



## Modern higher education competitiveness: commercial strategies and administrative policy

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### Abstract

The relevance of this article is to study such a social phenomenon as marketing activities of universities. In recent years, Russian universities have become more focused on commercial admission of students. Therefore, for any educational institution to function effectively, it is simply necessary to use new administrative and marketing approaches in management. The purpose of the research is to study the features of the marketing service functioning in higher educational institutions. Research methods: the survey method is used as a research method, which allows studying the marketing activities of higher educational institutions. Research results: the article considers the place and status of the marketing service of higher education institutions; the nature of competition in the higher education system; features of using the Internet space by higher education institutions to promote their services in the education market. The novelty and originality of the research lies in the fact that the work of the marketing service in higher educational institutions is considered for the first time. It is revealed that almost all educational institutions use marketing activities in their administrative policies. The personnel shortage of these departments is determined. It is shown that in absolutely all higher educational institutions, the marketing service reports directly to the rector, and this service closely cooperates with all departments of the University. It is determined that the level of participation of employees of the marketing Department in the discussion and decision-making at the University level is not high enough and the management does not always listen to the recommendations and advice of marketing services. Insufficient funding of marketing services was revealed, which is defined as the main problem in their work. It is determined that today there is practically no division of labor by functions in the marketing Department. It is shown that higher educational institutions use advertising in their activities: articles in the media, banners during the work of the admission Committee, advertising in transport, booklets, pocket calendars for schoolchildren, participation in educational exhibitions, holding an open door day and distributing advertising printing. It is shown that the public relations Department does not develop strategic marketing programs. It is revealed that the marketing services of higher educational institutions that perform the functions of marketing activities are quite new and have qualified specialists in their composition. Practical significance: the data obtained in this work can be used in marketing, marketing psychology, labor psychology, advertising psychology.

**Keywords:** commercial activities, marketing Department, higher education institutions, educational institutions

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### INTRODUCTION

Currently, in a market economy, higher education institutions have to change their strategy, as competition between universities is increasing due to the increasing appearance of commercial educational institutions (Balaban & Leontieva, 1999; Bortsov, 1997; Yegorshin,

2001; Mutavchi et al., 2018). Commercial admission of students is also becoming a priority for state educational

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institutions. This need is also dictated by the lack of adequate funding for educational institutions from the Russian Federal budget. That is why the commercial sector is strengthening its position in the market of educational services (Berezin, 2002; Goldobin, 1999; Lisechko & Razorvin, 2009; Mamontov, 1998). The marketing policy of higher education institutions is an essential part of its activities (Moskvichev & Razumov, 2001; Kuzmina, 2002; Shaposhnikov & Obukhov, 2010; Kirimlina, 2000; Selivanova, Gromova & Mashkin, 2018). Due to the development of the market economy in Russia, the expanding service sector is gaining more and more popularity. Undoubtedly, the marketing of the service sector is fundamentally different from marketing in the field of consumer goods, which allows us to treat the service sector as an independent direction in the market. The service sector is a complex multi-faceted mechanism that covers a wide range of activities: from trade and transport to education and insurance (Kotler, 1990; Solomandina, 2002; Doyle, 1999; Lovelock, 2005).

Thus, the service sector, as well as the consumer goods sector, must rely on marketing methods to form its activities in order to meet the needs of customers (Pesotskaya, 2000; Fatkhutdinov, 2002; Tretyakova, 2001).

Currently, we are increasingly faced with the daily use of the phrase *educational services*. One can consider the growing competition between higher education institutions as the fundamental indicator of the current state of education due to the increasing appearance of commercial educational institutions (Vladimirov, 1997; Pavlov, 1999; Cherdymova & Cherdymova, 2009; Khrutsky, 1991; Kvon et al., 2018; Olkhovaya et al., 2019). To address the issues that arise in the life of universities, institutes and academies in a market economy, it is essential to establish a specialized marketing service.

Considering the marketing of the service sector, we can conclude that it is necessary to organize an effective marketing policy for both commercial and state structures. Education is no exception. Some experts in the field of service marketing believe that even in countries with developed market economies, education has been and remains primarily the object of attention and support of state structures and, therefore, the need for marketing is still in its infancy (Tikhomirova & Isaev, 2010; Shemetova, 2012; Azoev, 1996).

Despite this, we can assume that this is a misconception and the system of relations about getting an education can easily be represented in terms of marketing. Thus, in modern conditions, educational institutions are full-fledged subjects of the market economy. Educational institutions act as entities that produce a service, provide it, and promote and sell it themselves. In this regard, when strategic planning of their activities, there is a need for market research and

the use of marketing analysis tools (Zinnurov, 1993; Pankrukhin, 1997; Makarova et al., 2019; Narutto et al., 2019; Saganova, 2005).

Therefore, the marketing activities of the educational institution will be successful if the classic issues of assortment, pricing, communication, sales, and personnel policy are resolved.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to study the features of the marketing service functioning in higher education institutions. As a research method, the survey method is used, which allows to effectively study the marketing activities of higher educational institutions. The study sets the following tasks:

to identify issues related to the marketing service in an educational institution; to reveal the presence of marketing services in the organizational structure of higher education institutions; to identify the level of participation of the marketing Department employees in the discussion and management decision-making at the scale of the educational institution; to reveal the degree of satisfaction with the funds allocated for the marketing activities of an educational institution; to describe the role and status of the marketing Department in the educational institution; to describe the existing staff of marketing specialists; to identify the number and composition of the marketing service in an educational institution; to determine the criteria for hiring future employees in the marketing service; to describe the specific features of the marketing strategy of higher education institutions; to describe the extent to which the marketing service performs the relevant functions in higher education institutions; to identify the nature of competition use by the marketing service of higher educational institutions; to determine whether the marketing service studies competitors; to identify the frequency of conducting such studies; to identify whether the marketing service develops strategic marketing programs; to evaluate the effectiveness of promoting higher education institutions in the Internet space; to identify the existence of University websites and how often do they update their information; to determine whether a higher education institution has specialized pages and groups in social networks to find out how important it is for the University to promote it in social media; to determine what information is contained in social networks and who is responsible for updating and relevance of the content.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Marketing Service Activity Features in Educational Institutions

During the survey of respondents, the following results were obtained: all objects, namely marketing services or departments that perform the functions of

marketing activities are new enough. Their appearance occurred in the last twenty years. To date, as can be seen from the statements of respondents, almost all of these higher educational institutions have a marketing service (87%), or a center, or a Department that performs marketing functions (13%). Determining the number and composition of specialists in marketing services revealed that the number of employees varies from one to five people, almost all respondents (77%) stressed that one of the main criteria was a higher professional education in marketing, management and employee experience. The leading departments of the University marketing service were identified: marketing services sector, advertising Department, corporate development Department, quality service. The main tasks of the marketing services sector: analysis of the University's position in the educational services market and forecasting its market conditions; promotion of educational services of an educational institution; monitoring of pricing policy of consumer preferences; planning and conducting marketing activities; development of corporate identity and advertising products of the University; organization and coordination of measures to create a positive image of the University; information support of the admission company and paid educational services; arrangement of the external and internal space of the University. The main tasks of the Department of advertising, innovation and marketing: advertising and public relations; preparation and placement of materials in the media; work on the appearance and content on the official websites of the Academy; formation of news content; marketing activities, development of customer loyalty programs, etc.; formation of a positive image of an educational institution; development and implementation of innovative projects; corporate design: development of corporate design of educational institution's Souvenirs; rendering of printing services. The main tasks of corporate development management and external communications are: to develop proposals for the strategy and tactics of the Institute's PR policy; to organize advertising activities; to organize events for the formation and maintenance of public relations; to organize PR events, projects and promotions; to implement activities aimed at developing the internal corporate information space; to plan and organize exhibition activities; to form a corporate identity; to interact with the media; the creation and placement of important materials about the Institute in resonant media; monitoring and analysis of media education problems; establishing and maintaining databases of information on activities; maintaining information resources delegated to the management, etc.; building an effective communicative space with the internal environment of the Institute; building an effective communicative space with the external environment - government, public, administrative, professional public

organizations, etc.; formation and promotion of an attractive socially significant image as a modern successful higher education institution. The main tasks of the quality service: development of tools for collecting and analyzing information about the quality of training; internal audit of functioning; conducting internal marketing research.

Determining the level of participation of the marketing Department employees in the discussion and decision-making at the University level and satisfaction with the funds allocated for marketing activities of the University, it was found that it is quite difficult to determine the status of the marketing services sector (87% of respondents). Interaction with the admissions Committee and faculties (89%) and directly with the deans' offices (77%) is mainly noted. The scale of importance and significance as 50% can determine the level of participation of the Department employees in the discussion and decision-making at the University level. Employees of the Department take part in meetings held by the Institute administration (50%), in other events, projects, seminars, conferences organized or held at the Institute. In General, we can conclude that the status of the public relations Department at the University is defined as a separate division (97% of respondents believe this), independently working with various departments and reporting to the rector. The level of participation of the marketing Department employees in the discussion and decision-making at the University level according to the responses of respondents is 67%. The nature of administrative subordination of the marketing service at the University as all services and departments of the marketing service is primarily subordinate to the rector's Department, as the most dominant in any educational institution. As for the level of participation of the marketing Department employees in the discussion and management decision-making at the University, it should be noted that everything related to work within the Department, these issues are discussed directly with the head of the marketing Department, and in solving all other issues, employees of the Department participate, depending on the position and, accordingly, depends on the issues that need to be resolved. As for the funding that is allocated to the University's marketing activities, the experts surveyed noted weak satisfaction (88%)

Based on the results obtained, we can conclude that in absolutely all higher educational institutions, the marketing service reports directly to the rector, and this service closely cooperates with all departments of the University. In addition, the level of participation of the marketing Department employees in the discussion and decision-making at the University level is not high enough and the management does not always listen to the recommendations and advice of marketing services. As for the question concerning the financial resources allocated for the marketing activities of higher education

institutions, almost all respondents (88%) noted this as a disadvantage and the main problem in the work of marketing services. As for the division of labor by function in the marketing Department, now there is practically no division of labor (56% of respondents believe so). The division of labor by function in the advertising, innovation and marketing Department definitely exists (78% of respondents believe so). The frequency of carrying out studies relating to monitoring of the preferences of applicants is every year. The information obtained from the results of such research is used quite fully when opening new specialties at faculties.

The Department of corporate development and external communications assists in the implementation of the student recruitment plan. For this purpose, marketing research is conducted on the preferences of applicants. Accordingly, the information obtained from the results of these studies is used quite fully when opening new specialties in the faculties of higher educational institutions. The Department of corporate development and external communications organizes advertising activities for the Institute and uses various types of advertising. The public relations Department does not develop strategic marketing programs. The quality service is also engaged in studying competitors. Such research is conducted quite often, as well as monitoring the preferences of applicants, but only by other methods using a concentration strategy aimed at providing high-quality service to several market segments. Monitoring is continuous. The nature of the competition strategies used is determined depending on the specific problem (77% of respondents believe so). It is also determined that all higher education institutions have a website (100%). The site contains General information about the Institute, its structure, contacts, as well as information about various conferences, events, holidays, etc. There are also specialized pages and groups in social networks and promotion in social media (100%). All information about the University flows into the Department of advertising, innovation and marketing; it is edited and posted on the website. Information is constantly updated, depending on the conduct of completely different events at the University. Promotion in social media is becoming more and more relevant and modern way of providing information, it is convenient, interesting and accessible. Thus, as for the promotion of the University in the Internet space, all respondents (100%) answered unequivocally that the educational institution had a website and specialized pages in social networks, but marketing specialists did not participate in the implementation of the concepts of promoting the site and filling it with content that is attractive to the applicant. Now, programmers are engaged in the design and promotion of the site, and responsible persons from each faculty are responsible for correcting and adding information. Marketing

departments of educational institutions have a mediated attitude to website development, which is incorrect. After all, it is marketing services that should form content based on research conducted on the desires of potential consumers. However, often the work on equipping the site is solely the responsibility of system developers, who in turn see only the technical side. Thus, based on the survey, we can conclude that almost all educational institutions use marketing activities in their administrative policies. Despite the fact that in some higher education institutions only one person works in this Department, the management, one way or another, is aware of the need to promote their educational institution. Marketing services of higher educational institutions that perform the functions of marketing activities are quite new and have qualified specialists in their composition, but, unfortunately, the number of personnel is relatively small. As for the administrative subordination and status of the marketing service in higher education institutions, based on the results obtained, we can conclude that in all educational institutions, the marketing service reports directly to the rector, and this service closely cooperates with all departments of the University. In addition, one of the important questions that interested: unfortunately, the level of participation of the marketing Department employees in the discussion and decision-making at the University level is not always high enough, and the management does not always listen to the recommendations and advice of marketing services. As for the question of financial resources allocated for marketing activities of higher education institutions, almost all respondents noted this as a disadvantage and the main problem in the work of marketing services. 75% of the higher education institutions studied are engaged in the development of strategic programs.

## CONCLUSION

In the modern world, higher education is one of the most important factors that ensure economic growth, social stability, and the development of civil society institutions. The main objectives of higher education institutions are quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of higher education. The improvement of these parameters and their continuous and innovative nature make the higher education system an important factor in ensuring the growth of the well-being of its citizens.

The specifics of the marketing policy and advertising activities of higher education institutions is the social orientation of its activities as a non-profit enterprise. The consumer of educational institutions' services is focused on meeting the need to acquire knowledge and improve their life status. Advertising reflects the position of an educational organization and forms its image in the minds of potential consumers of educational services. In



a situation of intense competition, the quality and effectiveness of advertising is extremely important.

Thus, we can conclude that almost all higher education institutions use marketing activities in their administrative policies. Despite the fact that in some higher education institutions only one person works in this Department, the management, one way or another, is aware of the need to promote their educational institution. Marketing services of higher educational institutions that perform the functions of marketing activities are quite new and have qualified specialists in their composition, but, unfortunately, the number of

personnel is relatively small. It is noteworthy that specific functions are not assigned between the Department's employees; this is due to the minimal actual presence of employees in these departments.

Because of considering the issue of marketing activities in higher education, one can say that marketing of higher education institutions is a necessary and important part of its activities. Educational organizations that do not realize this need and do not actively engage in marketing activities may soon find themselves at a disadvantage and will not be able to maintain their competitiveness in the market of educational services.

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