

University Internet Marketing as an Effective Tool to Attract Students

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Abstract— The present article considers the concept of Internet marketing in higher educational institution (university). Besides, the basic tools of university Internet marketing have been analyzed, its main advantages and disadvantages have been determined. As a result of the research the authors have developed the interaction algorithm for the system: –student (applicant) – university employee – student’s (applicant’s) representative” involving effective Internet marketing in university. The research has employed such general scientific methods as observation, description and modeling. University Internet marketing lags far behind the traditional one. Thus, success in competition for applicants will be achieved by the university, which will do a more effective Internet marketing. From this point it can be concluded that the Internet marketing development in education is an issue of current importance for research.

Keywords— *internet marketing; university internet marketing; effective tool to attract university applicants; competition among universities; internet marketing advantages; internet marketing disadvantages*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the present period of information technologies global development, when the most part of the society is absorbed with virtual reality, higher education (being one of the traditional spheres) has to keep up to date, constantly modernizing its work and services, creating new formats of teaching and interaction with university applicants and students.

Nowadays educational institutions may use Internet space not only as a channel for advertising, but also as a portal to attract applicants and enroll them.

II. THE RESEARCH RELEVANCE

It is worth noting that the majority of higher educational institutions still consider an organization’s website to be the base of Internet marketing, despite multitudinous opportunities offered by virtual space. Thus, the theme of the present research is an important and practical issue. Its practical aspect involves development of the following system: “student (applicant) – university employee – representative of studying applicant.

The Federal Law on Education in Russian Federation N 273-FZ, dated December 29, 2012 [1], RF Government Decree N 582, dated July 10, 2013 (new version of August 7, 2017) “On adopting the Rules of placing and updating information about educational institution on its official site in “the Internet” - informational and telecommunicational network” [2] oblige educational institutions to have official sites and regulate the minimum of information to be placed there.

There is a list of data which must be put on the official site of an organization. The list is the same for any institution, it includes the information about an organization, its structure, educational services offered, work of graduate admissions board, the enrollment requirements, the educational institution’s director, materials and equipment for scientific and educational work and other data.

The minimum of information stated above will enable the site to operate, but it will not be enough to fulfil marketing function assigned to it, namely, to attract maximum number of prospective applicants. Both the target audience and “accidental” visitors are more attracted to the educational sites

with a clear structure, enough information, original design, university's official logotype, user-friendly content and interface, unified style of pages, "feedback" option. And the university doing the most effective Internet marketing connecting its site with the entire virtual space will occupy a leading position in the market.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scientific research in the field of marketing and Internet marketing was conducted by such scholars as: D.L. Hoffman, T.P. Novak [3, 4], C. Blattberg, J. Deghton [5], R. MacKena [6], F.J. Rayport, J.J. Sviokla [7], R.G. Kiani [8], A. Kierzkowski, S. McQuade, R. Waitman, M. Zeisser [9], P. Kotler [10], A.M. Francesco, B.A. Gold [11], D. Chaffey, F. Ellis-Chadwick, R. Mayer, K. Johnston [12], M. Miller [13].

Internet marketing is usually considered as a practice of using all aspects and elements of traditional marketing in the network space. The main task of such practice is to get maximum effect from prospective site users and increase their inflow.

Internet marketing in higher education was investigated by such scholars as: L.V. Degtyaryova, S.M. Klebanova [13], U.U. Andreeva [14], D.A. Shevchenko, U.V. Loktyushina [15], N.V. Rozova, E.A. Luneva [16], O.G. Marchenko, V.S. Prosalova, E.N. Smoliyaninova [17], I.U. Shpolyanskaya, A.M. Vorobiyova [18], A.F. Zaviyalov [19], D.V. Krainova [20].

Having reviewed various authors' works we arrived at the conclusion that Internet marketing in education is a set of tools of traditional marketing in the Internet, including its main elements – mixed marketing.

IV. THE PURPOSE AND TASKS

The purpose of the present research, reflected in the article, is to develop an effective system: "student (applicant) – university employee – representative of a studying "applicant", in the framework of improving Internet marketing using university site.

In order to achieve the purpose the following tasks have been fulfilled: such concepts as Internet marketing and university Internet marketing have been investigated, the main tools of university Internet marketing have been reviewed, advantages and disadvantages of Internet marketing in education have been studied, the analysis of the need to implement the system "student (applicant) – university employee – representative of a studying "applicant" has been conducted

V. RESEARCH FOCUS

In the course of the conducted research, the authors clarified the concept of university Internet marketing as being a number of definite methods intended to attract the target audience to the services, offered by university, for their further promotion.

University Internet marketing is usually considered to imply:

1. site of university and its subdivisions;
2. university's advertisement in the Internet;
3. interaction between a university employee and an applicant (student, parent and so on) by means of the "question-answer" option on university site, e-mail, social networks;
4. the Internet coverage of scientific results obtained by university teachers;
5. users' feedback about university teachers and other employees.

We should note that the target audience of any university comprises not only factual consumers, but also prospective ones.

There are a lot of ways to effectively promote educational services through the university site. Some of them are secondary, some are used to promote services within more extensive strategies [12].

The main tools of university Internet marketing are:

1. promotion through search engines;
2. advertising in social networks;
3. television advertisement;
4. video (for example, such popular channels as YouTube);
5. web banners.

Let us now consider each of the tools in more detail.

Promotion through search engines is a set of operations performed with the site intended to improve the site position in the search engine result pages. For example, a secondary school student is thinking about what university to enter in the Far East of Russia. His query for the search engine is most likely to be "the universities of the Far East". In response to the query the system displays all the possible results, including the universities' sites. The user is certain to pay attention to the first links in the results list, he rarely looks at the last ones. Therefore, every university should do everything possible to make their sites occupy the upper lines.

Advertising in social networks. In the modern world almost everyone uses social networks. The most active users are young people. By means of social network communication between a university representative and a prospective / factual consumers it is possible to complete a lot of tasks, such as: to ask questions and get comprehensive and timely answers, to obtain the key information concerning further education courses, clubs, students' scientific work and many other things.

Television advertisement. It is usually run just before the admission of applicants. Little television advertisement is determined by its high cost. However it should be borne in mind that besides the main specialities, any university regularly enrolls students for various courses, like further education, foreign languages, and on-line study. It is to be added that university does not have to start special commercials. When university organises a large-scale event

(forum, international conference, regional academic competitions, specialized workshops) it gets a wide coverage by mass media (reports and interview on television) at least by local television. That can also advertise university and improve its image.

Video. The audience of some of the Internet channels amounts to millions. Thus, university should promote its Internet channel. (Place interesting video about various events, respond to users' main questions and so on).

Web banners. They create an association of a definite brand (symbol) with the university (universities use their official colours, symbols and slogans).

It can be concluded that the tools mentioned above are similar to the traditional ones in a way, but they are used in the work of a definite university and do not touch upon its competitors.

It is worth noting that university Internet marketing has both advantages and disadvantages. Let us consider them in more detail.

The main advantages are:

1. a wide coverage of the target audience (almost everyone uses the Internet, which means that the main tasks can be accomplished remotely. One does not have to go to university, because all the necessary information is available at hand);
2. sufficient information content (various Internet channels of university contain reliable and complete information);
3. high efficiency if compared to traditional advertising (traditional advertising is rather expensive, and some of its tools have already outdated considerably, like printed newspaper advertisements. People have turned to electronic sources of information. The way educational courses get promoted in the Internet is different – the user himself inputs a search engine query according to the theme that interests him).

The main disadvantages are:

1. need for some experience and knowledge of the basics of information technologies and human psychology;
2. large volume of constant work (regular upgrading of the site, interaction with social networks, providing smart answers to the questions asked);
3. high risk of IT problems (unauthorized access to the site or social networks, server failures).

Thus, to make university Internet marketing more effective, it is necessary to conduct some work, to hire qualified specialists of that field and keep the image at the high level.

In order to improve university image and the work of university employees we offer to implement the system "student (applicant) – university employee – representative of studying "applicant" into the work of university.

The introduced system is a program, which will send midterm and final grades via one of the communication channels (e-mail, SMS). The duty to send reports about each of the students is to be fulfilled by a tutor in charge of a students group. The report must contain such data as: name, surname, patronimic name (if a student has it), name of speciality a student is studying for, number of obtained points and maximum number of points, the period during which he can take the test on the failed course, a tutor's contact information, teacher's consultation hours. Thus, each link in that chain fulfils a number of definite functions. A student attends classes, gets points, and goes through academic assessment. A group's tutor monitors the procedure of midterm and final assessment, controls students and provides reports to their parents. In case a student failed a course, parents in their turn should control his going through assessment.

The first step in creating the system described above was to study the need for the system implementation. On the open day Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education "Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service" asked parents (representatives) to fill in a questionnaire containing the following questions:

1. Would you like to receive a report of your child's academic progress based on the number of points he got as a result of midterm and final assessment? (The answers are: Yes – 89%, No – 11%)
2. Select the way you would like to receive the information (e-mail (67%), SMS (15%), paper letter (by mail) (3%), telephone call from a tutor (1%), parent control through personal account on the university site (14%)).
3. Will you be willing to give your contact information in case it changes? (The answers are: Yes – 73%, No – 27%)

The results of the poll show that parents got interested in the program. University in its turn will be able to create the image of the institution that cares about the students having no intention to get maximum profit, but trying to give maximum knowledge to the students. That would attract much parents' attention. When entering university a student must sign the consent to personal data processing and informing parents (representative in law) about his studies (for the whole period of education with a possibility to get further education). Correspondingly, a parent signs the consent to personal data processing and assures that he will immediately give his contact information if it changes to keep the program operate uninterrupted.

The system "student (applicant) – university employee – representative of studying "applicant" will ensure a big inflow of applicants, because all the parents want their children to pass through the course successfully and get a good knowledge base for their future jobs.

The system enables university to accomplish the following tasks:

1. to minimise the percentage of the expelled students;
2. to improve the applicants and parents' (representatives') image of the university;

3. to establish direct communication between a group's tutor and parents (representatives in law);
4. to raise quality of the services offered;
5. to control the procedure of midterm and final assessment of students;
6. to control teachers' giving points (grades) to students in due time.

The difficulties connected with the implementation of the system:

1. large volume of work (development of the system's appearance, software, training university employees for the new developments);
2. a need for constant information updating;
3. access to the system (some of the site resources are available only within the territory of educational institution);
4. time of reports delivery to the recipient (no mobile phone connection, limited access to the Internet).

The authors have come to the conclusion that despite the difficulties, the implementation of the system through effective Internet marketing will increase the demand for educational services. That means that the educational institution will get a competitive edge in the market. It is possible to develop the system by means of the above mentioned tools (promotion through search engines, advertising in social networks, television advertisement, video, and web banners).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the points emphasized in the article, it should be noted that university Internet marketing is in developmental stage. The university, developing a customer-centric strategy, will succeed in virtual environment, attracting maximum number of applicants and prospective students. The system "student (applicant) – university employee – representative of studying "applicant" is under development now. The present article describes only one of the possible ways of applying the system. If it is successfully tested, it could be adapted for working with applicants (informing about passing scores when applying the documents, deadlines, requests for the original documents and so on).

University Internet marketing has a lot of opportunities, despite many restrictions by law. However if university uses maximum opportunities of Internet marketing in competition for applicants, it will enroll record number of students not only for the main academic programs, but also for programs of further education.

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