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Branding and Advertising on Social Networks: Current Trends

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Abstract

The emergence of social networks has led to the flourishing of a new golden era of branding, which is a challenge for companies due to the need for creative positioning of companies with an emphasis on building trust and loyalty to the brand. Consumers are becoming more demanding and due to a wide range of products in different markets, make demands that are more stringent on companies. The **goal** of this article was to study the main trends of branding and advertising on social networks to develop a new approach to brand promotion. **Methodology.** The quantitative and qualitative research design was used to determine the main trends in branding and advertising on social networks. The methodology included the following methods: 1) analysis of the relationship between brand value and brand content strategy, 2) content analysis of the content of companies in social networks on the example of 10 world-famous brands with the highest value. The **results** allowed forming the criteria of effective content and communication: simplicity of content and simplicity of communication, lack of direct advertising of products, emphasis on global socio-economic problems and social orientation, unobtrusive communication, content creativity, indirect information about the product or work, the history of the company's development through various tools. The main content strategies of brands are defined: storytelling strategy; strategy of informing about the history of the company's development; entertainment and information strategy; strategy of joint interaction with the audience through the involvement of well-known influencers or users of products. The theoretical and practical value of the results is confirmed by the conceptualization of the main content strategies of world-famous brands, which are pioneers in new ways to build relationships with users through social networks. The research proposes to use a customer-oriented approach to brand promotion. This means studying consumer behavior and predicting possible changes in behavior, which determines the level of interaction with the brand, the content strategy of the brand, and its effectiveness.

Keywords: *branding on social networks, advertising on social networks, Instagram branding, brand positioning, brand content strategy.*

1. Introduction

The emergence of social networks has led to the flourishing of a new golden era of branding, which is a challenge for companies due to the need for creative positioning of companies with an emphasis on building trust and loyalty to the brand. Consumers are becoming more demanding and, due to a wide range of products in different markets, make demands that are more stringent on companies. As a result, branding is becoming more customer-oriented, personalized, and companies occupy specialized niches with detailed segmentation of their customers. Social networks allow not only to position your brand but also to analyze and identify customers, customize advertising "for the buyer" and his needs. Advertising on social networks is an upward trend (Whitelock, Cadogan, Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Knoll, 2016). "Social media is used as a platform for marketing and advertising activities. Firms always find a challenge to design social media ads to attract customers" (Alalwan, 2018). These challenges are related to the dynamic change in consumer behavior and the peculiarities of product advertising. The dynamic change in behavior is due to a large number of advertising messages on social networks, so users become more resistant to advertising messages, ignoring and blocking them (Wright, Khanfar, Harrington & Kizer, 2010). Customer relationship marketing and creative advertising are becoming increasingly popular among companies.

Branding and advertising on social networks depend on two key factors: dynamically changing social media algorithms and user behavior that determines the change of algorithms. These challenges are always relevant, which requires the development of new approaches to branding in social networks based on an understanding of the latest trends. For example, users fall into two categories: those who prefer to view posts and those who prefer to view the

content of a feed on a company page. Another example is giving preference to watching video content over reading useful content within publications as a way to entertain users. The latest trend is also the popularity of user interaction through reactions to the company's content on social networks.

The **goal** of this article is to study the main trends of branding and advertising on social networks to develop a new approach to brand promotion.

2. Literature review

Branding is seen as a set of techniques for forming a relevant culture, which means matching supply and demand, the company's understanding of customer needs (Holt, 2016). Brand management is seen as supporting its effectiveness and popularity (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). The main component of the digital strategy of companies is branded content, which forms the perception and perception of the brand in social networks (Holt, 2016). Geurin & Burch (2017) consider branding as a method of consumer marketing, formed by the company and/or consumers for strategic and operational content management to maintain profitability, track consumer needs, get product feedback, brand promotion. Branding is also a tool for building trust relationships within the concept of relationship marketing. Recent research shows that marketing budgets directed towards social media are constantly growing, suggesting that brands are increasingly interested in establishing their presence on social media. The shift towards social media can be explained by several factors as stated by Gilin12 (Latiff & Safiee, 2015):

- 1) Declining response rates towards conventional online marketing such as banner and direct mailer via email due to disinterest and spam.
- 2) Technology developments have made way for developing IT infrastructures, new tools, and increasing online population that contribute to social media attractiveness.
- 3) Demographic shifts whereby young individuals are keener to move online and the use of traditional media channels as declined.
- 4) Customer preference whereby on the internet, people trust their friends and other users of the similar situation more than any company does and lastly, the most crucial factor of all is low cost. A viral campaign can produce more engaged customers compared to a television campaign at a much lower cost.

The first strategies of brand content on social networks were aimed at using entertainment videos as the main technique (Holt, 2016). The traditional concept of branding has involved large amounts of investment and tight image management through controlled communication for profit (Kohli, Suri & Kapoor, 2015). Social networks have significantly changed consumer behavior and the traditional approach to branding (Kohli, Suri & Kapoor, 2015). The consumer has become an active participant in brand building through collaboration with customer users (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Therefore, the emphasis of companies has shifted from providing product information-to-information exchange (Shen & Bissell, 2013). Companies cannot level the users of social networks, because now the value of the brand is formed together (Lund, Cohen & Scarles, 2018), and user content can negatively affect the company's reputation (Lund, Scarles & Cohen, 2020). Besides, users influence each other's buying behavior (Lund, Cohen & Scarles, 2018). Influence marketing as a concept is becoming increasingly popular due to the active involvement of users in brand formation (Glucksman, 2017). Opinion leaders actively influence the perception of the brand through advertising on social networks, the formation of a popular brand culture among the target audience of the company.

In the last ten years (2010-2020), companies must focus on targeting crowd culture - non-intrusive communication to promote the product and increase the awareness of target customers about the brand. Social networks are platforms for promotion and communication with customers, building relationships (Brennan & Croft, 2012). The motives for customer communication with the company are the need for social interaction, self-expression, and search for information about the product or entertainment (Gao & Feng, 2016). Lee, Kim & Ham (2016) identify two main motives of users in the use of social networks "information seeking and socializing". Brand success depends on the understanding of the audience and the motives for interaction with the brand of users (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). If the company's content meets the needs (motives) of users, the brand will be popular (Gao & Feng, 2016). Thus, the content strategy of the brand affects customer satisfaction with the product, services, and services of the company, the level of brand popularity, determines the quality of communication with users. The latest trend in branding and advertising on social networks is the minimization of native advertising as a way of manipulation, which negatively affects the perception and attitude of the brand. Therefore, this study aims to develop an approach that will minimize the manipulative impact of advertising on consumers to promote the brand.

3. Methodology

The quantitative and qualitative research design was used to determine the main trends in branding and advertising on social networks. Qualitative design is the most popular among scientists for two reasons: the inability to collect data for a full quantitative analysis; quantitative analysis does not provide a complete picture of understanding the content, brand formation strategies. The methodology included the following methods:

- 1) analysis of the relationship between brand value and brand content strategy in social networks to determine how much the content affects the value;
- 2) content analysis of the content of companies in social networks on the example of 10 brands with the highest value for the formation of criteria for effective content and communication. The method of content analysis is selected, given its greatest effectiveness as a method of studying company branding on social media among researchers (Shen & Bissell, 2013; Glucksman, 2017; Geurin & Burch, 2017). Also, the study of content on social networks is possible only through a qualitative analysis of publications, content, and essence of publications, the purpose of publications, user involvement in the publication, quantification of brand popularity based on indicators of publication preferences, and several subscribers.

4. Results

Social networks allow you to communicate directly with customers, reduce advertising costs, understand customer needs "here and now", which determines the product strategy, focus on those products that the market needs. Of particular importance in this context is communication and communication strategies with customers on social networks. Therefore, communication must comply with the principles of accuracy and timeliness, simplicity and trust, understanding the customer's needs by the seller. Otherwise, the company will lose its customer base, receive negative/neutral feedback, the level of loyalty will be reduced, and customer relations will deteriorate. The content of social networks should be aimed at bringing the target audience closer, building trust through the common values of the company and customers.

According to the Invesco survey, 88% of consumers trust product reviews, and 90% read real product reviews before buying, and 72% of respondents say they trust local companies after reading positive reviews (Invesco, 2021).

However, consumers are little aware of the specifics of the operation of the platforms where the reviews are posted, in particular about the commercial benefits and the opportunity to purchase positive feedback about the product. Another aspect of the importance of feedback is the departments of companies that form the analysis of feedback and the effectiveness of customer relationships. The system of analyzing the feedback of real customers on social networks in the company provides an understanding of the weaknesses of the product and its systematic improvement. Such examples are the analytics department of Enjoy the Wood - a global Ukrainian manufacturer of wall wooden cards, which is constantly improving the product by collecting feedback and personalizing the product for the needs of consumers in a particular market (India, USA, and Ukraine). The company's content on social networks is aimed at the perception of an environmental brand that inspires travel and brings together. The value of the brand is formed based on three key indicators: financial, the role of the brand in purchasing decisions, the strength of the brand compared to competitors (Table 1).

Table 1. Cost of brands: top ten globally known brands 2020, billion dollars

Ran k	Brand	Brand Value	1-Yr Value Change	Brand Revenue	Industry
1	Apple	\$ 241.2 B	17%	\$ 260.2 B	Technology
2	Google	\$ 207.5 B	24%	\$ 145.6 B	Technology
3	Microsoft	\$ 162.9 B	30%	\$ 125.8 B	Technology
4	Amazon	\$ 135.4 B	40%	\$ 260.5 B	Technology
5	Facebook	\$ 70.3 B	-21%	\$ 49.7 B	Technology
6	Coca-Cola	\$ 64.4 B	9%	\$ 25.2 B	Beverages
7	Disney	\$ 61.3 B	18%	\$ 38.7 B	Leisure
8	Samsung	\$ 50.4 B	-5%	\$ 209.5 B	Technology
9	Louis Vuitton	\$ 47.2 B	20%	\$ 15 B	Luxury
10	McDonald's	\$ 46.1 B	5%	\$ 100.2 B	Restaurants

Source: Forbes (2021).

Analysis of the relationship between brand value and brand content strategy in social networks shows that certain indicators of brand value indirectly affect the content. High-value brands significantly influence decisions about purchasing products through content, showing how the

product can be used and informing about innovative developments.

Apple's content strategy is based on storytelling on various topics, which actively engages the audience. Google positions the company on the social network as an Internet provider with a focus on protecting the environment through dynamic climate change. The topics of the publications are various - from greetings of the company's employees to coverage of historical events, conferences of the company and the latest technological developments, training programs and open vacancies, income of economic agents from the company's products. Microsoft's content strategy on social networks is based on publications about the history of the company, offices in different cities, contains entertaining creative content. Amazon uses marketing influence to promote the brand, attracting well-known bloggers who shoot videos about the company. The content strategy is mainly based on entertaining content, but there are also publications about new products. Branding contains content that promotes women's participation in business, which demonstrates the company's commitment to overcoming gender inequality. Facebook's content strategy on social media is about engaging users of the company's products, so the posts tell the stories of users from different continents who use the company's products. Facebook also actively promotes the important role of women in history, which means focusing on reducing gender inequality and discrimination against women.

The content strategy of the Coca-Cola brand is based on creative and informative content (Figure 1), the purpose of which is to unite the fans of the brand, both through useful and entertaining content. In its publications, the company calls for "humanity", the union of all citizens regardless of race, gender, and age. This means the social orientation of branding is a part of the company's positioning policy.

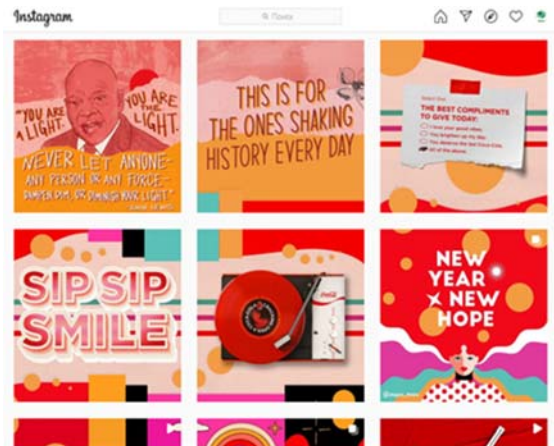


Figure 1. Coca Cola's Instagram page

Disney focuses on its products, but the involvement of actors of different nationalities in the filming indicates the emphasis on socially significant issues of racial inequality. Disney's content, despite being entertaining, actually covers the company's history through information about early products and the latest creations (Figure 2). This form of interaction with the audience ensures its active participation through comments to publications.

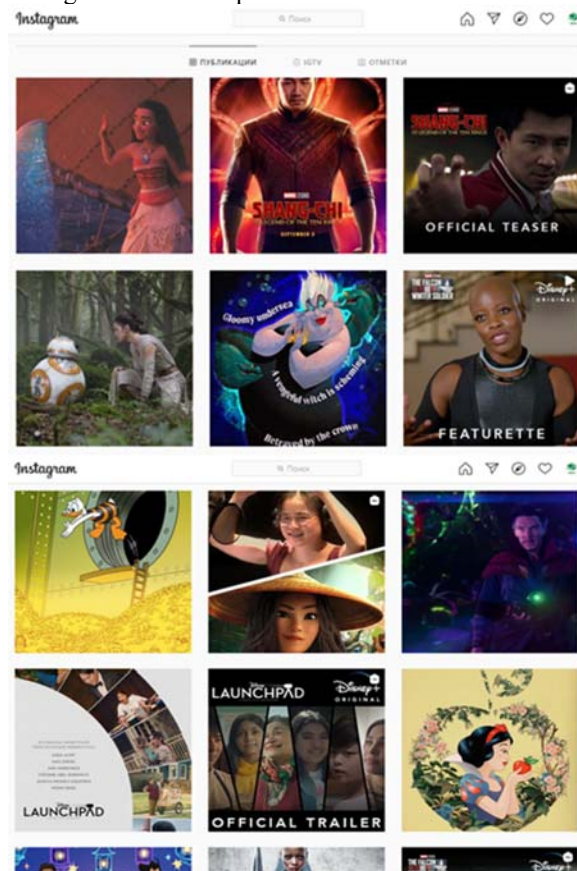
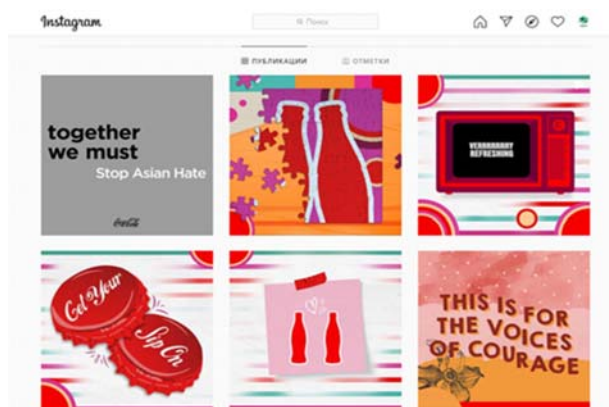


Figure 2. Disney's Instagram page



Samsung branding focuses on sustainable development, science, technology, and innovation, publishing publications with information on possible ways to reduce the negative impact on the environment. The company engages bloggers to engage the audience in active participation in environmental protection. In the publications, users use Samsung products, which means indirect advertising of products, new services, technologies, and opportunities for new products.

Louis Vuitton is the only brand that directly promotes new collections and products through the publication of videos and photos. At the same time, recent publications are devoted to the theme of femininity: "Twist is embellished with a feminine flower charm", which means positioning the brand focused on social values. For example, the advertising campaign of the product concerns "life without borders", freedom as a core value, the opening of new horizons: "Dreams without bounds. #LouisVuitton translates Maison's core values into a reverie of adventure and an ode to the inner child". Louis Vuitton attracts world-famous actors and models for advertising campaigns. The brand uses the principle of creativity to create content that shapes the brand's style and personality.

McDonald's content strategy is based on product awareness, art promotion, entertainment, creativity, and violence against inter-ethnic violence (Figure 3). Advertising is done through the publication of the content of an entertaining nature, which provides interaction with the target audience.

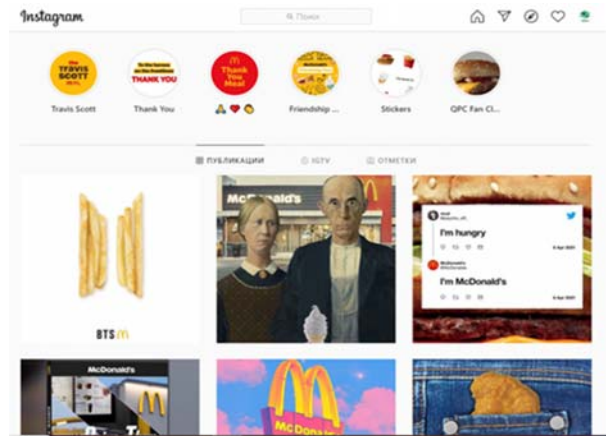
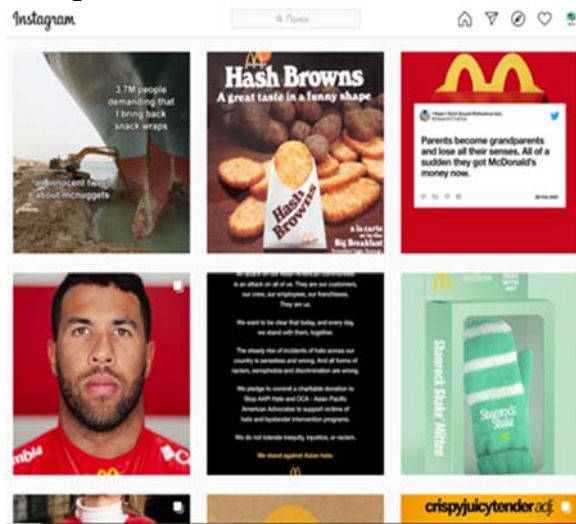


Figure 3. McDonald's Instagram page

Content analysis of publications of companies on social networks on the example of 10 brands with the highest value allows you to form criteria for effective content and communication:

- 1) simplicity of content - the publication of simple to understand the target audience materials, often without information load, which do not intrusively involve the audience, but at the same time information about the company, product, or policy on serious socio-economic issues: gender inequality, dynamic climate change, environmental problems;
- 2) ease of communication - information is presented in a simple way for users to understand, publications are often entertaining or simply informative, the text of the publication is short but accurate;
- 3) lack of direct advertising of products - advertising of products of companies can be considered in the context of publications;
- 4) emphasis on global socio-economic issues: gender inequality and protection of women's rights, climate change, protection of animals and the environment;
- 5) non-intrusive communication, which forces the user to easily interact and engage through comments to discuss important social issues;
- 6) creativity of content as one of the main criteria of effectiveness, which can combine both information about the product and information about different problems in different spheres of public life;
- 7) the main purpose of branding - indirect information about the product or work, the history of the company through various tools: storytelling, blogging, entertainment content, user feedback about the product;

8) social orientation to solve common problems in a given society.

Content strategies of the brand can be divided into the following: storytelling strategy; strategy of informing about the history of the company's development; entertainment and information strategy; strategy of joint interaction with the audience through the involvement of well-known influencers or users of products.

5. Discussion

The study shows the use of social networks to build relationships with consumers and study the perception of the brand by society. Similar findings were made in a study by Gao & Feng (2016): social networks are used by companies to interact with the target audience (Gao, Q., & Feng, C. (2016). Only one brand directly advertises its products (Louis Vuitton) on social networks through advertising campaigns involving famous actors, and models. Timely updating of content promotes constant communication with customers (Shen & Bissell, 2013). The peculiarity of communication of world-famous brands is social orientation and social responsibility. All the considered brands' post content aimed at forming a not indifferent attitude of society to social problems: climate change, racial and gender inequality, animal protection, combating violence, uniting society regardless of demographic and cultural differences. It seems that branding is aimed at positioning companies as socially responsible, and advertising campaigns are a tool to promote brand policy to jointly solve global problems.

Gao & Feng (2016) note the special emphasis of companies on brand design, while we analyze the content; we show creativity in constant communication and at the same time the simplicity of the content. Simplicity and creativity are ways of engaging, which allow ensuring non-obsessive communication, ease of interaction, entertainment.

The unique advantage of branding on social networks is the ability to attract consumers to instant long-term communication. User reactions may change during the interaction, but the content affects the perception of the brand.

Social networks have transformed branding: companies less and less use direct advertising, while the promotion of shared social responsibility to solve socio-economic problems is one of the main methods of modern branding. Companies have been actively transforming branding strategies through the important role of social networks

(Kohli, Suri & Kapoor, 2015). Branding becomes an invisible tool for forming a positive perception of the company. Advertising indirectly acquaints consumers with the products and capabilities of the company's products. Videos and photos are increasingly simple, concise, clear, creative, sustained in a single style and design. This solves the problem of advertising obsession, which forms a negative perception of the brand and the intention to purchase products, which is actively covered in the literature of 2010-2015 (Lin & Kim, 2016; Lee, Kim & Ham, 2016). Lee, Kim & Ham (2016) argue how native advertising can manipulatively influence consumer behavior. In this case, if the native advertising is unobtrusive, it has a positive effect on perception, attitude to the brand. This study identified ways to eliminate negative brand perception through native advertising - the simplicity of content and communication, creativity, social orientation, and entertainment content. Advertising obsession is considered an important negative factor that determines the reaction of consumers to advertising on the Internet because consumers are usually in the mode of searching for information on the Internet. Boateng & Okoe (2015) argue that there is a significant relationship between consumers' attitudes towards social media advertising and their behavioral responses. Corporate reputation softens this relationship.

Social networks are used as a viral marketing tool (Shen & Bissell, 2013). Due to the entertaining nature of the content, users share new posts with friends, which maximizes the brand's interaction with the audience. The main motive for user interaction is the need for social interaction, self-expression, or entertainment (Gao & Feng, 2016). Interaction promotes brand dissemination and greater popularization, forming a shared brand value (Lund, Scarles & Cohen, 2020).

Branding in the social networks of world-famous companies is characterized by values that are indirectly highlighted in the content. Nevertheless, product advertising is still one of the goals of advertising campaigns (Shen & Bissell, 2013). The Instagram platform is an effective way to promote a product (Latiff & Safiee, 2015), which complements other communication channels.

According to Lund, Cohen & Scarles (2018) for the success of branding in social networks, companies must play a key role in the concepts of sociology. This means focusing on storytelling, mobility, and performance that reflects the company's policies. Changing social networking algorithms affect the branding of companies in social

networks. Therefore, all the considered brands focused on social issues, indirectly advertising products and focusing on social interaction. This means that companies are aware of both the dynamic change of social networking algorithms and the change of consumer behavior, and therefore constantly transform the content from the needs and requests of the target audience. Thus, the branding of companies now depends significantly on consumer behavior, which affects the change of algorithms and content on social networks.

Brand content strategies contain information about product characteristics and capabilities that emphasize the excellent qualities of the product (Geurin & Burch, 2017). Attracting customers and well-known bloggers who advertise the product allows you to engage your target audience in the communication process. The creativity of publications is an integral component of user engagement. Followers of brands share the company's content, which is more popular than the brand's publications. Brand-oriented photos arouse a greater level of user interest, which means a commitment to the brand (Geurin & Burch, 2017). Photos and entertainment content are most popular with consumers and provide interaction with social media platforms. This interaction is a new way of advertising (Voorveld, Van Noort, Muntinga & Bronner, 2018), which imperceptibly for the user forms his loyalty to the brand. The study by Dwivedi, Kapoor & Chen (2015) also states that social networks are a channel of communication and interaction that provides an increase in the level of product advertising (Hensel & Deis (2010).

Content analysis of the social network Instagram allows forming a new approach to brand promotion - customer-oriented, which means studying consumer behavior and predicting possible changes in behavior, which determines the level of interaction with the brand, brand content strategy, and its effectiveness. This approach also involves predicting the behavioral reactions of consumers to advertising on social networks, based on the main motives for the use of social networks. Brands must take into account the mood and emotions of the user to increase the level of interaction and increase the level of brand value.

6. Conclusion

Content analysis of companies' publications on social networks (on the example of 10 brands with the highest value) allows forming criteria for effective content and communication: simplicity of content and simplicity of communication, lack of direct advertising of products,

emphasis on global socio-economic issues, and social orientation, not intrusive communication, content creativity, indirect information about the product or work and the history of the company through various tools.

The research makes it possible to determine the content strategies of brands: storytelling strategy; strategy of informing about the history of the company's development; entertainment and information strategy; strategy of joint interaction with the audience through the involvement of well-known influencers or users of products.

The theoretical and practical value of the results is confirmed by the conceptualization of the main content strategies of world-famous brands, which are pioneers in new ways to build relationships with users through social networks. The study proposes to use a customer-oriented approach to brand promotion. This means studying consumer behavior and predicting possible behavioral changes that determine the level of interaction with the brand, the brand's content strategy, and its effectiveness.

Further research should be aimed at studying the behavior of social network users as a factor in changing the content strategy of brands and advertising campaigns. Due to limited quantitative data, this study did not evaluate the quantitative effects of social interaction between users and the brand. Therefore, further research can be aimed at quantifying the effectiveness of branding as a tool for developing relationships with customers through interaction in social networks.

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