

German Rail's Facebook Campaign – A Lesson in Social Commerce

Marketing has changed over the years and organizations are on the lookout for innovative strategies that will help them to capture their dynamic target markets. The internet has revolutionized marketing especially after the launch of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. One such example is Deutsche Bahn (German Rail) that used Facebook for a social e-commerce campaign to advertise its premium routes.



The ad called “The Boss Is Coming” was targeted at young travelers who were below 25-years-old. It is difficult to reach young audiences through conventional media since this market segment prefers to interact online through the social networking sites. The company’s budget was also limited and social media thus seemed to offer an effective and less expensive marketing solution. The company developed a social media campaign that was to be sold exclusively on Facebook. The “Boss Ticket” was created and the offer was only available for two weeks.

There were concerns about whether it would be possible to generate revenue on Facebook. However, German Rail went ahead with the campaign because it was the most effective channel to reach the target demographic. The Boss Ticket was supposed to make profits and it turned out to be a great social commerce example.



There are more than 10 million Facebook users who are under 35-years-old in Germany. This makes the site the best platform for a company that wants to target a young audience. German Rail came up with an offer that was capable of creating a viral effect. To make this happen, the company created a Facebook page one week before the sale began. This was necessary to control negative comments and let users know that the page would only address issues about the Boss Ticket.

To promote the tickets, German Rail created a video, which got the attention of bloggers. They loved the video, which was directly linked to German Rail's Facebook page, and it became an internet hit within a week. The company did not have to spend anything on media to promote the video. A smart seeding strategy was applied to help the video go viral on YouTube and blogs. The company made the video available to carefully selected bloggers who then shared it with other people.

The video generated more than 700,000 views and it became one of the leading viral videos of the year. The company has managed to attract ticket buyers even before the sale began. Facebook users shared details about the Boss Ticket and this started off the company's low budget social media campaign. It was launched in October 2010 and it ran 7 days a week between 8am and 12pm. The video ad was supported by online banners on lifestyle and travel sites and Facebook ads. It was also aired in cinemas just before the movie "The Social Network."



At the end of the campaign, 280,000 users visited German Rail's Facebook page. The company managed to sell 145,147 tickets and an additional 17,000 items within the two weeks. This was beyond the company's expectations and it became a lesson in social commerce.

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