

MOBILE COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AS AN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS INSTRUMENT IN PROMOTING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Purpose. The purpose of the study is to define the modern methods of effective marketing interaction between the university and its target audience, considering the implementation of mobile marketing strategy.

Design/methodology/approach. Theoretical analysis and summarisation of the scientific literature, periodicals, information from international research companies and materials from higher education institutions were used to explore the complex characteristics of mobile marketing strategy.

Findings. Tightening of competition between higher education institutions both at the national level and within the international academic sphere requires universities to seek new ways to increase their attractiveness. Mobile marketing strategy should be the basis and an integrating element of the information and communication interaction between modern universities and their target audience.

Originality/value. The value of the approach, grounded in the study, lies in formulating recommendations for the implementation of mobile marketing strategy by higher education institutions. The article describes marketing opportunities for mobile marketing in the activities of the modern university, consisting of strengthening marketing's impact on target groups of educational service consumers.

Keywords: marketing communications, mobile marketing, optimization of communicational processes, mobile marketing strategy, integrated marketing communication

Paper type: case study

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent decade has seen a drastic change in Russian education market opportunities: society's growing requirements for quality in vocational education, the change in economic conditions, state policy aimed at reducing inefficient education institutions – all this greatly influences a university's functioning. Nowadays, competition among Russian higher education institutions is to be observed not only on the internal market, embracing domestic universities that offer similar training directions. Foreign universities have also gained popularity on the Russian market with their own education programmes. The rapid development of modern digital technologies and the implementation of distance learning have opened national borders for education services from abroad.

A global tendency has recently been observed in Russia – higher education has turned from something elite into a mass phenomenon. Modern universities offer services based on the principle of continuing education, according to which a bachelor's degree may be followed by a master's degree and then by a post-graduate course as well as a wide range of additional vocational education programmes. These tendencies have influenced the growing number of education service consumers and the number of higher education institutions. Today, an education reform is being carried out in Russia which is aimed at reducing the number of universities, closing or reorganising inefficient ones. With these factors in mind, competition in the sphere of education services has become especially fierce. There has been a constant struggle to increase student and trainee enrolment. In this regard, Russian universities are challenged with the task of improving their competitiveness and struggling for each applicant. They have to develop their marketing plans and positioning thoroughly, think out methods of measuring marketing efficiency and build an integrated marketing communications strategy, using such promotion technologies that seem to be most appropriate for attracting a young audience. Mobile marketing technologies may be especially effective tools nowadays.

Intensification of competition among higher education establishments both on a nationwide scale and in the international academic context makes them search for new ways to win people over. Under the tough conditions of the Russian educational system reform, integration with international educational systems and standards, and the unfavourable demographic and economic situation, higher education establishments have actively started to use the full range of marketing communications, devoting special attention to mobile marketing.

2. MOBILE MARKETING STRATEGY AND INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Mobile marketing strategy as an integral part of marketing strategy plays a pivotal role in promoting a higher education establishment. However, while developing a strategy of mobile communications of any kind, the general strategy of the company should be of prime importance, followed by the integrated marketing strategy and then the strategy for marketing communications in the mobile environment.

Strategic planning is “the process of developing and maintaining a real correspondence between the company’s goals and resources and changing environmental conditions. The point of this process is to gain a sufficient profit and to achieve an acceptable rate of growth in keeping with the mission”. (Burnett et al., 2001). Strategic planning helps in four types of decision-making: it enables one to set goals (the focus of the plan), to choose strategies (the ways of achieving goals), to form tactics (the set of short-term solutions to specific problems of strategy implementation), and to determine the method of control (monitoring, modification and efficiency evaluation).

Strategic planning of mobile marketing is aimed at implementing the functions of all the communication tools in the mobile environment in the most efficient way as well as integrating them with other marketing communications, including advertising, PR, direct marketing, sales promotion, and event marketing in the online and offline environment. Moreover, its purpose is to control the interaction of these elements with the marketing mix (product, price, distribution). Strategic planning helps in identifying the most appropriate and efficient combinations of methods to deliver information and content.

For Russian universities, a transition to an integrated marketing communications system is the most promising way of interacting with education service customers and other target audiences.

Schultz (1993) defined IMC as a concept of marketing communication planning that combines and evaluates the strategic roles of different communication tools to achieve clarity, consistency and a greater impact. According to the American Association of Advertising Agencies, integrated marketing communication is a concept of planning marketing communications defined by the evaluation of strategic roles of their specific fields (advertising, sales promotion, public relations, etc.) and searching for an optimal combination to provide consistency and maximum impact of communication programmes through integrating all aspects involved. A university’s integrated marketing communications system is designed to coordinate means of promotion and carry out strategic operations in order to develop a positive image through communication tools. The following are considered to be the most important marketing communications tools for promoting a university: advertising, public relations, direct marketing, exhibitions, personal sales, Internet marketing and mobile marketing. Each marketing communications tool has its own specific ways of reaching the target audience. Combining various communication tools into a system of integrated marketing communications allows one to enhance the efficiency of each instrument and affects efficiency as a whole.

A crucial factor that has been particularly relevant in the system of integrated marketing communications is the development of telecommunications and digital technologies, mobile devices, computers and the Internet. They anticipated the active use of digital marketing – a modern means of promoting brands, products and services using all digital channels and the corresponding marketing communications tools (television, radio, Internet, mobile phones, etc.).

Therefore, in order to respond to modern challenges, marketing has to alter its ideology of advertising messages. It has to be transformed from an indirect impersonal appeal to personal communication with the target audience via direct bilateral communication channels in accordance with the modern concept of relationship marketing. The achievement of the marketing effect is possible due to communication channels’ modernization together with applying a new professional toolkit: mobile and internet marketing accompanied by SMM – social media marketing. (Neretina E., et al., 2013).

3. MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES HAVE RADICALLY CHANGED THE APPROACH TO COMMUNICATIONS

These days, a most fundamental trend has been observed – the mobile experience is starting to dominate over all others. Smartphones are gradually becoming integral parts of their owners. They are used more often than any other devices and are closely connected with a new type of interaction – so-called “micro moments”.

Young people aged 12-20 prefer mobile devices to traditional PCs and laptops. They keep changing the usual traffic and directly influence the development of additional services such as messengers, new mobile TV formats, applications with geolocation and all possible additional functions.

A mobile-only community has come into existence and such people use only mobile devices (smartphones and tablets, not laptops and desktops) to access the Internet. While the population of this community was only 14 million in 2010 globally, the figure reached 788 million in 2015. (Cisco, 2015).

Mobile marketing technology has radically changed the media environment, opening up new opportunities for marketers to promote brands. Today, mobile devices have surpassed television in terms of screen interaction time in the "multiscreen" community and market research by Millward Brown proves it. On average, users that have the ability to view information on different screens spend 113 minutes a day watching television and 197 minutes with mobile gadgets (smartphone 147 minutes + tablet 50 minutes). (Novak K., 2015).

There is another trend in the use of devices – multiscreening, the simultaneous use of more than one device. Thus, approximately 62% of consumers use mobile devices while watching TV. Among those aged 20-34, on average, 69% look for information on their mobile device after they see it on their television screens. According to research by Microsoft, by 2017, every Internet user will have about five different devices. Marketers need to understand how users will interact with these devices in order to build a coordinated multi-channel digital strategy.

Information from the research resources Comscore and Statista is of particular interest here. (Kuvaev R. (2013).

Total global sales of smartphones and tablet PC sales already exceeded PC sales three times in 2013, and a fivefold rise is predicted by 2017. This rapid spread of smartphones will, in turn, lead to a mobile Internet "boom". We can see the rapid growth in popularity of the mobile Internet now – if in 2012 the average amount of time a user spent on the mobile Internet was 74.4 minutes per day, in the second quarter of 2014 this figure reached 108.6 minutes per day, and this means that this index is about 50% larger. (ComScore, 2014)

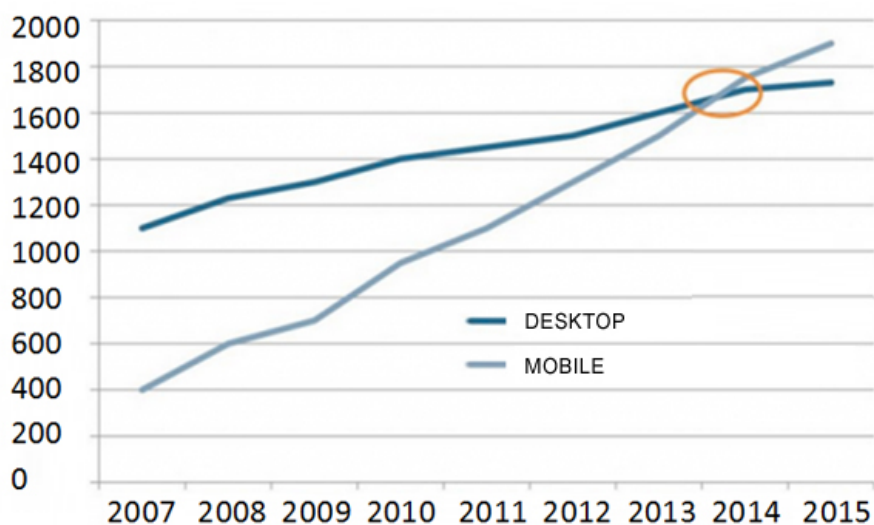


Figure 1. The active subscriber base of mobile data mln people globally (2007-2015 biennium). (ComScore, 2014)

We can see the high index of mobile Internet use in Russia. According to TNS, in December 2014 the proportion of mobile device users that used the Internet at least once a month was 68% for Russia and 73% in Moscow (of Internet users in general).

Smartphone owners are the most active mobile Internet users as of year-end 2014; 52.6 million subscribers used mobile data transmission, generating an average of 1.2 GB of traffic a month per user.

Regular mobile phone substitution by smartphones and, as a consequence, the growth of mobile Internet use has led to a transformation in the model of consumer behaviour in terms of receiving information. Educational institutions are faced with the need to actively apply the tools of mobile marketing in the promotion of educational services.

4. MOBILE MARKETING AS AN EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE TARGET AUDIENCE

The Mobile Marketing Association (MMA), an international organization aimed at measuring and maintaining the growth of mobile marketing and related technologies, provides the following definition of mobile marketing: “the use of mobile media as an integrated delivery of content and a direct communication tool in cross-media marketing communication programs”. Therefore, mobile marketing is one of the many marketing communications tools, the whole strategy’s effectiveness depending on a mobile channel’s integration into other traditional and digital media elements. For instance, mobile marketing tools may be used together with direct advertising (TV, outdoor, radio and print), thus enhancing the overall effectiveness of a marketing campaign.

According to A. Safin, mobile marketing is a combination of marketing measures aimed at promoting products or services with the use of cellular communication as well as by means of tailoring these measures to mobile devices (telephones, smartphones, communicators, tablets, etc.) (Safin A., 2011)

We stick to the following definition of mobile marketing: a combination of measures aimed at promoting a product, a service or an idea by means of providing content and interactive communication with the customer, which is carried out with the help of mobile devices and gadgets.

It is important for marketers to consider the large number of tasks that can be solved with the help of mobile marketing. Unlike other technologies, which are mainly focused on one marketing goal – television influences brand awareness, direct marketing is focused on establishing contact – mobile marketing provides solutions and opportunities with regard to all marketing problems.

4.1. A LIST OF MOBILE MARKETING TOOLS

While new mobile tools, platforms and applications are introduced relatively frequently, the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) has identified a number of them that are particularly important (MMA, 2016):

- **Mobile video, display or audio ads:** Mobile display ads are an effective way to engage customers and prospects. There are a number of different formats for mobile display ads. The MMA has a recommended Universal Mobile Ad Package UMAP to make it easier for marketers to create mobile ads for smartphones, feature phones and tablets. Additionally there are rich media formats, mobile video as well as mobile audio ads, all used to drive deeper brand engagement and revenue.

- **Mobile websites:** This is a version of your desktop website that has been specifically designed to be compatible with mobile devices. Mobile websites deliver an engaging and streamlined mobile experience that appeals to a mobile visitor who is using their smartphone or tablet to connect with your brand.

- **Mobile applications (mobile apps):** Not to be confused with mobile websites, mobile apps are software programs that can be downloaded on a smartphone or tablet. Apps can be used by brands to educate, entertain, engage and/or sell products to users.

- **Response codes:** According to CMBInfo.com, 50% of smartphone users have scanned QR codes and 18% have made a purchase as a result. There are a number of different kinds of response codes, the most common of which are QR codes, Microsoft TAGs, ScanLife, SPARQCodes and others.

- **Mobile Search Marketing:** Mobile Search, like desktop search, is a powerful way to connect consumers with your brand. It is important to note that search behaviour and motivations can differ in the mobile environment and that search results will appear differently on mobile devices vs. a desktop or laptop. It is also critical to take your customers to mobile optimized pages to deliver a completely enhanced mobile experience. Lastly, consumers can amplify and share your messages more easily on mobile devices, thereby increasing the viral potential of your mobile search marketing.

- **SMS and MMS:** Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Message Service (MMS) are

systems that enable brands to send texts or rich media (graphics, video, audio) to customers.

- **Location-Based Marketing (LBM)** Location-based marketing technologies allow one to spot a smartphone owner's location as well as his or her personal data, gender, age, profession, preferences, hobbies, etc. Such technologies open up new opportunities for developing marketing campaigns aimed at a specific consumer.

- **Near Field Communication (NFC)** is a technology of wireless high-frequency short-range communication that ensures the exchange of data between devices at a distance of a few centimetres. It combines the interface of the smart card and reader into a single device. In other words, NFC helps a common user to move a contact or video clip from one smartphone to another just by touching these devices as well as to make contactless payments by replacing bank cards. Even now smartphones with NFC can replace bank cards, transport tickets, discount cards and access smart cards, movie tickets and parking cards.

We consider it necessary to mention a few other mobile marketing tools – brand promotion in social networks, augmented reality (AR) and interactive voice response

Interactive Voice Response

Interactive voice response is one of the oldest mobile communication channels; marketers started to use it as soon as mobile phones were available. Nowadays, the following two channels are widely used: a free number (the initial code for Russia is "8 800") and interactive voice services. Studies show that if companies begin to use the free number, the number of calls increases because people prefer free calls, even considering the affordable rates of mobile operators.

Interactive voice response enables the customer support service to save significantly and to provide the potential buyer with necessary information.

- **Marketing in social networks.** Administering a group or a page in social networks allows one to attract users and establish informal contact rather quickly. In social networks people prove to be more open than in real life and more willing to communicate and share information. The technologies of access to social networks constantly widen the range of functions for collecting and processing different information with the use of mobile devices. Combining social networking with mobile technologies creates an innovative channel for advertising message distribution.

- **Augmented Reality (AR).** Augmented reality is a technology that allows one to overlay digital information on top of a physical world in real time with the help of computer devices such as tablets and smartphones and software for them. Augmented reality technology is actively used for marketing purposes, especially for the promotion of youth brands and children's brands. Mobile augmented reality allows one to read virtual information via smartphones and this is one the main advantages for mobile marketing.

4.2. ADVANTAGES OF MOBILE MARKETING

Mobile marketing has obvious advantages in comparison to traditional types of marketing communications such as advertising, public relations and sales promotion:

1. Prospective audience. Users of today's mobile devices are active and solvent.
2. Immediacy. For example, an SMS can be sent instantly to hundreds of thousands of customers located in different cities and even countries.
3. Interactivity. A distinct advantage of mobile marketing is instant feedback from the target audience as well as constant consumer involvement in the dialogue with the brand.
4. Efficiency. For example, SMS-ing almost always involves feedback, e.g. a call-back or an SMS code word; this activity makes it possible to get high accuracy on an efficiency estimate.
5. Low cost. The cost of mobile marketing technologies is often lower or comparable to "traditional" methods.
6. Selective effect for the target audience based not only on the standard parameters of the target audience's identification, but also on the specific consumer's preferences and habits, his/her behavioural patterns, typical leisure time, interests, recent actions on the Internet, etc.
7. Combination of different tools. Mobile marketing technologies perfectly combine with each other as well as with other marketing communications tools that allow one to organise an integrated, catchy campaign.
8. Company image. The customer associates the company with innovative technologies and modern communication methods, which is essential for most organisations.

9. There are no legislative limitations. No legal restrictions are imposed on tobacco and alcohol advertising in Russia through mobile marketing.

10. 24/7 availability. A mobile phone is the only thing that a person has with him or her constantly, so it is safe to say that the target audience is available to act at any time of the day, seven days a week.

4.3. THE TRENDS IN THE GLOBAL MARKET FOR MOBILE MARKETING

It is necessary to mention the main trends in the global market for mobile marketing, stated by J'son & Partners Consulting (J'son & Partners Consulting, 2016) experts:

- Dissemination of new operating systems: Android, iOS, Windows;
- Increasing influence of mobile social networking on mobile marketing;
- Tablet computers are booming;
- Development of mobile payment systems and mobile banking;
- Growth in mobile devices and increased share of smartphones;

The following factors can be considered as the barriers to the market development of mobile marketing in Russia:

- Technical constraints on SMS and MMS advertising. Based on the technical parameters of a message a cell phone can hold a limited number of characters and SMS messages cannot contain multimedia (images, audio, video); this is not suitable for every advertising campaign.
- Legal restrictions (Federal Law of the Russian Federation of July 21, 2014 N 272-FZ (the Law on "Communication")). The main requirement is that a mobile phone user has to give consent to receiving mailings.
- Low advertiser involvement.
- The negative economic situation in the Russian Federation.

5. PECULIARITIES OF PROMOTING FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN A MOBILE ENVIRONMENT

A recent study by Purdue University (Purdue University, USA) on the necessity of mobile applications for students showed a clear preference for mobile applications compared to the conventional mobile version of the university site.

A report by the consulting centre Ruffalo Noel Levitz is also of interest; it showed the following:

70% of university students visit the official website of their university through mobile devices, and 73% are interested in institutions with official mobile applications that provide easy access to the catalogue of courses and relevant information. (Quinn P., 2013)

Applications can be used not only to obtain additional and necessary information, but also as the basis for online courses. Students of three master's programmes at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota are provided with iPad tablets with an application which contains all courses in electronic form, and consulting work with teachers is optimised along with submission of reports and course work projects.

Many foreign universities apply mobile marketing technologies using an unconventional approach. For example, OCAD – a university of art and design in Canada – offers students and teachers a free app for smartphones with a function for calling the police or an ambulance in case of emergency. A Carleton University mobile application contains a function for monitoring student attendance.

A decision made by the University of British Columbia is of special interest. Its international research and teaching centre is consistently ranked among the top 40 universities in the world. The mobile application of the university is fully integrated with the information system of the university. There is a constant exchange of information with potential entrants and later students and graduates through a serial mobile application devised for such issues as submission of documents for admission, student adaptation at the university, the educational process and long-term relationship building with alumni.

The University of Dalhousie has engaged in an innovative approach called App Challenge. This is a student competition for creating mobile applications. A University of Toronto project is also quite interesting in this regard: students develop and constantly improve the university's applications and learn to develop their own projects.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL BIGGEST PLAYER BLACKBOARD IMPLEMENTING THE MOBILE MARKETING COMPLEX

Unlike Russian universities, where mobile app development is just emerging, almost all leading foreign universities have their own apps. A major foreign market player, Blackboard (**Figure 2**), is a provider of commercial systems for distance learning. One such system is an application designer that allows universities to develop a mobile app with their own colours, icons, tool set, and access to iTunes and Google Play. (Borovinsky A., 2016)

A list of tools provided by the Blackboard app designer:

- News from an RSS feed. It is easy to connect to existing university sites without extra creation of news for mobile devices.
- Campus map with various marks.
- Contact information. Contacts may contain a telephone number with a one-click function, rapid transition to e-mail writing and location of the department building on the map.
- YouTube video file catalogue.
- An app for distance learning.
- Access to Dropbox.
- Course schedule. There are no groups as every student may choose any course. So the schedule presents a list of courses and times and map links to locations.
- University events calendar.
- Link to any website (e.g. the library site).
- Photo gallery.



Figure 2. Possibilities of the Blackboard Platform (www.blackboardmobile.com)

7. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOBILE MARKETING STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In the future, more and more entrants and students will use the Internet only through mobile devices, so universities should analyse their activities in the field of mobile marketing attentively:

- Creation of a mobile version of the site
- Implementation of mobile advertising campaigns
- Creation of a mobile application
- Optimisation of marketing for mobile devices in social networks

The main recommendations for the implementation of mobile marketing strategies for higher

education institutions are presented below. Universities need to take the following fundamental steps.

7.1. IMPLEMENTATION OF A MOBILE VERSION OF THE SITE

The trend is that if a university does not have a mobile version of its site, there is a significant loss of solvent young applicants. The presence of a mobile version of Internet resources is not a trend, but simply a necessity. A mobile version is a version of a website adapted for viewing on mobile devices (tablets, mobile phones, smartphones and other gadgets).

A mobile version of the site has a number of distinguishing advantages:

- Search engines use a mobile search for mobile devices, so the mobile version will be ranked higher.
- A mobile site is downloaded more easily because of the code size and the number of loadable items, which significantly reduces the costs for the user, and it reduces the amount of payment for mobile traffic.
- A mobile version is adapted for touchscreen technology for users of a regular mobile phone keypad.
- Compact content display.
- Mobile versions often include additional communication features aimed at specific target groups of visitors: calling, sending an SMS directly from the site, offering a route to the sales office, etc.

7.2. DEVELOPMENT OF A MOBILE APPLICATION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

The transition to content consumption from mobile devices presented a new challenge for universities' information infrastructure. Users have been reluctant to use websites which are not optimized for viewing at least from tablets.

Recently, more and more Russian universities have experienced the necessity to launch specialized mobile applications under their own brands.

Today, having a convenient, user-friendly and effective mobile app is a must for any university.

The main advantages of a mobile application:

1. Considerable functionality

Mobile applications are much more functional and flexible than classical sites. They are faster and easier to connect to a network, they are extremely concise and, moreover, they allow one to use such necessary options as Bluetooth, geolocation, a contacts list, a camera, etc.

2. Positive consumer attitudes toward applications

More and more users think of the smartphone as the main device for communication and use of different services. And, consequently, users expect that the university has an application for Android or iOS.

3. Loyalty programmes

Users tend to be attentive to notifications and messages from mobile applications. Thus, mobile applications' potential for creating loyalty and personalisation is very high.

4. Marketing research

An obvious advantage for marketers who examine consumer behaviour and preferences is the predictability of mobile application users' actions and clear and reliable interpretation of these actions.

Opportunities for mobile applications as marketing tools in university promotion

- advertising education services
- developing a university brand – an app is one of the most efficient university positioning tools
- university event infotainment (open days, conferences, festivals, etc.) as well as enrolment campaigns
- the development of an applicant database and active interaction with it
- communication with the target audience and feedback organization; apps are the most practical and efficient way to be in touch with every applicant, student and lecturer
- loyalty programme realization and creation of customer communities

A university may use a mobile app not only as a marketing instrument but also as a mobile learning platform for users.

A mobile phone and its functional features allow one to organize the education process with the use of electronic textbooks, training courses and specialized files with educational information. Teaching aids are designed especially for mobile phone platforms.

The term “mobile learning” (m-learning) is relevant in the context of mobile and portable IT devices such as PDAs (personal digital assistants), mobile phones, laptops and tablets in teaching and learning processes.

The implementation of mobile technologies in education allows education process participants to move freely; expands the education process borders beyond an educational institution; gives disabled people an opportunity to study; does not require one to buy a personal computer or academic books, i.e. it is justified economically; due to modern wireless technologies such as WAP, GPRS, EDGE, Bluetooth, and Wi-Fi it is easy to provide students with educational resources; information is provided in a multimedia format. Thus, the expediency of using such modern communication means in education is obvious. (Golitsyna I., 2011)

7.3. THE USE OF MESSENGERS AS UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN THE MOBILE ENVIRONMENT

Nowadays, messengers are becoming the main form of communication online. A messenger is a specialised service that is able to transfer a great variety of content in real time instantly. Messaging has already become a popular technology for mobile marketing. Once devised only for personal communication, messengers are now transforming into information channels in the form of social chat channels. This brings universities closer to the target audience: the personalised interaction and the possibility of rapid communication builds trust and boosts loyalty to the higher education institution.

7.4. MAINTENANCE OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION’S PROFILE IN SOCIAL NETS

Every month 69 million people in Russia use the Internet; more than 80% of them are registered in social nets. Social networking sites are actively used in all spheres of society. The main reason users prefer to communicate in social networks is that geographical, social and age differences between people blur and even out. It should be noted that VKontakte is one of the most popular social networks in Russia and the most visited resource in the Russian internet segment.

Vkontakte is still the leader among Russians and has 54.6 million active users (January 2015). VKontakte is followed by Odnoklassniki (Classmates), with a monthly community of 40 million users, and My World, with 25.1 million users, but these social media are beginning to lose ground and popularity. Classmates’ user base decreased by 1 million over the last year and My World lost 2.7 million users. Facebook is growing and is in third place; it now has 24.2 million users. It is followed by LiveJournal, with 16.6 mln users, Instagram, with 13.3 mln users, and Twitter, with 8.4 million users. (Frolova E., 2016)

The differences between the target audiences of VKontakte and world leader Facebook are blurring. Previously it was thought that the site VKontakte has a younger and larger community that is interested in entertainment content, while Facebook is used more for informative purposes. Now Facebook is simplifying its functionality, and the presence of the Russian version adds popularity to it each year. As a result, differences in the communities have become insignificant.

In order for a particular education institution to determine what kind of social network is better as a promotion platform, it needs to figure out the target audience’s demographics as well as the gender, age, social status and level of education of the users of particular social media.

Maintaining groups and pages on social networks allows a university to attract users to the its activities and to quickly establish informal contact. People are more open than in real life, more willing to communicate and share information in the social network environment.

Key promotion opportunities for a higher education institution in social networks

The opportunities are as follows:

- Maintaining a group settles a wide range of advertising and marketing issues and promotes the formation of a favourable image of the higher education institution.
- A social network group implies direct communication with the target audience – applicants, students, alumni.

- The university can conduct market research and find out users' opinions on current issues and their wishes and preferences.
- The group provides the institution with the opportunity to inform many users immediately about new courses, open days, and admission campaign start dates.

We would like to suggest that higher education institutions pay particular attention to Instagram. It is one of the largest social applications in the world; its popularity in Russia is constantly growing. According to comScore, the Russian Instagram platform currently has more than 9 million users (15+, in the whole of Russia). TNS estimates that this mobile application has 5.5 million users (12-64, cities 700k+) (ComScore, 2015).

Instagram is the world leader in terms of audience engagement, surpassing Twitter and Facebook, and this gap is growing. Every day around the world 70 million new photos are published on Instagram which receive 2.5 billion likes. (ComScore, 2015)

Instagram is the leader among social platforms in the rate and extent of growth of youth and female user coverage. For these segments, visual content has become a new and universal language of expression and communication, and viewing a photo report increasingly substitutes for reading, public correspondence and reading friends' profiles. Maintenance of an interesting and current Instagram profile creates a modern image for the educational institution and projects this image in other social networks.

Mobile marketing in Russia is one of the most dynamic areas of marketing communications today. Companies create mobile versions of websites and advertising budgets include mobile advertising costs; agencies offer interesting options for advertising campaigns using new technologies. There is an increase in the number of companies specialising in mobile marketing.

8. CONCLUSION

In the coming years, higher education institutions, whether public, municipal or private, will require the implementation of the most advanced educational and marketing methods and technologies that not only provide high-quality and competitive higher education, but also offer marketing opportunities. Mobile marketing is one such technology that has not yet received an adequate level of development and implementation and has great potential for innovation in university competitiveness.

We suggest the following definition for mobile marketing: a combination of measures aimed at the promotion of goods, services or ideas by providing content and interactivity with consumers, carried out with the help of mobile devices and gadgets. A list of mobile marketing tools that are currently widely used includes: mobile video, display or audio ads, mobile websites, mobile applications, quick response codes; mobile search marketing, SMS and MMS, location-based marketing, near field communication (NFC), marketing in social networks, and interactive voice response.

The implementation of a mobile marketing strategy, in our opinion, should be the basis and an integrating element for the information and communication interaction between modern universities and target groups of consumers. A mobile marketing strategy includes the following main stages: analysis of the current situation; establishment of the goals and tasks of the mobile marketing; their comparison with the goals of marketing communications; definition of target audiences; development of mobile marketing tactics; formulation of communication messages; selection of tools; definition of the budget; implementation; and the final stage, performance evaluation.

Statistical data presented in this article showing the rapid growth of mobile content consumption by the target audience of the university allowed us to characterize mobile marketing tools as an essential marketing reserve. Modern applicants are pretty particular about the scope and content of marketing information, have good communication skills in the digital environment and are accessible through use of innovative marketing communications. Russian educational institutions, on the contrary, prefer traditional low-budget communication methods and technologies that can and should be upgraded through the introduction of mobile marketing strategies.

Analysis of mobile activities at foreign universities showed that higher education institutions actively use the opportunities of digital communications; moreover, almost all universities have mobile applications, actively manage communities in social networks, and provide opportunities for interactivity between the student and the teacher, permitting the organization of fully fledged

information and communication support of educational activities.

Regarding improvement of the effectiveness of marketing communication interaction between universities and their target audiences, we suggest primary solutions, such as creating a mobile version of the website, implementing mobile advertising campaigns, creating a mobile application, and marketing optimization in social networks for mobile devices. Practical implementation of this approach will ensure continuous marketing interaction between the university and the target audience and bring the university's marketing and communication interaction to a new level.

It is obvious that the era of mobile marketing has come. In these circumstances, universities face the need to develop a balanced approach to their marketing plans and build strategies for marketing communications using mobile technologies for promotion as the most effective tool of influence on the target audience.

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