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INTERNET IN THE PROMOTION AND SALE OF FOOD INDUSTRY PRODUCTS

Key words: promotion, communication, marketing, new media, food industry, consumer

ABSTRACT. The purpose of the article was to present the possibilities of using new media as an opportunity to promote food products. The study analyzed the literature on the subject and available reports. A strategic approach to promotion in every industry is one of the basic elements of creating a competitive advantage. This statement also applies to the broadly understood food industry. Its diversity requires deep analysis and adaptation to the specificity of individual food markets. The Internet presents a huge field of activity in the promotion of food industry products and contact with customers. The customers of the 21st century are aware recipients, who use modern media to obtain information and make shopping decisions. As the results of research show (E-grocery report), in Poland, already 16% of Internet users declare that they regularly buy food products via the Internet. Taking into consideration the fact that the generation determining demand in the near future will be representatives of the Z generation, i.e. those born after 1996, manufacturers must adapt their form of communication to the lifestyle and needs of such clients. It is estimated that, by 2020, they may constitute up to 40% of consumers. Due to the fact that the main communication channel with the X and Z generation are new media, it is becoming necessary to use this communication channel, while adapting in form to the manner of communication of representatives of this generation.

INTRODUCTION

The most popular social network in the world – Facebook – in the third quarter of 2019 had as many as 2.45 billion active users [Statista 2019]. At the same time, the number of enterprises that follow their users increased in geometric progression - using Facebook for marketing and sales purposes. For example, in 2016, the number of business pages [Smith 2019] was 60 million, in 2017 [Kaplan 2017] already 65 million, and in 2018 [Newberry 2019] as many as 80 million.

The result of all these activities is a growing number of Polish companies and corporations creating accounts on social networking sites and trying to establish relationships with their clients through these tools. Social media has become an opportunity for the food industry in the context of promotion and reaching target groups. The purpose of the article was to indicate the possibility of using social media in the communication process of food sector brands. The first part of the article presents the objectives of the strategy

for the promotion of food products. The next part presents the characteristics of the 21st century consumer and the possibilities of promotion in social media. The study used the subject literature as well as available statistics and reports.

The article presents examples of the use of social media by brands related to the food market. The analysis was exploratory in nature for further quantitative and qualitative research in the area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FOOD PRODUCT PROMOTION STRATEGY

The food sector is one of the most developed branches of the Polish economy. The idea in the food promotion strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is to rely on a coherent, dynamic and targeted policy for the promotion of food products. The policy is adapted to the needs of the agricultural-food sector. A strategic approach to promotion is crucial to achieving its main goal, which is to increase the competitiveness of Polish food and [MRiRW 2017]:

- create a positive image of Polish food in the country as well as on other EU and third country markets;
- increase the brand recognition of Polish food products in the country as well as on other EU and third country markets;
- increase the value of Polish food export by diversification and opening new markets.

In the 21st century the ability to communicate effectively and accurately inform target groups is absolutely necessary in achieving competitiveness on domestic and foreign markets. There are several basic stages in this process [MRiRW 2017]:

- defining the group of recipients,
- precisely defining promotion goals,
- the message structure,
- a selection of transmission channels for the so-called promotional mix,
- setting a promotional budget,
- evaluating promotion results.

The opinion survey “Defining the image that Poland should promote abroad” [MSZ 2013], whose respondents were tourists visiting Poland, shows that Polish food is perceived as “natural” and “healthy” by them. This opinion can be treated as a kind of differentiator. The results of the aforementioned research also indicate that among Polish promotional activities carried out on foreign markets, the most effective were those implemented on the Internet. According to foreign entrepreneurs, Poland should more often appear at conferences, meetings, trade fairs and exhibitions, as well as intensify promotion in the media. This is confirmed by the opinions of respondents, according to which the main source of information about Poland was television and the Internet.

Food is a very special promotional item. This is due to the specificity of the food industry, which affects marketing strategies and forms of promotion used. The main characteristics of this industry include, among others, seasonality and the nature of agricultural production. Important specific features also include legal restrictions on products, low price elasticity of demand and its significant role in the structure of consumer spending.

Food is also common and is subject to high shopping frequency or has a significant impact on health and satisfying basic human needs [BGŻ BNP PARIBAS 2016].

21ST CENTURY CONSUMERS

Nowadays, apart from traditional forms of promotion, it has become effective and necessary to use the Internet network, which perfectly fits the strategy of communication and continuous dialogue with the environment. Given that the generation of young consumers mainly obtain information from online sources, the presence of brands is absolutely necessary there. These are two very specific generations called Y and Z.

Generation Y, called millennials, are people born between 1980 and 2000. It is a group of over 11 million consumers in Poland. According to data from the report “OMG! So how to talk to Polish millennials”, the fact that they buy and spend the most makes them the most important, developing target group. Dedicated marketing strategies are created for them and they dictate changes in the offer of companies [Effective PR 2016].

It is worth noting that technology was an important element of their growing up. They are said to be young, smart and impudent. The Internet is their ‘natural environment’ from which they learn from an early age. They have no problem finding information. This is a generation defined by Facebook and Google, whose main communication channel is social networking [Jaska et al. 2016]. Their behavior is influenced, among others, by factors such as: high mobility, access to education, constant contact with new technology and knowledge of foreign languages. This is a group with very large purchasing opportunities. Millennials in the US spend USD 1.3 trillion each year, of which USD 430 billion is free to be spent. If young Europeans are added to it, it constitutes USD 2.45 trillion. And the biggest global brands are seeking this share today [Forbes 2016].

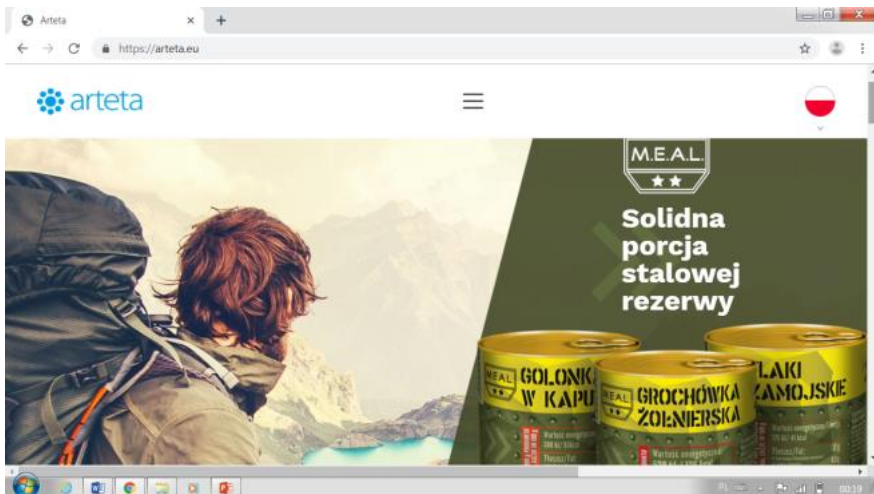


Figure 1. Image of www.arteta.eu website
Source: www.arteta.eu

The next generation determining demand in the near future are representatives of the Z generation, i.e. those born after 1996. They are characterized by high purchasing power. It is estimated that, by 2020, they may constitute up to 40% of consumers [Kierunek Spozywczy.pl 2018]. This generation is almost online non-stop, and their ability to navigate the web is incomparable with representatives of earlier generations. It is important that the so-called Zets do not know life without the Internet, smartphones and Facebook. Importantly, they are, therefore, indifferent to traditional advertising messages. They rely more on the opinions of friends, influencers and social media patterns than on traditional information. Considering the way of making purchasing decisions and obtaining information, the food industry must adapt to such a consumer in a strategic way, both in terms of packaging, an appropriate advertising message and language. A young recipient needs interesting, funny and sometimes intriguing messages. A good example is Arteta, which promotes its product line with slogans such as „Don't let it feed you with a fake”, „A solid portion of steel reserve” etc. (Figure 1).

An interesting example of Danio's cheese producer's advertising campaign characters is the “Little Hunger”, which is the canvas of a story presented in social media. The story is consistent with the advertising campaign conducted in traditional media. The character won the sympathy of recipients and became a symbol of the product.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In the 21st century, social media is one of the most important communication channels between Internet users. They are long range, thus allowing to reach a specific group of consumers. They are mainly used for communication between internet users [Grębosz et al. 2016]. Among others, they are distinguished by:

- availability regardless of place and time of day,
- the ability to use them through computers, smartphones and other mobile devices,
- the ability to provide information and chat with Internet users almost in real time.

Compared to traditional media, such as television or radio, access to broadcast information is slower and not received on such a large scale [Falls, Deckers 2011]. It is worth noting that 16% of Internet users declare that they regularly buy food products via the Internet [E-grocery 2019].

Enterprises use social media to promote and inform about products offered. Messages about new services and products are updated on a regular basis, which affects the interest of potential customers in the company [Grzegory 2011]. These are the following forms of social media [Bonek, Smaga 2013]:

- Services where Internet profiles are personalized and which are mainly used to communicate with others, e.g. www.instagram.com,
- Services used for designing a business account and contacting various companies, e.g. www.goldenline.pl,
- Websites for publishing films in public or private, e.g. www.youtube.pl,
- Services that recommend content found on various websites, e.g. www.patrz.pl,
- Journalistic services regarding current world events www.tvn24.pl,

- Blogs on various topics where opinions, reviews or photos of products are mainly posted, or simply writing an online journal, e.g. www.styloly.com,
- Discussion forums that are used to exchange opinions or views on a given topic/product, e.g. www.wizaz.pl,
- Services that are used to analyze and recommend online stores or products available on the market, e.g. www.opineo.pl
- e-commerce websites where you can buy original or used products, e.g. www.ceneo.pl.
- The most popular social media sites include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and Snapchat. When it comes to the context of cooperation between creators and brands, this is usually done in 3 business models:
 - Barter cooperation, during which the creator receives the product and, in return, has to perform certain benefits.
 - Paid cooperation during which the creator evaluates the benefits to be provided. Brands try to use this model of cooperation most efficiently to promote a given product.
 - Sales cooperation, in this model the influencer gets a certain commission from the sales of products with his discount code.

The publication of various types of content takes place via text with photos, e.g. on Facebook, blogs or Instagram, while on YouTube or Snapchat videos are recorded and posted [Glucksman 2017]. However, on Snapchat, by posting several videos in one day, a „Story” is created, which means that videos are available to followers for 24 hours from the time of uploading them to the Snapchat portal [Snapcenter 2019]. The 21st century is also characterized by significant use of the power of so-called influencers.

INFLUENCE MARKETING

Considering the features of a 21st century consumer, it is worth paying attention to the fastest growing branch of marketing today which is influencer marketing. It consists of creating a marketing strategy based on opinion leaders considered to be authorities in a given target group and having a real impact on consumer purchasing decisions. Brands are increasingly using influencers[□] for broadly defined marketing activities. Thanks to influencer marketing, marketers can creatively reach the recipient they care about most [Brown, Hayes 2007].

Influencer marketing is, above all, the art of skillfully creating advertising messages, and, at the same time, the right choice of an influencer to promote a specific range of products. When a creator is chosen incorrectly for an advertising campaign, a company may not only be exposed to bad consumer comments, but may also worsen sales. When creating strategies in influencer marketing, one should pay attention to how the brand communicates on the Internet and whether its communication is consistent with the influencer’s communication [Hall 2017]. The introduction of influence marketing to the YouTube platform gives great opportunities in the transmission of information about a product. Youtubers have the option of presenting a product, testing, branding or simply using specific products in a way that is easy and understandable for consumers. It is

extremely important to be able to communicate in a very short time and get almost immediate feedback on the recipient's side through comments and ratings.

The advantage of this form of communication is the ability to reach a very specific group of recipients, so the message can be directed to specific individuals.

THE SALE OF FOOD PRODUCTS ON THE INTERNET

Online sales are a chance for the food market. The virtualization of purchases is associated with the huge popularity of the Internet. However, this is not the only argument. The consumer of the 21st century is characterized by a permanent lack of time and often follows convenience. Therefore, e-shopping is becoming the optimal solution for the modern consumer. Until recently, this form of shopping was treated as innovative, but now it is becoming everyday life. It is worth noting that food products are one of the most difficult product categories for e-sellers. It is very difficult to evoke positive emotions and the desire to possess food products solely on the basis of a photo. The specificity of food products means that a potential consumer would like to check a given good organoleptically before buying it. For this reason, among other things, the online sales of these products are more often in stores that have stationary counterparts. Young customers for whom the use of on-line services is an almost natural process are a chance for popularizing this type of shopping. They are happy to follow brands on Facebook and get involved in their activities.

Transferring marketing communication from the offline segment (television, radio, printed media) to the Internet has allowed enterprises not only to significantly increase their reach but also increase communication efficiency. It is becoming necessary to constantly improve the website, customer needs research, marketing and positioning. A lack of a consistently implemented strategy in this area can lead to huge losses. Companies that understand this think forward and focus on strengthening their position. That is one of the reasons why it is worth transferring the provision of e-commerce logistics services to professional contractors. Content generated by other users, i.e. opinions, tests and recommendations, is something that influences the purchase decision of a potential customer. Therefore, it is not enough to just attract attention but also get the customer involved in and participate in activities created by a given brand.

According to the survey of „E-grocery in Poland - online grocery shopping”, 16% of Internet users already declare that they regularly buy food products via the Internet. E-buyers of food products from an online grocery store above all expect high quality products and convenient contact (37%). It is worth adding that one of the factors influencing growing interest in online grocery shopping in Poland is the total trade ban on Sundays from 2020. According to the Nilsen report, the share of FMCG sales in total sales in Poland is below 1%, while in the UK it is 6.3%, in France 6.1%, Switzerland 1.8%, Italy 1.7% and the Netherlands 1.5% [Nilsen 2018].

CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays, the Internet has become an area of broadly understood communication. Its ability to reach representatives of very specific target groups makes it one of the most important instruments for promoting products and brands. The food industry must also follow this path taking the characteristics of the 21st century consumer into account. This consumer is demanding, aware of his/her needs and rights, constantly waiting for something new, interested and committed. Transferring marketing communication from the offline segment (television, radio, printed media) to the Internet has not only allowed enterprises to significantly increase their reach but also increase communication efficiency. New media provides the opportunity to meet all these conditions but all actions should be carried out in a thoughtful and strategic way. It is worth using professional services in this area. Online sales are a chance for the food market. It is particularly important to adapt to the recipients of the Y and Z generation, who rely more on the opinions of friends, influencers and models from social media than on traditional information transfer. Interest in products is affected by the continuity of messages about new products, which are updated on a regular basis. Presence in the Internet also gives the opportunity to conduct market research and adapt to the needs of customers, who are becoming more educated and demanding. It should also be remembered that food products are one of the most difficult product categories for e-sellers for many reasons. The main ones include: seasonality, the specificity of agricultural production, legal restrictions, its impact on human health and life. The analysis was exploratory in nature for further quantitative and qualitative research in the area.

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INTERNET W PROMOCJI I SPRZEDAŻY PRODUKTÓW BRANŻY SPOŻYWCZEJ

Słowa kluczowe: promocja, komunikacja, marketing, nowe media, branża spożywcza, klient

ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie możliwości wykorzystania internetu w promocji i sprzedaży produktów branży spożywczej. W badaniach dokonano analizy literatury przedmiotu oraz dostępnych raportów. Strategiczne podejście do promocji w każdej branży jest jednym z podstawowych elementów tworzenia przewagi konkurencyjnej. Twierdzenie to dotyczy również szeroko pojętej branży spożywczej. Nie należy ona do łatwych. Jej różnorodność sprawia, że wymaga głębokiej analizy i dostosowania do specyfiki poszczególnych rynków żywności. Internet stanowi olbrzymie pole do działania w zakresie promocji produktów branży spożywczej oraz kontaktu z klientami. Klienci XXI wieku to odbiorcy świadomi, korzystający z nowoczesnych mediów w zakresie pozyskiwania informacji i podejmowania decyzji zakupowych. Jak pokazują wyniki badań (E-grocery raport), w Polsce już 16% internautów deklaruje, że regularnie kupuje produkty spożywcze za pośrednictwem internetu. Ze względu na to, że pokoleniem determinującym popyt w najbliższej przyszłości będą przedstawiciele generacji Z, czyli urodzeni po 1996 roku, producenci muszą dostosować formę komunikacji z takimi klientami do ich stylu życia i potrzeb. Szacuje się, że do końca 2020 roku mogą oni stanowić nawet 40% konsumentów. W związku z tym, że głównym kanałem komunikacji z pokoleniami X i Z są nowe media, niezbędne staje się wykorzystanie tego kanału komunikacji, a jednocześnie dostosowanie się formą do sposobu porozumiewania się przedstawicieli tego pokolenia.

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