Promoting Technical Higher Education Institutions on Social Media

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Abstract: *In this paper I am aiming at identifying the methods used by higher education institutions in order to create an online promotion campaign. Based on the various possibilities offered by the online environment but also on the impact that the Internet has mainly on the young generation, I will analyse the importance of capitalising these resources.*

Key words: *website, social media, promotion, universities, technical domain.*

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to highlight the need of using the continuously developing online environment in our favour. The higher education institutions need to always be in touch with the changes that happen at a technological level, integrating as many revolutionary methods as possible in both the learning processes and in the ways in which they are being promoted.

Starting from the point that mainly the young generation spends a great amount of time on the Internet, there is the possibility of capitalising on this lapse. There are some ways in which useful information that may not be perceived as needed can be delivered to the audience. Thus, there are some marketing techniques that are worth to be analysed in order to identify the best approach that a technical high education institution can have towards the public.

2. The research method

2.1. Benchmarking

The research is based on a benchmarking of five websites of technical universities, namely The Polytechnic University of Bucharest, The Polytechnic University of Timișoara, The Technical University „Gheorghe Asachi" of Iaşi, The Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest, and The Technical University of Cluj-Napoca. In addition to the details that account for the visual aspect of the webpage, there are other criteria we need to keep in mind while managing a webpage. The importance that the virtual reality has gained throughout the time allows users to access a multitude of similar webpages, and because of some technical elements there is the risk that the user will lose interest in the content presented. The comparison will be made keeping in mind some criteria such as the relevance of the content, the way in which the information is structured, accessibility etc. An examination of each webpage will be made and then they will be benchmarked.

Through this analysis I want to identify the best approach when it comes to delivering information to a certain audience, and also to see how we can make a link between the webpage and other social networks used at present.

2.2. Quantitative analysis

The research is based on the application of 20-question quizzes to a group of highschool students. They are representative for one of the categories targeted by high education institutions and, for this reason, I want to find out what they think concerning the way in which they can navigate on the webpages of the aforementioned universities, and how they perceive the way in which the information is delivered.

3. Results

In order to conduct a benchmarking of the five websites of the technical universities chosen, each webpage needs to be analysed. Following the example for the webpage of the Polytechnic University of Timişoara, I will continue with the other universities.

www.upt.ro is framed in the domain of education, being a webpage that offers information for different categories of audience, especially highschool students, university students, graduates, current or future teachers, and parents of the highschool students or university students.

The University webpage has a clearly structured menu that comprises nine well-defined categories:

Each category has many more subcategories, with clear denominations, that make the page intuitive and the information easily accessible.

Also, on the front page there is a slideshow with photos that illustrate the most important sections, at least for the target audience as

far as this analysis is concerned, namely highschool students. These categories are "enrolment", "events", "learning spaces" (the library). In this way, the visual impact makes us feel welcome on the page we accessed. The simple design and the colour combination make the site a friendly one, but it also enforces a certain type of seriousness.

One of the downsides is that the events or activities presented on the webpage are not presented in a chronological order.

Simultaneously, the icons at the bottom of the page that link us to the Facebook, Twitter and Google+ pages send us to one and the same place, namely the Facebook page of the institution.

A very important aspect that gives the page more weight is the fact that it has a translated variant for the English speakers. The Polytechnic University of Timişoara has multiple partnerships with different high education institutions abroad, so a large number of students who want to study here come from foreign countries.

To conclude, while analysing the webpage www.upt.ro for the first time, we can see that it fulfills the criteria of aspect and structure because the information is clear and accessible. The research will continue with the analysis of the other four webpages, followed by a comparison to determine the best aspects for each of them and what can be done to improve those websites.

As far as the quantitative analysis is concerned, the target group consists of highschool students from the Western part of Romania, ranging between 14 and 19 years old. Having in mind the fact that they spend a lot of their free time on the Internet, I do believe that the virtual environment can be used to help them acknowledge the opportunities they can benefit from academically.

Q9.Cât timp petreci, în medie, pe internet pe zi?
100 de răspunsuri

- Mai puțin de 2 ore
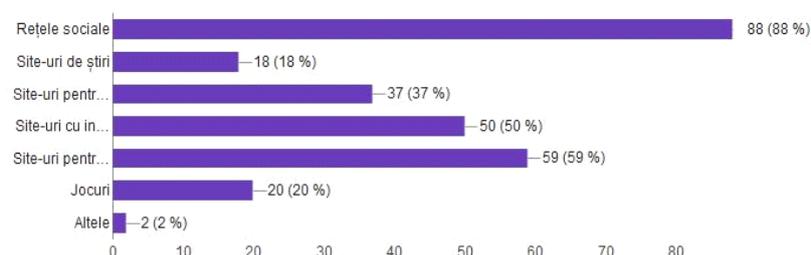- 2-4 ore
- 4-6 ore
- Peste 6 ore
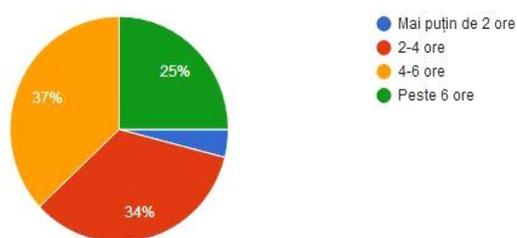
After applying the questionnaire, we can see that young people spend at least two hours a day on the internet, a great percentage being represented by students who spend even more than six hours doing the same activities. Even though this range is purely informative, the main kinds of accessed pages are those of the social networks. 88% of the interviewed students spend their free time on social networks, but another great percentage is occupied by the viewing of movies and TV series (59%).
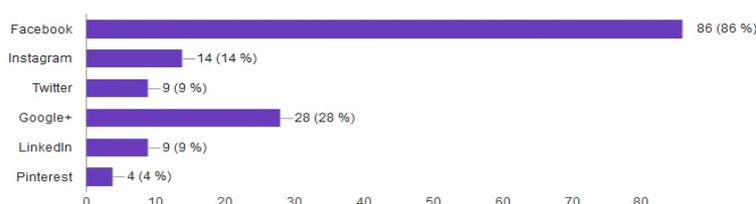

Q8.Ce tip de pagini accesezi pe internet?
100 de răspunsuri

Rețele sociale — 88 (88 %)
Site-uri de știri — 18 (18 %)
Site-uri pentr... — 37 (37 %)
Site-uri cu in... — 50 (50 %)
Site-uri pentr... — 59 (59 %)
Jocuri — 20 (20 %)
Altele — 2 (2 %)

Q17. Pe care dintre următoarele rețele de socializare consideri că este important ca o instituție de învățământ să aibă cont?

100 de răspunsuri

Facebook	86 (86 %)
Instagram	14 (14 %)
Twitter	9 (9 %)
Google+	28 (28 %)
LinkedIn	9 (9 %)
Pinterest	4 (4 %)

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80

When they were asked about the best social networks where education institutions should have an account, 86% of the highschool students chose Facebook, followed by Google+.

To conclude, the online environment represents one of the most accessible methods of promotion, regardless of the domain involved. The research will continue with the interpretation of the data obtained after having applied the questionnaire, which come as a completion of the analysis of the five university websites.

4. Specialised sources consulted

Digital marketing is one of the most used techniques when it comes to promotion whether we are talking about a product or a service. By using the search instruments Web 2.0, the information can reach the target audience, clients or potential seekers, without having to put too much effort into it. Thus, the importance of optimising the searching processes increases, and specialists need to pay attention to the strategies that need to be implemented focusing on the degree of the freedom of thought of the targeted public. In order to analyse these aspects, most of the bibliographical resources used were electronic, i.e. websites that have as a main topic the virtual space, but I have also used printed books.

The topic that I chose for this research is based on the need of the high education institutions to attract a certain category of the target audience, namely highschool students, because they will end up contributing one way or another to the development of the institution.

The first step that we are to make in order to start the promotion process, initiating a campaign, is to create a webpage that reflects exactly what the public wants to perceive of the product or service concerned. Among the benefits brought by the correct management of the content, we can enumerate:

- Increasing the notoriety of the promoted brand;
- Increasing the visibility of the promoted brand;
- Visibly raising the number of potential beneficiaries or clients, depending on each case;
- A higher conversion rate. (https://www.mioritix-media.ro/promovare-site-online-internet.php; accessed on 22.05.2017)

According to The Institute, some criteria are to be respected in order for a website to be functional and efficient. "The Institute promotes creative industries in Romania, seeking to contribute to its modernisation. The Institute has been initiating and organising events for the past 19 years and it has built a community that gathers entrepreneurs, professionals, and the public of creative industries in Romania.(http://www.institute.ro/despre-noi; accessed on 05.04.2017)

Even if the webpage follows all the criteria and it is structured correctly, the social networks constitute a key element for the marketing strategies. "A few years ago, social networks could be ignored without difficulties. Nowadays, social networks cannot be omitted from any marketing strategy and their presence is essential in order for us to successfully manage our reputation. Social profiles are so easy to create and they appear rapidly in the search results on Google, improving the reputation of a person or of an online company" (Sfetcu, 2015).

Therefore, using social networks in the process of promotion is more important than the type of information owned by an institution or by the results it has and what is being done with them and it is the key to success. Using social networks as a promotion technique allows the transmitter-receiver interaction, institution-target audience respectively, and it contributes to maintaining the reputation and the standards of an institution.

5. Conclusion

With the help of the data used in the bibliographical research, I have conducted the analysis of a webpage that is representative for the university education environment. This will be followed with a benchmarking of other sites of the same domain, namely the technical higher education, in my dissertation paper. Based on this analysis, I will be able to identify the most important information that needs to be mentioned within the promotion process.

I will also be interpreting the processing of the complete data following the application of the questionnaire used on the same theme. 100 high school students from the Western part of Romania have analysed websites of technical higher education institutions mainly from the point of view of content. Based on the answers and on my own analysis, I will be able to offer some suggestions in order to optimise this type of institutions in the online environment.

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Webography

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