

Social media as a marketing tool in transport and forwarding services

Mateusz Dziechciarz

University of Szczecin
e-mail: mateusz.dziechciarz@gmail.com

Key words: transport, forwarding, transport-forwarding services, marketing, social media, marketing concepts, use of social media in transport and forwarding

Abstract

Entrepreneurs in the transport and forwarding services field are looking for new areas of activity to ensure a competitive advantage over their competitors. Currently, with relatively balanced price levels and service quality, the acquisition and retention of clients can ensure success in the market and marketing activities. The approach to marketing activities has changed over the years. Currently, marketing 2.0 is used, which is focused on the customer, their needs, and preferences. Marketing 3.0 is also used, which introduces a broader customer perspective. The area of activity, which is part of the new marketing 3.0 concept, is social media, currently used by over one billion people globally. Such a large group means a regular flow of information which is highly important for businesses. Research has shown that companies use social media primarily for promotion, to recruit new employees, and contact contractors. Internet tools are the most widely used distribution channel of services in the industry. Over half of the surveyed enterprises indicated that they planned to increase social media in their company's marketing activities. A positive trend may indicate that transport and forwarding companies may plan to increase their future use of this channel for marketing activities.

Introduction

Due to the strong competition in the TSL market, service providers strive to maximize profits while providing the best quality of services offered. Globalization of the economy, growing network of connections, and easier access to resources (modern fleet, IT tools, and specialized staff), has made companies improve their offerings. They have attempted to invest in this type of activity, in the hopes it will provide a competitive advantage in the market.

The concept of marketing is based on activities aimed at satisfying the needs of potential customers while simultaneously being profitable. Recent years have seen the development of modern marketing tools, in particular the access to the Internet. In the search for potential service recipients, social media has become increasingly important.

The aim of this article is to organize knowledge of marketing activities in transport and forwarding.

In addition, an analysis of the use of social media in the marketing activities of the industry will be conducted. The assumed goals will be achieved through synthesizing the marketing activities literature. In this article, a survey was conducted on the use of social media in the marketing activities of transport and forwarding companies.

Social media in the concept of marketing 3.0

Running a business, regardless of its nature, is inextricably linked to performing actions aimed at seeking potential recipients of services while also maximizing profits. To maintain profitability, entrepreneurs operating in a demanding economic environment are looking for new solutions to provide an advantage in the market. Currently, with a relatively identical level of quality and prices in the transport and forwarding services market, attempts to gain an

advantage through activities directly related to the nature of the conducted activity may not be sufficient. Therefore, companies should seek to gain an advantage in other areas.

The purpose of marketing activities is to identify the needs of potential customers, while also being profitable. In practice, it is possible to distinguish between the social and managerial definition of marketing. From the social point of view, marketing activities provide a higher standard of living, while from the managerial point of view, it is the art of selling (Kotler & Keller, 2013). The misconception is, however, that the overriding goal of marketing is sales. According to Drucker, the aim of marketing is to know and understand a potential customer so that the offered product or service will sell itself. This means that the goal of marketing is not so much sales as it is getting a customer who demands (Drucker, 1974).

Marketing specialists have identified 10 major categories susceptible to marketing activities, including (Kotler & Keller, 2013):

- goods – physically-existing products in the marketing activities of most countries which constitute the largest share;
- services – in the era of economic development, services are an increasing part of marketing activities;
- events – marketing activities which manifest themselves in the promotion of significant events on a global scale (Olympic games, World championships) and local events (elections, concerts);
- experience – the integration of goods and services to encourage a potential client (e.g. amusement park, swimming pool);
- people – artists, outstanding specialists, and athletes are also susceptible to marketing activities. The aim of activities in this category is to create a unit that is a globally recognized brand;
- places – cities, regions, and countries compete with each other to encourage potential tourists to visit;

- tangible and intangible assets – copyright and ownership;
- organizations – including the marketing of small, medium, and large organizations such as: stores and sales networks;
- information – a product produced by schools and universities that is marketed and sold to communities;
- ideas – any product or service that is associated with a certain idea of sales designed to encourage a customer to buy. The goal of an idea is to convince the demand side it is right by acquiring a particular good.

By analyzing the above categories, it can be concluded that every area of life is susceptible to marketing, while the results of marketing activities depend on expenditures.

Over the years, marketing has adapted to economic changes. According to Table 1, the beginning of the 20th century was the era of marketing 1.0, which focused on mass production and products. The overriding goal of marketing 1.0 was to reduce costs while maximizing profits. The demand side was characterized by low impact on the producer. A characteristic example is Henry Ford, who stated that “customers can buy a car in any color they want, provided it is black”. Marketing 2.0 means focusing on the client, their needs, and preferences. The offer is based on feedback from the market, where the client is the central participant (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). The idea of “client our man” is significant here. Currently, we are dealing with an approach in-line with marketing 2.0, but also a new concept of marketing 3.0, which introduces a wide and holistic view of the customer. According to the concept of 3.0, the client is not an ordinary, passive consumer, but rather a human and business partner. This approach is a response to the changing needs of consumers, for whom it is not so much the product or service that is important, but also the idea behind

Table 1. Comparison of marketing concepts 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0

	Marketing 1.0	Marketing 2.0	Marketing 3.0
Aim	Product sale	Meet the customer's expectations	Change world for better
Period	Beginning of 20 th century	The period between the II World War and the 20s of the 21 st century	Nowadays
Trends	Industrial Revolution	The development of information technologies	The new wave technologies
The basics of marketing concept	Design and development of the product	Distinguished on the market	Higher values
Interaction with the consumer	Relation: seller – many customers	Relation: seller – customer	Relation: many sellers – many customers (partners)

it (Garrigos-Simon, Lapiedra & Barberá Ribera, 2012).

The client-consumer-partner, next to the order, looking for a product or service, expects to meet emotional needs. Companies implementing the marketing concept 3.0 go beyond the standard established framework of the seller-buyer relationship and enter a higher level of contact to obtain an advantage in the market (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiwa, 2010).

Social media is an area of activity that is part of the marketing 3.0 concept. Every minute, 300 hours of new video content appears on YouTube (Viralseed, 2019), while Facebook has 9.1 million daily entries (Raport Strategiczny, 2017/2018). This means a regular flow of information, which is important businesses (Sadowski, 2013). Social media can be divided into two categories:

1. Expressive social media such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
2. Cooperative social media such as Wikipedia and Filmweb.

Over half of social media users use this form of communication to observe interesting brands, while 36% of users display forms of activities related to their issues, many of whom actively participate in creating brands. This means a large amount of the relationship between the seller and the buyer takes place only through and on the Internet. Social media has thus become an important tool for creating demand and information, setting trends in private and public life, and impacting particular industries, including transport and forwarding (Gal-Tzur, Grant-Muller, Minkov & Nocera, 2014).

Competition in the transport and forwarding services market is based on the pursuit of entities to achieve the set goals. The effectiveness of the actions taken depends on many factors, the sum of which must lead to the distinction of a given entity on the market. According to the Mix marketing theory, these factors include (Wrzosek, 1994):

- product – service,
- price,
- promotion,
- distribution.

When in a competitive struggle, companies can diversify the intensity of individual factors to achieve their set goals (Rosa, 2002).

Transport and forwarding companies have great freedom to operate on the market, but they make decisions at a certain level of risk. This means it is necessary to use selected sales techniques, knowledge, and developing variants for changing market conditions (Ciesielski, Długosz & Gołębska, 1996).

Research carried out by Gal-Tzur A., Grant-Muller S.M., and Minkov E., Nocera showed a broad interest in contact via social media in the airline business. In 2008, KLM airlines reached 355,000 “fans” on Facebook (remembering that Facebook has been operating since 2004), while it currently has over 12 million users. Research has shown that the main functionalities of social media in terms of services are:

- providing information about the main update of the website;
- weather updates for tourist and business trip destinations;
- handling complaints and complaints;
- forwarding responses to inquiries regarding handling of passengers, flights, delays, etc.;
- forwarding wishes on various celebrations (holidays and other important events).

Even though some travel companies have foregone having a social media presence (Ryan Air indicated that this would entail an additional cost of employing a team to serve Facebook), in most cases, this is the standard of service currently practiced (Gal-Tzur et al., 2014). As illustrated in Figure 1, the most common factors generating contact between the passenger and airline lines were: expressing opinions on the services provided (48%), demonstrating the demand for the service (36%), and the desire to report an adverse event (16%).

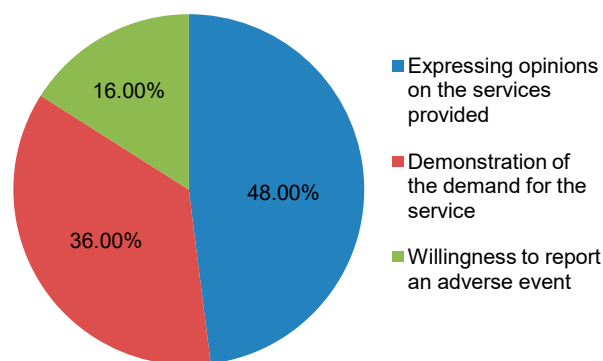


Figure 1. The most common reasons for Facebook communication between the client and air carrier

Communication in social media in the transport and forwarding industry may be used to provide concise information or content marketing. That is, it may be used to create and transmit extensive content that is a response to the demand. This form of communication is aimed at attracting a specific target group, building an expert position, and maintaining and developing cooperation with new clients (Stwarz-Garcia, 2015). An example of marketing

content are enterprises that, apart from concise messages, create extensive thematic articles, putting themselves in the role of an expert in a given subject.

The use of social media in the transport and forwarding industry

The use of social media by transport and forwarding companies has been met with increasing interest, but in many cases, this form of activity is still viewed as an addition to standard marketing activities. For the purpose of this article, research was conducted among enterprises that use the Internet in processes related to the promotion and sale of services. This study was conducted using the direct interview method on a random group of enterprises that indicated international forwarding as their main scope of activity (100% of respondents), domestic forwarding, as well as domestic and international transport (66%). The survey was conducted on group 50 of transport and forwarding enterprises, located in Poland, which declared activity on social media.

Each of the surveyed companies indicated the use of a website to promote their service offering, while more than 85% of the surveyed enterprises used social media (Figure 2). Slightly fewer (82.50%) enterprises used industry events to promote their services (business meetings and conferences).

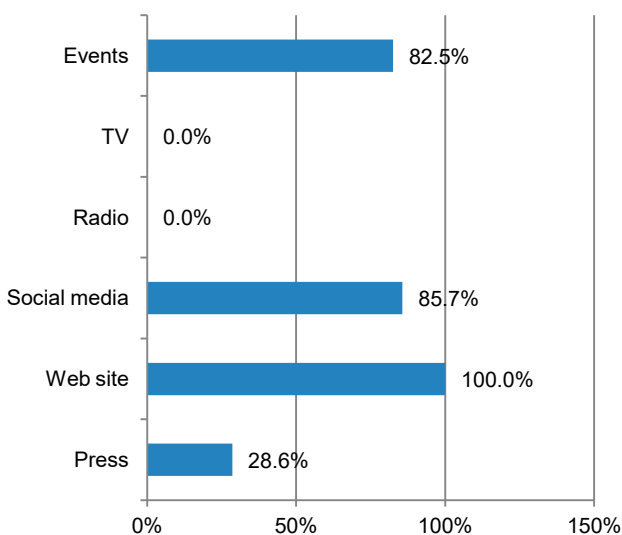


Figure 2. Service communication channels for transport and forwarding companies

It is important to note the polarization in the use of channels to promote transport and forwarding services. While over 28% of surveyed enterprises promoted their services through the press, none of the

respondents indicated radio or television. The results indicate the leading role of the use of online tools in the promotion of transport and forwarding services with a low use of radio, television, and industry press, which have traditionally played leading roles in the service marketing field.

Based on Web 2.0, social media enables the exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), which may take the form of: blogs, social or business networks, forums, games, or social networks. For the purpose of this study, social media has been divided into two groups: social networking sites and instant messengers (Aichner & Jacob, 2015). The most commonly used social networking sites for transport and forwarding companies are Facebook (100%), followed by LinkedIn (71.4%), Instagram, and Goldenline (less than 30%). In turn, the most commonly used communicators are Skype, which is used among 57% of surveyed enterprises, followed by Gadu-Gadu, and Messenger (ca. 30%). Some companies also use internal company communicators.

The main purpose of using social media by transport and forwarding companies is to promote the company. As shown in Figure 3, 100% of respondents indicated such actions, which, by analyzing the previous results of channels used for promotion, shows the potential of social media and its growing role in affecting the industries and the environment. Tools offered by social media are rated “well” or “very well”.

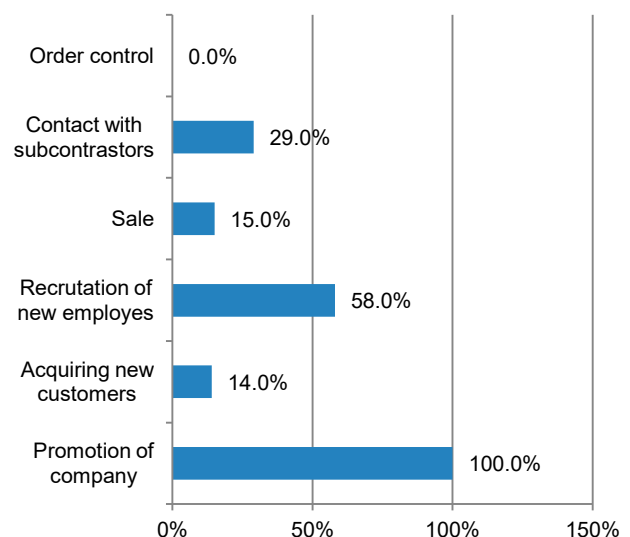


Figure 3. Goals of using social media in the transport-forwarding industry

Slightly less than 60% of enterprises use social media to search for new employees, noting that it is a very good channel for recruitment, while every

fourth researched company uses it to make contact with contractors, assessing this form of contact as “well” or “medium”. Interestingly, only 14% of the surveyed companies used social media to search for new clients, which translates into an average assessment of this form of activity.

Despite the wide range of marketing tools, social media is included in the business strategy only as a supplemental measure. Fewer than 15% of surveyed transport and forwarding services providers pointed to the large role of social media in sales activities, while the remaining respondents defined the share of this form of promotion as small or medium. This may be because social media is a relatively new marketing tool, often still unknown. However, the research presented above shows that when companies increase their social media presence, they build their position, which should help increase participation in their brands. This trend is also noticeable among transport and forwarding companies. Over 57% of respondents reported that they planned to increase the use of social media in their company’s marketing activities.

Conclusions

With a relatively balanced level of quality and prices of services, marketing activities may be the market’s advantage. Companies are currently strongly focusing on their clients, which is consistent with the 2.0 marketing approach and increasingly clearly outlined the concept of marketing 3.0, where the customer is not an ordinary passive consumer. Furthermore, the service, in addition to the implementation of basic activities related to the purchase, provides additional sensations. Social media is part of each concept, and provides the necessary tools to sell products and services in-line with a modern approach.

Social media was not an indispensable tool in the sales activities of transport and forwarding companies, but the companies surveyed indicated a significant share of this channel in brand building. Services such as Facebook or LinkedIn play an equal role in the promotion of enterprises as a website, trade fairs, or industry press, and more than radio or television.

Although social media is not widely used to acquire new clients or for order control, the companies surveyed indicated the use of this communication channel to promote services, recruit new employees, and contact contractors. This points to the significant role of social media in enterprise activities, which may mean further developing and increasing the impact of social media on the transport and forwarding industry by declaring their willingness to increase the use of this channel in their marketing activities.

References

1. AICHNER, T. & JACOB, F.H. (2015) Measuring the Degree of Corporate Social Media Use. *International Journal of Market Research* 57 (2), pp. 257–275.
2. CIESIELSKI, M., DŁUGOSZ, J. & GOŁĘBSKA, E. (1996) *Zarządzanie przedsiębiorstwem transportowym*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo AE.
3. DRUCKER, P.F. (1974) *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*. New York: Harper & Row.
4. ERRAGCHA, N. & ROMDHANE, R. (2014) New Faces of Marketing in The Era of The Web: from Marketing 1.0 to Marketing 3.0. *Journal of Research in Marketing* 2 (2), pp. 137–142.
5. GAL-TZUR, A., GRANT-MULLER, S.M., MINKOV, E. & Nocera, S. (2014) The impact of social media on transport policy: issues, challenges and recommendations. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 111, pp. 937–946.
6. GARRIGOS-SIMON, F.J., LAPIEDRA, R. & BARBERÁ RIBERA, T. (2012) Social networks and Web 3.0: their impact on the management and marketing of organizations. *Management Decision* 50 (10), pp. 1880–1890.
7. KAPLAN, A.M. & HAENLEIN, M. (2010) Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons* 53(1), pp. 59–68.
8. KOTLER, P. & KELLER, K. (2013) *Marketing*. Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis.
9. KOTLER, P., KARTAJAYA, H. & SETIWAN, I. (2010) *Marketing 3.0*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo MT Biznes.
10. Raport strategiczny. Internet 2017/2018, OLX group.
11. ROSA, G. (2002) *Marketing jako sposób wzmacniania pozycji konkurencyjnej na rynku usług transportowych*. Szczecin: Wyd. Uniwersytet Szczeciński.
12. SADOWSKI, M. (2013) *Revolucja social media*. Gliwice: Wydawnictwo HELION.
13. STWARZ-GARCIA, B. (2015) *Content marketing i social media. Jak przyciągnąć klientów*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN SA.
14. Viralseed (2019) [Online] Available from: <https://viralseed.pl/> [Accessed: 2019]
15. WRZOSEK, W. (1994) *Funkcjonowanie rynku*. Warszawa: PWE.