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## COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT IN SEARCH-CENTRIC MARKETING

*In this article, the author focuses on the issues of creating a communication mix that reflects recent changes in consumer behaviour. These include increased activity in researching information before, during and even after purchasing decisions. This requires from marketing managers and communication and media agencies to incorporate search engine marketing into each campaign to attract relevant audience and interconnect various communication channels. The author presents a holistic approach to communication campaign management and introduces the components of an integrated communication campaign in the context of search-centric marketing.*

*Keywords:* communication campaign; marketing communication; search engine; communication channels.

*JEL classification:* M31.

Андрей Міклошік

## УПРАВЛІННЯ КОМУНІКАЦІЙНОЮ КАМПАНІЄЮ В ПОШУКОВОМУ МАРКЕТИНГУ

*У статті описано, як сучасні зміни в поведінці споживачів впливають на формування комунікаційного міксу. Мова йде, насамперед, про вивчення інформації – до, під час та після прийняття рішення про купівлю. Відтак, маркетологи компаній та медіа-агенції мають включати елементи пошукового маркетингу в кожну нову кампанію для залучення релевантної аудиторії та підтримки взаємозв'язку каналів комунікації. Запропоновано комплексний підхід до управління комунікаційною кампанією в контексті розвитку пошукового маркетингу.*

*Ключові слова:* комунікаційна кампанія; маркетингові комунікації; пошуковий сервер; канали комунікації.

*Рис. 3. Табл. 1. Літ. 10.*

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## УПРАВЛЕНИЕ КОММУНИКАЦИОННОЙ КАМПАНИЕЙ В ПОИСКОВОМ МАРКЕТИНГЕ

*В статье описано, как современные изменения в поведении потребителей влияют на формирование коммуникационного микса. Речь идёт, в первую очередь, об исследовании информации – до, вовремя и после принятия решений о покупке. В связи с этим маркетологи компаний и медиа-агентства должны включать элементы поискового маркетинга в каждую новую кампанию для привлечения релевантной аудитории и поддержания взаимосвязи каналов коммуникации. Предложен комплексный подход к управлению коммуникационной кампанией в контексте развития поискового маркетинга.*

*Ключевые слова:* коммуникационная кампания; маркетинговые коммуникации; поисковый сервер; каналы коммуникации.

**Introduction.** Marketing managers need to stay in touch with current changes in consumer behaviour. It is crucial for them to identify and respond to recent trends and reflect them in their marketing strategies. As S. Zak (2015) notes, it is important to know how and where customers talk spontaneously, how willing they exchange information with others and what are the real and the declared reasons for consumer behaviour. Over the past few years, the way of looking for information within purchasing decision-making has changed a lot, and nowadays consumers tend to

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research information more actively using inter alia websites and social media. To get information, consumers search online and access many sources via search results. According to M. Zgodka (2011), there are several reasons for this. Search engines enable consumers quickly access information, reduce information search costs or provide the most accurate information on the problem researched. It has been proven that people tend to search online in case they see an interesting TV moment (Joo, Wilbur and Zhu, 2015). This happens immediately (or in parallel) while watching TV ads or programs. Thus, positioning within these results is crucial for each company to stay in touch with prospective customers. The importance of this has been confirmed in many sectors including tourism (Pan, 2015).

In this article, we aim at introducing the components of an integrated search-centric communication campaign and identify the activities that need to be performed at each stage of communication process. To achieve the goal we have applied the following methodology: Firstly, we researched and collected recent scientific and professional resources on the topic and analysed them. Following this, methods of deduction and combination of theoretical findings with empirical knowledge and experience was applied. This resulted in singling out the components of the search-centric marketing approach. Finally, we performed three indepth interviews with se-nior managers of renowned international marketing agencies to confirm the fundamentals of the concept created and further develop its application for effective management of a communication campaign. To create the concept of three pillars of a communication campaign and integrated holistic approach to search-centric campaign, we used the method of case analysis applied to recent communication campaigns managed by these agencies. Lessons learned from these studies served us as inputs for the complete designation of all activities of marketing communication in the context of search-centric approach according to 4 basic stages of communication campaign management. Several findings generated here are unique in the marketing theory and so far, marketing agencies have not applied them in practice as a complex concept.

**Theoretical background.** Changes in consumer behavior within the digital world and digital economy need to be reflected by companies and marketing managers. People use more digital devices to look for new products, compare and assess them, share opinions, look for opinions of other users and/or finally purchase a product service. The rising importance of search engines can be observed in this process. People use Google search or similar services to research before purchasing. This search is performed not only on computers or laptops but more often on tablets and smartphones (sometimes even smart TVs and other devices). There are several scientific studies that examined and confirmed the influence of search engine marketing and online advertising on purchasing intentions and online purchases. W. Duan and J. Zhang (2014) studied the predictive relationship between three referral channels: search engine, social media and third-party advertising, and online consumer search and purchase. These new trends were mapped by Google (2012). This study confirmed that search is the tool that efficiently connects various phases of searching for information. People start searching on one device, continue on other and in some cases, they finish the search or purchasing decision-making on a third device. From this second study, however, it can be also believed that search engine marketing affects not only online purchases but purchases in general, regardless their type.

The importance of search and its active usage by target audience needs to be reflected by companies and organizations. It is necessary more than ever before that they place themselves in front of the search results with their corporate or product website. Normally, people tend to click only on the first 3 results, majority of them do not even go to the second page of the results. Thus, placing within the first page is a must to catch attention. In case of a marketing campaign, search plays another important role: it connects the offline (above-the-line – ATL) advertising with the online world. To say it differently, if a user (potential customer) watches a TV advertisement and is interested in a product, there is a great chance that he/she might research information instantly using a tablet or a smartphone. This behavior was proven in several research studies and Google describes it as the parallel multiscreen behavior. Based on these findings, the author has introduced the term "search-centric marketing" (SECM). This new approach to marketing stresses the importance of online presence, and especially the inclusion in search results for each marketing campaign, in each life cycle of the company and its products. In the context of the evolution of marketing concepts over time, SECM can be perceived as the new level of holistic marketing, or its integral part. Different authors include various components of holistic marketing. P. Kotler and K. Keller (2011) state that it has the following four compounds: relationship marketing, integrated marketing, internal marketing and social responsibility marketing. J. Sheth and R. Sisodia (2015) see these 4 fundamental components of a superior holistic marketing: internal marketing, relationship marketing, integrated marketing and performance marketing. Thus, only the difference in the fourth component can be observed when comparing these two approaches. Anyway, SECM can be positioned as the fifth component within this classification, serving as a tool and an approach that permeates all the abovementioned 4 components.

In the SECM concept a company creates a strategy for search engines presence even if it sells its products offline and does not advertise online much. It was proven that SECM approach creates many benefits for both the company and its customers. Nevertheless, the activities and marketing channels used, search always connects these channels and enables the customer or potential customer remain active and "caught" by the company in its decision-making process. SECM stresses that everything is dependent on the search engine marketing performance, also those at first sight unrelated processes and activities. Visualization of the SECM approach is presented in Figure 1.

**Marketing communication in the context of search-centric marketing.** Over the recent years, the concept of integrated advertising campaigns was introduced and adopted. This approach states that all communication channels are coordinated and serve the same goal. Holistic approach means that all other aspects of company and its functions including external environment are taken into account when planning and executing a campaign. In the context of search-centric marketing, there is a very important component added to each campaign – the search engine (and online) visibility. In this concept, a typical communication campaign consists of three basic pillars: ATL (above-the-line), BTL (below-the-line) and SEV (search engine visibility). In search engine visibility, a combination of search engine optimization (SEO) and pay per click (PPC) methods is required to reach top positions by certain keywords.

The importance of incorporating different kinds of results and even support them by content and positive products rankings has been confirmed in the study of Ghose, Ipeirotis and Li (2014). Three pillars of a communication campaign are shown at the Figure 2.

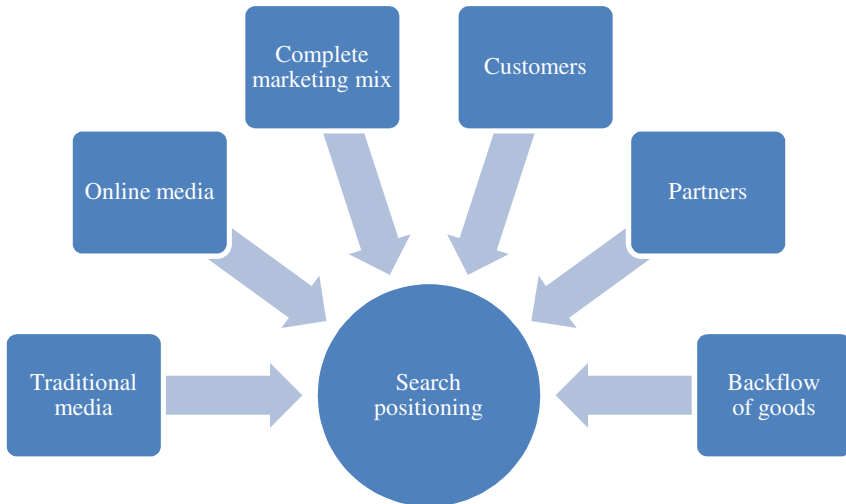


Figure 1. Search-centric marketing approach, author's

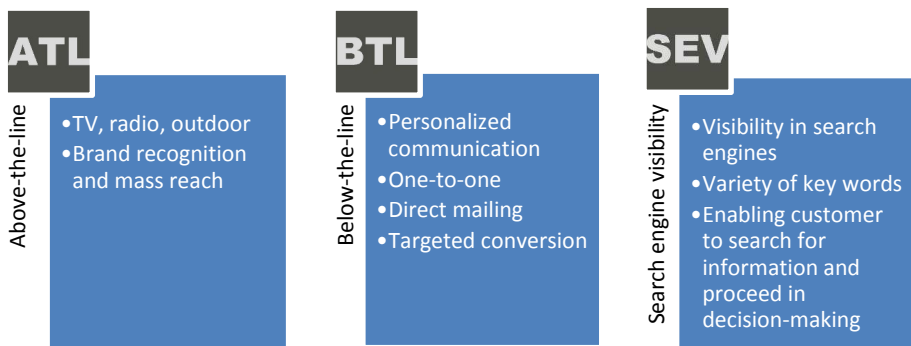


Figure 2. Three pillars of communication campaign, author's

**Research results.** In recent research studies, direct effects of search engine marketing have been proven on different aspects of brand recognition and awareness. G. Zenetti et al. (2014) confirms that search engine advertising has positive effects on all four examined categories/consumer metrics: advertising awareness, brand awareness, brand image, brand consumption. Thus, search engine marketing needs to be incorporated into each communication campaign via the creation of the so-called search-centric campaign. In this process, we need to stress the importance of the holistic approach to communication process. In Figure 3, we introduce the integrated holistic approach that consists of two different levels to be reflected when striving to ensure SEV. The first level is considering external inputs important for a communication campaign. These include pricing, stakeholders, production planning and

distribution management. Managers need to examine the pricing strategy and its influence on campaign and demand generation. These two "P" of marketing mix have to be evaluated together to ensure cohesion and the integrated effect. When developing a communication plan, different stakeholders from inside and outside the company should be interviewed to assess all possible interactions and conflicts of the campaign with company's operations. Production management and planning needs to be in line with the campaign to provide support in producing the required amounts of goods and distribution management has to ensure its effective and continuous delivery to the distribution network so they are accessible when the demand generation curve starts to rise.

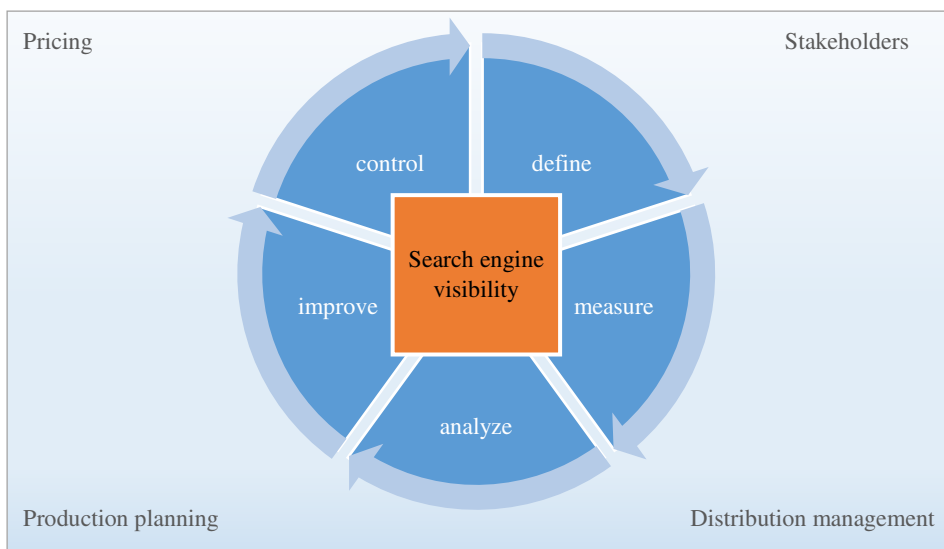


Figure 3. **Integrated holistic approach to search-centric campaign, author's**

The emphasis on continuous improvement is crucial because in the digital environment, all activities are precisely measurable and feedback is instant. Because of this, the company needs to daily monitor and evaluate activities, learn from mistakes, strengthen the positive results and continually work on the optimization of its online performance, including search positioning.

In this situation, companies and organizations need to adapt the new way of thinking and reflect these changes in campaign planning, implementation, management, control and assessment. We have developed the matrix of activities to be performed in this context in all of these phases of marketing communication (Table 1). Our aim is not to list all activities for each phase, but only to point out at those processes that are to be executed in the context of changes in consumer behavior.

The introduced approach to campaign management creates many opportunities and improvements for both company and its customers. This integrated and holistic view is very important in this digital age which enables the company target its audience and significantly increase campaign effects by better targeting, simplifying and shortening decision making process for customers. We can summarize the benefits as follows:

1. Improving project results globally – better and integrated planning phase improves project execution, minimizes conflicts and finally, radically improves the results of the communication campaign.

*Table 1. Activities of marketing communication in the context of search-centric approach, author's*

Phase of communication campaign	Activities to be performed
Campaign planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly define objectives for online and search engine visibility and articulate them not only within the online team but to the whole campaign team including internal employees, external co-workers, suppliers and other stakeholders.</li> <li>- Define the role of online visibility coordinator – it can be part of work of an existing team member or, for more demanding campaigns, this role needs to be covered by a full-time job, or it can be outsourced.</li> <li>- Prepare the concept of online visibility – the plan of web sites including product site(s), landing pages and their structure, plan for mobile applications (if applicable), and plan for social media penetration.</li> <li>- Create the plan for contents – types of content for online presentation, plan of content generation in time, coordinate the content strategy with the search engine optimization strategy.</li> <li>- Introduce the search engine marketing plan – plan PPC and SEO activities, their timing, coexistence and their contribution to visibility in search engines from the very start of the campaign.</li> <li>- Coordinate the online visibility plan with its components with the global marketing campaign plan in all aspects – the approach needs to be integrated and reflect all requirements of stakeholders, and combine them into one functional entity.</li> <li>- Create the time schedule for online visibility activities and align them with other campaign activities.</li> <li>- Calculate the cost for online visibility activities including all internal and external costs (do not forget the content – its creation can be demanding and expensive) and align the online budget with the overall budget of the campaign.</li> <li>- If possible, allow more time for campaign preparation to consider the need for running search engine optimization activities several weeks before launching the over-the-line part of the campaign.</li> </ul>
Campaign implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement all activities of online and search engine visibility according to schedule.</li> <li>- Put as much content online as possible already in this phase to create the roots for organic visibility in latter phases.</li> <li>- Use focus groups to test online visibility before launch, reflect on findings and continually improve results.</li> <li>- Search for new ideas to enhance online visibility and continually modify and supplement the plan.</li> </ul>
Campaign management and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor all activities and their impact using the tools of SERP positions measurement, social media monitoring, social media analysis, web site traffic, conversion analysis, visitor behaviour, heat maps and other tools.</li> <li>- Use the DMAIC (define-measure-analyze-improve-control) approach to reflect findings of monitoring, compare them with goals and find operative solutions to improve performance in all defined aspects.</li> </ul>

Continuation of Table 1

Phase of communication campaign	Activities to be performed
Campaign assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apply the holistic approach to results assessment – global results of the campaign need to be taken into account, not online and SEM performance results.</li> <li>- Clearly define the contribution of online visibility to campaign results, quantify them and explain them to all stakeholders.</li> <li>- Prepare the lessons learned document, comment, approve and present it to improve the performance of the following campaigns.</li> <li>- Reassess the campaign periodically (e.g. quarterly) to include long-term effects of the campaign, clearly filter out noise and effects not affected by the campaign including seasonality, changed environment etc.</li> </ul>

2. Company stays in line with current trends – the company image as the technological leader that reflects all current changes in IT, technologies and consumer behavior is very appealing for specific customer segments.

3. Reach the target audience more accurately – search-centric marketing approach and search-centric marketing campaign enable the company fully use the potential of precise targeting and potential of the customer target group. Moreover, it prevents the company from losing potential clients that have been reached by the ATL campaign by catching them in the "vacuum" of the decision-making process in its earliest stage (Do I have such a need? Do I need such a product? Where to find more information regarding the products or solution?).

4. Increase the campaign conversion rate – the customer is able to research more information instantly and from authorized sources created or recommended by the company. This enables gathering required arguments and finally, decide positively and purchase the product.

5. Shorter decision-making process – this is an advantage for both the company and the customer. If the customer is able to find all data online in a comfortable way, he/she is able to interact with the company on social media, find trustworthy recommendations, find valuable online content regarding his/her need, finally the customer is able to decide much quicker than usually.

For customers, there are reasonable positive effects as well. We can summarize them as following:

1. More comfortable access to information about products and company itself – everything is accessible via search on all devices including smartphones and tablets and thus, customers can study information anytime and return to it comfortably.

2. Improved communication with the company – easier access to contact information and the possibility of online interactive communication using e.g. posts on Facebook or online chat.

3. Easier purchase – customer can decide regarding the purchase much quicker and he can evaluate purchasing conditions in more detail and comfort as well. Sometimes, he can even purchase online or using electronic communication and this increases his comfort and finally, his happiness.

4. Better customer service – company is accessible online including services before and after the purchase and thus, customer can easily contact it regarding any



problems, complaints or suggestions. These are handled much quicker than with standardized ticketing system or help desk.

**Conclusion.** The research results have confirmed that the integrated and holistic approach to communication planning and management is necessary in order to generate demand, get the most of market potential and maintain contact with consumers throughout the purchasing decision-making process. We have proven that there are numerous advantages for both the advertiser and the consumer if the campaign incorporates the search-centric approach and media agency and or/marketing managers ensure good search engine visibility throughout the campaign and after it. The introduced concept and components of marketing communication in the context of search-centric approach for each stage of communication campaign management offer a guidance for marketing managers in creating an up-to-date and efficient communication campaign.

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