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ANTI-CRISIS MARKETING IN THE PANDEMIC PERIOD

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Abstract. The article discusses the features of marketing activities in modern conditions associated with the spread of coronavirus infection. COVID-19 has shocked the world and left many economies in dire straits. Many companies are now struggling to survive, and marketing is essential to restore sales. How badly has the virus affected marketing, PR and sales? Contactless, remote, virtual are the main words in the description of technologies in 2020. Management of remote teams, remote sales support, virtual communication with the customer and the maximum acceleration of delivery have become priority areas for finding solutions for retail. Many innovations have already been tested in past years, but the pandemic has accelerated their implementation in the daily life of companies.

Keywords: marketing; marketing strategies; anti-crisis marketing; marketing approach; pandemic; COVID-19; innovation; marketing communications.

Для цитирования

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In a crisis, many companies leave the market as they lose their solvency. To maintain and strengthen the position of the enterprise, anti-crisis management is used, i. e. management with a high probability of risk. Regardless of the economic situation and

stage of the company's life cycle, it is necessary to develop anti-crisis management programs. Such programs are aimed at preventing bankruptcy, bringing the organization out of the crisis and restoring competitiveness.

Anti-crisis marketing is a part of crisis management. During the crisis and on the eve of it, special attention is paid to the development of an effective anti-crisis marketing strategy based on marketing research. They help diagnose the opportunities and position of the company in the market, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and identify possible threats [1].

Anti-crisis marketing is an operational change in all marketing components in accordance with changes in the environment, which helps to maintain the maximum competitiveness of the company in changing market conditions.

Goals and objectives of anti-crisis marketing:

- determination of the company's position (recognition of the crisis, analysis of the threats and volumes of the crisis, assessment of possible consequences);
- determination of goals and objectives, plans and prospects for the development of the company;
- determination of ways to achieve the set goals (4P marketing complex, image enhancement, expansion of the marketing division, promotion and sales);
- performance evaluation (testing of measures, the degree of fulfillment of the assigned tasks, analysis of the effectiveness of the implemented measures).

Anti-crisis marketing programs should ensure the production and sale of goods that are in strong demand in the market and bring the main profit to the company. Also, enterprises should most fully, in contrast to competing organizations, satisfy the needs of consumers in those areas where they have strong competitive advantages.

A marketing approach to solving the company's problems in a crisis helps mitigate the impact of the consequences and continue to actively operate in the market.

During various crisis situations, in order to reduce the negative impact of the crisis on the company's image, the management turns to specialized PR-agencies or activates the activities of its own division. Measures will be effective if the management has an understanding of the dynamics of crises, timely adopts a program of action and at the same time preserves the reputation of the enterprise.

There are three stages of crisis management, within which the appropriate tools and marketing tools are used:

- the stage of pre-crisis management;
- the stage of crisis management;
- the stage of post-crisis management.

The first stage involves preventing a crisis and developing strategic plans for the company's development. In this case, the main anti-crisis marketing tools are:

- marketing research (diagnostics of market conditions and identification of risk factors);
- development of strategies aimed at preventing crises;
- drawing up strategic plans, business plans and plans for advertising campaigns;
- development of staff incentive programs.

The second stage consists in developing a quick and without consequences strategy for overcoming a crisis situation, as well as strategies aimed at minimizing the negative

impact of the crisis on the company's work, plans for each specific situation and programs to minimize costs [10].

The third stage is programs for the rehabilitation and stabilization of the company's position, the development of strategies aimed at updating problem areas, the search for new market opportunities.

Anti-crisis marketing is implemented in the following stages.

1. Market research (forecasting capacity, assessing product development trends, changes in sales channels, factors affecting shopping, expanding contacts with consumers).

2. Evaluation of the company's business portfolio (identification of products that have outlived, die, bring little profit and are unprofitable).

3. A decrease in the brand portfolio (will lead to lower costs and will allow you to focus on important target groups).

4. Analysis and change of brand positioning.

5. Innovation (despite the fact that the development and implementation of innovations during a crisis is a risky business, this is the only way to survive and maintain a position in the market).

The important parameters of competent and effective anti-crisis marketing are efficiency (quick response and adaptation to new market conditions) and the quality of products sold. It is the second aspect that influences the establishment of long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with clients [7].

2020 turned out to be quite difficult for many areas of business, especially for the service sector, but as historical experience teaches us, any pandemic provided the basis for a renaissance. Digital marketing is no exception. For the next six months, entrepreneurs should better stock up on good budgets for digital and hire creative guys with burning eyes, their time has come.

Through social media, you can easily and quickly attract new customers, while your sales funnel can be significantly reduced and this will even make the shopping process easier for your customers.

It was previously expected that by 2020 posts with purchases will become the norm. Today's shoppers are looking for new experiences on the Internet, and for many this means more interactivity. In fact, a whopping 91% are looking for more visual and interactive content.

This period can be called «Digital Impressions».

Content has been the axiom of digital marketing for years and 2021 will be no different.

Quality content allows you to showcase your expertise and connect with customers from reputable sources. Your content is also what search engines provide to search engines on the internet, so continuing to create high quality content is a must [2].

And an important component of content is «Video marketing» is one of, if not the most important marketing trend today and probably in the next 5–10 years. These numbers show the importance of including video in your digital marketing strategy in 2020:

- 70% of consumers say they have shared a brand video;
- 72% of companies say video has improved their conversions;

- 52% of consumers say watching product videos makes them more confident in online purchasing decisions;
- 65% of CEOs visit a marketer's website and 39% call a supplier after watching a video.

Influencer marketing

And when you launch video content, you need to remember about influencer marketing, about influencers:

- 63% of consumers trust the opinion of influential people about products much more than what brands say about themselves;
- 58% of people bought a new product in the past six months due to an influencer recommendation.

Live video is especially popular with a large number of companies who use it for interviews, product demo and behind-the-scenes glimpses of the brand, such as office life, how products are manufactured, corporate events, etc.

Personalized video messages

1: 1 video is when companies or marketers create personalized video messages rather than making phone calls or sending emails. With the declining cost of cinema equipment and ever better smartphone cameras, this is easier than ever.

But when puzzled by the content of the experience, you should also worry about the touch points in advance.

Zero position

Ranking zero in SERP # 1 is no longer a target. The first place in the search results is now occupied by the zero position — a selected piece of text that appears above the search results.

This main location often provides information related to the search query, and also provides a link to the page from which this information is taken.

Zero position is the first and sometimes the only result that some users see [4].

Thus, it is highly desirable and should be the target of your efforts. While many business owners appreciate the fact that marketing continues to change at a rapid pace, those willing to adapt and evolve will continue to attract high-quality customers in the digital world. You can give an assignment to your optimization and analytics department right now.

Life cycle marketing

Life cycle marketing or as it was taught in Russia earlier in a more primitive form «customer journey marketing», is an approach in which a digital marketing strategy is built from the point of view of customer interaction with the company. As most companies imagine the customer journey now: advertising — click on the site — purchase.

Lifecycle marketing studies the customer journey in more detail with all doubts and their reasons, stop factors and motives to return to the site.

What is the main difference from the usual interaction strategy? The main difference is that life cycle marketing sees in the target audience not an abstract socio-demographic group, but each real person individually with their own interests and client experience. Based on this, communication is built.

As you understand, without a database and data analytics, without a client department, it will be difficult for you to keep up with the times, because impersonal marketing no longer meets modern realities.

All messages that a person receives are interconnected and logically complement each other, correspond to the stage of interaction with the company.

A customer who has already made a purchase will not receive a welcome message or offer.

If you want to stand out in 2021, you need to personalize your marketing — which means personalized content, products, emails, and more.

Consider these characteristics of personalization:

- 63% of consumers are very annoyed by general advertising explosions;
- 80% say they are more likely to do business with a company if it offers a personalized experience;
- 90% say they find personalization attractive.

Marketing innovation

In general, if we talk about innovations in marketing tools, then most likely these are the main trends, but now the task is further complicated by the fact that you will not only have to occupy zero positions in search queries, but present your content so that it can be easily recognized and find with voice search!

– 55% of all American homes will have a smart speaker by 2022.

– 72% of people who own voice speakers say their devices are used as part of their daily life.

Voice shopping is set to jump to \$ 40 billion in 2022, up from \$ 2 billion today.

Global shipments of smart speakers almost tripled from Q1 2018 to Q2 2019, increasing from 9.36 million units to 26.1 million units and it is difficult to say what indicators will be observed in 2021, but the trend is clearly towards growth despite the crisis.

If you are not tired of reading, then only now we come to the main and most fundamental tendencies that unite all the tools and innovations, namely, we are talking about «Omnichannel marketing».

Omnichannel marketing

Omnichannel marketing is the process of marketing across multiple platforms (such as social media, apps, email, and blog), so you can connect with potential customers on more touchpoints. When you do omnichannel marketing the right way, you can offer an improved user experience and a cohesive brand message that drives people to action [9].

Modern marketing and metrics go hand in hand, so if you don't invest in better analytics, it will be difficult to manage the results you want to see. The problem, however, is that the customer journey is more complex now. We live in the era of omnichannels, when the average consumer connects up to six touchpoints to the brand before making a purchase.

With multiple channels to manage and multiple ways to market your products and services, tracking analytics is quickly becoming a gigantic mission.

And as you already understood, digitalization trends gently lead us from the digital specialist's toolkit to the analyst's marketing toolkit, but will this be the logical end of the trend chain and building effective marketing work?

If you answered «Yes», then I will have to upset you, since marketing is forced to return to its logical beginning — «Economic origins». After all, what is marketing? This is knowledge and ownership of the market, and here we have to once again delve into basic science.

Marketing itself is a management discipline, and in 2021, after the crisis year, marketing management should be relevant, although these concepts are confused.

Long format content

In 2020, short messages will get you nowhere — not from Google or your audience. Typically, posts with a length of at least 3000 words generate the most traffic because they offer readers an in-depth study of topics. Long-format content allows content creators to establish themselves as subject matter experts and gives them more options for keyword targeting.

Businesses around the world are struggling to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Everything is very difficult for businesses, especially small ones — from mandatory closings and loss of income to fears of an impending economic depression.

While it may seem counterproductive in this time of crisis, growing your online marketing is what sustainable companies do. The key is to avoid any strategies that seem opportunistic or unprincipled. It's actually a pretty thin line between marketing that helps your audience and marketing that uses people at difficult times. Here are some strategies to help you find balance.

1. Use the principles of crisis communication.

The pandemic has triggered an economic downturn that affects most businesses in one way or another. Resilient brands are those that express solidarity, not weakness. One of the key tenets of crisis communication is to focus on the facts and stay cool rather than hysterical.

Companies that grumble or swear at business closures or lacks are unlikely to survive a downturn. For example, one restaurant, which was subject to a mandatory temporary closure, made posts in which it faked news. This is an unprofessional approach that shows the company as opportunistic, but not strong and stable. If you have nothing constructive or helpful to say, it's better not to say anything at all.

If you were forced to close your office or severely restrict your production activities, be open to clients and send them messages with accurate information. Post new policies and procedures regularly and take some time to support and thank your loyal customers. By showing that you care for them and protect people, you become a stronger leader in your industry.

It's also worth noting that people evaluate companies in terms of how organizations respond to the pandemic. While layoffs are inevitable, anything you can do to keep them to a minimum and support the remaining employees will help your business get through this crisis.

2. Build a friendly community around your brand.

Just because consumers can't visit your business or spend a lot of money doesn't mean they are not interested in your business. Anyway, they can go shopping until things get better. This is why you shouldn't be discouraged even if you can't sell right now. Take the time to develop the community around your brand and give people something for free, tell them what they can count on when this is over.

Develop an inbound marketing strategy and create great content that will attract new customers in the long run, so you can spend less time looking for them. The concept is for you to focus on attracting them to you through blogs, videos, and other content they find interesting. Now that people are actively consuming content, this is the perfect time for inbound content marketing.

Try to shift your marketing strategy from PPC ads and emails to high-quality content that you post to thematic websites and social media. It can be:

- instructions;
- practical guides;
- interview;
- expert articles;
- private messages;
- virtual training;
- shows or webinars.

These strategies work because they show how much you value your customers. Not only are you giving your audience what they are looking forward to, but you are also giving them the ability to interact with your company without having to buy.

3. Do not sell during the COVID-19 period.

If you are planning to offer a pandemic discount, think twice: some consumers may feel like you are taking advantage of the crisis. Only if there is a legitimate reason for discounting your services or products, for example when they might be useful in a crisis, can you do so.

Remember that many consumers are unemployed and worried about the future. How can your company make their lives easier? If you can't help and make it easier, focus on providing them with entertaining or supportive messages rather than promoting sales and discounts.

Take a look at a small list of anti-crisis measures during the restriction of production activities that you can do yourself. Ultimately, your ability to weather the pandemic and its associated recession depends a lot on how you use your brand story.

It is very important to maintain and value your brand community during these turbulent times. Focus on being clear, communicative, and supportive rather than capitalizing on the pandemic. When all this is over, consumers will have a positive impression of your company.

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АНТИКРИЗИСНЫЙ МАРКЕТИНГ В ПЕРИОД ПАНДЕМИИ

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Аннотация. В данной статье рассмотрены особенности маркетинговой деятельности в современных условиях, что связано с распространением коронавирусной инфекции COVID-19. Это потрясло мир и привело экономику многих стран в плачевное состояние. Многим компаниям сейчас приходится бороться за выживание, и для восстановления прежнего уровня продаж большое значение имеет маркетинг. Насколько сильно вирус повлиял на маркетинг, PR и продажи? Бесконтактный, дистанционный, виртуальный — главные слова в описании технологий 2020. Управление удаленными командами, дистанционная поддержка продаж, виртуальное общение с покупателем и максимальное ускорение доставки стали приоритетными областями поиска решений для ритейла. Многие новации уже тестировались в прошлые годы, но пандемия ускорила их внедрение в повседневную жизнь компаний.

Ключевые слова: маркетинг; маркетинговые стратегии; антикризисный маркетинг; маркетинговый подход; пандемия; COVID-19; инновации; маркетинговые коммуникации.