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Digital Marketing in Times of Crisis

A crisis is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as 'a time of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering'. It manifests itself in different ways depending on the situation, the reasons and the context. It could be an economic, political, security or health crisis as is currently the case with the Covid-19. Whatever the form it takes, it causes the destabilization of an organization.

Sometimes as is the case in Lebanon, the crisis does not have a beginning and an end but is continuous, changing its aspects permanently. It can also associate two or more of the above forms of crises together.

The health crisis we are experiencing, for example, has economic and social repercussions on a global scale. In addition to the lockdown imposed worldwide, concerns in an uncertain context profoundly modify the behavior of consumers, including internet users. Companies are therefore impacted at the organizational, financial, operational and commercial levels.

One of the main ways to keep business going well in this critical time is marketing. It activates the cash flows between the different socio-economic entities and maintains strong communication between businesses and the consumer. By being a triggering factor of the commercial activity, it also strongly contributes to the growth of the national economy.

Nowadays, marketing strongly impacted by changing consumer habits and the evolution of technology, is no longer what it used to be. Traditional or transactional marketing programs targeting multi-segments are gradually turning into personalized marketing programs targeting the individual consumer through digital technology.

In times of crisis, it becomes necessary for companies to adapt their marketing strategies and turn to new levers of conversion and engagement such as influencer marketing, or to accentuate this lever if it already exists within the company's marketing system. As internet users are glued to their screens to search for information or to work, they become more inclined to search for adequate information through their computers and mobile phones. Several scientific studies conducted during the

COVID-19 outbreak period have shown that global traffic has increased by 70% in containment zones and that this disease could transfer billions of dollars from physical to virtual ad environments.

This allows us to deduce that the known techniques of transactional marketing are becoming less and less effective and that the digital marketing strategies, adapted to these particular circumstances are those which will make it possible to get through a period of crisis and to maintain the growth of the company's commercial activity.

Digital marketing strategies may vary during the crisis depending on the organizational objective of the company, which action plan should begin with an understanding of the consumer's behavior evolution during the crisis as well as the assessment of the relevance of the different digital marketing strategies to adopt, and which will focus on attracting the customers to the commercial offer, on converting them or on retaining them.

Many important tools can be exploited for a better customer's response efficiency. Social media platforms particularly *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Snapchat* create strong bonds between marketers and their audiences and generate buzz around brands. Analytics tools like *Google Analytics*, *Twitter Analytics* and *Facebook Insights* can provide precious data that help marketers optimize their campaigns. Finally, email marketing tools allow marketers to build email lists and automate their email campaigns.

At a time when physical presence is no longer necessary in companies, digital marketing remains the most effective and appropriate during a period of crisis because it allows a customized targeting of customers and an excellent personalization of contact. It also allows the company to obtain a better return on investment because it is less expensive than conventional marketing in more ways than one.