

Social Media Advertising During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Lorena Dumitru

Abstract: *Social Media is the place where we share ideas and thoughts. It is the place where we go when we want to read the news, entertain ourselves or just talk to our friends and family. For businesses, Social Media is the place where they can reach out for customers very easily using all the tools that platforms have to offer. But what happens with all of these when a lot of people become unemployed or they have to work from home? Or when traveling is banned? Everyone turns to technology and online communication undergoes some changes in this context. The aim of this article is to analyze how COVID-19 has changed the way businesses communicate and how we can adapt and respond as a brand during these uncertain times.*

Keywords: *social media, pandemic, advertising, marketing.*

I. Introduction

1.1. Definition of Social Media

Social media is a collective term for websites and applications which focus on communication, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.

On these networks, people can contribute by posting different kinds of content such as: personal information, documents, videos and photos (Rouse, 2019).

While there are a lot of marketing strategies that businesses can use to promote themselves, only one is successful in almost every case: Social Media Advertising. Social Media Advertising can increase sales and brand awareness, businesses can keep in touch very easily with customers and they can see what their competitors are doing and how (Newberry, 2018).

There are a few social media networks where advertising can be very successful (Statista, 2020):

- Facebook – with 2.45B active users/month
- Instagram – with 1B active users/month
- Twitter – with 330M active users/month
- LinkedIn – with 310M active users/month,

1.2. Regular posts

Even if businesses are aware of the impact of Social Media, many of them are still not making full use of these platforms. For the benefit of the business, brands have to invest time, effort and money. This means that regular posts on Social Media can increase brand awareness and visibility and customers can see more of the brand. Between 3-5 posts per week on Social Media will build loyalty and credibility (Fyfee, 2020).

1.3. Paid ads

On these Social Media networks, especially on Facebook and Instagram, marketers create paid ads with different objectives: brand awareness, store traffic or website traffic, reach, app installs, engagement, video views and many more. Depending on the subject of the post, we can choose the one objective that suits our strategy, create an audience, choose the duration of the ad and add a budget. Regular posts on Social

Media and ad campaigns for almost every single post are the key to success for brands, because those ads will always reach to new clients and regular posts will keep the relationship strong with the actual clients.

II. How the pandemic has changed the way businesses communicate

A lot of brands and businesses teamed up with their advertising agencies and used their creativity to make sure that they are spreading powerful messages and that their communication with their customers is correct and efficient during the pandemic (Wikipedia, 2020).

2.1. Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola wanted to make sure that people understand that social distancing is very important and that they observe the rules (Schultz, 2020). To send their message, they changed their logo and they used a billboard on Times Square, New York, to show the new logo with extended spaces between letters + the headline: *“Staying apart is the best way to stay united”* (Figure 1). Also, the campaign was very successful on social media, given the number of shares.



Fig. 1: Times Square Billboard. Source: adage.com

2.2. Ikea

Because of the pandemic, a lot of people moved their offices at home and parents needed to homeschool their children. Ikea knew that when you have to stay at home for several days, things can get boring especially for kids, so they shared a few ideas of do-it-yourself (DIY): castles, houses, fortresses - all of these, with the help of their products (Burton, 2020) (Figure 2).

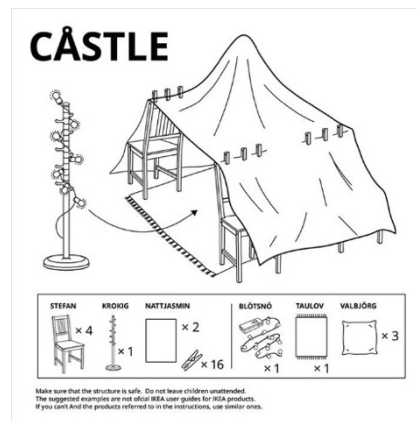


Fig. 2: Castle plan. Source: Ikea

III. How can we adapt communication during the pandemic?

3.1. Pivot and adapt

What we had planned before the pandemic cannot be used anymore. Many ideas and campaigns need to be paused because they are inappropriate or irrelevant at this time. Even simple posts on Social Media must be modified: in a Facebook post, for example, we have to stop using call-to-actions (CTAs) like “Come visit our shop”; instead, if the business owns an online shop or a website, we need to say “See more online”. The messages were adapted for the Spotlight Heritage Timișoara too (Figure 3).

 **Spotlight Heritage Timisoara** ...
Published by Lorena Jaqueline [?] · May 11 at 5:47 PM · 

Nimic nu se compară cu o plimbare prin cartierele din Timișoara, într-o zi însorită de primăvară. 🌸
Dar cum ar fi dacă în timp ce admiri fascinantele clădiri, afli istoricul prețios al acestora?
Descarcă aplicația Spotlight Timișoara pentru Android pe bit.ly/spotlight-heritage-google sau pentru iOS pe bit.ly/spotlight-heritage-appstore și bucură-te de o plimbare virtuală prin oraș! 🗺️

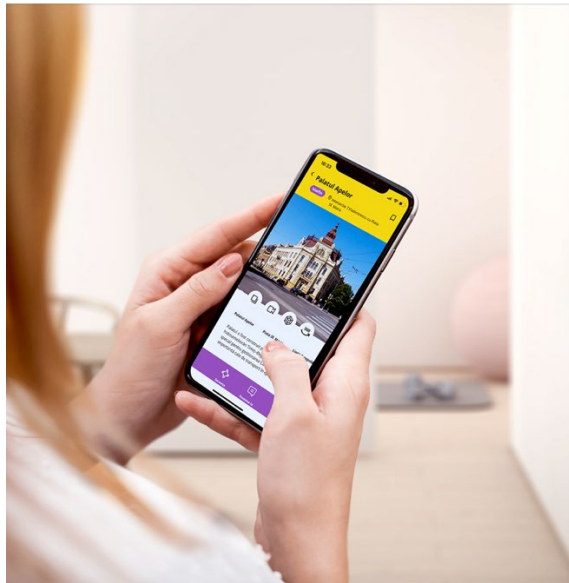


Fig. 3. CTA adapted

3.2. Keep in touch with customers more than ever

Social Media is the place where people can interact with brands, posts or services, but most important is the fact that they can interact with businesses to ask questions for which they can receive a quick answer. Even if we have a conversation about a review, a comment or a message, we have the possibility to shape the view of the customer about our brand or product (Gregory, 2019).

3.3. Interact more

Questions like “How was your weekend?” to a text post, or posts like a video or a poll can easily increase the interaction and therefore, the credibility. Also, there is a big chance for them to answer and interact with the brand/business (Figure 4).

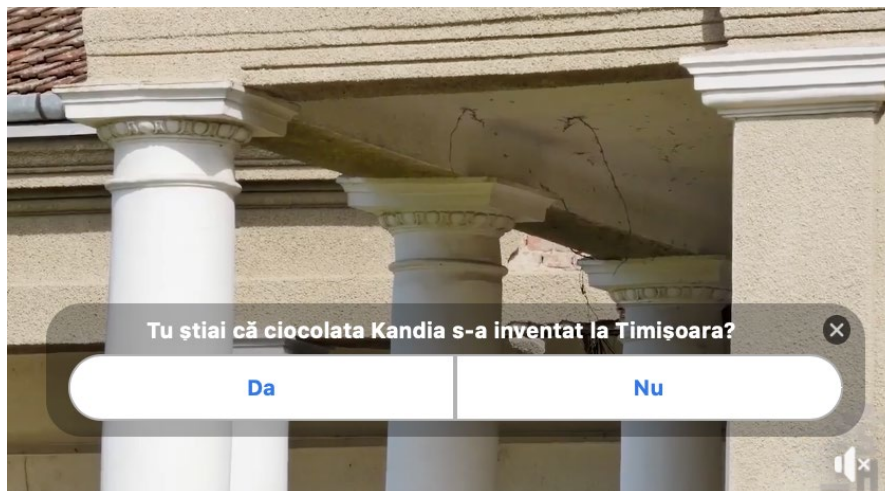


Fig. 4. Poll added on a video

Use the channels where the audience spends the most time on

Most people spend a lot of time on social media and they have an account on more than just one platform. To avoid losing them, find out which are the platforms that the audience is on. Maybe they use just Instagram and Facebook, or they have just discovered TikTok and they love it. A brand has to consider all the platforms in order to reach to new customers or keep in touch with the old ones.

Conclusions

Business were not prepared for times like these, but with some creativity, experience and strategy, things can work very well on Social Media even in these times. Social Media has managed to keep some

businesses on top during the pandemic, and if some business somehow closed, or paused for a while, maybe they should have used Social Media and not just give up. Social Media is the place where we can share opinions and experiences and it is very important to know what it can offer us and how we can use it.

Based on my research, I have proposed 5 steps to successfully adapt communication during the pandemic:

- Pivot and adapt
- Keep in touch with customers more than ever
- Interact more
- Use the channels where the audience spends the most time on.

Webography

1. Burton, B. (2020). Ikea shares instructions for building comfy homemade forts and tents. www.cnet.com. Available at: <https://www.cnet.com/news/ikea-shares-instructions-for-building-comfy-homemade-forts-and-tents/>. Accessed on 06.06.2020.
2. Fyfee, Z. (2020). The Benefits of Posting Regularly on Social Media for your Business. www.themarketingfolks.com. Available at: <https://themarketingfolks.com/social-media-benefits/>. Accessed on 6.06.2020.
3. Gregory, S. (2019). 6 Key Elements of Using Social Media for Customer Service. www.freshsparks.com. Available at: <https://freshsparks.com/using-social-media-for-customer-service/>. Accessed on 06.06.2020.
4. Newberry, C. (2018). 23 Benefits of Social Media for Business. www.blog.hootsuite.com. Available at: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-for-business/>. Accessed on 05.05.2020.

5. Rouse, M. (2019). Social media. www.whatis.techtarget.com. Available at: <https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/social-media>. Accessed on 6.06.2020.
6. Schultz, E. J. (2020). Coke puts social distancing message in times square. www.adage.com. Available at: <https://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/coke-puts-social-distancing-message-times-square/2245631>. Accessed on 6.06.2020.
7. Statista. (2020). Most popular social networks worldwide as of April 2020, ranked by number of active users. www.statista.com. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>. Accessed on 6.06.2020.
8. Wikipedia. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic on Social Media. www.en.wikipedia.org. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_on_social_media. Accessed on 06.06.2020.