

MARKETING AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF SELECTED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

Marketing of universities was unknown word in Slovakia years ago, however, it is now becoming a necessity. Regional education funding based on the number of students has created a competition between schools. This is further compounded by the decreasing number of students caused by the negative demographic development. We integrate contemporary sociological scholarship on higher education to appraise universities as peculiar organizations, on three dimensions. Universities are positionally central to the institutional order of modern societies, providing working links between state, market, civil society, and private-sphere organizations. This fact is also recognized by the analysed education institution. The paper offers an overview of activities performed with presentation of results. It deals with two specific steps that have been undertaken – a student survey and an analysis of educational institutions by students. With these tools, it presents their results, which - in marketing activities of analysed education institution – act as key areas of focus of the education institution.

Key words: marketing, education, university, student evaluation

JEL Code: D02, I23, M31

Introduction

We integrate contemporary sociological scholarship on higher education to appraise universities as peculiar organizations, on three dimensions. Universities are positionally central to the institutional order of modern societies, providing working links between state, market, civil society, and private-sphere organizations.

Universities are polysemic, embodying civic, economic, and sacred meanings simultaneously. These insights are harmonious with classic insights on the character of academic organization and offer concise dimensions for observing variation in

higher education systems across space and time (Eaton & Stevens, 2020). In higher education, a situation similar to the private sector arises. For enterprises, sales are dependent on the number of customers. Companies are therefore trying to attract new customers and keep old ones. Customers and their satisfaction with the company and its products depend on whether the company will be profitable, on the edge of survival or leave the market. The focus is on the customer, his needs and wishes (IRVS, 2007). This is the only way to succeed in a market economy in the rule of law. In the highly dynamic, competitive, and uncertain environment of tertiary education, universities nowadays have to intensify marketing communication to address potential applicants (Gunina, Komarkova, & Pribyl, 2019). It is important to point on the university brand image and on its essential dimensions and components, including the cognitive attributes (service/educational quality) and affective attributes (corporate brand image) of the university / faculty (Alwi et al., 2019).

1 Object of research

Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Economics in Bratislava with seat in Košice, Slovakia (FBE UEB) was established in 1992 as the fifth faculty of the University. Currently, the FBE UEB provides training for university educated economists and managers at all three levels of study in full-time and part-time form of study.

The first “swallows” in the application of marketing principles in Slovakia were private schools, and some state schools were gradually added. FBE UEB has also realized that schools that apply marketing thinking will succeed, many others will disappear. This is one of the reasons why this institution has been and is doing activities to achieve a vision of better services and higher standards for both current and potential students.

2 Main research in marketing activities of the selected educational institution

A marketing mix is not just writing or building certain strengths and eliminating weaknesses of education institution. The marketing mix is a process that benefits the university by providing benefits to customers. The marketing mix of a university as a specific institution providing services can be compiled as follows (Dudas Pajerska, 2017):

- Services of university and communication of university
- Price of education

- Location and physical environment of university
- University staff and atmosphere of university

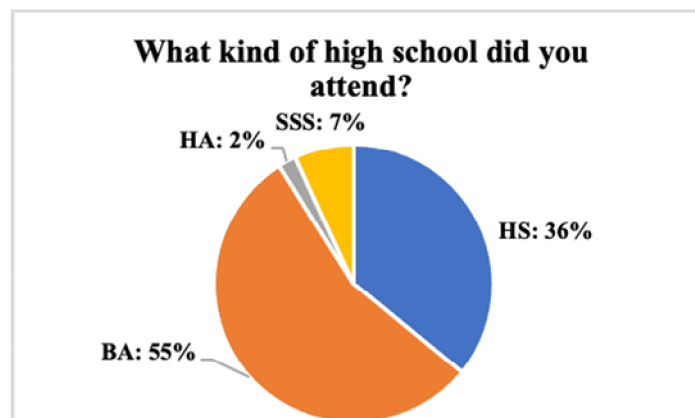
Every single element of the marketing mix can help the university to succeed in the education market. Each single element can become a competitive advantage. Each element can distinguish the university from others and help it to succeed.

2.1 Student survey

The faculty conducted a survey among students in which they were asked how they attended secondary school, which colleges of economics are, in their view, competitors for FBE UEB, what their experience with the study department and what are their assessments for FBE UEB in view of several characteristics. The results of the questionnaire survey can be seen in the following pictures.

The first area whose results were determined by the marketing activities of the faculty was the issue of secondary school, attended by current students involved in the survey. According to the submitted answers, 55% graduated from the business academy, 36% from the grammar school, 2% from the hotel academy and 7% from another secondary vocational school.

Fig. 1: Graduated high school



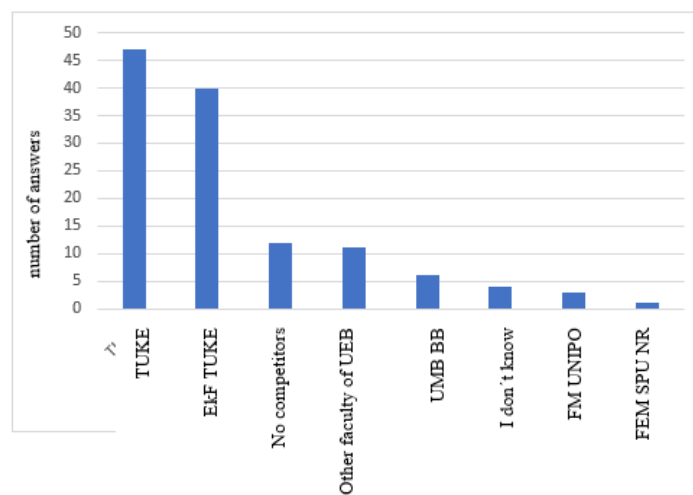
Notes: HS – High school, HA – hotel academy, BA – business academy, SSS – secondary special school
Source: own processing

Based on the percentage distribution of types of secondary schools completed, it is obvious for the faculty management in which areas it is necessary to carry out its marketing activities. For this reason, lectures for potential students in high schools and business academies are the most widely held. Various activities are carried out, where students at these schools can try to study at the faculty for several days. The proportional distribution of

secondary schools reflects the fact that the faculty provides university education in economics that is most suitable for secondary school graduates with a similar focus. Such education is provided by high schools and business academies.

Subsequently, the survey was focused on competitors of FBE UEB (Figure 2) on market of university education in economic field. The students were also asked to express which faculties they consider to be competitors for the FBE UEB. The results show that TUKE students and in particular EkF TUKE are considered the main competitor for analysed education institution. Another area of investigation to improve marketing activities of education institution was the assessment of characteristics of FBE UEB.

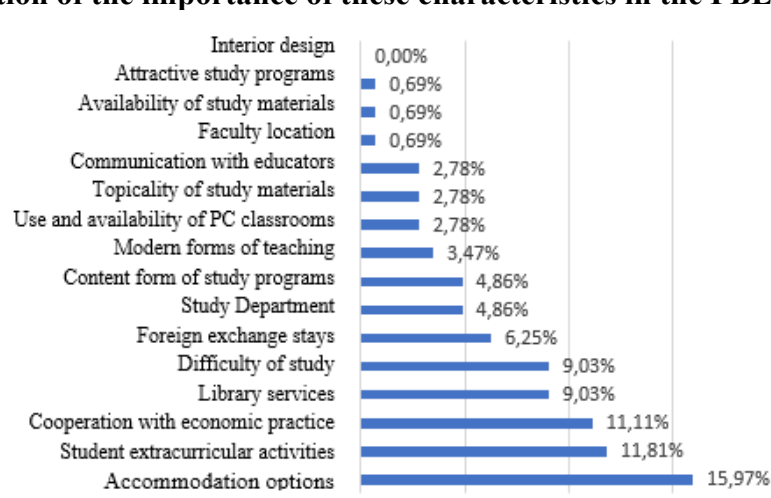
Fig. 2: Competitors for FBE UEB



Notes: TUKE – Technical university in Košice, EkF – Economic faculty, UMB BB – University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica, FEM SPU NR – Faculty of Economic management in Nitra

Source: own processing

Fig. 3: Perception of the importance of these characteristics in the FBE UEB evaluation



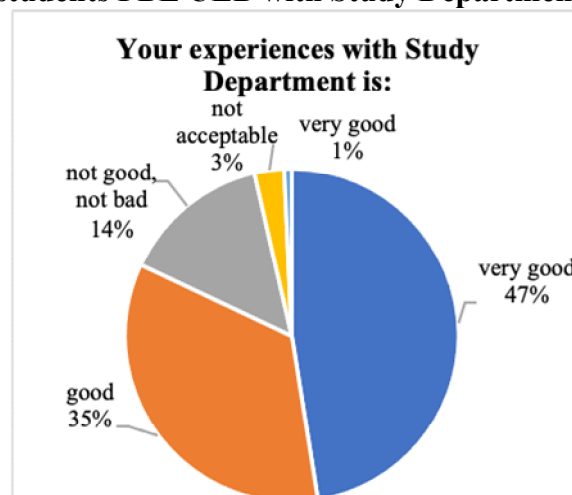
Source: own processing

15,9% of the total number of asked students consider the accommodation options important for the FBE UEB evaluation, followed by 11.81% of student extracurricular activities and above 10% (exactly 11.11%) of students consider the cooperation of the school with economic practice to be an important factor. Less than a percentage of students attach importance to the location of the faculty, the availability of study materials and attractive study programs.

FBE UEB in cooperation with the then management of UEB provided for the students of the faculty own Student Home on Bella Street in 2005, which managed to solve the long-term problem of accommodation of its students lasting 20 years (original Student Home on Podhradova street were in 1985 assigned to other universities by decision of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic).

As next part of the survey, students were asked to comment on their experience in working with the Study Department. The Study Department also closely cooperates with students by providing preparation, conduct and evaluation of the admission procedure, ensuring student enrolment, keeping the relevant agenda and records related to the implementation of the educational process, preparing documents for planning the educational process and preparing the timetable, participates in the realization and organization of state examinations and defines of final theses, participates in the preparation and organization of student matriculation and graduation ceremonies. The results are shown in the following figure.

Fig. 4: Experiences of students FBE UEB with Study Department



Source: own processing

In total, up to 85% of the surveyed students expressed a very good and good experience with the Study Department, 14% of the students had neither good nor bad

experience, 3% expressed cooperation as insufficient and 1% very bad. Therefore, the Study Department carries out its agenda in relation to students at a very good level and in this way contributes to the positive marketing of the whole workplace of the FBE UEB.

2.2 Analyses by students

After this general survey next step was analysing of faculties abroad which are similar to FBE UEB according to fields of study, number of students and founders. In particular, students were involved in this step, as their experiences gained from graduating from foreign faculties were also used. The analysis proceeded by means of a pre-prepared form, which was devoted to 3 basic areas: the characteristics of the country, the characteristics of the university / faculty and the usability for FBE UBE.

Students analysed together 40 universities faculties from 15 countries. 46 students participated in this analysis and had 10 weeks to complete it. The individual course of analysis was supervised and consulted with FBE UEB pedagogical staff whose scientific orientation is in the field of marketing, international marketing and euromarketing.

Tab. 1: List of universities from complex analyses

Country	University	Economic faculties	Number of students
Austria	University of Wien	7	18 540
	Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien	1	23 600
Czech Republic	University Hradec Králové	2	6 611
	University of Economics, Prague	6	13 000
	Masaryk University	1	7 800
Denmark	International business academy	1	4 700
	Copenhagen business school	1	20 000
	VIA University College	2	19 000
	Aalborg University	1	8 700
Finland	University of Helsinki	1	31 200
	Arcada University of Applied Science	1	2 700
	University of Lapland	2	5 100
France	Université de Sorbonne / Université de Paris	1	45 600
	Université de Strasbourg	1	40 800
Germany	Heidelberg University	8	30 898
	University of Mannheim	7	12 000

	Humboldt - Universität zu Berlin	2	12 500
	Ulm University	1	10 503
Great Britain	University of Cambridge	2	18 00
	University of Liverpool	1	24 775
	The Nottingham Trent University	1	29 370
Holland	Wageningen University & Research	6	13 914
	University of Twente	5	7 584
Italy	The University of Bologna	1	85 509
	Bocconi University	8	14 428
	The Università degli Studi Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria	2	10 200
Norway	University of Oslo	8	28 007
	Westerdals School of Arts, Communication and Technology	5	1 700
Poland	Wydział Ekonomii, Zarządzania i Turystyki Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu w Jeleniej Górze	1	1 710
	Univerzita of Gdansk	1	1 200
	Uniwersytet Warszawsky	3	24 200
	Uniwersytet Rzeszowsky	1	16 456
Scotland	University of Edinburg	1	35 000
	University of Stirling	3	14 000
Slovakia	University of Economics in Bratislava	7	8 000
	University of security management, Košice	1	1 124
Slovenia	University of Ljubljana	2	13 500
	University of Maribor	2	14 100
Spain	Univerzitat Pompeu Fabra - Barcelona	1	17 600
	Univerzitat de Valladolid- Valladolid	2	26 000

Source: own processing

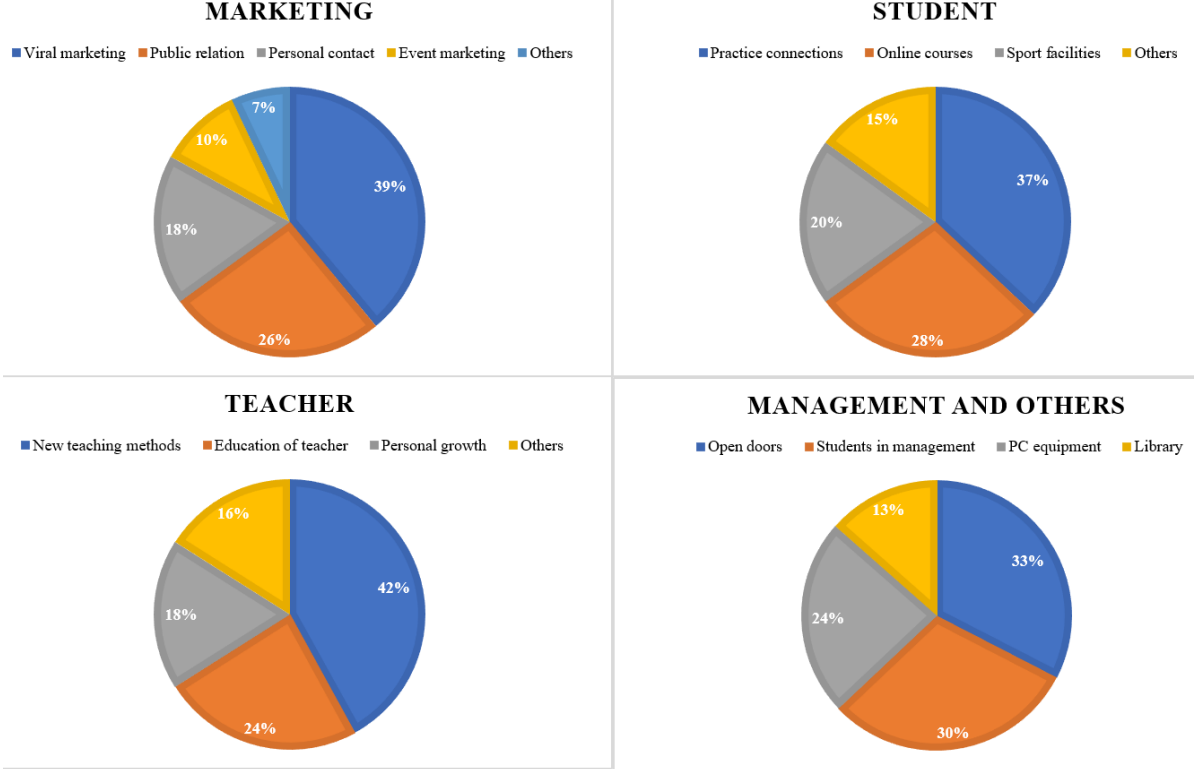
As a result of this process, a comprehensive analysis of similar faculties within the European Union as a basis for setting up FBE UBE marketing activities was achieved. Previous table provides lists of universities which were subject of analyses.

3 Results for proposed marketing activities

Based on an analysis of selected educational institutions, conclusions, and recommendations for marketing activities of FBE UEB were made. From the point of view of the investigated sub-areas in the third area Usability for FBE UEB, specific recommendations were obtained,

which are presented in clear form in the following figures for the sub-area Marketing, Student, Teacher, Management and others.

Fig. 5: Results for area Usability for FBE UEB



Source: own processing

Conclusion

Since 2008 FBE UEB has implemented a quality management system based on ISO 900X standards. The faculty has developed a quality policy that includes basic directions in meeting the needs and expectations of customers and other stakeholders, as well as a commitment to continuous improvement of the Quality Management System. The quality management system has been put into practice and operates in accordance with valid documentation, currently according to STN EN ISO 9001:2016.

Higher education institutions are called to expand their role and responsibilities, by enhancing their entrepreneurial mindset and redefining relationships with stakeholders. In order to cope with these new challenges, they have started to operate in a strategic manner, by performing marketing and merchandising activities (Fantauzzi, Frondizi, Colasanti & Fiorani, 2019). Market of education and in Europe is oriented to evaluate education institution upon to ratings. Student ratings are now an accepted orthodoxy in global higher education environments. They form an increasingly important metric that has been assimilated as a

robust proxy measure of quality for evaluating individual, institutional and even system-level performativity. The student ratings have developed through three primary motives: an originating democratic improvement imperative; a dominating quality assurance assimilation and the emerging drive of satisfying the student-as-consumer (Darwin, 2020).

There is a need to provide an appropriate normative conception of the modern university / faculty: a conception which identifies its unifying purposes and values and, thereby, gives direction to institutional role occupants, governments, public policymakers and other would-be institutional designers (Miller, 2020). Based on the results, FBE UEB carries out marketing activities in the areas identified as key by these steps to receive good reviews from its “customers”. Management of faculty is taking into account that encouraging students to share positive reviews should not be regarded only as a marketing tool, but it has very wide range of impacts and using (Lee, Ng & Bogomolova, 2019).

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