Kisiołek A. S., Ph. D. Eng. (The Great Poland University of Social and Economics in Środa Wlkp, Poland)

ADVERTISING IN THE INTERNET AS A MARKETING TOOL OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Анотація. В статті показано, що сучасні заклади вищої освіти, щоб витримати сильний тиск конкуренції, змушені вести активну маркетингову діяльність. Наведено результати досліджень використання обраних інструментів інтернет-реклами польськими закладами вищої освіти. Визначено основні інструменти інтернет-реклами, що використовуються польськими закладами вищої освіти: традиційні банери і подібні форми (скайскрепер, білборд та інші засоби нестандартних розмірів), спонсорство інтернет-сервісів і активність в соціальних мережах.
Ключові слова: онлайн-маркетинг, електронний маркетинг, реклама в інтернеті, маркетинг освітніх послуг, вища освіта.

Аннотация. В статье показано, что современные заведения высшего образования, чтобы выдержать сильное давление конкуренции, вынуждены вести активную маркетинговую деятельность. Представлены результаты исследований использования избранных инструментов интернет-рекламы польскими заведениями высшего образования. Определены основные инструменты интернет-рекламы, используемые польскими заведениями высшего образования: традиционные баннеры и подобные формы (скайскрепер, билборд и другие средства нестандартных размеров), спонсорство интернет-сервисов и активность в социальных сетях.
Ключевые слова: онлайн-маркетинг, электронный маркетинг, реклама в интернете, маркетинг образовательных услуг, высшее образование.

Annotation. In order to handle competitive pressure, modern higher education institutions are forced to engage actively in marketing activities. The aim of this article is to present the results of the study of the use of the selected online marketing tools by higher education institutions in Poland. The article draws on the results of the survey carried out by the author as well as the review of the literature. For the purpose of the study, the basic online marketing tools used by the Polish schools were the following: traditional banners and their derivative forms (eg., skyscrapers, billboards, other non-standard sized media), website sponsoring as well as various activities in the Social Media. Further research in the field should allow for both the changing forms of e-advertisement and the strategic dimension of the increasingly digitised sector of higher education marketing.

The emergence of a free market of educational services was the direct consequence of the introduction of Law on Higher Education in 1991. The Act lay open the paths hitherto unavailable to higher education institutions, in particular the possibility to establish non-state higher education schools, a two-tiered system of education, as well as paid extramural, evening and part-time studies [1, p. 13]. The Act stimulated the process of transformations, including the need for the marketing orientation of higher education institutions. This need, nowadays considered a necessity, raises numerous questions, controversies and doubts.

The Internet is currently the only medium developing so dynamically, in both the domestic (i.e., local) and global context. The number of Internet users around the world (who can access it using not only stationary, but also, actually predominantly, mobile devices) is constantly increasing. A natural aftermath of this evolution is the wide and egalitarian use of the Internet for marketing purposes, ranging from simple websites to marketing activities in Social Media.

Each and every marketing activity must be customer – oriented. In that sense, it is customers' needs that serve as a point of reference for the entire management process and determine its functions. Therefore, for an organisation to gain and maintain competitive advantage and thus secure its existence on the market in the long run, it is crucial that all the activities it is about to undertake should be marketing – driven. Each decision, process, a single action, as well as the entire campaign must allow for the demands of the market.

It wasn't until 1991 that higher education institutions encountered the reality of the market based on the above-mentioned criteria. In recent years, the marketing activity of higher education institutions has been the subject matter of an extensive exchange of opinions on both domestic and international arena. A number of researchers worldwide have contributed to the discussion, e.g., M. J. Armstrong, B. R. Clark, R. S. Franz, M. Sirvanci. Among the Polish scholars one may list H. Hall, A. Pabian, J. Dietl, I. Seredocha, A. J. Fazlagić, K. Leja and A. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, among others. Nowadays, it is not the question of whether such institutions should adapt to the concept of marketing management, but rather what strategies, methods and instruments they should use for that purpose.

Internet marketing (e-marketing, online marketing) came into being in the mid '90s of the 20th century in the USA and has been developing very rapidly ever since. A few, perhaps several years ago, it may have been considered an eccentric choice, but these days it practically conditions the functioning of a business enterprise in the market reality. The selection of relevant instruments to conduct online marketing activity, in particular online advertising, should be regarded as both a theoretical and a practical problem. Researchers and managers need analyses illustrating market dynamics and outlining the most effective trends.

Particularly useful are the data that zoom in on markets other than the local market, as they offer a broader perspective on the evolution of the phenomenon.

The Internet as a medium has the following characteristics:

– it is interactive, i.e., it renders two-directional communication and recipient control over the received content possible;

– it constitutes a medium of individual communication, i.e., it allows full personalisation of the presented content and individualised dialogue between the enterprise and the client;

– it is available 24/7;

– it belongs to the pull-type media (as opposed to push-type, where the content depends solely on the sender / broadcaster), i.e., it engages the recipient by allowing them to decide what information (and in what order) they want to get, which makes it easier for the enterprise to identify potential customers and their needs;

– as a medium, it allows everybody to provide content as long as they have access to the web;

– it offers a possibility to integrate the elements of a marketing mix, e.g., by means of banner advertising (or a different form of online promotion), consumers access the website featuring the specific product and may purchase it (via the online order placement system). In case of goods such as software or information, online delivery is also an option [2, p. 18].

It is due to these characteristics that the use of the Internet for marketing activity, initiated in the mid '90s of the 20th century, has become the predominant trend in the development of the entire marketing sector. What started out as a tool has developed into a whole sector of marketing activity. Once this fact is correlated with the latest IT knowledge, the emerging picture is that of digitized marketing.

Initially, e-marketing was an attempt to tailor the traditional marketing rules to the needs of Web 1.0, which is why websites resembled company product catalogues and banners looked like advertisement boards. Yet, it immediately started to evolve, as marketers quickly discovered the potential of the interaction with the Internet user and the crucial role of the latter (customers, partners, etc.) in the communication. The emergence of Web 2.0 enabled a dynamic growth of e-marketing perceived in this way. As in the case of the Web, e-marketing seems to have gone through certain developmental stages and nowadays one can speak of marketing 2.0 or even 3.0 (the numeration is informal, the digits are used to stress the influence of new technologies, procedures and ideas).

Marketing 2.0/3.0 draws on the concept of open communication based on trust (key element of any long-term e-marketing activities, given that the effects of such activities are typically visible in the long run) and consumer participation. This peculiar involvement serves to contribute to the image of a given product or brand in the way that cannot be affected by the marketing specialists initiating the specific activities. It appears that a given company / brand / product gains full credibility by allowing its customers to take a stand [3, p. 217].

Issues relating strictly to the development of the Polish market of Internet advertising have been discussed by A. Dyba, M. Kacprzyk, A. Kisiołek, Z. Zwierzchowski, among others. Typically, though, this problem constitutes the object of analyses devoted to marketing on the Internet, see, among others, J. Strauss, R. Frost, A. Sznajder, T. Vassos, J. Wielki, W.G. Zikmund, M. D'Amico.

Advertisement is a type of promotion that aims to inform and persuade potential customers to buy products offered by a given company [4, p. 105]. The purpose of advertising is to present the specific characteristics of the advertised products. Traditionally, it appears in press, on the radio, TV or in the form of outdoor advertisement. Depending on the object advertised, it is either product or brand advertising. In the first case, given that the advertising efforts are designed to introduce a new product to the market, they focus on outlining its novel nature. In the other case, the advertisement is meant to promote a specific brand.

Advertisement on the Internet is vastly different from its traditional counterpart, as it offers unique opportunities not encountered elsewhere, such as the following:

– global range – country, continent, the whole world – just a mouse click away from the advertiser;

– a significantly (sometimes even a dozen times) lower cost of providing roughly the same amount of information, in comparison with press ads or printed advertising materials;

– precise recipient targeting, also used in Poland thanks to the latest research;

– the possibility to update the content on a regular basis (exceptions: websites, virtual catalogues, paid links, etc.) without generating additional expenses;

– easy access and supervision of the presented information;

– real time modeling of advertising campaigns by, for instance, using adservers during banner campaigns;

– a specific manner of provision of pull-type content, i.e., the addressee often has to perform certain actions in order to reach the message prepared by the company (e.g., click on the banner in order to be redirected to the target website);

Undoubtedly, the key feature of the above-mentioned characteristics of e-advertisement is its relatively lower cost in comparison to the traditional media, which implies that this medium will be an attractive solution for smaller companies as well, which, until recently, did not exist in the sphere of advertising. An ordinary web service based on a simple, but professional website, with the overall cost of preparation ranging from a few to several thousand zlotys, may serve a case in point.

According to the results of the research carried out by the Jupiter Research Center, the Internet is most often used as an advertising medium in order to achieve the following:

– strengthening relations with customers (73 % of the respondents);

– branding (69 % of the respondents);

– generating inquires (59 % of the respondents);

– generating online transactions (53 % of the respondents);

– experimental purposes (47 % of the respondents);

– PR (45 % of the respondents);

– market research (41 % of the respondents);

The Internet is becoming an increasingly important channel of communication, which naturally boosts the importance of online advertisement. It wasn't until a few years ago that one would hardly encounter big budget online advertising campaigns in Poland. Yet, the efforts of interactive agencies, web portals and advertising networks aiming at educating their customers have radically changed this state of affairs.

While the transition of the online advertising market, with its progressing educational aspect, has closely followed the development of the Internet, the beginning was not easy. However, online advertising has experienced an unprecedented boom ever since. In Poland, the value of the Internet advertising market in the period from 2000 to 2008 rose 76 times (in the period from 2000 to 2011 it was 138 times!). In 2007 was the first time that the Polish advertisers had spent more on Internet promotion that advertisement on the radio, and in 2008 the overall amount spent exceeded one billion zlotys. The expenditure on Internet advertising in years 2000–2015 is presented in Table 1. Particularly impressive are the dynamics of expenditure growth in the sector of internet advertisement in years 2000–2008.

Table 1*

Expenditure on Internet advertising in years 2000–2015

Year	Expenditure [in billion zlotys]	Dynamics, %**
2000	0.016	0
2001	0.024	50.00
2002	0.033	37.50
2003	0.050	51.52
2004	0.087	74.00
2005	0.135	55.17
2006	0.215	59.26
2007	0.743	245.58
2008	1.216	63.66
2009	1.373	12.91
2010	1.582	15.22
2011	2.003	26.61
2012	2.206	10.13
2013	2.432	10.24
2014	2.609	7.28
2015	3.137	20.24

* Source: Author's own compilation based on the data from IAB Polska.

** previous year as 100 %.

The research was conducted in the period from November to December 2013 as part of the original project entitled «The Internet in the marketing activity of higher education institutions in Poland». The research took the form of a survey based on a questionnaire consisting of 16 questions grouped into five categories:

– Category I general questions-introduction (questions 1 and 2);

– Category II marketing research (questions 3–5);

– Category III (promotion) (questions 6–12);

– Category IV (question 13);

– Category V social media in the marketing of higher education institutions (questions 14–16).

The questions were of the open-ended, half-open and closed-ended type. The questionnaire was directed to persons responsible for the marketing activity of the respective schools. Most of the respondents were managers, marketing and PR specialists as well as rectors' proxies for marketing. Among the entities that took part in the survey were both public and nonpublic schools, the relevant division of the research sample presented in Table 2.

Table 2*

Division of the research sample due to the type of school

Type of school	Number of schools	Researchsample
	Main Statistical Office 2011	
Universities	19	4
Higher schools of technology	25	5
Higher schools of agriculture	7	2
Higher schools of economics	77	17
Higher schools of pedagogy	17	4
Higher maritime schools	2	1
Medical universities	9	2
Academies of physical education	6	1
Higher schools of arts	23	5
Higher schools of theology	14	3
Higher state professional schools	36	8
Other higher education institutions	218	48
Total	453	100

* Source: Author's own analysis based on the data from the Main Statistical Office.

Polish higher education institutions most frequently employ Internet advertising in the form of various activities on Social Media, as reported by 93 % of the respondents. At the same time, they considered the results of these activities positive, as 54 % and 24 % of them selected the option «good» or «very good», respectively. A few years ago such appreciation for Social Media would have been surprising , yet nowadays it seems to fit in the larger picture of the development of the Web through interactive participation of Internet users (WEB 2.0), who not only deliver the so-called content, but, more importantly, create a community, which is particularly crucial in the context of educational activities.

WWW sponsorship was rated second most popular form of online advertisement (79 % of the respondents), followed closely by traditional banners (468x60 pixels) and their derivative forms, e.g., skyscrapers, non-standard size billboards, (76 % and 65 %, respectively). This time, however, the respondents held neutral opinion (60 % and 41 %, respectively).

It was surprising to find out that direct e-mail – based activities were rather unpopular with the respondents, 69 % of whom declared they had not used it for marketing purposes. The detailed results are presented in Table 3.

As for the available forms of Internet browser promotion, the vast majority of Polish higher education institutions tend to choose organic positioning (68%). Sponsored links, contextual advertising and advertising boxes are far less popular (41 %, 37 % and 21 %, respectively). The detailed results are presented in Table 4.

Due to the increasing influence of the Internet on the everyday life of the Polish people, the Social Media sphere is bound to gain on importance. In the sector of advertisement, it is to be expected that graphic display, including its most dynamic form, i.e., video advertising, will continue to play a dominating role on the market. Judging by the trends observed in recent years, one may also expect further expansion of Search Engine Marketing as well as advertising on mobile devices. Although the inherently changeable nature of the economic reality makes forecasting a difficult task, the coming years will see further approximation of expenses on Internet advertising and TV commercials.

The purposefulness of marketing activities undertaken by higher education institutions has been consistently growing in recent years, with online promotion being one of the most dynamically developing areas. The results of the study stress the role of the Internet as a tool supporting other marketing activities of higher education institutions, including student service, online advertising and Public Relations.

Further research in this area should allow for the evolving forms of e-advertisement as well as the strategic dimension of higher education marketing due to the digitisation of this sector.

Popularity and evaluation of use of selected forms of Internet advertising used by higher education institutions in Poland

Forms of Internet advertisement	Not used so far	Negative	Neutral - neither positive nor negative	Good	Very good	I don't know	No answer	Total
Traditional banners (468x60 pixels)	24	2	60	13	1	0	0	100
Derivative forms of traditional banners (e.g., skyscraper, billboard, other non-standard size billboards)	35	4	41	16	4	0	0	100
Pop up	67	17	10	4	1	1	0	100
Interstitial, superstitial (typically a full-screen animation displayed between the subsequent content pages)	81	0	8	6	5	0	0	100
Top layer (animation displayed in the foreground of the visual interface projected onto the content page)	76	6	4	13	1	0	0	100
Video advertisement	80	0	2	9	9	0	0	100
Sponsored article	47	2	5	22	24	0	0	100
WWW sponsorship	21	0	11	49	19	0	0	100
Advertising activity on Social Media	7	6	9	54	24	0	0	100
Amplifying on Internet fora	89	0	0	5	1	5	0	100
Direct e-mail (mailing)	69	1	4	15	11	0	0	100

* Source: Author's own analysis.

Popularity and evaluation of effectiveness of selected forms of Internet browser promotion by higher education institutions in Poland

Form of promotion	Not used so far	Negative	Neutral - neither positive nor negative	Good	Very good	I don't know	No answer	Total
Sponsored links in browsers	58	0	3	25	13	1	0	100
Advertising boxes in browsers	79	3	0	12	6	0	0	100
WWW positioning in browsers	32	2	6	45	15	0	0	100
Contextual advertising	62	1	14	14	8	1	0	100

* Source: Author's own analysis.

1. Pabian A. Marketing szkoły wyższej: [monograph] / A. Pabian – Warszawa : ASPRA-JR, 2005. 13213 p. **2.** Guziur P. Marketing w Internecie – strategie dla małych i dużych firm: [monograph] / P. Guziur – Gliwice : HELION, 2001, – 18 p. **3.** Kisiołek A. The evolution of online marketing from Web 1.0 to social networking media/ A. Kisiołek in H. Howaniec, W. Waszkielewicz (editors)// Marketing Management. Selected Issues. – Bielsko-Biała: ATH University in Bielsko-Biała (Poland), 2012. – 217 p. **4.** Sznajder A. Marketing wirtualny: [monograph] / A. Pabian – Cracow: Dom wydawniczy ABC, 2000, – 105 p. **5.** Kisiołek A. The development of Internet advertisement in Poland throughout the recent years/ A. Kisiołek // Marketing and Management of Innovations. Scientific journal. – Sumy: Department of Marketing and MIA, Sumy State University (Ukraine), 2014. – № 1/2014. – pp. 43–51.

Рецензент: Рецензент: д.е.н., професор Борейко В. І.