Full Length Research Article

ONLINE ADVERTISING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES (VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY – HO CHI MINH CITY)

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ABSTRACT

The article mentions concepts, benefits and types of online advertising. The author then suggests some solutions to strengthen the effectiveness of this activity in the Library of University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City).

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, library advertising strategies include public activities such as display panels, posters, exhibits, bulletins, promotional materials and direct mail advertisements. Almost academic librarians agree on the necessity of library advertising strategies because those strategies show their clientele what collections, products and services are being offered. In the Internet age, academic libraries have developed dynamic website to provide information about the library, way to provide access to information resources and offer web-based services. These technology-based developments are to keep pace with the changing user needs that are influenced by the expanding innovations in information creation and dissemination via the Internet. As an increasing number of users are turning into solely networked users and rarely visit the library in person, it is only viable that libraries begin to consider the Internet as an advertising tool.

Objectives

The objectives of this paper includes:

- Describe current situation of online advertising taken

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by the library to promote information resources, products and services to their clientele
- Advantages and disadvantages of using online advertising
- Conduct solutions to improve the effectiveness of online advertising in the library

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper will utilize qualitative data collection tools, including: surveys, observations and interviews with librarians, users to collect substantive and relevant data such as types of online advertising used at the library; library resources (computers, databases, networks, etc.) and user's information searching behavior.

Review of the literature

Definition of online advertising

Online advertising is the organization using the internet and internet services for introducing and providing information about products, services and convincing customers to choose the products and services. Online advertising involves the usage of digital tools based on internet technologies. This paper focuses on online advertising, which can consequently refer to the sum of all measures on the Internet to build brands

or drives sale through ads appearing while consumers are surfing the Internet or using other services, such as email and instant messaging.

Benefits of online advertising

Cost effective: online advertising helps organizations save money.

Reach: organizations can reach much customers online. Information about products and services can be sent to many different customer groups and the transactions are made easy with low-cost and fastest time wherever they are.

Measurable: online advertising is transparent. Organizations can see what is or is not working and they can adapt very quickly to improve their results.

Instant action: the speed of the transaction quickly, the information about products or services coming to the market very quickly and effectively by audio, image, video etc. Online advertising helps customers get information faster and can click on a link to access more information immediately, make a purchase or register for newsletters, products, services easily.

Viral: online advertising canpromote products, services without geographical boundary limitation because it can use social media share buttons on website, email and social media channels enable message to be shared incredibly quickly.

24/7, without interruption: online advertising has a prominent advantage compared to traditional advertising that overcomes time constraints due to the possibility of continuous operation at any time, make full use the time of day and days of the week, no concept of downtime.

Types of online advertising

1. Search engine advertising includes two activities:

- *Search engine optimization* is a set of methods which put the website on the first position in result pages of the search engines.
- *Advertising pay* is operated by search engines in the form of sponsored or paid results, where an advertisement is displayed in a pre-specified region of a search result page along with web search results. Search engines charge placement fees tied to the price of the relevant keywords, which is primarily determined by auction and measured by Cost-Per-Click / Cost-Per-Action, Cost-Per-Acquisition.

2. Email advertising is a method of transporting, sending information about products, services via electronic mail.

Web advertising: With this method, organizations create the ads on their website or buy ads space on other websites. The major types of web advertising are banner advertising, pop-up advertising, button advertising, and interstitial advertising.

Viral advertising: Organizations build ads messages with compelling content for their target groups, after that the target customers can send ads to their friends and make it spread quickly. The tools are used for viral advertising include Widget, Social networking, Really Simple Syndication feed.
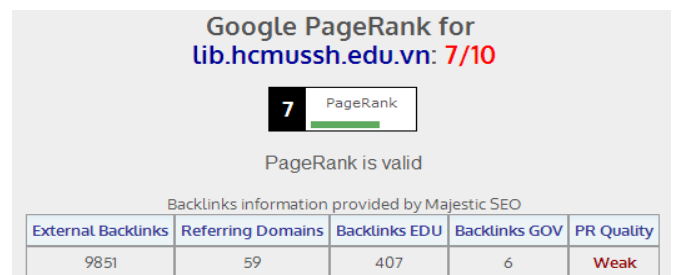
Affiliate advertising is an agreement between two sites in which the affiliate agrees to feature content or an ads designed to drive traffic to another site. In return, the affiliate earns a commission for referring clicks, leads or sales to a merchant.

Current situation of using online advertising taken by the Library of University of Social Sciences and Humanities (LIBUSSH)

Up to now LIBUSSH has done only one form of online advertising which is their website. Nowadays, Google Analytics, Click Heat or Crazy Egg are the most widely used web analytics services on the internet. These tools can identify how many people visited the website, where visitors came from, how long they stayed. However, LIBUSSH has not done any tracks and reports website traffic. Because of limitations on data collection, advertising efficiency through library' website in the paper is just based on two most general measuring tools which are Google pagerank and Alexa rank.
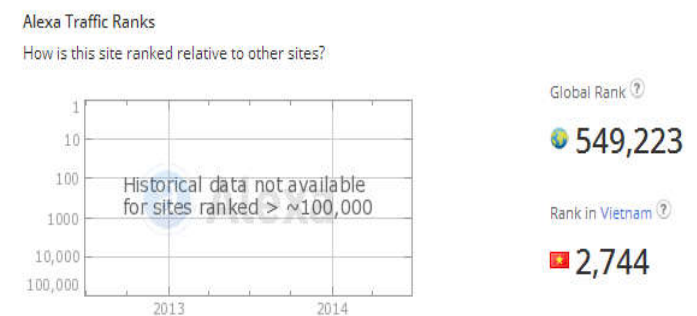
Google pagerank

Google pagerank is a score from 0 to 10 that tells us how the website stacks up against others or help to determine the relative importance of a website. Google pagerank based on backlinks (backlink is incoming link to a website or web page), the more quality backlinks the higher Google pagerank. [Figure 1] shows Google pagerank for LIBUSSH' website is 7/10 but the page rank quality is weak. It means that the backlinks pointing to library website are of poor quality.

Google PageRank for lib.hcmussh.edu.vn: 7/10

7	PageRank

PageRank is valid

Backlinks information provided by Majestic SEO

External Backlinks	Referring Domains	Backlinks EDU	Backlinks GOV	PR Quality
9851	59	407	6	Weak

(Source http://www.checkpagerank.net, date 17/12/2015)

Figure 1. *Google pagerank for LIBUSSH' website*

Alexa Traffic Ranks

How is this site ranked relative to other sites?

Historical data not available for sites ranked > ~100,000

Global Rank 549,223

Rank in Vietnam 2,744

(Source http://www.alexa.com, date 17/12/2015)

Figure 2. *Alexa rank for LIBUSSH' website*

Alexa rank

Alexa rank bases its ranking on tracking information provided by users who have the Alexa toolbar installed over a period of three months. This traffic is based on such parameters as reach and page views. The reach refers to the number of Alexa users who visit a particular site in one day. Page view is the number of times a particular page (URL) is viewed by Alexa users. Alexa rank can help us gage the popularity of a site. As opposed to Google pagerank, the lower ranking number, the better. [Figure 2] shows the popularity of LIBUSSH' website is very low, including 549223 for Global rank and 2744 for country rank.

Advantages and disadvantages of using online advertising from survey results

Advantage

Online advertising via library' website focus on the introduction about collections, products and services of the library. Users said that LIBUSSH' website is useful for finding basic information about library such as opening hours, rooms, contact information etc.

Drawback

LIBUSSH has done only one kind of online advertising that is advertising via library' website. Moreover, most of information in text formatting, do not include other formats like images, video, galleries etc.

The above limitations derived from the following causes

Human problem

LIBUSSH does not have staff with responsibility for marketing and advertising. In addition, librarians donot have advertising skills and opportunities to join in training courses about this subject.

Financial problem

LIBUSSH has a small amount of money and has to fight with increasing costs because the budget of the library is dependent from the financial decisions of university' administration. However, most of budgetsare used for collection development activities. Therefore, LIBUSSH does not have enough money for marketing activities including advertising activities.

Solutions to improve the effectiveness of online advertising in the library

Improving the efficiency of the advertising via library' website

Improve library' website ranking

- *Increase Google Pagerank*

LIBUSSH can increase their Google ranking by the following:

Page title

LIBUSSH should insert most important search keywords into the titles. However, the titles do not longer than 80 characters because more than that can be considered as spamming. When users perform a Google search, Google search in each site finds out and list the webpage or website that contains the phrases most relevant search results to be returned ("served") to users. Therefore, LIBUSSH should create a clear website structure, list all the keyword phrases matching the contents of the library website then distribute keyword phrases on the most appropriate site so library' website can achieve higher ranking in the search result pages. For example, on the site for products and services, library should use keyword phrases like "Ask a librarian", "Interlibrary loan", "Duplication services" etc. If users search by these keyword phrases, library' sites are listed in the first page of results quickly.

Meta description

Meta description is the textual description that a browser will use in page search return. It as a site's window display, a concise and appealing description of what is contained within with the goal of encouraging people to enter. Google does index meta description tag so the library should make sure their description contains most important search keywords. In addition, LIBUSSH should create meta descriptive for photos or videos on their website because Google can access and identify the contents of photos or videos.

Broken links

Broken links are dead links which do not exist. Google always selects websites are updated regularly so the library must regularly update their website, check and remove broken links and dead links in their website.

On-page and Off-page

Google has been trying for decades to find a way to return the best results to the searcher. To do that, Google takes into account the on-page factors and off-page. Therefore, LIBUSSH should focus:

On-page refers to set library applying on their website so that it is optimized for search engines. LIBUSSHshould make sure that they are using keywords in most important and prominent places on the page, in their domain, titles.

Off-page refers to techniques that can be used to improve the position of a web site in the search engine result pages. Off-pages give them a very good indication on how other websites and users perceive the particular website. A useful website is more likely to have links from other websites. Basically by building external links to library website because of a matter of quantity, a matter of quality of these links will affect the ranking of website library. Library needs to try to gather as many 'votes' as they can so that they can bypass their competitors and rank higher. For example, library should attract links from other websites such as academic libraries, Vietnam National Library, General Science Library etc. or other institutions such as National Agency for Science and

Technology Information, The Library and Education Assistance Foundation for Vietnam (LEAF-VN) etc.

Increase Alex rank

Alexa estimates the average daily visitors (the percentage of users that visits website) and pageviews (how many pages are viewed by each visitor when they come on to the page) to every site. Therefore, to improve Alexa rank libraries should:

- Increase their site traffic through social media or advertising activities such as attaching their website address in the emails, newsletters or the registration forms for using the library etc. because more traffic help to increase Alexa rank at fast speed
- Make their website' contents as interesting as possible to rake in even more page views

Add description for library' website

LIBUSSH should write descriptions for their website because these descriptions will attract new visitors or search engines can get an overview of the library' website. Library should begin this task by using meta description tags. Meta description tags, while not important to search engine rankings, are extremely important in gaining user click-through library' website from the search engine result pages. Normally meta description tags will display below page titles. However, Google just displays 150 characters on meta description tags. If it is more than 150 characters, Google automatically cut off the excess. Therefore, when writing for meta description tags, librarians should write brief introduction about website content, each different site should have a different description tag to introduce this site as well. If library build good titles and meta description tags for library' website, they can help library increase their ranking on the search engine result pages as Google. In addition, the library should publish images, video clips to introduce about the library such as collections, policies, how to borrow books etc. on library' website. LIBUSSH can also optimize their website by integrating links to their photos on Flickr, their videos on YouTube or social networking sites. This is not only save money but also can help library collect statistical figure from these tools.

Developing types of online advertising

Advertising in online newspapers

Online newspapers are more advantages than printed newspapers and can be found online by typing in any online newspaper name in the Google search engine. Also, online newspapers have better content with photo, video, audio, forum, message board etc. and other interactive features help users find information easily. Online newspapers are becoming common more than printed newspapers by the advantages above, that why the library should not ignore this form of advertising. Based on statistics of Ministry of Information and Communications of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, there are 62 online newspapers in Vietnam. Therefore, the library can advertise through these online newspapers by using banner, logo or pop-up ads.

The standards that the library should use to select online newspapers for their advertising can be: the popularity of the online newspaper, relevance with the target customers of the library, costs paid for advertising etc.In addition, the library need to follow and evaluate the effectiveness of these advertising activities via the amount of times users view the advertisements, how many users access to library website from the advertisements orhow many times users do the transactions etc.

Email advertising

To doadvertising via email, the library should follow stepsbellow:

Firstly, LIBUSSH should create a database containing information about email address of their users. Library can do that easily by statistics of users' email addresses when they sign up on library website, join the library' training class or when they use the library etc.Most of usersdo not interested with the information that they are not required, so the self-creation list of user' email address can help library determine users would like to receive emails to avoid spamming.

Secondly, the library should note some points:

- Select the appropriate title: title of the emailsneed to mention about benefit for users and related to email body.
- Put most important andcompelling information at the top of the email because most users read email in less than 10 seconds. The content must focus on the value of the products, services to users. Also, library should use bullets or text highlight colour important content in emails.
- Personalize the email by adding the user's first name in the email body or subject line because everyone likes to receive email directly. Also, personal email helps receivers feel more interested in reading more letters.
- Need to track the emails have been sent to determine the effectiveness of the advertising via email.On the other hand, library need to be sure someone is responding to reply, any questions or comments need to be handled in a timely manner.

Social network advertising

Social networks are very popular because they have some special advantages such as worldwide connectivity, real-time information sharing, usually free etc. Because of these reasons, library can use social networks as one of the useful tools to do advertising activities. For users, if they connect to the library via social network, they can update information from library anytime and anywhere with internet connected. Nowadays, most users use smartphones, tablets or laptops which can connect to social network sites easily. This confirms that social network should be one of the top choices for library' advertising activities. Library can select the social networks based on some standards such as popular social network sites; easy to use, interoperability, share information with other social network sites; performance analysis feature and high security. There are many social network sites but Facebook is

the largest social network site with more than 1.59 billion users by the end of 2015. If library use Facebook, there will be have large visitors. To do advertising via Facebook, the library needs an account Facebook Fanpage.

This registration is free and easy with the following steps:

Step 1: Create Fanpage for the library. Library needsusername for Facebook Fanpage because each account is built with an ID, however, because it is difficult to remember the ID number so the library should choose a username brief, easy to remember, easy to promote.

Step 2: Set the fanpage, use available applications or add new applications, write basic information to introduce about fanpage. This information should be simple, concise but enough basic information. Library should provide address of library' website and contact information here.

Step 3: Make sure their fanpage operate efficiently, library should provide information about the activities of the library, give more information about products and services of library; manage comments from users and reply or answer their questions.

Finally, the library should look at statistics from Facebook Fanpage for information about the interaction of the fans on the fanpage. Facebook has two statistical items, there are Users and Interactions. These statistics of users' activities will help librarians know about their fans. Library can make online advertising strategy based on the statistics about gender and age. Statistics of feedback (like, comment), the number of views (impressions) to measure the impact and value of content, interaction of the information is posted. Statistics of page activity to evaluate the interoperability of their fans as well as the attractiveness of the page etc. On the other hand, library can understand the needs and expectations of fans if they track statistics and comments of fans on the fanpage.

Blog advertising

Blog (short for "weblog") is a form of online diary, a site on which anybody writes about personal opinions, activities or experiences. The construction, renovation and using information on the blog are done easily and almost free, so anyone can create their own blog. Blog is not spread strongly as social networks but when people learn, study or when there is a concern most of them want to read the articles on blog instead of reading the lines briefly share on social networks like Facebook. The library also needs to use the blog to promotion the library, information resources, products or services because library will access user needs via blog easily. However, if the library does not create a private character or not build relationships and participate in community activities, library advertising through blogs will do not provide high efficiency. The library should note the following points when conduct blog advertising:

Create interesting content on blog

Content is very important for attracting blog users. Library should publish useful information to theirusers. If library' blog receives the enjoyable of users, it will become a source of information that helps libraries enhance the reputation with users, also users can share, cite information from the library' blog.

Library'blog should contain the following:

- **Policy:** the policiesof library as circulation, fines, interlibrary loan etc.
- **Opening hours:** information about the opening hours at each room and any change (if any)
- **Library collections:** the collection of books, newspapers, journals, essays, thesis etc. by the videos instead of text formatting.
- **New books:** quickly update new books' information on the library's blog with the cover image, video and other information such as barcode, call number or summary note to users.
- **Online databases:** the library has online database but the rates of using are low. The survey results show that most of users do not used them because of obstacles such as language limitations, network problems, unknown how to access through internet. Therefore, library' blog should give information in detail about their databases and guide how to use them for library clientele.

Library' blog should be made differences

Besides the blog content, users also interest in the differences of the library than the other libraries so library needs to share their views, special information to attract visitors.

Promote and build relationships with users

The library should focus on attracting users who visit library' blog or increase traffic to library'blog by participating in forums, social networks, creating links with other blogs. For example, library should leave comments on other blogs because it is a way to create a link to library's blog from the blog that library have left comments; put address of library' blog in email signature; register address of library' blog with search engine like Technorati - a search engine content of blog to increase the capabilities found library' blog on the search engines.

Update blog

Blog must have new information and need to be updated regularly so that blog can attract users. In case library cannot published entries each day, library should also have information about their activities or update new content to sustain the interest of users.

Reply users' comment

Users leave their comments when they are interested with the entries on the library' blog. Therefore, library should answer these comments. This job can help library build a close relationship with users and this is an opportunity for library to explain or respond to the adverse comments against library. In addition, blog can also integrate general services such as RSS,

instant messaging, tools for sharing photo, video and podcasting to become useful reference site for users.

Advertising by sharing videos and photos about the library

LIBUSSH should use websites which can share videos, photos such as YouTube and Flickr to promote about library, products and services of library.

YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload videos with just a few simple steps. LIBUSSH can begin to advertise through YouTube by creating an account for the library on YouTube. After that, the library should publish some useful videos such as an introduction about the history of the library, library resources, special collections, how to use online databases, information skills instruction etc. so users can see and share them with other users. YouTube stores and uploads the videos so users can access from anywhere, at any time if they have internet connection and the information of librarycan be promote for free and so fast. However, to achieve high efficiency promotion, library needs to attract users watch and share videos. The methods for attracting users can be advertise on the library' website, blog or social network sites, including:

- YouTube allows for writing describe videos and searching videos related to a specific topic. Therefore, library should use keywords about library to describe for videos so thatlibrary' videos can be found easily on the YouTube.
- YouTube has sharing buttonsby the end of each video on YouTube, it provides the code to insert the video into other websites. Thus, library should insert the widgets from YouTube on their website, blog or Facebook fanpage. Therefore, users can see those widgets without access to YouTube.
- YouTube supports analysis and statistics features, so library will know their video has been viewed how many times and seen at where (on the YouTube, Blog, Facebook or other sites). Based on it, library can measure the effectiveness of advertising activities by videos on YouTube.

Flickr

Flickr is a photo sharing website that can help library share their photos easily by creating an account on it, specifically:

- Flickr allows to upload collections of pictures so library should build the images to introduce about library materials, special collections or create exhibitions to inform the users about the resources, events and news of the library.
- Flickr allows to describe details information of the images, also users can search images by topic, place by using keywords. On the other hand, Flickr allows setting images storage mode at the level of privacy or public. Because of these advantages, library can attract with their users easily if they use keywords to describe and establish the appropriate permissions for the pictures.
- Flickr have statistical results and analysis the number of views over time of the day, the week in graphs and charts so the library can use the statistics feature on Flickr to measure the effectiveness of the advertising through this communication channel.

Conclusions

This paper reveals current situation of LIBUSSH in online advertising about library, products and services. In this era of the internet and competitors like Google and Yahoo, libraries have to strategize to attract more users. Therefore, communication is the key strategy to effective advertising. Channels of communication must be opened and help build a relationship with users. So opening a communication channel with users via website, blog, facebook and other social network sites can slowly but surely bring users back to the library.

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