



Animated video serie «Little Green Bags»

Copyright:

University of St.Gallen (HSG), Text: Prof. Dr.Christian Belz and Dr. Marc Rutschmann,
Creation: Zense

Real Marketing: Stop Advertising and Start Selling

Confused customers, overstimulation, interchangeable products and an abundance of brands and channels – the world of marketing has become pretty complicated. And the companies' reply is always: We need more of the same! More Advertising, better image campaigns, love brands, social media presence, standardised corporate identities and sexy celebrities... just to make sure it is our head that sticks out.

In our research we call this classic approach to marketing "the world of identification" – an artificial and top-down-controlled world, attempting to link positive thoughts and feelings to a product or service. Then, one assumes, customers will act accordingly and buy the desirable product. Unfortunately, this rarely works. Think of a mountain top restaurant: is it enough to pitch its splendid cuisine and beautiful view with TV commercials, celebrities and posters? No, you have to make sure your guests find their way up there and gently guide them towards a purchase.

We believe in a marketing approach less sexy but far more effective. Let us no longer try to manipulate thoughts and feelings through "worlds of identification" in fashion magazines, super bowl spots or viral videos but focus on the customers' actual activities and actions. It's not about what makes them tick, but about what makes them act. It's about the world of action.

Companies mustn't try to control their customers' minds but follow their actions. Let's take Zara or Amazon, for example. Their success doesn't result from image campaigns. Their successful image is a result of the meticulous consideration they take in meeting their individual customers' needs. It's a customer's action that makes a brand strong, not the other way around.

From our research we know: Faced with equivalent offers, customers act without identification and let opportunities, stimuli and impulses guide their actions. This is where our solution ties in: Examining the individual stages of a purchasing process reveals which levers are most effective for direct marketing, call centers or sales people on site. Fun fact: studies have shown that those levers where it is the customer who approaches the company are particularly valuable. Factory visits or well managed complaints create customers for eternity.

Yet, the customer's route towards a purchase isn't a Formula 1 Grand Prix – linear, paved, short and surrounded by beautiful posters. The AIDA formula – attention, interest, desire, action – is outdated. Rather, it's a muddy rally with twists and turns, where customers

modify their intentions and preferences, break axles, change teams, goals and vehicles, or... give up altogether. For instance, a customer takes about 55 steps to buy a new car. He may quit his journey at each and every one of them. And at the beginning, he's interested in completely different things than he is right before the purchase. Initially, he may notice some colourful balloons and think about the money he has spent on recent repairs.

But shortly before he makes the decision to actually buy the car, he prioritizes his need for enough room and space for his rapidly growing family.. And brand traits such as driving dynamics, youthfulness and Michael Schumacher never really played a part anyway.

This is why the communication style regarding formality, style and perceived commitment changes at every stage, too. It's like being in love: don't you dare speak of marriage on your first date – unless you want another hundred years of solitude. By the way: the only communication element that is important throughout is... exactly... listening.

Companies need to carefully gather and understand their customers' purchasing narratives, using micro-behaviour analyses and big data analyses, in order to apply their marketing and sales tools effectively. Structure your company along the lines of the world of action, not the world of identification.

Time to summarize.

First, align your marketing instruments along the purchasing narrative. Where do axles break with particular frequency? Where are signposts needed?

Second, seek dialogues with your customers rather than providing monological information. And don't you ever forget to listen.

Third, forget about Integrated Marketing Communication. Develop a repertoire of identities and roles, adapted to each individual stage of the purchasing process.

Fourth, focus on inbound marketing rather than outbound marketing: stop peddling your wares – invite your customers to become active, and win them over with your hospitality.

Whenever a customer wants to hear something about your company, you've got a bull's eye. That's even true for complaints.

And fifth: think of marketing as a part of sales, not the other way around.

Modern Marketing's world of identification is not effective. The world of action is fitter for purpose: Find out what influences customers on their long and stony path towards a purchase and make sure they won't turn back halfway through. Real marketing's only goal is... yes...to make sure customers buy.

Direct link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_3938969347&feature=iv&src_vid=0fSNk81KLyU&v=rn-MwAiNeQ0