



CREATING MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS



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Summary

The article presents a thesis that the primary premise of creating marketing strategies for higher education institution is a three-dimensional notion of marketing. The first dimension lies in the theoretical notions of the essence of marketing, including the transactional marketing (1.0), relationship marketing (2.0) and spiritual marketing (3.0). The second dimension is formed by methods of marketing research and accurate notions of marketing, while the third are channels of marketing information. Harmonizing these three dimensions is a precondition for effective marketing. Another conditions for effective strategies include: aligning goals of the chosen strategy with the mission of higher education institution, correct choice of targeted segments of the market and of marketing tools. The article also gives a sample classification of marketing strategies based on these criteria, with emphasis on the fact, that every higher education institution employs its own strategy.

Keywords: marketing strategy for a higher education institution, transactional marketing, relationship marketing, spiritual marketing, typology of marketing strategies

Introduction

In contemporary organizations conducting marketing activity supporting management processes has become a norm. This rule applies also at universities. Even well-known and highly developed universities apply marketing elements in management activity. The scope and manner of marketing activities vary depending on a particular university and depend on numerous factors both internal, that is, broadly understood identity, and external factors associated with the current policies for the development of science and education, as well as with situation on the labour market.

The discussion concerning the marketing of universities actually began at the time when the first non-public universities were established. At the beginning of 1980's the scope of marketing activities was rather modest. By the early years of the 21st century marketing wasn't really necessary as this period was characterized by strong demand on the market of universities, so schools were not forced to compete for greater number of student candidates. It was in the second half of the first decade, or even more so after 2010 that first problems on the university market caused mainly by the demographic situation, as well as dropping demand of employers for university graduates, emerged. This was also followed by growing unemployment among graduates. It is possible to conclude that the reasons for this weren't the "fault" of universities. They undoubtedly influence the dynamics of attracting student candidates. The second group of reasons leading to the slowdown of recruitment is the attractiveness of universities, their curriculums, which can provide knowledge and skills allowing people to serve professional functions in a constantly changing reality, as well as enabling every graduate to develop his, or her personality. What is undoubtedly an important determinant is the quality of teaching and the skills of academic personnel conducting courses. Among these reasons there is also the deteriorating image of science in public awareness.

All these factors have led to a situation in which implementing marketing tools and in particular working out marketing strategies and implementing them became necessary. Every university managed in a modern way should work out such marketing strategies that could help provide active support for the implementation of general strategies, thus maintain and further develop the university's position on the market of

education on the one hand and on the other hand that could secure high quality of teaching for the satisfaction of both graduates and employees.

The goal of this paper is to point out that the condition for the marketing efficiency of universities is integration and harmonization of its three basic elements, that is:

- the theoretical foundations of marketing;
- methods for solving marketing problems;
- marketing tools suitable for universities.

The efficiency of marketing strategy also depends on the correct identification of the market of education, the whole sector of education, as well as on public awareness with regard to the conviction that thanks to acquired, solid knowledge a graduate, or rather a whole group of graduates are able to initiate many social changes.

Three-dimensional concept of marketing as the basis for planning a marketing strategy

The starting point for drawing up a marketing strategy for universities (and not just universities) is adopting the definition of marketing. The components of the adopted definition make it possible to arrange the structure of the strategy and to fill it with the appropriate content, which is suitable for the sphere of higher education. The marketing strategy of a university is a kind of programme of its activity on the education market and the contents contained in it will constitute a direction for strategic and operational actions on the market and inside the school, as well as working out long-term and short-term plans of these activities.

The basis for further discussion will be the definition of marketing formulated by P. Kotler. According to his definition, marketing is a management and social process thanks to which particular buyers get what they need and want to achieve by creating, offering and exchange of goods and services providing value. Applying this definition to universities, the buyers of educational service are high school graduates, their parents. Also employers can be included in this group. These buyers generate demand for

educational services. They expect reliable knowledge and acquisition of skills, which they will be able to use in their professional careers.

The initiator of marketing actions are entities of the educational market, including universities representing supply in the area of educational services. They offer knowledge of appropriate quality and services in form of scientific research, as well as various student life attractions. The provider expects the value of offered services will be recognized by the buyers. At the same time the buyers will be satisfied, when they will be able to successfully play their professional roles. Obviously, these roles are diversified. Above all, the knowledge acquired at school should become the basis for further development of every graduate, thus its role is strategic in character. For example, starting postgraduate, or doctoral studies. Knowledge acquired at a university should allow the graduate to find a rewarding job in an economic entity, in line with the completed area of studies. At the same time the employers expect graduates to introduce attractive solutions to problems that they face in their everyday activity, including the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of entities in which the graduates will be employed. It is necessary to remark here that on the educational market there are many universities and various entities offering similar educational services and that also they will be informing their environment that their services offer high quality, which obviously creates competition. A university planning its marketing strategy has to take this problem into consideration. At this point marketing issues emerge, namely: how can we establish contact between the participants of the educational market, between potential buyers and offerors? How should offerors behave to attract buyers, convince them that their offer is attractive, what contents should they include in their marketing messages, what information base should they organize. In course of solving these issues it is possible to distinguish between three concept of the development of marketing named by P.Kotler:

- Marketing 1.0 — corporate marketing;
- Marketing 2.0. — marketing of relationships, relationship marketing;
- Marketing 3.0 — marketing of value.

According to the concept 1.0 (the oldest one), the final buyer of the effects of companies' activities is unknown, anonymous, which means that

marketing tools are aimed at an undefined segment of the market. According to this concept, the initiator of marketing activities representing supply aims mostly at selling his product, or service. He is not interested in the identity of the buyer, He applies a well-known marketing mix, that is 4P. This leads to the question whether this concept would be more suitable with regard to the educational market, rather than universities? Without detailed justification the answer will be negative. Mainly due to the fact that educational services are highly complicated, complex and not comparable to a product, to which 4P has been applied, which is associated with the fact that the process of education is long. The process of education leads to shaping a graduate who is supposed to change the existing reality. So, proposing a product in form of a particular educational package is not hard. Nevertheless, universities quite intensively apply one of four P's, namely, price as a factor determining a potential student's choice of university. However, it is impossible to reconcile high level of education with low price. In some extreme cases low price can attract people who simply want to obtain a document and not actual knowledge and skills.

Corporate marketing is an already obsolete concept of marketing activity, that's why people have been looking for other, more efficient solutions. A more modern proposal is marketing 2.0 — partnership marketing, relation marketing, relationship marketing. The concept developed along with the evolution of social values. The concept assumes that humans can't be treated as anonymous buyers of goods and services, but as a kind of partner, a consultant for the manufacturing of goods and provision of services, maintaining good relationship with the manufacturers and providers. This concept led to the creation of the term "prosumer", which reflects the changes that have taken place in the relations between the producer and the consumer. In marketing 2.0 the most important goal is keeping the client and maintaining a beneficial relationship with the client. Eric von Hippel even introduced the term "democratization of the market", emphasizing the significance of cooperation between the participants of the market.¹ The concept of partnership marketing can be also applied to the educational market and to universities. Both the employer and the student can be prosumers. The employer may recommend particular scope of knowledge and skills that, from his perspective, could be used to improve the curriculum. An

important issue in marketing 2.0 is keeping a client, not the first contact (the purchase of an educational service) is the start of these relations: educational services are actually this sphere of human activity which in itself requires the cooperation of the suppliers with entities representing demand. This includes, among others, striving to make bachelor's course student continue studying at a master's course at the same university. The buyer of educational services may be encouraged to buy them by means of developing, strengthening such cooperation, which can take various shapes.

The purpose of applying relationship marketing at universities is based on the following premises:

A characteristic feature of universities is the necessity to establish many diverse relations with the stakeholders, including potential students:

These relations are valid over a longer term;

Good relationships are beneficial from the point of view of creation of a school's positive image and they build this image;

The relations make it possible to determine in real terms: What is the awareness of a given university's existence? Which of its traits are most clearly realized by the potential buyers of services? Does it enjoy respect? Is the relationship with the stakeholders "symmetrical"? (Is the school also a stakeholder of a particular institution, or community?) Do the stakeholders recommend the university?

As a result of further development of the theoretical assumption of marketing, P.Kotler formulated the concept of spiritual marketing (marketing 3.0). According to this concept, the final goal of marketing activities is human in all dimensions of his existence, in the dimension of his emotions, values, health and obviously in the dimension of needs and material capacities. The concept of spiritual marketing is closest to educational services and cooperation in the area of scientific research. It is also comprehensible for universities, in comparison to the briefly presented rules of marketing conduct. Under marketing 3.0 the student is prepared to create new standards of science and systems of values. He is prepared for the great concept of creating a better world. The concepts of marketing obviously affect the choice of methods of implementing goals resulting from these concepts and next the tools applied with regard to the chosen methods. In short, the choice of method and tool of marketing communication is determined by the choice of marketing concept and in

particular results from the theoretical assumptions of marketing, that is, the first, most important dimension of marketing. The idea of three-dimensional concept of marketing is presented on Picture 1 and Chart 1.

Table 1. The idea of three-dimensional marketing concept

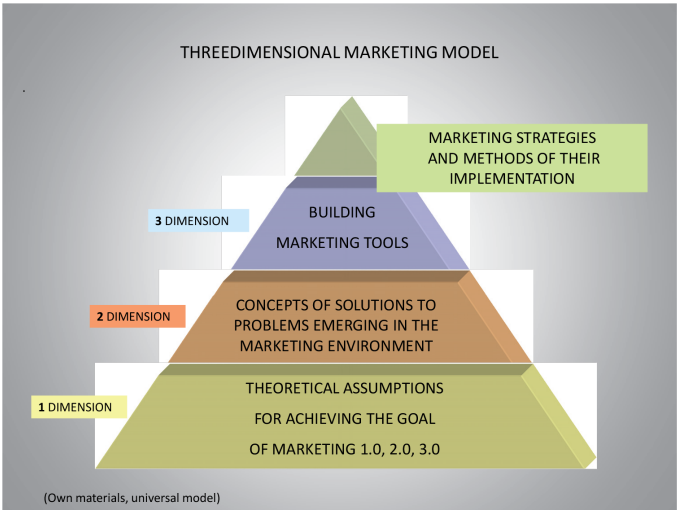
Dimensions of marketing	
Theoretical assumptions	Explanations
1. Carrying out marketing goals	Marketing 1.0 — human/organization final buyer of goods and services; Marketing 2.0 — human/organization — prosumer — participant of the process of creating goods and services, market participant; Marketing 3.0 — human entirely focused on cooperation, culture of activity, goal — making the world a better place.
2. Concept of solving marketing problems taking into consideration the environment	Lateral marketing; Content marketing; Porter's 5 forces; Blue ocean strategy; 5 I — identification, individualization, interaction, integration; SAVE — kinds of needs, access to stakeholders, evaluation of benefits, education, seminars, conferences.
3. Building a marketing tool	4 P, 4 C, 11 C.

Source: Own materials.

Picture 1 and Table 1 inform that the development of marketing takes place in the above-mentioned three dimensions. The development of marketing takes place in such a way that its rules are implemented in various areas of human activity. It is possible to name many areas and institutions of social life (outside the economy as such) in which the rules of marketing are applied, e.g.: healthcare, sports, political parties and obviously education, including universities. It is also worth pointing out here that marketing activities refer both to processes (e.g. education) and to entities, e.g. universities. The general purpose of marketing remains unchanged in every new area. Obviously, entities' marketing activities must take into consideration the characteristics of processes, which take place within them. In every area of human activity there is the three-

dimensional concept described above. In the first dimension you have to answer the basic questions: What is the purpose of marketing in a particular sphere of its activity? Who is the target of marketing messages sent by the offerors? (that is, questions concerning segmentation).

Chart 1. Three-dimensional concept of marketing



Source: Own materials.

The second dimension of marketing answers the question what methods can be used to solve marketing issues in a particular area. They make it possible to diagnose market issues. What is equally important is marketing diagnosis of the inside of an organization, as well as to some extent its forecast. Among the best-known methods of marketing analyses there are e.g.: SWOT analysis, Porter's 5 forces. It is also possible to solve marketing problems by applying various kinds of concepts, e.g. the concept of lateral marketing, the concept of blue ocean strategy. The latter is particularly significant in the context of innovation of value. The results of these analyses and the results of applying particular marketing concepts make it possible to diagnose the market and are in a way used for the purpose for forecasting. In our case they serve the purpose of working out an educational package. They are also a starting point and serve the purpose of strengthening and correcting the internal potential.

In the third dimension of marketing, which is to a large extent operational in character, universities define the tools and ways of communicating with the potential buyer on the matter of attractiveness of offered products and services and thus includes broadly understood marketing communication. It is also necessary to answer the question which information channels should be chosen and, what's most important, what contents are conveyed in messages. There is a broad range of information channels. They can be messages published in press for the general public, or in specialist press associated with a particular area of study, or in television, on the Internet, in form of posters, as well as in form of direct messages, e.g. conversations with future graduates of high schools, at educational fairs, or at open days in particular schools. The choice of communication channels is obviously an extremely important step, however, an even more important and hard problem is filling particular messages with content. The content has to result from the adopted assumptions, from the marketing concept and above all it is necessary to adapt the content to the characteristics of chosen segments of the market. for universities marketing 3.0 should be the leading concept. According to the concept, marketing messages are aimed at the development of the personality of the potential buyer of educational services. Advertising campaigns play an important role here. It is also possible to use traditional 4P tools, even though they are not fully suitable for the third dimension of marketing. The content of marketing messages

has to take into consideration: the opportunity for students to acquire a broader, or unique scope of knowledge (compared to other schools), inspiration and students' participation in university events (sports, events, etc.), students' participation in ventures from the area of a university's social responsibility, students' participation in financial reward programmes (lower tuition fees for outstanding grades), participation in scientific research, co-authoring university publications. On a side note, I would like to point out that in practice names of marketing associated exclusively with the tools of communication have become common. These are such names as: electronic marketing, or mobile marketing, however, without knowledge of the essence of problems the technology alone is useless. At the same time it is necessary to emphasize that the development of the third dimension of marketing, that is, marketing tools and technologies, are developing very fast, which leads to a situation in which marketing activities should be very efficient. The goal of building marketing tools is: evoking positive attitudes among potential students, before they make the decision to start studying at a particular university, starting cooperation in the area of scientific research and didactics with units from the sphere of science and practice, acquiring funds for a university's didactic and research activity. When you're building marketing tools, you should take into consideration the following: the perception of formation and integration of didactic problems, scientific research and social responsibility, taking into consideration the time between the application of tools and the expected effect of their application.

The construction and goals of universities' marketing strategies

The marketing strategy of a university is a document which contains long-term goals of marketing activity, as well as methods and means used to achieve these goals. The purpose of marketing strategy is helping achieve general strategic goals contained in the strategy of a university. The goals of marketing strategy of universities can be defined in the following way:

1. Attracting an optimum number of students;
2. Continuous improvement of curricula;
3. Obtaining funds for scientific research;

4. Developing material didactic and research facilities;
5. Cooperation with economic and social institutions;
6. Attracting didactic personnel.

Among features constituting marketing strategy model of universities there are the following:

1. Marketing goals resulting from the general strategy of a university;
2. The structure of target segments and the possibility of acquiring new segments;
3. The concept of solutions to marketing problems;
4. The choice of marketing tools;
5. The choice of marketing communication channels.

Marketing goals should support the implementation of strategic goals contained in the strategies for the development of a university. The implementation of the mentioned marketing goals is determined by many factors. The most important among them are the following:

1. Creating the department of marketing at a university;
2. Extensive marketing knowledge of the employees of marketing department, as well as knowledge associated with the type of university;
3. The starting point for working out a marketing strategy is the general strategy for the development of a university, its mission, as well as the position of the university in university rankings;
4. What is also an important issue is creating a marketing database containing information from a university's environment, as well as data from longer timeframes. The database should contain information reflecting structures along various cross-sections of students over a longer term. What is equally important is information associated with the careers of graduates of a particular universities. The database should also contain information about foreign entities.

Examples of marketing strategy models of universities are presented in table 2:

Table 2. Examples of universities marketing strategy models in relation to particular criteria constituting strategies

Criteria constituting strategies	Scope of activities	Strategies
Goals of strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attracting an optimum students; 2. Continuous improvement of curriculums; 3. Acquiring funds for scientific research; 4. The development of material didactic and research facilities; 5. Cooperating with social and economic institutions; 6. Acquiring didactic personnel. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Price strategy; 2. Strategy of implementation of personnel marketing; 3. The strategy of students' participation in scientific research, publications, etc.; 4. Strategies of efficient marketing communication; 5. Economic strategies.
Target segments of potential students, who are the recipients of the offer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All high school graduates; 2. Selected (according to exam results, grades) graduates of high schools; 3. Graduates of foreign high schools; 4. Employees of companies and governmental as well as non-governmental institutions and local administration. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Egalitarian strategy; 2. Elitist strategy; 3. Strategy of unique programmes; 4. Strategy of development of scientific research;(all associated with the strategies of goals).
Cooperation with institutions from the environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cooperation with other universities; 2. Cooperation with R&D Institutions; 3. Cooperation with governmental, non-governmental and local administration institutions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategy of cooperation with domestic universities; 2. Strategy of cooperation with foreign institutions; 3. Strategy of scientific research in cooperation with R&D units; 4. Strategy of cooperation with companies also on social responsibility programmes.

Source: Own materials.

The above-mentioned assumptions of marketing strategies have to be taken into consideration in course of planning these strategies. There may be many models of marketing strategies and the choice of the models depends in each case on the current situation of a particular university. Over time these models can change for a simple reason, namely, because

the environment in which a university is functioning, is changing. Table 2 quotes possible models of marketing strategy, according to various criteria — among these criteria there may be marketing goals, target market segments, structure of marketing tools, or marketing problems to be solved. These criteria are helpful in defining the models of marketing strategies. Building a marketing strategy model it is necessary to remember that a university has to follow the rule that it should assume only obligations which it can meet. Failure to follow this rule most often leads to losing trust, which in the long term may undoubtedly affect recruitment.

Each of the mentioned strategies has to be defined in detail. For example, the strategy of raising the quality of education may include many detailed solutions — e.g. students' participation in scientific research, in publications, in appearances at conferences, or at international seminars, student exchanges with foreign universities. In order to develop this subject to a greater extent it is necessary to have information about solutions to these problems at other universities, including foreign universities. It is also necessary to pay a lot of attention to the strategy of acquiring foreign students.

Another important problem is the choice of a marketing strategy from the range of prepared strategies that should be implemented. Carrying out many strategic goals may be hard, or even impossible due to particular marketing potential of a university. For example, if a university decides that one of its strategic goals will be acquiring as many foreign students as possible, it can't recruit people from all around the world, but should focus on students from Eastern Europe. In the future it can also start recruiting students from the Far East, or the West. The choice of marketing strategy will depend on:

- the character of educational market;
- the state of marketing knowledge from the discussed period.

The results of marketing environment analysis:

- scenarios for the development of higher education;
- the level of relations and intensity of international cooperation in the area of higher education.

Final remarks

Every university has its own character and finds its own, unique solutions. What I emphasize is the importance of monitoring the implementation of strategy. It can happen that due to substantial changes in the environment (e.g. new regulations concerning education) marketing strategy will require major modifications.

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