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Internet-marketing communications of trade companies based on consumer typology

Abstract

Due to fundamental changes in the sphere of information and the enhanced role of the Internet and social networks in the community, as well as to the understanding of technological and functional features of information and communication networks, there is an urgent need to study approaches to the segmentation of Internet users.

The article deals with the Internet users' behavior. We have developed methodological approaches to segmentation of Internet users based on their activity in social networks and awareness of the value of their personal data. This provides a set of measures related to Internet-marketing communications in the light of the projected impact of such communications on target groups of consumers. Target groups of consumers are singled out based on chosen segmentation criteria, namely: a set of factors that influence the consumer decision to purchase items online, chances to shop online, use of social networks for communication, data privacy controls, consumer awareness of the value of personal data. The basic target segments of consumers according to our segmentation are price hunters, interested, finders, observers and freshers.

The conclusions have been made concerning the possible use of Internet-marketing communication components for above-mentioned segments of consumers.

Keywords: Internet-marketing Communications; Customer; Internet User; Trade Company; E-commerce; Enterprise

JEL Classification: F19, M30

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Интернет-маркетингові комунікації підприємств торгівлі на основі типології споживачів

Анотація

У статті досліджено поведінку Інтернет-користувачів та розроблено методологічні підходи до сегментації користувачів Інтернету на основі активності участі в соціальних мережах, усвідомлення споживачем цінності персональних даних, що забезпечує формування комплексу заходів Інтернет-маркетингових комунікацій з урахуванням прогнозованого впливу Інтернет-маркетингових комунікацій на цільові сегменти споживачів. Цільові групи споживачів сформовано за базовими критеріями сегментації. Зроблено висновок щодо можливого застосування компонентів Інтернет-маркетингових комунікацій для виділених сегментів споживачів.

Ключові слова: Інтернет-маркетингові комунікації; покупець; Інтернет-користувач; електронна торгівля; підприємство.

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Интернет-маркетинговые коммуникации предприятий торговли на основе типологии потребителей

Аннотация

В статье исследовано поведение Интернет-пользователей и разработаны методологические подходы к сегментации пользователей Интернета на основе активности участия в социальных сетях, осознания потребителем ценности персональных данных, что обеспечивает формирование комплекса мероприятий Интернет-маркетинговых коммуникаций с учетом прогнозируемого воздействия Интернет-маркетинговых коммуникаций на целевые сегменты потребителей. Целевые группы потребителей сформированы на основе базовых критериев сегментации. Сделан вывод о возможном применении компонентов Интернет-маркетинговых коммуникаций для выделенных сегментов потребителей.

Ключевые слова: интегрированные маркетинговые коммуникации; покупатель; интернет-пользователь; электронная торговля; предприятие.

1. Introduction

It is necessary to emphasise that at the present stage of economic growth, essential changes are taking place in customer perceptions. This means that customers have become different, their market awareness has increased. They have a higher level of expectations about the quality of goods and services, and strive for more convenient arrangements and working hours, better service, lower prices. This has been caused by modern trends in public development, changes in the way and style of people's life.

Also, the part of innovators, who endeavor to get goods in which new ideas and technologies were embodied, has risen lately. This is also due to the rate of modern development and implementation of information and communication technologies as well as psychological factors.

Along with buying prestige goods, consumption of such goods becomes a symbol: it demonstrates a high social status, shows progressiveness and contemporaneity of the customer. As the world experience shows, the speed of response to market changes is characteristic of small and medium-sized businesses which are rather flexible to changes and opportunities of variable market conditions.

At the current stage of economic development, the majority of trade companies face the market crisis, which is caused by globalizing processes, increasing competition, scientific and technological progress, the shift in consumer behavior and lifestyle, the decrease of traditional marketing communications effectiveness, as well as by the increased expectations of society regarding companies with considerable resources.

The information economy introduces new requirements towards the formation of Internet-marketing communications that are able to continuously interact with consumers and to involve them in the process of interactive trade. The significance of Internet-marketing communications (InMC) grows with increasing competition, and experts predict that over time they will play a leading role as the most progressive marketing system which will be able to establish personal contacts with the target audience. Ukraine ranks 32 among 198 countries by number of Internet users and takes 58th place in the world ranking of e-commerce [1].

Addressing the needs and wishes of potential and existing clients is indispensable while ensuring a company's success in the market; with increased international competition, companies must be focused on individual features of consumers. With the increasing importance of online sales and the growing number of shoppers purchasing from online shops, it is imperative for marketers to develop a better understanding of Internet surfers and shoppers [2].

In international marketing activities, significant problems are often posed by differences in the characteristics and consumption behavior of consumers in different parts of the world. Certainly, some of these differences are becoming less important and some academics have the opinion that they are no longer of great significance. However, there is also a lot of evidence that both cultural variance and differences in consumer behavior are still very important facts in many international markets [2; 3].

2. Brief Literature Review

There is virtually a consensus that, to remain competitive, firms must continuously develop and adapt their business models [4]. However, it is believed that all users are equal and equally creative, particularly in relation to the so called Web 2.0 culture in which everyone is defined as being a participant in new Internet services [5; 6]. However, several studies have demonstrated that people with similar levels of access engage the Internet in fundamentally different ways [7].

T. Kollmann, A. Kuckertz and I. Kayser (2012) have developed and empirically analyzed a typology of customers to classify distinct segments of consumers, highlighting the associated interrelationship of individual shopping motives and cannibalization and synergetic effects [8].

S. Ghose and W. Dou (1998) have examined Web offers by doing a study of the impacts of web-site design features on its quality [9]. Convenience of online shopping is one of the

most obvious advantages. Similarly, the ease with which information can be accessed is also strength of the online environment. Security of information is a primary worry for potential e-commerce consumers. Ph. Kotler (2002) also mentions that consumers have ethical concerns about Internet vendors [10]. Research results clearly show that attitudes towards the Internet and Internet shopping behavior differ from country to country [2; 11].

In this global environment, consumer typologies may prove an effective instrument for identifying and addressing different consumer clusters. A similar approach has been considered to be highly relevant for Internet-marketing [12; 13]. In articles on trade, customer segmentation is described as crucial for the success of electronic commerce. R. Burke (2002) points out that one of the important unanswered research questions relates to how retailers can segment online shoppers [14]. Only through an understanding of the different customer segments will marketers be able to develop strategies and tactics to attract and maintain these customers [2].

There exist some typologies of Internet users, such as those of the Boston Consulting Group or McKinsey & Co., and these have not been developed in accordance with academic standards of research [2; 15]. Another evidential approaches are presented in the research works of Brandtzaag, P. B., Heim, J., & Karahasanovic, A. (2011) and Christodoulides, G., Michaelidou, N., & Siamagka, N. T. (2013) [5; 16].

3. Purpose

The paper uncovers issues of methodological, scientific and practical approaches to basic target segments of consumers and proposes a possible use of the components of Internet-marketing communications for them.

4. Results

The Internet occupies the basic position among all information technologies, which leads to the need to promote products and services of trade companies, to search for information, customers and partners, and also to take advantage of Internet-technologies application. This requires new means of Internet-marketing, including marketing communications, which can give an opportunity to make a considerable reduction of marketing costs and provide a more effective communication between trade companies and consumers, competitors, intermediates, providers and other social circles.

The results of the marketing investigation of 400 consumers in Kyiv on food and nonfood products buying provided by the authors in March and April, 2015 suggest that respondents have determined the most essential features of online shops: a wide range of products, varying price levels, the possibility of comparing characteristics, prices, promotions, sales of different products, as well as getting access to customers' and experts' reviews and forums discussions.

The differences in the price range are actively tracked by customers aged between 30 and 39 which comprise 85.7%, and by customers aged between 40 and 55 with a ratio equal to 83.7%. Speed of delivery is the most determinant option for the customers who choose shopping online (86.5%) and have a high level of income. The available video review and the supply information appear to be less essential.

Internet posts (experts' reviews, blogs, and forums), websites of online shops, comparison sites and social networks are the most significant of all information sources which influence customers' decisions whether to buy or not to buy goods in online shops (Table 1).

The personalized approach to plan the Internet-marketing communicative campaigns of trade enterprises and to define the perspectives of their improvement are based on the use of methodological approaches to the process of segmentation of Internet users, thus it provides the formation of integrated Internet-marketing communications considering their influence on the targeted customers segments.

There are models of consumer behaviour such as VALS (based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory), VALS-2 (consumers based their choice on beliefs, perception and action) along with financial, informational, physical, psychological and resource

models. The developed SRI International model known as iVALS (Internet VALS) (1997) helped to improve the efficiency and the quality of online environment.

Depending on the activity and their professional skills, Internet users are divided into the following groups: wizards, pioneers, surfers, mainstreamers, upstreamers, workers, sociables, socialites - seekers, immigrants. However, these models do not take into consideration specific features and actions of domestic consumers in terms of extremely rapid development of the Internet in Ukraine. The segmentation process of the Internet users must be based on the monitoring of their activity in social networks, customers' awareness of personal data value considering the forecast of influence of Internet-marketing communications on customers target segments [17-18].

The approved expediency of specific consumer segments isolation, i.e. those who constantly look for information in the Internet, have an experience in searching for information, look for the conditions for purchase, look for low prices, look for the information on the Internet for the first time.

Finders («searchers»):

Those who look for easy ways to buy; this type of Internet users (21% of all Internet consumers) is characterized by the dependence from the Internet to find shops and make purchases. Before making a purchase, the majority (90%) of such users look for online information about goods and half of them use their mobile phones to check the price, being in the traditional store to make a profitable purchase and not to share personal data.

Observers:

Those who look for the lowest prices (20% of all users): they are not sure about the advantages of the Internet, spend little time online, and only 28% of them visit social networks. They don't understand the value of their personal data and don't express serious concern about it.

Freshers («tiros»):

Those who provide the information search (17% of all users), they are aware of Internet-marketing communications and almost 82% know that marketing experts may focus on them, depending on the search history and browsing. They rarely log social networks and have the most protected private settings on their gadgets and provide strict control over the safety of their digital world.

It is suggested to apply the customized approach to defining the most acceptable forms and methods of online advertising for the target audience, as well as the system of stimulating on the Internet, online merchandising, online PR, direct sales on the Internet. In the course of development of online marketing communication program, it is also suggested to apply benchmarking methods for the InMC development programs. It is recommended to increase the competitiveness of enterprises by implementing InMC means into the marketing activity, based on the viral marketing and consistent inner corporate coordination, which provides the coordinated work of all the departments which take part in the development or realization of InMC programs.

The main trends of the domestic online trading in 2016-2017 are: implementation of mobile versions of sites to buy and order products via mobile phones; easy and safe mobile payment; active development of innovative ways of purchase and payment; use of multi-channel marketing; automation of the process of marketing control at enterprises (automatic analysis formation, page testing, posting); popularization of online PR; simplification of site interfaces; evolution of showrooms and marketplaces; arrangement of online video reviews.

5. Conclusions

Based on the systematization of research literature and developments, the authors have found out that trading companies which operate offline and online have to respond to the ongoing changes in consumer behaviour, improving their information and technological environments.

There are representatives of the determined consumer segments who always search for information, have some experience in searching for information, look for easy ways and the lowest prices, search for information for the first time.

The target consumer groups are formed based on the chosen segmentation criteria (a set of factors that influence the consumer decision to purchase items online, chances to shop online, use of social networks for communication, data privacy controls, consumer awareness of the value of personal data). There are tools InMC and the main topics relevant to the issues of application of Internet-marketing communications.

Tab. 1: Sources of information which influence the respondents' buying decisions in online shops, %

Information sources	Age of respondents				
	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-55	56 and more
Experts' and bloggers' messages	54.6	69.6	42.6	53.1	37.5
Relatives, friends, colleagues' advice (word of mouth)	21.9	21.6	17.6	18.8	43.8
Corporate web-site (company, brand or product)	31.9	36.8	30.6	46.9	75.0
Price comparison websites	45.4	52.8	40.7	65.6	37.5
Advertising background of online shops	7.6	6.4	10.2	21.9	18.8
Online news sources	10.9	14.4	13.0	40.6	56.3
Salesmen's recommendations	1.7	2.4	4.6	12.5	12.5
Printed advertising	10.1	7.2	15.7	15.6	37.5
Enterprise information in social networks	46.2	36.8	32.4	53.1	43.8
TV and radio advertising	4.2	8.8	16.7	25.0	56.3
Customers information on forums	32.8	34.4	25.9	34.4	31.3
Online advertising in search engines	37.8	28.8	20.4	28.1	25.0
Online advertising in social networks	23.5	27.2	25.0	25.0	50.0
Websites of online shops	42.9	38.4	29.6	59.4	37.5
Printed chapbooks/catalogues	3.4	5.6	10.2	15.6	12.5
E-mail advertising dispatch	16.0	15.2	13.0	25.0	31.3
Manufacturers' online shops	10.9	14.4	14.8	59.4	50.0

Source: Authors' investigations, a national survey of 400 consumers in Kyiv on food and nonfood products buying, statistical error – 0,945. Investigations were provided in March and April, 2015

The target groups of consumers were formed based on segmentation criteria (a set of factors which influence the consumers' decision making, the probability of purchase on the Internet, and the social networks as a means of communication, personal data confidentiality management, the customers' awareness of personal data value). The motivated segmentation allows specialists to make offers of argumentative InCM instruments and main themes of online marketing appeals.

We have detected the following segments of target consumers (Table 2):

Price hunters:

Those who constantly look for all necessary information (21% of all online consumers of whom 60% are men). This is the biggest of five groups, and, as a rule, it is less inclined to the risky activities in the Internet. Half of them appear online more than 10 times a day, and when they share their personal data with online shops; in return they are supposed to get assistance, full information access and lucrative offers.

Interested:

Those who have some experience in searching for information; such a type accounts for 21% of all Internet users, covers the most dedicated social network affiliates, and not without special technical background. These users are informed about target marketing, but they know little about Internet-marketing communications – only 37% of them know that social networks can use their personal data to keep them informed about special offers.

Tab. 2: Application of Internet-marketing communications to implicate consumers

		Target segments characteristics				
Characteristics	In a constant search of information	Experienced in information search	Choose the easy way to buy	Look for the lowest prices	Search information for the first time	
Set of factors which influence the consumers decision making concerning buying products on the Internet	The wide range of products; competent and common style of product review; website design (color, font, etc.); product photo; video review	Information about online shops; charts; wide range of products; responds by clients, experts; forum discussions	Conditions and different ways of payment; possibility to compare product quality characteristics; easiness of order	Price level; possibility to compare the product quality characteristics, prices and special offers; special offers and sales	Reputation and popularity of online shop; level of safety of websites; relevance of contacts; convenient search; speed of site uploading; Friends' advice; availability of reliable information	
Probability of purchase online	High	Low	Average	Average	Low	
Social networks for communication	Very often	Seldom	Often	Often	Seldom	
Private data management	In comparison with other users they are more inclined to make purchases by means of mobile devices and to share personal data, but in return they expect benefits in the future	They don't conceive of the value of personal data and don't express concern about it	They know that social networks can use personal data to inform about special offers	They share their personal data and expect the access and lucrative offers in return	They have protected personal settings and know, how to change the confidentiality settings on computer and mobile devices	
Customers' awareness of personal data value	Insufficient recognition	Absence of recognition	Rather recognition then not	Recognition	Full recognition	
		Internet-marketing communications components				
The main topic in InMC content appeals	Technical and semantic logic	The expert support of specific information search	Compliance with announced obligations	Sales	Protection of personal data	
The most important instruments of InMC which should be used by the trade enterprises	Key words: search engine; optimization; InMC appeal content; InMC in social networks; price comparison sites; InMC on mobile devices; banners, multimedia and online advertising	Price comparison sites; site navigation; promotions, sales, Internet prizes raffling; InMC in social networks; online PR (awards, charts)	Site navigation; banners, multimedia and online advertising; InMC in partnership programs; price comparison sites; lead generation	Promotions, sales, Internet prizes raffling; InMC in e-mail dispatch E-coupon; free shipping	Site navigation; professional club membership; Links for the appropriate tests and reviews; online PR (articles, video-conferences); Forums and chats personal assistance	

Source: Authors' own development

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