

THE IMPACT OF ONLINE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EVOLUTION OF KOSAROM COMPANY

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Abstract

The present paper centralizes the results of a research regarding the way that online marketing campaigns and communication through virtual channels influenced the interaction between the Kosarom studied company and its target audience, on one hand, and the increase of its financial figures and the whole brand notoriety, on the other hand. The authors aimed at demonstrating the importance of implementing online marketing campaigns, and that in the agri-food business, companies need to follow a long-term online marketing strategy based on target audience analysis, market trends, and the most suitable web platforms for delivering the key messages. In the research the authors have analyzed data from secondary sources, such as specific literature and they identified and studied the online entity of Kosarom company, its digital implemented campaigns through its website and the social networks and the reaction of the target audience to the company key messages. The studies have identified increases regarding the Kosarom online brand visibility after the emerge of its campaigns on the popular social networks. The increases were noted in terms of company revenue, the company having rises of the turnover and profit in the period following the implementation of the online marketing campaigns.

Keywords: agri-food marketing, online marketing, online promotion, social media, digital marketing.

In a society abundant of brands and advertising messages ever so diverse, the success of a company resides in the way it manages to establish strong connection with its target public. These connections undergo modifications and influences according to the market trends and this aspect will have to be assessed as a complex entity given the socio-economic and cultural influences. (Chiran A., 2003; Chiran A., 2007; Gîndu E., 2006)

Asserting and showing the importance of communication with the target audience by means of online channels has become more obvious during the last years and this type of communication contributes greatly to the activity of a company. Upon analyzing the communication systems pertaining to the field of marketing one can observe a drastic change in regard of the leverage mechanisms together with blooming the internet popularity and the apparition of the social networks. Thus, the audience overcame the mere stage of receiving a message and got a *voice*, promoting a bidirectional communication. Online marketing campaigns in the agri-food field set forth a set of strategies, instruments and activities that can be employed in promoting agri-food companies and also agri-food products destined to

be sold. Unlike the traditional communication channels, the online communication channels embrace greater numbers of mechanisms and offer a higher extent of market coverage. If, by means of traditional communication channels, the potential number of customers reaching the advertising campaign was a rather limited one and determined by various factors (territorial, financial, temporal etc), the online channels offer an almost instant access all over the world connected to internet. This aspect offers companies the opportunity to communicate constantly to their target public, to promote their products and convey different messages in real time while spending less than employing traditional marketing campaigns. (Althaus S., 2009)

We live in a complex world characterized by a fast-technological advancement with great influences over the consumption patterns and inter-human communication modalities. The needs of information and socialization are covered more and more online which is regarded as an infinite data source and interconnection possibilities, communication and exchange of information. Given the context, the companies are compelled to adapt their communication channels and also to

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reiterate their information broadcasting modalities. (Hoffman L., 2007, Pringle H., Field P., 2011)

They are meant to obey the technological and media trends and to meet the expectations of the public by embracing the newly changed communication channels with the modern ones which are undoubtedly popular among the target audience. The marketing specialists consider that in the era of changing the dominance of online communication over the traditional methods, the companies must keep up with the technological advancements and ongoing trends of communication of their public as regards marketing in order to enhance the efficiency. (Drewniany B. L., Jewler A.J., 2009)

Rethinking and resetting the whole communication system, the fierce competition in the agri-food sector and the social environmental changes are a few of the aspects influencing the companies active in the domain of agri-food industry in order for them to become proactive and oriented towards the tendencies of the target markets.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The necessary studies to elaborate the present paperwork were performed during 2018 using as sources of information the secondary data, particularly the online communication channels of the company to be analyzed: the website, pages and official pages from social networks, online marketing campaigns that are implemented in the virtual space. Also, the financial data of the company from the last four years was taken into consideration, analyzing the turnover, profit and number of employees before and after implementing the online marketing campaigns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The development of the social networks in the direction of allowing the companies to promote themselves on a target basis according the audience aimed at by the advertising campaign facilitates implementation of frequent online campaigns, adjusted in real time according to the received feed-back from the addressees.

Analyzing the evolution of the Kosarom company, there was observed a certain connection between implementation of the online marketing campaigns and the raise of the company's turnover immediately after implementing a complex strategy of communication over the internet.

The Kosarom group of companies, holding numerous factories in the region of Moldavia represents one of the great players on the market of

producing and processing the meat at national level. Active in the food industry from Romania, the company went private in 1992 by the Pilot Program of Privatization initiated by the Government corroborated with the European Institutions. According to the offered data by the company, by constant investments in technology and human resources exceeding 40 million euros in the last 5 years alone, Kosarom managed to gain its pole position among the meat processing companies with an ever-growing market share. The activity performed by Kosarom is a complex one achieved in an integrated chain of production: producing concentrated animal food, reproduction, raising and fattening the animals, slaughter housing and industrializing the meat, selling meat and byproducts thus becoming an important presence in all the aspects of economic activity.

Among the companies belonging to Kosarom group, it is worth mentioning Agricola Țirgu Frumos, Industrializarea Cărnii Kosarom SA, Suinprod Roman and Avi Top Iași. Industrializarea Cărnii Kosarom SA is a shareholder company made in 1991 having as main activity the Meat Elaboration and Preservation with CAEN code 1011. This produces approximately 80 kinds of meat products using raw materials from own supplies.

In Romania, the consumption of meat and meat products is relatively low compared to other European countries with a higher growth in economy. The average monthly consumption of fresh meat per person was, in 2017, 3.54 kg per person, higher than in 2016. Together with meat products, the level of meat consumption in Romania is up 4.75 kg/person per month in 2017, higher with 0.24 kg/person per month compared to the previous year, which means an average annual consumption of 56.95 kg/person. (INS, 2018)

Analyzing the purchase of fresh meat and meat products by household categories in 2017, we can observe that the level of fresh meat consumption is higher than the level of meat products consumption, and a higher level of meat consumption in general amongst people with a monthly income in comparison with people with no regular income (*table 1*). These consumption habits may be based on the multiple possibilities of using fresh meat in different recipes in comparison with recipes where meat products are necessary. Regarding this subject, we can see that through different online marketing messages, Kosarom company often offers ideas of using its meat products in different recipes in order to increase the interest in such products. In our research we observed that its online strategy focuses also in changing the consumption habits of its target group

by placing its products in the centre of the culinary possibilities and needs of the public.

The purchase of fresh meat and meat products by household categories in 2017

Table 1

- Monthly averages per person -

Product	U. M.	Total households	Employees		0		Unemployed		Pensioners		
			Quantity	Value	Quantity	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
				- lei -			- lei -		- lei -		- lei -
Total purchases			229.11			130.34		164.97		238.57	
<i>of which, for:</i>											
<i>Fresh meat, total</i>	kg	2.579	35.74	2.733	1.391	16.70	1.858	23.88	2.812	38.21	
<i>of which:</i>											
- beef	kg	0.244	4.82	0.264	0.136	2.28	0.119	2.25	0.259	5.04	
- pigs	kg	0.928	14.87	1.020	0.437	6.75	0.638	9.94	0.993	15.63	
- poultry	kg	1.167	12.72	1.210	0.689	6.05	0.959	9.82	1.281	13.68	
<i>Meat products</i>	kg	1.125	19.03	1.172	16.98	0.766	11.03	0.935	14.30	1.179	

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2018

Also, the data representing the purchase of fresh meat and meat products by households in rural and urban area in 2017 show significantly higher levels of purchase in urban areas than in the

rural areas, indicating a more stable market, higher incomes and positive consumption habits regarding these products (table 2).

The purchase of fresh meat and meat products by households in rural and urban area in 2017

Table 2

- Monthly averages per person -

Product	U. M.	Total households		Households:			
		Quantity	Value	Urban		Rural	
			- lei -	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
Fresh meat, total	kg	2.579	35.74	3.120	44.87	1.952	25.15
<i>of which:</i>							
beef	kg	0.244	4.82	0.301	6.30	0.177	3.11
pigs		0.928	14.87	1.127	18.22	0.697	10.98
poultry		1.167	12.72	1.408	16.46	0.887	8.38
<i>Meat products</i>		1.125	19.03	1.255	22.51	0.972	14.98

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2018

These indicators show important information about the habits consumption in the area in which the Kosarom brand activates, demonstrating that the Romanian public needs to be persuaded through different marketing campaigns in order to increase its market share and to gain a larger share in the monthly shopping budget of a person.

Analyzing the internet presence and online marketing campaigns implemented by Kosarom, we can identify the most important online communication channels the company administers: the official website, accounts and official pages in

social media: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube video sharing channel.

The company's website Kosarom, (figure 1) is a presentation website containing 9 main pages – Home, Our Company, Products, Market, Group of Companies, Careers, Media, Contest, Contact- each of them having multiple subpages according to the specific of the category. (www.kosarom.ro, 2018)

This website is meant to present the history of the company, its specificity and activity, gained prizes, marketing activities currently implemented, available jobs and the possibility to apply for a

position directly online, current selling posts, organizational chart, range of products and assortments, coverage area and the most important data recorded until present days.

The website (*figure 1*) is interactive, the information can be easily found, the visitors accessing the data using a special search button inside the website. Also, through special buttons included on this platform, the active

communication online channels: the YouTube channel rendering commercials and video content, Instagram account and Facebook account can be accessed. The website lists the official regulations of the online marketing campaigns presently implemented by the company.

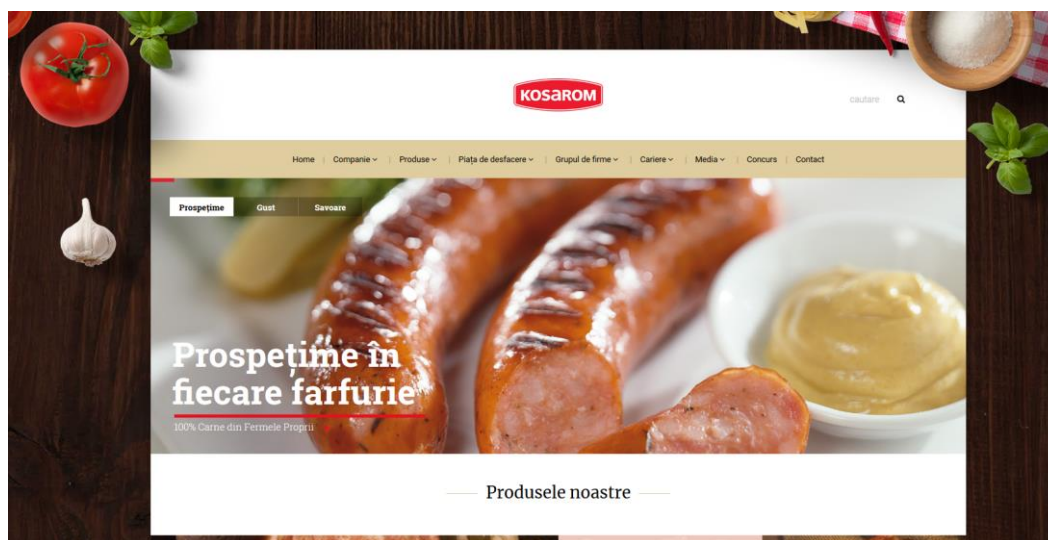


Figure 1 Landing page of the KOSAROM Website

Analyzing the number of people interacting with the brand supported by these channels, reactions, comments on these three online options where Kosarom is present, one could notice that the social network Facebook is the main online channel of communication pertaining to the Kosarom company, followed by the YouTube channel and Instagram account. On Facebook, Kosarom implements online marketing campaigns referring to informing the public on new available assortments, promotions and price cut offs in certain periods of time, selling posts available to Kosarom customers, product quality, using products, ways of using the products in a multitude of recipes, social campaigns in which Kosarom is involved, prizes, acquisitions, and general development recommending this company as a trustworthy brand.

The presence in social media through Facebook page largely contributes to raising the notoriety of the brand by widening the communication available to target audience. By this Facebook page (*figure 2*) the company can bidirectionally establish a communication bridge with the targeted audience and may build a strong connection by direct communication, proving interests and adjusting readiness of the commercial message according to the feedback from the

targeted audience. (www.facebook.com/kosarom.romania/, 2018)

According to the analysis of the Facebook page of this company, of their competition nationwide, the registered data from the monitoring platforms and assessment of the presence in the social networks: ZeList Monitor and fbMonitor belonging to TreeWorks company, we can analyze the Facebook activity of the company by means of some main specific indicators: the number of active fans and individual users who have created an interaction with the brand, the number of fans liking the page, the number of posts per page, number of comments and the number of positive or negative reviews. (ZeList Monitor, 2018; fbMonitor, 2018)

The official Facebook page of the Kosarom company was created in 2016 and communication with the public by means of visual and text content began to pay off starting from October 2016. (*figure 2*)

Until August 2018, the registered results on Facebook are positive and the company currently registers in the top 10 brands from its category, thus revealing a strong presence nationally. In august 2018, the overall number of likes of the page is 24.000 situating this company among the first 10 companies of its category from Romania, according to a poll made by the monitoring

platforms of the online brands. (ZeList Monitor, 2018; IQads, 2018)

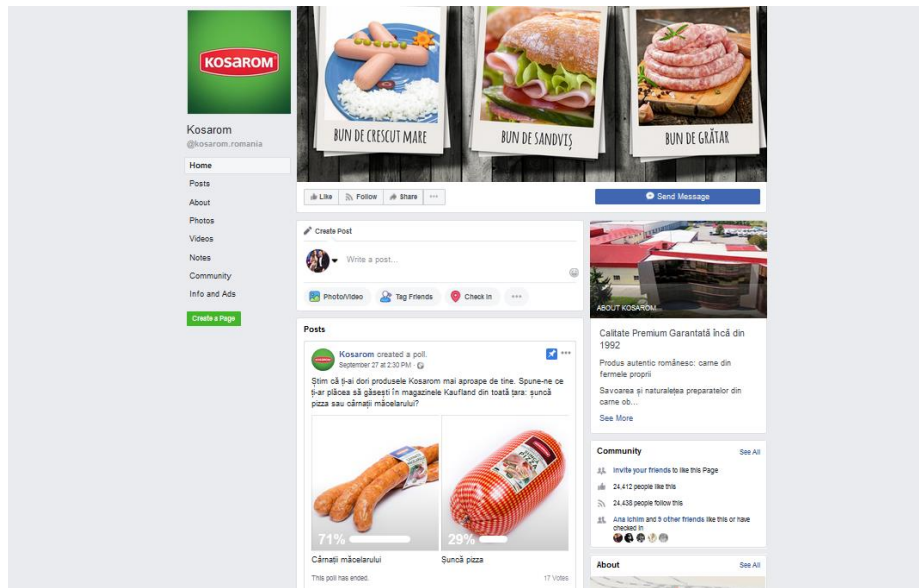


Figure 2 Official Facebook page of the KOSAROM company

The first places in its category are occupied, at the national level, by companies such as *Cris-Tim*, *Caroli*, *Moldova în bucate*, *Mezeluri Sibiu*, *Matache Măcelarul* and *Meda*. Although the total number of likes (the main success indicator of this social network) of the page is lower compared to its competition but considering that its presence on Facebook is less than 5 years, unlike its competitors, there can be seen a rapid growth of the number of likes, the page becoming more and more popular due to extensive implemented marketing campaigns.

As regards the activity on Facebook, one can identify an online marketing strategy based on attracting and constant maintaining the interest of the target public on the page. The communication strategy on Facebook platform was built according to the characteristics and interests of the main target audience: people interested in cooking, taking decisions of acquiring food products, in charge of preparing the food. In this direction there can be noticed a diversity of posts types on the page which is meant to uphold people's interest and to satisfy different other needs related to the field of activity of the company. Most messages are transactional, meant to induce a behavioral pattern of buying Kosarom products. These transactional messages promote various product assortments, the benefits of consuming these products, offers, information linked to the composition of the products and their quality. Another type of posts from Facebook are the posts

referring to community and its inner relations. We therefore encounter posts referring to Facebook community of the company created by its customers, fans, followers.

To vividly maintain their interest and to reward its most active fans and also to popularize the page online, there are often organized "Like and Share" contests where prizes are awarded after an electronic random selection. One of the most popular competition took place in August 2018 and rocketed the Facebook page of the company Kosarom nationally in its category – the competition "Urzeala Grătarelor / Game of Barbeque" which cleverly transferred the popularity of a TV series ("Urzeala tronurilor / Game of Thrones") in promoting on Facebook by means of views and messages referring to the above series in a metaphoric form by matching the title and features of the main characters. The competition has drawn attention to large scale, the registered results being considered satisfactory: approximately 300 shares per post, 1500 likes per post and 600 comments per post.

Another type of popular posts frequently found on Kosarom Facebook page is embodied by posts about recipes having as protagonists the products sold by the company, meal taking advice, modern ways of integrating assortments in the daily menu. This type of posts is appreciated by the younger audience who is interested in finding and learning new things, in easily preparing recipes which need little time to prepare and less resources.

The audience interested in eating healthy is also targeted by publishing recipes and ideas of reinterpretation of the classic food choices seen as unhealthy, such as sandwiches, barbecues, pasta. It may be noticed that by the diversity and typology of the posts the aim is to create a modern image of the Kosarom brand keeping up with modern gastronomic trends. Altogether, there appears the image of a brand interested in the needs of the target audience aiming to establish a strong connection with it, to communicate bidirectionally by constant request of customers feedback, product enhancement suggestions and the ways of presenting it.

The main message promoted by means of Facebook social platform is "Kosarom 100%

Românesc / Kosarom 100% Romanian", the company being interested in occupying a fine place among authentic Romanian brands selling high quality products made locally. Aside from promoting own products, advice of using them, opening new branches and initiating new contests, the Kosarom company highlights during online communication the activities of social responsibility, getting involved in challenged social cases or challenged social categories and supporting national causes such as sports events and other activities loved by the audience. (Kosarom Facebook Page, 2018).

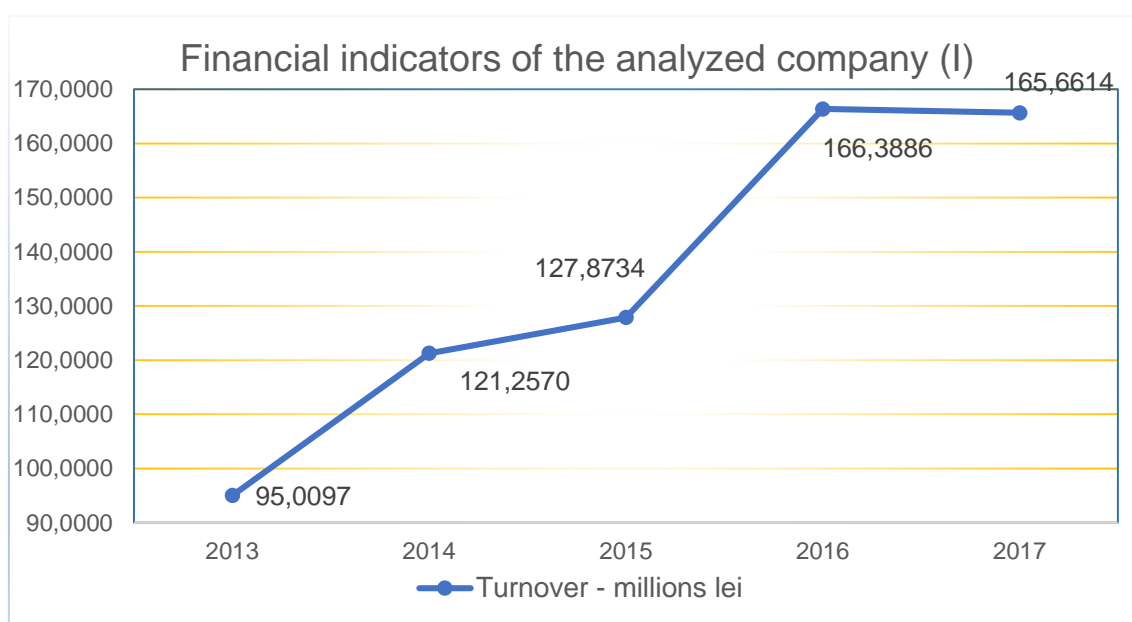


Figure 3 Financial indicators of the Kosarom company (I)

In conclusion, the Facebook page representing Kosarom brand stands for an important online communication channel through which online marketing campaigns propagate inside a targeted audience, the specialists of the company having the opportunity to establish certain parameters of selecting people who are on the verge of viewing the messages of the

campaigns in the virtual environment. In this way the company may create and disseminate diverse messages according to desired audience to whom they address. The messages can be adjusted in real time according to the received feedback, the brand managing to prove its interest in quality in all domains and increased involvement in the community.

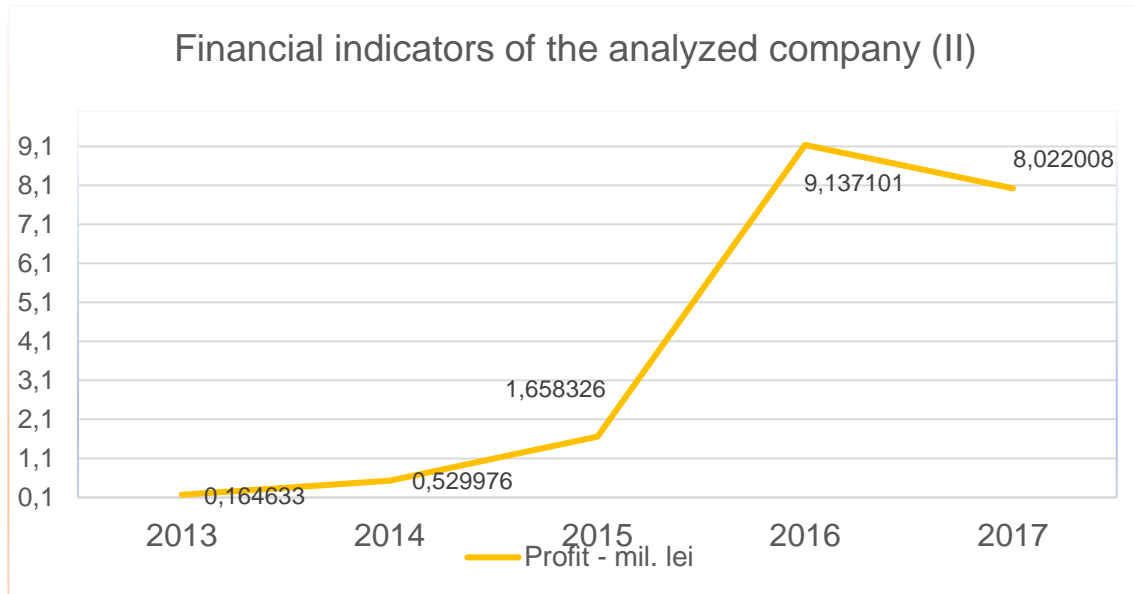


Figure 4 Financial indicators of the analyzed company (II)

Another used channel in implementing online marketing campaigns belonging to Kosarom company is the Instagram account. This contains similar posts to the ones promoted via Facebook but focused mainly on visual aspect which is characteristic for this network. Moreover, by means of this channel increases the visibility of the Kosarom brand among young audience of people aged between 18-25 years old. Psychologically, people have the tendency to react more intensely to promotional messages having as main images food related highlights and given this aspect, using Instagram channel is most appropriate, being well known that all the brands active in food business

have a greater rate of success due to visual stimuli obtained by posting image-based messages and visual characteristics of the food product.

According to the public financial data of Kosarom, during the last 5 years the company registered raises both in the turnover (*figure 3*), profit (*figure 4*), but also in the number of current employees (*table 3*).

If in 2012 the company had a turnover of 95.009.659 lei, in 2017 their turnover nearly doubled reaching a peak of 165.661.389 given the fact that the number of employees increased only with 132, thus proving the efficacy of work due to investments in new technologies. (*table 3*)

Table 3

Evolution of turnover, profit and employees number during 2013 – 2017 of the analyzed company

Indicator/Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Turnover	95.009.659	121.256.959	127.873.437	166.388.617	165.661.389
Gain	164.633	529.976	1.658.326	9.137.101	8.022.008
Employees number	368	417	457	472	500

Source: Ministry of Public Finance, 2018

Together with implementing the first marketing campaigns in online field we can notice a raise of the turnover from 127.873.437 lei in

2015 to 166.388.617 lei in 2016 and 165.661.389 in 2017 (*figure 4*). In 2017, the number of employees raised with 43 over the year 2015, data

certifying that the investments in technology and marketing contributed greatly to enhance the financial capital of the company.

CONCLUSIONS

Projecting and implementing online marketing campaigns positively influenced the notoriety of the Kosarom brand on Romanian market and led to growing the turnover of the company and of the profit in the years after such implementations. As the data referring the growth of the company, it is worth mentioning:

- Implementing a series of online marketing campaigns on Facebook and Instagram social networks which registered a high number of people involved in distribution of the messages, following Facebook page, liking the posts of the company, the viral aspect being very important in its category of activity.
- The benefits of online marketing campaigns are reflected in the viral potential of online advertising techniques, the present study highlighting the way Kosarom established a bidirectional communication with its target audiences.
- Through targeted online marketing campaigns, the Kosarom company has the possibility of delivering key messages in real time, conceived according to the characteristics of the target audience (professional status, age, gender, interests and other important criteria), using lower budgets in comparison with traditional marketing campaigns.
- The online communication channels provide a favorable climate for building relationships with customers and increasing customer retention levels.
- The online marketing channels provide the possibility to Kosarom brand in adjusting its marketing campaigns in real time, according to the feedback received from the audience. This means a more efficient management in case of an image crisis and a better and realistic tool in knowing its own target audience in terms of desire, consumption habits, expectations etc.
- The Facebook page of Kosarom company grew rapidly to a peak number of 24.000 likes until August 2018.
- Once the first marketing campaigns have been implemented online we can notice a growth of the turnover from 127.873.437 lei in 2015 to

166.388.617 lei in 2016 and 165.661.389 in 2017. The profit also increased from 1.658.326 lei in 2015 to 9.137.101 in 2016 and 8.022.008 lei in 2017. In 2017, the number of employees raised with 43 over the year 2015, data certifying that the investments in technology and marketing contributed greatly to enhance the financial capital of the company.

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