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Digital brand strategies in the Era of COVID-19 pandemic: immersive AR-communication model

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Цифровые стратегии брендов в эпоху пандемии COVID-19: иммерсивная модель AR-коммуникации

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The coronavirus pandemic had an impact on every business and continues to influence to this day. Brand communication strategies need a deep revision in order to meet the requirements of the time. This is the main reason why traditional strategic communication and marketing tools are no longer sufficient for promotion. As we moved into 2022, it is essential that marketing communicators and researchers of strategic communication have to stay on top of the latest technical and industry developments. This will help companies adapt their communication strategy using the innovative technologies and tactics, gradually getting rid of unnecessary things.

The statistics of the digitalization and the Internet growth and development are absolutely stunning (e.g. the Internet is growing at more than 7 percent a year, but in many developing countries, annual growth is much higher [2]). The researchers mention there is a pervasive digital acceleration, e.g. channel shift from physical to digital [5]. Consequently, digitization in the era of Covid-19 pandemic promotes more digital strategic communication tools, especially immersive ones. According to Gartner, in 2021 more than 70% of companies will implement immersive technologies in their work [4].

The research question of this study is about the most relevant digital immersive strategic communication tools in the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic era. As a result of research of communication characteristics, we found that the most relevant and effective tool in a post-coronavirus strategy is Augmented Reality (AR). Augmented Reality is the technology of real-time use of information in the form of text, images, animations and other virtual enhancements integrated with real-world objects.

AR uses neural networks and successfully determines the position of a person's figure in space, which can be useful for various cases. Through AR brands offer their users a unique immersive experience, engaging them in an exciting and memorable process, reaching new audiences and upgrading their involvement. The introduction of new AR technology into a communication strategy is also useful for increasing brand value and attracting customers.

For this reason, leading brands are interested in incorporating AR into their communication strategies: currently, this technology is already used in their strategies by brands such as ASOS ("virtual catwalk"), FC Manchester City ("AR-driven stadium tour"), Gucci ("'try on' shoes in AR"), Toyota ("vehicle demo") [3]. A huge number of brands in the context of the pandemic used AR to communicate with consumers through Instagram masks. The Times has started an Instagram-driven AR initiative meant to create more personal and interactive experiences for users [7].

Generally, researchers predict that the AR industry will reach $70 Billion in 2023 [6].

Thus, in the era of pandemic, this technology is one of the most reliable and practical solutions in conditions of isolation and limited personal and brand communication, which unites and connects communication participants in the context of social distancing. This new hybrid communication model makes strategic communication more close to the target audience.

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