РЕАЛИЗАЦИЯ ПОТЕНЦИАЛА ОМНИКАНАЛЬНОЙ СТРАТЕГИИ: ПРАКТИЧЕСКИЙ КЕЙС

OMNI-CHANNEL STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: PRACTICAL CASE

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Аннотация

В статье освещены проблемы устаревших методов рекламы, не позволяющих оставаться конкурентоспособными в современных условиях рынка. Автор считает, коммуникацию бренда с потребителями можно сделать более эффективной благодаря использованию омниканального метода совместно с рядом других сопутствующих факторов. Предлагая ряд решений, позволяющих повысить эффективность омниканальной стратегии, автор рассказывает о реальном кейсе как о примере успешной рекламной кампании. В результате автор выделяет несколько ключевых факторов успеха рекламной кампании: омниканальность, продуманная механика вовлечения, креативный подход и время, необходимое для разогрева целевой аудитории.

Abstract

The article highlights the problems of outdated methods of advertising, which do not allow to remain competitive. The author thinks that the use of the omni-channel method, with a number of other accompanying factors, can make the brand's communication with customers more effective. Proposing a number of solutions that can make the omni-channel strategy works better, the author tells about a real case of a mineral water distributor company as an example of successful advertising campaign. As a result, the author designates the key factors for the success of the advertising campaign, which are the omni-channel approach, the presence of engaging mechanics and the time used to warm up the target audience.

Ключевые слова: омниканальная стратегия, омниканальный маркетинг, рекламные технологии, рекламные стратегии, вовлечение аудитории.

Keywords: omni-channel strategy, omni-channel marketing, advertising technologies, advertising strategies, audience engagement.

Modern marketing strategies are almost always customer-driven. Meanwhile, it is more and more difficult to bring a customer to a purchase: the market is oversaturated with offers of goods and services, and it is quite complicated to draw attention of potential buyers. Brands continue to compete with each other in creativity, advertising, and client retention.

Fortunately, the omni-channel method comes to the rescue for companies. This is the integration of disparate communication channels into a single system in order to ensure continuous connection with the client. Omni-channel approach allows clients to receive any offers of interest in any convenient channel. Therefore, it forms an integrated consumer perception of a product or service through the use of all available channels: email, call center, website, social networks, etc. At the same time, with the omni-channel method the user can be sure that it is possible to interact with the company representatives in any convenient channel and receive the answer quickly and without obstacles, and it is important that there is no need to call another phone number or write to another mailbox.

One of the key principles of omni-channel strategy is to collect and store information about customers in order to make the service approach more personalized. This allows sellers and companies to make specialized offers that are more likely to be interest to specific audience segments than promotions and discounts that are available to all buyers.

The idea of omni-channel strategy was first proposed by Darrell Rigby in 2011 [2]. The author explains omni-channel concept as a possibility to merge the advantages of the digital and physical worlds, based on the knowledge that interaction between brands and customers proceeds not through a single channel, but through many different ones. Later many researchers write about omni-channel concept, endowing different definitions to the notion. For example, in 2015 Peter C. Verhoef, P. K. Kannan and Jeffrey Inmanc published an article "From Multi-Channel Retailing to Omni-Channel Retailing: Introduction to the Special Issue on Multi-Channel Retailing" in *Journal of Retailing*. The authors claim that "omni-channel retailing is taking a broader perspective on channels and how shoppers are influenced and move through channels in their search and buying process" [3].

And in 2019 Anne Cassidy explained omni-channel concept as "retail's customer data revolution", when "retailers are delving deep into consumer data to provide a more personalised experience and make customers feel valued" [1]. Based on the experience of H&M, Spotify and other brands the author writes about new trends in advertising strategies such as analysis of data (for example, a customer's purchase behaviour or who they follow on social media), ensuring advertising messages relevant, etc.

An increasing number of researchers have been discussing the omni-channel approach in recent years. For example, WenYu Zhao and Nianqi Deng claim, that nowadays "consumers are more concerned about high-quality pleasant purchasing experience in the whole process of shopping" [5] in the article "Examining the Channel Choice of Experience-Oriented Customers in Omni-Channel Retailing" in *International Journal of Information Systems in the Service Sector*. They believe, that "in omni-channel retailing environment, the bricks and barriers of channels are got through and channels tend to develop as an integrated channel".

Lai Wei, Stefanus Jasin and Roman Kapuscinski in their article “Shipping Consolidation Across Two Warehouses with Delivery Deadline and Expedited Options for E-commerce and Omni-channel Retailers” in *Manufacturing & Service Operations Management* study “the optimal shipping and consolidation policy by taking into account both the delivery deadline and the expedited shipping options” [4], based on practice of omni-channel retailers. Their work “is also directly applicable in omni-channel setting”, which became more popular last years. The fact that their research conducted specifically to optimize the operation of omni-channel companies confirms the growing popularity of this approach.

The author of the article believes that promotions based on the omni-channel principle bring the company much more benefits, despite the fact that their preparation and implementation requires more time and effort. But it is critial not only to use the omni-channel method, but also to combine it with other factors for the most effective strategy. Today it is not enough to give the user the opportunity to communicate in a convenient channel: it is also important to draw his attention. The author of the article believes that the key factors for the success of brand communication messages can be, firstly, engagement, secondly, creativity, and, finally, the time required to support the attention of the audience.

As an example, the author wants to describe an advertising campaign of *Healing waters of the Czech Republic* company. It is the exclusive distributor of Czech and Serbian mineral waters to Russia. The company has existed for more than 15 years, and during this time it has repeatedly changed its approaches to advertising activities. It was the experience of the Black Friday promotion in November 2020 that turned out to be the most successful and indicative. While preparing the advertising campaign, marketers of *Healing waters of the Czech Republic* were guided precisely by the principles of omni-channel, striving to integrate all communication channels in order to make the user experience comfortable, seamless and as convenient as possible. That was a series of special offers from the *Healing Waters of the Czech Republic* company held as part of the Black Friday. The company's marketers have developed a special style of the campaign, which was different from the usual corporate identity of the

company. For the purpose, marketers chose a pirate style, and the whole point of the action was reduced to a month-long journey in November 2020, during which both fictional characters and buyers had to search for treasures (and for shoppers the treasures were discounts and special offers). A special pirate character was developed, and the bottled waters that the company sells were also introduced as travelers plying the okenae in search of treasures. Since the action took place in several stages, this made it possible to sufficiently warm up the audience and involve them in additional activities organized within the framework of the campaign.

Following the principles of omni-channel approach, the campaign took place on all channels and platforms used by the company: information about discounts was posted on the company's website and in all social networks (Telegram, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Facebook, Instagram), and was also broadcast via targeted, contextual advertising, as well as in email mailings and through phone calls with notification of the promotion.

In addition to information about discounts, one of the main factors for the success of the campaign was the various engagement mechanics, also available on different channels and in different formats. For example, users could participate in competitions, which were held on Instagram in Stories mode, which is popular on the platform. Users supposed to hold the screen while watching an interactive video stories in such a way as to catch a diamond falling into a pirate's chest. In this way, the audience of the account actively interacted with the media content even at the physical level, literally being in touch with the media materials. In addition to games in Stories, a large number of polls have been published, that also involved interaction.

In other social networks, publications of engaging contests in publics have become the main format of interaction with the audience. There were both creative contests, offering to create a poem about a pirate journey of mineral waters, and contests with random mechanics, offering absolutely any user to win a gift for performing a minimum set of actions, for example, for writing a comment.

It is important that the same recognizable style of the campaign was supported on all channels, so the user, moving from one social network to another, could participate

in different activities and receive gifts and prizes for different actions, interpreting the company's communication message as whole. The non-standard visual and a plot about a pirate journey made it possible to attract increased attention of users to the campaign: the creative part made it possible to activate even those users, who skipped posts from the company's accounts on social networks for a long time.

It is important that the channels used by the companies not only allowed users to take part in promotional activities on convenient platforms, but also complemented each other, allowing the user to easily switch from one channel to another and implying a seamless type of communication. So, one of the stages of the promotion was an offer to place an order on a certain day so as to later receive a secret individual offer by mail. Information about this opportunity was posted both in social networks and through targeted advertising. When placing an order, the user left his email to receive the order details, so he did not need to take additional actions to later receive a secret offer by mail. Immediately after the delivery of the order, all clients who took advantages of the offer received a treasure map decorated in the style of the action, explaining the conditions and details. The letter contained a special promotional code, and the client could receive his bonus by naming it in any channel used by the company.

It is important to take into account all the success factors of this advertising campaign. Firstly, a specially created creative concept that allowed the promotion to differentiate itself in today’s markets and to be more notable among other brands. Secondly, a large number of various contests and the opportunity to participate in these contests on different platforms made it possible to reactivate the lost percentage of subscribers both in email newsletters and in social networks. Thirdly, the successive warm-ups and the wave-like nature of the campaign allowed a larger percentage of customers to take part in it, inspired by advertising activities. Finally, the omni-channel approach allowed to make communication between customers and the company seamless, to avoid negative reactions and to make the user experience as convenient and comfortable as possible.

It is important to mention, that in November 2019 the company's customers received only one notification about the start of the Black Friday sale by mail. There

were typical mistakes: lack of advertising strategy, no audience warming up, and only one communication channel was used. Having acquired this rather negative experience, the company increased the number of sale days in 2020, and Black Friday took place on November 13, 16 and 27. Every Thursday subscribers received the first mail about a close start of the sale, and on Friday they received the second mail, informing them about the last chance to buy mineral waters at a discount. The second letter helped to reach those subscribers who did not have time to read the first.

Therefore, the omni-channel approach helped to make the campaign coherent in the perception of the audience. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of omni-channel strategy in general still needs additional research: it is clear how to use this strategy for an advertising campaign, but it is still difficult to understand under what factors omni-channel method will work in the most effective way at the levels of the entire company, but this topic lies behind the framework of this study.

As a result of a change in the approach and owing to the mechanics of the promotion, the number of orders and the amount of revenue in 2020 increased by 4 times compared to 2019. Thus, the key factors for the success of the campaign were the omni-channel approach, the presence of engaging mechanics, the creative part and the time used to warm up the target audience. It is a synthesis of factors that is now relevant for companies promoting their products and looking for new ways to interact with target audiences in the most effective way.

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