Special aspects of digital technology-based brand promotion

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Abstract. Experience economy and digital economy inside of which new level of ‘brand-targeted public’ communication is being shaped assume significant importance in new market conditions. Empirical marketing and digital marketing contribute to establishment of long-term relations with consumers and shaping of stable links in the market. Empirical marketing having its own specificity is laying emphasis on consumers’ emotional experience and feelings while digital marketing using digital tools is providing address linkage and mobile communication with brand's targeted public. Under such conditions, educational institutions may achieve significant success in university brand promotion by combining digital technologies and cooperation with art and culture industries and thus provide the university with competitive advantages in the market of education services and raise customer loyalty. The article is addressing the process of cooperation between Russian state hydrometeorological University (RGGMU) and Russian Museum within the project entitled ‘Virtual museum’ and (analyzing synergetic effect produced by their joint activities performed with the use of digital technologies.

1. Introduction

Present-day world is experiencing the new stage of evolutionary development. Forthcoming changes are considerably modifying fields of human activity like education, culture, economy simultaneously creating new concepts and approaches, e.g.: behavioral economy, digital economy, empirical marketing, experience economy etc.

‘Digital economy’ and ‘experience economy’ assume particular significance and importance in emerging digital reality; at that, the latter fell outside the limits of three classical economic categories: ‘stock-product-service’. Experience economy brings forward appearance of new (fourth) economic category — ‘experiences’. Experience is understood as economic proposal which, under the conditions of digital environment, is capable to provide the product or brand with efficient and predicted outcome in the target market [1].

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digital tools is providing address linkage and mobile communication with brand’s targeted public. Approach to branding as such is changing on the basis thereof [2].

Brand is construed by empirical marketing as a focused expression of experience which is straightforwardly affecting the consumer on sensory and emotional levels. In this case, in order to ensure efficient development in contemporary market conditions the companies are quite reasonably using the so-called ‘co-branding’. This term is used in respect of particular form of branding practiced by two or more companies uniting their marketing efforts. [3].

Rampant development and digitization of culture industry, support provided to it by state authorities gave impetus to appearance of so-called ‘creative partnerships’. The latter are characterized by structuredness and active approach which is oriented on qualitative result, namely:
— monitoring over ethical constituent of partner projects and company tasks;
— establishment of interactive communication around art-projects by means of social networks and Internet;
— active involvement of experts and consultants representing the spheres of culture and art;
— implementation of multi-media and digital technologies;
— appearance of ’hybrid’ environments [4].

Cooperation between brands within the framework of empirical marketing is increasingly using digital technologies. Efficiency of such collaboration (using digital technologies) may be tracked by the example of university-museum cooperation.

2. Discussion
Higher education institutions have clearly defined services promotion specificity strongly linked with final product: firstly — educational service, secondly — specialist which is trained and intended for the labor market. It should be mentioned that educational service has its own specificity which differs it from other services. Prior to addressing the process of shaping and promoting the university brand it is necessary to find common position in regard of ‘educational service’ term definition.

The Law of the Russian Federation on education contains no definition of educational services. General notion of services is provided in the RF Tax Code. Service is understood as activity whose result has no tangible expression and is being realized and consumed in the course of this activity. Philip Kotler defines service as ‘an act of performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything’ [5].

D. Shevchenko in his definition of educational service notion is proceeding from objectives set up by Federal standard of higher education which identifies it as ‘process of acquisition of a definite set of knowledge and practical ways of fulfilling thereof so as to satisfy person's demand for professional status and advancement’ [6].

The majority of researchers keep to the point that product of each educational institution is represented by a ‘set of educational services intended to change consumer's educational level or professional training and supported by respective resources provided by the educational institution’ [7].

Any enrollee selecting the institution is choosing namely an educational program which is capable to ensure his knowledge increment — a kind of educational program's quality indicator.

However, in view of the fact that any university is normally operating in two markets it is necessary to take into account the level of graduates it is producing. Namely university is one of the main factors shaping the graduate's personality; namely university is laying valuables which the graduate will refer to in his future activities. Therefore, university internal environment and exterior attributes (like graduate's image) are playing crucial role in shaping the university brand.

Creation of educational institution's brand provides it with following advantages:
— shaping of consumers loyalty;
— provision of enrollment competition enabling the university to select most prepared candidates;
— provision of powerful possibilities for taking part in scientific, research and social projects conducted at the expense of funds provided by companies and other extra-budgetary sources;
— establishment of international relations.

Educational brand includes the below constituents:
— uniqueness and recognizability of brand identification system like name, logo etc.;
— educational product or service including all intrinsic characteristics (quality of education, academic staff, learning environments etc.);
— university image as a set of characteristics, expectations, associations perceived and attributed to it by consumers and public;
— university mission and values represented by any advantages promised by the brand owner to educational service consumers.

All the aforesaid constitutes brand identity. Essence of the brand may be represented by university mission [8]. However, as practice shows, Russian universities prefer token approach to their mission shaping being clueless about its main task — profound involvement into social life. However, namely university mission is the cornerstone of its brand policy creation.

Integrated marketing communications enable localization of brand in perception of targeted public and society as a whole. However, due to economic appropriateness, namely BTL tools (PR methods, organization of special events, implementation of loyalty programs, participating in public programs and partner projects) [9], not direct publicity, are entering the foreground in the sphere of educational branding. Here, digital technology tools are acting in capacity of BTL event translators.

Today, conventional brand promotion methods do not always gain expected results this is why it is essential to develop new forms and methods of communicating with targeted public and society also taking into account intensified education services digitization. Thus, today there is a need to seek for new self-determination and localizing of the individual both in real social medium and in virtual environment. Cooperation with museums aiming to build up joint on-line resources contributing to awareness of each economic entity’s brand may become such innovative target of universities cooperation.

Museums expand beyond their conventional representational functions and provide audience with more active (including interactive) forms of information reproduction and perception. Establishment of virtual museums is stipulated by rapid growth of experience economy and digital economy. Namely due to these circumstances today’s consumer is no longer satisfied exclusively by information products: modern society requires innovative methods integrating into cultural environment. Personalization of public in virtual environment represents a wide range of interests and enables museums and educational institutions to apprehend public preferences and to offer a range of services and projects for efficient and long-lasting cooperation. Museums, acting as creative partnership initiators, are focusing towards mutually advantageous cooperation with educational institutions. This cooperation is oriented to a visitor in terms of individual training and directed towards knowledge popularization in museum environment. Owing to such cooperation, the universities obtain competitive advantages:
— establishment of corporate image and reputation improvement;
— high competitive strength in the sphere of educational services;
— attractiveness for targeted public;
— friendly relations with foreign universities and experience exchange;
— investment prospects.

3. Materials and methods
In order to bring to light opportunities of using virtual museums for university brand promotion let us scrutinize this model on a particular example of the Federal state budgetary educational institution of higher education Russian State Hydrometeorological University (hereafter RGGMU). This university is a regional training center affiliated with World Meteorological Organization and has the status of first ever university of this profile in the world [10]. According to official data presented by the RF Ministry of education and science RGGMU is among the best and highly demanded Russian educational institutions (rating 2018 — 125th place in Russia and 15th in Saint Petersburg) [11].
RGGMU is performing fundamental and applied researches in the sphere of metrology, hydrology, oceanology, climatology, informatics environmental protection and rational use of natural resources.

It acts in capacity of a partner in various international projects.

Apart from participating in international actions, RGGMU is an honorary member of global funds financing the scientific-research projects [12].

State Russian Museum — largest global art collection established in XIX century by Emperor Alexander II of Russia has great history and universal importance.

Currently, the State Russian Museum is widely regarded as largest scientific-research, restoration and methodological center overseeing activities of entire national art museums.

In condition of digital economy it is expedient for each economic entity in any sphere to have its own on-line resource so as to facilitate awareness of its brand and popularity among the targeted public. Joint usage of such resources (‘virtual museum’) produces synergy effect while promoting the brands of service providers.

4. Result
Modern museum is a complicated multi-level system intended to solve socially important tasks among which educational leisure program, integration of cognitive, recreating and artistic functions are holding increasingly noticeable position. With appearance and development of Internet the society faced the demand for direct interaction with showroom requiring mandatory feedback. Modern digital technologies give such possibility and this is promoting museums to further level [13].

Namely, owing to this, in 2011, aiming to facilitate cultural-educating activities, ‘Sistema’ charity fund (honorable corporate member of ‘Russian museum friends’ organization) became a non-commercial partner of the State Russian Museum. Owing to such joint work, the museum took the lead in coordinating establishment of new cultural-information environment for youth and students. As to Virtual museum, it became a tremendous project in the sphere of innovative technologies.

Digital portal is fulfilling its activities since 2003 in capacity of international center whose goal is to accustom the public to national art culture on the basis of free digital materials access. Using opportunities provided by modern communication and computer-aided facilities the virtual platform is intended to establish a common cultural-information environment in the territory of Russia and neighboring countries. Expansion of scientific and educational programs application is achieved by means of:

— cooperation with Federal state educational institution of culture ‘State Russian Museum’ within the project entitled ‘Russian Museum: virtual branch’;
— compliance with public acculturation requirement through development of programs and projects aiming to create multi-media content in the sphere of art;
— digital re-mastering of art works kept in Russian Museum collection, for instance;
— provision of ‘Virtual Russian Museum’ and museum-supported projects and programs in social information environment (web sites, Internet, social networks);
— cooperation with designated companies and experts in the sphere of education and science, culture and arts aiming to implement programs and projects whose targets are set forth by ‘Virtual Russian Museum’ Statute [14].

Currently, museum’s interactive performance is being overseen by special department responsible for the development of ‘Russian Museum: virtual branch’ project which is an interregional and international project fulfilling the idea of affordability of Russian largest art collection to public outside Saint Petersburg (figure 1). Purpose of this project is wide audience familiarizing with Russian cultural values and history through free access to digital and paper-based materials as well as shaping of integrated cultural-information environment for entire project participants.
Main goal of university-museum cooperation consists in ‘Virtual Museum’ promoting and using by students aiming to improve awareness of the State Russian Museum by youth; at the same time, the university receives a chance to give access to considerable volume of materials owned by one of leading national museums for the trainees. Efficiency and practical value of this project stems from the fact that large scopes of information are better apprehended through visualization of objects under study to which museum items and art works can be referred.

Interactive and classical training methods are intended to shape positive students motivation and steady interest to research work. Center resources (library, media center, Internet, Data processing Center and State Russian Museum networks) and database including materials of scientific-methodological and other humanitarian character are available with unlimited access. Computer-based technologies provide wide opportunities of working with audio-visual tracking of alternative source of authoritative information.

In February 2018 Russian Museum opened virtual branch No. 205 in RGGMU. Project is entitled ‘Media center inside the library’ and already complying with new strategy pursued by Russian Museum. The said resource to a large extent meets the objective demand put forward by the university for humanitarian constituent in students training and duly complies with university specificity. Activity of ‘Russian Museum: virtual branch’ is supported by qualified specialists specialized in arts and education, modern technologies and museum-based pedagogy. Informative project includes multimedia cinema and information class. Media center is classifying materials dedicated to permanently working the Russian Museum showrooms. Owing to center's information materials richness it is capable to organize seminars, studies and laboratory practices and self-training of students and teaching staff.

Museum virtual branch enables the following for the sake of learning process maintained within RGGMU curricular and extra-curricular activities:

— actualize and extend knowledge in various specialties relating to humanitarian sciences, figural and applied arts;
— elaborate skills of profession-oriented retrieval and informative reading;
— stimulate profession-oriented and cross-cultural research activities.

Having defined basic activities performed by Russian Museum virtual branch we may conclude that cooperation with virtual museum is a promoting tool enabling the University to ensure long-term
cooperation with its targeted public. Russian Museum needs partners interested also in cooperation with University to fulfill activities in Russia.

While RGGMU and Museum brands were cooperating within virtual branch framework it was not easy to evaluate their cooperation efficiency because cooperation is now in the stage of development and will be the subject for investigation in future. However, it should be mentioned that the ‘Russian Museum: virtual branch’ is maintaining activities since first day of establishment showing steady tendency for partners base extension and developed materials increment. And this is an essential factor enabling evaluation of activities in wide scope not concentrating on smaller cases.

5. Conclusions
Official freely accessed (Russian Museum website) statistics affirms that, as of today, annual total number of visitors who checked out Russian museum virtual branch website is exceeding 500 thousand persons. This confirms the tendency of recent four years according to which number of persons who visited only lectures held by the branches increased by more than 11 times nationwide.

Project attractiveness for the university consists in availability of continuous replenishment of multi-media programs content, conducting of information-educational and entertaining lectures with participation of museum employees aiming to attract candidates for training as per University programs. It is important that main goal of the virtual branch is cooperation on continuing basis. Namely the latter factor enables RGGMU to maintain (while performing communicative activities) strong links with targeted public and improve coefficient of interest in university in educational services market.

Today’s economic reality provides new technologies and tools allowing to efficiently promote brands using on-line technologies. At that, universities may serve as innovative platforms actively using digital technologies in various spheres of activities.

Therefore, cooperation between RGGMU and State Russian Museum makes great contribution to both brands awareness.

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