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THE IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION ON BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Case study

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Abstract

The advent of the Internet and the business digitalization produced in recent years has meant a rethinking of the marketing strategies and particularly of the business communication strategies. Business communication has undergone major changes both in terms of means, but especially on the content. Thus, if until now the target customers of a company were limited geographically, nowadays, it must take into consideration a "global customer", arising in a multicultural environment.

Also, more than ever, the core of business communication must be the analysis of the potential clients' needs in order to provide them with useful information.

In this context, the online media (social networking, email marketing, webinars etc.) represent the "New World" for corporate communication.

Therefore, the success of business communication depends essentially on how the company manages to turn digitization into a competitive advantage.

Introduction

In the era of digitization, the Internet offers opportunities for companies, which substantially reduce costs by digitizing their business and by having an easy access to a global market, but also for customers who are able to search / obtain information on the desired product, to compare prices and also to save time by the online purchasing of the product.

Thus, companies should analyze very well the opportunities produced and the dangers generated by the globalization. (Kotler, Dipak, Jain, Suvit Maesincee, 2009: 9).

Through the Internet, the company is able to obtain in a short time important information about its prospects so that it can better adapt the business communication to them. In this context, the business communication will be customized on the company's target, focusing on the customers' needs.

Taking into consideration the fact that, nowadays, the online consumer is, most often, a well-informed person, eager to find out information about the wanted product using online tools , it is very important that the company's online communication to be clear, explicit and "sincere" on the offered product or service.

In the digitalization context, Professor Philip Kotler, considered to be the "Marketing's Father", states: "The marketing and the customer-centric thinking must characterize the whole attitude of the company, providing insights, principles and practices meant to do by the value and the customers' satisfaction the goal of all". (Kotler, Dipak, Suvit Maesincee, 2009: 9).

In the same vein, the statement mission of Amazon.com company, which ranked the 13th place in the top of the most powerful brands in 2015, says: "To be the most customer-oriented company on the Earth, where people can easily find and discover anything they want to buy online." (Brandt, 2012: 7).

Based on this consideration, a successful communication starts with the question "Why a particular product should be preferred to the prospectus?" "Is it able to satisfy the client's needs?

Thus, the business communication doesn't aim, essentially, the description of products or services, but their ability to respond to current and future needs of the clients.

The fair and correct information of the customer on a product or service will allow him to make the right decision of purchase, which will create a "win-win" situation.

Being better informed and able to choose the best price, customers "press" companies to increase the quality of their business communication.

Also, according to several professionals, the company's online communication practiced by the published articles must assure in a percentage of 80% the customer's information and education, and only 20% of the business content must determine the purchase of products and services. (Pulizzi, 2010).

More, Professor Philip Kotler considers that "Marketing today relies more and more on maintaining the relationships with customers (Kotler, 2009:11).

Given that the customers analyze by the use of tools like Google Analytics, which offers a suite of advanced statistics about who accessed a specific article on the blog or site, it is essential to pay a special attention to the customers' identification, in order to develop a long lasting relationship with them.

One of the trends used by the communication specialists is the "transmedia storytelling". The specialists consider that brands seek to tell their story in a more dynamic way, using mixed media of expression; visual supremacy will be doubled by dynamic video effects and the simultaneous integration of these messages in-motion across multiple platforms: Facebook, blogs, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr (Echipa CTRL-D, 2013).

With the digitization of business communication, the traditional communication strategy has been adapted, including tools such as:

- Website;
- Emailing campaigns;
- Social Network (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.);
- Blogs;
- Webinars;
- Online contests.

The use of the digitization tools in business communication allows **several advantages**, such as:

- brand development;
- attracting new customers;
- analysis of direct competitors;
- networking;
- recruitment on vacant posts (eg using Linkedin);
- development of a long-term customer relationship by (email marketing, social networking, blog ...)
- reduced business communication costs compared with traditional communication;
- global market;
- disseminating information speedily;
- permanent interactivity with customers;
- ease of use of digital communication tools (Australian Governement, 2015).

1. Business Communication adapted to the mobile devices

As the use of mobile devices is growing, the business communication optimization for mobile devices is an essential element for the success of the B2B and B2C communication strategy.

As 45% of emails are opened on mobile, 36% on desktop and 19% on a webmail client (Mail on the mark, 2015), the websites as well as the newsletters must be adapted to mobile devices. Also, more than half of employees (57%) check their email after work, and most of them are convinced that, doing so, they are more effective.

With a growing number of people who check their email on mobile devices, it should be an increased need to optimize emails for small screens.

In regard to the first social network, Facebook, the total number of mobile version users increased to 745 million and the ads component in the Facebook mobile space was the most important income source, accounting 69% of the total (Nitu, 2015).

In Romania, it was estimated that by the end of 2015, the smartphone market grows with 30% over the last year, continuing the customers migration trend from normal to smart terminals (Dumitrache, 2015).

Globally, the second quarters 2015 were sold 337 million smartphones, an increase of 11% compared to the same period of the previous year (IDC, 2015).

If in 2013, 78% of the European homeowners were connected to the Internet, nowadays, most of the companies do online business. As more and more people are connected 24h / 24h to the Internet through mobile devices, in particular smartphones, it is required that business communication should meet this need. Moreover, the increasing use of mobiles in emerging markets is one outstanding reason why business communication should take account of this trend.

Google Analytics offers information about the mobile operating systems and mobile devices that sent users on the company's website, to the company's mobile application or the social media page.

In this context, digitalization enables a permanent business communication across the company and to the external environment.

2. Website

The website is the business card of any company in the online environment. That's way, the attention given by the companies to their websites is defining for their success. The website must be intuitive, easy to access and must provide, in a synthetic way, the best information about the company's business, products or services and their ability to meet the customers' needs.

As Google Analytics service offered by Google provides information on:

- active users in a given period of time;
- customer value (how valuable different users are to the company depending on the performance of customers over several sessions);

- group analysis (identifying a group of users who have one common feature identified in the report by a Google Analytics parameter);
- demographics (age, sex) which provide context for extending ads in markets with similar content (related categories) and precisely target your ads to users who demonstrate that they are willing to consume your content;
- behavior (new users compared to those appellants, frequency and recency, as well as involvement);
- technologies used by users to reach and browse the company's website;
- customization (custom variables defined by the user);
- comparative analysis that enables to compare the company's data with the aggregated data in the field, from other companies that allow access to their data;
- users' trail;
- user's flow (graphical representation of the paths taken by users on the company's website, from source to different pages) (Google, 2015).

Using this information, business communication can be customized and adapted to the company's target. Also, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is essential, given that on a "huge" online market, an unsatisfactory positioning from a simple Google search can be synonymous with the business's failure.

3. Blog

The blog is the second tool to the company's website that allows the custom communication with the target audience. The blog allows the creation of a long-term relationship with customers or prospects, drives traffic to your website, develops a "personality" of the brand, improves the result of the search engine, as well as it allows a direct feedback.

By the articles published on the blog, the company does not only promote products and services, but also educates the target segment (knowing that 80% of the content published on the corporate blogs focuses on educating and informing the public target).

Moreover, the blog content should aim at creating a "customized" relationship with the reader.

4. Email marketing

Email marketing is perhaps the most valuable tool of communication in business, 59% of B2B marketers considering that email is the most efficient channel which generates revenue (Visually, 2012).

In the case of business communication by email campaigns, it is important to choose the right ESP according to the company's needs, building a relevant contact list, carefully targeting the contacts that receive Newsletters (Mielach, 2012).

In business communication it is very important that emails have a title which convinces to increase the rate of initiation. Also, if the email campaign is sent to a target range of contacts, it is recommended to use the A/B testing method on smaller samples, and after that, to send the campaign with the best results to the envisaged database.

For the success of an email campaign, a special attention should be paid to the moment of sending, respectively to the moment of the reception. The receiving email at inconvenient times may compromise the results of the mailing business campaigns.

Another important aspect is the existence of a link that allows "unsubscribing". Otherwise, if the company continues to send business emails to people who no longer wish to receive them, it may adversely affect the company's image and the newsletters automatically will be considered spamming.

For the success of the mailing campaigns it is recommended to establish a well-determined frequency for sending. Another important aspect notified in the case of email campaigns in business, is that the text format usually has better outcomes compared with the graphical emails, which often are associated with spam.

4.1. The benefits of using email campaigns

Advantages of business mailing campaigns are multiple, the most important are:

▪ The speed of dispatch and production: a commercial postal communication needs normally five to eight working days to reach the recipient, while sending and receiving business emails are almost instantaneous. To the dispatch's rapidity it must be added the speed of the production (Claeyssen, Marketingul prin email, 2009: 27).

▪ Very high reactivity.

▪ Acceleration of direct marketing: 80% of the responses will occur within 72 hours after launching the operation and thus we know almost immediately if the marketing campaign was successful or not (Claeyssen, Marketingul prin email, 2009: 28).

▪ Triple mobility: whether the destination is national or international the cost of routing is the same (Claeyssen, Ibidem). The recipients can access their emails via mobile phone, laptop, at office, at home or on holiday.

▪ Permanent interactivity: email is designed to trigger immediate action from the recipient, who can, by a simple click, make an order to participate in an online contest, or subscribe to a newsletter (Claeyssen, Marketingul prin email, 2009: 29)

▪ Limitless customization and targeting: so far, no other channel had better results than e-mail in terms of personalization and targeting (Claeyssen, Ibidem).

5. Social networks
5.1. Facebook

Facebook is the largest social network in terms of number of users, with 1.39 billion active users, about 890 million of these are very active, visiting the social network at least once a day (Nitu, 2015). Facebook is a perfect tool to connect people worldwide with the company's business.

Facebook is ideal for small and medium businesses with a limited marketing budget because companies are able to communicate with customers or prospects, allowing them finally to see the services and products in pictures or videos posted by the company, and also to see their special offers.

Large companies use Facebook to test their marketing concepts and the main themes of their communication (QueensLans Government, 2014).

According to a survey conducted by EY company in Romania, Facebook is the most used social networking platforms, with 93% of responses (94% globally), followed by LinkedIn with 61% (71% globally) and Google+ by 31% (54% globally).

Also, in Romania, new entrants in the ranking of social networks are Pinterest 8% (47% globally) and Instagram 7% (28% globally) (EY, 2014).

5.2. Twitter

Twitter is a "micro-blogging" service that allows sending short messages to customers or to the prospectus.

In late September 2015, Twitter counted 320 million monthly active users, one billion monthly unique visitors to websites with Tweets incorporated, 80% of active users on mobile, 79% of accounts outside the US and over 35 languages accepted (Twitter, 2015).

In business communication, Twitter is used to communicate different information or offers of the company, to generate leads, to promote your brand or to study the latest trends in the field.

An example of a successful business communication through Twitter was practiced by the United Airlines company, which when they created their first account, they offered tickets at minimum prices and discounts - which were posted only on the Twitter page and the first 10,000 followers received bonuses for the flight tickets (Beta Code, 2015).

5.3. Linkedin

In 2014, Linkedin counted 300 million users worldwide: 119 million in North America, 45 million in South America, 15 million in Africa, 11 million in East Middle, 78 million in Europe, 52 million in Asia and 8 million in Oceania. (Link Humans, 2014).

At present, LinkedIn is the largest online professional network in the world with more than 400 million in over 200 countries. According to

Linkedin statistics, every second 2 new members are recorded (Linkedin, 2015).

In business communication, Linkedin can be used to communicate relevant information on the company's business or on the field in which the company operates, to raise awareness and to improve the company's image, as well as to create a leadership position of the company in relation to the online business community created.

Moreover, Linkedin can be a good tool in the recruitment of new employees of the company.

5.4. Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform based entirely on posting pictures and videos. The platform is owned by Facebook and there are over 400 million active users per month (75 million per day). Posts cover topics about food, art, travel, fashion, etc. (Kharpal, CNBC, 2015).

In the month of May 2014, the registration rate was 15 times higher than the rate of Facebook subscription and 25 times higher than Twitter (Estrin, Imediaconnection, 2014).

According to Scott Galloway, founder of L2 and professor of marketing at the University Stern School of Business in New York, the most recent studies indicate that 93% of the most prestigious brands have an active presence on Instagram and they included this tool in their marketing mix (Galloway, 2014).

Also, according to a study by Simply Measured (an important social media analysis company), 71% of the largest brands use Instagram as a marketing channel (Tishgart, Wire, 2013).

Furthermore, statistics indicate that Instagram will continue to have a considerable increase in the future.

In business communication, Instagram is used to communicate with current and potential customers with the help of pictures related to products or events organized by the company. In this regard, this platform is used to "capture the attention of the market target with an interest in the offered product or service" (Stevens, Business to Community, 2013).

5.5. Youtube

YouTube is an online video hosting platform, with over one billion users (about a third of all Internet users), 80% of the YouTube views are from outside the United States. Surfing Youtube covers, in total, 76 different languages (covering 95% of the population using Internet) and it was released in local versions in 70 countries (Youtube, Statistics, 2015). Although it is known more for the music products, using YouTube in business communication can focus on product video presentations, video presentations about how to solve a specific problem or video presentations on

the installation or use of products, and it allows to create an online community.

6. Specialized forums

Although it is not a tool fully controlled by a company, it should be taken into consideration because people tend to show more confidence to other people than to advertising. In this regard, according to a Nielsen survey conducted in 2009 on 25,000 internet users in 50 countries, 90% declared they trust the recommendations of known persons and 70% of them trust the consumer opinions posted online (Queensland Government, 2014). That is why, any online reviews of the company, product, service is a powerful form of online business communication.

7. Webinars

Webinars or online courses offered by the company's specialists in a particular field can also be a useful tool in the business communicating strategy. On the one hand, they increase the company's reputation, the confidence in the company as well as they improve the company's image, which will be associated with the professionalism of its employees. In opposite, if the webinars aren't realized in a professional manner, they may adversely affect the company's image.

Conclusions

Digitization has allowed a dynamic transformation of business communication. In a future dominated by high technology, without an active business communication in the online environment, an organization's communication strategy is doomed to failure.

As Esther Dyson (President of EDventure Holdings Inc.) said: "The Internet is not just another sales channel. It is not just a means of advertising. It is a tool that fundamentally changes the way a company does business, takes orders from customers and gives them value (Kotler, Dipak, Suvit Maesincee, 2009: 17).

The business communication methodology should include a more extensive range of online communication tools and reach more market segments.

Thus, the online business communication is simpler, efficient and comfortable than the traditional one.

Also, beyond the technical details of the business communication or the communication focused on generating leads and sales, the online B2B or B2C communication must focus first of all on establishing long-term relationships with the consumers.

Moreover, beyond the content of the business communication, a special attention should be allocated to image, given that, according to the

experts in online communication, "people remember 80% of what they see and 20% of what they read", and the "content with visual elements has up to 94% more views" (Oltean, Romania Copywriter, 2014).

Currently, the most powerful companies (Apple, Microsoft, IBM , Coca-Cola, Google, etc) - (Forbes, The World's Most Valuable Brands, 2015) are those that have the best visibility on the online market, and the eCommerce websites seem to be the new trend in the procurement field.

Also, social media promotion is the ideal advertising medium for small and medium businesses that become visible on a global market with minimal costs invested in the online communication.

If in the past, the most successful business communication strategy, at large scale, required considerable amounts of money, currently, with a lower cost and a well-planned strategy, a company can achieve effectively the business communication targets.

Online analysis tools like Google Analytics help to better identify the customers and prospects, as well as to formulate messages according to their interests or needs.

Therefore, the digitization enables a multichannel business communication, low cost, accessible, dynamic and adapted to the needs of the target audience.

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