Chapter 33
Ad Avoidance and Distance Education Marketing:
How Ad Avoidance Can Affect Distance Education Advertising

N. Bilge Ispir
Anadolu University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

All distance education institutions need inform their target audience (in this case, target students) about their education programs. In order to do this, distance education institutions apply some marketing communication activities including advertising. Distance education institutions have to use media to send their messages to target audiences. But target audiences are already in an ad-cluttered media environment and find ads irritating, boring, and offensive. Because of this, audiences try to avoid ads with different ways. On the other hand, audiences' ad avoidance behavior is affected by some factors including attitudes toward an ad, ad clutter, and communication problems. This study aims to understand ad avoidance behavior and factors that affect ad avoidance. In the light of this understanding, distance education institutions may develop effective marketing communication programs and may manage ad avoidance.

INTRODUCTION

Education is in competitive environment in order to satisfy students' different needs in our global world. The learning tools are varying nowadays depends on development of technology. These varieties bring opportunity to satisfy students' need and beat competition. Parallel to technological development and competitive environment, it is getting important to reach right target audience and satisfy their need. For this, all distance education institution started to manage their marketing communication in professional way all over the world. As a result of these marketing communication

activities, target students were bombarded with messages in different mediums. Within this message clutter, distance education institutions have to plan their marketing communication activities in order to reach target students.

On the other hand, target audiences have developed some strategies for avoidance this message bombardment. Ad avoidance of audience was examined first in the traditional media (TV, newspaper, magazine, radio). However, audience ad avoidance on new media (internet, SMS advertising etc.) was started to investigate depends on the development of new technologies by the academicians. Distance education institutions use both traditional media and new media to send their messages to reach target audiences. To understand audience ad avoidance on new media and traditional media is important for distance education institutions and this understanding will effect distance education institutions marketing communication activities.

However, ad avoidance is affected some factors including attitudes toward advertising, ad clutter, attitudes toward medium, permission based marketing, communication pattern. In this chapter, ad avoidance will be tried to explain and factors that affect ad avoidance will be discussed in the point of view distance education marketing communication.

DISTANCE EDUCATION MARKETING

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA) marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. (http://www.marketingpower.com/AboutAMA/Pages/DefinitionofMarketing.aspx)

Marketing is the critical element that determines the survival of business organizations and, to a large extent, distance education institutions in a competitive environment. Any service delivered

through the distance education mode to be effective, it must of necessity employ some marketing strategies. Successful distance education programs in an open economy have to use and refine their marketing strategies and tactics (Michael, 1997). Educational institutions vary in their use of modern marketing ideas. Some colleges and universities are beginning to actively apply marketing ideas, whereas many private schools are just becoming aware of what marketing has offer. Public schools have generally not shown any interest in marketing, but they would like more public support nonetheless (Kotler and Fox, 1985: 8).

According to Michael (1990), educational marketing is "an institutional philosophy which provides a framework or a process for identifying and satisfying the needs of specific relevant publics in a mutually beneficial manner" (p. 24). Kotler and Fox (1985) define educational marketing as:

Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control, of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets to achieve institutional objectives. Marketing involves designing the institution's offerings to meet the target markets' needs and desires and using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform motivate and service the markets (p.7)

As a process, marketing strategy includes some sub-actions. Figure 1 shows a marketing process for educational sector.

Jeff Harmon, director of marketing for the University of Illinois, has developed a strategy for marketing distance education offerings that maximizes the impact per marketing dollars. Harmon summarizes his strategy in five steps (Lorenzetti, 2005). In the first step, distance education institutions should understand where their students are. This is something of a preliminary step, but one critical to the success of any marketing endeavor. In the second step, distance education institutions should clean up their web site.

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