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MODERN TRENDS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN ERA OF E-COMMUNICATION

Introduction

The occurrence and spread of new technologies and Internet have played crucial role in the development of international marketing communication with consumers. It can be observed that e-communication with consumers is gaining on popularity and becoming one of the most important tools in the integrated marketing communication of companies and enterprises nowadays. Moreover, e-communication has significant influence on the creation of new trends in consumer behaviour. Rising amount of e-business and new technologies, social media popularity and Internet availability led to the creation of e-consumer term. Consumers are aware of almost unlimited possibilities offered by the Internet as a result became more demanding. Companies also became more aware of new technologies and its marketing potential. Engagement of e-media by companies in communication with consumers can be observed with higher and higher frequency. These phenomenon have prompted the change of consumers behaviours' patterns on global scale and yet, appearance of new trends. The aim of this paper is to identify and characterize modern trends of consumer behaviour in era of e-communication. The first part of paper investigate the concept of e-communication. Then, modern trends of consumer behaviour will be discussed in response to new technology usage in European and international marketing communication.

1. E-communication

Marketing communication is one of the most important spheres of company activity which determines its competitive advantage on the market¹. It is an important tool of marketing strategy as a result of the fact that it enables the enterprise to meet its practical market aims². Marketing communication role for the company is crucial, as the nature of the enterprise can be identified through the process of communication with the environment³. The marketing communication concept is complex. There are plenty of functions and aims to be fulfilled and factors to consider in order to create consistent and effective message to reach consumers. As a result of the raising complexity of current environment, the marketing communication theory and practice is getting broader and is currently developing. There are six main categories of marketing communications tools: advertising, sponsorship, sales promotion, personal selling, public relation and online marketing (e-communication)⁴. Successful marketers, while creating the marketing communication plan have to focus not solely on the company offer but on the customers' needs, demands and new habit of behaviours. This is a basis to the relationship marketing and customer oriented marketing. As a result, e-communication is the most developing marketing communication tool.

E-communication is described as all types of marketing communication tools which engage the electronic media, especially Internet, mobile devices or digital television⁵. It is a rapidly growing area of marketing communication due to high technology development or new trends like social networking arrival. The main features of online marketing communication are hipermedial environment, technical and personal interactivity. E-communication has several major tools and trends which has evolved throughout last years and are predicted to develop in the future. Three main e-communication trends of e-communication may be identified: online advertising, mobile marketing and Internet of Things.

Rising power of online advertising is a noticeable and inevitable trend both at European and global level⁶. It is predicted that in 2013 digital advertising spend-

¹ B. Pilarczyk: *Procesy komunikacji marketingowej a pozycjonowanie marek*. In: *Współczesny marketing. Trendy. Działania*. Red. G. Sobczyk. PWE, Warszawa 2008, p. 295.

² J. Wiktor: *Promocja. System komunikacji przedsiębiorstwa z rynkiem*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 10.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ L. Boone, D. Kurtze: *Contemporary Marketing*, Cengage Education 2012, p. 489.

⁵ C. Hakely: *Advertising and promotion. An Integrated Marketing Communication approach*. Sage Publications, Sydney 2011, p. 285.

⁶ PWC: IAB Internet Advertising revenue report. 2012 full year results. April 2013, p. 5.

ing will reach \$113,5 billion globally, 14,6 % more than 2012. North America is expected to reach \$42.8 billion in online advertising spend, Asia-Pacific \$36,8 billion, while Western Europe is estimated to reach \$26.6 billion⁷. The real turn to e-communication is supposed to take place in 2016. At the moment, the tendency of rising penetration of smartphones, tablets and other technological gadgets on the market can be observed. Smartphones and tablets are the main devices for receiving mobile or e-mail marketing messages, and to access Internet therefore be exposed to all forms of e-communication. Continuously decreasing price for broadband Internet connection also contributes to this phenomenon. There are many types of online marketing, however the most general classification indicates Search Engine Optimization, Pay-per-click advertisement, Viral marketing, Article marketing, Affiliate marketing and Social media marketing⁸.

Search Engine Optimization and Pay per Click advertisement are based on redirecting consumers to the specific web page. Search Engine Optimization consists of adjusting the web sites in respect of relevant keywords, while Pay per Click advertising displays the ads on web sites, which are relevant to the search results or the targeted web page content.

Viral marketing is a kind of online buzz marketing, where once published message is being disseminated from one Internet user to another⁹. Article marketing is connected with blogging, where the marketer may publish his or her articles and by this way communicate with consumer, when Affiliate marketing involves Internet users to promote the product and reward them when they are successful¹⁰.

Social media marketing is a type of online marketing, however the influence of this tool is so significant that may be considered as a separate trend. Social media marketing uses various media networks in order to create marketing communication. Social media marketing covers activities which involve social sharing of content, videos and images to reach marketing goals¹¹. There are three types of social media marketing, many-to-many, one-to-many and one-to-one. In the first case, it is based on using many social networks simultaneously, for example posting a message on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Second category involves one social media channel with wide audience, for example posting a movie only on

⁷ Website of WPP: <http://www.wpp.com/wpp/press/2013/>.

⁸ Website of infusion SEO: <http://www.infusionseo.com/blog/>.

⁹ R. Duermeyer: Viral Marketing – Internet Viral Marketing, available on: <http://homebusiness.about.com/od/homebusinessglossar1/g/viral-marketing.htm>.

¹⁰ G. Wasil: *What is Affiliate Marketing and How to start with it?*, available on: <http://www.vast9.com/blogg/affiliate-marketing-start/>.

¹¹ Website of WordStream: <http://www.wordstream.com/social-media-marketing>.

YouTube. The last type social media marketing consists of sending a personalized message to social media user, for example through chats implemented in social networks¹². Social media marketing is characterised by active participation of consumers, they can exchange information, share experience and opinions. What is more, social media marketing operates with many tools, which is one of its advantages over the traditional ways of marketing communication. It may involve private forums, wide social networks, public discussions boards etc.¹³. It was found that the most often searched-for term on the web is facebook, except from Japan, Russia and China, nevertheless, in Japan facebook was the fastest-rising search term in the year to August 2012¹⁴. Facebook is not anymore the sole association with social media. Young Internet users got bored with Facebook itself, therefore the popularity of other social sites is growing. People aged 18-24 asked what is their favourite social site indicate Tumblr or Twitter usually. Usage of Twitter, Youtube and Pinterest during marketing communication is rising, especially non-standardized one. Google+ is said to be the second most popular social site in the globe. Pinterest was the quickest rising social site in 2012, with 4000% rise in the number of users from May 2011 to May 2012¹⁵. Instagram also tend to rise rapidly and at the beginning of 2013 was bought by Facebook for 1 billion dollars.

However, even though the popularity of social media channels is growing, the decreasing marketing communication power of social media can be observed. The phenomenon of ad blindness in the Internet is already known, however the social media is just starting to be ineffective. Currently 50% of all social media campaigns are not noticed by the consumers during the time spent on social media profiles, while at the same moment more and more marketers declared that they are going to increase the use of this medium in marketing communication. 93% of global and 81% of polish marketers engaged social media, where the main platform is Facebook¹⁶.

One of the most promising within e-communication tools was and still is mobile marketing. Mobile marketing is considered as a set of practices that enable organizations to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant way through and mobile device or network¹⁷. At the beginning

¹² Website of Search Engine <http://searchenginewatch.com/article/>.

¹³ Website of Management Study Guide: <http://www.managementstudyguide.com/>.

¹⁴ Ofcom: The Communication Market Report: International., 13.12.2012, available on: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/cmr/cmr12/icmr/ICMR-2012.pdf> (accessed 14.04.2013).

¹⁵ A. Mohamud, B. Block, C. McCarthy: *2013 Europe Digital Future in Focus*. comScore, 21.03.2013, p. 18.

¹⁶ N. Hatalaska: *TrendBook 2012*, <http://hatalaska.com>, marzec 2012, p. 8.

¹⁷ Website of Mobile Marketing Association: <http://www.mmaglobal.com/>.

it was based mainly of push type: sms and mms messages sent to the consumers. Nowadays the concept developed more strongly into pull type messages which are based on the Internet, as a result mobile marketing evolved in different direction and got brand new dimension. There are four main factors that make this tool highly effective. First of all, mobile marketing is based on permission, consumer need to give their permission before being marketed. What is more, mobile marketing is live, responses are in real-time thanks to the nature of mobile devices and their users. It is also well targeted. Finally, mobile marketing communication through mobile devices is two-way, consumers do not only respond but also request information that they need at a particular moment¹⁸. There are nine types of mobile marketing, which are SMS, MMS, Mobile Applications, QR codes, Pay Per Call Mobile, Voice Marketing, Mobile Banner Ads, Location Based Marketing and Bluetooth Wireless Proximity Based Marketing. SMS and MMS consist on sending the messages to consumers, using the text or multiple media respectively. In case of mobile application, the advertisements may be inside the application design and logic. QR Codes allow consumers to scan the bar code and be redirected immediately to a particular site. Pay Per Call generates a billable only when the reader of the advertisement makes a phone call. A mobile advertisement may contain a phone number that the consumers can select and call instantly from their cell phones. Voice Marketing consist on playing the pre-recorded messages to the customers. Mobile Banner Ads works like the standard banner ads on the web pages, however their format is adjusted to mobile devices. Location-Based Marketing delivers information directly to the users of mobile devices in relation to their location identified via GPS technology. Bluetooth Wireless Proximity Based Marketing on another hand disseminates the custom ads for the area where consumers' wireless devices are picking up¹⁹. Very similar to the above-mentioned category of mobile marketing tools is Near Field Communication (NFC). This term refers to a set of short-range wireless technologies, typically requiring a distance of 4cm or less to initiate a connection²⁰ and engages such devices like smartphones and tablets. It is predicted to revolutionize the marketing communication in nearest future, however Bluetooth and Wi-Fi technologies are still much more developed and the total switch to NFC, if possible, is not definite yet²¹. The share of mobile marketing in the budget spend on marketing communication is increas-

¹⁸ O. Khan: The Mobile Marketing Phenomenon: Towards Personalisation, 2009, available on: <http://pakmediablog.net/518/the-mobile-marketing-phenomenon-towards-personalisation/>

¹⁹ D. Rayfield: Get Your Business Moving: 9 types of Mobile Marketing, available on: <http://harp-social.com/2010/03/get-your-business-moving-9-types-of-mobile-marketing/>

²⁰ Website of Developers: <http://developer.android.com/>.

²¹ Website of NetworkWorld: <http://www.networkworld.com/>.

ing year by year and global retail mobile marketing spend is supposed to reach \$55 billion annually by 2015²².

Nevertheless, even though mobile marketing was said to be promising and potentially the biggest e-communication trend, it was overcome by other trends. One of the microtrends which is gaining on importance is the Internet of Things or in other words third wave of the Internet²³. It may lead to the end of mobile marketing era. Internet of Things may be defined as the web of physical objects, which can communicate with each other and with human through built-in sensors and access to the Internet. Objects are beginning to be intelligent due to the Internet connection and access to unlimited data, which particular thing (in other words machine or device) can analyse in real time. It is estimated that until 2020, 50 billion of devices will be connected to the Internet and the market will be worth 14 trillion dollars²⁴. At the moment, the era of peaceful technology begun. Peaceful technology is one which is perfectly composed with the environment and does not need attention to be used.

2. Modern trends in e-consumer behaviours

Modern technologies in marketing communication influence the consumer behaviour and the most significant of them will be described below. First of all the Internet has changed the moment when consumer decide to buy a particular product. The First Moment of Truth, three to seven seconds of first contact with the product on store shelf was believed to be crucial, however nowadays this moment is not anymore inside the store but even many hours before, when consumer goes online²⁵. People who are connected to the Internet provide an advanced research before making decision over a purchase. Consumers compare different products, look for information about them, compare prices and what seems to be another trend, do not count on friends and family opinions solely, but mostly analyze the comments on web pages or publish a general question on their social media profiles²⁶.

²² Website of Mobile-Ent: <http://www.mobile-ent.biz/>.

²³ N. Hatalska: *Trendbook 2013*, Natalia Hatalska <http://hatalska.com>, April 2013, p. 21.

²⁴ Cisco: *The Internet of Things*, Cisco IBSG, March 2013.

²⁵ Website of AdWords: <http://adwords.blogspot.com/>.

²⁶ Vetter, S.: 3 Trends in Consumer Behaviour, 2013, available on: http://www.prosar.com/inbound_marketing_blog/bid/173578/3-Trends-in-Consumer-Behaviour.

One of the consumer behaviours which arouse in response to social media spread is fear of missing out (FOMO). It is a fear of being excluded from social life, as a result consumers inform about every step taken in their life on social media. Such consumer behaviour can be identified while specific information are placed on social media sites like work change, partner change, change in marital status, what shops do they attend. This type of consumers is afraid that what the others do is more interesting, as a result they observe other people's activity and copy it²⁷.

Big data availability trend can be defined as a phenomenon of not only enormous amount of data generated by consumers, but also unstructured data availability for marketers and consumer awareness of progressive lack of privacy. The forecasts appeared that in 2015 consumers will produce 1 Zetabyte of information, which is 1 trillion of bytes. Nevertheless, the data is not structured, what means that marketers do not solely analyze standard demographic, economic, social data. Analysis based on the information available on social media sites, for example based on "likes", can give information about sexual orientation, political views or being only child of divorced parents. As a result consumers lose their privacy. There are some attempts to protect oneself from invigilation – cloaking, however it was researched that consumers do not mind being analysed by commercial companies if they have measurable benefit from that fact.

The last trend which derives from online marketing is the increasing level of consumers involvement into communication with marketer. Thanks to new technologies consumer gets closer to the product and may even influence its design. As a result the concept of presumer and custowner has been recently developed. Presumers are those consumers who in order to get a perfect product or service get involved in its creation, funding and promotion before this product or service is realized. Next to presumers are custowners, who do not passively consume the goods but move towards funding and investing in the brands they are interested in and buy from them²⁸.

Also mobile marketing has a huge impact on consumer behaviour. There are plenty of applications which are using live-streaming techniques and their popularity may be considered as a rising trend in consumer behaviour. Since consumers want to stay connected and share most of their observation, mobile devices with their technological advancement got on importance. For example application Nokia viNe enables to create an interactive map which consist of the photos, videos, music files which were recorded in specific places indicated on the map.

Also Location based marketing and Bluetooth wireless proximity based marketing influence strongly the direction of changes in consumer behaviour. Thanks

²⁷ N. Hatalaska: *Trendbook 2012*. Op. cit.

²⁸ Website of trend watching.com: <http://trendwatching.com/trends/10trends2013/>.

to mobile devices the message may be provided to a wide audience, which is in a proper location at a particular moment. While receiving a message with information about recent discounts, consumer will be more likely to visit a store, since he or she is already near this place.

Consumers are more and more likely to use the mobile payments. Mobile devices which are compatible with Near Field Communication technology (NFC) enable the exchange of data between devices with a touch. Mobile phone becomes a wallet and many consumers follow this trend. By 2015 the value of all mobile money transactions is expected to reach \$670 billion²⁹.

The last trend connected with mobile marketing is a rising usage of mobile applications. Digital technologies become the new medicine. Doctors turn to health applications and services to improve health outcomes. There are for example antibiotics reminder applications, which remind about taking proper pills at specific time. The rising role of applications may lead to the conclusion that consumer are going to use them extensively and in every sphere of their lives³⁰.

If following the development of Internet of Things, consumer will tend to product personalization. The products will receive the identity and consumers will be in on-going relationship with the brand³¹. There are two major consumer behaviour trends connected with Internet of Things: nomophobia and access over ownership need. Nomophobia is a situation in which consumers are in a fear of not being in a range or discharge their mobile. Consumers take their mobile devices with them from home more often than keys, wallet, purse or money. Consumers take their mobile devices to almost every place they are. Moreover, the access over ownership need was observed. It means that consumer have higher need and value more access to the Internet than to actually possess something³².

Conclusion

E-communication is rapidly developing marketing communication tool throughout last years, which became defined, observed and analysed independ-

²⁹ Website of Host Merchant Services: <https://www.hostmerchantservices.com/articles/mobile-payments/>.

³⁰ Website of trend watching.com: <http://trendwatching.com/trends/10trends2013/>.

³¹ Raport J.: Advertising and the Internet of Things, 2013: http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2013/03/advertising_and_the_internet_o.html.

³² Ericsson. Consumer Lab: Mobilizing Everyday Activity, An Ericsson Consumer Insight Summary Report, December 2011, p. 4.

ently from other marketing communication tools. There are several factors which influence its development. First of all, technological triggers among which there can be emphasized rapid development of the software solutions which ease data analysis, miniaturization of hardware devices or possibility to gather and analyse data in clouds. Then, psychological triggers shall be underlined, with attention put on changing consumer behaviours. Modern consumer demands permanent access to the Internet and information in every place and time. He expects to be a part of a community, needs to be involved in communication with brands producer and be able to influence the products and services that he is going to buy. Pace of life is faster as a result modern consumer demands solutions which are intelligent and effective. Such trends influence the way that advertising agencies used to work and change current market. Copywriters and creatives are not the sole members of teams responsible for marketing communication campaigns, presently IT specialists are needed. It is predicted that marketing directors will spend more money on IT solutions than IT directors by 2017. More and more interactive agencies are set up and they become successful throughout globe. Internet is ubiquitous and the phenomenon of deeply connected world can be observed. As a result, term of e-consumer has appeared. It is inevitable that modern consumption will be dominated by technological opportunities, what lead to consumer behaviours' change. Contemporary world of consumption is the hybrid, there is no more the division between offline and online – there is one, marketing communication and consumer has to adapt. Therefore we face the development of e-consumption and e-consumer era, for this reason it is difficult to forecast what the future of marketing communication holds.

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Keywords: consumer behaviour, e-communication, modern trends