GOOGLE ADS CAMPAIGNS IN PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THEATERS

KAMPANIE GOOGLE ADS W PROMOCYJNEJ DZIAŁALNOŚCI TEATRÓW

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ABSTRACT

Although the pace of life is very high today, young people spend free time among applications and electronic devices, but theatrical performances are relatively popular nonetheless. Theaters to appeal to young people should use online tools as a basic form of advertising. One of the most popular forms of e-marketing is the search engine SEM. The research question was formulated in the form: do the theaters advertise in paid search results PPC? To answer this question, we analyzed the search results on Google, including AdWords ads, among Polish theaters for popular keywords. By analyzing the results obtained, it can be said that definitely theaters do not use PPC as an advertising tool. Among the popular keywords only 5 theaters were identified using this form, which represents less than 3% of all the theaters in Poland. The reasons for low popularity are the high costs and the lack of advertising due to the relatively large number of contemporary theater customers.

Key words: Search Engine Marketing, SEM, Google Ads, Google AdWords, SEO

ABSTRAKT

Mimo że współcześnie tempo życia jest bardzo duże, a młodzież czas wolny spędza wśród aplikacji i urządzeń elektronicznych, to jednak spektakle teatralne cieszą się stosunkowo dużą popularnością. Teatry, aby dotrzeć do młodzieży, powinny wykorzystywać narzędzia internetowe jako podstawowe formy reklamy. Jedną z popularniejszych form e-marketingu są działania w wyszukiwarkach internetowych SEM. Postawione pytanie badawcze miało postać: czy teatry reklamują się w płatnych wynikach wyszukiwania w formie *paid search*? Aby odpowiedzieć na postawione pytanie, dokonano analizy wyników wyszukiwania w Google z uwzględnieniem reklam AdWords wśród polskich teatrów dla popularnych słów kluczowych. Analizując uzyskane wyniki, można odpowiedzieć, że teatry zdecydowanie nie wykorzystują formy PPC jako narzędzia reklamy. Zidentyfikowano zaledwie pięć teatrów wykorzystujących tę formę, co stanowi niecałe 3% wszystkich teatrów w Polsce. Wśród przyczyn małej popularności należy wymienić wysokie koszty oraz brak konieczności reklamy, wynikający ze stosunkowo dużej liczby klientów teatrów.

Słowa kluczowe: marketing w wyszukiwarkach, SEM, Google Ads, Google AdWords, SEO

JEL: M37, M31

Introduction

According to the universal classification of cultural institutions, 15 types of entities operating in this area can be distinguished: theaters (dramatic and puppet), musical theaters (operas and operettas), philharmonics, orchestras, choirs, song and dance groups, museums and para-gallery institutions, libraries, information and library institutions, galleries and art salons, cultural centers, community centers, culture centers, clubs, recreation rooms and cinemas. Despite the fact that today pace of life is very high and young people spend their free time among applications and electronic devices, theater performances are relatively

popular. Although it would seem that the theater has no chance in confrontation with other competitive forms of spending free time, there are still performances, for which tickets must be purchased well in advance. On the basis of the researches of the Theater Institute (Instytut Teatralny, 2017), three largest barriers in visiting theaters include: too high price of a ticket, lack of free time and communication difficulties. An interesting result is the fact that the largest group of theater viewers constituted people with higher education (44%), while the students constituted only 15% of respondents. In order to reach young people, theaters should use online tools as basic forms of advertisement. Activities in SEM search engines are one of the most popular forms of e-marketing. The research question was formulated in the following manner: do the theaters advertise themselves in paid search results in the form of Paid Search?

Theaters as cultural institutions

In 2016, there were 182 theaters and music institutions with their own artistic groups in Poland. During the year, they staged over 60,000 performances and concerts for audiences exceeding 14,5 million spectators and listeners. A year later, their number increased (slightly) — there were 187 such units, organizing over 65,000 events (GUS, 2018). Additionally, they showed 752 performances and concerts abroad — compared to 2015 it presented an increase of almost 200 events (538 in 2015).

Groups of dramatic theaters — 332 (including puppet theaters — 125) and philharmonic orchestras (142) most often performed abroad. Other orchestras and choirs performed 155 concerts abroad. The majority of institutions from the analyzed sector operated in the following voivodeships: Masovian, Silesian, Lesser Poland and Lower Silesian. A large number of cultural entities is not always connected with the number of recipients. The highest number of viewers and listeners per performance was achieved in the Lesser Poland and Pomeranian Voivodeships. A high ratio was also achieved in Lodz and West Pomeranian Voivodeships — despite the relatively low number of theaters and music institutions.

Over the last six years, the number of theaters and music institutions in Poland has been relatively constant, oscillating around 180 entities. In 2016, in the area of dramatic and puppet theaters, 108 institutions were identified. Dramatic theaters constitute 45.9% of all theater and music institutions. This sector is mainly represented by public institutions (83.3%), which received 13.8 million viewers. Satirical theaters and institutions, as well as small stage forms were also included in the subjects of dramatic theaters (GUS, 2017).

When analyzing consumer behaviors, it should be noted that the average annual expenditure on the purchase of cultural articles and services in 2016 amounted to 347.40 PLN per 1 person in a Polish household, obtaining a small (2.2%) increase in this value compared to the last year. It is less than 30 PLN per month. if this amount was entirely allocated to the theaters, we would be very enthusiastic about the results. However, the highest expenses were related to the use of popular media (radio and television subscription fees, as well as fees for digital and cable television) and they accounted for nearly 30% of the total amount of expenditure on culture in households. On the other hand, the amount of 2.66 PLN per person per month (on average) was spent on tickets for theaters, music institutions and cinemas.

A significant difference in expenditure was observed in the results between urban and rural residents. This is probably determined by the limited access of rural residents to cultural institutions and other social behaviors and habits. Households in cities spent in 2016, 42.60 PLN per person per year (on average) on entry tickets to these institutions, while households in rural areas spent only 15.00 PLN.

Dramatic theaters are slightly more popular in Poland. In 2016, one performance was watched by 195 people (average), while the puppet show — only 131 persons. Some performances, despite their many years of presence in the repertoire, are still very popular — for example, Paul Pörtner's "Shear Madness" premiered in Poland on 27 March 1999, and it is still difficult to buy tickets for this performance. Nevertheless, in order to meet the expectations of viewers and enrich the repertoire, Polish dramatic, puppet and music theaters presented 760 premieres (in 2016). Polish theaters are primarily located in the largest cities — the majority of them operate in

Warsaw (19 entities), Cracow (9), Lodz (7), Wroclaw (5), Lublin, Poznan, Szczecin (4), Bialystok, Slupsk, Torun (3) (GUS, 2018).

Search Engine Marketing

The creation of the Mosaic web browser in 1993, which has the functionality of graphics presentation, influenced the emergence of new forms of online advertisement (Kuś, 2010, p. 75). Today, search engines are an important tool in the field of Internet marketing communication, and the term describing this phenomenon is called Search Engine Marketing (SEM). Search engine advertising covers many areas: website positioning and optimization from the point of view of position in search results, search engine advertising context, forms of ad targeting to users, payment systems and methods of converting advertising creations (Wiktor, 2013, p. 290). Usually, the term of SEM (Search Engine Marketing) is defined very generally. It focuses on activities, the aim of which is to improve the position of the website in SERP (Search Engine Result Pages). Despite the fact that there are many interpretations of SEM (Szymański & Mróz--Gorgoń, pp. 199–209), for the purposes of this publication, it is assumed that SEM constitutes all marketing activities using search engines through the use of: SEO (Search Engine Optimization), Paid Search and contextual advertising. The concept of SEO is a set of activities aimed at increasing the position of a website in organic SERP results — on-line and off-line activities should be highlighted here. On the other hand, PPC (Pay Per Click), in accordance with the acronym, is a form of setting payments for clicks. A widespread popularization of this abbreviation as a classic Paid Search enables its identification with all paid forms of search engine advertising. This enables to take the relation SEM = SEO + PPC as correct.

PPC activities in Google search engine operate under the name AdWords and their popularity is definitely greater than other known forms of e-marketing (Figure 1). In 2000, Google implemented an advertising program called AdWords. According to many reports, expenditure on search engine advertising in the form of Paid Search has

constituted the largest share of Internet platforms for many years (van Gelder at all., 2019, p. 1286). They maintain an annual growth rate at the level of 10% (PWC, 2015).

Figure 1. The popularity of Google searches of selected forms of online advertising in the years 2004–2019
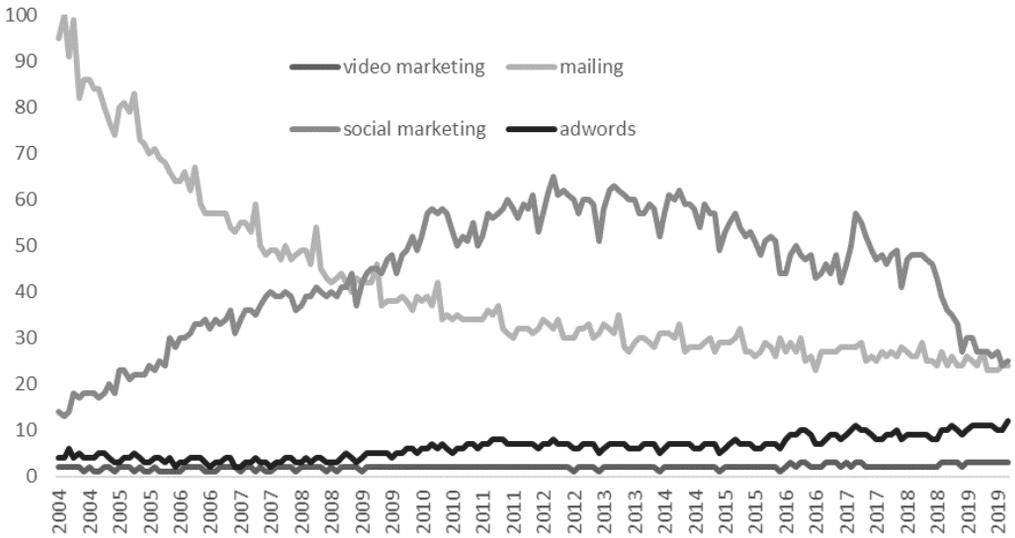
Source: https://trends.google.pl/trends (01.10.2019).

Pay Per Click is a type of advertisement in the form of a banner or a link with a description displayed in search engines. This is one of the fastest methods to increase the number of visits to the website, which determines the more effective acquisition of new clients. The basic advantage is the model of payment for effects. In the case of PPC, they constitute clicks on the advertising creation. A sole display of the advertisement, regardless of its popularity and time of exposure, as well as the number of views, does not charge the advertiser's account (Tricahyadinata & Mulawarman, 2017, p. 62). However, an ineffective optimization of the advertisement, connected with a low clickthrough rate, causes an increase in click fees. The next advantage is that the

overwhelming majority of users are not well able to distinguish advertisements from organic results on Google's search engine results pages (Lewandowski, 2019, p. 13). Another determinant that differentiates PPC from SEO is the ability to activate (immediately) the campaign. In the case of website's positioning, effects are visible within several weeks. However, launching the AdWords campaign depends only on the funds in the account and the preparation of the basic elements of the creation. An important advantage is also the possibility of permanent optimization of the campaign. A constant monitoring of current results guarantees quick optimization response that increases clickthrough and conversion rates. The effectiveness of advertising activities in search engines is most reliably characterized by the conversion rate (CR). It shows the ratio of the number of clicks on the ad to the number of persons, who completed a specific task (Berkley, 2009, pp. 35–36). On the other hand, the clickthrough rate (CTR) determines the frequency of clicks on the ad by Internet users, who have seen it. In the form of PPC advertising, CTR is used to determine the effectiveness of keywords and entire campaigns. CTR is the number of clicks on the advertisement in relation to the number of its views. A high CTR indicates that users find advertisements as relevant in terms of their search. In the area of payment for specific keywords, CTR is a component of the quality result that affects the cost and position of the ad. In the optimization process, the CTR identifies the effectiveness of ads and keywords (Google).[1]

The last significant advantage of AdWords is the ability to personalize ads, both in terms of demographic data of recipients and in terms of display time. Identification and geolocation of recipients significantly increases the conversion rate, especially for companies that operate in the local area (as cultural institutions). The results of researches indicate that there are noticeable differences between the acceptance of personalized and general contextual advertising. Personalized Facebook ads are seen more often by women than men. On the other hand, men provide a higher bid and conversion rate for Google AdWords ads (Ruhrberg, Kirstein & Baran, 2017, p. 230).

The key disadvantages of PPC are short duration of actions and higher costs compared to SEO. The visibility of advertising creations is strictly

dependent on the positive balance of the advertising account. Furthermore, an unprofessionally prepared campaign and the lack of permanent optimization and control of results can significantly increase total costs. The use of a word that is less popular (but more effective) brings benefits in the form of less competition. This method is colloquially called the "long tail of search". There is a visible analogy to the Pareto principle, the online form of which could describe the relation that 80% of website visits come from 20% of marketing activities related to the PPC form.

Available studies indicate that SEO activities determined a much lower CPA (Cost Per Action) than PPC, which means more effective marketing strategies (Kritzingers & Weideman, 2017, p. 13). However, optimization actions are definitely long-term and (for better results) they need close cooperation between the marketing department of enterprises and programmers (Drivas, Sarlis & Varveris, 2017, pp. 429–436). Optimization activities include many complex operations, the correct implementation of which is aimed at improving efficiency. Although there are attempts to create an automation of the optimization process with the use of neural networks and fuzzy logic, the obtained results are unsatisfactory (Madera et al., 2016, p. 106).

The use and possibilities of the AdWords tool in the promotion of theaters

Both in PPC and SEO, the right selection of keywords is an important element of effectiveness. Theaters are definitely operating on the B2C market, where recipients are individual clients — viewers (less often institutions). For potential clients, the selection of a particular theater is usually less important than the choice of a specific performance. Therefore, SEM activities should not be focused on the names of cultural institutions, but on the titles of performances and popular queries.

The "long tail" technique is widely used in the e-commerce sector and it should also be effective in the area of marketing activity of theaters. However, in the event that a potential client enters the name of a particular performance / play, there is no need to pay for this word, because it is characterized by low competitiveness. Two theaters rarely

have in their programs identically titled spectacles — especially theaters located in close proximity (theaters that could be selected by the same clients). In these cases, SERP organic results should be a sufficient source of information for Internet users.

Another aspect of searching new clients by theaters is the possibility of acquiring undecided persons or people without specific plans in the area of performance titles. Among the most frequently typed Google terms related to theater or spectacle, an automatic proposal of the planner (Google tool) identified many possibilities (Keywords ideas) — Table 1. The majority of the proposed keywords are related to a specific theater (Capitol, Narodowy, Powszechny, etc.). These words in the field of cultural institutions should highly position a given theater in SERP organic search results. A large part of Internet users, who enter the query "theater", probably do not look for theatrical inspiration, and perhaps only definitive, historical or even information elements. An interesting proposition with a relatively low rate is a "gift idea", especially during the holiday season. According to the PremiumBrand report (2016), 78% of people buy presents for relatives and family, 39% of people spend on all gifts from 100 to 300 PLN. This may indicate that theater tickets can be an attractive gift for persons without their own idea — despite the fact that in 2016 only 3% of Poles chose theater tickets as a Christmas gift. On the other hand, the Deloitte report (Deloitte) is a positive aspect. It indicates that 94% of Internet users will search for gifts with the use of search engines, 95% of users will use price comparison websites, and 53% of persons will take advantage of the assistance of social media.

When analyzing Google Planner's proposals in terms of the amount of the suggested rate per click (Table 2), you may notice the relation that the more general password, the higher remuneration per click. Although there are only 10 searches for the phrase "repertuar warszawskich teatrów" ("repertoire of Warsaw theaters"), the proposed rate exceeds 14 PLN. This may be connected with a large conversion of this password. Clients, who are undecided on a specific title of the show, will be happy to click on the advertising creation that contains the answer to their query. However, despite the fact that the payment for highly effective keywords will increase the number of clients, it may turn out that the campaign will be ineffective due to the high costs compared to revenues.

Table 1. **Popular theater-related keywords proposed by Google Keyword Planner and their cost in 2017 and 2019**

Keyword	Average monthly number of searches September 2017	Suggested rate [PLN] — September 2017	Average monthly number of searches September 2019	Suggested rate [PLN] — September 2019
komedie 2017/komedie 2019 (comedies 2017 / comedies 2019)	33 100	1.18	38 500	5.01 / 5.11
teatr komedia (theater comedy)	27 100	0.07	26 000	0.03 / 0.05
pomysł na prezent (an idea for a gift)	22 200	0.68	26 000	0.25 / 1.10
teatr warszawa (theatre warsaw)	22 200	0.74	20 000	0.22 / 0.55
teatr capitol (theatre capitol)	22 200	0.55	22 200	0.46 / 0.77
teatr polski (theatre polski)	22 200	0.68	33 000	1.99 / 3.56
teatr narodowy (national theatre)	22 200	2.18	22 200	0.30 / 1.99
teatr muzyczny gdynia (theatre muzyczny gdynia)	22 200	2.26	22 200	0.10 / 2.17
teatr polonia (theatre polonia)	22 200	3.06	18 800	0.54 / 1.56
teatr (theatre)	18 100	2.66	14 800	0.12 / 0.93
teatr powszechny (theatre powszechny)	18 100	1,38	18 800	0.51 / 1.56
teatr bagatela (theatre bagatela)	18 100	4.08	—	—
och teatr (och theatre)	18 100	2.79	18 800	0.45 / 1.42
teatr muzyczny (theatre muzyczny)	14 800	0.60	8 900	1.07 / 2.67
teatr kamienica (theatre kamienica)	14 800	0.10	13 800	0.33 / 0.64

Source: own study based on adwords.google.com/ko/KeywordPlanner (17.03.2019).

In order to answer the research question, a study in the form of observation of Google search results for selected keywords was carried out. Analyzing the obtained results (Table 3), it can be noted that there is a little interest among theaters in relation to PPC advertising. Along institutions that advertise themselves, only 5 theaters were identified: 3 theaters located in Warsaw (Teatr Komedia, Teatr Narodowy and Teatr

Druga Strefa), one theater in Słupsk (Teatr Władca Lalek) and one theater in Wrocław (Teatr Pieśń Kozła). Moreover, the lack of professional preparation of AdWords campaigns can be indicated. Almost all theaters in their ads redirect users to the main pages of websites. The only exception is the creation of the National Theater in Warsaw, where the link directs to a website with a repertoire. Furthermore, no personalized advertising creation that has at least a title correlated with the keyword has been identified.

Table 2. **Popular theater-related keywords proposed by Google Keyword Planner**

Keyword	Average monthly number of searches	Suggested rate [PLN]
repertuar warszawskich teatrów (repertoire of warsaw theaters)	10	14.03
sztuki teatralne dla młodzieży (theater plays for young people)	20	13.77
ciekawe spektakle teatralne (interesting theater performances)	10	12.74
teatr dzieci (children's theater)	90	10.76
teatry wrocławskie repertuar (wroclaw theaters repertoire)	20	9.79
wrocław teatr polski repertuar (wroclaw theater polish repertoire)	50	9.23
teatr lalek wrocław repertuar (puppet theater wroclaw repertoire)	480	8.07
spektakle dla młodzieży (shows for young people)	50	7.61
repertuar teatrów śląsk (repertoire of silesian theaters)	20	6.98
sala kongresowa repertuar (congress hall repertoire)	70	6.96
teatr lalek wrocław (puppet theater wroclaw)	320	6.95
teatr dla dzieci śląsk (silesian children's theater)	140	6.65
teatr groteska (groteska theater)	4 400	6.64
teatr toruń repertuar (theater torun repertoire)	210	6.61
repertuar teatrów lublin (repertoire of theaters in lublin)	90	6.60

Source: own study based on adwords.google.com/ko/KeywordPlanner (17.03.2019).

However, the analyzed keywords were paid for by many companies other than theaters. We can indicate the following entities related with the theater: "Niezła Sztuka" Art Promotion Foundation and "Ależ Gustawie", Futura Philharmonic in Gdansk, PKT industry website, as well as "JEST OK" Foundation conducting trainings and workshops. An interesting fact is the advertisement of the "Farmer" online service for the word "teatralne hity 2019 gdańsk", or the Volvo showroom in Gdansk with a test drive offer (for the same password). However, for the word "co polecacie w teatrze" ("what do you recommend in the theater"), Ceneo's ads were identified.

Table 3. **Popular theater-related keywords proposed by Google Keyword Planner**

Keyword	Theaters that advertise themselves
atrakcyjna komedia teatr łódź (attractive comedy theater lodz)	Teatr Druga Strefa, Teatr Pieśń Kozła
komedia teatr warszawa (comedy theater warsaw)	—
atrakcyjna komedia teatr (attractive comedy theater)	Teatr Komedia, Teatr Druga Strefa
co polecacie w teatrze (what do you recommend in the theater)	Teatr Druga Strefa
na co iść do teatru 2019 (what to go to the theater 2019)	Teatr Druga Strefa
teatralne hity 2019 warszawa (theatrical hits 2019 warsaw)	Teatr Komedia, Teatr Narodowy
teatralne hity 2019 łódź (2019 theatrical hits lodz)	—
teatralne hity 2019 gdańsk (theatrical hits 2019 gdansk)	Teatr Władca Lalek
teatry wrocławskie repertuar (wroclaw theaters repertoire)	Teatr Pieśń Kozła
teatry gdańsk repertuar (gdansk theaters repertoire)	—
spektakle dla młodzieży (performances for young people)	Teatr Władca Lalek
teatr lalek (puppet theater)	Teatr Władca Lalek

Source: own study based on adwords.google.com/ko/KeywordPlanner (17.03.2019).

Conclusion

When analyzing the results obtained in terms of the posed research question, it can be said that theaters definitely do not take advantage of the PPC form as an advertising tool. Among the popular keywords, only 5 theaters using AdWords were identified — this is less than 3% of all theaters in Poland. However, taking into account the average cost-per-click, which will not always end in conversion, the use of this form may be ineffective. On the other hand, there are keywords, the costs of which are observed within the limit of 0.5 PLN (Table 2) and perhaps their use would increase the number of clients. Among theaters that currently use PPC, all of them do not have a properly prepared AdWords campaign. Basic mistakes are made — for example, ads are displayed to users all over Poland and it is rather unlikely that they will come to Wroclaw from Gdansk in order to show the performance. There is also the lack of personalized ads, i.e. titles and descriptions adapted to keywords. Links always direct users to the main pages of websites — instead of specific

programs, price lists and other elements that are searched by Internet users. All conclusions indicate a lack of interest in PPC advertising among theaters. The reasons of this fact include too high costs, no need to advertise all performances and the use of other forms of online advertising, including social media marketing, which may be sufficient to achieve the intended strategic and marketing targets.

Endnotes

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