

УДК 811.111:659.121

Bartashevich Y., Oleynik O., Beznis Y.

Viral Marketing as an Alternative Advertising Method

Belarusian National Technical University
Minsk, Belarus

In modern realities there is a huge selection of goods and services, each of which needs non-standard and effective methods of attracting consumers. The greater the number of such products and services is, the more creative the marketing activity should be. In this regard, companies are beginning to resort to methods of promotion that are alternative to direct advertising, viral marketing being one of them. Viral marketing is a marketing activity in which information about a product spreads between people, especially on the Internet [1]. This term was first mentioned in the article «The Virus of Marketing» in 1996. In this article Jeffrey Rayport drew an analogy between the proliferation of biological viruses and marketing messages [2]. The main difference between this very method and other conventional methods is that the main force for spreading information about a product or service is people. The company creates an advertising product, which is a video, photo, article, official product with the symbolism of the advertised object or other types of consumer attraction. In case this product involves users' attention then automatic distribution begins, and it becomes viral. Thus, without needing much money for promotion, the content covers a large number of potential consumers. The advantages of viral marketing include the following characteristics:

- costs only for creating an advertised product;
- non-intrusiveness since the consumer is not forced to watch the content;

- the advertised product is well remembered due to its simple and clear content;
- it keeps the consumer's attention longer, because companies often involve the person in brand-associated activities.
- inspire more confidence, since the distributors are familiar people, etc.

But this method also has a few disadvantages:

- unpredictability, since viral advertising may not interest the consumer, thus the invested funds may not pay off;
- there is no way to manage the distribution process;
- advertising can be so implicit that people may not notice a reference to the brand in it;
- the idea must be original.

To reduce the risks while creating viral advertising, you must stick to a number of rules. At first, the idea must be clear to the popular culture. So, any popular science article is distributed at a much lower rate than advertising involving cats. Secondly, advertising should be relevant and cause an emotional response from consumers, for example, you can touch on issues of concern to society at the moment. Third, an important aspect is to determine the target audience, its demands and the choice of how to provide information to this audience. Also viral advertising, like any other type of marketing activity, needs to evaluate the results. However, the implementation of these rules doesn't guarantee the success of an advertising campaign, as there are a huge number of external factors, including high competition in the field of advertising. Consider the application of this type of advertising on the territory of the Republic of Belarus. Now Belarusian Digital agencies are just beginning to implement viral marketing in the list of their services. Among those who provide this service in the Republic of Belarus, the following agencies can be distinguished: *VIDEOLAB.by*, *Create.by*,

Academia.by. The price of this service ranges from 2000 BYN to 9000 BYN. The final cost may increase depending on the complexity of the implementation of the advertising project [3]. One of the most outstanding examples of such advertising in Belarus is the advertising of an Internet portal for buying apartments *Domovita.by*. To do this, they created 4 videos with a talking cat to attract attention, which were distributed through Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, Yandex.Video. In total, these videos have gained 677 thousand views on the Youtube platform. According to the director and screenwriter of the video Pavel Stankus, the cat was chosen as the main character, because for many people cats are a symbol of comfort and moving to a new home [4]. Nevertheless, don't forget that there are no universal methods of promoting goods and services. No approach, including viral marketing, can guarantee the desired result. To get the maximum benefit from advertising activities, it is necessary to integrate viral marketing into traditional marketing.

References:

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