users: "They help to deal with only one of several human problems, forcing him to turn to our webinar to solve the rest. Therefore, the lead magnet should have a real practical value."

Before choosing a tool for mailing, most of the respondents studied and compared various options in order to find a specific service that meets all their needs. It turned out that, for the most part, all variants successfully perform the same task. Participant B mentioned: "Of course, the mailing is necessary, but it should not be intrusive. The first message should come immediately after registration and contain words of gratitude, as well as the promised lead magnet. Then, depending on how many days are left before the event, emails with worthy information, interesting facts, and feedback from participants of past webinars are sent. Subsequent emails are sent to subscribers 3 days before the webinar, as well as the day before it. On the day of the broadcast itself, you can send about three emails: 3 hours, an hour and 10 minutes before the start of the event with a link to log in to the platform." Participant C went through the structure of lead magnets in the newsletter: "Materials should be related to the main topic of the webinar and, of course, supplement it with practical knowledge. But there shouldn't be a lot of it, no one wants to read a whole book. It is best to send a short formatted text. These documents should be simple, clear and bright, then people's interest in the webinar will definitely become higher."

No less important step is to choose the platform on which the webinar will be held. Participant E said: "The choice of a site for a broadcast depends on the price of using the service, the interface language, the availability of analytical tools and other instruments useful for streaming. I also pay attention to easily accessible and fast technical support, preferably around the clock." Participant A talked about the use of Zoom by experts: "For them, the opportunity to actively interact with the public is important, and the "raise your hand" function helps them in this, because it makes it clear that during the performance someone has questions; as well as "reactions" with which viewers can show their personal attitude to what host said or what they saw, and the presenter will understand that he is really being listened to. The ability to use a screen demonstration to visualize materials is also a serious advantage." Participant D chose to host broadcasts with the use of Webinar.ru: "The service is quite easy to use. There is automatic monitoring of the quality of communication, so the platform itself ensures that the broadcast goes on without any failures. Also, there is an automatic recording of the webinar, which is subsequently saved in the account. Moreover, I will take the liberty to recommend using this service if you want to organize a paid webinar since payment processing takes place directly on the platform and you do not need to connect additional tools for this." Participant B said: "I think MyOwnConference is a great find for those who want to conduct a live stream. Firstly, the possibility of branding allows changing the design of the webinar room in accordance with the corporate style. Secondly, the analytical functions of this service enable to analyze the quality of the webinar, to be more specific: to show how many people connected to the broadcast, how long they listened to the speaker, etc."

When the desired number of people for the webinar is registered, the platform is selected, it's time for the test stage. All respondents agreed on the importance of conducting test operations in order to correct all problems and inaccuracies at the stage when it can still be fixed. Participant C mentioned the verification of the prepared material: "Of course, an

expert needs to pronounce it in advance, edit in case of mistakes and correlate with the information in the presentation. Ideally, it is required to go through the text not just once, but at least 2-3 times to accurately eliminate all misunderstandings and repetitions. After participation in the organization of several webinars, I realized that it is also essential to prepare and recheck the webinar script or plan, presentation and memo with answers to frequently asked questions.” Technical equipment also plays a significant role in the webinar. As a rule, this requires a computer with Internet access, a microphone and a webcam. Participant E said: “Before each webinar, it is necessary to conduct a test broadcast, which checks the operation of the webcam, sound, and presentation demonstration. All this reduces the risks of technical problems, respectively, and worries before the performance.”

To sum up, preparing for the webinar is a serious and long process, which includes not only creating a presentation and a speech plan, but also determining the purpose of the event, as well as gathering interested people. The participants shared their experience, told which platforms they prefer and why, how best to choose the date of the stream, and how to attract viewers through the landing page. It was determined that the test stage is one of the most important steps of preparation, since it implies checking all aspects of the webinar.

3.3.2.2 Conducting a webinar

After completing the preparation for the event, the most exciting moment comes - conducting the webinar itself. One of the main aspects of success is what the speaker is talking about and how he does it. Participant B said: “Being a good speaker is not an innate talent, but a skill that can and should be developed. The presenter's expertise reflects his speech and behavior in the frame.” Participant E advised improvising less during the performance: “Sometimes improvisation is involved, it's a fact. But I wouldn't recommend relying on this, since not many people can come up with high-quality lines on the go. Being able to formulate your thoughts and express them concisely is a special skill. It does not depend on how well you understand the topic of the speech. On the contrary, the more obvious some thoughts are to you, the more difficult it is to explain them to other people.” Participant A also considered the script of the speech an integral part of the webinar: “The text gives confidence. There is nothing wrong with peeking into it, because it does not affect the host's expertise in any way. He or she can always briefly apologize and continue the speech, the audience adequately perceives this. I think such moments make speakers closer to people, showing that they are not robots.” All the others expressed approximately the same opinion on this matter.

Participant D said that in order to maintain the interest of the audience, an expert must speak confidently: “An insecure specialist who says the right things will go unnoticed - unlike a person who broadcasts his ideas firmly. It is very easy to lose the attention of listeners if the lecturer repeats the same words, makes inappropriate lyrical digressions or

uses too many professional words that are not familiar to the audience.” Speaking about being in front of the camera, all the experts agreed that during the broadcast, the presenters need to actively gesture and make an expressive face - this makes the broadcast livelier. Participant C: “A webinar is a kind of monologue in the theater. A specialist cannot sit still with frozen facial expressions. Rather, it should be dynamic and bright. Viewers need a personality, they came to the webinar not only to listen but also to watch.”

In order not to leave all the work to one speaker, it is necessary to make a well-thought-out presentation. All participants believe that a presentation is an indispensable thing at a webinar, especially if it is of high quality and unique. Participant C spoke about the importance of attractive design: “It should be interesting for viewers to look at the slides. Beautiful packaging, especially at the first interaction, determines the attitude of the audience to the product.” Participant D said: “The presentation should be concise, so it's worth keeping track of the amount of information and not overloading the slides. It's hard to read from the screen, and it's even harder to read and listen at the same time. It is worth putting only the main points of the broadcast, keywords or abstracts on the slides. Then viewers, especially visuals, will remember exactly what was said at the webinar.”

Some experts had other opinions about the presentation. Participant E said: “Wherever possible, it is better to replace the text with visual components: pictures, photographs, charts, graphs. But they should also be simple and clear, without intricate diagrams and other things.” Participant A shared that she creates 2 presentations for each webinar. “One presentation goes as the main one, it can be seen on the screen during the broadcast, and the second one is sent to the participants after as a more detailed summary. Thanks to this, the audience can more easily remember the content of the webinar, and in general it helps to improve relations with customers - they like when something is done specifically for them.”

All respondents agreed with the importance of implementing interactivity in the webinar and some even shared the methods of retaining the attention of viewers that their clients use. Participant D said: “Any webinar should be interactive so that people feel involved. The very first thing that can help to establish a small contact is questions about the quality of sound and video. It would seem a trifle, but in this way the fear of writing something and showing yourself will disappear.” Participant B also talked about feedback from the participants: “There should always be contact with the audience, the speaker should not forget to ask: is everything clear, are there any questions, does he need to repeat something, what they think about it, etc. The audience should be made to feel their importance.” Participant E talked about the idea of a little acquaintance with the audience so that they feel like valuable participants at the webinar: “People identify themselves as individuals when they consider others to be truly interested in them. With the help of simple questions about the name, age, city, occupation, hosts can reach a deeper level of communication.”

The interviewees also gave some recommendations for conducting a successful webinar. Participant E said that it is important to respect your audience: “The most valuable thing that viewers can give us is their time, which is why it is necessary to start and finish the webinar on time. The absence of delays will raise you in the eyes of the audience. I always advise organizers to accurately calculate the time of the entire broadcast, including 10-20 minutes in the end for answering questions from listeners, and stick to the original plan so as not to go beyond the agreed time frame.” Participant A recalled the relevance of keeping control of the situation: “In no case should you enter into an argument with your viewers. If someone present tries to start a conflict with the host, it is worth immediately stopping such behavior by warning, muting or removing them from the webinar room.”

In conclusion, the webinar is the culmination after a long preparation, however, it is necessary to know how to conduct a stream successfully. Firstly, a lot depends on the speaker, his or her expertise and ability to retain the audience. Secondly, a good presentation helps not only the expert himself, but also the participants, since it is easier for many to perceive the bullet points visually. Thirdly, it is important not to forget about the interactive parts during the webinar, as they interest the participants to stay until the end. In conclusion, the respondents gave some additional advice on conducting a broadcast.

3.3.2.3 Post-webinar communication

After the webinar is completed, the final part of the work with the audience begins - post-webinar communication. Most of the respondents agreed that after the webinar it is necessary to consolidate the material covered and identify opportunities for new interaction. Participant E stated: “We usually send a thanks letter an hour after the broadcast ends, as well as a recording of the webinar uploaded to one of the video hosting sites or built-in cloud. Of course, it's more convenient for viewers to use the same platform they've already been on.” Participant B spoke about the repetition of a special offer for the purchase of a product in text format in the form of push letters: “Together with a thanks letter, it is worth recalling the sale of the course, namely the key features of training, to justify why a person needs to purchase it and inform about the time limit of sales at a reduced price and the number of remaining places.” Participant A mentioned: “If it was not possible to provide a discount on the purchase of what was presented, then in return other bonuses can be offered: useful books, videos, etc.” Participant D said: “Feedback from the audience is always essential for us in order to improve the quality of subsequent broadcasts and avoid certain organizational mistakes in the future. After the webinar, we send a link to a form where viewers can leave their opinion; say what they liked and what they didn't. The survey should be short so that filling out does not take much time.” Participant E talked about evaluating feedback after the webinar: “As soon as we receive answers to the questionnaire, we study them carefully. We try to track patterns and take into account both positive and negative comments. Criticism should be used effectively. For example, if several people said that the speech was long, then it is worth taking this into account and adjusting the duration of the next broadcasts.”

Participant B spoke about the importance of analyzing statistics after the webinar: “Due to the study of analytics after the event, organizers can understand how successful the preparation for it was, how effectively the various steps of the developed sales funnel worked. We usually start by analyzing the conversion of the landing page of the webinar, through which we can track the total traffic of visitors to the page and compare it with the number of registrations. The percentage of visitors who registered for the webinar reflects how well the site is made and whether the competitive advantages of the event were clearly written”. Participant D said: “We monitor the ratio of the number of registrations to the number of webinar participants, as it is important to make everyone interested to attend the event itself. This coefficient shows how well we managed to warm up the audience's interest in the broadcast. The level of interactivity during the webinar is also important to us since the most active participants are the most obvious potential buyers. This is measured in their participation in surveys, answers to questions, and comments. It is also possible to calculate the average duration of the listeners' stay in the webinar room: track how the number of participants changed, how many people remained until the end.”

Thus, post-communication is aimed at further work with participants as clients: letters of thanks are sent for attending the webinar, exclusive discounts on services, as well as a request to evaluate the organization of the event. Their feedback and further analysis of statistics are necessary to improve future broadcasts.

4 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Summary of findings and theoretical implications

After completing the empirical part of the study, all the results obtained were analyzed and conclusions that can be used by various specialists from the field of marketing and sales were formulated. I used not only the theoretical basis of the study, but also qualitative analysis of the data obtained through case study and semi-structured interviews. Having studied a large amount of information about webinars and analyzed the relationship between the various stages of the sales funnel and their impact on changing the number of customers, I am sure that the objective of the thesis has been achieved. Also, the answers to the research questions I mentioned earlier were received.

RQ1: How to attract the attention of the customers and motivate them to attend the webinar?

The main idea in attracting an audience is that a person decides for himself whether to register for an event or not, but the organizers can motivate him to the right action. To do this, as the marketing experts, participating in the interviews, mentioned, it is necessary to conduct high-quality preparation for the webinar: make a meaningful landing page, send emails with a reminder of the event and lead magnets containing practical information for individuals interested in this field information. People value their time, so it is necessary at the initial stage to tell and show what the webinar will be about, who will conduct it and

for whom it will be beneficial. Motivated users will not refuse the opportunity to attend the event, realizing the value of the knowledge gained and the further benefits of using it.

The information received from the experts largely coincided with the literature about one of the steps in AIDA model, to be more specific – “interest”. It consists of scientific papers by Makarov, Slutsky and Portnova (2019) about key principles of creating a promotional page and Solodar (2018) about different stimulation methods that are used to push a client to action. Thus, in this matter it is more effective to use working tools that have been tested for years. But, this does not mean that the approach to this stage is the same for everyone, because it depends on the knowledge and experience of a specialist. Theory only gives a chance to start from somewhere and continue experimenting on what will suit a particular project.

RQ2: What materials should be shared with the audience to satisfy their interest?

The interest of the audience is reinforced throughout the entire "journey" through the sales funnel, starting with the registration for the event itself. Before the webinar, unique lead magnets are sent, which contain important information on the matter (checklists, a step-by-step description of a process, etc.). Also, articles can be provided that reveal topics from the field in which the expert has professional knowledge. According to the experts' opinions, good materials will confirm the company's long-term experience in the industry and allow a person to dive deeper into the chosen direction.

After the webinar, participants are also sent all the necessary materials to repeat what they heard and saw in the future. A recording of the broadcast is also shared with the audience, to which they can return and refresh their knowledge at any time, as well as a summary presentation with the main theses of the speech, expert ideas and illustrative examples.

Thus, it can be noted that there are a great variety of the materials that should be shared with the audience. In the theoretical part, information about the most popular variants of lead magnets was written based on the scientific article by Tsekhomsky, Vakulenko, Kasumova & Okhotnikov (2022), as well as about the presentations was based on the materials by Miketerr (2021) and Kufley and Dmitrienko (2016), while the data obtained during the qualitative research, allowed to delve into this matter and supplement the existing list.

RQ3: What selling offers should be developed to awaken the viewer's desire to buy the product?

As stated by the experts, in order for more people to be interested in buying a product or service, it is necessary to create several "participation" packages with different content and price. Thus, almost every listener will have the opportunity to purchase items based on their financial capabilities and development goals.

After the webinar, it is important to remind the viewer again about the competitive advantages of what the company sells and a temporarily reduced price specifically for him. The discount will push a person to purchase a product if it is significant. However, too large a percentage can make a person confused about the quality of the services offered. The most optimal discount is from 30 to 50%, it will not arouse suspicion, but will draw a person's attention to such a profitable purchase. If there is no way to reduce the price, then you can offer additional unique material as a bonus for the purchase. It can be a second course as a gift, additional lessons and consultations, invitations to private workshops, etc.

In foreign practice, according to EUR Lex (2022), it is prohibited by the European Union law to present the lower price as a discounted one, although there was no discount applied at all, so all available information on this issue was obtained from Russian-speaking sources. This practice is quite popular with professionals from Russia. Most follow the same principles, but only in different variations, and are of the opinion that this tool serves as an important sales activator.

RQ4: How to conduct afterwards communication to acquire additional purchases?

In order to get additional sales, it is necessary to remind the viewer about the proposed product or service, so that even the most doubtful participants become closer to making a purchase decision. To do this, as the marketing experts mentioned, push letters are sent, in which all the advantages of training are briefly formulated, the reasons for the purchase of items are justified and temporarily reduced prices are provided as a bonus. Also, sending a webinar recording may affect those who could not attend the broadcast, because now they will have the opportunity to fully familiarize themselves with the good and decide whether they need it or not.

The actions that are performed by the managers after the webinar is over are related to the information about the last step in the organization of the online event received from various sources and also correspond with the literature about the last step in AIDA model, which is "action". Post-webinar communication is often carried out according to the schemes proposed by marketers, on whose research papers I rely in the first chapters. For example, all experts mentioned the step in the process described by Ismail, Syafrinal, Salam and Hajriyanti (2022): "the final action is to call all the viewers who were presented on the webinar, with the purpose to receive feedback on the organization of the event, the content of the presentation and the speech of a specialist in order to further improve it, increase the volume of the audience involved, and, accordingly, future profits."

Thus, it can be concluded that attracting people to purchase a product or service through a webinar is quite a labor-intensive process, but effective, since this leads to an increase in the number of sales. It is worth keeping in mind that in order to achieve success in this matter, first of all, it is necessary to conduct high-quality advertising of the event and find people interested in the proposed area of activity.

4.2 Managerial implications

Due to a detailed analysis of semi-structured interviews, I was able to obtain a large amount of qualitative data. The different views of experts on the conduct of webinars allowed me to draw a number of important conclusions. All of them are organized into three groups corresponding to the process of organizing the event: preparation, conducting the broadcast, and post-webinar communication.

Preparing for the webinar:

- To attract people's attention to the webinar, the organizers need to choose one of several promotion tools based on their own budget, advertising campaign goals and past experience,
- The date and time of the event are selected taking into account the analysis of user activity on the Internet,
- The landing page should be as informative as possible so that a person can immediately understand whether this webinar is interesting to him or not,
- The organizers should not neglect the lead magnets, because they work well not only to attract new listeners but also to warm up interest in the event itself,
- The lead magnet must satisfy one of the client's needs so that he has the desire to attend events and solve all his remaining problems,
- The mailing should not be intrusive, it is enough to send several letters, most of which are reminders of the upcoming event,
- The chosen platform mainly depends on the company's preferences in terms of functionality, but it is also worth taking into account the convenience for viewers: the ability to watch the broadcast from different devices and a comfortable interface,
- The test stage is an important part of preparing for the webinar. It is necessary to check not only the technical aspects but also the prepared material.

Conducting a webinar:

- The speaker's speech can both encourage the viewer to stay at the webinar and make him leave because of the boring and tedious presentation of the material. Therefore, it is better to avoid monotonous intonation and repetitive sentences,
- It is better to always have a webinar script at hand to clearly follow its plan and set timing,
- A well-designed presentation can also help the speaker during the speech. It should briefly describe the main theses, as well as clearly show all the graphs, diagrams, tables, photos,
- The organizers can make 2 presentations for the webinar, one for the presenter, and the second with more detailed content for the listener, which will be sent after the broadcast,

- It is important for viewers to feel like full-fledged participants of the webinar, so it is important to use various kinds of interactive for real audience involvement,
- To increase sales, it is necessary to use trigger phrases and questions that will make a person think about buying an item.

Post-webinar communication:

- After the webinar, it is worth sending not only a thanks letter but also a recording of the broadcast, so that the viewer can always return to the studied material,
- It is necessary to remind viewers several times about the unique characteristics of a product or service and why it is important to make a purchase right now,
- Getting feedback is important for improving the organization of further webinars. It can be obtained through a survey using various online forms to collect information,
- Analysis of the statistics of the broadcast can help in the development of the following events,
- The presence of users' contact details allows the organizers to be in touch with them and remind them about the company throughout the year, sending holiday greetings, invitations to other events, etc.

4.3 Limitations and opportunities for future research

I have chosen a rather narrowly focused topic related to the use of webinars as a sales tool in the educational segment on the Russian market. I have studied all aspects of this issue, looked at the problem from different angles and concluded that the study turned out to be quite deep, comprehensive, thoughtful and logical. Of course, if I didn't focus on a certain market and segment, then the field of research would become wider, so I could approach this topic in a broader sense.

During the research, such related topics as the development of a sales funnel, ways to promote goods and services, communication with potential and existing customers, etc. were touched upon. These questions are interesting and relevant for today, so I will definitely study them in more detail in my next studies.

Besides, future research could also include the perspective of consumers on this matter to gain a better understanding of how they perceive webinars as part of the sales funnel. This can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of webinars as a marketing tool and help brands tailor their webinar strategy to better meet the needs and expectations of their target audience. Including consumers in the study can also shed light on any potential barriers or challenges they face when attending webinars and provide recommendations for improvement.

CONCLUSION

Conducting a webinar is only a part of a comprehensive approach to attracting new customers. Companies can use various tools, such as content marketing, online and offline advertising, as well as other methods. Each of these tools has its advantages and can be used depending on the target audience and the firm's business strategy. Webinars bring great informational value and allow to present products or services in an interactive format, but they cannot completely replace all other marketing approaches.

It should be noted that in modern conditions, when most events are held online, they are becoming an integral part of the marketing strategies of many companies. By applying the right approach for organizing this online event, as well as taking into account the experience and expertise of other specialists, level of trust for the brand can be significantly increased, as well as the conversion of potential customers into real ones, which in fact is the goal. The main advantages of webinars are their accessibility, convenience and low cost in comparison with other sales tools. They can be used to sell a wide variety of products and services, and are also suitable for both sales in the B2C and B2B market segment.

However, for the effective operation of this tool, proper organization, accurate planning and conduction of the broadcast itself, as well as the skills and experience of the specialists involved in the process will be required. It is necessary to pay special attention to such aspects as: a webinar landing page, the choice of channels for attracting viewers, the content of the warm-up mailing, the script of the speech and presentation, the analysis of the final indicators and the collection of feedback. One of the key points when conducting a webinar is the quality of the content. It is necessary to prepare material that will be useful in solving the problems of viewers, as well as a valuable and interesting offer that will have an appeal to the target audience and motivate them to make a purchase.

In conclusion, the purpose of the study was achieved, the answers to the questions were found, and the results obtained can be used not only in theory but also in practice. With a help of webinars, managers can give more detailed information about a product or service, show the expertise of the company and its employees, and it will also help significantly increase the competitiveness and profitability of the business and become an important factor in maintaining and increasing customer loyalty. As a result, I have contributed to the knowledge base on the effectiveness of webinars as one of the most frequently used sales channels in the Russian market of info business and online education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovene language)

Tradicionalno trženje v svoji klasični obliki ne prinaša več rezultatov, ki bi jih podjetniki lahko dobili pred nekaj leti. S prihodom interneta imajo kupci zdaj možnost najti in izbrati bolj donosne pogoje na trgu. Oblike interakcije med podjetji in kupci se hitro spreminjajo in razvijajo. Zato je klasični pristop zamenjalo infotrženje – teorija, ki poslovnem omogoča, da z uporabo informacijskih izdelkov povečajo prodajo oziroma dobiček v podjetju. Sestavljen je iz večstopenjskega prodajnega sistema, ki mu pravimo tudi "prodajni lijak". Glavni cilj je pritegniti pozornost kupcev na podjetje in izdelek, pridobiti zanimanje potencialnih strank za njegove uporabne lastnosti in jih prepričati o potrebi po dogovoru. Da bi podjetje delovalo, je treba upoštevati več obveznih korakov pri njegovem razvoju: prvi stik s hladno publiko, ponudba uporabnih "magnetov" (ang. lead magnets), ki bodo odgovorili na boleča vprašanja ciljne publike in argumentirali morebitne ugovore, ohranjali zanimanje za spletni seminar, izvedbo samega dogodka in kasnejšo komunikacijo.

Spletni seminar je obetaven in edinstven instrument v kompleksnem mehanizmu trženja na več ravneh, ki izboljšuje proces promocije izobraževalnih storitev. Celostni pristop k organizaciji, katerega pravilno načrtovanje in izvajanje omogočata lastnikom podjetij, da uporabljajo najučinkovitejše promocijske kanale, večkrat povečajo bazo strank in so nekaj korakov pred svojimi konkurenti. Organizacija oddaje je eden najpomembnejših korakov v celotni verigi ukrepov za povečanje števila strank in končni dohodek, kar je glavni cilj vsakega podjetja. Po mnenju CloudIncome.com (2023), več kot 70% tržnikov meni, da so spletni seminarji eden najučinkovitejših načinov za pridobivanje visokokakovostnih potencialnih strank. Managerji se bodo morali ukvarjati z izbiro spletnih konferenčnih storitev, strukturo predstavitve, načini zadrževanja pozornosti, predlogom ugodnih pogojev nakupa in tako naprej.

Glavni namen magistrskega dela je prispevati k znanju o učinkovitosti spletnih seminarjev kot enega najpogostejše uporabljenih prodajnih kanalov na ruskem trgu informacijskega poslovanja in spletnega izobraževanja. Glavni cilj magistrskega dela je raziskati razmerje med različnimi fazami prodajnega lijaka in njegov vpliv na spremembo števila kupcev in splošne prodaje izdelkov.

Skozi raziskavo želim dobiti odgovore na naslednja raziskovalna vprašanja:

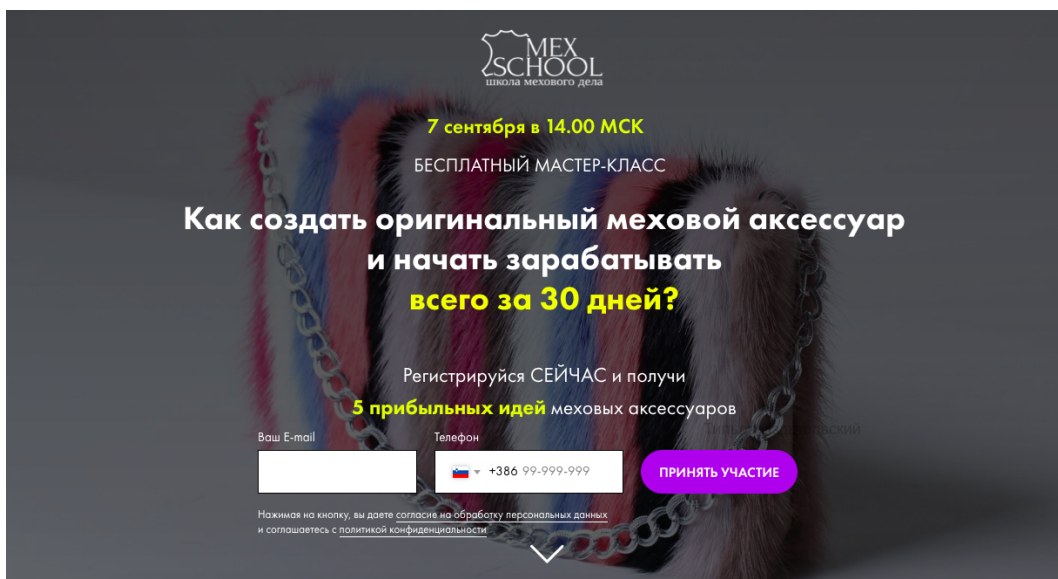
1. Kako pritegniti pozornost strank in jih motivirati za udeležbo na spletnem seminarju?
2. Katere materiale je treba deliti z občinstvom, da bi zadovoljili njihovo zanimanje?
3. Katere prodajne ponudbe je treba razviti, da bi prebudili željo po nakupu izdelka?
4. Kako izvesti naknadno komunikacijo za pridobitev dodatnih nakupov?

Metodologija magistrskega dela temelji na analizi primarnih in sekundarnih virov podatkov. Teoretični del diplomskega dela je nastal z raziskovanjem že obstoječe

akademske literature s področja trženja, natančnejše informacijskega trženja. Empirični del temelji na primarni raziskavi, ki je bila izvedena z metodami kvalitativnega zbiranja podatkov - kritično študijo primera in polstrukturiranimi intervjuji. Vse rezultate empirične študije sem skrbno preučila, analizirala in uskladila s teoretično podlago, da bi prišla do logičnih in razumnih zaključkov.

Če povzamem, lahko sklepamo, da lahko managerji s pomočjo spletnih seminarjev dajo podrobnejše informacije o izdelku ali storitvi, pokažejo strokovno znanje podjetja in njegovih zaposlenih, povečajo zanimanje občinstva in vzpostavijo komunikacijo s potencialnimi strankami. Če so vse faze organizacijskega procesa, in sicer: izbira teme in datuma izvedbe, opredelitev namena dogodka, analiza portreta ciljne publike, izbira načinov promocije, razvoj ogrevalnih materialov, pa tudi tistih, ki bodo uporabljeni med predstavitvijo, izbira platforme za oddajanje itd., izvedene pravilno, potem na pričakovani rezultat ne bo treba dolgo čakati. Tako sem prispevala k bazi znanja o učinkovitosti spletnih seminarjev kot enega najpogostejše uporabljenih prodajnih kanalov na ruskem trgu informacijskega poslovanja in spletnega izobraževanja.

Appendix 2: Landing page of the webinar that was organized by MexSchool



MEX SCHOOL
ШКОЛА МЕХОВОГО ДЕЛА

7 сентября в 14.00 МСК

БЕСПЛАТНЫЙ МАСТЕР-КЛАСС

**Как создать оригинальный меховой аксессуар
и начать зарабатывать
всего за 30 дней?**

Регистрируйся СЕЙЧАС и получи
5 прибыльных идей меховых аксессуаров

Ваш E-mail:

Телефон:

ПРИНЯТЬ УЧАСТИЕ

Нажимая на кнопку, вы даете согласие на обработку персональных данных и соглашаетесь с политикой конфиденциальности.

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: September 7 at 14.00 (Moscow time), free workshop “How to create an original fur accessory and start earning in just 30 days?”. Register now and get 5 profitable ideas of fur accessories. Button “register”, by clicking on the button, you consent to the processing of personal data and agree to the privacy policy.

**Хотите работать с натуральным мехом,
но думаете, что - это
сложно, дорого и для профессионалов?**

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Do you want to work with natural fur, but you think that it is difficult, expensive and just for professionals?

Мастер-класс для:



Рукодельниц,

которые умеют и любят шить, вязать, мастерить и даже зарабатывают на этом, но пока не работают с мехом



Начинающих дизайнеров,

которые хотят внедрять отделку мехом и меховые аксессуары в собственный бренд



Владельцев своего небольшого бизнеса,

думающих о расширении ассортимента и выходе в новые сегменты



Тех, кто задумывается об открытии оригинального бизнеса для себя

и ищет прибыльную нишу



Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Workshop for: needlewomen who know and love to sew, knit, do handmade and even earn money on it, but do not work with fur yet; aspiring designers who want to implement fur accessories in their own brand; owners of small businesses thinking about expanding the range and entering new segments; those who are thinking about opening an original business for themselves and looking for a profitable niche.

На мастер-классе вы узнаете:

1

Как всего за 1 месяц

научиться самому создавать стильные меховые аксессуары, удивлять окружающих и зарабатывать на этом

2

Как освоить престижный меховой сегмент и раскрыть творческий потенциал,

если вы достигли потолка развития в работе с текстилем и другими материалами

3

Где брать материалы и инструменты,

а главное, идеи уникальных меховых аксессуаров

4

Как войти в новую нишу

и зарабатывать больше на оригинальных изделиях с мехом

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: At the workshop you will find out: how to learn the creation process of a stylish fur accessory in just 1 month; how to master the prestigious fur segment and unleash your creative potential if you have reached the ceiling of development in working with textiles and other materials; where to get materials and tools, and most importantly, ideas for unique fur accessories; how to enter a new niche and earn more on authentic fur products.

Мастер-класс проведут



Ирина Белецкая

В меховом деле с 1985г.

Основатель Школы дизайна и мехового дела MEXSchool,
глава производственной компании "Меха Мелково",
автор образовательного проекта по меховому ремеслу в
технологическом колледже №34,
директор ООО "Меха Екатерины" 2005-2016г,
инженер производства в концерне "Русский мех",
товаровед высшей квалификации по пушно-меховому сырью,
MBA открытого университета Великобритании,
участник выставок в России, Гонконге, Милане и Франции.



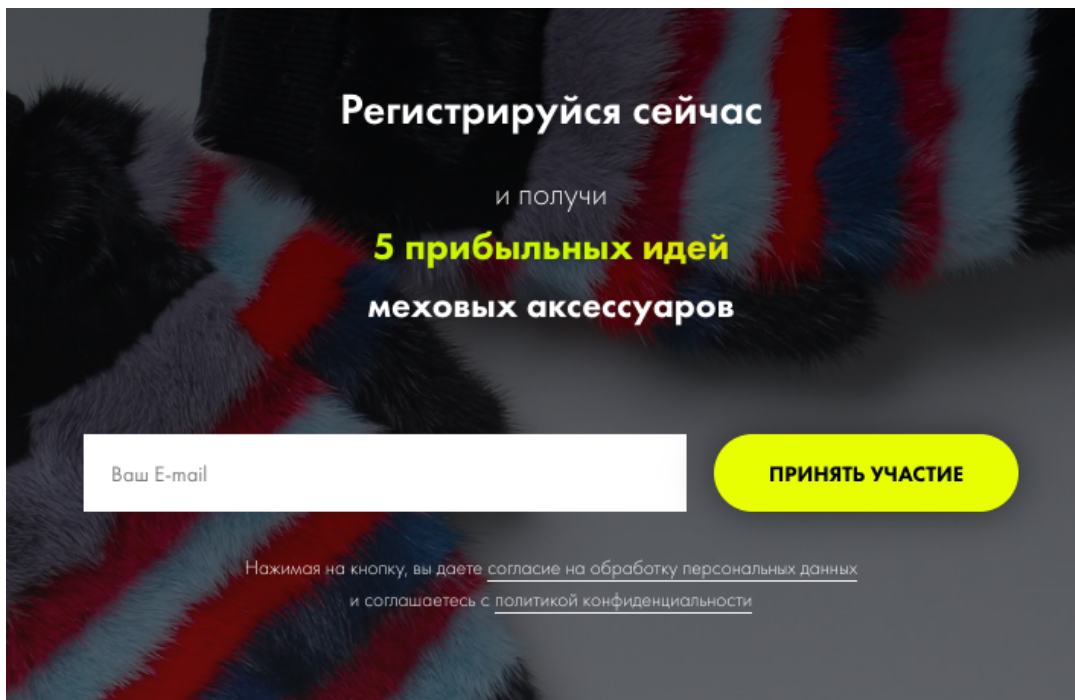
Кorableва Елена

В меховом деле с 1992г.

Эксперт по созданию меховых аксессуаров,
портная и технолог Школы дизайна и мехового дела MEXSchool,
многопрофильный специалист,
портной по коже и меху, скорняк раскройщик,
технолог по пошиву и разработке меховых аксессуаров,
мастер по индивидуальному пошиву и перекрою.

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Workshop will be help by: Irina Beletskaya, in the fur business since 1985, founder of the MexSchool design school, head of the production company "Melkovo furs", author of the educational project on fur craft at technological college №34, director of LLC "Ekaterina's fur" (2005-2016), production engineer at the concern "Russian fur", commodity expert of the highest qualification in fur raw materials, MBA of the Open University of Great Britain, participant of exhibitions in Russia, Hong Kong, Milan and France; Elena Korableva, in the fur business since 1992, an expert in the creation of fur accessories, a technologist of the MexSchool design school, a multidisciplinary specialist, a tailor for leather and fur, a furrier cutter, a technologist for sewing and developing fur accessories, a master in individual tailoring and re-cutting.



Регистрируйся сейчас

и получи

5 прибыльных идей

меховых аксессуаров

Ваш E-mail

ПРИНЯТЬ УЧАСТИЕ

Нажимая на кнопку, вы даете согласие на обработку персональных данных
и соглашаетесь с политикой конфиденциальности

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Register now and get 5 profitable ideas of fur accessories. Button “register”, by clicking on the button, you consent to the processing of personal data and agree to the privacy policy.



Source: MexSchool (2018)

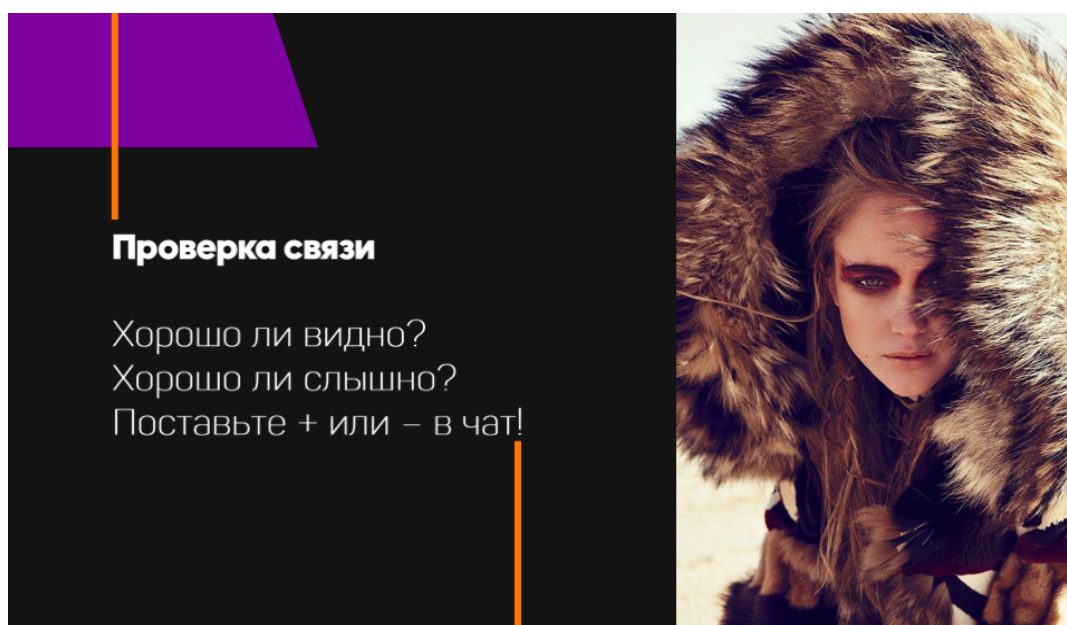
Translation: MexSchool, school of design and fur business, privacy policy, info@mex-school.ru.

**Appendix 3: Part of the presentation of the webinar that was organized
by MexSchool**



Source: MexSchool (2018)


Translation: September 7, 14:00, Irina Beletskaya, Elena Korableva, MexSchool, how to create an original fur accessory and start earning on a trendy handmade in just 30 days?



Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Checking the connection. Is video working? Is the sound good? Put + or - in the chat!

Мы покажем,
как за 8 шагов сделать
простой меховой аксессуар,
который стильно дополнит
образ, станет достойным
подарком или позволит
заработать до 10 тыс рублей.




Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: We will show you how to make a simple fur accessory in 8 steps that will stylishly complement the image, become a worthy gift or allow you to earn up to 10 thousand rubles.

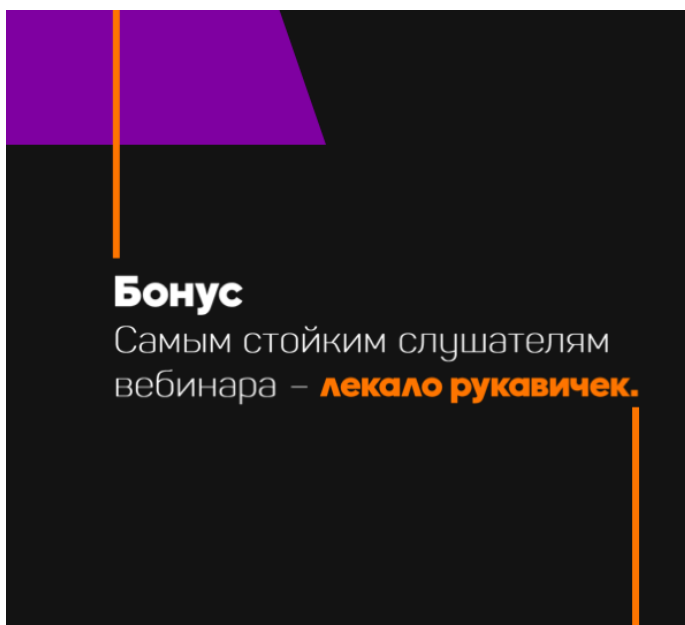
А также:

- обсудим основные тренды мехового дизайна,
- развеем популярные мифы об этом материале,
- преодолеем страхи по работе в данном сегменте.



Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: And also: we will discuss the main trends of fur design, dispel popular myths about this material, overcome the fear of working in this segment.



Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Bonus: the most persistent listeners of the webinar will receive a pattern of mittens as a gift.

A presentation slide with a black background and a purple geometric shape in the top left corner. The title 'Мастер-класс проведут' is in bold white. Below it, the name 'Ирина Белецкая' is in bold orange. To the right is a circular portrait of Irina Beletskaya. To the left of the portrait is a bulleted list of her credentials in white text.

Мастер-класс проведут

Ирина Белецкая

- основатель Школы дизайна и мехового дела MEXSchool,
- глава производственной компании "Меха Мелково",
- автор образовательного проекта по меховому ремеслу в технологическом колледже №34,
- участник выставок в России, Гонконге, Милане и Франции.

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: The webinar will be held by: Irina Beletskaya, founder of the MexSchool design school, head of the production company "Melkovo furs", author of the educational project on fur craft at technological college №34, participant of exhibitions in Russia, Hong Kong, Milan and France.

История успеха спикера



- 1985-1989 преподаватель пушно-мехового техникума
- 1989-1995 инженер производственного отдела мехового производственного объединения «труд» (русский мех), зам. директора фирменного магазина
- 1995-2016 товаровед, зам.директора, директор торгового дома «Меха Екатерины»
- 2016 - данный момент - индивидуальный предприниматель (школа мехового дела)

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: The speaker's success story: 1985-1989 teacher of fur technical school, 1989-1995 engineer of the production department of the fur production association "Trud" (Russian fur), deputy director of the company store, 1995-2016 commodity expert, deputy director, director of the trading house "Ekaterina's fur", 2016-now an individual entrepreneur (design school).

Мастер-класс проведут

Елена Кораблева

- Эксперт по созданию меховых аксессуаров,
- меховая портная и технолог Школы дизайна и мехового дела MEXSchool,
- многопрофильный специалист мехового дела с 1992г,
- портной по коже и меху, скорняк раскройщик, технолог по пошиву и разработке меховых аксессуаров,
- мастер по индивидуальному пошиву и перекрою.




Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: The webinar will be held by: Elena Korableva, an expert in the creation of fur accessories, a technologist of the MexSchool design school, a multidisciplinary specialist in the fur business since 1992, a tailor for leather and fur, a furrier cutter, a technologist for sewing and developing fur accessories, a master in individual tailoring and re-cutting.

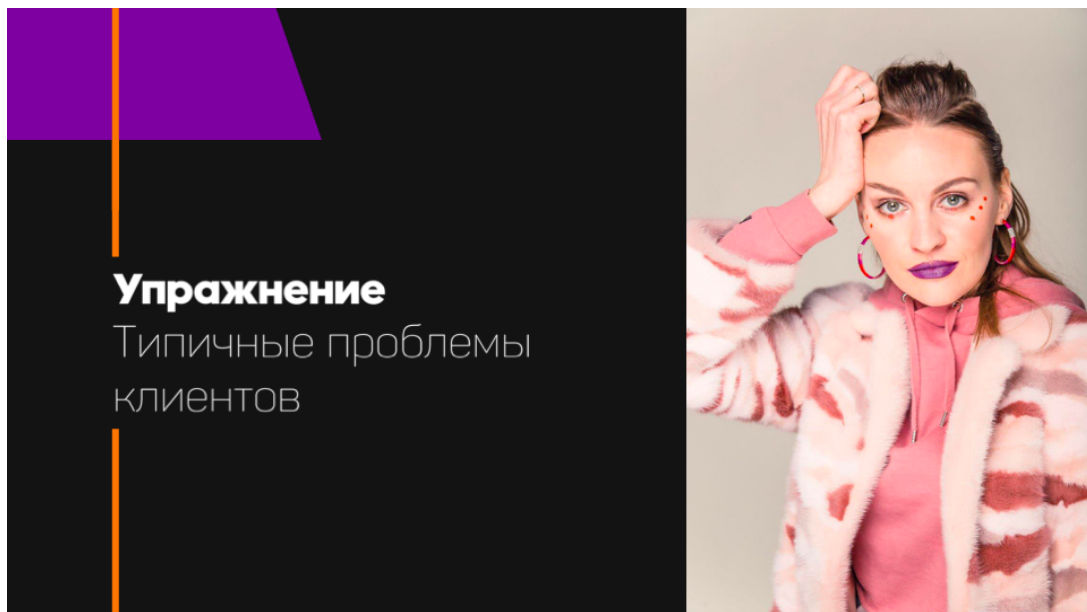
Давайте познакомимся!

- Из какого вы города?
- Чем занимаетесь? Создаете ли вы какие-то хенд-мейд вещи в данный момент?
- Что вас к нам сегодня привело и для чего хотите научиться работать с мехом?



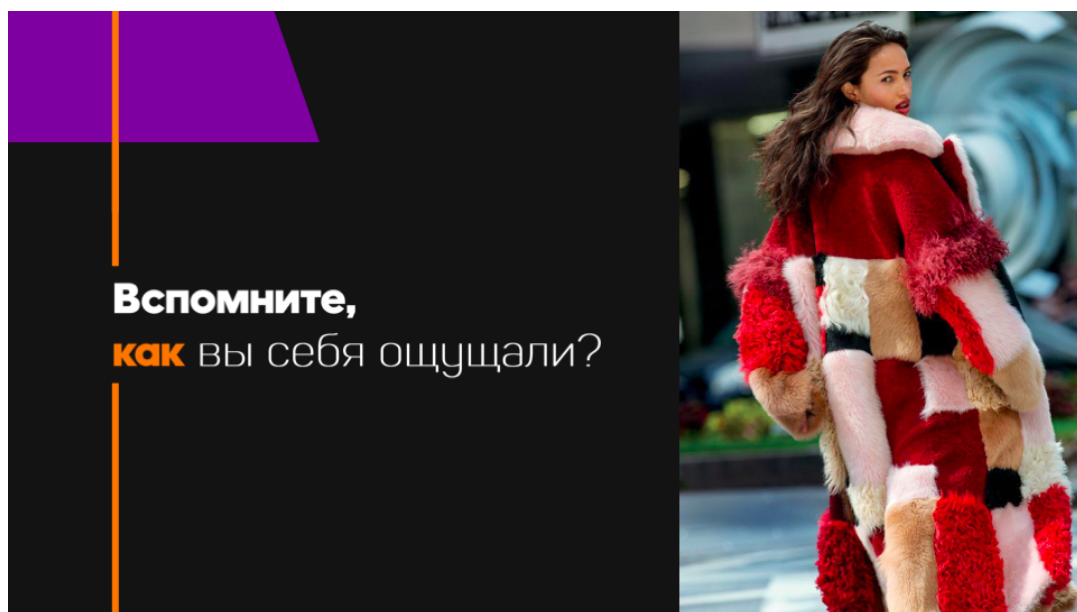
Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: We would like to know a bit more about all of you! What city are you from? What do you do? Are you creating any hand made things at the moment? What brought you to this webinar today and why do you want to learn how to work with fur?



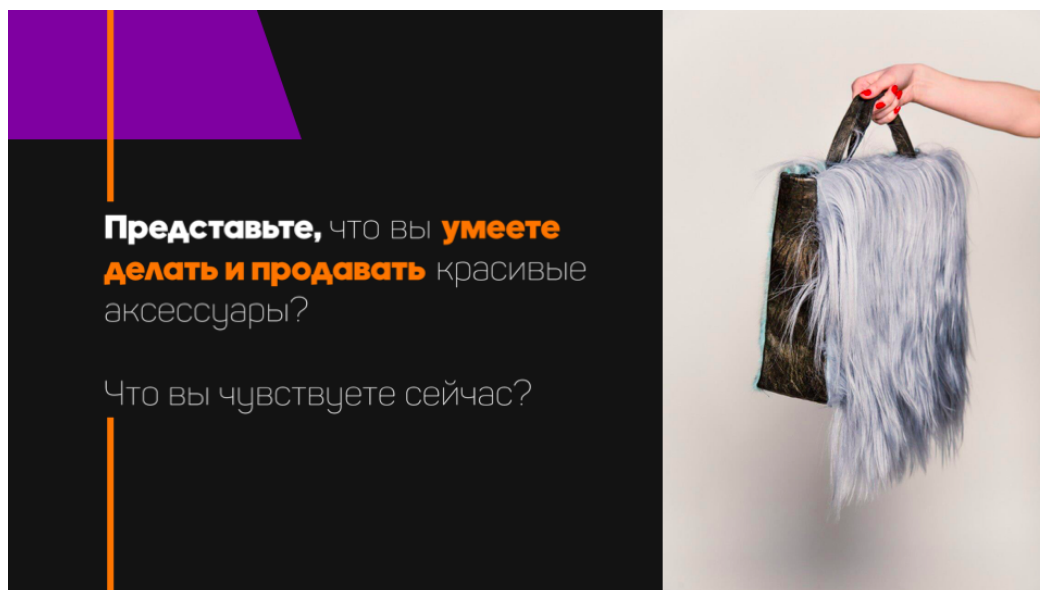
Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Exercise: Typical customer problems.



Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Remember how you felt?



Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Imagine that you know how to make and sell beautiful accessories? How do you feel now?

The image shows a dark grey or black rectangular area with a purple triangle in the top-left corner and a thin vertical orange line. It contains Russian text in white and orange, followed by a bulleted list in white.

ЭТОТ вебинар для вас, если вы хотите:

- научиться работать с мехом,
- обрести возможность создавать интересные и необычные продукты,
- делать стильные аксессуары для себя, в подарок или на продажу,
- расширить бизнес и выйти в перспективный сегмент,
- начать зарабатывать больше,
- и прочее

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: This webinar is for you if you want to: learn how to work with fur, gain the opportunity to create interesting and unusual products, make stylish accessories for yourself, as a gift or for sale, expand your business and enter a promising segment, start earning more and so on.

Сегодня мы будем развенчивать мифы о мехе:

- не сложно и не дорого,
- работать с мехом можно без специальных навыков и инструментов;
- не нужно быть именитым дизайнером, чтобы сделать стильный аксессуар,
- мех – это не только классические тяжелые шубы и бабушкины воротник,
- нельзя заработать и потери очень велики,
- сезонный товар,
- огромная гора стереотипов, которая окружает мех, меховые изделия и индустрию в целом

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Today we will debunk the myths about fur: it is not difficult and inexpensive, you can work with fur without special skills and tools, you do not need to be a famous designer to make a stylish accessory, fur is not only classic heavy fur coats and grandmother's collars, you cannot earn and losses are very high, seasonal goods, a huge number of stereotypes that surround fur, fur products and the industry in general.

Информация о курсе



Онлайн
формат обучения

Встречи онлайн и видео-уроки



Занятия
частота и длительность

2 раза в неделю по 1,5 часа



Проверка
домашних заданий

Обратная связь и чат поддержки

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Course information: online learning format (online meetings and video lessons), frequency and duration of classes (2 times a week for 1.5 hours), homework check (feedback and support chat).

План обучения

Блок 1: создаем аксессуар

- Готовимся к старту и обсуждаем идеи (онлайн-встреча)
- Создание лекал
- Навыки работы с инструментами
- Подбор сырья и материалов
- Особенности технологии
- Секреты мастерства
- Разбираем вопросы и ошибки (онлайн встреча с экспертом)

Блок 2: учимся зарабатывать

- Обратная связь по созданным аксессуарам (онлайн-встреча с экспертом)
- Перспективы сегмента натурального меха (онлайн-встреча с автором проекта)
- Успешный старт нового продукта или направления
- Онлайн-встреча с уникальным тренером по продаже меховых изделий

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Training plan: block 1 "creating an accessory" - preparing for the start and discussing ideas (online meeting), creating patterns, working with tools, selection of raw materials, technology features, secrets of mastery, discussing questions and mistakes (online meeting with an expert); block 2 "learning to earn" - feedback on created accessories (online meeting with an expert), prospects of the natural fur segment (online meeting with the author of the project), successful launch of a new product or direction (online meeting with a unique fur sales coach).

Пакеты участия

Блок 1: создаем аксессуар

+

Блок 2: учимся зарабатывать

+

Бонусы: для старта в ремесле

- Сортировка и определение качества шкурок
- Комплект лекал на меховой аксессуар
- Персональный онлайн разбор созданного аксессуара с экспертом

Уровень доступа 3

«Хочу развивать Бизнес»

15800 руб

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Participation packages: block 1 "creating an accessory" + block 2 "learning to earn" + bonuses "to start in the craft business" - sorting and determining the quality of skins, a set of patterns for a fur accessory, a personal online analysis of the created accessory with an expert. Access level 3 "I want to develop a business" - 15 800 rubles.

Пакеты участия

Блок 1: создаем аксессуар

+

Блок 2: учимся зарабатывать

- Обратная связь по созданным аксессуарам (онлайн-встреча с экспертом)
- Перспективы сегмента натурального меха (онлайн-встреча с автором проекта)
- Успешный старт нового продукта или направления
- Онлайн-встреча с уникальным тренером по продаже меховых изделий

Уровень доступа 2

«Хочу зарабатывать на хобби»

9800 руб

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Participation packages: block 1 "creating an accessory" + block 2 "learning to earn" - feedback on created accessories (online meeting with an expert), prospects of the natural fur segment (online meeting with the author of the project), successful launch of a new product or direction (online meeting with a unique fur sales coach). Access level 2 "I want to earn a hobby" - 9 800 rubles.

Пакеты участия

Блок 1: создаем аксессуар

- Готовимся к старту и обсуждаем идеи (онлайн-встреча)
- Создание лекал
- Навыки работы с инструментами
- Подбор сырья и материалов
- Особенности технологии
- Секреты мастерства
- Разбираем вопросы и ошибки (онлайн встреча с экспертом)

Уровень доступа 1

«Хочу начать»

3800 руб

Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Participation packages: block 1 "creating an accessory" - preparing for the start and discussing ideas (online meeting), creating patterns, working with tools, selection of raw materials, technology features, secrets of mastery, discussing questions and mistakes (online meeting with an expert). Access level 1 "I want to start" - 3 800 rubles.

В течение 48 часов будет действовать **скидка 50%** для участников сегодняшнего вебинара на покупку пакетов.

Не упускайте шанс!
Если вы ждали знак извне - вот он!

Source: MexSchool (2018)

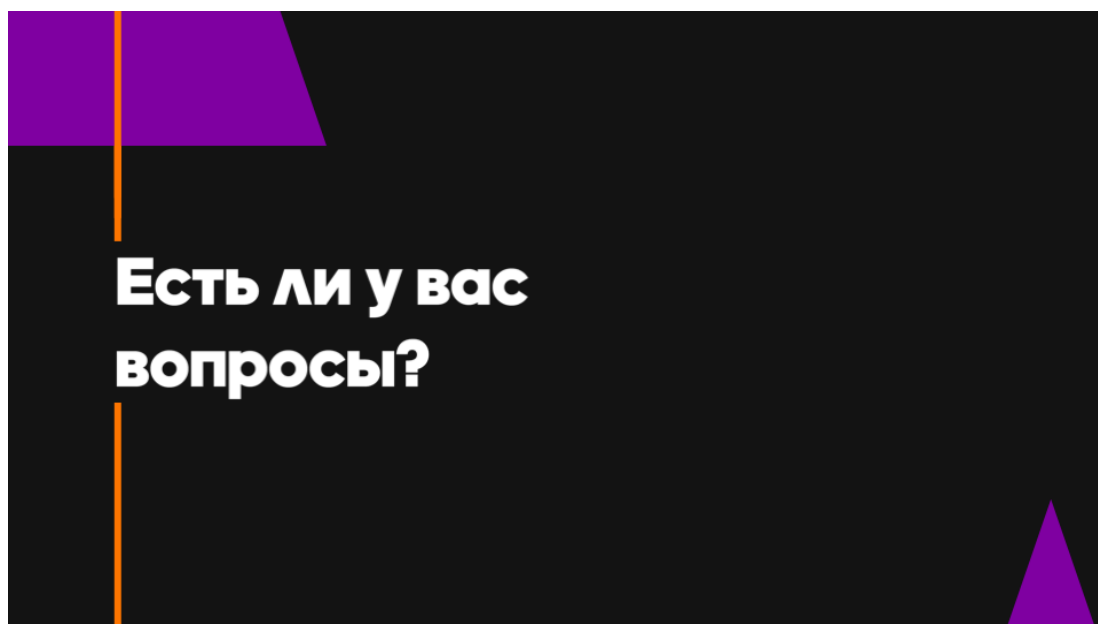
Translation: Within 48 hours, a 50% discount will be valid for participants of today's webinar for the purchase of packages. Don't miss the chance! If you've been waiting for a sign from outside - here it is!

**Специальная цена:
в течение 48 часов**

Уровень доступа 1	Уровень доступа 2	Уровень доступа 3
Блок 1: создаем аксессуар Блок 2: учимся зарабатывать	Блок 1: создаем аксессуар Блок 2: учимся зарабатывать	Блок 1: создаем аксессуар Блок 2: учимся зарабатывать Бонусы: для старта в ремесле
«Хочу начать»	«Хочу зарабатывать на хобби»	«Хочу развивать бизнес»
3900 руб 1990 руб	9900 руб 4990 руб	15900 руб 7990 руб

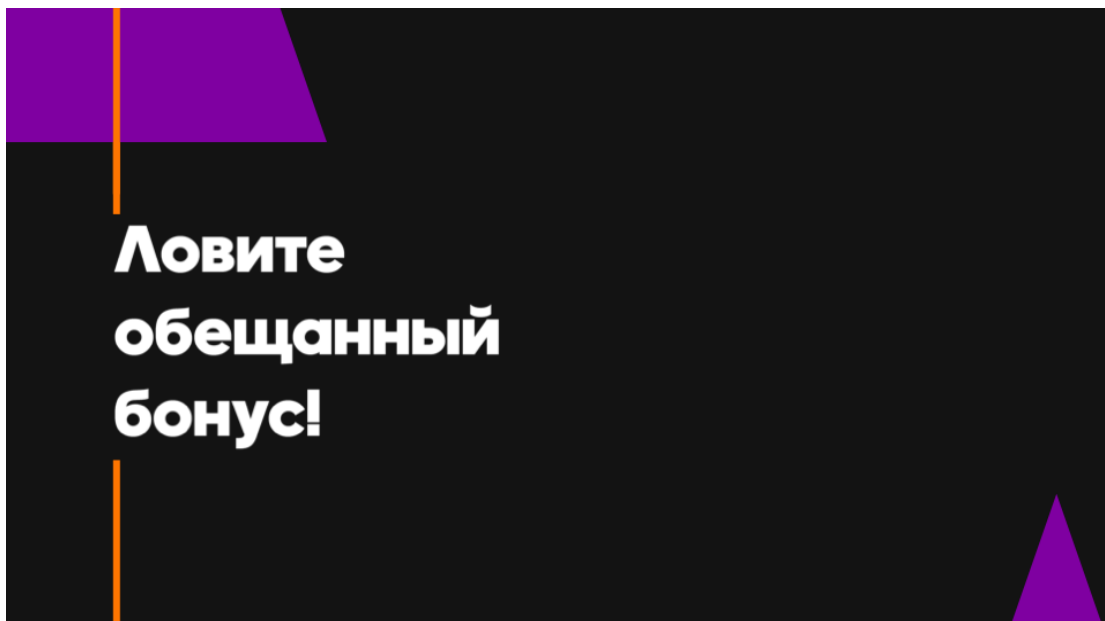
Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Special price within 48 hours: block 1 "creating an accessory", access level 1 "I want to start" - 1 990 rubles; block 1 "creating an accessory" + block 2 "learning to earn", access level 2 "I want to earn a hobby" - 4 990 rubles; block 1 "creating an accessory" + block 2 "learning to earn" + bonuses "to start in the craft business", access level 3 "I want to develop a business" - 7 990 rubles.



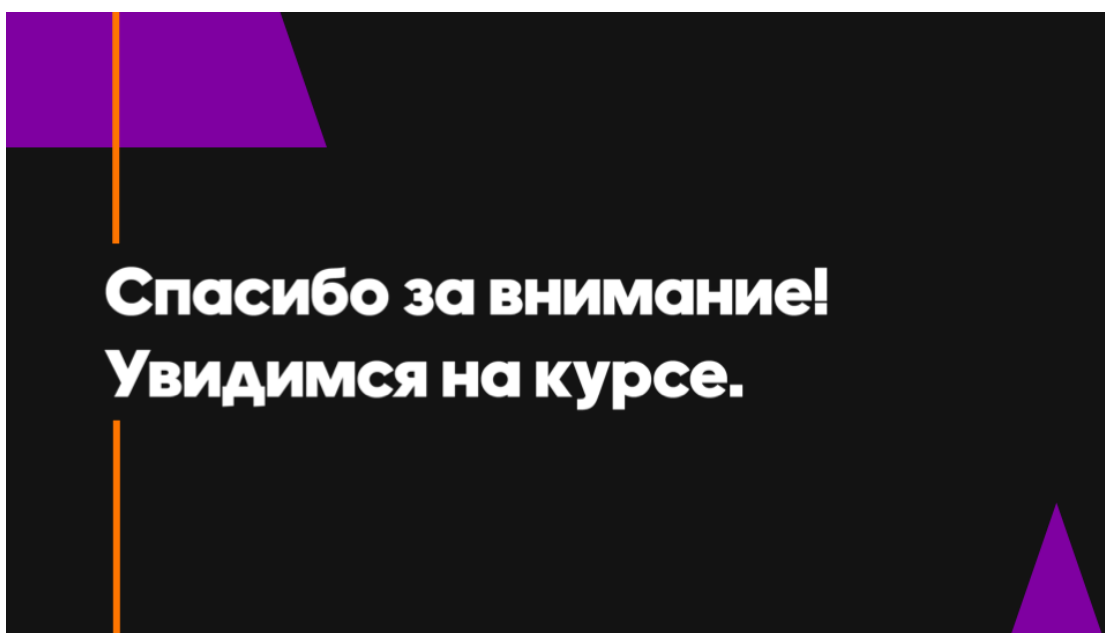
Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Do you have any questions?



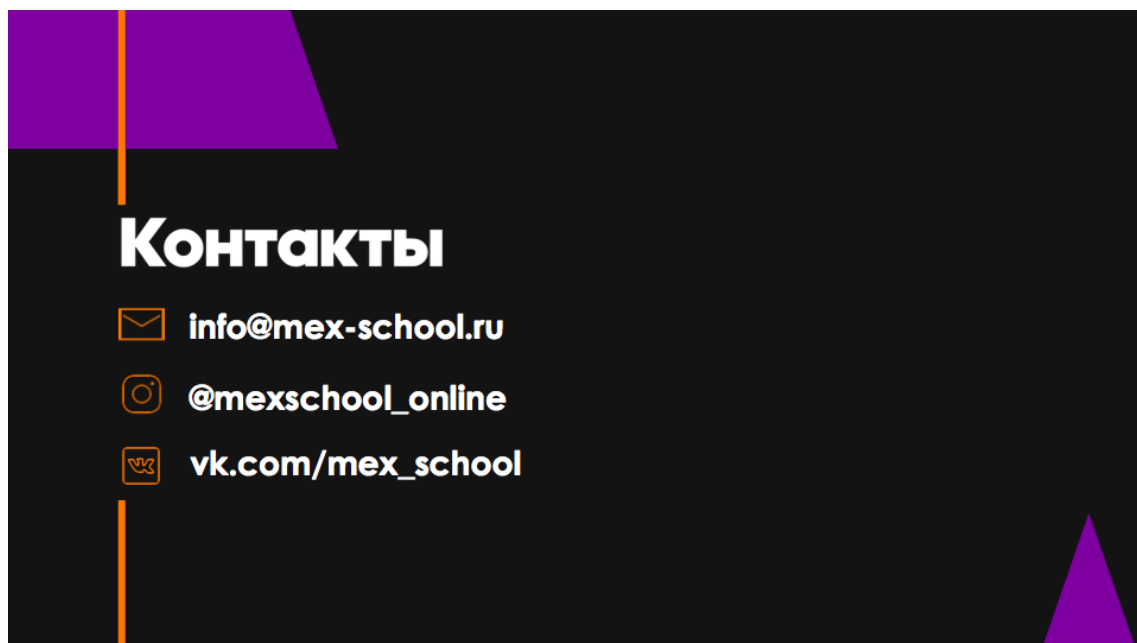
Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: It is time to receive the promised bonus!



Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Thanks for your attention! See you on the course.



Source: MexSchool (2018)

Translation: Contacts.

Appendix 4: Interview guide

1. What is your job, how many years of experience do you have in marketing, as well as in organization of how many webinars have you participated?
2. What products or services have you been promoting?
3. How do you think the organization of such online events should begin?
4. What is the basis of each webinar?
5. How is the date of the webinar usually chosen?
6. What tools do you use to announce the webinar to the audience?
7. Which methods of attracting customers to the promotional pages do you typically use?
8. Moving through the sales funnel, what happens after a user's registration?
9. What kind of broadcast service do you mostly use?
10. How should an expert prepare himself for the performance?
11. What are the key points to pay attention to when preparing a presentation?
12. What can you say about the interaction with the audience?
13. What should post-webinar communication consist of?
14. How important is it to collect feedback?
15. How can the effectiveness of the webinar be evaluated?

Appendix 5: Interviews

Transcriptions:

Interview №1

Participant A

Date of the interview: 20.10.2022

Information about the respondent: female, 25 years old, 2 years of experience, right now working as a freelance marketer, participated in the organization of more than 10 webinars.

I - Interviewer

P - Participant

I: Hello. Thank you so much for taking the time to have this conversation. My name is Marina Kholina. I am currently studying at the University of Ljubljana for a master's degree in marketing. Our talk will be devoted to research on the topic "Webinar as part of an effective sales funnel". It will last about 30 minutes. Do you give your consent to record our discussion for further analysis and use of the information in my thesis?

P: Hello. Yes, okey.

I: Super. Could you, please, tell me about yourself. What is your name, how old are you, where do you live at the moment, what is your job, how many years of experience do you have in marketing, as well as in organization of how many webinars have you participated?

P: My name is *** (changed to Anna), I am 25 years old. I live in St. Petersburg, Russia. Regarding work experience: I have been working as a marketer for about 2 years, before that I was developing in event management. Regarding the number of webinars in the organization of which I participated: they can be counted on the fingers and toes, about 10.. maybe a few more.

I: What products or services have you been promoting?

P: All those webinars that my colleagues and I organized were for an esoteric school that offers online courses in tarot and numerology.

I: Wow.. curious! I suggest we first talk about the preparation for the webinar. How do you think the organization of this online event should begin? What should be the first step?

P: Hm.. with the definition of the webinar topic? Yes.. I think this is where to start. It is necessary to understand what the expert is strong in and what he wants to share with the public. And then ask himself the question - why does he want to share it? In order, for example, to warm up the interest of the audience and.. possibly sell something to them? As an option. Accordingly, the purpose of the event will be determined in this way, which is also important.

I: And what can you say about the choice of the date of the webinar?

P: We analyze the list of site visitors over the past 3 months and, realizing at what hour the largest number of people visited the page, determine the time. The analysis of social networks also helps us: we track at what time of the day the profile activity increases.

I: An interesting approach, really. So... you decided on the topic and purpose, chose the date. What's next?

P: It's time to start looking for viewers... Imagine, all the work is done, the webinar is very soon, and there are no registrations. Terrible! Seriously speaking, many professionals make landing pages. From personal experience, I can say that this method is effective, but quite time-consuming. Therefore, we have recently started testing another tool.

I: Which one?

P: We create a VK.com page for the event and collect registrations using built-in widgets. I mean through forms that have the same functionality as, for example, Google Forms.

I: And how do you attract interested users to these pages?

P: Everything is quite banal here — targeted advertising in VK.com. This option is almost always a win-win if you find a good specialist. I have had different cases: when it worked at 200%, and when it gave a result far from what we expected. But to summarize, in my opinion, this is quite a working channel for attracting an audience.

I: Sounds very good. Registrations began to appear, what's next?

P: Since we switched from one-page sites to pages in social networks, we also do the mailing there. We send reminders about the webinar to the users who filled out the form in private messages. In my opinion, % of the reading is bigger than when we did it through an email newsletter.

I: Great. Moving on... What kind of broadcast service do you usually use?

P: We prefer Zoom. I can't say that this service is perfect, but since we have been working through it for quite a long time, there is no desire to waste time and effort on switching to a new platform. What positive aspects can I highlight.. The first thing that came to mind, since I just heard it from our new expert a few days ago: the opportunity to actively interact with the public is important, and the “raise your hand” function helps them in this, because it makes it clear that during the performance someone has questions; as well as “reactions” with which viewers can show their personal attitude to what host said or what they saw, and the presenter will understand that he is really being listened to. The ability to use a screen demonstration to visualize materials is also a serious advantage.

I: Got it. And what can you say about the last steps in preparation for the webinar?

P: If we are talking about the role of the speaker in this event... it all depends on whether he has a lot of experience in performing. If not, then he will need training. Somewhere I read about this method - to practice speech while standing in front of a mirror. In a way it helps to reduce the level of stress and also better orientate in the content of the presentation. In general, the text gives confidence. There is nothing wrong with peering into it, because it does not affect the host's expertise in any way. He or she can always briefly apologize and continue the speech, the audience adequately perceives this. I think such moments make speakers closer to people, showing that they are not robots. However, if an expert already has similar experience, then he will only need a test webinar to check the technical side (which buttons to press if anything unpredicted happens, how the microphone and camera work and so on).

I: Do you have any comments on the preparation of the presentation?

P: You probably already realized that I encourage the presence of “supporting” materials, so in the case of presentation, we usually have two of them. One presentation goes as the main one, it can be seen on the screen during the broadcast, and the second one is sent to the participants after as a more detailed summary. Thanks to this, the audience can more easily remember the content of the webinar, and in general it helps to improve relations with customers - they like when something is done specifically for them.

I: What can you say about the interaction with the audience?

P: It is very important to be in touch with the viewers! Yes, most likely they came just to listen to you. But there will be those who would want to speak out. Give them this opportunity. I also want to note, in no case should you enter into an argument with your viewers. If someone present tries to start a conflict with the host, it is worth immediately stopping such behavior by warning, muting or removing them from the webinar room. Unfortunately, we have had such situations. The experience is not pleasant, as you can imagine.

I: Last questions. What should post-webinar communication consist of? And how important is it to collect feedback?

P: Extremely important. Without feedback, it is impossible to analyze the effectiveness of the webinar, draw conclusions and outline the vector of development. And about maintaining contact after the event. It is definitely worth writing a thankful letter and sending a recording of the broadcast. If it was not possible to provide a discount on the purchase of what was presented, for example, when in return other bonuses can be offered: useful books, videos, etc. The audience will be grateful.

I: Thank you so much for all your answers. It was incredibly useful and interesting to delve into the topic of organizing and conducting webinars. I am sure that our conversation will help me in my research.

P: I am always up to help! I know many more interesting stories, but let's leave them for other studies.

Interview №2

Participant B

Date of the interview: 22.10.2022

Information about the respondent: female, 37 years old, 12 years of experience, right now working as the head of a marketing agency, participated in the organization of more than 100 webinars.

I - Interviewer

P - Participant

I: Hello. Thank you so much for taking the time to have this conversation. My name is Marina Kholina. I am currently studying at the University of Ljubljana for a master's degree in marketing. Our talk will be devoted to research on the topic "Webinar as part of an effective sales funnel". It will last about 30 minutes. Do you give your consent to record our discussion for further analysis and use of the information in my thesis?

P: Good afternoon. Sure.

I: Thank you! Could you, please, tell me about yourself. What is your name, how old are you, where do you live at the moment, what is your job, how many years of experience do you have in marketing, as well as in organization of how many webinars have you participated?

P: My name is *** (changed to Olga), I recently turned 37. I live in Moscow. I've been in marketing for probably 12 years. But I opened my own agency only 3 years ago. The number of webinars in the organization of which I participated has already exceeded a hundred, most likely.

I: What products or services have you been promoting?

P: I won't list everything, of course. There were too many different projects. One of the biggest and most important - we are working with an agency that is engaged in the development of influencers. And we help them with the promotion of informational products that those bloggers create.

I: That is so cool! I suggest we first talk about the preparation for the webinar. How do you think the organization of this online event should begin? What should be the first step?

P: The choice of the topic of the performance. It is important to focus on what will be interesting to a wide audience. Then discuss with the expert what results he wants to achieve? The organization of the entire preparatory process will depend on that. Quite crucial to determine point A and point B, and only then start.

I: What about the choice of the date of the webinar?

P: We usually hold two webinars a week to capture different audiences: on a weekday evening and on a weekend. This approach, in my opinion, increases the number of potential customers.

I: I understood you. You decided on the topic and purpose, chose the date. What's next?

P: And then the promotion. In my opinion, it is easiest to attract users' attention to the webinar using a one-page website. Our main vector is collecting new leads. That is why it is important to make the landing page informative and as enticing as possible. In my opinion, it should consist of such information: what the webinar is about, who it is for, what benefits the participant will receive, the name of the speaker and a small information summary of him, reviews from past viewers, and, finally, the registration form. To encourage users to register, for example, we usually display a countdown timer to the event on the first screen. This serves as a visual indicator that the chance to attend the webinar will soon expire. This urgency effect on the landing page increases the conversion rate by an average of 30%.

I: Well, you have prepared the landing page. But how to attract potential viewers to it?

P: Targeted and contextual advertising. To promote bloggers' products and services, we mainly use their pages on social networks, because they already have a loyal audience. The main task is to develop an effective sales funnel and write a warm-up scenario.

I: What happens after a user's registration?

P: Then the mailing begins. Just keep in mind, it should not be intrusive. The first message should come immediately after registration and contains words of gratitude, as well as the promised lead magnet. Then, depending on how many days are left before the event, emails with worthy information, interesting facts, and feedback from participants of past webinars are sent. Subsequent emails are sent to subscribers 3 days before the webinar, as well as the day before it. On the day of the broadcast itself, you can send about three emails: 3 hours, an hour and 10 minutes before the start of the event with a link to log in to the platform.

I: What a detailed scheme, thank you very much! Now let's move on to choosing a webinar service. I'm sure you've tried many different platforms, but which one turned out to be the most convenient for you?

P: I think MyOwnConference is a great find for those who want to conduct a live stream. Firstly, the possibility of branding allows changing the design of the webinar room in accordance with the corporate style. Secondly, the analytical functions of this service enable to analyze the quality of the webinar, to be more specific: to show how many people connected to the broadcast, how long they listened to the speaker, etc.

I: Yeah... please, tell me about the last steps in the preparation for the webinar?

P: We have already discussed so many important aspects.. You can also add to the list the preparation of an expert for a performance, the creation of materials - presentation, for example, and, of course, a test run. In general, this is a huge complex process.

I: Let's take a closer look at these points. How should an expert prepare himself for the performance?

P: Being a good speaker is not an innate talent, but a skill that can and should be developed. The presenter's expertise reflects his speech and behavior in the frame. There should always be contact with the audience, he or she should not forget to ask: is everything clear, are there any questions, does he or she need to repeat something, what they think about it, etc. The audience should be made to feel their importance.

I: And what are the key points to pay attention to when preparing a presentation?

P: To be honest, I delegated this task to the design department a long time ago. I have completely trusted them in this matter for more than a year. I will only say that the presentation is an assistant for the speaker and a guide for the audience. It should be bright enough, but at the same time concise. Without overloading with text and still does not consist only of pictures. In general, my idea is that it is essential to put a soul into what you are doing. And it will definitely turn out at its best. The same can be referred to the creation of various materials.

I: There are only a couple of questions left. What can you say about post-webinar communication?

P: You know what I want to draw your attention to.. for some reason, not all colleagues remember this. Together with a thanks letter, it is worth recalling the sale of the course, namely the key features of training, to justify why a person needs to purchase it and inform about the time limit of sales at a reduced price and the number of remaining places. The webinar has passed, but sales may occur even within a week after, if not more. Let all potential buyers have a letter in the mail with your offer. Not everyone can make a decision in a limited period of time. Perhaps someone will want to purchase a product or service for the full cost, but a little later.

I: And the last question: how to understand if a webinar was organized well and if the goals were achieved?

P: Look at the numbers. Due to the study of analytics after the event, organizers can understand how successful the preparation for it was, how effectively the various steps of the developed sales funnel worked. We usually start by analyzing the conversion of the landing page of the webinar, through which we can track the total traffic of visitors to the page and compare it with the number of registrations. The percentage of visitors who registered for the webinar reflects how well the site is made and whether the competitive advantages of the event were clearly written. Then you need to run through all the other indicators: the number of viewers (maximum, average, etc.), the number of purchases during the webinar, the number of sales after the broadcast ends. In general, this is a fairly large and important field of work that you can talk about for hours.

I: Thank you so much for all your answers. It was incredibly useful and interesting to delve into the topic of organizing and conducting webinars. I am sure that our conversation will help me in my research.

P: You're welcome! Approach any preparation process with all seriousness and everything will be at the highest level. Good luck!

Interview №3

Participant C

Date of the interview: 23.10.2022

Information about the respondent: female, 27 years old, 3 years of experience, right now working as a copywriter specializing in writing selling materials, participated in the organization of more than 30 webinars.

I - Interviewer

P - Participant

I: Hello. Thank you so much for taking the time to have this conversation. My name is Marina Kholina. I am currently studying at the University of Ljubljana for a master's degree in marketing. Our talk will be devoted to research on the topic "Webinar as part of an effective sales funnel". It will last about 30 minutes. Do you give your consent to record our discussion for further analysis and use of the information in my thesis?

P: Hi! Sure, go ahead.

I: Could you, please, tell me about yourself. What is your name, how old are you, where do you live at the moment, what is your job, how many years of experience do you have in marketing, as well as in organization of how many webinars have you participated?

P: My name is *** (changed to Sofia), 27 years old. I recently moved to Sochi, before that I was living in Krasnodar. I have been working as a copywriter for the last 3 years, but started writing selling texts (posts, scripts, etc.) only about 1.5 years ago. Overall, I would say around 30 times my materials helped marketers to sell products or services.

I: What products or services have you been promoting?

P: Since I have been writing texts for a long time, I managed to work with different niches, including "soft": psychology and coaching, and "hard": medicine, IT, etc.

I: Your experience with different niches is impressive. I suggest we first talk about the preparation for the webinar. How do you think the organization of this online event should begin? What should be the first step?

P: As strange as it may sound, but I will allow myself to compare the process of organizing a webinar with the process of writing a text. To know what to write or talk about, you need to decide on the topic. So this is the first step. There is also an unspoken rule in copywriting: one text = one goal. In my opinion, same situation with webinars. The organizers must understand what results they want to achieve.

I: And what can you say about the choice of the date of the webinar?

P: Unfortunately, I was not involved in making a decision on this issue, so I can't say anything. I will comment only from the user's point of view: most of the webinars I attended took place post-work hours.

I: I understood you. Can you say something about the promotion of the event?

P: Remembering all those with whom I worked - they promoted their webinars through landing pages. But once I volunteered to help with one task - posting information about the event on aggregator sites. You know, the ones where people publish information about all sorts of different offline and online events. Through using them, you can also collect leads.

I: You are not the first to talk about landing pages. But about aggregators - this is something new. And how to attract an audience to these pages?

P: I think they are promoting organically with the help of some internal tools of aggregators. If there is a goal to get additional traffic, then I would turn to contextual advertising.

I: Did you somehow participate in subsequent communications with registered users?

P: I was the person who was writing texts for the lead magnets. These are useful documents that warm up users' interest in the upcoming event. What can I say about them.. Materials should be related to the main topic of the webinar and, of course, supplement it with practical knowledge. But there shouldn't be a lot of it, no one wants to read a whole book. It is best to send a short formatted text. These documents should be simple, clear and bright, then people's interest in the webinar will definitely become higher.

I: Can you tell me something about the last steps in preparation for the webinar?

P: Since I am also engaged in writing a speech for an expert, I will speak out on this matter. All people are different, I understand that. But when a person is going to perform in front of an audience, he needs to forget about his worries and concentrate on the excellent presentation of the material and the vibe of the performance. A speaker can be a great professional in the field, but if his speech is not exciting, then most likely the audience will not like the performance. It is necessary to focus on the interests of the listeners, as well as on the oratorical skills of the speaking expert. A webinar is a kind of monologue in the theater. A specialist cannot sit still with frozen facial expressions. Rather, it should be dynamic and bright. Viewers need a personality, they came to the webinar not only to listen but also to watch. I seem to be saying such obvious things, but nevertheless.. for some reason, not everyone thinks about it. And I also want to add about the run of the

material, because this also influences the quality of the presentation of information. Of course, an expert needs to pronounce it in advance, edit in case of mistakes and correlate with the information in the presentation. Ideally, it is required to go through the text not just once, but at least 2-3 times to accurately eliminate all misunderstandings and repetitions. After participation in the organization of several webinars, I realized that it is also essential to prepare and check the webinar script or plan, presentation and memo with answers to frequently asked questions.

I: Perhaps you can add something else about the presentation?

P: Not my area of responsibility. But! It should be interesting for viewers to look at the slides. Beautiful packaging, especially at the first interaction, determines the attitude of the audience to the product.

I: I think that's the end of my questions. Thank you so much for all your answers. It was incredibly useful and interesting to delve into the topic of organizing and conducting webinars. I am sure that our conversation will help me in my research.

P: I was glad to help. I'm sorry I couldn't answer some questions. I know quite a lot about the preparation for the webinar in terms of developing materials, but I've only heard about the rest.. I hope that my answers will be useful to you.

Interview №4

Participant D

Date of the interview: 24.10.2022

Information about the respondent: male, 32 years old, 5 years of experience, right now working as a marketer in a company specializing in the promotion of online products, participated in the organization of more than 50 webinars.

I - Interviewer

P - Participant

I: Hello. Thank you so much for taking the time to have this conversation. My name is Marina Kholina. I am currently studying at the University of Ljubljana for a master's degree in marketing. Our talk will be devoted to research on the topic "Webinar as part of an effective sales funnel". It will last about 30 minutes. Do you give your consent to record our discussion for further analysis and use of the information in my thesis?

P: Hello. Yes, I do.

I: Excellent. Could you, please, tell me about yourself. What is your name, how old are you, where do you live at the moment, what is your job, how many years of experience do you have in marketing, as well as in organization of how many webinars have you participated?

P: My name is *** (changed to Dmitry), 32 years old. I was born in Russia, and now I live here. I have been working in marketing for about 5 years. At the moment I hold the position of marketer in a company specializing in the promotion of online products. For all the time I have been working in this direction, I have managed to participate in the organization of more than 50 webinars. I'm talking offhand, since the exact amount is difficult to count...

I: What products or services have you been promoting?

P: Hm.. there have been a lot of different goods and services over all the years of work. Recently, I have been promoting online courses on the disclosure of intellectual and creative abilities in children from 6 to 14 years old (the development of mindfulness, logic, memory, etc.).

I: Sounds like a great product to promote! I suggest we first talk about the preparation for the webinar. How do you think the organization of this online event should begin? What should be the first step?

P: I think it's worth determining the topic of the performance first, as well as the purpose of your webinar. Does your expert just want to share his expertise in a certain field, or perhaps he wants to sell some of his services? It is important to understand this at the initial stage of preparation, as the whole process will depend on it. It is also very important to identify the target audience. For whom is the expert going to conduct this webinar? I believe that the audience's level of immersion in the topic should be approximately the same. In another case, such situation may occur: some listeners simply will not understand the material that the expert will present, while others will get bored and lose interest, since too obvious things will be discussed at the event. Expert won't be able to tell equally interesting stories for a kindergarten graduate and a PhD candidate at the same time. The group should be whole - with the same level of knowledge and understanding. You can also do input testing if we are talking about a whole training course. But for the sake of one lecture, it hardly makes sense.

I: And what about the date of the event? Based on your experience, how is it usually chosen?

P: To be honest, I am used to always discussing this issue with the team of organizers and the expert who will conduct the webinar. We usually rely on the pre-agreed terms of the

project, our availability, as well as on the online activity of users in whom we are interested. If I quickly statistically evaluate all those webinars that we have already had, then the most popular option is a weekday after 18:00.

I: Good. You decided on the topic and purpose, gained an understanding of the target audience that you would like to see as viewers at the webinar, and chose a date. What's the next step?

P: Let me think. In theory, then you need to tell potential viewers about the webinar and promote it.

I: What tools did you use to announce the webinar to the audience?

P: I think the landing page will handle this best. I mean a one-page website that will have all the most important information about the webinar. Namely: the program of the performance, to whom it will be useful, what results the audience will receive after watching the broadcast. I almost forgot.. at the same time, it will also serve as a tool for registering participants.

I: And which methods of attracting customers do you usually use?

P: Mainly, targeted advertising... I also want to add that lead magnets helped us to increase registrations for the webinar. Each time we offer a small collection of exercises for independent study with a child. This is what makes many moms register for the event, because it helps to deal with only one of several problems they have, forcing the person to turn to our webinar to solve the rest. Therefore, the lead magnet should have a real practical value.

I: Yeah, I got it. So users started to register for the webinar, what's next?

P: Before each webinar, we send out warm-up letters. A few years ago, I analyzed all the strongest services and chose the one that seemed to me the coolest in terms of functionality. So.. I still use it.

I: And what about the service for the broadcast itself? Do you have a favorite?

P: Webinar.ru, do you know such? The service is quite easy to use. There is automatic monitoring of the quality of communication, so the platform itself ensures that the broadcast goes on without any failures. Also, there is an automatic recording of the webinar, which is subsequently saved in the account. Moreover, I will take the liberty to recommend using this service if you want to organize a paid webinar since payment

processing takes place directly on the platform and you do not need to connect additional tools for this.

I: Yes, I've heard of it! It's great that you found a service that meets all your needs. And what can you say about the last steps in preparation for the webinar?

P: Firstly, I believe that conducting a test webinar is a must! Find one extra evening for this, you will say thank you to me later. That will solve some of the unforeseen problems in advance and there will be less stress during the main broadcast.

I: Very important advice, in my opinion! And what about the preparation of the expert for the performance? What should he or she do?

P: I have a lot of thoughts on this. To begin with, in order to keep the audience's attention, the expert must speak confidently and passionately! An insecure specialist who says the right things will go unnoticed - unlike a person who broadcasts his ideas firmly. It is very easy to lose the attention of listeners if the lecturer repeats the same words, makes inappropriate lyrical digressions or uses too many professional words that are not familiar to the audience. During the speech, of course, the focus should be kept on the basic information, for which the audience came to the webinar. But he can also tell them some inspiring stories (of success, for example). So, what else.. Any webinar should be interactive so that people feel involved. The very first thing that can help to establish small contacts is questions about the quality of sound and video. It would seem a trifle, but in this way the fear of writing something and showing yourself will disappear.

I: Thank you for such a detailed answer! As far as I know, one of the main elements of the webinar is a presentation. What are the key points to pay attention to?

P: The presentation should be concise, so it's worth keeping track of the amount of information and not overloading the slides. It's hard to read from the screen, and it's even harder to read and listen at the same time. It is worth putting only the main points of the broadcast, keywords or abstracts on the slides. Then viewers, especially visuals, will remember exactly what was said at the webinar.

I: There are only a couple of questions left. How important is it, in your opinion, to collect feedback?

P: Feedback from the audience is always essential for us in order to improve the quality of subsequent broadcasts and avoid certain organizational mistakes in the future. After the webinar, we send a link to a form where viewers can leave their opinion; say what they liked and what they didn't. The survey should be short so that filling out does not take much time.

I: And what can you say about the analysis of the event?

P: We monitor the ratio of the number of registrations to the number of webinar participants, as it is important to make everyone interested to attend the event itself. This coefficient shows how well we managed to warm up the audience's interest in the broadcast. The level of interactivity during the webinar is also important to us since the most active participants are the most obvious potential buyers. This is measured in their participation in surveys, answers to questions, and comments. It is also possible to calculate the average duration of the listeners' stay in the webinar room: track how the number of participants changed, how many people remained until the end.

I: That's it. There are no more questions at this stage. Thank you so much for all your answers. It was incredibly useful and interesting to delve into the topic of organizing and conducting webinars. I am sure that our conversation will help me in my research.

P: I was glad to help!

Interview №5

Participant E

Date of the interview: 30.10.2022

Information about the respondent: male, 38 years old, 7 years of experience, right now working as a producer of online courses, participated in the organization of more than 50 webinars.

I - Interviewer

P - Participant

I: Hello. Thank you so much for taking the time to have this conversation. My name is Marina Kholina. I am currently studying at the University of Ljubljana for a master's degree in marketing. Our talk will be devoted to research on the topic "Webinar as part of an effective sales funnel". It will last about 30 minutes. Do you give your consent to record our discussion for further analysis and use of the information in my thesis?

P: Hi, Marina. Of course, I do give my consent.

I: Thank you! Could you, please, tell me about yourself. What is your name, how old are you, where do you live at the moment, what is your job, how many years of experience do you have in marketing, as well as in organization of how many webinars have you participated?

P: My name is *** (changed to Mark), 38 years old. Currently live in Russia. I have been working in the info business field for about 7 years. Became a producer of online courses 3 years ago, as far as I remember. If I count all the webinars in the organization of which I participated, regardless of the role, then there will be about 50-60 of them.

I: What products or services have you been promoting?

P: Online courses on targeted and contextual advertising, social media management, graphic design - all that I can remember now. Ah! Also on entering the marketplace (Wildberries), because now this direction of business development is very popular.

I: Yes, I know about that! I suggest we first talk about the preparation for the webinar. How do you think the organization of this online event should begin? What should be the first step?

P: The topic of the webinar, its purpose, the portrait of the target audience - that's where you should start. I believe that this is a kind of foundation on which the entire organizational process will be built later.

I: You didn't mention the choice of the date of an event. What about it?

P: We've had so many discussions with the team on this issue. Sometimes it even came to arguments.. Opinions were diverse, as everyone is based on their own experience. Ultimately, it was decided to hold 3 events a week: Tuesday at 19.00 for those who preferred to join on a weekday after work, as well as on Saturday at 12.00 and 18.00, for those who are willing to allocate time for this only on weekends. In my opinion, this would allow more people to participate in webinars.

I: Curious strategy. So what is the next step in the organizational process?

P: So.. the topic is chosen, the date is selected. Then we usually make a website for the event, where we post all the information necessary for making a decision. It is easier to work with interested users than with those who have no idea about the product or service you are promoting. That is why I always recommend giving a hint about the presentation that an expert is going to have: write on the landing page to whom the webinar will be useful, what topics will be discussed, what knowledge viewers will receive, etc. And then the person, having all the data, will decide for himself whether he wants to attend the event or not. At this stage not much depends on us.

I: Got you. So how do you attract potential viewers to these pages?

P: Probably like everyone else.. with the help of targeted advertising. It's not worth going into the details of setting up campaigns, right?

I: If only very briefly.

P: The most important matters in effective advertising is an exciting selling text, a well-designed creative, a thought-out portrait of the target audience and a choice of the right settings (geography, age, interests, etc.).

I: Okay. First registrations started to appear. What will be your next move?

P: Be sure to send several emails before the selected date. The content may be different, but the goal is the same - not to let a person forget that he has registered for a webinar. With these letters, you must ensure that he still attends the event.

I: What did your letters contain?

P: A simple text reminder. Sometimes there are some useful files that will facilitate the assimilation of the material that is prepared for the webinar. Sometimes some video greetings from experts. In general, you can come up with anything. The main thing is not to be intrusive. There is a limit to everything.

I: What's next?

P: The choice of a site for a broadcast.. For me personally, it depends on the price of using the service, the interface language, the availability of analytical tools and other instruments useful for streaming. I also pay attention to easily accessible and fast technical support, preferably around the clock. I conducted webinars using various services. Sometimes I used several platforms in parallel for different projects. My favorites are webinar.ru and getcourse.

I: That's cool! So... the date of the webinar is approaching. What's left to do?

P: Before each webinar, it is necessary to conduct a test broadcast, which checks the operation of the webcam, sound, and presentation demonstration. All this reduces the risks of technical problems, respectively, and worries before the performance.

I: I agree with you. Let's discuss the webinar itself. What do you usually focus on?

P: Preparation of the expert for the performance, presentation.. there is something else, but I will remember it during the conversation.

I: Sure. So what can you tell me about the preparation of the expert for the performance?

P: Practice, practice and.. practice! Expert should find some time to go through the script before the webinar starts. If he doesn't do it, then the performance will probably not work out very well. I'm not talking about memorizing the text. But at least just remembering the structure of your speech would be good. Sometimes improvisation is involved, it's a fact. But I wouldn't recommend relying on this, since not many people can come up with high-quality lines on the go. Being able to formulate your thoughts and express them concisely is a special skill. It does not depend on how well you understand the topic of the speech. On the contrary, the more obvious some thoughts are to you, the more difficult it is to explain them to other people.

I: Is there anything else you would like to add about interaction with the audience?

P: Expert need to establish contact with viewers. People identify themselves as individuals when they consider others to be truly interested in them. With the help of simple questions about the name, age, city, occupation, hosts can reach a deeper level of communication. This will undoubtedly help with sales later, since you won't be strangers anymore.

I: Interesting thoughts.

P: One more important matter. The most valuable thing that viewers can give us is their time, which is why it is necessary to start and finish the webinar on time. The absence of delays will raise you in the eyes of the audience. I always advise organizers to accurately calculate the time of the entire broadcast, including 10-20 minutes in the end for answering questions from listeners, and stick to the original plan so as not to go beyond the agreed time frame.

I: That's a lot of useful advices! Can we move on to the presentation?

P: Of course. What can I say about the presentation... In my opinion, it should be appealing. Wherever possible, it is better to replace the text with visual components: pictures, photographs, charts, graphs. But they should also be simple and clear, without intricate diagrams and other things. Do not save money, order a professional design from a specialist. A good visual will attract the attention of the audience and make them focus on the slides.

I: Great. The webinar is over. What do you usually do at last?

P: We usually send a thanks letter an hour after the broadcast ends, as well as a recording of the webinar uploaded to one of the video hosting sites or built-in cloud. Of course, it's more convenient for viewers to use the same platform they've already been on.

I: And what about the evaluation of the effectiveness of the webinar?

P: Together with the recording of the broadcast, we send a link to a Google form through which viewers can leave their honest opinion about the event. As soon as we receive answers to the questionnaire, we study them carefully. We try to track patterns and take into account both positive and negative comments. Criticism should be used effectively. For example, if several people said that the speech was long, then it is worth taking this into account and adjusting the duration of the next broadcasts.

I: Amazing. I don't have any more questions left for you. Thank you so much for all your answers. It was incredibly useful and interesting to delve into the topic of organizing and conducting webinars. I am sure that our conversation will help me in my research.

P: Thank you for an interesting discussion!