To understand marketing in retail: Multi- or Omni-?

Marketing communication continues to evolve thanks to technological advancements and availability of new tools. Daniel Stańczuk, Marketing & PR Senior Communications Specialist, Asset Services, Cushman & Wakefield, talks about multi- and omnichannel strategies and differences between the two.

As technology advances and new marketing execution tools become available, marketing communication continues to evolve. We can use different communication strategies, depending on the objective we want to achieve. To illustrate a subtle difference between multi- and omnichannel strategies, I will outline simplified definitions of the two terms below.

Multichannel is an approach based on communication with potential consumers via multiple touchpoints. The primary objective is to enable consumers to buy specific products and services via multiple distribution channels (a brick-and-mortar store, an online store, purchases via social media or mobile apps). Looking at it subjectively, it is a form of traditional retailing without the use of marketing automation tools. We use multiple tools, but we do not analyse data making up a consistentcustomer profile. We do not know his or her purchase history, predictions of his/her online behaviour, the degree of his/her interest in a brand, and we are unable to build brand loyalty effectively.

Omnichannel is based primarily on integration of activities and tools, irrespective of the area of operation and degree of advancement. It requires a combination of all processes where the customer and his/her behaviour are the focal point. The objectives of an omnichannel strategy are to generate leads, improve the conversion rate irrespective of distribution channels, and to build and execute loyalty programmes. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) can be used as a useful co-existing tool to create positive post-purchase experiences in particular.

To sum up, omnichannelis a process which - as it evolves - requires implementation of a set of various IT tools. It requires creation of an environment (ecosystem) and IT facilities that will enable aggregation of collected data to create a dedicated and personalised message not just to a group of shoppers, but to individual customers.

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