Social Media Advertising for Achieving Long-term Marketing Objectives

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Abstract

Increasing competition on consumer markets forces businesses to elaborate marketing plans focused on long-term perspectives. This is important in today's fluctuating and unpredictable business environments, where high level of competitiveness and positive reputation is a premise of survival for a business. Otherwise, it will be unable to retain its share on consumer markets and make plans focused on long-term periods. In this regard, social media advertising is one of the most powerful strategies to reach various marketing goals: brand awareness and high brand value, positive reputation and word of mouth, growing customer base, high ROAS (return on ad spend) in short-term and CLV (customer lifetime value) in the long run. Therefore, it is necessary to research social media advertising in terms of achieving long-term marketing goals. The paper deals with various issues, including advertising opportunities of social media, ways of attracting and retaining customers, raising brand awareness and elaborating strategies focused on long-term results. Discussion provided in the paper is a result of literature review and the author's observations. Each part of the paper contains recommendatory remarks for achieving long-term marketing goals by using social media advertising strategies. The paper is summarized by a brief conclusion.

Keywords: Social media advertising, SMM, Social media marketing

Introduction

Advertising has always been an integral part of marketing communications on every stage of its development. Emergence of social media made advertising an even more powerful tool for maintaining profitable relationships with audiences. Marketers are able to set a wide variety of advertising goals, make detailed segmentation, target specific categories of customers and influence their behaviour efficiently. At the same time, social media is shifting the power from marketers to consumers, because regarding to the democracy allowed in social media all users as consumers can now be in contact with each other exchanging the information about products and services, which push marketers changing their old methods to match the new needs of consumers (Ertemel…2016). Marketers face challenges of attracting and retaining customers as online word of mouth significantly affects consumer decisions. Hence, it is extremely important for businesses to elaborate advertising strategies that will be designated for long-term marketing objectives. Social media platforms provide such an opportunity. However, it requires profound planning and execution. Therefore, the issue is important and worth discussing.

Advertising for achieving long-term marketing goals in social media is necessary for maintaining competitiveness. Gaining brand recognition and improving brand impression is a vital, yet challenging task for companies, especially in highly competitive markets (Golmohammadi…2022). Consistent advertising should serve as a prerequisite for generating a loyal customer base and growing brand equity. Since social media is overloaded by a high number of commercial offers, advertising messages should offer value that will persuade customers not only to stay loyal to a company but also give a motivation to become a recommender for potential new customers.

Another important aspect is that social media is an unpredictable and fluctuating online environment. Businesses face reputational risks that are created by the nature of web 2.0, where consumer-generated content can spread fast, reach high numbers of people and negatively influence a brand's reputation. Thus, the popularity of the social online community increases the need for companies to take ever increasing cautionary measures in protecting reputations (Becker…2019 :232). Social media advertising may serve not only as a way to increase sales and attract new customers, but also as a long-term marketing strategy that is able to reinforce brand awareness and positive reputation. In this process, selecting a certain positioning niche is important as well.

When it comes to setting and executing long-term advertising goals, consistency is one of the key principles. Frequent exposure of customers to advertising messages increases chances of single purchase intentions and

also becoming a loyal customer for long-term perspective. Additionally, social media advertising purposes can and must be differentiated according to a stage of the life cycle of a product. Advertising in social media can be informative, persuasive or reminding, depending on life cycle stage: introduction, growth, maturity or decline. For long-term objectives, informativeness is a rational factor that can increase the number of loyal customers as it has a significant impact on the value of social media ads (Alalwan, 2018 :66). Right approach on the right stage and consistency can make social media advertising one of the main factors for increasing competitiveness in various business industries.

The opportunity to reach the right audience at the right time and place is another condition for establishing lasting and profitable relationships with customers. The principle of "everytime and everywhere" can efficiently provide businesses with the opportunity to achieve long-term marketing goals. However, precision in targeting and segmentation is extremely important for a successful advertising campaign. Segmentation can leverage a better understanding of consumers' behaviour, and therefore a better targeting, in order to obtain the desired effect of any marketing activity (Vinerean…2013 :67).

Setting long-term advertising goals in social media is a necessity for both large-scale companies and small businesses. Due to the high level of competition on markets and peculiarities of social media marketing, it is vitally important to attract new customers consistently and gain their loyalty. Otherwise, the perspective of obtaining high competitiveness will be vague. Therefore, focusing on long-term perspectives is one of the main premises of success while planning advertising campaigns in social media.

Social media as a powerful tool for advertising

There is an array of advantages that make social media a favourable platform for advertising. Features like detailed segmentation, ad format diversity, device diversity, rich analytical data and goal diversity make it often a primary channel for advertising communication for companies. Setting right goals and KPIs is of great importance. They are primarily derived from firms' strategic marketing goals and help to coordinate organisational actions and mobilise resources (Tafesse…2018 :6).

Long-term marketing communication generates high volumes of analytical data that requires thorough processing and detailed reporting. This is necessary for improving the efficiency of decisions that affect a company's marketing policy both in short and long-term periods. In this process, social media analytics tools are used for gathering data from social platforms to help guide marketing strategies (Kumar, 2019 :63). Furthermore, proper management of social media analytics can be

considered as a strong competitive advantage. This is even more important when a business aims at achieving objectives designated for long-term perspective.

Depending on specific goals and target audience, various types of platforms and formats are at marketers' disposal: general purpose social networks like Facebook and Twitter, Youtube as a leading video portal worldwide, Instagram as a platform for visual content etc. Marketing communication through these platforms can enable firms to reach new customers through users' connections and drive the demand for their products. Therefore, understanding the factors that affect sharing on social media platforms is important for both marketing practice and theory (Peng, 2018 :571). This information can be used for choosing an advertisement's creative, format, target audience, purpose, platform and device types. Each of above mentioned platforms may have their own type of audience with characteristic traits of behaviour and decision-making habits. Based on prior research and analysis, it is possible to conduct an advertising campaign targeted for a specific category of customers. However, marketers should take into consideration that significant number of social media users are active on more than one social media platform. Nevertheless, traits of behaviour of a particular user may differ depending on the platform type. It creates the necessity for marketers to differentiate advertising style, intensiveness and goals according to social media platform types.

Social media platforms are also equipped with the opportunity to track customers' location. This allows marketers to target audiences based on geographic data. Location can play an important role in the formation of a loyal customer base. In this process, advertisers should use geomarketing tools as part of their business strategy if they want to regularly and automatically analyze the data of the target customer group (Madleňák, 2021 :5). Therefore, consistent emphasis on location in advertising messages is able to prompt a customer to make repetitive purchases which will have lasting effect. However, location should be used in line with other values that a customer will be offered in advertising campaigns.

Consistent advertising communication may also be encompassed by various reputational risks and even threats of PR crises. Therefore, it is necessary to elaborate online reputation management (ORM) policy for detecting possible complications while conducting advertising campaigns through social media platforms. Immense amounts of information is generated by users daily throughout social media platforms, including posts about brands and their products. By the growing size of information available over the Internet, an urgent need is felt towards finding tools which assist in resource search and management. A large share of the generated information content is processed daily over social sites (Manaman, 2016

:94). Therefore, companies need to use online reputation management tools for detection and timely prevention of possible problems while conducting advertising campaigns on social media platforms. The necessity of online reputation management strategy increases even more when a business aims to set long-term marketing goals. Among other strategies, social media advertising is one of the main components in this process.

Marketers also need to consider social media advertising as an activity for formation and implementation of positioning strategy. Every advertising message can be used for conveying brand values, fostering positive reputation and raising brand awareness, alongside with product sales. Such an approach can have a long-lasting effect and bring various marketing benefits to a business. Focusing on intangible assets like brand value, positive reputation and positioning in a unique niche can be gradually and increasingly converted into tangible assets - sales and growing profitability. Eventually, competitiveness increases. Nevertheless, high competition on markets forces businesses to take measures to retain loyal customers.

Audience retention and attracting new customers

Social media marketing creates an unprecedented scale to reach a large number of people, interact with them and leverage their voices for greater marketing impact. A purposive application of social media enables marketers to manage customer relationships, promote their brands and influence their purchase decisions (Tafesse…2017 :4). Among other strategies, advertising is one of the main tools for building these relationships. Every positive interaction within social media can be regarded as a step towards proximity between a brand and customers. Consistent positive interactions motivate customers not only to make repetitive purchases, but also establish connection with a brand on an emotional level. This is a robust foundation for retaining profitable relationships with customers for a long period of time. Eventually, such customers may become brand advocates which has a potential to influence existing and potential customers. According to Philip Kotler's concept, in the digital economy, customer path should be redefined as the five A's – awareness, appeal, ask, act, and advocacy. The concept of Marketing 4.0 ultimately aims to drive customers from awareness to advocacy (Kotler, 2017 :69). Social media advertising provides marketers with the opportunity to turn ordinary customers into brand advocates. In its turn, such customers can provide a business with stable growth of customer base in the long run.

In order to attract a high number of loyal customers or so-called "advocates", brands need to modify their advertising messages in social media considering the types of target audiences: "cold", "warm" and "hot"

audiences. In this process personalization can play an important role. However, the level of personalization should correspond to the level of engagement between a customer and a brand. Excessive level of personalization in advertising may harm the efficiency of an advertising campaign. Therefore, it is important for the sellers to research on who's who that is related to their product and target audience (Latiff…2015 :18).

The role of "advocates" in attracting new customers can be revealed in electronic word of mouth (eWOM). eWOM received on digital channels is valued by consumers, in some cases, more highly than their own primary experience. It effectively builds brand communities and subsequently influences product judgement (Gvili…2017). As a result, potential customers intensively get engaged with a brand on social media platforms which is a strong prerequisite for establishing lasting connections. Alongside other marketing benefits, establishing positive and long-lasting relationships with high number of customers can facilitate to increasing customer lifetime value (CLV) of a business. Social media advertising can be used as one of the key factors in these processes. In order to manage eWOM throughout social media platforms, monitoring customer feedback is one of the most important principles. It allows marketers to rectify possible drawbacks in advertising campaigns and avoid reputational complications.

Audience retention and attracting new customers requires comprehensive research of consumer behaviour. This is a key pillar of understanding consumers' needs, wants and demands. Social media provides marketers opportunities to observe and influence consumers' actions. Customer relationship management (CRM) is a strategy allowing marketers to collect various types of information about customers. CRM applications can use technology to collect and process the information that can predict consumers' behaviour (Elena…2016 :786). Hence, businesses need to create well-functioning CRM system in parallel to advertising campaigns on social media platforms.

Information collected within CRM channels is a part of data analytics policy. Social media marketing is combined with metrics and/or analytics tools, methodologies and techniques. Social media metrics represent the tangible outcome of monitoring, measuring, reporting, calculating content from social media (Misirlis…2018 :271). As social media is a rich source of consumer data, marketers are able to use it in analyzing consumer behaviour and making important decisions for future advertising campaigns. Besides, companies use social media to harness their brand awareness, product/customer service improvement, advertising strategies, network structure analysis (Batrinca…2014 :91). Proper management of data analytics policy allows companies to collect, process and analyze information necessary for attracting and retaining loyal customers.

While conducting advertising campaigns on social media, psychological factors play extremely important role in formation of consumer behaviour and their attitudes. Significant part of decisions is based on emotional, irrational and subconscious factors. Impression received during online communication process influences customers' perceptions that further determine their actions. It is important that an advertising message carries the right promise – a message that creates expectations in a consumer's mind. At the same time, customers define the rules of brand engagement. Psychological engagement is important because consumers are not passive recipients of information; they are participants (Ashley...2015 :16). This is a part of branding process, where social media advertising is an important component, together with other marketing strategies.

Branding and raising awareness

Number of conversions is the most obvious result for evaluating the efficiency of an advertisement in social media. However, positive reputation, high awareness and high brand value are also strong factors that influence customer decisions. At the same time, these results are more difficult to measure. Businesses on social media can transfer the uniqueness of the product and brand to the customers and can be influential by making touches that will make them feel important (Bilgin, 2018 :132). Brand equity helps a business maintain a high level of competitiveness, sales, growing revenue and other tangible assets. Advertising campaigns in social media boosts a brand's positive reputation, awareness and influences consumer behaviour. Therefore, the overall philosophy of branding should comprise advertising as one of the key tools on every stage of life cycle.

Although advertising is an important component, branding is a much larger process. It requires thorough planning and execution on multiple touchpoints between a brand and a consumer, both online and offline. This process may take years and considerable amount of resources. However, the return on investment in branding is high in long-term perspective. Social media advertising can be used as one of the primary strategies in this process, in conjunction and full compliance with other marketing strategies. Using social media platforms contributes to the ability of firms to attach customers to their own brands more (Alalwan...2017 :1182). If done properly, a business will be able to manage integrated marketing communications efficiently, where every channel and marketing effort contributes to building a brand image.

Since branding is an ongoing and lasting process, social media advertising should be used on a regular basis. Repetitive exposure to a brand in social media advertisements can create a positive image of a company in a customer's mind. Nevertheless, this process may be accompanied by

complications. Consumers may perceive companies and brands as unwanted guests in the interactive space. In contrast, many users expect firms to participate in social media and may even purposely pull firms into the social media conversation by either mentioning the brand or "hashtagging" the firm (Felix...2017 :119). Such peculiarities of social media users and diversity of customer behaviour types creates the necessity to segment and target audiences in a detailed manner. Besides, in order to avoid negative perception of a brand, marketers need to implement the principles of permission marketing in branding strategy and also in advertising campaigns on social media platforms. This is a complex but efficient approach that can bring a number of marketing benefits for a business.

It is expedient to discuss also the issue of public relations and coping possible PR crises. As social media is an unpredictable environment, unexpected developments may occur during communication process with customers. The reason for such complications may become an advertising message. Improper management of the communication may turn into a full-scale PR crisis. Thus, marketers need ro be prepared for managing communications during a crisis. On one hand, social media and advertising, in particular, may become a source of PR crisis but on the other hand, social media platforms can be used to alleviate or even resolve a PR crisis. Developing a direct dialogue with online users can help a company be proactive in the case of a PR crisis. At the same time, a firm can leverage its online social presence to smooth out the echo effect deriving from a crisis and use e-WOM to its advantage (Zamani...2015 :47).

Word of mouth may become one of the main threats for a brand in social media. In order to protect a brand from such threats, an anti-crisis strategy is necessary. One of the main principles for avoiding a PR crisis is constant monitoring of advertising campaigns. Marketers can use ORM tools to observe comments and feedback posts about a brand or a product. In this case, they will be able to detect a threat and take preventive measures for avoiding complications at an early stage. In case of the occurrence of a crisis, one of the most important principles is an immediate response. Delay in reaction may aggravate a crisis and bring it to the point where it will be impossible to cope with the negative consequences. In the long run, this may significantly undermine brand reputation and decrease competitiveness to the lowest level. Managing advertising campaigns in social media requires not only general advertising skills, but also brand management qualification and experience. Therefore, while setting advertising goals, together with sales, branding must be envisaged as one of the objectives. Modern tools and platforms of social media allow marketers to set multipurpose goals while planning advertising campaigns.

Setting goals, executing plans and analyzing results

Before discussing details of long-term advertising plans in social media, it is necessary to identify what type of goals can be classified as "long term". Social media advertising is not the only but important factor in achieving the following long-term objectives: 1. Raising brand awareness and brand value; 2. Fulfilment of positioning strategy; 3. Constant growth of customer base; 4. Positive word of mouth and online reviews; 5. Growing CLV; 6. Growing reach and engagement in social media. It may take years to attain these goals.

Setting KPIs designated specifically for long-term perspective is one of the primary stages in elaborating marketing plans. This is important not only for conducting an advertising campaign but also for summarising the results and analytics. Each indicator should have a pattern and a reference point for the tested period; (these can be the results for the previous period or the average for the sector) (Kościelniak, 2018 :177). In this case, marketers will be able to analyze an advertising campaign while running, make corrections in ongoing campaigns if necessary and summarize the results after completion. However, marketers may encounter some difficulties while attributing an achieved goal to a particular advertising campaign.

Intensiveness of advertising campaigns in social media is another important issue for marketers. The level of intensiveness is one of the elements that can determine the quality of an achieved goal as social media environment is overloaded by immense amount of information, both commercial and non-commercial. It is extremely difficult to attract a customer's attention in such conditions. Therefore, having competitive advantages and offering important values for customers are important prerequisites of a successful advertising campaign in social media, including in the long-term prospect.

The efficiency of setting goals, executing plans and analyzing results depends also on the level of compliance of an advertising campaign with general marketing policy and branding philosophy. Each advertising message in social media can be regarded as an element that forms a customer's attitudes, decisions and behaviour towards a brand. Since social media is a platform with intensive, multilateral communication, brand values spread at a high pace on various channels. Consequently, active utilization of social media allows a brand to disseminate its messages and build a unique image of itself in customers' minds.

Customers' engagement habits to advertisements in social media is largely determined by algorithms. This is another issue that marketers have to take into consideration while planning and executing advertising campaigns. By using large-scale machine learning and deep learning algorithms, platforms learn about each user's interests and preferences

through interactions with the content, including taps, swipes, time spent on each article, time of day content is consumed, pauses, comments, dislikes, favourites, and so forth (Li, 2019 :334). This information can be analyzed within the scope of data analytics policy.

Decisions based on analytical data are much more efficient than unsubstantiated actions. However, due to unpredictability of social media environment, flexible decisions are necessary, according to current developments. Forecasting consumer behaviour precisely is a difficult task. Nevertheless, based on processed data obtained from previous advertising campaigns and current analytical information, it is possible to create an advertising campaign that will have a potential to influence consumer behaviour in favour of a brand. Post-purchase behaviour is satisfaction or dissatisfaction that consumers get after the purchase of the product. In the purchase stage, the consumers compare the performance of a product with perceived expectations (Sama, 2019 :59) and often customers manifest their impressions in social media environment. This is an opportunity for brands to leverage this data for analyzing and influencing consumer behaviour.

Online touchpoints in social media between customers and a brand is an important source of analytical data. These touchpoints are influential only in case if they come into full compliance with one another, including outside social media platforms and CRM channels. Moreover, they also must correspond to offline interaction peculiarities and general marketing policy of a brand. In this case, social media advertising campaigns will have long-lasting marketing results. It is also necessary to analyze results in terms of raising brand awareness which is one of the most apparent long-term marketing assets. In its turn, a company is able to obtain positive reputation which can spread from social media environment to the physical world and vice versa.

Measuring CLV is one of the obvious indicators of long-term marketing success for a brand. It implies measuring the customer's value over his or her lifetime, for most applications it is a three-year window (Kumar, 2018 :8). Calculating CLV precisely requires a number of financial and marketing data. It would be difficult or even impossible to measure a brand's long-term marketing efficacy without processing various data from multiple sources. It also demonstrates how important it is to manage data analytics properly. However, no matter how precise analytical data and CLV calculation is, without respective conclusions, it is impossible to set future goals, execute marketing plans and assess results.

Conclusion

On today's markets, B2C businesses need to have marketing strategies designated both for short and long term objectives. This approach

allows companies to concentrate resources more efficiently and increase return on investments. Social media is a marketing communication channel that allows marketers to plan advertising campaigns with diverse goals. Besides, focusing specifically on long-term goals is a necessary strategy for increasing competitiveness. As a result, a company gains high brand awareness, growing brand value, growing base of loyal customers, positive word of mouth both online and offline, growing profit and CLV. However, as mentioned above, these results can not be achieved solely by social media advertising efforts. Holistic marketing and branding efforts are necessary for attaining these goals.

Choosing a social media platform is extremely important as it can be considered as a type of segmentation on a global scale, depending on a business industry, type of product and target audience. Each social media platform has its own niche and audience. Nevertheless, much more detailed segmentation and targeting is necessary for increasing the efficiency of an advertising campaign. Social networks provide marketers with powerful opportunities to choose the right audience, including location-based communication.

Another important issue is managing complications in communication and readiness for PR crises. Long-term advertising strategy would be incomplete without a detailed anti-crisis plan. Hence, marketers need to elaborate a unified policy where advertising campaigns are backed by anti-crisis measures, if necessary. The need for positive reputation is especially important in the fluctuating and unpredictable environment of social media. In order to achieve this goal, brands need to have strong online reputation management (ORM) policy. This will allow them to prevent complications in communication and even large-scale PR crises.

Last but not least, marketing teams and company management need to have up-to-date skills for current trends and technological novelties in social media advertising. Constantly evolving advertising policies of social media platforms, ever changing algorithms and developing advertising opportunities prompt businesses to be flexible in their plans, decisions and actions for setting and achieving long-term marketing goals.

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