

Online Promotion Strategies Used by Iulius Town Timișoara

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Abstract: *The starting point of this paperwork lies in the desire to study the way online platforms are used by the largest business, retail and entertainment hubs in western Romania. Events are per definition limited in time and space. However, the social interaction taking place before, during and after the events can continue online. As the online environment seems to become a priority for promoting different activities, our intention is to analyse the ways in which such a business retail company is promoted online, as well as how it interacts with the audience, in an attempt to attract new customers. The paper "Online Promotion Strategies Used by Iulius Town Timișoara" aims to develop a framework for online interaction strategies, resulting from several comparisons made at various periods of time. We will highlight a content analysis of social platforms, as well as a qualitative analysis by designing an interview addressed to the marketing specialists working at various companies.*

Keywords: *events, strategies, online platforms, social media*

1. Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to illustrate the online promotion of a mixed project, an urban regeneration project for Timișoara. Given the

fact that nowadays people spend a lot of time online, the information distributed by a retail business with the help of the internet engages the online community to interact more, involving them in the company's activities. People put their trust in a company, so online promotion is a very important element which can help the company gain new customers. Moreover, there are interactions between event attendees who have met during an event and who maintain their friendship online, the photographs from the event are shared and commented on, sometimes publicly, for example on the Facebook page of the event. Our case study shows the way in which the image of such a large business, retail and entertainment hub in the Western region is promoted to the community.

2. Research method

As research methods, we have chosen monitoring the online communication tools used by Iulius Town Timișoara, the content analysis of their posts on Facebook, Instagram and Youtube, and the content analysis of the online press, as well as an interview with an employee who works at Iulius Town, in the field of marketing.

For this research, two periods of time have been chosen. We will determine the presence of Iulius Town on online platforms by comparing two different months: August 2019 and April 2020. Located in the center of Timișoara, Iulius Town is the most important real estate project inaugurated in 2019 on the Romanian market.

Content analysis is useful to see how traditional methods are transferred to the online environment, how often the social media platforms are used by such a company as the Iulius group, the frequency of their posts, the number of followers, the number of likes and also the number of comments.

The interview is a qualitative research tool that we will use to obtain meaningful information from someone working at Iulius Town Timișoara and will provide more details about the company's promotion strategy. Interviews are the most common and at the same

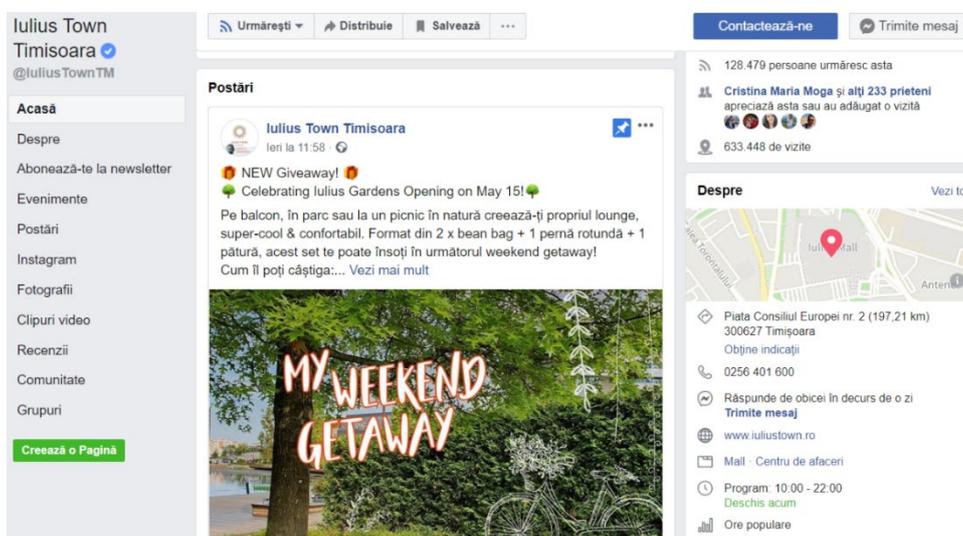
time the most valuable qualitative method of market research. They involve a conversation based on a large number of questions asked by the researcher to find out the interviewees' beliefs and the perceptions that underlie their behavior. The interview we intend to administer contains 8 short questions, designed to find out more details about the promotion of Iulius Town in the online environment as well as in the traditional one. This will provide us with an overview of their promotion strategies.

3. Results

The following example is the content analysis of the Facebook page of Iulius Town Timișoara. The official page of Iulius Town Timișoara (<https://www.facebook.com/IuliusTownTM/>, accessed on 20.03.2020) was created in 2010. This page was originally named Iulius Town, but in 2020 the page name was changed. Currently, the page has 121,533 likes and 128,384 followers, and the number is increasing steadily.

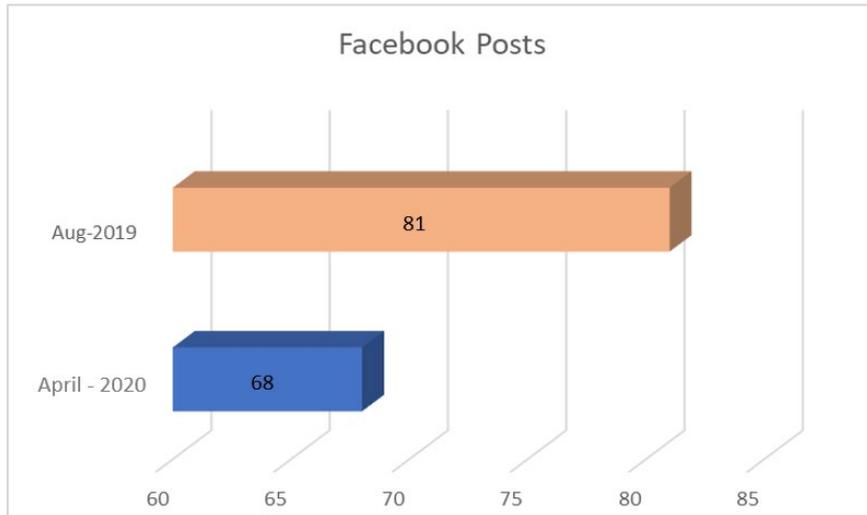
By analysing the Facebook page of Iulius Town Timișoara we noticed that the page is very active and posts on average twice a day about the projects that take place, the services it offers to the customers, the events that will take place and it also informs about promotions inside the Iulius Town restaurants and shops.

The main page contains a section with the specific buttons “Follow”, “Like”, “Send message”, “Contact us”, but there are also the following categories: “Home”, “About”, “Subscribe to the newsletter”, “Events”, “Posts”, “Instagram”, “Photos”, “Videos”, “Reviews”, “Community”, “Groups”. These buttons help users to follow what they are interested in more easily.



Also, we noticed that the category “Subscribe to the newsletter” appears on the main page, which is a good strategy for promotion using the email marketing method. If the section is accessed, the user is redirected to a registration form. Once accessed, it can be seen that the platform used for email marketing is MailChimp.

The concept of multichannel is applied within the Facebook page. The phone number of Iulius Town, its address, its location on the map, its web page address and its operating hours are displayed. Comparing the two time intervals, August 2019 and May 2020, some significant changes have been noticed. Iulius Town was active on the Facebook page both month. In August, there was a total of 81 posts, while in April the total number of posts was 68.



In August 2019, 80% of the posts were about to the inauguration of Iulius Town, in contrast with april 2020, when Iulius Town was affected by the crisis period caused by Covid19 and the messages referred only to Auchan promotions or to the "Donate today, smile tomorrow!" campaign. This campaign, launched by IULIUS company, provides the community with a platform that allows anyone to donate any amount of money, supporting the hospitals in Timișoara in the fight against the Coronavirus. All of them were multimedia content posts.



Virtual photo frame

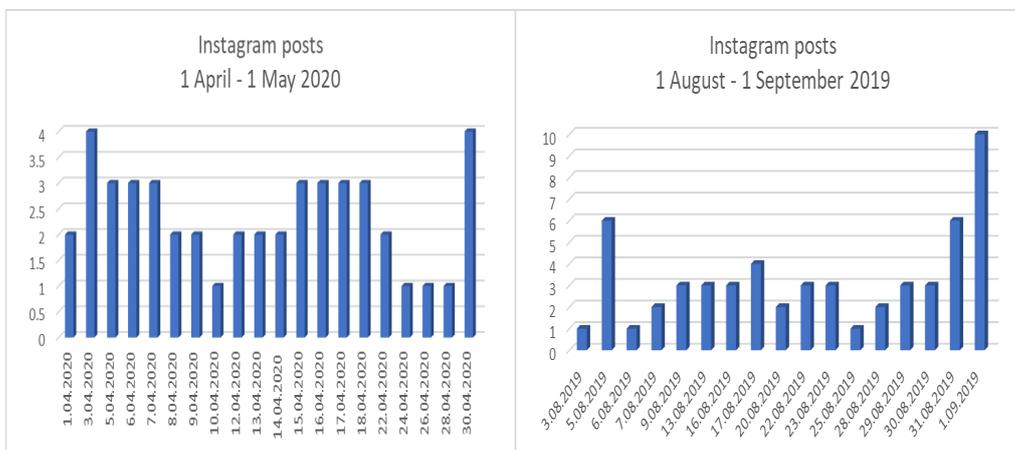


Cover Facebook

In August 2019, a very good way to promote was relying on posters and personalized photographs created by the specialists in charge of the official Facebook page. There were a multitude of photos designed to make the inauguration of Iulius Town known to the community. On August 31st, Timișoara broke a new Guinness World Record when the most LED lights lit simultaneously.

Iulius Town Timișoara also has an Instagram page that currently has 10,800 followers and 806 posts. Specific contact information has been added, such as the link to the website, the address, but also a short description in bio: "My Town".

In the charts below, it can be seen that in August there were a large number of Instagram posts. Similarly to Facebook, all posts covered the Iulius Town inauguration and the three-day festival full of events for the community. Thanks to all these posts, the public can find out in advance about the events taking place and they can also share the information to their groups.



The official Youtube page of Iulius Town (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWe1xsQMb6cEv7p38U6iwxQ/f> eatured, accessed on 14.04.2020) was created on July 1st, 2019 and has 1,043,136 views and 311 subscribers. Currently, Iulius Town has 32 uploaded videos. During August, Iulius Town had 15 videos uploaded on Youtube. The figures in the table below show that the most

widespread video was “Stabilim un nou Record Mondial – 31 aug”, with a total of 498,867 views. In contrast, no videos were uploaded on Youtube in April.

	Video title	Views	Likes
1	Record Mondial - Tutorial - Folosire Bratara	945	4
2	Stabilim un nou Record Mondial - 31 aug	498,867	18
3	Luminăm #TimișoaraÎmpreună	245	5
4	Iulius Town - Iulius Gardens	2,351	33
5	UnderTown 4	165	0
6	UnderTown 6	57	1
7	UnderTown 7	49	0
8	UnderTown 1	57,752	2
9	UnderTown 2	61	1
10	UnderTown 5	27,730	2
11	UnderTown 3	37,196	2
12	IULIUS TOWN - YOUR NEW SHOPPING DESTINATION	327,323	6
13	Iulius Town - United Business Center Timisoara	2,469	46
14	Iulius Town - Iulius Mall Timișoara	2,331	36
15	Oamenii IULIUS	1,526	20

To conclude, Iulius Town uses online communication tools to a great extent. However, the analysis of the two different periods of time shows that the content of the messages has changed significantly over time. August was a month full of events, the company attracted customers and enjoyed notoriety, whereas April was a time of crisis and this was felt as well by Iulius Town.

4. Expert sources consulted

The topic addressed in this paper highlights how a company can use social platforms in a good way to promote itself. Everyone uses social platforms to communicate, spread information and find out about a variety of things. Promotion is a complex process, which has a decisive impact on the effectiveness of an organization's activity. Promotion is the effort made by an organization through which it can present its offer in a positive light, so as to sell as much as possible. However, this approach

is considered simplistic, and the true power of promotion is to create a certain image of an event, product, service or organization (Zbucea, Pînzaru & Galalae, 2009, p. 24).

In „Event Marketing. How to successfully promote events, festivals, conventions and expositions“, Leonard H. Hoyle (2002, p. 30) states that, regardless of the nature of the event, its success will largely depend on the promotion. Promotion is vital to creating awareness of the event, to instilling the desire to participate in the public and the feeling that the investment of time and money validates the benefits offered by the event.

Camelia Cmeciuc (2013, p. 133) argues that the strategies used in online public relations campaigns are diverse. There are three campaign strategies addressed to the online public: the information and interactivity strategy, the connection strategy, and the participation and mobilization strategy. The message is a key element in promotion campaigns. It must be designed to elicit a reaction from the target audience, such as purchasing products, participating in various actions and changing behaviour. The communication for promotion must be addressed both to those in the internal environment of the company and to those in the external environment.

In the article “Placing Romania on the map: the quest for recognition through Guinness Book Records“, Mariana Cernicova (2017, p. 5) points out that Timișoara is considered “a city of premieres” and exemplifies many significant initiatives that happened there. Timișoara has succeeded in securing three records: one registered by the cartoonist Ștefan Popa and two linked to the identity of the city. Thanks to all these premieres, the city caught media attention.

In “Digital Marketing Excellence: Planning, Optimizing and Integrating Online“, P. R. Smith (2017, p. 33) points out that the use of the Internet has led to the creation of the new concept of online marketing, with a new model of buyer and seller. This type of marketing helps businesses be present where the customers are always present: online. There is no doubt that digital marketing can help build a brand.

Many analysts see digital marketing as a way to build both the brand image and the overall company value.

Content strategy on Facebook should focus on the following steps: finding the audience's interests, the topics covered, the content, the length of the texts, the frequency of the posts, the right time to post. When the interests of the audience are known, it is easier to communicate a message of interest. Content strategy needs to include the times to post various photos, videos and links. An effective way to attract as many users on a page can be to post daily about the company's activities. It is recommended to use keywords to write online texts. For example, for trading strategies on Facebook, some keywords can be: "event", "win", "winner". Posts that generate comments are the ones that contain questions, and it is usually a good idea to ask the question at the end of the text (Bădău, 2011, pp. 144-154).

Conclusion

This research has helped us realise the impact promotion can have on organizing different events, the workload needed and the importance to have well-defined strategies to contribute to development of the business.

By using content analysis, we found out that the online environment is a means of communication used a lot by Iulius Town to promote itself among the online community, and the social media is used as a way to promote existing events but also to attract customers.

The newsletter is another strategy that Iulius Town uses to promote itself. We are living in the age of Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, but email is still a promotion channel that brings sales to retailers, especially when it comes to customer loyalty.

The city of Timișoara enjoys a distinct identity, the inauguration of Iulius Town offering the city the chance to present itself as different, in a positive way. We can say that it was a city branding strategy.

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