OUTDOOR ADVERTISING AS AN ELEMENT STRENGTHENING THE RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS OF UNIVERSITIES

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Helena Rachwał, PhD Student

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Faculty of Political Sciences and Journalism

e-mail: helena.rachwal@gmail.com

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Summary

The article puts forward the thesis that outdoor advertising is an important element that enriches college recruitment campaigns if it meets certain conditions. The basic factors determining the effectiveness of outdoor is the conciseness and simplicity of the message, the creation taking into account the proper character of the advertisement and referring to the emotions of the recipient, the composition based on the appropriate arrangement of elements, intriguing advertising text forcing the recipient to think, integrate outdoor communication with the internet transmission and the correct location of the advertising medium. The subject of outdoor advertising and its impact on candidates for studies is omitted in the literature on marketing activities of tertiary education institutions. Therefore, it was attempted to fill the cognitive gap by referring to foreign scientific research and examples of outdoor applications by universities in the United States of America and Great Britain. Also described are outdoor campaigns of the SWPS University, which cooperates with the Cityboard Media Institute in the field of external advertising research. In order to analyze outdoor Polish universities, the article uses part of the photographic material collected by the author, and reflects on the basis of their own observations and in-depth interviews with employees of Marketing Departments of selected universities.

Keywords: outdoor advertising, outdoor university, recruitment campaign, creation, composition

Introduction

Competitiveness of educational services provided by universities forces universities to take new measures aimed at attracting clients, that is, students. The reasons for the existing situation is the emergence of a large number of private universities, deepening demographic low, as well as growing aspirations of the society with regard to education (Wierenko, 2015; Pawłowski, 2005; Krzyżak, 2009; Ryńca, Myśko, 2016). According to Pabian (2002, p. 138) even the best university cannot assume uncritically that it is very well known in its region, in Poland and the world. This happens among others because it is subject to continuous changes. The role of marketing at Polish universities keeps growing. Marketing activities are not handled anymore only by students willing to add some more income to their scholarship, but by professionals working in organized units, which are gaining stronger and stronger position in the university structure (Maliszewski, 2008).

One of the forms of advertising of universities is outdoor advertising used in communication with students and student candidates. Despite the fact that these issues are taken into consideration in literature on the subject, what is missing is more precise definition and systematization of issues associated with universities' outdoor advertising, as well as research on the degree of efficiency of medium in recruitment campaigns. What is emphasized is low efficiency of outdoor advertising in the marketing activities of universities (Wasiluk, Markowska 2015). However, it is hard to find in publications an answer to the question about the reasons for this state of affairs. Does it come from the strength of messages found on the Internet and in social media? Is it an effect of incorrect design of outdoor message?

The article relies on the experiences and scientific research of American and British universities confirming high efficiency of outdoor advertising in recruitment campaigns. The forms of outdoor advertising used most often by Polish universities were analyzed and confronted with this. Also, the example of SWPS is discussed. The University uses outdoor advertising every year as an important element of its advertising campaign in time of student recruitment.

The methodology of research involved field research covering the

territory of the city of Poznań, as well as qualitative research in form of in-depth interviews with the employees of Marketing Departments of chosen universities¹. The purpose of this article is drawing attention to the potential of outdoor advertising and the possibility of its application in a broader scope by universities. The content of the article doesn't exhaust the subject of the research, but only serves as an expression of the author's will to initiate discussion and further research on the highlighted problem.

Outdoor advertising of universities abroad on the basis of the example of United States and Great Britain

In the United States and Great Britain, similarly as in Poland, a major reduction of the number of student candidates has been observed in the recent years. This is an effect of not just a demographic low, but above all the growth of fees for studying at American and British universities². In the current times when the educational market has become very competitive, foreign universities trying to reach hesitating student candidates have noticed a potential in one of the most traditional forms of advertising, namely, outdoor advertising.

Studies show that students in Great Britain spend most of their time going out and spend about 874 pounds per year on entertainment. Thanks to this outdoor advertising is a very efficient medium for reaching the target group and above all makes it possible to take advantage of unused space in an unconventional way³.

It seems that in the age of smartphones and social media these kinds of media constitute the most efficient method for attracting the attention of future students. However, the contemporary young people, in comparison to the generation of demographic high, understand modern technologies and thus are more resistant to online messages⁴. Marketingcharts.com has published the results of studies which show that up to 57% of students never click online ads and 30% never even look at them. Additionally, 56% of the surveyed try to avoid advertisements appearing online⁵. The results of studies have been confirmed also by a survey conducted online on a sample of 1209 students aged 18-34 in the period from March 3 to March

14, 2014 (College Explorer survey), which clearly suggests that social media portals attract 6 out of 10 students, similarly as radio advertising and press advertising⁶. It is also worth mentioning the results of research by Anatomy Media, which shows that most Internet users have installed an ad-blocker on at least one device. The survey covered 2700 people aged 18-24, out of this group 46% of respondents use an ad-blocker on a desktop computer, 31% - on a smartphone, or tablet and 14% of the respondents have installed ad-blocking software on both devices⁷. It is expected that this trend will be developing on a global scale. High level of saturation of the Internet with online advertising leads to hampering communication and disturbing the identity of a brand⁸. Moreover, studies show that making decisions is to a large extent an emotional process. According to statistics, 95% of decisions result from emotions⁹. By using an emotional message outdoor advertising has the power to evoke strong emotions rooted in basic needs¹⁰. As opposed to Internet message, outdoor advertising may have a positive impact on student candidates under condition of appropriate composition and creation. It is also necessary to remark that outdoor advertising influences the parents of future students in an exceptionally efficient way. This is because they better react to traditional advertising, expecting conciseness and simplicity of the message¹¹.

University of San Francisco, willing to compete with such universities as Stanford and Harvard carried out a billboard campaign in cooperation with Hub Strategy & Communication, which was supposed to reach the current generation of students (picture 1, picture 2). The campaign raised the awareness of recipients by 12% and raised the level of engagement in social media¹².

Concordia University in Saint Paul also recognized the advantages of outdoor advertising. In cooperation with marketing agency EMC Outdoor it carried out an intensive advertising campaign using various outdoor carriers in many locations in the city (Picture 3). The campaign was designed so that it would be possible to reach students at any time of the day. Individualized, but coherent messages had a direct impact on the minds of recipients, helping them make the right decision with regard to starting studies at a university¹³.

Picture 1. Design of a billboard of the University of San Francisco number 1

Source: <https://hubsanfrancisco.com/client/university-of-san-francisco>

Picture 2. Design of a billboard of the University of San Francisco number 2

Source: <https://hubsanfrancisco.com/client/university-of-san-francisco>

Picture 3. An example of outdoor advertisement of Concordia University in Saint Paul

Source: https://www.emcoutdoor.com/case_concordia.htm#

Central Michigan University in order to give a boost to the recruitment process, as well as the recognizability of the university's brand carried out in 2014 a complex outdoor campaign using billboards, citylights and advertisements on vehicles (Picture 4)¹⁴. It was observed that outdoor advertising contributed to 27% growth of the number of students in the first year of studies¹⁵.

A very interesting and successful campaign with the application of outdoor advertising was prepared by the University of Colorado Denver. The goal of the campaign was not just growth of recruitment for studies, but also improving the recognizability of the brand in the society and above all drawing the attention of the business community to university's students and graduates. The campaign took place between November 3, 2014 and January 4, 2015 on the premises of the international airport in Denver under the slogan "Learn with Purpose"¹⁶. The main outdoor advertising carriers were large-format wall posters and a 50-yard-long floor graphic design, which linked escalators on two sides of the airport (Picture 5, Picture 6).

Picture 4. An example of a citylight of Central Michigan University

Source: https://www.cmich.edu/office_president/university_communications/about/Pages/portfolio.aspx

Picture 5. Large-format posters of the University of Colorado Denver at the airport in Denver

Source: <http://pennecooutdoor.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/university-of-colorado-case-study.pdf>

Picture 6. Floor design of the University of Colorado Denver at the airport in Denver

Source: <http://pennecooutdoor.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/university-of-colorado-case-study.pdf>

Innovative application of outdoor advertising contributed to 10.5 million displays in social media within 8 weeks¹⁷. Moreover, the campaign caused a big stir in the society, also among rival universities¹⁸.

There are many more similar cases of application of outdoor advertising by foreign universities. Apart from universities, also colleges use outdoor advertising, deriving major benefits and achieving high level of efficiency of the medium¹⁹.

It is worth keeping in mind that outdoor advertising influences the recipients 24 hours per day, seven days a week and there is no way to switch it off like in case of television, or radio, or throwing it away as in case of newspapers and this leads to the appropriate level of reception (Russel,

Lane, 2000). Outdoor advertising also has other advantages, one of them is mass character and scope of coverage. The advancing fragmentation of the media leads to a situation in which outdoor advertising may become the only medium reaching the mass recipient²⁰. Moreover, outdoor advertising fits very well in contemporary times when people live in constant hurry and the solutions worked out in outdoor advertising may prove efficient in other media (Kubuj, 2006).

Outdoor advertising of universities in Poland.

Case study.

In Poland, during the time of student recruitment, numerous forms of outdoor advertising of universities can be observed. However, in most cases it is treated as a secondary medium and a rather insignificant element of a recruitment campaign.

An appropriate solution applied by universities using outdoor advertising is locating advertisements in city centres and districts with the highest streams of people. These are public transport stops and crossings of main streets, that is, the places where potential student candidates, including people finishing high school aged 19-20 can be found (photograph 1). However, universities most often use large-format outdoor advertising in form of billboards, or banners placed on the facades of buildings owned by them (except for historical buildings, due to legal limitations) (Picture 7, Picture 8). This is a convenient method which doesn't require additional costs associated with the rental of space, but at the same time greatly limits the reach of advertising. In such case only people who happen to get close to a university can notice the advertisements. Usually, advertisements of this kind present the names of offered areas of study without advertising slogans and images, which doesn't require much work on preparation of a message.

Wall paintings constitute an interesting form of outdoor advertising, because they make it possible to use buildings (often not very modern buildings) and neighbouring architecture and at the same time to emphasize the atmosphere of the place (picture 10, picture 11).

Picture 7. Citylight of WSB University at Most Teatralny stop in Poznań

WSB WYŻSZA SZKOŁA BANKOWA
w Poznaniu

studia magisterskie
dla absolwentów wszystkich
kierunków

Do 10 października
czesne już od
297 zł miesięcznie

DYPLOM MAGISTRA (3 LUB 4 SEMESTRY):

- Finanse i rachunkowość
- Logistyka i rekreacja
- Zarządzanie
- Zarządzanie – ścieżka dla inżynierów (3 semestry)

ORAZ STUDIA MAGISTERSKIE Z PODDYPLIMOWYMI
I STUDIA 100% W FORMULE ONLINE

Wpisowe **0 zł** (oni)

www.wsb.pl

Source: Own materials.

Picture 8. A banner placed on the building of the Faculty of Environmental Engineering and Spatial Planning of Poznań University of Life Sciences

Source: Own materials.

Picture 9. A banner of the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism of Adam Mickiewicz University, placed on the side wall of a building

Source: Own materials.

Picture 10. Wall painting of WSB University in Poznań on the wall of a building at the crossing of Ratajczaka street and Powstańców Wielkopolskich street in Poznań

Source: <http://www.wsb.pl/poznan/dla-prasy/materialy-dla-mediow>

Picture 11. Wall painting of Collegium Civitas in Warsaw

Source: <https://www.civitas.edu.pl/uczelnia/aktualnosci/mural-collegium-civitas>

With regard to the creation and composition of advertising, universities' outdoor advertising is usually informative in character and involves only naming the offered areas of study and using the images of anonymous people who supposedly are the students of a particular university (picture 12, picture 13). What is definitely missing from posters is an emotional message in form of intriguing advertising slogans, or using the images of people associated with the academic community (lecturers and students) and their short recommendations strengthening the credibility of the message. It is necessary to emphasize that the more a recipient can identify with the hero of an advertisement, especially a typical client (student), the more, in a certain sense, the hero becomes an authority for him, or her (Sutherland and Sylvester, 2003).

Picture 12. Outdoor advertising of the Faculty of Theology of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Source: Own materials.

The main reasons for limited utilization of outdoor advertising named by the employees of Marketing Departments of the surveyed universities, or of particular faculties are the following: limited budget, insufficient

Picture 13. Billboard placed on the side wall of the main building
of Poznań University of Life Sciences

Source: Own materials.

knowledge about the functioning of outdoor advertising among employees responsible for advertising and promotion of a university, barriers resulting from the defined rules of the System of Visual Identification of a particular university and lack of examples and scientific research concerning the implementation of successful outdoor advertising campaigns by Polish universities.

One of rare cases of efficient application of outdoor advertising in a recruitment campaign is SWPS University. The university runs outdoor campaigns in all cities where it has its branches, that is, in Warsaw, Wrocław, Katowice, Rzeszów, Sopot and Poznań. The university, since the

beginning of its presence on the educational market has been using outdoor advertising. Since 2013 the university has had a more selective approach to outdoor advertising. Every year the university makes it to the top three of universities awarded in the Genius Universitatis contest for a creative recruitment campaign in at least one category. The contest is organized by Wydawnictwo Perspektywy.

What constitutes an important fact is the cooperation of SWPS University with Instytut Cityboard Media on the area of expanded research concerning outdoor advertising and conducting post-graduate course titled "Psychology in marketing and advertising - efficiency in action"²¹.

The most often used outdoor advertising carriers are citylights placed on bus and tram stops, especially in the city centre. The advertising message reaches a broad target group of people moving along the main transport routes. The location of advertisements on bus stops makes it possible to learn about the content of the message in detail and its composition is based on slightly different rules than in case of other large-format forms e.g. billboards.

In Warsaw SWPS University also promotes itself on metro stations by means of backlit LCD carriers forming a wall, which additionally raises the reach of outdoor advertising (Picture 14).

Picture 14. LCD carriers of SWPS University located on a metro station in Warsaw

Source: Photographic documentation of the Department of Marketing of SWPS University in Poznań

Outdoor advertising projects are exclusively an initiative of the Department of Marketing of SWPS University, similarly as their execution. The creations are to some extent repeated in the subsequent years, but the team keeps implementing new ideas. The outdoor campaign is conducted in the months of May, June, July and September. Despite offering a few areas of study and an even greater number of specializations, SWPS University still focuses on the promotion of law and psychology. In case of the Poznań branch this is justified, as its educational offer covers only law, psychology and design.

With regard to the composition of outdoor advertisements of SWPS University, it is built in such a way that it is easy to notice the advertisements among a huge number of other advertisements in a city. Łukasz Skorupski, the head of the section Creation and Internet, emphasizes that "the creations mainly present a different image of scientists and students of SWPS, a half of the face is supposed to symbolize the other, less obvious face of a person. What is also significant is the very format of the carrier, which it is much easier to compose on the basis of a half of the face - however, this is a secondary factor". The basic colour of the university, which is applied in outdoor advertising of the university is black, which symbolizes a premium brand, quality, prestige and success. According to the head of the section Creation and Internet, "(...)it matches all colours very well, which in our case is important taking into consideration the colours distinguishing all five cities". The designs of SWPS University advertisements correspond to the rules of lateralization of brain hemispheres, according to the psychology of advertisement. Left hemisphere is responsible for the logical analysis of detailed characteristics of a product, or service, while the right hemisphere is responsible for emotions. To achieve a proper reception of the advertising message, the image and emotional elements are on the left side of the poster and rational message in form of information is on the right (Picture 15, Picture 16).

Picture 15. The design of a citylight of SWPS University using the image of Marcin Czarnecki

**UNIwersYTET
SWPS**
POZNAŃ

**NOWY WYMIAR
STUDIÓW
PRAWNICZYCH**

Ze studentami dzielę się wiedzą i doświadczeniem. Zachęcam ich także do odważnego i twórczego myślenia o prawie. Chcę, aby nasi absolwenci wyróżniali się pośród prawników. Tak, jak pośród dobrych gitarzystów wyróżniają się wirtuozowie gitary.

Marcin Czarnecki
Adwokat
Uniwersytet SWPS w Poznaniu

www.studia.swps.pl
Drzwi otwarte: 17 września 2016 r.

Studia prawnicze
Studia jednolite magisterskie
Prawo dla magistrów i licencjatów

Source: materials of the Department of Marketing of SWPS University

Picture 16. The design of a citylight of SWPS University using the image of dr Maria Grzymisławska-Cybulska

UNIwersYTET
SWPS
POZNAŃ

**NOWY WYMIAR
STUDIÓW
PRAWNICZYCH**

Stosowanie przepisów prawa jest jak gra strategiczna. Aby grać - trzeba znać reguły, aby wygrywać - wiedzieć jak się nimi posłużyć.

dr Maria Grzymisławska-Cybulska
p.o. Dyrektora Instytutu Prawa
Uniwersytet SWPS w Poznaniu

www.studia.swps.pl
Drzwi otwarte: 17 września 2016 r.

Studia prawnicze
Studia jednolite magisterskie
Prawo dla magistrów i licencjatów

Source: : materials of the Department of Marketing of SWPS University

It is worth pointing out that the employees of the Department of Marketing of SWPS University conduct a poll among the recruited students every year. The results of the polls show clearly that outdoor advertising gets noticed by the candidates and additionally it substantially boosts brand recognizability, which leads to growth of interest among the stakeholders of the university.

Summary

On the basis of the examples mentioned in this paper it is possible to conclude that outdoor advertising of Polish universities is far from outdoor advertising of foreign universities. This comes from the fact that in Poland there is still a common conviction that one of the most efficient elements of recruitment campaigns are Internet advertising and social media. The basic mistake made by the employees of Marketing Departments of the surveyed universities is the lack of research on and monitoring of the changes associated with the reception of outdoor advertising among the enrolled people. Research, for example, in form of a properly built questionnaire would make it possible to verify the quality of outdoor advertising campaigns and to diagnose its inefficient elements. As opposed to Polish universities, American and British universities treat outdoor advertising seriously, carrying out thought-out recruitment campaigns with the application of outdoor advertising. In Poland SWPS University is an example of appropriate application of outdoor advertising on the basis of scientific practice. Research shows that outdoor advertising may not only influence the growth of the number of students, but can also shape the image of a university in a positive way.

In light of the data presented in the article, it is necessary to think about returning to the oldest form of advertising, namely, outdoor advertising. Outdoor advertising will certainly not squeeze out social media, or other forms of Internet advertising and other means of conveying message, which have an influence on the choice of a university. Nevertheless, it may become an important element strengthening the process of student recruitment, which reaches a broad target group under condition of appropriate creation, composition, integration of the message with the Internet message, location of the carriers and particular time of display of advertisements.

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- ¹ The research was conducted in 10 universities on the territory of Poznań, including 15 faculties of one of the biggest universities in Poland in the period from January 2017 to September 2018. The article contains exclusively information for which the author has obtained permissions for publication. However, this doesn't have an impact on the formulated conclusions.
- ² <https://airoutdoor.co.uk/blog/outdoor-advertising-universities/> (accessed 07.12.2018) <https://www.pennecooutdoor.com/effectiveness-of-outdoor-advertising-for-colleges-universities/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ³ <https://airoutdoor.co.uk/blog/outdoor-advertising-universities/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ⁴ <https://airoutdoor.co.uk/blog/outdoor-advertising-universities/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ⁵ <https://www.marketingcharts.com/industries/media-and-entertainment-44096> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ⁶ <https://www.marketingcharts.com/industries/media-and-entertainment-44096> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ⁷ <https://airoutdoor.co.uk/blog/outdoor-advertising-universities/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ⁸ <https://airoutdoor.co.uk/blog/outdoor-advertising-universities/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ⁹ <http://pennecooutdoor.wpengine.com/why-are-billboards-effective/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ¹⁰ <http://pennecooutdoor.wpengine.com/why-are-billboards-effective/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ¹¹ <https://airoutdoor.co.uk/blog/outdoor-advertising-universities/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ¹² <https://hubsanfrancisco.com/client/university-of-san-francisco> (accessed 08.12.2018).
- ¹³ https://www.emcoutdoor.com/case_concordia.htm# (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ¹⁴ <http://pennecooutdoor.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/central-michigan-university-case-study.pdf> (accessed 08.12.2018).
- ¹⁵ <https://www.cmich.edu/news/article/Pages/cmu-achieves-nearly-27-percent-growth-in-freshman-class.aspx> (accessed 08.12.2018).
- ¹⁶ <http://pennecooutdoor.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/university-of-colorado-case-study.pdf> (accessed 08.12.2018).
- ¹⁷ An advertising spot concerning the preparations of the University of Colorado Denver for an outdoor advertising campaign can be found under the link <https://youtu.be/rWaVnOV148Q> (accessed 02.02.2019).
- ¹⁸ <http://pennecooutdoor.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/university-of-colorado-case-study.pdf> (accessed 08.12.2018).
- ¹⁹ <https://www.pennecooutdoor.com/effectiveness-of-outdoor-advertising-for-colleges-universities/> (accessed 07.12.2018).
- ²⁰ <https://www.clearchannel.com.pl/bank-wiedzy/swiat-outdooru/zalety-reklamy-zewnetrznej> (accessed 10.10.201).
- ²¹ Instytut Cityboard Media has been carrying out research projects since 1998. The purpose of these projects is showing the efficiency of outdoor advertising. Information concerning research can be found on the website of the organization: <http://www.icbm.info>

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Helena Rachwał, M.A. — doctoral student at the Faculty of Political Sciences and Journalism of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, studied journalism and social communication, specialized in advertising and promotion at the Faculty of Political Sciences and Journalism of Adam Mickiewicz University and in management at the Faculty of Law and Administration of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. In her research work she displays interest in issues associated with the marketing of universities, social economics and academic sports.