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MARKETING INTERNETCOMMUNICATION PECULARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES PROMOTION

Annotation

The article studies the specific features of marketing Internet-communications in the market of educational services, using the experience of Ukrainian education institutions.

The educational servicesmarket involves the market relations sphere that arise between educational activity agents as forbuying-selling of a specific product - educational service. The educational services market can be defined as the sphere of economic relations with regard to buying-selling of educational services, which depends directly on the economic situation in the country, its socio-cultural sphere, etc.

The authors tend to believe that in market conditions consumers of educational services become more demanding, and the service peculiarities complicate their performance and promotion, the competition of education institutions unfolds, first of all, in the information field using a wide range of marketing communications. Therefore, in case of aggravation of the competitive situation that is currently observed in the Ukrainian market of educational services, the involvement of marketing communication technologies makes it possible to increase the competitiveness of a separate education institution and the entire spectrum of its services.

The article describes the most important elements of marketing communications used by education institutions to promote educational services. Thanks to the technologies development, Internet technologies in particular, new channels of communication are emerging. Accordingly, methods and techniques for working with new Internet communication channels are being developed and constantly modified. In recent years, such a method of marketing, as the promotion of services through Internet-communications, is becoming more and more relevant and brings significant economic benefits from its usage. Taking all these into account there is a need to study new channels of communication, methods of working with them and continuous improvement of the work of education institutions to promote learning services on the Internet. Therefore, the authors identify the main tools of marketing Internet-communications in the context of improving the communication of the education institutions with consumers of educational services, their main characteristics are described and the peculiarities of application in promoting educational services are explored.

Keywords: marketing communications; Internet communication; educational services; educational services market; promotion; advertising.

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СПЕЦИФІКА МАРКЕТИНГОВИХ ІНТЕРНЕТ-КОМУНІКАЦІЙ У ПРОСУВАННІ ОСВІТНІХ ПОСЛУГ

Анотація

У статті досліджено специфічні риси маркетингових інтернет-комунікацій на ринку освітніх послуг, використовуючи досвід українських навчальних закладів.

Ринок освітніх послуг передбачає сферу ринкових відносин, які виникають між суб'єктами освітньої діяльності з приводу купівлі продажу специфічного товару – освітньої послуги. Ринок освітніх послуг можна визначити як сферу економічних відносин щодо купівлі і продажу освітньої послуги, яка безпосередньо залежить від економічної ситуації в країні, стану її соціально-культурної сфери тощо.

Автори схиляються до думки, що оскільки в ринкових умовах споживачі освітніх послуг стають більш вимогливими, а особливості послуг ускладнюють їх представлення та просування, конкурентна боротьба навчальних закладів розгортається, перш за все, на інформаційному полі з використанням широкого кола засобів маркетингових комунікацій. Тому при загостренні конкурентної ситуації, яка зараз спостерігається на українському ринку освітніх послуг залучення маркетингових комунікаційних технологій дає можливість підвищити конкурентоспроможність окремого навчального закладу та всього спектра його послуг.

У статті наведено характеристику найбільш вагомих елементів маркетингових комунікацій які застосовуються навчальними закладами для просування освітньої послуги. Завдяки розвитку технологій, зокрема інтернет-технологій, з'являються нові канали комунікацій. Відповідно розробляються і постійно модифікуються методи і прийоми роботи з новими каналами інтернет- комунікацій. В останні роки такий метод маркетингу, як просування послуг за допомогою інтернет-комунікацій, стає як ніколи актуальним і приносить значний економічний ефект від застосування. У зв'язку з цим виникає необхідність у вивченні нових каналів комунікації, методів роботи з ними і постійного вдосконалення роботи навчальних закладів з просування освітніх послуг в мережі інтернет. Тому авторами виокремлені основні інструменти маркетингових інтернет-комунікацій в контексті покращення комунікації навчального закладу із споживачами освітніх послуг, наведено їх основні характеристики та досліджено особливості застосування у просуванні освітніх послуг.

Ключові слова: маркетингові комунікації; інтернет-комунікації; освітня послуга; ринок освітніх послуг; просування; реклама.

1. Target setting

In current market conditions, the effective functioning and development of an education institution involves the introduction of a marketing management approach. Which, in its turn, involves the adoption of a set of marketing

decisions, among which there is an introduction of effective marketing communications of an education institution. As in the market conditions, consumers of educational services become more demanding, and the peculiarities of services complicate their performance and promotion, the competition of education institutions unfolds, first of all, in the information field using a wide range of marketing communications.

The problems of marketing communications in education have been studied in the works of both foreign and national scientists and practitioners such as F. Kotler, G. Beckwit, V. Kremen, I. Vakhovych, N. Krakhmalova, N. Zinchuk, O. Sayenko and many others.

Thanks to the technologies development, Internet technologies in particular, new channels of communication appear, such as sites, social networks, catalogs, various aggregators, applications, etc. Accordingly, methods and techniques for working with new communication channels are constantly being developed and modified. In recent years, such a method of marketing, as the promotion of services through Internet communications, is becoming more and more relevant and brings significant economic benefits from its usage. Considering all these there is a need to study new channels of communication, methods of working with them and continuous improvement of the work of education institutions to promote educational services on the Internet.

2. The statement of basic research materials

V. Kremen and Yu. Kovbasyuk define communication as socializing and a process of information (thoughts, ideas, etc.) exchange, a specific form of people interaction in the process of their cognitive activity [1, p.193]. According to A. Andreasen and F. Kotler, foreign marketing specialists, the communication process includes the sender of the message and the recipient (potential consumer). The sender has an assigned message, but whether the received message will correspond to the purpose is determined by the extent to which the communication process is free of interference [2, p.361].

It is known that the main product of education institutions is educational service (preparatory courses, undergraduate, master course, postgraduate studies, advanced training, etc.), which is mainly considered by the researchers as an economic and social category. It is an activity when one person (service performer) passes to another person (service customer) a complex of information and knowledge aimed at mastering professional skills, acquisition of the necessary competences, development of the person, intellectual growth, etc.

The educational services market is a complex socioeconomic system that consists of the following elements: educators (pedagogical groups of pre-school education institutions, secondary schools, pedagogical workers of vocational schools, academic staff of education institutions and consumers (state, region, households, physical and legal individuals.) This is a sphere of market relations that arise between educational activity agents as for buying-selling of a specific product - educational service[3].

This service is considered by various authors [1, 3] as a specific product, social or economic benefit, type or product of activity, a complex of related services of education institutions, a system of knowledge and skills, etc.

Thus, the educational services market can be defined as the sphere of economic relations with regard to buying-selling of educational services, which depends directly on the economic situation in the country, its socio-cultural sphere, etc.

Nowadays, as the competition on the educational services market intensifies, the attraction of marketing communication technologies makes it possible to increase the competitiveness of any institution and the entire spectrum of its services.

The most important elements for promoting an education institution are the following elements of marketing communications: advertising, public relations, event-marketing, exhibition activities, Internet representation. Such a division is quite arbitrary, since modern marketing communication is an integrated complex, each means of which influence may include elements of other means.

Advertising is a traditional, habitual channel of promotion, both for the authorities of an education institution and for consumers. Advertising of an education institution is the information about it distributed in any form, with the help of any means, its educational services, which is intended for an indefinite number of individuals and is aimed at forming or maintaining an interest in this education institution and its educational services [4].

It should be noted that adverts of education institutions are usually standard. They contain information about education programs, licenses availability, training terms, cooperation with foreign education institutions, high quality of received knowledge and practical skills; high level of teaching; quality educational and methodological base; the ability to reveal fully the abilities through participation in scientific research; examples of high achievements of graduates of the education institution in a particular area of training in professional, entrepreneurial, social, or political activity; opportunities for having practice or part-time study abroad; opportunities to receive additional educational services, etc. However, the best option for an advertisement is that it combines the content and the extraordinary creative decision to provide such information.

Public relations is one of the key activities within integrated marketing communications of an education institution, because their objectives are direct bilateral communication with both customers and with society as a whole [5].

The main purpose of forming public opinion is to create a strong position of an education institution in society and among potential consumers. The scheme of the public opinion formation mechanism is a chain of successive actions: express yourself - attract and hold the attention - arouse interest - remove tension and distrust - form a positive image - initiate desire - encourage desirable actions for the institution - improve the institution image (elevate the rating).

Event marketing as one of marketing communications of education institutions is the organization of a carefully planned special event (for example, "Open Days", Olympiads, holidays, concerts, solemn ceremonies, lectures of a well-known people, etc.), that should cause an emotional response with the invitees. In addition to observing the course of a special event, the invited people get acquainted with the education institution, become direct participants of the event. The main thing in organizing and holding a special event is to leave the invited people with a positive impression of the institution as a whole and to form a commitment in choosing the educational service of this education institution.

Another element of marketing communications is the exhibition activity. Participating in a specialized exhibition as exhibitors is now a common means of promoting an education institution. This is due to the fact that exhibitions attract a large number of potential consumers; give the institution the opportunity to evaluate their own achievements in the educational services market. The participation in exhibitions allows attracting potential customers, promoting business relationships with new partners, improving the reputation, demonstrating new education programs and allows you to actively use means of stimulating sales (training discounts, comprehensive sales of services with a price bonus, etc.).

The education institution representation in the network of Internet can be both an independent important element of communication and support for already considered PR events or social events.

Work on the Internet, related to marketing, promotion or PR, involves the creation of a community and the organization of target audience representatives live communication in this community, as well as potential and real consumers. It will also contribute to the positioning and promoting an education institution in one or another social network.

The Internet technologies development enabled to use a new communication environment for educational services promotion. The main tools of Internet communications and their characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Internet communications means

Means	Characteristics
Site	It gives the opportunity to convey the key elements of the brand, the benefits of the institution, highlight key events, provide round-the-clock access to the information about the education institution, expand the range of potential customers.
SEO -search engines optimization	It is a necessary means for promoting the site in the modern Internet, allows to see the link to the site on the first page of the search engine
Accounts in social media	A creation of a personal page of the institution in the social media allows rapid dissemination of the relevant information, attracting additional traffic to the site.
Banner advertising	A kind of Internet advertising of visual perception, placed on the target portals in order to attract potential consumers to their own Internet resources.
Target advertising	Textual, media, or multimedia ads that appear only to those media users who meet specific criteria of a given advertiser (gender, age, location, language of communication, field of activity, etc.).
Contextual advertising	The ad is selected for media users based on their search queries.
Mobile applications	Implementation of mobile applications.

According to the practical experience, education institutions in their work on promotion use mainly such means as a site, SEO and accounts in social media. The most time-consuming, but at the same time, effective, should be considered the creation of sites and their search engine optimization, and introducing in social media should be a supporting means for Internet communications.

This has its own explanation, which is substantiated by the specifics of using Internet communications to promote educational services.

The site improves informativity, as it allows providing relevant information to both real and potential customers, as the site access is open 24/7.

The site, with proper registration, is a part of the corporate style and, consequently, enhances the education institution image in the eyes of consumers, contributing to the advancement of educational services.

Currently the Internet is not only a great place to look for the right information, but also a huge trading platform that allows choosing, ordering and paying for goods and services online. Thus, by giving information about an education institution in social media, as well as creating its official website, it is possible to significantly increase the number of educational services users of a particular educational institution. In order to take a worthy place and not get lost among the similar ones offered by competitors of educational services, it is necessary to apply the search engines optimization (SEO). This is due to the fact that the sites that are in the first lines of the search engine results attract much more people, as many people are delayed on the start page, choosing the appropriate version of the proposed, and do not scroll further. Therefore, SEO is a very effective marketing means for both promoting goods and services.

Social media are very popular among potential clients of education institutions, and therefore they are also the key means of Internet communication with potential and real consumers. In addition, they have advantages that are not inherent to other communication elements, including:

- increasing the trust level towards the education institution. When a potential consumer (entrant) sees a live profile of an institution in popular social media, he/she realizes that the institution has a certain history and values its reputation. Increasing the trust level towards the institution increases the sale level. The recent trends in social media users show that fewer users waste time on calls and are increasingly leaving their questions, complaints, and thanks online. Social media allow doing this publicly, and, consequently, the user can count on a faster response, as well as obtain additional information from other consumers;
- a large users audience. Advertising through social media allows attracting attention to the institution every second, quickly informing about new events and services. There is no need to wait until users enter the site and read the news, it is possible to notify all those interested through social media;
- due to target advertising that is provided on social media, it is possible to accurately identify the target audience, which is likely to be interested in the proposed service. There is constant expansion of the target audience by increasing the number of potential customers, which cannot be attracted by other types of Internet advertising;
- increasing traffic to the site by sending members from communities in social media;
- growing number of regular consumers. It is much more difficult to attract a new customer than to sell something old (in case of positive experience). Social media work with an already loyal audience, who once marked the page of the institution, and, therefore, they are more than willing to appeal to you again.
- conducting interactive online activities. Contests, promotions, social media games are much more effective. It is easier to notify the interested audience about them. The media provide a number of handy means for conducting them (subscriptions, "likes", "repos", "retwitters"), and also include the social element of the competition. The users can see who else is involved with it, what results and chances are for other people. Consequently, again, the trust towards the institution as a whole increases and therefore increases a positive reputation in the eyes of consumers.

3. Conclusions

The usage of Internet marketing communications for an education institution is a must, as the Internet users are a part of the target audience of an education institution. The attraction of Internet communication means along with traditional marketing communications will have the best effect on achieving goals set by the institution.

The advantages of using Internet communication means are, first of all, that it does not cost much, secondly, the Internet allows creating high-quality contacts with the target audience, the third advantage is the ability to quickly submit relevant information.

Therefore, the involvement of Internet communication means in the general system of educational services promotion (integrated marketing communications) is very important in a competitive environment at the educational services market. It makes possible to increase efficiency of communication policy of the education institution, to provide a contingent of listeners, and as a result, it has a positive impact on the results of education institution financial activities.

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