

Social Networks as a Tool of Marketing Communications

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Abstract

The relevance of the research topic lies in the necessity to use social networks as innovative tools of marketing communications. A wide audience and the ability to segment the market for a specific consumer determine the construction of a corporate strategy, which will be based on using the social networking approach. The spread of the global coronavirus pandemic has led to the rapid development of remote communication channels between the company and the customer. The issue of using marketing tools in social networks acquires the most urgent importance in the modern world of the introduction and implementation of the company's marketing strategies. The purpose of the academic paper is to study the use of social networks as features of implementing the marketing campaign. Social networks are the result of the development of digital technologies and the processes of creating an information society involved in the digital space. The objectives of the research are to analyse the opportunity of using social networks as a tool for marketing communications and their implementation at the level of its widespread use by enterprises and establishments. It is significant to create an advertising campaign by defining the target audience and outlining the key aspects, on which the company is focused. The research methodology consists in determining the theoretical and methodological approaches to the essence of introducing social networks and their practical importance in the implementation of marketing activities of companies. The obtained results can significantly improve the quality of functioning of modern enterprises and organizations that plan to master a new market segment or gain competitive advantages in the existing one. The academic paper examines the essence of social networks as a tool of marketing communications. The key principles of the development of digital social platforms were revealed. The quality of implementing the advertising campaign in the social network was studied, and further prospects for the development of using social networks as a component of the marketing strategy were outlined. Therefore, the academic paper analyses the problems of using social networks as a marketing tool.

Keywords: marketing strategy, advertising, advertising campaign, digital technologies, social platform, information society, social networks, marketing tools.

Introduction

In today's conditions, the issue of developing and forming a high-quality marketing strategy is becoming relevant, which led to the emergence of new digital technologies in the society. The rapid digitization of the global environment directly affects human social and economic activity. Social networks are a platform where people of various professions and interests are intersected. When being involved in a social network, they are united in special groups and communities, use their own approaches to the vision of the qualitative development of their own digital consciousness. A digital portrait of a person is quite often a business card in his real life. Marketing activities are aimed at

promoting products, advertising services and the art to interest the client in purchasing a given service. Marketing tools are aimed at wide social audiences, which make it possible to conduct relevant marketing studies and form a client base with the help of a marketing campaign. Currently, there are many options for using marketing companies in social networks, forasmuch as they contain all the necessary attributes, namely: the ability to determine the target audience, transparent conditions of cooperation from the owners of the social network, the availability of a wide range of data analysis tools. Taking into account the development of digital technologies and proving their real practical value, more and more companies are trying to use social networks as a key tool of digital communication between people. In addition, using social networks as a form of communication can improve the effectiveness of communication activities. The main advantage in global space is that communications are carried out remotely and do not require the actual presence of a person. Such aspects have caused the increased interest of corporate giants in investing in social networks as a technology of the future. This is precisely why social networks as a marketing communication tool will be the leading means for implementing the company's marketing plan and strategy. The issue of using social networks in the marketing aspect is a priority for companies wishing to increase the direct level of sales. The importance of using modern tools in combination with social media platforms can give a business a number of competitive advantages in the corporate sector. In addition, with the help of using complex marketing measures, social networks can become not only an additional means of implementing a marketing policy, but also the principal one in the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Scientists are arguing about the further development of social networks as a key direction in the implementation of business marketing activities. Using social networks to advertise one's services and a brand is an important task for a modern enterprise that will be able to strengthen its marketing security in the early future. Along with this, the issues concerning the quality of implementing social networks and the diversification of the portfolio of existing social network platforms and methodical approaches to advertising in them remain open.

The purpose of the research is to analyse the use of social networks as tools of marketing communications in the modern digital space. An important area of the research is the analysis of the influence of social networks on the effectiveness of advertising campaigns of enterprises and organizations. The aspect of manifesting social networks as a means of marketing communications is the possibility of using methodical approaches to the quality policy formation for the exploitation of social network resources. The priority direction of the research is to outline the prospects for the further development of social networks and to determine the need to implement marketing activities of the enterprise based on using the social networks as a key tool of marketing communications. The comprehensive analysis of the theoretical and methodological definition of "social networks" reveals social networks as a tool for managing social and economic attitudes and forming an information culture. The academic paper outlines the main tools for using social networks in advertising campaigns and digital technologies used to support social network activities. The key factor in conducting an analytical study is the impact assessment of the global coronavirus pandemic as a catalyst for the development of social networks.

Literature review

As of today, there is a debate about the development of social networks as an effective platform for marketing communications. The problematics are revealed in many foreign works, and attention is paid to aspects of the quality of ensuring communication activities and the real influence of social networks on the effectiveness of conducting commercial activities. The author (Enyinda, 2021) emphasizes that the main drawback of social networks lies in the fact that they are a high-quality tool for promoting small and even medium-sized businesses; however, they do not ensure the significant development of large industrial or agricultural enterprises. The emphasis is put on the use of approaches towards small businesses that can find a consumer due to the affordability of prices for services and creativity of design. In big business, according to the viewpoint of the author (Piterova, 2022), the factors of price policy and the reputational component play a significant role. The presence of large corporate enterprises in social networks is determined precisely by the need to consolidate and position their brand, and not because of commercial interests. Any enterprise should operate a web

page in a social network in order to promote its image. Such a rule has become the presence of business etiquette in the modern digital world. The lack of a page in social networks negatively affects the evaluation of the company's activities on the market, which can cause significant reputational damage. Other authors (Wengler, 2021) emphasize that social networks are a tool of future marketing communications, which are only at the beginning of their birth. The authors explore the possibilities of creating social networks not only as an entertainment event, but as tools of state control and accounting. Identification of a person in social networks by the state may become the technology of the future. An interesting viewpoint of the author (Cham, 2022) on social networks is quite interesting; the scholar defines the features of social network functioning as the most necessary for the support and implementation of a business advertising campaign, forasmuch as the largest social networks contain a significant part of the economically active population. According to the standpoint (Becker, 2020), the problem of social networks is the lack of a clear division into social web pages for individuals – ordinary customers and legal ones – large companies and enterprises. The author believes that the modern management of social networks does not pay enough attention to the distinction between physical and legal entities, which can cause a number of problematic aspects in the implementation of advertising. For instance, advertising that is directed only to the target audience according to the adjusted indicators can be displayed for legal entities, which reduces the effectiveness of the advertising campaign in general. This is precisely why, the authors (Omar & Atteya, 2020) prove their opinion on the necessity to carefully use social networks as marketing communication tools and diversify their marketing portfolio as much as possible, including traditional means and other digital platforms like blogs, websites, forums, etc. The marketing discipline is perspective from the standpoint of using social networks as a form of marketing communication and implementing the policy of establishing direct relations with the client. A scholar (Rai, 2018) believes that the use of social networks is to a greater extent aimed at the B2C market, while advertising on online stores and holding traditional business meetings are the priority of the B2B marketing system. Under such positions, there is a very controversial viewpoint of the author (Nur, 2021); he believes that despite the features of the functioning of modern social networks as platforms for small businesses and the search for a target audience based on a narrow range of parameters, the future of marketing consists in mastering the tools for the exploitation of social networks and web-resources as the main source of regular customers. The necessity to form an effective system of marketing communications, in the opinion of the scholar (Krishna, 2018), is the key basis of any modern enterprise, forasmuch as the pandemic of spreading the coronavirus and the rapid decline in offline sales led to the search for new digital markets. The scientist (Yang, 2018) considers that high attention is paid to social networks as a global marketing tool (Yang, 2018); he believes that social networks make it possible to carry out effective marketing activities not only in the domestic market, but also in the foreign one. Such an approach is crucial for enterprises implementing their commercial activities oriented to the global market and wishing to expand their segment of marketing influence. Currently, there is no single point of view among scientists regarding the use of social networks as a key tool for the advertising campaign of enterprises; however, the majority of them outline the prospects for the development of social networks in order to ensure business activity at all its structural levels.

Methodology

In the course of the research, a number of scientific research methods have been used, which can reflect the most detailed features of using the social networks as the main factor in the development of the company's marketing policy. Particular attention is paid to the theoretical and methodological basis of the information society and social networks, as a result of this concept. A number of qualitative approaches have been proposed regarding the necessity to use social networks as a basis for forming a marketing strategy and positioning the product in the selected market segment. The method of analysis was applied in order to determine the key principles of the functioning of social networks, and the necessary digital infrastructure to ensure its functioning was also characterized. In addition, based on using the method of deduction and induction, the key advantages and disadvantages of using social networks for both small and large businesses were identified. The method of abstraction makes it possible to improve the marketing strategy formation of the enterprise in the modern market and to investigate the degree of influence on the internal and external environment of the enterprise in the

selected segment. With the help of the comparison method, the effectiveness of using social networks as a promising tool for marketing communications was investigated. The method of synthesis was applied in order to analyse the social-economic climate of the European space after the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Marketing communications are an important component of customer-oriented policy and the possibility of establishing a “warm” customer base. The use of digital technologies in the context of communication policy with the client can increase the effectiveness of the marketing company and ensure the formation of reserves of the company’s client base.

Methodical approaches were studied in order to outline and develop strategies for using social networks to ensure the competitive advantages of enterprises in the corporate market of products and services as the main source of advertising campaigns on social platforms. The methodical approach was also formed in the academic paper regarding the opportunity of improving further developments in the problematics of social networks and their implementation in the company’s activities as a marketing communication tool. The method of explanation was applied in order to determine the principles of implementation of marketing communications in the modern global space. Approaches to the definition of social networks, as part of the company’s branding strategy, create conditions for evaluating the prospects for the marketing policy development, taking into account the mandatory implementation of the planning policy of the company’s activities in social networks. Therefore, with the help of the methods outlined, the research was conducted on the use of social networks and platforms as a tool for marketing communications.

The methodology employed in this study involved analyzing the data obtained from various marketing activities to determine the effectiveness of different channels in attracting customers. The primary focus was on the utilization of social networks as a marketing tool due to its significant impact on customer acquisition. To gather the necessary data, a comprehensive analysis of the marketing activities of Govitall and Mentupp Company was conducted. These companies were selected as case studies due to their successful implementation of marketing strategies using social networks. The conversion rates from advertising on social networks, specifically on platforms like Instagram, were examined in detail. To analyzing the conversion rates, the research also considered the advantages of viral marketing and "word of mouth" in the context of social networks. These factors were deemed crucial in attracting customers and simplifying communication policies with clients. To assess the effectiveness of social networks as a marketing communication channel, practical research was conducted. The research findings not only demonstrated the high level of marketing communication provided through social networks but also highlighted the potential for other companies and organizations to develop effective marketing communication mechanisms based on the examples of Govitall and Mentupp Company. The study revealed that the extensive experience of Mentupp Company in the mental health and psychological support market contributed to their higher conversion rates compared to Govitall. This indicates a deep understanding of the social network market and the effective implementation of communication strategies.

Results

Modern features of marketing development are the result of the rapid formation of digital technologies and the corresponding infrastructure. Social networks are a product of mass digitization of social and economic activities of people and their participation in transforming the traditional world order. The emergence of social networks has simplified communication processes and stimulated the corporate sector towards mastering this market. Features of the development of social networks are associated with the introduction of Facebook in 2004, as a high-quality functioning system that can ensure communication between people from different countries, national identities and professional orientation. Social networks are a global source of human resources, access to which is a key task of a product-oriented or service enterprise. The formation of quality activities on social communication platforms can increase the competitive position of the enterprise. In the scientific literature, it has been noted (Opute, 2021) that a social network is a product of digital technologies that unites people in a unified digital dimension. Such approach creates quality fundamentals for the development of social networks, as a priority task for implementing the company’s marketing strategies. The first social

networks functioned on the basis of closed communities. It could be a community of students or a certain circle – corporate, sports club, etc. Subsequently, with the development of digital technologies, they were able to provide the necessary digital infrastructure to ensure the functioning of social networks. The load on the servers of social networks is enormous, taking into account the number of registered users; consequently, the modernized equipment is required in order to support the capacity of the data centres. The marketing strategy of the enterprise differs in quality by the nature of its implementation and direction. It is possible to define the following main features of using the social networks for marketing communications, namely:

- Broad access to the audience of various directions;
- The ability to search for necessary communities and groups;
- Implementation of an advertising campaign in social networks;
- Using automated software to increase the duration and level of customer support in social networks.

Such aspects are key features of the social networks' advantages and the possibility of stimulating the construction of marketing strategies of the enterprise precisely on the basis of the implementation of marketing strategies aimed at being introduced on social platforms.

A prerequisite for the development of social networks were forums and special web resources where people could exchange opinions. Such approaches became the first in the design of social network prototypes. Today, the look and feel of social networks has changed significantly, but the tools of advertising have remained the same.

The main advantage regarding the implementation of marketing communication activities of the enterprise on the market of social networks is the set of established rules from the owner and the need to implement them regardless of the market's standpoints.

Such external regulation creates a necessity to search for effective tools for implementing advertising campaigns in social networks and revealing optimal strategies for the development of the communication component in social networks. Despite a number of positive features of the influence of social networks on the communicative development of people and business, social networks also contain significant disadvantages. Let's consider this problematics in more detail in Table 1.

Table 1.

Advantages and disadvantages of social networks as tools of marketing communications

Advantages	Disadvantages
Wide profile audience	Remote communication channels can cause distrust without the necessary documentation, the correctness of the page design
Constant contact with the client	The factor of design and creativity of the presentation is an advantage when contacting the client
The possibility of using media influence, the factor of creativity	DDos attacks, spam attacks and information vulnerability of a company or an organization
Use of automated systems	The need for special software for large-scale activities requiring significant financial costs.
Rapprochement of the company with the client, positioning itself in the market	It is a new market, and it has not been thoroughly studied yet regarding the specifics of advertising and product offers.

* Source: compiled by the author

The data in Table 1 indicate that social networks contain many opportunities for improving their communication policy and conducting advertising campaigns, but this requires a balanced strategy and experimental testing. Most advertising campaigns in social networks are fulfilled on the basis of

testing, which consists in the possibility of investigating the quality of feedback from the client. At the moment, none of the owners' companies reveal the secrets of the algorithm for promoting their own web pages or the possibility of selling products; consequently, the promotion in social networks, called SMM by experts, is imperfectly studied and needs significant improvements.

The main problem with the use of social networks is a great variety of available robots. The issue lies in the fact that with the help of an open API, it is possible to use the data and web infrastructure of social networks for spam attacks, which scarcely ever can be warned by security services. Automation can contain both a number of advantages for communications and disadvantages. A constantly working support robot can provide an advantage when the time zone of the company and the customer are different, but from the point of view of security, the use of robots is dangerous for companies and for social networks, in general.

The importance of security is a key issue regarding the development of social networks in the future.

The spread of the coronavirus pandemic in 2019-2021 and the peak of its aggravation in 2020 forced most European countries to transform their business activities of a traditional nature to a digital one. The companies that were able to remain on the market used mostly digital technologies. It was the means of implementing e-mail marketing, setting up contextual advertising and using targeted advertising that were able to ensure the functioning of small and medium-sized businesses.

The main problem was communication with the client and the ability to maintain communication in a convenient way. Most people do not use mail outside working hours or do not sort it due to a lot of spams, because using mail is already a partially out-dated way of communication. Such conditions create the need to search for new interactive practices of communication with the client.

Social networks have become the best platform for conducting communication activities with the client, forasmuch as they contain a number of advantages that can improve the overall functioning of the enterprise and ensure the stability of its development.

The key advantages of social networks are brief information about a person or the same company; as a rule, any photo on social networks should contain the following information:

- Name – the company logo, username, etc.
- Activity description – a description of what a person or organization does;
- Confirmation of activity – any information related to social-economic or professional activity.

Based on these signs, it is possible to form features of their use in social networks according to the division into basic segments. Let's consider an example of effective marketing communications in social networks. During the coronavirus pandemic, mental health support became an important direction; therefore it was suggested to choose companies that develop projects in the provision of psychological assistance and moral stabilization, namely Govitall and Mentupp. The materials for the research are reports of open source companies and information from their social networks. Govitall will be the main company for determining the effectiveness of marketing communications in social networks, and Mentupp will be the control one, used for comparing. The Govitall project is called "Mental Health", which implements a communication policy on various platforms; however, social networks, namely Instagram, as one of the most effective social network platforms for marketing activities, have become the main means of attracting customers and getting them interested in this project. Let's consider in more detail the features of attracting customers into the company's project in Figure 1. The indicators in Figure 1 bear evidence that Instagram and Facebook are the most effective platforms. This indicator is predictable given the fact that the above social platforms have the most qualitatively developed advertising management system and the possibility of automating communication with the client. In addition, when conducting advertising activities, there are two types of accounts, both personal and for enterprises with the appropriate functionality. Each network improves the specifics of using each of them and encourages the search for new relevant practices and

methods for the development of communication channels with the perspective of the developing the enterprises involved in social networks, and not only individuals. Such approach will be able to qualitatively improve the level of functioning of social networks and bring the policy of communication to a new strategic level. The implementation of the advertising budget control system, setting up the communication system, the ability to create advertising banners and the formation of the time of the advertising appearance – all the outlined provides crucial non-verbal advantages in communications with a client.

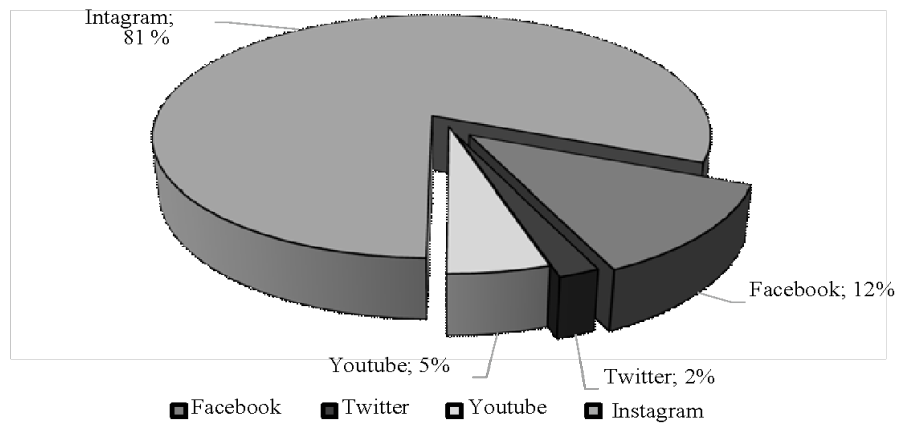


Figure 1. Number of clients from social networks of the Govitall Company, the Mental Health project, 2021

Source: compiled by the author

It is important to note that Facebook has a unique traffic system, which can influence the effectiveness of the company's advertising campaign implementation. As a rule, marketing activities are carried out from advertising accounts on Facebook, but each of them has its own limitations. In addition, in order to avoid monopolization in the market, there are a number of restrictions on the use of advertising. Therefore, some companies use tools for purchasing advertising accounts of ordinary users and create several streams of advertising campaigns from each of them. Such a profession is called a media buyer. Social networks create not only communicative meeting points between the client and the company, but can unite a certain community. Let's consider the features of an effective marketing communication policy in Govitall and Mentupp social networks, reflected in more detail in Table 2.

Table 2.

Comparison of the effectiveness of marketing policy in Govitall and Mentupp social networks

Communication tool	Expenses, thousands of dollars	Number of jumpings	Number of orders	Number of sales	Conversion (%)	Expenses for one purchase, USD	Average price per click, USD
Govitall							
Advertising on Instagram, Facebook	20 000	6240	541	28	25,57	714,29	1.45
Contextual advertising in Google	10 000	8700	241	6	11,11	1872,1	1.53
Article	5 000	180	12	2	23,57	2510	269.14
Banner	10 000	340	9	3	13,64	2124.62	252.13
Advertising block	5 000	460	12	7	12,52	714.29	120.6
Average value					36,28	1785.71	144.83
Mentupp							
Advertising on Instagram,	10 000	3005	313	200	87	55	2.10

Facebook							
Contextual advertising in Google	10 000	2300	303	250	81,4	45	5,1
E-mail marketing	10 000	347	9	100	74,54	101	24,51
Average value					26,18	63,3	15,5

Source: authors field survey

The data in Table 2 indicate that despite the diversified toolset of marketing activities, the largest number of customers was attracted from social networks. In addition, it is worth considering such a factor as viral marketing and “word of mouth”, which is a key advantage of using social networks.

As it can be observed, the biggest conversion for Govitall was precisely from using advertising in social networks and Instagram. Other sources were also useful; however, the possibility of implementing communication policies with the client is more simplified precisely on the basis of using social networks.

Mentupp Company is to a greater extent involved in mental health and psychological support projects, and it has been operating in this market for several years more than Govitall, which is reflected in the conversion rates. In addition, such high indicators testify to a perfect knowledge of the market of social networks and the features of implementing the communicative marketing policy.

The conducted practical research testifies to the features of providing marketing communications in social networks at a high level. The example of the companies under study can stimulate towards developing an effective mechanism of marketing communications for other companies and organizations in other segments of their corporate activities. Such an approach indicates that social networks can become a key direction for the development of marketing communications. In addition, social networks provide the formation of a reputational component, which is qualitatively reflected in the company’s policy implementation.

Thus, it can be concluded from the research conducted that social networks can serve as a qualitative factor in improving the company’s marketing communication and its development in a global environment.

Discussion

The research results characterize the features of using and implementing social networks as the most appropriate tool of marketing communications in conditions of social-economic instability. The issue of using social networks in marketing activities should become a priority area for analysis. Digital technologies are developing rapidly and provide an opportunity to create a comprehensive toolkit for conducting effective marketing policies on various social platforms, including social networks. The features of applying various strategies for setting up marketing communications in social networks can become a promising direction for subsequent studies. The issue of automating marketing communications, based on the use of chatbots, an automated help system with answers to the most common questions, is also quite interesting. The research results indicate the necessity to spread the idea and concept of using social networks as one of the main tools for introducing and implementing communication policy and strengthening the company’s brand in the selected market segment.

Foreign scientists note (Mishra, 2017) that the prospect of further studies will be the creation of automated systems of communication with the client. The implementation of automated systems with the possibility of a real mechanism for solving the client’s problems will create quality conditions for the further development of marketing as a discipline. It is digital technologies that stimulate the transformation of traditional marketing into a modern one. The coronavirus pandemic, as scientists note, has been able to reveal that traditional tools are ineffective; however, social networks have turned out to be the most expedient for use. Remote communication with the possibility of

implementing design systems, information processing and working with objections will be revolutionary discoveries when planning an advertising campaign and building a marketing strategy.

Other researchers (Dhore & Godbole, 2021) emphasize that social networks are a useful tool in the use of customer-oriented behaviour in the market, but they are hardly efficient in the implementation of large business. State tenders, investment projects are more effective in forming the marketing strategy of a large enterprise. Therefore, a promising direction of subsequent studies lies in outlining the advantages of using social networks, both for the B2C market and for the B2B market. Methodical approaches will be able to qualitatively improve the functioning and implementation of social networks in the context of the influence of the global environment.

Ukrainian scientists (Borisova & Protsyshyn, 2020) believe that social networks are a product of the development of digital technologies, and they can diversify the policy of marketing communications. Along with this, they consider that social networks are not the only important direction for the implementation of such a communication strategy. A complex combination of traditional and digital marketing activities can increase the real commercial result of the enterprise. In view of the standpoints outlined, it is worth conducting an analysis concerning the effectiveness of the rational distribution of the advertising campaign on both traditional and purely digital means of communication and carrying out a correlational analysis of the results.

Prospects for further studies relate to the improvement of technological support for the functioning of communications with the help of social networks, as well as the spread of the practice of using social networks as a tool of communication policy. The issue of methodical approaches to the possibilities of creating a communicative environment and its automation is of the highest priority in using social networks as a component of the marketing strategy of enterprises and organizations.

Conclusions

Therefore, a number of key conclusions can be drawn from the research. Firstly, social networks are an innovative technology caused by the global digitalization of the society and the strengthening of the influence of information technologies at all levels of human activity. In addition, in order to ensure the functioning of a high-quality marketing environment and the implementation of a communication policy, it is necessary to introduce automated systems and improve the internal policy of marketing communications. Social networks can provide access to a large audience, which calls for developing approaches to qualitative segmentation and identification of the target customer. Secondly, social networks are developing rapidly, which forms new fundamentals for the formation of marketing strategies and the mechanism of their implementation on the market. Moreover, in order to support marketing activities, it is worth using support infrastructure tools, special container systems, cloud technologies, etc. Thirdly, social networks, as evidenced by the experience of 2019-2021, have become the key advantage of the company during the global lockdown forasmuch as they have made it possible to maintain relations with its customers.

Social networks as a tool of marketing communications occupy leadership positions in matters of improvement and development. The scientific community should focus research efforts on identifying the possible development of social networks for both the B2B market and the B2C market. The creation of complex social networks exclusively for business will be able to improve the communication policy of enterprises, stimulate international cooperation, and enhance the recruitment policy and many other business processes that can be optimized with the help of social networks.

The main conclusions of the conducted research are that the use of social networks as a marketing communication policy can characteristically influence the stages of building a marketing strategy and increase the quality of the company's brand positioning. It is significant that social networks are a characteristic attribute of the quality of doing business; after all, for any enterprise, the presence of a web page in social networks is a business card for communication with the client.

Thus, the conducted research testifies to the effectiveness of using social networks as a tool of marketing communications in the global space. Consequently, subsequent studies should be directed to qualitative approaches towards building a digital infrastructure for business and investigating the model of creating social networks for business.

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