ДИСКУСІЙНА ПЛАТФОРМА 3
ПОВЕДІНКА СПОЖИВАЧА ТА УПРАВЛІННЯ КЛІЄНТСЬКИМ ДОСВІДОМ

M. Bajak, MA *(Marketing Department, Cracow University of Economics, Cracow, Poland)*

BEACONS IN MARKETING COMMUNICATION – IN THE LIGHT OF CONSUMER OPINION RESEARCH

(1) The paper presents a synthesis of the major issues related to the use of beacons in marketing communication with consumers. These devices are an element of the Internet of Things [Szozda, 2017], which has an increasingly important position in considerations in the area of broadly understood business. The author discusses mutual penetration of the online and offline world with the use of sensors. The presented considerations are supplemented with the results of the author's quantitative research exploring consumers' attitudes to the technology in question.

(2) Beacons can be described as small size devices made up of a Bluetooth chip generating a radio signal and a battery [Smejda, 2016]. These devices detect persons and objects equipped with a compatible app – regardless of whether they are inside or outside the premises [Dudhane, Pitambare, 2015]. As a result, they allow for locating them at the microscale, collecting user data and transmitting personalised information and messages [Manczak et al., 2019]. Moreover, sensors can cooperate with other technologies, for example as a result of providing them with access to the Internet, GPS transmitters etc.

(3) In the context of marketing communication, beacons perform functions in six basic areas [Sanak-Kosmowska et al., 2018]: 1) information (transmission of knowledge about a given institution and its offering), 2) navigation (discovering user location and guiding users in a space), 3) communication (transmitting messages and facilitating response), 4) promotion (carrying out marketing activities aimed to boost sales), 5) research (collecting consumer data and its practical application), 6) image (creating a desirable image through implementing projects using beacons).

(4) In the process of marketing communication with the customers of retail outlets an important role is played by the possibility of collecting user data with the use of beacons. It facilitates a more accurate identification of consumer needs. As a result, marketing activities are personalised, and an offering presented to buyers best meets their individual

preferences. A customer can be encouraged to buy a product having a better specification and proportionately higher price (up-selling), as well as to purchase complementary goods (cross-selling) [Dutko, 2013]. Simultaneously, the acquired information can be a basis for optimising a retail outlet's offering and for improving its business processes. Importantly, the use of beacons facilitates combining the knowledge about consumers, acquired in the real and virtual world. The integration of online and offline information can contribute considerably to the quality of marketing communication with buyers. The obtained data serves to create individual customer profiles, for example on the basis of online buying behaviours, searched and observed products, individual interests and relationships with a brand.

(5) The mutual penetration of real and virtual space resulting from the use of beacons facilitates a synthesis of various sales channels. Currently, buyers seek online information about the products they intend to purchase in a brick-and-mortar shop. This phenomenon is referred to as the "ROPO" effect – Research Online, Purchase Offline [Panek, Wyrwisz, 2015]. The opposite of this process is showrooming – getting acquainted with a product in the real space and making a purchase online for the purpose of finding the best price offer [Tkaczyk, 2015]. Beacons can be treated as tools for shifting buying traffic between online and offline space using appropriate marketing messages, as well as instruments for measuring interdependencies between those channels of sales.

(6) The research of consumers' perception of beacons in marketing communication was conducted from April to May 2020, and was based on the author's questionnaire survey. The study was based on online Google Forms. The selection of respondents was based on non-probability sampling using snowball sampling and the elements of quota sampling. The participants of the survey were asked to send questionnaires to several other people they knew who met the criteria set by the researcher. The objective was to bring the sample structure closer to the Polish population with digital skills. The number of correctly completed questionnaires in the survey amounted to 431. Females accounted for 50.8% of respondents and males – 49.3%. The respondents represented four generations: 1) generation Z, accounting for 7.4% of respondents (persons under the age of 18), 2) generation Y – 44.1% of respondents (persons of the age 18–35), 3) generation X, accounting for 28.5% of respondents (persons of the age 36–55), and 4) Baby Boomers, representing 20% of respondents (persons over the age of 50).

(7) For the purpose of assessing respondents' attitudes to the use of beacons in marketing communication, the decision was made to employ

Lickert scale. Particular responses were assigned to adequate values: a) Strongly agree (+2) = 2, b) Yes (+1) = 1, c) Undecided (0) = 0, d) No (-1) = -1, e) Strongly disagree (-2) = -2. Then the mean value was calculated for each variable (Table 1). The conducted study indicates consumers' positive attitude to beacons. More than half of respondents regard them as an attractive solution (55.5%). Only 9.5% of respondents expressed a negative opinion. According to 63.9% of respondents, beacons can improve quality service in a shop, while 61.5% of them believe that such devices can make shopping more exciting. Sensors are perceived in a similar way regardless of respondents' gender. From the perspective of particular age groups, most reservations about beacons are expressed by Baby Boomers. Younger generations seem to be open to the use of the analysed technology.

Table 1

Consumers' attitudes to the use of beacons in the marketing communication of retail outlets

Description	Total number of respondents	Gender		Generation			
		F	M	Z	Y	X	BB
Assessment of the attractiveness of marketing communication using beacons	0.92	0.91	0.93	0.87	1.11	0.93	0.51
Assessment of beacons as a tool for improving service quality in a shop	0.69	0.61	0.69	0.75	0.73	0.63	0.45
Assessment of beacons as a factor making shopping more exciting	0.58	0.58	0.57	0.56	0.64	0.58	0.45

Source: author's research.

(8) Beacons seem to be a technology of the future in the area of marketing communication. Consumers express positive attitudes to this solution and its benefits. The conducted study indicates, in the first place, such benefits as the possible use of sensors in locating people and objects in

a space, the personalization of marketing communication, and the transmission of information. The obtained results can lead to the assumption that benefits resulting from the use of beacons in marketing communication are also relevant to trading institutions. These benefits are as follows: 1) collecting specific consumer data, 2) personalization of marketing activities, 3) improvements in the customer service process, 4) optimization of offerings, 5) integration of online and offline selling, 6) monitoring of the inventory of products, 7) improvements in payment systems, and 8) locating products in a shop space. A reliable evaluation of the presented technology, however, requires further research, particularly quantitative analyses, as well as the constant observations of business practices.

References

Dudhane, N., Pitambare, S. (2015). *Location Based and Contextual Services Using Bluetooth Beacons: New Way to Enhance Customer Experience*, "Lecture Notes on Information Theory", vol. 3 (1).

Dutko, M. (ed.) (2013). *Biblia e-biznesu*, Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Helion.

Manczak, I., Sanak-Kosmowska, K., Bajak, M. (2019). *Zastosowanie beaconów w komunikacji marketingowej muzeów z osobami niepełnosprawnymi*, „Zarządzanie w Kulturze", vol. 20 (4).

Panek, A., Wyrwisz, J. (2015). *Efekt ROPO w procesie zakupowym młodych konsumentów*. „Studia i Prace Wydziału Nauk Ekonomicznych i Zarządzania Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego", vol. 39 (2).

Sanak-Kosmowska, K., Bajak, M., Filip, J., Kargula, N. (2018). *Uwarunkowania i przesłanki wykorzystania beaconów w mobilnej komunikacji marketingowej*, „Marketing i Rynek", vol. 10.

Smejda, P. (2016). *Internet rzeczy (IoT) we współczesnej gospodarce. Rola, zadania i bariery rozwoju*, „Zeszyty Naukowe. Organizacja i Zarządzanie", Politechnika Łódzka" vol. 64.

Szozda, N. (2017). *Znaczenie Internetu rzeczy w planowaniu przepływów produktów i informacji w łańcuchu dostaw,* „Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach", vol. 315.

Tkaczyk, J. (2015). *Źródła informacji w procesie podejmowania decyzji o zakupie przez e-konsumentów – Polska na tle innych państw UE*, „Marketing i Rynek", 22 (8), p. 759.