Internet communications as a mainstream marketing activity in the digital environment

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Abstract — **The paper considers the specifics of marketing activities in the Internet space, identifies expert assessments of the development trends of digital communication tools and the main trends in communication activities for 2019-2020 and formulates promising research tasks in the field of Internet marketing.**

Keywords — internet communications, marketing communications, Internet marketing, digital environment, e-commerce, interactive marketing.

I. INTRODUCTION

The realities of the modern economy and the theoretical constructs of socio-humanitarian knowledge capture the emergence of new communication roles for marketing more and more actualizing the importance of communication interaction in order to build and manage relationships with consumers.

Since the 1990s Researchers unanimously note not only a steady decline in the effectiveness of traditional communication tools and carriers, but also a degree of trust in them, with the increasing importance of Internet communications. Among the reasons for this situation, domestic and foreign experts cite: information development of society and an increase in the Internet audience, a change in consumer psychology and consumer characteristics of millennials, a desire for omnichannel, personalization of interaction and blurring of the boundaries between online and offline space, an increase in consumer communication activity and intensity of consumer experience exchange, high cost and complexity of return assessment on investments of traditional funds.

We are convinced that the importance of Internet communications will only increase. So, according to the analytical data of various research agencies and companies, in 1995 the number of Internet users was 16 million people - 0.39% of the world's population, in 2019 - 4.39 billion people - 57.16% of the population [1; 2]. As of January 2019, over 1.94 billion websites are registered on the Internet. In 2019, daily users post about 4 million messages, and this figure is growing

steadily. 7 million people regularly post in the blogosphere, and more than 12 million actively post on social networks [3].

We emphasize that the Internet is turning from virtual reality into the real world with advanced capabilities, and communication activity in the Internet space is a very promising and rapidly developing area of marketing activity. However, the issues of its essence, tools and technologies for use, despite the fact that they have been studied by researchers for more than 20 years, remain open and debatable.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The issues of the role and degree of influence of marketing communications tools on market actors, the structure of individual and social activities were considered in the works of Russian and foreign marketers: G.L. Bagiyev, F. Barden, R. Best, F. Kotler, J.-J. Lamben, O.A. Tretyak and others.

The theoretical and practical foundations of Internet marketing are reflected in the fundamental and applied research of foreign and domestic experts: L. Weber, L.F. Ezhova, L.M. Kapustina, G.I. Kurcheeva, D.A. Leonov, J. Lesinski, I. Mann, M. Lindstrom, M. Meyerson, U. Palekh, Yu.V. Ponomarev, S.A. Ryabov, M. Scarborough, V.A. Khvoristov and others.

Empirical developments and research projects of practicing marketers and SMM specialists are mainly devoted to the problems of development, adaptation, technologies for using communication tools of the Internet environment, assessing its effectiveness and the level of consumer perception. N. Androsov, M. Ilyakhov, N. Karpuk, E. Kryukov, J. Sabaityte, E.-K. Soule, V. Davidaviciene, J. Strakova and others.

The information and empirical base of the work was composed of materials from specialized Russian and foreign websites, blogs, forums, as well as data from the research company Mediascope.net and the Internet service Yandex.Market.

III. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Most domestic and foreign researchers unanimously note that the development of modern economics and technologies determine the increasing role and importance of communicative interaction between all market entities. And more and more importance in the process of communication is given to the online environment.

The Internet as a global information system has made significant adjustments to the previously existing economic order. We believe that the most important among them are: finding the producer and consumer in a single information space and their equal rights, the personified nature of interaction and the possibility of prompt feedback, increasing activity of consumption and the exchange of consumer experience. That is why we can talk about virtualization of communications as a modern paradigm that determines the success of the interaction between the manufacturer and the consumer and determines the mainstream development of marketing activities in the Internet.

It is safe to say that until recently, the main function of the Internet - the receipt and storage of information, is no longer leading. The Internet assumes the role of an aggregator of communication, becomes a means (tool) to meet the needs for belonging, respect and approval, information and communication, trust and ownership. We believe that the ability to meet these needs gave an impetus to the development of communications in the Internet environment and caused, among other things, its rapid development. Thus, the lack and saving of time by a modern person is compensated by the speed of contact and the ability to always be in touch, the ability to communicate based on interests and without taking into account time and geographic boundaries gives an advantage in finding a reference group, the ability to receive likes and reposts confirms one's own significance and social endorsement. Companies, in turn, also received a pool of new opportunities - this is the potential of electronic commerce, and the search, collection, analysis of a variety of information about consumers and competitors, and the possibility of continuous customer support, and reputation management, etc.

Thus, the development of information technologies, among which the development of the Internet is the key, the emergence and rapid growth of electronic commerce have become the basis for the emergence of a new direction in modern marketing activity - marketing in the Internet environment, which, in our opinion, is an alloy of traditional methods, techniques and capabilities marketing and information technology.

Note that a number of authors (L.F. Yezhova, G.I. Kurcheeva, Yu. Palekha, V.A. Khvorostov et al.) talk about the emergence of a new concept of marketing - information marketing, emphasizing the leading role of communications in modern market relations. However, despite the undoubtedly significant role of communications, it seems unnecessary to talk about the formation of a new marketing concept since modern communications, in our opinion, meet the requirements of traditional marketing concepts.

We emphasize that at the moment there is no single definition of the essence of marketing in the Internet environment shared by the scientific community. Such a situation is conditioned, in our opinion, both by a relatively short period of its existence during permanent development and modification, and by an insignificant amount of fundamental theoretical developments. As a rule, when characterizing marketing activities in the Internet space, researchers use the term Internet marketing. It is defined both as a separate "supramundane market with its own specifics", and as the promotion of goods and services on the Internet, and as a set of techniques on the Internet aimed at attracting attention to a product or service, popularizing this product (site) on the network and its effective promotion for the purpose of sale [4; 5]. F. Kotler writes about interactive marketing, treating it as a form of direct marketing. Some researchers argue that marketing on the Internet can be represented (J.-J. Lamben), not only as an integral part of traditional marketing, but also as a completely independent complex. Others, - rightly, in our opinion, believe that this is the practice of using all the techniques and elements of traditional marketing in the online space with the goal of building and managing customer relationships, and not just selling goods and (or) services. After all, as D.A. Leonov, Yu.V. Ponomarev, S.A. Ryabov consider, in marketing in the Internet environment the same elements of the marketing mix are used - 5P (product, price, promotion, people, channel) [6], but each element has its own characteristics.

Reflecting on the relationship between traditional and Internet marketing, L. M. Kapustina and I.D. Mosunov also consider the possibilities of the latter from the perspective of a marketing mix. So, the authors note that the product in Internet marketing is the same goods and services as in off-line marketing, but at the same time there are ample opportunities for customization, and besides, virtual products and services also appear. As for the second "P," here among the changes the appearance of mass auctions and the simplification of the process of tracking and comparing prices are named. Speaking about distribution and promotion, the authors write about new channels for the distribution of goods and services and about new communication channels [7, 12].

We emphasize that the unique characteristics of the Internet as a marketing tool are significantly different from the characteristics of its traditional tools. One of the most important properties of the Internet environment is its hypermedia nature, which is more effective in the process of presenting and assimilating information, and significantly increases marketing opportunities creating a closer relationship between enterprises and consumers. Agreeing with D.A. Lisin and Yu.V. Ponomarev, we note that the role played by the Internet is not limited only to communicative functions [8], but includes wide possibilities, such as making deals, making purchases and making payments, giving it the features of a global electronic market.

According to Yandex.Market, Russia is in the world top 10 in terms of volume and growth rate of electronic commerce. At the same time, the researchers note that the growth is not due to the frequency of purchases, but due to an increase in the number of online buyers. So, according to statistics provided

by Mediascope in April 2018, 58% of Russians over 18 make online purchases [9]. According to Data Insight, online sales in 2018 are 1,150 billion rubles. And according to experts, the e-commerce market in Russia will only grow, as in the whole world [10]. According to experts, in 2019 applied trade for catering, pharmaceuticals and sales of services should show the greatest growth. Among the trends of electronic commerce, analysts stand out: virtual assistant, augmented and virtual reality, advanced search in online stores, mobile application promotion, machine learning, neural networks and personalization, interest-based advertising, voice search and SEO, image search, online search, and off-line purchase online, fast delivery and improved logistics, placing goods on marketplaces [11].

Thus, the development of information technologies, among which the development of the Internet and the rapid growth of e-commerce are the key, has led not only to the emergence and development of new means of communication, the modification of the purpose of marketing communications but also to a change in the role of marketers working in this environment.

IV. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Summarize the main features of marketing in the Internet environment, highlighted by experts in the field of marketing activities in the online space: Internet marketing has a high degree of personalization, interactivity, a large amount of information that is inaccessible or difficult to verify in an offline environment, and a steadily increasing consumer activity. As we can see, the specifics of marketing activities in the Internet environment are due to the emerging opportunities for interaction between the company and all its contact audiences, including potential ones.

We emphasize that even when typing and determining the essential characteristics of Internet marketing strategies, the vast majority of practicing specialists consider them exclusively as promotion strategies. We believe that such a roll in the direction of advancement is due both to the technological capabilities of the network, opening up new forms and models of interaction, and to a change in the psychology of perception of Internet space by consumers and producers.

Among the trends in the development of Internet communications, theorists and practitioners note: lead generation, SEO, web design, SMM. Let us characterize the main trends highlighted by practitioners for 2019-2020. in each of the declared trends:

1. The main trends in the lead generation process:

- omnichannel - experts are unanimous that this is the main trend of 2019-2020. We emphasize that the main conditions for omnichannel are representation on any device and the identity of the customer experience, regardless of the channel;

- web analytics - we share the conviction of experts who claim that the ability to interpret the behavior of visitors, predict and guide, based on specific statistics from the site, will become one of the key for the online

marketer and web analytics in 2019. Also, we note that of the three types of web analytics - descriptive, predictive and incentive - it is incentive analytics that will gain more and more popularity.

2. Among the main trends related to SEO in 2019, analysts note: voice search and virtual assistants, link building, user experience, quick answers, the growth of visual search, artificial intelligence and machine learning.

3. Among the main trends in web design in 2019, experts stand out: personalization of sites, e-commerce sites, website optimization for mobile phones, "brutality" of design and the importance of typography, as well as video content.

4. SMM. According to empirical data presented in various sources, the Russian audience of social networks ranges from 49% to 63% of the total population.

Among the most promising SMM trends, experts distinguish: the return of long-reads, the increasing role of Micro-Influencers, community mailing on VKontakte, the widespread distribution of chatbots, the demand for interactive content, streaming, blogging or personal pages by business owners.

We characterize the communication tools that are most often (intensively) used by domestic specialists in the Internet space.

Display advertising - showing banners, teasers and videos placed on websites as advertisements. Contextual advertising - works on the principle of keywords that search engines are guided by the user's request.

We emphasize that the media and contextual types of advertising from the point of view of communication orientation do not differ from the traditional one - the movement of information from the producer to the consumer, communication is "passive".

Video advertising and mobile advertising are so far used by companies only as a test channel, but are gradually gaining momentum. In particular, the growth rate of mobile advertising, according to various estimates, exceeds 40% per year.

Targeted ads are text, display, or multi-display ads that are shown only to network users who satisfy a specific set of requirements specified by the advertiser. When classifying targeted advertising, experts use a fairly large number of variables that allow it to be typed depending on the goals and objectives facing the marketer.

We believe that targeting is inherently related to the classic marketing tool - segmentation, which allows to interact and serve fairly homogeneous segments in accordance with the specific needs of representatives of these segments. Classic of Marketing F. Kotler, claiming that there is no universal approach to segmentation, identifies four principles - geographical, demographic, psychographic and behavioral [12, 355-357]. And types of targeting are correlated with its (segmentation) principles.

Note that in addition to targeting, most social networks have the option of retargeting. Retargeting is an advertising mechanism through which online advertising is sent to those

users who have already viewed the advertised product by visiting the advertiser's website.

Search engine optimization - site optimization in order to obtain high ranks in the search engine for queries that meet the site's topics.

Content marketing is widely interpreted by practitioners and applied in various contexts: from maintaining and promoting a company's blog to creating infographics and a list of services in the form of publications. We share the position of researchers that content marketing is to attract users through the publication of useful content, not always advertising, but always in demand. Smartinsights has combined the types of activities in network communities into a single content marketing matrix based on the functionality of its elements [13].
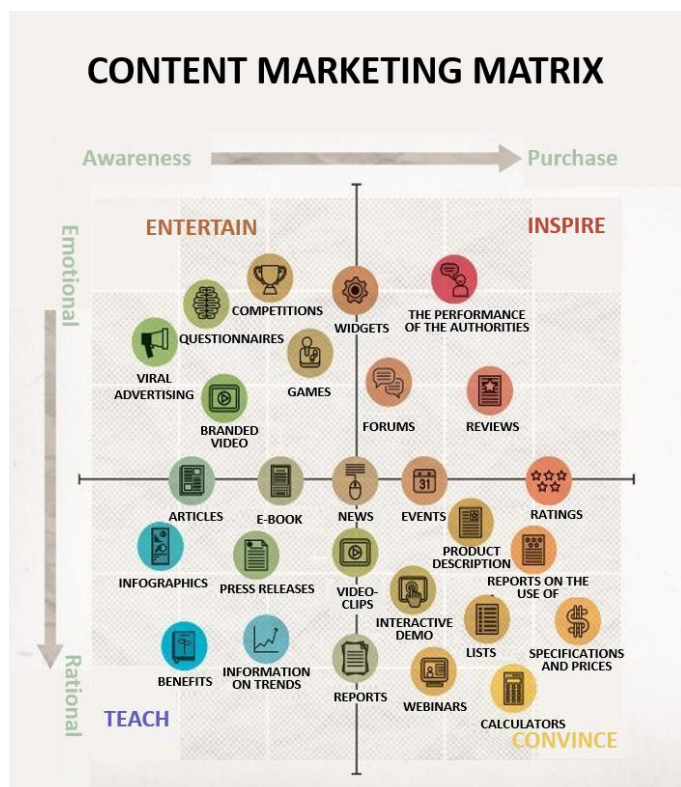

Fig. 1. Content Marketing Matrix

We believe that the presented matrix is conditional, since the adaptation of its elements to the needs of consumers and the company can change the installation shown in the diagram.

SMM (social media marketing) - promotion on social networks through the publication of useful information and communication with potential consumers.

It should be noted that some experts consider targeted advertising as part of SMM, however, in our opinion, this approach is not entirely correct. We believe that SMM is the process of communication between a company (brand) and a user through social networks through direct communication and creating content that people will distribute on their own, without the participation of a communicator. We share the position of researchers who argue that messages sent over social networks currently cause a greater degree of trust among potential consumers. We emphasize that the purpose of marketing communications in network communities is not static and varies depending on corporate goal-setting.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the material, we note that the emergence and introduction of new technologies, the growth of both the volumes of electronic commerce and the audience on the Internet, directly lead to an increase in demand for promotion in the virtual environment, as well as to constant, fairly rapid changes in communication interactions between market participants . However, as it seems to us, to reduce marketing activity in the Internet space only to advancement means to deceive both the essence of marketing communications and the essence of marketing itself.

Among the distinctive features of the modern domestic Internet communications market, experts emphasize its comparative novelty with respect to Western countries, the national specifics of optimizing and tuning each of the tools, as well as the ongoing evolution of approaches to understanding their essence and significance. Researchers are unanimous that Internet communications provide enterprises with a variety of tools for interacting not only with consumers, but with all public groups relevant to the company, including its staff.

At the same time, as promising research tasks, we highlight:

- the study of changes in the psychology of perception of the Internet space by producers and consumers, including factors and motives of behavior;

- determination of the essence and significance of marketing communications in network communities and the role of marketers;

- study of the consumer's level of tools' perception of the Internet environment, including a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of communication tools of Internet marketing, including the relevant characteristics of consumer profiles [14] and the decision-making process.

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