

Case Study

# Strategies of Socially Responsible Online Marketing and Advertising Management of Trade Enterprises

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## ABSTRACT

Social aspects are increasingly taken into account in the marketing activities of enterprises, as they allow for solving many problems and increasing business profitability. The article aims to empirically study how the strategies of socially responsible online marketing and advertising management of trade enterprises ensure the efficiency of their activities. The research methodology includes case studies based on the case method of foreign trading companies - representative offices in Ukraine, which implement strategies of socially responsible online marketing and advertising management. The results demonstrate the integration and coherence of socially responsible marketing strategies following the problems and marketing activities of enterprises. Market positioning, niche features, product range, and marketing determine the purpose and objectives of online marketing strategies. Trade enterprises in the course of marketing products on the Internet face some problems that require the involvement of experts. As the analysis of the cases showed, independently developed strategies and advertising campaigns are not effective enough due to a lack of professional knowledge in advertising management of digital marketing. Socially responsible Internet marketing strategies contain the following main components: (1) purpose, goals, and objectives, coordinated with the overall strategy of enterprises; (2) strategic directions and tools for implementing the strategy; (3) key performance indicators, selected following the goals and objectives, which provide a measurement of the effectiveness of advertising management. The theoretical and practical value of the article lies in empirical confirmation of the need of enterprises in social marketing activities, which contributes to the growth of profits, formation of brand awareness, improvement of its reputation in the market, raising consumer awareness of products, taking into account the motives and interests of customers.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ① Market positioning, niche features, product range, and marketing determine the purpose and objectives of online marketing strategies.
- ② Trade enterprises in the course of marketing products on the Internet face some problems that require the involvement of experts.

**Keywords:** strategy, marketing, advertising of the enterprise

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Today, enterprises are forced to include social activities in their marketing strategies. Enterprises are not only profit-oriented entities of the economic system but are also considered to be full-fledged corporate citizens, subjects of social relations. Consumers are well aware of the social and environmental initiatives of business and, as a rule, make decisions on the purchase of goods or services based on the responsibility of producers. Thus, in the modern business paradigm, companies cannot focus solely on monetary returns. They must also implement and adhere to social initiatives and emphasize these business principles to improve the company's image through sound corporate citizenship.

Corporate social responsibility is a company's activity that is considered voluntary. It is reflected in the participation of businesses in solving social and environmental problems following its business model. This global trend of taking into account the principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR) together to make a profit has forced companies to redesign their business structures, processes, and models. However, businesses have realized the relevance of integrating CSR into marketing to achieve their short and long-term goals, developing marketing strategies around sustainability objectives to increase competitiveness and maintain market positions.

The article is aimed at empirical research of how strategies of socially responsible online marketing and advertising management of trade enterprises ensure the efficiency of their activities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The scientific literature systematizes the theoretical, practical, and methodological aspects of socially responsible marketing of enterprises (the reason for the emergence and development factors, inclusion in marketing strategies, stages of building strategies, etc.) The key factors in the development of socially responsible online marketing strategies are competitive market conditions (Garachkovska *et al.* 2021), the need to ensure competitive advantages and market positions (Khaminich *et al.* 2020; Mazaraki *et al.* 2021), the growth of information about goods and services, and, accordingly, a higher level of consumer awareness, which increases competition (Oklander *et al.* 2020), the need for new

ways of managing consumer demand (Koval *et al.* 2021), the tendency to take into account the interests of different stakeholders - government, civil society, non-profit organizations under sustainable development (Danko *et al.* 2020; Balanovska *et al.* 2021), considering social and environmental aspects in doing business (Maslov *et al.*, 2019).

### The concept of online marketing

To determine the strategies of socially responsible Internet marketing and advertising management, it is advisable to consider the essence of the concepts of marketing strategy, Internet marketing, tools, and types of strategies. A marketing strategy is a comprehensive, long-term action plan to promote the product and increase the company's profits, which is implemented when entering the market, launching a new product, expanding the market, and other major changes. In the context of changes in consumer behavior and increasing demand, marketing strategies for product promotion are beginning to expand and include new sales tools, including the Internet. Among the results of the strategy is an increase in the level of competitiveness, awareness, and loyalty of consumers about the product. To do this, companies must identify and disclose competitive advantages: introduction of new technologies, development, and launch of new products, improvement of service quality, rebranding, etc. Online services and tools are new competitive advantages of businesses within the marketing strategies of enterprises.

Internet marketing is the promotion of goods and services through online services, covering a wide range of strategies aimed at promoting a company and its products through online tools to attract potential customers, increase traffic to the site and grow sales. Robul (2020) states that the key characteristics of Internet marketing are product promotion, performance analysis, and demand analysis. Depending on the size of the business and the niche occupied, entrepreneurs use different channels of communication with consumers, ranging from PPC to blogging, where they share useful content. For example, they show videos with instructions for the organic promotion of brand products. Unlike traditional advertising in newspapers, on television, radio, banners, billboards, and posters, Internet marketing functions

online. It offers effective tools for lead generation and building communication to interact with the audience, measuring the level of engagement and brand loyalty. Popular online marketing channels include email marketing, PPC, SMM, messengers, chatbots, web push notifications, and search engine optimization. The actual combination of these channels in the action plan to promote communication products forms different Internet marketing strategies.

It is worth noting that in traditional marketing there are the following marketing strategies:

1. Diversification - the choice of this strategy means expanding the range of manufactured or sold products or services with the development of new areas.
  - 1.1. Horizontal diversification is the launch of a new product for consumers who are well acquainted with the company.
  - 1.2. The strategy of vertical diversification is to launch new products that are part of the chain of the old product.
  - 1.3. Lateral diversification is a departure from the standard areas of activity for the organization to take a place in a promising niche with a high rate of return, reduce risks or get tax breaks.
2. Segmentation - dividing potential consumers into groups based on certain criteria and creating products for individual segments.
3. Globalization strategy implies standardization of products - the company adapts to the common market requirements.
4. The strategy of cooperation means interaction with other organizations, and is beneficial for all parties.

The famous American economist and specialist in competitive strategies Michael Porter identified three basic competitive strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, and market segmentation (or focus).

1. **Cost leadership:** The company reduces costs wherever possible. This way it is easier to reduce the price of the product. In this case, cost reduction does not mean that you will necessarily set the lowest prices on the market. In the context of Internet marketing, such a strategy is implemented through sales from the site, which allows you to save on

renting warehouses for the storage of products.

2. Differentiation implies having some kind of advantage that can take you to market leadership. In the context of Internet marketing, such a strategy can be implemented through the quality of service, for example, through social networks and quick communication with the client. In addition, thanks to social media, a company can develop and promote its brand, different from other firms in the market. For example, the Silpo chain of stores was the first of the chain stores to introduce an application with gamification elements and free delivery, as well as to start selling its brand products, etc.

3. Market segmentation (or focus) - focus on a specific market segment with the desire to lead in a niche. In the context of Internet marketing, a business can focus on individual products and actively advertise them online.

### Strategies for socially responsible online marketing

In contrast to traditional Internet marketing, where the goals are pursued by competitive commercial motives of enterprises, socially responsible marketing is aimed at retaining customers, forming their loyalty to the company, and brand, and creating a positive image. In this context, feedback (for example, customer ratings about the quality of goods, services, etc.) is a tool for measuring customer satisfaction and potential return. Socially responsible online marketing has a primary goal - to meet the needs and requirements of consumers, taking into account their preferences, and motives for purchase, while the additional effect is to make a profit, form a positive image, etc. In socially responsible marketing, the well-being of customers becomes an important measure of the effectiveness of enterprises.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology included a case study based on the analysis of the cases of trade enterprises - distributors of products in Ukraine, namely: the agricultural company 'Agro Expert'; Medik8, which is positioned as a cosmeceutical brand; and RevitaLash Cosmetics - a popular cosmetic brand. The cases of the companies were posted on the website of Elit-Web - one of the largest Internet marketing agencies in Ukraine and part of the

Wezom IT group. Since 2014, the agency has been providing clients with comprehensive solutions for online promotion, increasing sales, and ensuring profitability (*Elit-Web, 2023a; 2023b; 2023c*).

The case study allowed us to analyze real situations to understand and evaluate the marketing problems of companies on the Internet and their solutions using socially responsible Internet marketing strategies. Thus, the case studies allowed us to test the possibility of applying the concept of social responsibility in business in practical marketing activities. This research design is especially popular in marketing, advertising, and social sciences. The format of the case study consists of five parts: an overview of the company's marketing activities, its niche, strategy, and positioning; problem identification; analysis of the strategic solution; analysis of the results of the socially responsible Internet marketing strategy.

## RESULTS

### Case studies of socially responsible Internet marketing and advertising management of trade enterprises

#### *Case of SMM-promotion of Agro Expert Company*

The company 'Agro Expert' is a supplier of original plant protection products and high-performance sowing materials of foreign and Ukrainian selection. The company offers farmers a wide range of mineral fertilizers, micro fertilizers, and plant growth regulators. 'Agro Expert' is an ambassador of the leading brands of the agricultural industry, in particular the exclusive distributor of VITAZYME and SilagePro. The company's portfolio is expanding annually. For instance, since 2019, Agro Expert has developed an offer for the sale of tillage equipment, integrated systems for seed treatment, and equipment for the preparation of working mixtures. In 2020, the company began distributing innovative digital solutions together with Yara Digital. It was also decided to develop the presence of Agro Expert in social networks. Although the company mainly works in the B2B sphere, the management decided to organize the interaction with customers in the digital era through all possible communication channels.

The strategic goal of the company is to increase brand awareness to further increase sales. Promotion on Facebook and Instagram was of great importance, as recently there has been a surge of business activity in social networks. Interaction with the audience on these platforms made it possible to find out the range of interests of potential customers. Among the additional tasks of Internet marketing was to increase the number of visits to the site, which in the future allowed receiving more applications. SMM promotion of the agricultural company in social networks was effective. The company managed to increase the coverage of publications on Facebook by 110%, attract subscribers to the Instagram page and increase engagement rates.

#### *Case of contextual advertising for the website of the British cosmeceutical brand Medik8*

Medik8 is positioned as a cosmeceutical brand, which helps people to preserve the health and beauty of their skin for many years through unique developments. The products are based on impeccable formulas created by well-known cosmetologists and pharmacists. The company dispels myths about anti-aging care products and promotes the idea of using simple ingredients - vitamins C and A in different concentrations, which give an exceptional results when properly combined. The assortment of Medik8 includes a variety of serums, tonics, masks, complexes for cleansing, moisturizing, and ready-made kits. All products are aimed at cosmeceutical care, solving anti-aging and other problems. The peculiarity of the Medik8 brand is its unique philosophy based on 8 principles: simplicity of ingredients, individual approach, purity, exclusivity, freedom, professionalism, manufacturability, and ethical attitude to the environment. All products are supplied to Ukraine directly from laboratories in the UK. Since the products from the Medik8 cosmeceutical brand are of the highest class, they are popular among wealthy women, who are the key target audience. Accordingly, the supply of counterfeits to the market by various dealers was one of the key problems that negatively affected the brand's reputation. The company is the official representative of the brand in Ukraine, but traffic from the site goes to online stores that offer low-quality products at reduced prices. Therefore, the main task of Internet marketing was to increase



traffic to the official web resource of the brand. The main goal was aimed at increase sales and increasing the effectiveness of contextual advertising. During two months of work on the promotion of the website of the unique British cosmetics Medik8 with the help of contextual advertising, they managed to increase the number of transactions by 40%. In general, the growth of advertising profitability was 43.4%.

### *Case of contextual advertising for the cosmetic brand RevitaLash Cosmetics*

RevitaLash Cosmetics is a popular brand that has become known for offering the female audience “to believe in themselves and restore the natural beauty of eyelashes, eyebrows, and hair”. The goal of the advertising campaign is not only aimed at improving the natural beauty elements of women. The company supports breast cancer foundations and all those who are engaged in research in this field, prevention, and treatment of the disease. The collection of RevitaLash Cosmetics brand includes serums for eyebrows and eyelashes, makeup and makeup remover products, professional shampoos, masks, and hair conditioners. Each of the products has a unique patented formula, is hypoallergenic, recommended for use by dermatologists. The company is the official representative of the RevitaLash Cosmetics brand in Ukraine, which guarantees the quality and originality of products. However, in some Ukrainian online stores, you can find counterfeit products, and their prices are much lower. This situation causes a decrease in traffic to the company’s website. The main task of advertising management was to adjust traffic and attract new target users to the website.

The main goals set during the advertising campaign within the Internet marketing strategy were as follows: to attract new target customers to the website; to return consumers who are already familiar with the brand’s products; to optimize advertising costs. In addition, the long-term plans included strengthening the brand’s position in the market and increasing awareness of the RevitaLash Cosmetics brand.

The strategy was divided into stages, in particular:

1. Express audit of the advertising cabinet before the start of work to understand the reactions of consumers to existing advertising

campaigns. In the process, the settings of campaigns, audiences, and keywords were checked. At this stage, growth points were found to promote the site through contextual advertising.

2. Analysis and optimization of the client’s trading campaigns using reports in Google Analytics on the revitalash.ua website. As a result, it was found that the site had effective campaigns, but at the same time, there were problems: overpriced CPC, and the presence of keywords that could be disabled due to low efficiency. In this area, some actions were identified to achieve better results, as bidding campaigns have the potential to promote the project. In particular, bidding campaigns act as an auxiliary tool in the chain of user interactions to the final purchase.
3. Testing of other types of PPC advertising. According to the results of the express audit, it was found that the marketing work did not involve campaigns in the contextual media network, in particular remarketing. The task was to return those consumers who used the elite cosmetics from the RevitaLash brand. Through remarketing, in particular promotion in the Google display network, access to a new audience on Google partner sites was opened. Work on the promotion of the popular brand RevitaLash Cosmetics showed that with the help of contextual advertising, it is quite possible to increase the number of new users almost 3 times, and the profitability of advertising increased by 53%.

## DISCUSSION

Table 1 systematizes the main components of socially oriented Internet marketing strategies of trade enterprises. The key feature of such strategies is the goal that is focused primarily on consumers. For example, the company «Agro Expert» aimed to increase brand awareness, identify the interests of customers, to study their portrait. Medik8 and RevitaLash Cosmetics aimed to solve the problem of counterfeit products and brand reputation. At the same time, the goals of the strategies included sales growth, optimization of the advertising budget, and product promotion. As He & Harris (2020) point out, CSR strategies in marketing provide solutions

to social problems and implement consumer ethical solutions. Vieira *et al.* (2019), Palma-Ruiz, Castillo-Apraiz & Gómez-Martínez (2020), and Awaysheh *et al.* (2020) also note that sustainable responsible investment is a strategy for combining financial and social benefits.

The effectiveness of Internet marketing strategies was ensured by using an integrated approach and dividing the strategy into areas, which contributed to effective budget allocation and advertising management. Within each direction, the most effective tools of the advertising campaign were selected, which allowed us to achieve the goal of the defined Internet marketing strategy. At the same time, the selected tools contributed to solving problems that arose in the marketing activities of enterprises. Content testing in social networks provided an understanding of the target audience and its needs, which contributed to the overall increase in brand awareness. An important element of the strategy was a single style in the branding of the company. Important tools of the strategy in its implementation were competitive analysis and collection of analytics about customer accounts. The company “Agro Expert” has increased brand awareness through social orientation and the study

of consumer interests. According to Abbas *et al.* (2019), corporate social responsibility has a positive impact on the sustainability of firms, and social media marketing tools moderate the relationship between CSR and the sustainable production of business firms. López García *et al.* (2019) also found a large role of digital marketing in customer acquisition.

An integrated approach to the provision of contextual advertising services for Medik8 has increased its efficiency and sales. The key strategic tools of Internet marketing, chosen following the goals of Medik8, were as follows: (1) adjustment of existing search campaigns as one of the key tools to increase traffic. In particular, these campaigns were adjusted by expanding the semantics in search campaigns, working out the list of negative words, and geotargeting. (2) Setting up shopping campaigns in promotion for additional traffic to the website. This tool has provided an impact on some customers by combining standard sales campaigns with remarketing, which is configured in the display network. (3) Setting up a campaign in the contextual media network. The use of this advertising tool had great potential. Such campaigns help to work with a cold audience, increase reach, and increase

**Table 1:** Comparison of the purpose, goals, and results of socially oriented Internet marketing strategies of trade enterprises

| Strategy component             | “Agro Expert”   | Medik8  | RevitaLash Cosmetics  |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Strategic goal                 | Increasing brand awareness  | Sales growth, redirection of buyers from websites selling counterfeits  | Sales growth, redirecting customers from resources where counterfeits are sold  |
| Service                        | Promotion in social media   | Context advertising   | Context advertising   |
| Result                         | Increase of subscribers for the year on Facebook - 4802, on Instagram - 1214, increase in coverage of publications on Facebook by 110%, increase in engagement rates.               | Increase in site traffic by 36%, increase in profitability by 43.4% for 2 months of work                                | The number of clicks increased by 3.7 times, and transactions - by 3.4 times. The cost per click has halved   |
| Strategic directions and tools | Visual design according to the brand book.<br>Analysis of competitors on Instagram.<br>Development of a rubric for regular publication of materials.<br>Testing of content formats. | Express audit of advertising campaigns launched in the account to get up-to-date information about their effectiveness. | Express audit of the advertising cabinet.<br>Analysis and optimization of the client’s trading campaigns.<br>Testing of other types of PPC advertising. |
| Peculiarities of the niche     | B2B sphere, lack of digital communication   | High and not always fair competition in the market  | Working with a mono-brand, high competition in the market   |

Source: Systematized by the author based on Elit-Web (2023a; 2023b; 2023c).

brand awareness. Moreover, in the settings, you can exclude non-targeted traffic, which will increase conversion and help to spend the advertising budget efficiently.

The difficulty of promoting Medik8 products and brands was that the company's website presented products from only one brand. Consumers most often clicked on the name (audit data showed that such clicks were about 95%). To attract a new audience, it was necessary to work on increasing brand awareness. Another problem was related to "black dealers" who resell counterfeit goods. In addition, products from the Medik8 brand were in the catalogs of popular online cosmetics stores Makeup, Notino, etc. By optimizing existing advertising campaigns and connecting other advertising tools, it was possible to achieve the attraction of conversion traffic. This allowed for the achievement of the first positive results.

The difficulty of promoting the RevitaLash Cosmetics brand was that the company is a mono-brand, which has 95% of the brand traffic. The high-price segment limits the target audience: the price of goods started from 1000 UAH. An additional task when providing contextual advertising was to expand the level of consumer familiarity with the brand. This could affect the decrease in demand for the company's products from the so-called "black dealers" who illegally resell counterfeit cosmetics using someone else's brand. Working with the settings in the ad account and launching the purchase function made it possible to attract conversion traffic.

## CONCLUSION

The study shows the integration and coherence of socially responsible marketing strategies under the problems and marketing activities of enterprises. Market positioning, niche features, product range, and marketing determine the purpose and objectives of Internet marketing strategies. Trade enterprises in the course of marketing products on the Internet face some problems that require the involvement of experts. As the analysis of the cases showed, independently developed strategies and advertising campaigns are not effective enough due to a lack of professional knowledge in advertising management of online marketing.

Socially responsible online marketing strategies contain the following main components: (1) purpose,

goals, and objectives, coordinated with the overall strategy of enterprises; (2) strategic directions and tools for implementing the strategy; (3) key performance indicators, selected following the goals and objectives, which provide a measurement of the effectiveness of advertising management.

Empirical research confirms that socially responsible marketing uses a consumer-oriented approach. Such an approach can be applied to promotion, encouraging society to buy goods that deserve attention and preventing the use of deficiencies. Socially responsible Internet marketing and effective management of its strategies within the framework of advertising management allows for an increase in the level of well-being of society. The latter happens through active informing of customers about products, company activities, etc.

The modern concept of socially responsible marketing is a new, creative approach to regulating social changes and social processes in a democratic society. For companies that adhere to the concept of socially responsible marketing, it means creating a positive image, improving the quality of business management (increasing staff productivity, reducing operating costs, increasing sales, and increasing customer loyalty), increasing investment attractiveness, and, as a result, strengthening competitiveness in the national and international markets. For society, in turn, it is an effective tool for solving social problems. However, it should be noted that this approach should be systematic. Enterprises that have decided to introduce the principles of social responsibility in their activities should not be limited to periodic donations for socially useful purposes. Leading international organizations define corporate social responsibility as a general strategic approach to business.

To ensure the favorable development of socially responsible marketing in Ukraine, it is advisable to promote a successful business experience based on the concept of socially responsible marketing in the media, to form a complete information database on social projects and business inclusion. Further research on socially responsible Internet marketing and advertising management strategies should be aimed at identifying the features of such strategies in different markets.

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