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## **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AS A LEADING DIGITAL MARKETING TOOL**

Kalinina V.V.

Student of the Academy of Economy and Management,  
Southern University (IMBL), e-mail: [valeriakalinina230@gmail.com](mailto:valeriakalinina230@gmail.com)

Scientific supervisor: Rood' E.E.

**Abstract:** This article examines the main channels and methods of the marketing mix in the context of the rapid development of the digital economy. We described and substantiated the key points of successful brand promotion in social networks as a leading digital marketing tool.

**Keywords:** digital marketing, digital tools, social networks, brand promotion, SMM-strategy.

Scientific and technological progress today leads to the spread and rapid development of the digital economy - this leads to the emergence of completely new demands among modern consumers, which, in turn, requires the development of a new approach not only to creating a product, but also to its promotion [4]. And if the key paradigms of marketing remain relevant in the context of considering it as a modern philosophy of doing business, then certain traditional techniques and methods of the marketing complex in the context of the existence of a digital society are no longer able to provide the expected result in the target market [2]. In this regard, they are being replaced by fundamentally new communication policy tools, revolutionary forms of doing business and ways to attract consumers, referred to as digital marketing.

Digital marketing is a generic term used to describe targeted and interactive marketing of goods and services that uses digital technology to attract potential clients and retain them as consumers [6]. The main goals of digital marketing are brand promotion and sales growth through various digital channels. In addition to mobile technologies, traditional television and radio, the Internet acts as the main means of communication of digital marketing, which is a fertile platform for the application of a number of effective methods - digital tools, such as: content

marketing; email-marketing; social media marketing (SMM); search engine optimization (SEO); push-notifications; targeted advertising; contextual advertising, etc.

It is worth noting that digital marketing methods are applied based on the actual tasks of the developed strategy, and can be an integral part of each other, therefore it is difficult to answer the question of which of the tools is the most effective. However, against the background of other methods, SMM has a beneficial advantage, since, according to experts, it is not only promotion through various social platforms, but is ranked as a full-fledged marketing and is part of the communication strategy of modern management.

Social media marketing (SMM) is a set of measures for using social media as mediated channels for brand promotion, increasing its awareness and audience loyalty, expanding it, increasing website traffic of various companies, and solving other business problems in order to increase sales.

Among the benefits of SMM, as a leading tool of digital marketing we can enumerate the following:

- the trusting attitude of users to information on social networks, since it is not perceived as direct advertising;
- large coverage of the target audience and independence from the region;
- relatively inexpensive advertising contact (the cost is several times lower than advertising in the press or on TV), however, advertising costs increase significantly every year;
- the ability to select the target audience with a high degree of accuracy (targeting).
- feedback and quick response (gives a unique opportunity to interact with the consumer at every stage of his purchasing decision);
- high speed of information collection.

According to Hootsuite (social media management platform), there are 3.8 billion active social media users worldwide in 2020. In Russia, there are 70 million of them, that is, 48% of the population, which is also an indisputable advantage when using SMM and provides ample opportunities for managing business processes.

In this regard, the question is considered relevant: how to get steadily growing income through marketing in social networks? It is important to remember that the key point when working to promote a brand (product, service) in the media space is the development of a competent SMM strategy, which includes, as mentioned earlier, an integrated approach with detailed planning, from the formulation of a unique selling proposition to direct product sales:

- Definition, research and continuous monitoring of the target audience (client niche), as well as the selection of the site where this audience is mostly represented;
- Analysis of the competitive environment (market share, industry growth rates, strengths / weaknesses, marketing activities in Digital);
- Selection of high-quality, informative and useful content, including interactive (polls, contests, master classes, promotions and cross-promotions, games, etc.) - video broadcasts in real time, "stories" and the publication of short videos. Success determines maintaining the correct proportion of "selling / entertainment" content, constant updating of relevant information;
- Development of effective communication with the target audience. Stimulating user reactions, through the task of news feeds in posts, in order to increase the activity in the comments; participation in discussions, answering questions and feedback; practice of ethical behavior in response to negative comments, prompt response to user remarks;
- Analysis of the behavior of potential customers by collecting information about the online activity of users - the coverage of publications, likes, reposts, the number and quality of comments, conversions and conversions by utm tags - in

order to select content in accordance with the interests, needs and expectations of the audience;

- Working with opinion leaders. Advertising messages addressed not on behalf of the company, but directly from the same users - opinion leaders, according to statistics, have a greater impact on customers;
- Use of targeted advertising. Remarketing will allow the most effective use of the company's budget by sending an advertising message to a specific target audience based on the parameters set by the search settings;
- Cross-marketing with friendly companies within a common target group;
- Compliance with the rules and principles of digital marketing activities: an indication of the commercial nature of the social network; use of clear and transparent mechanisms that allow the consumer to prevent the use of their personal data; respect for the standards of business conduct on the Internet;
- Continuous study of digital marketing trends (SMM).

When developing an effective media plan, it is also necessary to prioritize the tasks, determine the performers - here it is worth talking about attracting SMM specialists or training company employees, determining the timing and advertising budget, thinking over ways to assess intermediate results (KPI), analyze them and adjust the strategy accordingly by eliminating problem and non-working places [2].

Summarizing the above, it is important to note that the presence on the network of its own Internet resource in the form of a website, blog, group in social networks or a landing page is typical for most existing companies today. We would like to note that website creation alone, of course, is not enough - digital marketing implies the complex use of various channels and tools [5]. However, modern realities clearly demonstrate that the successful functioning and development of business today is impossible outside the world wide web. As Bill Gates said, "If a company is not on the Internet, then it is not in business."

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