



## NEW EUROPE'S SHOPPING CENTERS

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### ACROSS AWARD

The most innovative shopping center project

### DEVELOPMENT

The retailer as developer:  
Promising and profitable business model

### COUNTRY FOCUS SERBIA

The advance of retail parks

### TEEN HANGOUT

# HOW TO DEAL WITH "MALL BUNNIES"



TEXT: Mr. Simon Künzler, Mr. Manuel J. Schöni IMAGES: IStockphoto

# SHOPPING CENTERS DISCOVER FACEBOOK

In Switzerland the popularity and scope of social networks like Facebook is on the rise. Meanwhile, more and more companies are discovering the potential and enormous possibilities of these platforms for marketing and communications. However, engaging social media in general and Facebook in particular is not yet the standard for the most successful shopping centers in the country. The first models illustrate how the new tools can be successfully implemented.



As current figures from xeit GmbH show, more than two million Swiss have a Facebook profile. The largest group of active users, at 35%, is from 20 to 29 years old – an attractive advertising target group. Users' average and age-independent dwell time for one visit that lasts a fabulous 25 minutes. The scope and contact frequency, which Facebook offers across the entire population and all age groups, is impressive and unique. The guiding principle of new marketing is: Fish where the fish are. In accordance with this paradigm shift, companies are communicating more effectively in places where more users spend their time.

#### POTENTIALS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Nowhere is a company closer to the consumers than in the Social Web. Social media like Twitter, blogs, or Facebook does more than just facilitate exchange between users. It also enables a direct dialogue between companies and consumers – in both directions. The great advantage is that interested

users grant selected companies permission to have virtual conversations and place messages through social media. This happens when consumers follow a company's Twitter account, subscribe to a blog's RSS Feed, or become Facebook fans. This is the purest form of permission marketing – assuming the companies are active in the Social Web.






Certain tools are particularly well suited to companies, such as Facebook fan pages. A fan page offers a variety of interesting functions for communications and marketing. Thus it works well as an information, interaction, and, in part, transaction platform. On a Facebook fan page dialogues can be carried out, events can be publicized, and sales promotions can be conducted – whatever is needed. Thanks to the open interface, applications – small external interactive applications – can also be integrated into the social network.

With social ads (online advertising on Facebook) more users can be targeted

#### >> ABOUT FACEBOOK

- The average user has 130 friends on Facebook
- Over 35 mil. users update their status at least once a day
- Over 20 mil. users become fans of a fan page daily
- Over 3 bio. photos are uploaded on Facebook monthly
- Over 5 bio. content units (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photos, etc.) are exchanged monthly
- Over 3.5 mil. events are entered monthly

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WEBSITE 	COMMUNICATION 	BRANDING 	TRAFFIC 
<p><b>twitter</b> Microblogging site that enables users to send short messages (tweets) of up to 140 characters.</p>	<p>Important tool to get a picture of what is currently being written online about a brand or product. "Tweets" spread through the Internet in real time.</p>	<p>Opens new ways to interact through proximity to customers and can trigger a viral effect of a message.</p>	<p>Twitter offers potential to set you apart from the competition. The potential and scope can be enormous – but the quality of messages and the channel is crucial.</p>
<p><b>facebook</b> Social networking site where users can add friends, send messages, and build their own profile.</p>	<p>Ideal way to address people who already have affinity to a brand or offer, want to express their opinion about it, or like to participate in competitions and promotions.</p>	<p>Through access to Facebook ads, the pages' extensive reporting data, and the precise segmentation of the target group, this type of interaction is the first choice when it comes to implementing a branding campaign quickly, effectively, and with transparency.</p>	<p>At the beginning the scope is probably greater than with Twitter, for example, because you can already address defined target groups. But the viral effect is that much smaller.</p>
<p> A <b>blog</b> is a regularly updated website similar to a diary.</p>	<p>A blog allows readers to be kept up to date on new events. These sites are maintained like a diary by experts, trendsetters, or others.</p>	<p>Blogs are interesting if they are dedicated to a specific theme or person and compile a variety of new, relevant information.</p>	<p>Established blogs can quickly acquire an audience of several hundred or even thousands of readers. The author's know how is extremely important.</p>



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effectively (ex. age, gender, place of residence, etc.). On the same principle, the users of a Facebook page can be exactly defined, thus refining how the target group is addressed.

**HOW DO SWISS SHOPPING CENTERS USE FACEBOOK & CO.?**

If you compare the success of Swiss shopping centers in terms of sales per square meter with the number of Facebook fans, the results are compelling.

Firstly, very few shopping centers have a fan page on Facebook, and are barely using the "virtual proximity" to reach consumers. Secondly, it is easy to see that some less "profitable" shopping centers build up a fan community on Facebook to increase customer loyalty and sales long-term through permis-

sion marketing – or at least to distinguish themselves through innovative marketing.

The successful Glatt shopping center is in the process of systematically boosting the number of fans through activities – the users' comments and ratings create a viral effect, because these activities appear in the news feed of the respective "circle of friends." This is the best recommendation marketing.

**THE LUTON MALL MODEL**

The appeal of a shopping center is determined by factors like infrastructure or geographical location – the offer and information about it are also important elements. Tips on sales promotions, new products, upcoming events, or additional services like daycare play a

substantial role when it comes to deciding where the target group makes its purchases.

Social media channels like Facebook fan pages, blogs, or Twitter are perfect tools to direct this information to an interested audience. But communication and interactions over these channels are still relegated to a niche existence with Swiss retail. In other countries there are already concrete examples of appropriate integration of social media in shopping center communications portfolios. One example of a comprehensive concept is The Mall – a shopping center in Luton (UK), which is heading in innovative directions with its communications policy. The online presence of this shopping center includes a Facebook fan page, a Twitter channel, and several blogs along with a conventional website. A great advantage of these channels is, as suggested earlier, the speed and pro-

ximity with which target groups can be addressed. For example, The Mall provides its visitors with regular updates on sales and mall activities through the various social media.

**CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK**

Social media belongs in every modern marketing and communications mix. Sooner or later the national shopping centers will recognize this across the board. The average amount of time that the Swiss spend in the social Web has markedly increased in recent years. Furthermore, in the medium term, the rising fragmentation of the media landscape will encourage consumers to rely on experience and recommendations from their own reference group for buying decisions. Companies who have recognized the sign of the times and are already positioning themselves in the social Web are a significant step ahead of the competition. ❖



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