

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY OF THE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: FEATURES AND PROSPECTS

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The article is devoted to the increasing role of digital marketing strategy, its development and implementation for higher educational institutions. The need for a systemic approach to the technology application to the marketing communications of higher educational institutions is underlined. Possible fields of digital marketing strategy of higher educational institutions application are listed. Peculiarities of the current situation on the market of higher education in conditions of global lockdown as well as the possibilities and advantages of live broadcasting implementation to the digital marketing and communication strategies of higher educational institutions are considered. The importance of continuation of digital strategy implementation and maintaining flexibility in terms of digital marketing tools application is emphasized.

Keywords: digital marketing, digital marketing strategy, higher educational institution, lockdown, live broadcasting.

Today, due to the increase in the competition of educational organizations in the market of educational services, connected with the development of online education and developing market relations in the field of higher education as well as with the increased availability of education abroad, we may observe the higher educational institutions' need to increase their competitive advantages and therefore being more appealing to its target audiences which leads them to the implementation of more efficient marketing strategies.

The rapid development of digital and Internet-technologies in the last years made it possible for everyone to move their marketing activities to the virtual environment. Consequently, a new type of marketing — digital marketing — appeared, which is a set of methods for promoting goods and services and customer relationship management that use digital channels such as Internet, social media, mobile phones etc.

By now, a number of higher educational institutions do take advantage of using the possibilities of Internet in order to develop their presence on the Web. Digital marketing of educational services is usually presented in the form of a website or a portal of an institution that is the main source of information about it as well as the websites of its structural units where they carry out specific marketing activities.

However, we cannot yet admit that all of them do apply a systemic approach to such application of technology due to having no solid digital marketing strategy. As a result, universities together with their faculties miss the

opportunity to achieve cumulative effect of using every possible digital channel. Digital marketing techniques and methods would allow higher educational organizations to transform formal web-presence into the targeted marketing communications on the digital channels what means the opportunity for them to develop their communicative environment, where they are able to interact systematically with their customers and partners.

Digital marketing strategy of higher educational organization should be built upon integrated complexes of digital marketing technologies so that to be successfully implemented in the following system of measures [1, c. 80]:

- Marketing research.
- Marketing research in the virtual space provides higher educational institutions with the interconnection with the external environment thus helping it to identify promising areas for the competitive advantage within both scientific and educational markets. Among the possible objectives of marketing research there are: recognition of the vacant spheres of new knowledge production; identification of knowledge consumers as well as potential partners and investors; analysis of market development trends and competitive analysis; determination of the specifics factors that affect the perception of the brand of the higher educational institution, etc.
- Sales of scientific and educational services.
- The sales of scientific and educational products are conducted through different channels.
- In case of scientific products, sales can be achieved with the help of Internet exchange of intellectual property objects of documented scientific and technical knowledge as well as higher educational institutions and their representatives can search for the partners for entering into a contract to carry out the research activities. However, institutions need to understand that aside from bringing economic effects, the channels of digital marketing do also bring communicative effects. Thus, while only a communicative effect is observed, there is a possibility of commercial distribution in the future.
- Concerning the sales of educational services through the channels of digital marketing, they are carried out by such methods as distance learning and the development and implementation of distance learning courses, uploading of electronic textbooks, materials, guidelines, etc.
- Communication with the subjects of the market of scientific and educational services.
- Being a communication structure that combines all levels of external and internal interactions, digital marketing strategy of a higher educational organization is an effective tool with the use of which the competitive position and unique proposition of the organization is transmitted to the target

customer audiences. Thus, a certain image of a particular educational organization is formed in the minds of their electronic audience.

One of the possible ways of such tool application is the career guidance. There, the target audience of the higher educational institutions is represented by schoolchildren and applicants that are going to receive educational services as well as by their parents. Channels of digital marketing, especially website and social networks of an institution, are used to establish a well-founded communication with the audiences that are interested in obtaining the necessary information on the form of training and a specific specialty and those who are interested in getting an education, but not yet determined with the institution or profession. In addition, we need to take into consideration the fact that different audiences do vary in the areas of interests and age. Therefore, the communication should not be reduced to one channel only but it should include various channels that would supplement each other and work for different audiences therefore arousing interest among them and prompting to certain actions.

In the last few months, the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) became the turning point in the development of digital marketing tools of higher educational institutions. Epidemic became a black swan for the world community — an unexpected event that entails irreversible consequences. We should admit that the current situation affects any type of service that requires gathering in groups.

Consequently, the way information is represented and perceived undergone several changes. The number of posts grew by 57.3%, 25.2% and 10.2% on Instagram, Facebook and Vkontakte accordingly. The growth rate of subscribers over the first two weeks of self-isolation has increased 2.6 times. Moreover, the reach of the posts has shown an average increase of 58% [2].

Now, when we can observe the merger of real life by virtual life, the tools and methods of communicating and promoting content of higher educational institutions require the development and implementation of a communication tool such as video calling. We may observe that live broadcasts have become popular as never before. Universities do already use them for carrying out open days, conferences and classes. Thus, the digital marketing strategy of the institutions did naturally put new tool into practice. The advantage of live streaming for educational businesses, especially when connecting with the prospective applicants, is instant online communication when the university or its structural units can make a video presentation of their product or when the current students can share their experience and give applicants advice, therefore instantly answering the questions of the audience.

While we cannot predict the future transformation of digital marketing methods of higher educational institutions that is conditioned by the epidemic

and its consequences, we are sure that universities that continue to implement their digital strategy, especially in terms of content and conversion improvement, as well as maintain flexibility so that to adjust to new conditions and methods of the strategy implementation will be able to recover much faster and become much more efficient and solid in terms of digital marketing strategy when it all ends. The management of the higher educational institutions need to understand that now the creation of new content should be referred to as a long-term investment that is not going to be paid off immediately. Even though there is no or little demand now, it is probably going to recover in the future therefore maintaining the need of keeping contact with the audience.

Thus, digital marketing strategy should be developed and implemented by higher educational institutions to provide them with systemic approach to communication with targeted audiences as well as with possibility to overcome the ongoing changes on the market. Further research should be aimed at the development and justification of methodological approaches to optimization and choice of the tools and methods of digital marketing of universities in the market of higher educational services.

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