

PERMISSION MARKETING STRATEGY SHAPING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR THROUGH ONLINE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

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Abstract. In today's cluttered world, consumers often try to avoid receiving advertising messages through various communication channels. Interruptive advertising is losing its effectiveness. As a result, marketers must change their strategies to retain existing customers and attract new audiences. *The purpose* of this paper is to review various aspects of permission marketing and to outline some of the ways in which it can be used in practice. *The object* of the study is the concept of permission marketing and its influence on consumer behaviour. Similar to other marketing concepts, it is constantly changing and evolving. Observation is used as the primary *methodology* of the study. In addition, the literature review contributes to the analysis of various aspects of the issue. It is one of the concepts that can drastically change the way of communication and create innovative approaches to influence consumer behaviour. Today, online communication channels are the most favourable tools for implementing permission marketing policies. However, due to the fluctuating and unpredictable online environment, they can turn from opportunities into reasons for serious complications. Therefore, the concept introduced by Seth Godin in 1999 requires further theoretical research amidst the development of online communication technologies. Properly planned and executed, permission marketing campaigns can be effective in influencing consumer behaviour. However, it is a strategy designed for longer periods of time. *Results.* The paper provides a theoretical review of the main aspects of the permission marketing concept: the role of online communication channels, the peculiarities of consumer behaviour and the implementation of permission marketing strategies. In addition, the paper provides a multilateral analysis of the current characteristics of the concept. Finally, the paper proposes some recommendations on how to influence consumer behaviour through different online communication channels within the framework of permission marketing policies.

Key words: permission marketing, consumer behaviour, online communication channels.

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

In an environment where everyday life is overloaded with an excessive flow of information, consumers' attention and time can be considered one of the most valuable assets a company can possess. Companies compete for consumers' attention not only with their direct competitors and the mass media, but also with ordinary consumers. They often use social media channels or virtual communities to share information and build relationships. Social media influencers use the same channels and provide unique value to both users and advertisers (Lou and Yuan, 2019, p. 59). Therefore, the high intensity of the information stream is rather an unfavourable condition for conducting efficient advertising campaigns. Thus, there is a need to transform marketing policies. In order to meet this challenge, permission-based marketing principles can

be considered as the main leverage to gain customers' attention, time and trust.

According to Seth Godin, the author of the concept, permission marketing is "the privilege (not the right) of delivering anticipated, personal and relevant messages to people who actually want to receive them." (Godin, 2008) The main philosophy of permission-based marketing communication is that customers express their willingness and desire to engage with companies without interruptive advertising or any other form of indirect compulsion. This approach is an innovative form of direct marketing based on Godin's concept. Permission marketing can also be seen as the opposite concept of "interruption marketing", which aims to interrupt the customer's attention with high intensity advertising communication. This approach has proven to be effective in achieving various marketing objectives. However,

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in the long term, permission-based marketing communication has the potential to shape consumer behaviour more efficiently, to the benefit of both companies and consumers.

Permission marketing can be divided into two categories: explicit and implicit. In the case of expressed permission marketing, a consumer provides their contact details to a company in order to receive marketing messages; implied permission marketing occurs when a company has an existing relationship with the consumer. This could include someone who is a current customer or a frequent website visitor (Carmicheal, 2019). The main advantage of permission marketing principles over interruptive marketing is that consumers perceive a company in a positive light. In contrast, interruptive communication can lead to negative perceptions, resulting in brand damage and other negative consequences. In addition, consumers are trying to avoid processing large amounts of information. They spend less time searching for alternative solutions (Godin, 1999, p. 27). Hence the need for new marketing approaches. From this point of view, the effectiveness of permission marketing is undeniable.

Implementing the concept of permission marketing has the potential to provide a company with a number of benefits: a loyal customer base, a growing number of new customers, positive word-of-mouth online and offline, high ROI (return on investment) and growing CLV (customer lifetime value). As a result, a company can become increasingly competitive. The main prerequisite for these results is the consumer's consent to receive a marketing message. Consequently, companies with a significant number of consenting customers have a competitive advantage over their business rivals (Krafft et al., 2017, p. 39). In turn, a growing number of loyal customers provides a strong foundation for increasing brand equity.

Online channels are the most widely used communication tools between businesses and consumers. Digital marketing is therefore the most appropriate strategy for implementing and managing permission marketing policies. However, online marketing communication has its risks and challenges as well as its opportunities. Therefore, planning and executing a permission marketing campaign using online communication channels requires prior research and thorough planning. There are a number of aspects that need to be considered: type of online channel, type of target audience, segmentation strategy, online reputation management (ORM) strategy and tools, customer relationship management (CRM) strategy and tools, analytics, communication style, branding and positioning strategies, content strategy, product and service

development strategy. All of the above are part of a company's overall marketing strategy.

Consumers may vary in the intensity of their consent to permission marketing communications through online channels. This peculiarity of consumer behaviour is one of the most important factors in permission marketing policy. Therefore, a high level of consumer consent is the primary objective when conducting permission marketing campaigns. High permission intensity is characterised by three factors: high information quantity, high information quality and flexibility of information use (Krishnamurthy, 2006). Customers are willing to share their information in exchange for valuable benefits. Therefore, the effectiveness of a permission marketing strategy depends on the brand promise and, more importantly, on the degree to which it matches the consumer's expectations and perceptions. In this case, a consumer will be ready to provide more information of higher quality, which is one of the main prerequisites for the success of permission marketing campaigns. The issue of personal data in permission marketing is essential not only for retaining loyal customers, but also for attracting new audiences.

2. Literature review

In 1999, Seth Godin introduced the concept of permission marketing. He proposed a new vision that was completely different from existing approaches to marketing communications. His book "Permission Marketing, Turning Strangers into Friends, and Friends into Customers" discusses various aspects of getting customers' attention and managing the communication process. The abundance of information in a customer's daily life makes it extremely difficult to run advertising campaigns due to the high level of competition. As Godin notes: "Interruption marketing fails because it cannot get enough attention from customers. Moving to permission marketing can fundamentally change a company's entire business model and profit structure." (Godin, 1999, p. 40) According to this concept, permission marketing has the potential not only to change the motivations of consumer behaviour, but also to drastically improve a company's management methods and business results.

Consumer motivations, perceptions and decisions in permission marketing are very different from those in interruptive communication. Therefore, the concept introduced by Seth Godin is an important research topic for marketing scholars. In addition to the benefits of the concept, it has been criticised for the methods used to obtain consumer permission. "It is not without controversy. By using the right combination of question framing and default answers, companies can gain the consent of almost

any website visitor. This raises privacy concerns for consumers and can affect their trust in permission marketing activities, which can affect the success of the medium." (Tezinde et al., 2022, p. 31) This is why the issue of consumer consent is so important. The essence of permission marketing is based on the free will of the consumer. Thus, a company's intentions and methods of obtaining consent must be clear and straightforward. The issue can also be discussed from an ethical perspective. "It is important that companies respect the needs of customers and their right to privacy. Companies need to know their customers to ensure deliveries, payments and to avoid fraud." (Waring and Martinez, 2002, p. 60) As the authors note, ethics is a critical issue in managing the permission marketing communication process for both companies and consumers. The absence of ethical approaches can seriously damage the relationship between a company and its customers.

Advertising is one of the central issues in permission marketing theory. "Advertising is not the reason we pay attention. But marketers have to get us to pay attention for advertising to work. If they don't interrupt our train of thought by planting some sort of seed in our conscious or subconscious mind, the ads fail." (Godin, 1999, p. 25) Consumer motivations, perceptions and eventual behaviour are not determined by the advertising itself, but by the information to which a consumer is exposed. For this reason, interruptive advertising loses much of its effectiveness when each consumer is exposed to a large number of messages on a daily basis.

Psychological factors are one of the central issues in advertising communication. Marketers must take into account consumers' perceptual peculiarities. In this context, the issue of "perceptual selectivity" is of great importance. This means that people pay attention to only a small proportion of the stimuli to which they are exposed. Consumers engage in a form of psychic economy, picking and choosing among stimuli to avoid being overwhelmed by advertising clutter (Solomon et al., 2006, p. 47). Furthermore, according to the psychology of attention, people voluntarily pay attention to information in contexts that are perceived to be relevant to their goals (Argyriou and Melewar, 2011, p. 437). Accordingly, the need for permission-based communication is largely determined by the problem of consumer attention.

Another important aspect of permission marketing theory is consumer expectations of companies. The concept of permission marketing is the idea that people give their permission for the marketer to inform them about its products (Kavassalis et al., 2003, p. 56). Therefore, consumer expectations of companies can vary. Modern consumers do not always perceive products as simple objects of

consumption. Instead, some types of products may serve additional, personal purposes for consumers. For example, self-expression, creating psychological comfort or even satisfying unconscious desires. Permission marketing principles are the most appropriate strategy to meet these expectations.

When Seth Godin first published his book, internet communication was not as widespread as it is today. However, his concept can be fully applied to modern digital marketing communications. Moreover, the latest developments in online marketing communications allow marketers to apply permission marketing principles to every channel they use, including mobile marketing and the Web 2.0 environment.

Often the practical application of permission marketing principles is more advanced than its theoretical study. Therefore, the issue of permission marketing's influence on consumer behaviour requires further research and analysis.

3. Discussion

3.1. Online communication channels in permission marketing policy

The technical capabilities of online channels allow the implementation of permission marketing policies. As permission marketing requires the transfer of personal data from customers, sales promotion programmes are one of the most suitable marketing tools. Sales promotion tools play an important role in encouraging customers to purchase a promoted product. Consumer behaviour can be positively induced through the use of various promotional tools (Shamout, 2016, p. 81). However, the permission principle requires companies to play by a number of rules. Consumers expect value in exchange for their personal information and permission to be contacted for promotional purposes. Sales promotion tools such as loyalty programmes, coupons, discounts, competitions and giveaways allow companies to increase sales. The terms and conditions of this type of marketing communication need to be as clear and transparent as possible. One of the most important aspects of this process is that consumers expect a high level of security and personal data protection in every communication channel: website, social media and mobile applications. Rapid technological advances are reducing the costs for companies to collect and use consumer data. As a result, new information flows are emerging that may threaten consumer privacy (Bleier et al., 2020, p. 6). Therefore, one of the primary concerns in implementing permission marketing policies in sales promotion programmes is consumer privacy.

The concept of permission marketing is not only based on the provision of consumers' personal data.

Implied permission marketing activities occur when a consumer engages in ongoing transactions across a company's various online touchpoints. This may include visiting a website for various purposes, using a mobile application or being part of a content marketing audience. Content marketing has multiple opportunities to attract new customers, retain existing customers and increase conversions. Therefore, many companies are interested in increasing the use of the content marketing tool in their marketing policy (Patrutiu Baltas, 2015, p. 111). The initiator of primary communication through various online channels is a company. However, the content has a particular value to the consumer that motivates them to read blog posts, watch videos, play games or take a quiz. As a result, consumers are deliberately engaged, providing an opportunity for a business to increase brand awareness, conversions and other short and long-term marketing objectives.

It is important to analyse how each user's results contribute to the global results in order to determine which measurements do not have a direct relationship with the achievement of conversions (López García et al., 2019, p. 12). Thus, one of the crucial aspects of permission marketing policy is analytics. It can facilitate fully automated marketing, personalise content and introduce location-based personalisation with mobile technologies (Davis et al., 2021, p. 450). A variety of sources can provide an organisation's marketing team with an immense amount of consumer data. Once collected and thoroughly processed, analytical data allows decisions to be made to improve permission marketing decisions. Among other channels, mobile devices are one of the primary channels that generate large amounts of consumer data. Companies using mobile social media often have some information about the consumers they are dealing with (Yadav et al., 2015, p. 338). In terms of being a channel, mobile provides companies with customers' transactional data, enabling them to analyse and predict customers' needs and wants (Shankar et al., 2016). Ultimately, proper management of analytics and mobile channels enables a firm to maintain high performance of permission marketing campaigns. On the other hand, mobile devices in permission marketing campaigns can be seen as both an opportunity and a challenge, as it requires dealing with consumer data privacy and complex analytics solutions.

One of the opportunities that online channels offer marketers in the context of permission marketing is a high degree of segmentation. Customers who have expressed a willingness to be contacted by companies are potential target audiences for a company. However, the first step in this process is to select the right target audience, and not just online. Companies need to realise the full and deep

integration of online and offline to truly provide a better experience for customers and meet their real demands (Zhu and Gao, 2019, p. 34). Getting the segmentation right and choosing the right audience is important, but not enough to deliver a successful permission-based marketing campaign. Delivering on the 'promise' made to customers during communication is the key aspect of positive customer experiences for a company's ongoing marketing success. This is especially true in the age of social media, where customers are often public about their experiences with companies. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) can have a significant impact on a company's reputation and alter its prospects for development, both positively and negatively.

A positive reputation is necessary for both small and large companies to remain competitive. Permission-based communication to create a positive reputation is suitable for both small and large firms. Social media enables small businesses to carry out marketing activities effectively despite limited financial resources (Hassan et al., 2015, p. 263). Social media channels can be used for a variety of purposes in a permission marketing strategy. For example, as a content marketing medium, to collect customer contact information and as a customer relationship management (CRM) tool. The essential success factor for the small business is a good customer relationship, which is accommodated by social media (Ainin et al., 2015, p. 573). Therefore, marketers should consider social media as a multifunctional communication channel to achieve various marketing objectives, including permission marketing activities.

Another online channel available to marketers is search engines. The process by which a consumer searches for a product or service is essentially based on giving permission. Looking at the stages of the decision-making process, a customer is looking for information about a product and evaluating alternatives. Therefore, this is a favourable condition for a company to offer the desired product or service based on permission marketing principles. However, due to the fierce competition for high positions in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Page), companies need to meet customer expectations. In fact, they often need to exceed expectations in order to retain a customer. However, in addition to valuable offers and products, a website should be optimised for search engines. Scientific algorithms developed through the computer programming language tend to rank searches according to highly related web pages (Nyagadza, 2020). Therefore, companies need sophisticated SEO knowledge and policies to attract customers through search engines, as the nature of the search process is highly permission-based. One of the most important aspects of permission-based

communication through websites is a clear and transparent cookie policy. Cookies can be used to find information files with server logs, tags or navigation bars. This data can be used to segment audiences (Saura et al., 2017). Companies must obtain consent from website users to use cookies for marketing and analytical purposes.

The use of email is one of the ways to conduct direct marketing campaigns. The first stage of conducting an e-mail marketing campaign involves getting potential customers to leave their e-mail addresses through which communication with them can be achieved (Grubor et al., 2018, p. 28). Permission marketing principles dictate that email addresses should only be collected with the consumer's consent. Otherwise, an email marketing campaign can damage a brand's reputation, as unsolicited email messages are perceived by customers as annoying attempts to communicate. Messages should not only be permission-based, but also contain a valuable offer to the customer. Furthermore, in the context of permission-based communication, one of the essential elements of email marketing is that consumers are given the opportunity to unsubscribe from receiving email messages.

In particular, mobile devices and applications offer marketers multiple opportunities for permission-based communication. Each mobile device is associated with an individual user with a high degree of precision. This allows for personalised communication with individual consumers. For example, various types of promotional programmes can be integrated into a mobile application. This online channel allows marketers to measure customer satisfaction. Marketers should be able to increase customer perceived value, as it has a significant impact on customer satisfaction in the case of mobile applications (Dovaliene et al., 2015, p. 663), as mobile devices generate a large amount of data on consumer behaviour. The specificity of consumer behaviour is one of the key issues in permission marketing communication strategies.

3.2. Consumer behaviour influenced by permission marketing solutions

When a company implements a permission marketing policy, it becomes an important part of the brand experience. Ultimately, it becomes a critical factor in the formation of consumer impressions, perceptions and overall behaviour. Brand experience is essential in the eyes of the consumer to enable him or her to differentiate between products (Urdea et al., 2021). The permission-based relationship between a company and a consumer can become one of its most valuable assets.

Seth Godin, in his book "Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable": "Build and leverage a permission asset. Once you have the ability to speak directly to your most loyal customers, it becomes much easier to build and sell amazing things." (Godin, 2002) This principle is highly effective in online marketing communication channels.

Consumer behaviour is strongly influenced by their level of awareness. Most consumers are aware of companies' intentions. In an interactive digital market environment, companies have the ability to generate customer insights about individual customers and use these insights to target specific customer segments (Varadarajan, 2020). Consumers are aware that the personal data they provide to companies will be used for commercial purposes. As a result, they not only give permission, but also expect to be contacted. However, these expectations only arise if consumers are satisfied with previous interactions with companies. As a result, permission marketing communications can have a psychological impact on consumers.

In general, psychological factors have a huge impact on consumer behaviour. When consumers agree to give companies permission to communicate, they expect to achieve certain goals. These goals are formed on the basis of impressions, emotions and experiences. This is a form of engagement that is a multi-level, multi-dimensional construct that arises from thoughts and feelings about one or more rich experiences involved in achieving a personal goal (Calder et al., 2015). These impressions, emotions, thoughts and feelings can change over time. Positive experiences are conducive to increasing consumer loyalty to brands.

Another important psychological factor that plays a crucial role in consumer behaviour is the issue of self-esteem. Today's consumers are often very aware of the commercial intentions of companies and marketing is perceived as a manipulative method. As a result, many consumers have trust issues, especially when it comes to disclosing personal information (Dastane, 2020, p. 143). To some extent, this can hinder the implementation of marketing campaigns as consumers try to avoid being manipulated. On the other hand, if a person feels that their decisions and actions are based on independent will, their self-esteem and ego are intact. One of the key requirements of permission marketing is to convince consumers that their decisions and actions are not being manipulated. Permission marketing means that consumers have full control over their data and the level of communication with companies.

Consumers weigh the consequences of disclosing their personal data against the value offered by the marketer (Martin and Murphy, 2017, p. 145). They expect a worthwhile reward in exchange for disclosing

their personal information. It is paramount that consumers are reassured about the security of their personal data. As a result, positive word-of-mouth (WOM) can occur online. WOM is considered to be the most important source of information in consumers' purchasing decisions and intended behaviour (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Consumers are often inclined to engage in conforming behaviour, especially if they are assured that their personal data is well protected. Therefore, the effectiveness of permission marketing is highly dependent on privacy policies and positive word-of-mouth across different online platforms.

Permission marketing has the potential to increase customer loyalty to brands. When the connection and engagement between a consumer and a brand is strong, a consumer can associate themselves with a brand. Consumers are often reluctant to invest additional effort in searching for alternative brands. Godin comments, "We already have a favourite brand of almost everything. Why spend time figuring out how to switch?" (Godin, 1999) However, this principle does not apply to all categories of consumers. Certain types of consumers are "innovation seekers" by nature. They are constantly looking for new options and opportunities. Therefore, consumer behaviour in terms of loyalty can be very different depending on the type of product, the permission marketing solution and, of course, the target audience category. The differences can be caused by the age of the audience, the cultural environment, the level of competition in the markets and personal factors.

The intensity of the influence of online channels on consumer behaviour has increased since the mid-2000s, when the concept of Web 2.0 was introduced by Tim O'Reilly. The competitive opportunity for new entrants is to fully exploit the potential of Web 2.0. Successful companies will create applications that learn from their users (O'Reilly, 2005). In some ways, the Web 2.0 environment has been a game changer in marketing communications. The advancement of web 2.0 technologies has certainly empowered customers (Palacios-Marqués et al., 2015, p. 1909). As a result, brands need to adapt their marketing policies to the Web 2.0 environment. Like other strategies, permission marketing is affected by online communication platforms. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of information. Instead, they are active individuals who can publicly express their opinions about brands and make decisions based on an analysis of various alternatives. Therefore, the characteristics of consumer behaviour in the Web 2.0 environment are both an opportunity and a challenge for the implementation of permission marketing policies.

As mentioned above, a significant proportion of consumers tend to exhibit conformist behaviour, including cases where behaviour is influenced by the recommendations of other consumers. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) campaigns can significantly increase the effectiveness of influencing consumer behaviour when it comes to the issue of trust in a brand. Permission marketing solutions are one of the most sensitive issues that can be affected by word-of-mouth across online platforms. Therefore, companies should focus on marketing strategies that can increase the amount of WOM (e.g., reviews or referral incentives, etc.) (Gong et al., 2018, p. 403). Furthermore, consumers' perceptions and feelings towards the websites and content created by other consumers are considered as important aspects in influencing consumer behaviour (Zhang and Benyoucef, 2016, p. 97). This is one of the most beneficial opportunities of Web 2.0 for brands. In this context, companies need to have a deeper insight into consumer behaviour and educate consumers about the brand in order to develop effective marketing strategies (Zhang, 2015, p. 59). Consumers show positive behaviour towards brands that they perceive as responsible, helpful and attentive.

Analyzing consumer behavior in online communication channels, it should be emphasized that social media is the most exceptional platform in terms of influencing consumer behavior. It is a multidimensional medium that has essentially become almost everything – content, information, behaviour, people, organisations, institutions (Appel et al., 2020, p. 80). Opportunities to influence consumer behaviour through permission marketing policies can be tightly integrated with social media platforms.

Permission marketing only has a fruitful effect on consumer behaviour when it is a holistic approach in a company's overall marketing strategy. Therefore, the implementation of a permission marketing strategy requires thorough planning and consistent execution at every stage of its development.

3.3. Implementing a permission marketing strategy

In today's highly competitive markets, companies need competitive advantages to maintain market share and attract new customers. Innovative approaches to marketing communications can effectively serve as a competitive advantage. Only companies that offer innovation can achieve competitive advantage (Dereli, 2015, p. 1367). Permission marketing can be used as an innovative approach to managing communications with target audiences. The competitive advantage provided by a permission marketing policy can significantly increase a company's ability to win the competition for loyal customers.

It is important to recognise that different audiences require different approaches to managing permission marketing solutions. In addition, permission marketing allows companies to build highly personalised relationships with customers. While advertising involves impersonal communication, direct marketing seeks to establish a one-to-one personal relationship with the target audience (Key and Czaplewski, 2017). This is another advantage of permission marketing over mass advertising communication. In addition, as the digital age continues to take hold, personalization is a powerful and influential tool for companies to determine what customers want to buy (Behera et al., 2020). Personalisation is one of the prerequisites for a successful marketing policy in general. However, the level of personalisation needs to be carefully chosen and based on extensive research into the target audience, their needs, behaviours and demographics.

Another essential requirement for implementing a permission marketing strategy is the necessary technical infrastructure, managed by qualified professionals. The infrastructure may include, for example, a website, online and offline promotional tools and devices, mobile applications, loyalty card systems, technical support solutions, customer relationship management (CRM) tools, data collection and processing software. A key part of the technical delivery of permission marketing management is the secure collection and processing of customer data. Today, companies are involved in an increasingly data-driven ecosystem (Saura, 2021, p. 100). Marketers often have to deal with vast amounts of consumer data to make decisions and plan marketing campaigns. As companies expand their efforts to collect and use customer data, customers are increasingly concerned about their privacy and the potential for harm (Martin et al., 2017, p. 37). Accordingly, a sense of privacy and protection of personal data are crucial factors for consumers when deciding whether to provide their personal data for commercial purposes.

As online communication channels generate large amounts of data, the right analytics policy can play a key role in implementing permission marketing solutions. It requires careful consideration of how commercial value will be generated through web analytics now and in the future (Chaffey and Patron, 2012, p. 34). In general, marketing has begun to focus more on the development of statistical models and predictive analytics (Wedel and Kannan, 2016, p. 99). However, in addition to quantitative and statistical data, analytics can provide marketers with qualitative information and predictive insights, differentiating loyal customers in existing audiences and identifying potential loyal customers in 'cold' audiences. The importance of data analytics is increasing as

consumer behaviour has evolved over time (Sheth, 2021). Buying journeys and decision stages are becoming more complex. Accordingly, marketers need to collect, process and analyse diverse consumer data to make the right marketing decisions, especially in the case of permission marketing strategies where consumer trust is the key element of ultimate success.

As marketers have to deal with consumer trust and personal data, reputational risks arise. Online trust is a major factor that contributes to the overall success of a company's marketing efforts (Boateng, 2018). Even a small mistake or malfunction in any process can cause a reputational crisis. Therefore, an online reputation management (ORM) policy is crucial. It helps companies to monitor discussions and sentiments, detect negative word-of-mouth, prevent possible complications and take necessary actions, use feedback data obtained from ORM tools to improve products, services, communication and PR activities. Managing an ORM strategy often requires a significant investment in financial and human resources. Small companies cannot afford to deploy large ORM systems. But they have smaller challenges. Like large companies, they need to develop comprehensive ORM management and crisis prevention strategies. Otherwise, the unpredictability of consumer behaviour and the fluctuating online environment can seriously damage their brand reputation, especially when it comes to managing permission marketing activities, where communication style and high levels of customer satisfaction are extremely important for survival in a fierce competitive environment. Even small companies need to implement an ORM strategy. They are more vulnerable to minor crises, whereas large organisations have more survivability potential.

The principle of permission-based communication can be exercised through a content marketing strategy. It can be used to support an organisation's inbound marketing strategy, which is based on permission-based communication. The two-way communication capability of digital media can be used to support consumers (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019, p. 36). The very idea of content marketing is based on the free will of consumers to maintain communication with companies. In this case, permission is not necessarily expressed by providing personal or contact information. Instead, if the content is interesting, helpful or otherwise valuable, consumers will choose to give companies their attention and time. Consumers' time and attention are valuable assets for businesses. These assets can be converted into various commercial outcomes: brand awareness, positive reputation, support for positioning strategy, brand equity and increased sales. The latter is the most obvious monetised outcome. The rest of the results are intended for the longer term. As for the

content marketing strategy itself, marketers have a number of channels and forms at their disposal: blogging, video content, podcasting, infographics, games, product reviews, guides, calculations, competitions, etc. They can entertain, inspire, educate or persuade consumers, depending on the marketing objective: increasing awareness or sales. Content marketing can significantly enhance a company's permission marketing strategy. However, it requires a high level of expertise and investment of resources. Various communication channels can be used, including websites, social media, video portals and mobile devices.

Mobile devices are the most prevalent platform for marketing communications today. Because a mobile device is associated with a single consumer, it allows marketers to maintain personalised, direct and constant communication. Therefore, as a communication platform, mobile devices lend themselves perfectly to a permission marketing strategy. Permission is a fundamental condition for opt-in campaigns (Berman, 2016, p. 4). Consumers and businesses can actively use mobile devices to exchange information, maintain contact, make offers and other transactions. The opportunity to use mobile devices in promotional programmes needs to be emphasised. This can be done through mobile applications. The mobile device is the most common platform used by consumers to disclose their online behaviour. Therefore, companies need to take advantage of the various opportunities offered by mobile platforms for successful permission marketing campaigns.

4. Analysis

A critical component of many communication success stories is a well-developed integrated marketing communications (IMC) programme (Keller, 2016, p. 286). Permission marketing as a stand-alone strategy cannot be effective. It is a unity of activities in a company's overall marketing policy. Each element of IMC in all online communication channels must be based on permission principles. In this case, consumers are exhibiting behaviours that align with a company's long-term marketing objectives. At the same time, the audience attracted by this strategy is highly segmented and active, including in terms of social media WOM. One of the key prerequisites for achieving this result is complete alignment between a promise and the consumer experience. Marketing is essentially a process of making promises, and the degree of success depends on the quality of the promises fulfilled. This philosophy is critical to the politics of permission marketing.

Unfulfilled promises can lead not only to failed marketing plans, but also to reputation management

complications and even a full-blown PR crisis. This threat is particularly dangerous for brands in the age of social media, where any consumer can spread their opinion about a company. As a result, social media can turn from an opportunity into a serious threat. For customers, integration is a naturally occurring process of perception, repetition and brand learning as they try to make sense of a cluttered world (Kerr and Patti, 2015, p. 319). To shape customer perceptions in a brand's favour, the consistency and coherence of IMC elements is critical. In the event of a PR crisis, brands must have preventive measures in place to deal with complications. This must be part of a pre-established anti-crisis plan as part of the overall marketing policy.

Increased return on investment (ROI) is one of the benefits of permission-based marketing communications. However, this may not happen immediately, as permission marketing is a long-term strategy. In turn, a longer timeframe means an audience of more loyal customers, enabling brands to increase customer lifetime value (CLV). This metric is one of the most obvious indicators of a successful brand. In addition, a marketing policy supported by permission-based communication can increase competitiveness.

As permission-based communication involves constant communication with consumers, online CRM tools play a key role. They enable companies to maintain a high quality of service, thereby creating positive perceptions among customers and influencing their behaviour. In addition to communication and service purposes, online CRM tools enable the collection of customer data. By using online CRM tools, brands have the opportunity to identify customer needs, wants and requirements. Meeting the needs of customers can be done by personalising marketing or treating each customer individually based on their interests and needs (Anshari et al., 2019, p. 100). Personalisation is one of the most favourable opportunities of online communication channels. Brands need to personalise their permission marketing policies in order to increase the efficiency of their communication. However, companies need to carefully choose the degree of personalisation. It needs to be increased gradually, depending on the intensity of customer engagement. It also requires consideration of the different stages of the customer journey and decision-making process. Redundant personalisation in the early stages of communication can have a negative impact on consumers' perceptions, decisions and ultimately their behaviour. Therefore, personalised communication in a permission marketing policy requires thorough prior analysis of marketing data and careful execution.

Advertising in the context of permission marketing is often seen as interruptive communication. However,

online communication channels make it possible to conduct permission-based advertising campaigns. This can be achieved through a comprehensive analysis of consumer data and behavioural characteristics. When consumers have a conscious and intense relationship with a brand, they subconsciously expect the brand to advertise to them. In this case, this type of advertising is not perceived as a disruptive attempt to grab their attention, but as an opportunity to learn about new products and services.

Online touchpoints have the potential to meet the principles of permission marketing. Customers react differently to their experiences depending on whether they take place on a website or in a store. Companies need to ensure that all touchpoints are integrated (Bolton et al., 2022, p. 85). Only the unity and full integration of online touchpoints can positively influence consumer behaviour. Each touchpoint should be designed with permission in mind. This approach becomes even more important when most consumers are highly informed and aware of brands' marketing policies and commercial intentions.

Last but not least, companies should realise that the Internet has taken away their ability to be irresponsible. Moreover, the peculiarities of online communication drastically reduce the effectiveness of interruptive marketing communications. As Seth Godin predicts, "In the long run, interruptive marketing is doomed as a mass marketing tool." (Godin, 1999, p. 43) Therefore, brands need to rethink reality and base their marketing policies on permission principles.

5. Conclusions

Based on the literature review, discussion and analysis of the issue, it is possible to formulate recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of permission marketing in influencing consumer

behaviour through online communication channels: 1. Permission marketing is not an individual campaign. It is a general strategy. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain the principles of permission-based communication on a regular basis; 2. "Customer is king!" Their needs, wants and demands must be prioritised when planning permission marketing policies; 3. Data analysis across different online channels is one of the keys to success. It is necessary to understand consumer behaviour in order to plan high-impact campaigns; 4. Content marketing, together with various forms of permission-based communication, is an effective strategy for attracting segmented audiences and building long-term relationships with them; 5. CRM tools are necessary to maintain continuous communication with customers, monitor their behavioural peculiarities and make appropriate decisions based on their feedback; 6. ORM strategy and tools are necessary to monitor word-of-mouth on social media and other online platforms, detect potential complications early and make preventive decisions to avoid a full-blown PR crisis; 7. An anti-crisis policy is needed to identify potential risks at different levels of communication: social media, email, promotional tools, CRM tools and mobile devices; 8. Permission marketing must be an integral part of integrated marketing communications (IMC) policy, not a separate set of decisions and activities; 9. Permission marketing policy must be supported by relevant technical infrastructure, applications and qualified human resources.

Similar to other marketing concepts, permission marketing is constantly evolving and changing, especially in the fast-paced digital communication age. Therefore, it is necessary to continue theoretical and practical research to improve its methodology to influence consumer behaviour.

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