Virtual Identity And New Consumer Behavior – The Role Of Mobile Marketing

Aleksandra Krajnovic, PhD, Associate Prof.
Jurica Bosna, MA, Assistant
University of Zadar, Department of Economics Croatia
Sime Nincevic, MA
Tax Administration Zadar Croatia

Abstract

As a part of a new virtual world, paper examines social and marketing environment according to the user level of involvement in virtual life. New marketing is present 24 hours a day and is becoming very unique per each client. Virtual identity of the company tries to be involved in customer everyday life and become its inevitable part. Mobile marketing is a relatively new branch of marketing, referring to the two-way marketing communication between company and customers that takes place via mobile devices whose importance in the past years constantly grows. The aim of this paper is to point out role and importance of the mobile marketing in the new reality and its function in a process of generating virtual identity of the company. The emergence of mobile marketing does not substantially change the system of marketing management but gives marketing experts new efficient tool by which they can easily reach a huge number of new clients. Thus, marketing experts have to adjust strategies to new technologies and media while marketing essence remains unchanged.

Keywords: Mobile marketing, mobile devices, virtual identity, virtual world, consumer behavior

Introduction

In the recent past, companies were using massive marketing – communication with a large number of potential customers at once via traditional media as TV, radio, newspapers, journals etc. By development of information technologies and the fact that massive market has become fragmented, marketing experts had to change their access to   the existing and potential clients. Development of information technology has enabled direct communication with the clients, while companies can find out useful information that can be used for creation different kind of products for each

customer. Also, new kind of directed/target marketing has been continuously developing.

Interaction between technology and people has become firmly close. That kind of a new interaction changed the way of getting information about customer behavior. Customer isn't any more unknown, hidden – it is globally available. Companies like never before, know customers location, time when they are on-line, their preferences, etc. They are actually trying to "attack" their virtual identity by the new marketing strategies and the new media. This paper analyses mobile devices as a new marketing tool in the new "virtual world".

New information technologies created new media – mobile devices, by which can be applied mobile marketing. Joshi (2013) identifies mobile devices as an important innovation whose impact on the company probably will not stop soon. To emphasize their importance and crucial role in business, Joshi (2013) calls mobile devices "strategic innovation". Because mobile devices are always close to their owners they create emotional impact.

The purpose of this paper is to point out the importance of the implementation of mobile marketing in the system of marketing management. The aim of this paper is to analyze and point out the role and importance of the mobile marketing in the new reality - its function in a process of building up virtual identity of the company. Mobile marketing appears to be efficient tool and some kind of a mediator which interfaces virtual identity of the company and customer.

Virtual Identity and Consumers Preferences

Identity is a central organizing feature of our social world. Across the social sciences and humanities, it is increasingly treated as something that is actively and publicly accomplished in discourse (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). Hettinger and Hass (2003) pointed out that virtual and adaptive environments revolutionize the ways in which humans live their daily lives. Virtual and adaptive environments are systems composed of humans, computers, and interface devices. That kind of environment generates virtual identities and provides new business models.

Web-based innovations and technological applications provide marketers with a plenty of information about consumers preferences, what challenges them to re-think and adapt their marketing strategies by using new marketing technological channels. It also offers them new opportunities to understand their consumers. Virtual reality and associated technologies are increasingly influencing people's lives (Cortimiglia et al., 2011).

Moreover, some authors like Cherner et al. (2011) and Lambin

(2013) state that internet – based innovative technologies (such as Facebook, YouTube or Twitter) are constantly changing traditional relationship between companies and customers trying to make unique marketing mix for each group of client due to the new technology which provides them information about consumer desires and preferences.

According to the research of Koles and Nagy (2012) there are three typological levels of people's virtual immersion: purely virtual, mixed and realist, emerging on the basis of the boundary between real life and virtual existence, and the corresponding variation in users' willingness and desires to seek and share personally identifiable information.

Considering the group of individuals purely immersed in their virtual identities, businesses can focus more on visual and readily available attributes or impulses, such as attractive design and external product features, in order to achieve the attention of this group. Realists, on the other hand, as they are more likely to be reading stories and narratives, may require more detailed and in depth information about goods, commodities or services, as well as identification of their potential links to the real world. Finally, users categorized as mixed/analytical, demand information about virtual objects or services inside as well as outside of virtual environment (Koles and Nagy, 2012).

According to Schroeder (1996) virtual environment or virtual reality is a computer-generated display that allows or compels the user (or users) to have a sense of being present in an environment other than the one they are actually in, and to interact with that environment. Moreover, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi (2012) developed a useful framework for understanding user intentions and behavior within a virtual world environment. Intention to participate in virtual world has been defined by a person's social identity, attitude toward using the service, subjective norms, attitude toward advertising on the service and enjoyment.

There is a great debate around the ways identity is shaped online, mainly as a result of understanding the online as networked individuals. Narrowing down the concept of identity to the software-dependent environment, it comes natural to say that the fluidity of identity is mainly determined by constant transformation the technology is subjected to. Each and every hardware or software upgrade immediately reverberates through the intricate process of identity building (Stoicescu, 2015).

Mobile Marketing and its Particularities

Dushinski (2009) in his paper defines mobile marketing as a revolutionary tool for connecting companies with each of their clients via their mobile devices in the right time, on a right place and with appropriate direct message. Becker and Arnold (2010) emphasize definition of mobile

marketing which have been given from Mobile Marketing Association[1], which says that mobile marketing is a set of procedures that enables communication with companies target audience on interactive and relevant way via mobile devices.

Although it is possible to reach out target groups via mobile devices, Tanakinjal et al. (2011) state that it's important to make an effort and explore the possibilities to make it work. According to Andrews et al. (2012), mobile marketing is any form of marketing communication that has been using mobile devices during the creation of potential opportunities and benefits for customers, what includes location based mobile services and services for the delivery of mobile content.

Marketing experts agree with the fact that activities that have been going on with the mobile devices, in the last decade, had a huge impact on a development of mobile marketing and on intent for purchase of potential customers in the future (Chinomona and Sandada, 2013). As many people equate the term of marketing with promotion, it also happens with the term of mobile marketing and mobile promotion, what is surely wrong. Tanakinjal et al. (2011) explain the difference between these two terms. Mobile marketing is a driver and a foundation for the exchange of content and direct response, while mobile advertising is form of a message which has been sent via mobile device.

Thus, mobile marketing is a form of communication with existing and potential clients. Basis of this communication has been development of telecommunication, information and wireless technologies. Mobile marketing does not lose the sense of marketing but reflects the creativity of marketing professionals and their strategy while result should be qualitative and successful marketing communication between the company and customers. Hence, mobile promotion is a part of mobile marketing and is one of its most important activities.

Mobile devices are owned by one person what enables communication with a specific person and message that has been sent to them is immediately available Hazlett (2011). Accordingly, interaction with the clients can be totally different for each client, what is not the case in other kinds of marketing (Dushinski, 2009). Because of the opportunities provided by mobile marketing, companies can easily include in the exchange of information with existing and potential customers, with the aim of improving products (Persuad and Azhar, 2012). Companies are increasingly opting for mobile marketing because of the trend and its optimistic projections (Smith, 2011).

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[1] Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) is a world leading association of mobile marketing. (http://www.mmaglobal.com/).

Mobile Devices and Access to Mobile Internet

Barutçu (2007) explains that what is of particular importance to the marketing experts is ability to communicate with potential customers anytime and anywhere. The revolutionary contribution to this kind of communication was enabled by mobile devices. According to Dushinski (2009) term of mobile devices includes different kind of mobile phones, smartphone devices, personal data assistant devices, tablet PC and even play station portable because user can connect through it by Wi-Fi technology and surf the Internet, either at home or outside.

Although there are different divisions of mobile devices by category, there has been generally accepted the division in three categories: feature phone, smartphone and connected devices (Pasqua and Elkin, 2013). Feature phones are older mobile devices which are less sophisticated. Lately, in this kind of mobile phones have been installed some advanced options which are still far from those which have smart phones (Rashedul et al., 2010; Pasqua and Elkin, 2013).

According to Becker and Arnold (2010), smartphone is a mobile device which integrates possibilities of mobile cellphone with the main possibilities of personal computer what includes Internet, applications, e-mail, entertainment and media services. Also, Barbour (2011) points out that smartphones are becoming thinner, faster, with much more functions that make them similar like laptops. Analysts of Gartner[2] figure out that total sale of smartphones in 2013. ammounted to a record 81 billion units, an increase of 3.4% compared to the previous year 2012.

Connected devices are all mobile devices that do not have the ability to call, but have all other features of mobile devices. These characteristicscorrespond to tablet devices, e-readers and portable entertainment devices. These devices share many things with smartphones, but their primary purpose is not phoning but browsing the internet, entertainment and reading e-books (Becker and Arnold, 2011).

Shah (2012) also highlights the importance of mobile devices, not only to build a brand, but also to gain customer loyalty and to evaluate the existing brand. Hižak and Mikac (2013) state that there has been daily developed more and more applications for "smart" mobile devices based on the most popular mobile platforms - Android, iOS, Windows Phone and others.

By development of wireless technology, mobile phones became part of our everyday life on private and business plan (Liao et al., 2007). Mobile devices can connect the Internet via network of mobile operator or

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[2] Gartner, Inc. (NYSE: IT) is the world's leading research and advisory firm in the field of information technology (www.gartner.com).

Wi-Fi network – user can choose, depends on a situation how to become connected to the Internet.

Feature phones and smartphones primarily connect the Internet via network of mobile operator which have been using while transfer rate and characteristics of connection depends on the standard used in the network and which device supports. Connected devices connect the Internet primarily via Wi-fi network, but there are also exceptions – like advanced tablets which can have functions of mobile phones and can use networks of mobile operators (Pasqua and Elkin, 2013).

A study conducted by Mobile Marketing Association and Vserv.mobi[3] in 2013. included 3.000 users of mobile internet in France, Italy, Russia, Spain and United Kingdom. The aim of a research was to get more information about the users of mobile Internet in the observed countries to help marketers in their future mobile campaigns. According to the research main conclusions are: 1) more than a half of mobile Internet users are young people, 2) men are using mobile Internet more than women, and 3) people who have higher level of education (undergraduate, graduate, post graduate) use mobile internet more than people who have lower level of education (secondary school).

It's no longer a case of asking whether mobile marketing is important. It's now a question of using the statistics to understand how consumers behave when using different types of mobile devices and what their preferences are. On figure 1 we can see that from the beginning of 2014. number of mobile users in the USA has exceeded number of desktop users.

Figure 1 Number of desktop and mobile users
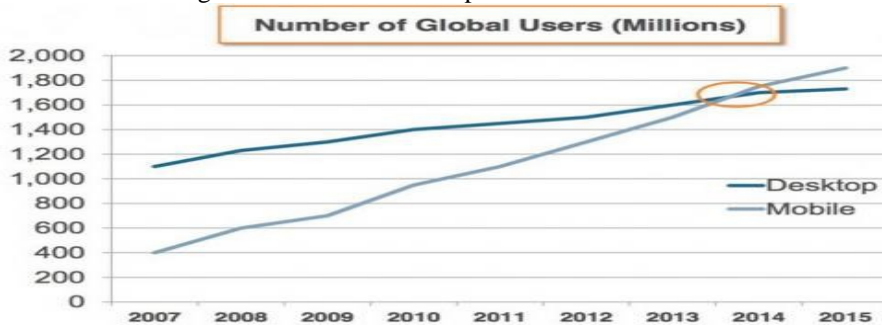
Source: Globalwebindex.net (2015)

The implications are clear - if you're not able to reach your audience through mobile search or display, or you're not providing a satisfactory mobile experience you will miss out compared to competitors who are.

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[3] Vserv.mobi is a company whose primary activity is the development of solutions for mobile platforms (http://www.vserv.mobi).

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Figure 2 shows us how time spent on Internet per adult by using mobile is constantly growing.

Figure 2 Time spent on Internet per adult by using digital mediaSource: emarketer.com (2015)
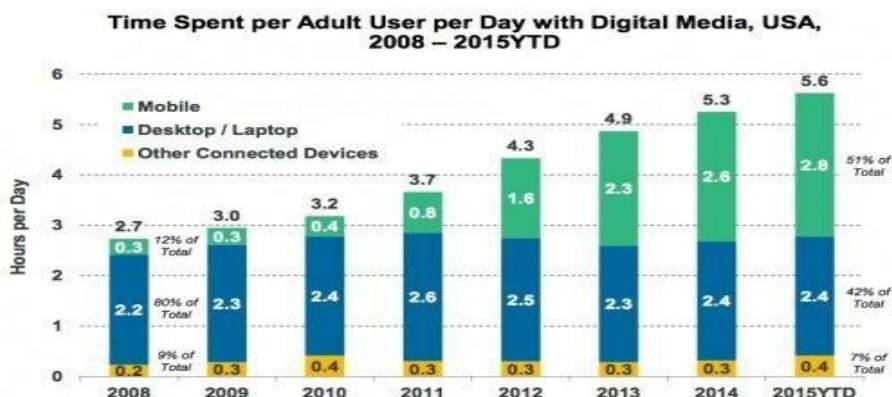
Also, according to the research of the global web indeks (2015), 80% of Internet users own a smartphone and it is the second most popular device which they use for surfing the net.

The Role of Mobile Marketing in a new Marketing Environment

According to Kotler et al. (2006) two main factors have been changing marketing communications: 1) Moving away from mass marketing and developing focused marketing programs which have been designed to build stronger relationships with consumers on a specific market, 2) Segmented marketing has been increasingly used because of the development in information technology.

Further, information technology helps marketers to understand better the needs of consumers. New technologies offer new possibilities for communication with the help of which one can get to the smaller segments of consumers with more personalized messages (Kotler et al., 2006).

Shankar and Balasubramanian (2009) state that existing and potential clients by sending the messages via mobile devices can greatly participate in forming the product. Thanks to location based services, Smutkupt et al. (2010) point out how marketing experts can easily determine the supply of products and services in the specific area with the aim of increasing sales. Also, to the each customer may be offered unique price without others knowing that. That allows sellers price discrimination of the first degree, which refers to the fact that to every customer can be offered a customized price (Smutkupt et al., 2010).

Mobile technologies help companies to increase the efficiency of product distribution. Also, customer can monitor the progress of the delivery of his product via mobile device (Smutkupt et al., 2010). In their work Luo et al. (2013) suggest that mobile marketing enables marketers to access the (potential) customers at a specific time and exact location.

Tools of mobile advertising are: mobile web pages, e-mail, mobile applications, QR codes, SMS and MMS, location based marketing and near field communication (Podmanicky and Turkalj (2011); Becker and Arnold (2010), Stuart et al. (2013)). Their proper application requires some effort, investment and proper strategy. To form a proper strategy, marketing experts should be provided with all information about the market – data on the prevalence of mobile devices on some certain market, the type of mobile devices that are used and the possibilities offered by mobile operators.

Mobile advertising is one of the important aspects of mobile marketing and, according to Bart et al. (2013), is one of the fastest growing forms of advertising. Bart et al. (2013) state that only in 2013. the mobile advertising spent 16.7 billion, with predictions that this number by 2017 will rise to 62.8 billion. Furthermore, Bart et al. (2013) point out that in support of numbers on the growth going and penetration of mobile devices, especially smartphones, whose number is constantly growing, both in the United States, and the rest of the world.

In their paper Bellman et al. (2013) report that mobile applications that advertise a brand, or a simplified - branded applications, play an important role in brand building and also in the increase of customer satisfaction. Bellman et al. (2013) state that, in addition to the data itself of the brand, mobile applications allows clients an ability to purchase the products and services.

Drossos et al. (2013) pointed out how interactivity in mobile advertising comprises a double interaction (between the seller and potential client), sometimes 24 hours a day, with direct responses to SMS or other queries (for example, by clicking on the appropriate link of ads that establishes a connection to an advertiser). Other ways of promotional communications in most cases do not involve a double interaction, and that is what this advertising method (generally mobile advertising and SMS) makes it unique.

Jingjun Xu (2006) in his work states that mobile advertising includes advertising on the (mobile) web site and via SMS and MMS messages, and has the ability of easier adaptation of messages due to the possibility of determining the location of potential users. Banerjee and Dholakia (2008) explain that goal of mobile advertising based on geographic location is to eliminate information barriers between the client

and the market and reaching out to potential clients at the moment when they come into the space in which is the active advertiser.

There are two most common strategies of mobile marketing that are called "push" and "pull". Push strategy is an active way of advertising which aims to reach out to a large number of customers at once and is successful if clients want to receive new information. On the other hand, users can receive new information on their request. Then, information content has primarily value for the user, and that kind of strategy is called pull strategy (Alibabić, 2012).

Discussion

Implementation of mobile marketing strategy in marketing management is a complex and demanding process. To make the implementation possible, companies should first examine the socio – cultural and technological factors which dominate on the market. Presence of the users in the virtual world via mobile devices gave marketers plenty of useful information which they can use to generate products and services that suites them the most.

Thus, mobile devices with their applications challenge marketers to re- think and adapt their marketing strategies what makes mobile marketing so important. Virtual reality and mobile devices are increasingly influencing people's lives so they change traditional relationship between companies and customers. Even more, mobile phones are becoming important marketing channel.

By the level of involvement in virtual world via mobile devices and using the mobile applications marketers should adapt their marketing plans which should comprise three different marketing strategies according to the three segments: young – complete users, middle age – partial users, older age – very poor users.

Mobile marketing has a great impact on all elements of the marketing mix and allows companies to develop products with the shape and characteristics which are desirable with existing and potential clients. Besides, mobile marketing offers complete control over pricing and distribution and provides great promotional activities through mobile devices such as advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing.

The emergence of mobile marketing does not substantially change the system of marketing management but gives marketing experts new efficient tool by which they can easily reach a huge number of new clients. Thus, marketing experts have to adjust strategies to new technologies and media while marketing essence remains unchanged. Because of its' characteristics mobile devices offer new opportunities for marketing management.

During the implementation of each mobile marketing campaign, mobile marketing tools should be used together or in a combination, what means that it is necessary to make a good strategy. The maximum efficiency of mobile marketing is evident when it has been used in a combination with traditional media.

Concluding Remarks

Mobile marketing is a relatively new concept in the marketing discipline. Although sometimes referred to as one of the marketing channels, mobile marketing is much more of that. It is a separate unit of marketing which tries by planning and development of effective marketing campaigns reach the potential clients on interesting and interactive approach via mobile devices and Internet connection.

Paper examined the impact of mobile marketing in a process of virtual interaction between customers and companies. This kind of interaction has a significant impact in a process of creating good relationships between companies and their customers what emphasizes the role of mobile marketing as a significant tool, not only in marketing system but also in a system of Customer Relationship Management in which it has a key role. Therefore, Customer Relationship Management and mobile marketing should take a central place in the process of creating marketing strategy as a significant part of business strategy.

Authors, according to the research, have noted four developing steps of mobile marketing:

1.) Mobile marketing as a new tool – new marketing channel.

2.) Mobile marketing as a part of marketing system - like all other on- line channels, it became indispensable part of marketing strategy.

3.) Mobile marketing, along with technical and cost side got psychological one that has been generated due to the closeness with the owner of the mobile device and by using it almost 24 hours per day. Therefore, examination of a new consumer behavior needs multidisciplinary approach especially involving behavioral sciences such as sociology and psychology.

4.) "Points of contact" between companies and customers - generally accepted term of Phillip Kotler on the basis of which is actually generated concept Customer Relationship Management cease to be "points of contacts" by getting timeless and without spatial component due to the new 24 hours communication on the endless global space. This fact brings with it a new, revolutionary conception of marketing activities and brand building what brings us the new paradigm of marketing. Moreover, customer cease to be unknown, his location is well known like his identity and style of living. Technological base for that are mobile devices which

are medium of communication and transmission of valuable customer preferences to the companies.

It is important to clear out how new technology, in this discourse primarily mobile marketing through social networks and other on-line tools and channels, has an impact and will have on the future of our lives through new style of living, and on the adoption of the business strategies whose necessity of involvement in the virtual world is no longer in doubt.

Therefore, it seems clear that managing effectively with marketing system in the new virtual environment is one of the central issues and opens the new paradigm of marketing, management and the whole economical and socio-cultural environment. It needs to be seriously considered the virtual identity of private individuals - customers and business entities as key elements of the new virtual system. Customer Relationship Management with new media and tools seems to be central, crucial part of this system.

How will these new behaviors, new technology and new forms of business activities affect "identity of the company", "brand identity", and what kind of impact will it have on the organizational behavior, organizational culture, and even human resource strategy? There are many issues which are immense. Clear and obvious is the increasing need for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach in economy, regarding to the assessment of powerful and relevant impact of non- economic phenomenon especially in the field of marketing. One of the intentions of the authors of this work is to encourage these discussions, which are certainly of key importance for understanding the new economy and the new "virtual" age in which we live.

The paper did not present the negative aspects of mobile marketing and virtual identity which is the limit of a paper.

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