

## DIGITAL ETHICS: FEATURES AND PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION IN ONLINE SALES

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**Abstract:** The article relevance. New technical capabilities related to the Internet are actively used in all spheres of public life, radically changing the communication models in each of them, including in the business sphere. Digital ethics is one of the areas that is undergoing drastic changes due to the new media environment. The purpose of

the study is to determine the role of online communication in online sales. Research methods: as a research method, the survey method was used to identify the features of communication practices in online sales. Research results: the article examines the characteristic features of online sales. The specifics of digital ethics in communications

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between the manufacturer and the consumer are investigated: the range of technical possibilities for dialogue is determined, the logic of organizing discussion fields is revealed, as well as the degree of their development. The novelty and originality of the research lies in the fact that the digital ethics of social networks for business is being investigated for the first time. It is shown that in large companies, the social network performs a connecting function only at the first stage of cooperation; small businesses practice maintaining long-term contact and the social network function is communicative for them. It is revealed that the social network page serves as a means of informing customers about services and products; for placing ads about promotions and events held in the company; for messages of common nature. It is revealed that social network marketing is not yet fully integrated into the Russian market. It is shown that the format of communication in the social network as a mechanism for accepting applications is characterized by a minimal degree of personification. It is revealed that the dialog space is segmented into an official unit (informative function) and a consumer forum (emotion exchange function). It is revealed that in large and

small companies, the functions of dialogue are radically different: for large companies, dialogue is one of the ways to maintain the image, the ability to create the appearance of openness and readiness for interaction, demonstration of customer orientation), for small companies - the ability to remotely and cost-effectively implement products and services, satisfying the individual preferences of each client. Practical significance: the data Obtained in this work can be used in marketing, advertising, social psychology, as well as for further theoretical development of this issue.

**Keywords:** marketing, communication, dialog, Internet environment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the development of the Internet and the improvement of new media means of communication, these processes are gradually integrated into the digital space of the network, getting a new life. Traditional market practices are being transformed into other interactive forms due to the emergence of digital communication channels.

In recent decades, many marketing and sales professionals are

increasingly turning to the question of the effectiveness of rapidly developing Intrusive-advertising techniques. A gradually changing market is beginning to dictate to marketers the need to revise the model that has been used in recent decades (Alekseev, 2000; Voronov, 2001; Veselkova & Kabanov, 2011; Pirogov, 2003).

Communication between the producer and the consumer has undergone a number of fundamental changes over the entire history of market relations: gradually shifting the focus of their attention from the product produced to the target audience, entrepreneurs turned a person from a faceless and mute buyer into an object of forced need formation. Thus, in digital ethics, the first communication practices originate, the task of which was to stimulate sales through information influence on the consumer. The main idea of sales agents was to artificially create a potential buyer's desire to purchase the product produced. Thus, in the process of evolution, communication mechanisms are reborn into acts of aggressive pressure on a person (Zhichkina, 1999; Bagiev, Tarasevich & Ann, 1999; Cherdymova, 2010; Kvon et al., 2019; Malhotra, 2003).

With the development of the Internet infrastructure, traditional marketing practices are gradually integrated into the new environment, acquiring fundamentally new formats. In the context of the new media landscape, dialog marketing also gets a new palette of tools. Digital technologies provide a new range of technical capabilities for building personalized communication (Mikhailov, 2002; Nosov, 1996; Reiman, 2002; Starkov, 2001; Gorev & Masalimova, 2017). In marketing, a new direction is emerging, called Internet marketing with its own digital ethics. Social media marketing is positioned as the best way to build horizontal connections with a potential customer and hear their opinion about the manufacturer. The logic of networking is the best environment for establishing personalized contact and penetration into the personal space of the consumer, and therefore creates the ground for building a dialogue (Kobelev, 2002; Altukhova, 2012).

Since marketing is primarily an economic category, rather than a social phenomenon, the study of its Genesis, evolution, and the totality of the paradigms that have developed within it has always been in the problem area of the economy and its branches. The

vector of analysis of this mechanism development has always been set by management theories, which include marketing activities as an integral process for creating, promoting and selling goods and services. In the tradition of marketing as a scientific discipline, it is customary to present the history of its origin and the transformation of its forms from this perspective (Tedeev, 2002; Kobelev, 2008; Hanson, 2001).

In any case, this era of marketing evolution is marked by a low degree of consumer orientation and a kind of imposition of desires. Despite the great variety of high-quality products and high competition between manufacturers, the choice of a person, in the end, was set from the outside by the range of products offered to him (Golyshko, 2000; Ivanov, 2001; Putilina et al., 2019; Parfenov, 2002).

Marketing philosophy has become a womb that gives rise to various violent mechanisms designed to stimulate demand in any possible way. Gradually, entrepreneurs develop and put into practice new and every year more and more improved methods of influencing the audience.

Despite such a wide variety of views and opinions of experts, we can

deduce a number of features that characterize such a marketing strategy. It has such distinctive features as active and persistent, and sometimes annoying impact on potential consumer; large-scale marketing activities; narrowly focused personalized communication; advertising based on comparisons and veiled threats; intimidating information messages and formulations (Spelstra, 2005; Enikolopov et al., 2006; Uspensky, 2001; Kholmogorov, 2001).

Thus, aggressive marketing and customer-oriented concepts are represented as different poles of a single system of commodity turnover, where the determining factor is the attitude to another person, to meet the needs of which, in fact, the production mechanism functions. Views on the end-user-oriented management system are the result of a long evolution of marketing, a series of endlessly changing concepts in which at different stages a person took different positions relative to the manufacturer. (Sibirskaya & Startseva, 2010, Khabarov, 2001, Yurasov, 2008, Sokolova & Gerashchenko, 2004)

Nevertheless, this turn to the target audience ultimately led to a distortion of the attitudes of the entrepreneurial philosophy. With the

improvement of the market economy and the development of various techniques and survival mechanisms for many companies, the idea of aggressive marketing is becoming more attractive. The main tool for its implementation is communication with the consumer, which now acquires another shape. Dialogue with a potential buyer is no longer aimed at trying to hear a person, but on the contrary, to form social (purchasing) attitudes, passing them off as their own motives (Nadirashvili, 1974; Cherdymova, 2011; Nosov, 1997).

This clever maneuver allows companies to dictate their production conditions without deviating from the value orientations of relationship marketing, which declare the interests of the client as the highest value.

### **The Study Objectives and Structure**

In recent decades, with the advent of digital ethics, there is a need to establish a dialogue with consumers. Manufacturers and marketers increasingly understand this fact.

The study set the following goals: to analyze the structure and the communicative resources (technical capabilities) of groups and pages of companies-producers in a social

network; to explore the purpose of the establishment of dialogue platforms in the social network by companies-producers; to study consumer attitudes to online communication with companies-producers; to identify the range of dialogue mechanisms used by companies-producers on the Internet; compare the dialog practices used by companies-producers in the social network.

Questions:

Does the company where you work have a group or social network page?

What kind of information is placed in a group or on a page?

In what form does the consumer communicate with the group administrator? Is this a monosyllable or a detailed conversation?

Are there any standards in Your Company that regulate communication with the client in the social network?

Are there any response templates that outline the scope of the dialog with the consumer?

What degree of freedom is reserved for the administrator of a group or web page here?

Does the customer's opinion about Your Company expressed in a social network serve as an incentive for

transformation? Or is this communication just a formality?

Do you use the feedback you receive from them for management purposes?

Do you listen to the customer's advice and ideas about improving the product or service?

### **Features of Compliance with Digital Ethics in the Dialogue Format**

The study revealed that the frequency of comments, as well as the length of the conversation in time, completely depends on the nature and relevance of the information (99%). After establishing contact with a person through a web page, the group's communication function loses its significance, and it continues to exist as a source of information for consumers (in almost more than half of cases (87%). It is assumed that participants can contact here to track the company's news (100%). The need to maintain the page, in these cases, sets the specifics of the services provided. For some, it is an integral part of the service. As the experience of conducting such groups shows, even the presence of a physical location of a sales agent cannot fully ensure the implementation of the tasks of

such production (53% of the respondents' responses). Thus, we see that the group registered by the company in the Social network not only promotes the product, but also is part of the marketing policy (80%). The role of the communication channel is ultimately minimized, but it is at some point that it becomes the basis for the process of identifying and meeting customer needs. The social network is only indirectly related to the process of production and sale of goods and services, which is the main goal of the company (80% of responses). This means that in this case we can only talk about the auxiliary role of the site. The main function that a page in social networks performs for a larger category of manufacturers can be called informative (87%).

For another category of organizations (small businesses), the social network page serves as an alternative channel of communication with the client (56%). Undoubtedly, this communication allows the manufacturer to make itself known. However, in contrast to the large type of companies, where the social network performs a connecting function only at the first stage of cooperation, small business firms assume maintaining long-term contact with the service provider, systematically

contacting the agent through the personal message channel. Despite the fact that the services provided by a sales agent involve personal communication with the consumer, online dialogue becomes an important element of interaction with the client and significantly simplifies the service process. Yet, a social network page is only a small component of communication with the audience (90%). If desired, this dialog space can be replaced with another one, including an offline one, which in no way affects the main goal of the manufacturer - customer satisfaction. Thus, the social network function for the category of small business companies is communicative: the page is an alternative communication channel for the company along with many others. Another category of producers sells products to customers primarily through the social networking site. The logic of customer service in such groups is as close as possible to the principle of an online store. It is, in fact, a trading platform and is designed like a catalog. Thus, if in all the cases discussed earlier, the function of the Internet group could be called auxiliary; whether it is communication with the client or simple informing (90%), then here the company page completely mediates the sales

process. In this case, communication with the client, with rare exceptions, takes place in the space of personal messages (87%). The page serves as a sales area and completely mediates the sales process (100%). The possibility of visual demonstration of options on the group's wall presents the entire range of products and services to the consumer. Everyone can ask their question in the comments under the posted post and will certainly get an answer. Communication with the consumer in real life is reduced to a minimum (13%) or absent at all, and the model of interaction with the customer is more conducive to personalized contact. All the details that the client is interested in are discussed in personal correspondence with the company's representative (87%). Finally, the purchase process is also performed online, which achieved using technical means is provided by the Internet. For example, this type of group often included a mechanism for making online orders (96%). The communication model always defines the purpose of creating a group. In each case, the features of using the Internet page are very specific. Each of the company's representatives had experience in conducting a dialogue with the client through the site group (100%), but this



format of communication was not a priority for everyone (24%). In some cases, the dialog mechanism was poorly developed (13%). Very often, a social network page can serve as a means of informing customers about the services and products offered by a sales agent. As noted by almost all respondents (96%), the community wall was used by them to place ads about promotions and events held in the company, or General messages. Some manufacturers purposefully register a group in social networks using the wall space as a kind of counter and design the page according to the catalog principle (67%). On these pages, a channel for personal communication between the administrator and the client is widely developed. Clients often contact the group for more detailed advice (87%). This often leads to a longer correspondence with a company representative. Sometimes such conversations are conducted in order to specify the order of further communication offline - for example, to make appointments. In other cases, all questions are resolved online. Client policy elasticity is often observed.

Due to the conservative attitudes prevailing in the post-Soviet socio-cultural space and firmly rooted in

the minds of many potential consumers, social network marketing is not yet fully integrated into the Russian market as a product promotion mechanism and as a communication channel. Therefore, not all the surveyed sales agents receive feedback. In General, the social network space is used either as a personal communication channel or as a one-way information channel. In other cases, offering products and services, organizations only notify about innovations and promotions. Conversations that took place in the format of personal messages in all cases were reduced to discussing the order of interaction, but none of them contained recommendations addressed to the company. Communication format - using a group in a social network as a mechanism for accepting applications is characterized by a minimal degree of personalization. As for the personal correspondence channel that is open to clients, it should be noted that feedback is provided promptly, but briefly and to the point. At the same time, the responses never go beyond the limits outlined by the topic of the appeal. Such immediate responses from the company's representative are received from the official page of the group registered as an account. In all cases, the



administrator's responses - clear and concise-are based on stylistic templates. Any question asked by a consumer is promptly answered by a company representative: feedback is received in the day out (85%), and sometimes in a few hours (15%). Each claim is reviewed in detail, and the results of the review are provided to the client. Not a single conflict with the company described by him/her remains without attention. A client's comment often leads to a dialogue with a company representative. The dialog can serve an instrumental function and serve organizational purposes. The representative of the company demonstrates focus on the client's wishes, willingness to implement the proposed, encourages his/her initiative. This indicates not only the company's desire to build a dialogue, but also a genuine interaction with the consumer. In the group space, there were often two discussion platforms-customers ask questions about the product under the information post posted by the administrator, and leave feedback in the thematic section of the Discussion section. Communication with the administrator on the wall can be called two-level; the representative of the company encourages building a dialogue in personal correspondence,

offering to continue communication behind the scenes. There is a willingness of the manufacturer to establish interpersonal contact with the client - the priority of personal correspondence is postulated in almost every such comment. The administrator, in addition, is willing to work with the community member individually. We can conclude that the dialog space is segmented into an official module, which performs an exclusively informative function, and a consumer forum, which is a platform for exchanging emotions. The main dialog platform for all groups surveyed is the social page wall.

## 2. CONCLUSIONS

There is a gradual integration of dialog marketing in the Internet space, which creates a favorable ground for the implementation of all the postulates of the ideal personalized communication.

The ever-evolving cyberspace is increasingly entangling the personal sphere of each person, acting as an integral component of everyday practices. Entrepreneurs and marketers use new communication niches created by the digital environment to find new ways to reach consumers. Manufacturing companies, therefore, are increasingly

using in their marketing policies improved means of penetration into the intimate zone of the Internet user.

Socio-economic transformations that served as a prerequisite for the formation of a digital market—a market where the client dominates, led to the formation of a digital consumer with a fundamentally new system of expectations. With the development and improvement of information technologies, the range of available dialog mechanisms and platforms is steadily growing. When developing a strategy, each company tends to give preference to certain means of communication. Nevertheless, analysts and marketing specialists insist on the convergence of all formats of information exchange.

With the development of the Internet, network infrastructure and the integration of marketing practices into the Internet space, the range of dialog mechanisms increases tenfold. The new media environment provides producers with a wide variety of platforms and tools for building two-way personalized communication.

It can also be concluded that the social network, which, due to its accessibility, multi-format, and, most importantly, proximity to a potential

consumer, becomes an ideal ground for implementing dialog practices.

Thus, with the gradual shift of emphasis from the product and its promotion process to the target audience, the format of communication between actors in trade and market relations also underwent drastic changes. For a long time, communication was a one-way informational impact on the consumer and was aimed at artificially stimulating demand. Changing and improving, communication mechanisms eventually took on new forms, and the consumer became the object of pressure from manufacturers.

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