

ARTICLE INFLUENCE OF UNIVERSITY ADVERTISING ACTIVITIES ON COMPETITIVENESS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES MARKET

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ABSTRACT

In the context of increased competition in the educational services market, in the process of discourse that is deployed in the educational environment of higher education in the field of quality, as well as an explicit struggle for state support, special attention of specialists is focused on creating a positive image of higher education institutions. The creation of a multidisciplinary educational platform for various segments of society can help increase interest in the services they provide. In this regard, one of the most important issues and the purpose of the research is to study the organization of university advertising activities. In the article, the authors, using the methods of analysis and synthesis of scientific literature, study the provisions of Russian legislation on advertising and scientific points of view on the stated problems. The authors determine that a significant part of the research concerning the topic does not fully reveal the importance of advertising distribution are systematized, indicating the most effective ones in the field of higher education. The authors predetermine the need for the development of targeted advertising activities in accordance with the requirements of the modern educational environment, in a tough competition, especially among universities that offer training in identical areas, since this is where the importance of advertising becomes obvious. In the conclusion, conceptual recommendations are formulated for the formation of a positive image of a university, focusing on which, in practice, various departments of the university can receive positive results – attracting applicants and, consequently, increasing profits.

INTRODUCTION

KEY WORDS

advertising strategy, social networks, official website, promotion methods.

Received: 1 Nov 2020 Accepted: 4 Dec 2020 Published: 8 Dec 2020

*Corresponding Author Email: zamiraloff.ta@yandex.ru The modern sector of higher education is characterized by high competition, which causes the need not only to meet the requirements of the Russian Federal State Educational Standards but also to hold positions in both the national and international markets of educational services. This can be achieved only with the active use of external communications in functional activities. Unfortunately, their use is limited at the current stage of socio-economic development. This forms a certain problematic field since insufficient attention to advertising does not contribute to the stable and advanced development of a higher education institution and its success in the competition with other universities. Advertising is the engine for trade, including the sphere of educational services. That is why the urgency of considering the issues related to the organization of university advertising activities increases. Moreover, today, there are tremendous opportunities for a university to make it known, distribute information, and attract an audience.

First of all, it is important to define the notion of advertising activity and then analyze how it relates to higher education institutions. Analyzing the presented definition, one can define advertising as a set of activities aimed at drawing attention to the object of advertising, generating interest in it, and promoting it in the market. However, the presented definition is not universal. It reflects only some aspects of advertising activities. In the legislation of many European countries, there is neither a definition of "advertising activity", nor a definition of "advertising". However, in the scientific literature, the concept of "advertising" has the following meaning: it is one of the forms of communication with people, aimed at promoting sales of a certain product or service [1]. In other words, it is not any information transmitted through the established communication channels, but only information focused on drawing the audience's attention to the object of advertising. We can say that in Germany this concept has the same characteristics that are indicated in the legislation of the Russian Federation.

The analysis of the doctrinal definitions of the term by German scientists indicates that one of the main characteristics of advertising is the need to compare goods [2]. This allows delineating it from impersonal comparison and asserting its superiority. This means that an advertisement must mention two or more objects of the same category and compare their certain characteristics (attributes). The study by Yakovlev and Rangelova is of particular interest since it analyses creative advertising in the field of higher education based on the example of Russia and Bulgaria [3]. The scholars point out that a common feature for advertising activities carried out in the Russian Federation and Bulgaria is their image character. Moreover, this feature was formed during the socialist era. At that time, the educational service was not considered a good or an object to be purchased and sold. Despite this, brands of higher education institutions already existed. The fact is that even then, there was a competition between universities for resources provided by the state. Naturally, this could not but affect the formation of a positive image. Its creation directly influenced both the government, on which the funding depended entirely, and the applicants. Moreover, reports, submitted to the higher authorities, depended on the quality of the audience. To be chosen by the most capable and best-prepared students, a university had to make every



possible effort to create a favorable image. Today, the following methods of advertising can be distinguished: television advertising, radio advertising, advertising in newspapers and magazines, outdoor advertising, advertising in transport, Internet advertising.

In addition to the above-mentioned methods, Sankina [4] also mentioned public relations, organization and holding of various events, participation in thematic exhibitions, presentations, and fairs, as well as personal sales, which include counseling during the admission campaign and open days [5: 105]. Production of souvenirs with information about educational institutions is widely used (for example, notebooks, pens, flags, mugs, T-shirts, etc.). Selling souvenirs at open days and job fairs helps to achieve a positive effect in the form of attracting the target audience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In modern conditions, higher education institutions try to attract not only Russian applicants but also people from other countries. For this purpose similar means are used, as well as the distribution of leaflets and flyers in the foreign embassies, national organizations of alumni, cultural centers, diasporas, etc. Posting information about a university, areas of its activities, faculties, etc. on social networks by foreign students and alumni has a positive effect [5].

Over the past 20 years, the methods of interacting with the target audience have changed a lot. In the 1990s, the entire university advertising was printed out and today, it is focused on Internet promotion. At the same time, over the past decade, university official websites have become popular, where anyone can get acquainted with the information about a university, its main mission, management, faculties, and other important areas of the institution's activities.

The tendency to use Internet university advertising exists both in Russia and abroad. The research by O.V. Smirnova analyses in detail the advertising activities carried out by the Polytechnic University of Milan [6]. To promote its services, the university actively uses not only its exclusive official website but also social networks, in particular Facebook, Linkedln, YouTube, and VKontakte. All accounts are active, in other words, content is regularly updated that attracts the target audience, information is fresh and relevant, etc. This institution is very popular among Italian and foreign students, to a large extent, because the university pays particular attention to advertising.

As for Russia, cooperation with Chinese higher education institutions is of great strategic importance. According to the administration of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) office in the People's Republic of China, Russian universities do not use their capabilities to the full extent. Their advertising in China is extremely inactive [7]. In the context of high competition, this leads to the fact that Chinese applicants are reluctant to become students of Russian universities, which are no longer recognized at the international level. On the contrary, American and British universities actively promote their services and brands.

The organization of effective university advertising activities deserves special attention. For this purpose, Kaftandzhiev et al. suggest considering the following conceptual points [8]:

- to choose carefully the key means and methods of communication with potential consumers of educational services, which are not only school graduates, but also people who seek to receive additional vocational education, improve competence and acquire another qualification;
- to approach the content and wording creatively, taking into account country-specific and intercultural characteristics of potential applicants;
- to develop advertising campaign and choose marketing communications according to the analysis
 of the strengths and weaknesses of a particular university, assess its competitive advantages and
 potential not only in the regional but also international market and focus on attracting foreign
 students;
- to use the Internet, including social networks, in advertising activities.

CONCLUSION

In modern socio-economic conditions, universities face a very difficult task. Spiritual, intellectual, and scientific development is completely impossible in a highly competitive environment without activating advertising, which allows one to respond to modern challenges of society, and being in the world rating system. University advertising, along with increasing the efficiency of the provision of educational services and improving their quality, is one of the necessary and priority directions of its functional activity. It should be taken into account that a higher education institution, especially located in a region remote from the federal center, is often a multifunctional organization that is a unique service meeting educational needs. At the same time, other higher education institutions may offer similar educational programs for potential consumers. Hence, the development of the advertising services market becomes a significant part of strengthening the competitiveness of an educational institution. Advertising is of particular importance during admission campaigns. In turn, the use of image advertising tools is one of the stable signs demonstrating the significant position of an educational institution in the region. Therefore, this direction needs to be considered in detail. This is due to the fact that based on the quality of advertising campaigns,



the image of a university depends on its position among competitors at the regional and international levels. The more potential applicants are interested in a particular educational institution and enter it, the more profit it will receive. Profit, in turn, is the key goal of any commercial organization in market conditions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST There is no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS None.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE None.

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