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Factors affecting the selection of marketing orientation of higher education institutions in Poland

Czynniki wpływające na wybór orientacji marketingowych szkół wyższych w Polsce

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article is to propose an integrated marketing model for a number of higher education institutions. This model is discussed through the prism of factors affecting the selection of marketing activities undertaken by higher education institutions. A set of those actions is to enable identification of a specific marketing orientation of higher education institutions. With regard to the above, marketing orientation is understood as a set of marketing activities with specific intensity, focused on satisfying the needs of different groups of stakeholders. Transposition of such reasoning onto higher education institutions allows for defining marketing orientation as a process of identification, assessment, and evaluation of factors with regard to the objectives and position of the higher education institution concerning future needs of stakeholder groups and the ability to respond to them by undertaking appropriate actions. This transposition thus creates a field for differentiating different types of marketing orientation of higher education institutions in Poland.

Keywords: higher education institutions, marketing orientation, integrated marketing model.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the market for educational services require HEFs to search for new management methods and tools that allow efficient operation under conditions of high competition. The great number of HEFs (including non-public institutions that began to rapidly arise in Poland in the 1990s) and the present demographic decline result in the fact that many universities

STRESZCZENIE

Głównym celem artykułu jest propozycja zintegrowanego modelu marketingowego szkoły wyższej. Model ten omawiany jest przez pryzmat czynników wpływających na wybór działań marketingowych podejmowanych przez szkoły wyższe. Zbiór tych działań umożliwia identyfikację określonej orientacji marketingowej szkół wyższych. W związku z powyższym orientacja marketingowa rozumiana jest jako zbiór działań marketingowych o określonej intensywności, ukierunkowanych na zaspokojenie potrzeb różnych grup interesariuszy. Transpozycja takiego rozumowania na instytucje szkolnictwa wyższego pozwala na zdefiniowanie orientacji marketingowej jako procesu identyfikacji, oceny i ewaluacji czynników w odniesieniu do celów i pozycji uczelni w zakresie przyszłych potrzeb grup interesariuszy oraz zdolności do odpowiadania na nie poprzez podejmowanie odpowiednich działań. Transpozycja ta stwarza więc pole do wyróżnienia różnych typów orientacji marketingowej szkół wyższych w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: szkoły wyższe, orientacja marketingowa, zintegrowany model marketingowy.

realised the need for changes in the management method, toward entities with market-based management (Cichoń, 2012; Piróg, 2014). The literature on the subject has numerous publications on the marketing of higher education facilities. These include, among others, works by Lewison and Hawes (2007), who emphasize the changes taking place on the education

market and the need for identification of students' needs. Other authors (see (Kamal Basha et al., 2020; Soutar & Turner, 2002)) indicate factors significant from the point of view of students' satisfaction. Naudé & Ivy (1999) and Mogaji (2016) present differences in perception of marketing by various types of HEFs. Hesketh & Knight (1999) indicate factors affecting the selection of programmes by students for master's degree. On the other hand, Ivy (2001) presents ways in which higher education facilities use marketing research to make their offers stand out on the market of educational services. Maringe & Foskett (2019) present university's experience related to the use of marketing and the possibility to use marketing from the perspective of the university's management. Ngyuen & Leblanc (2001) indicate the importance of promotion activities of a university for decisions made by students. The issues discussed in the literature on the marketing of higher education facilities are very broad. Attention is paid to the fact that it is a mistake to perceive marketing solely as a form of promotion and advertisement of a university. Trim (2003) stresses the need to use marketing activities to identify needs and formulate new products.

The literature also indicates the need to undertake marketing activities as determinants of the competitive position (Maringe, 2005). Many authors also draw attention to the importance of marketing in the process of recruitment of future students (Cubillo et al., 2006; Gibbs & Murphy, 2009; Ivy, 2001; Maringe & Foskett, 2019) On the other hand, Asaad et al. (2013) emphasise the role of academic staff in the process of increasing the competitiveness of a university. It is also noted that the marketing of higher education facilities is still a barely developed concept in many parts of the world (Maringe, 2005), in particular due to the problem of not being included in the organisation's strategy and prognostic planning. Importantly, the function of marketing often remains at the operational level rather than strategic level in most universities (Alessandri et al., 2006). Such a view of the situation constitutes the basis for looking at the functioning of universities undertaking marketing activities, along with the distinction of possible barriers in their application. The identification of factors that affect the set of marketing activities carried out by universities is also important.

The subject literature, as shown, among others, by results of the analyses of Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka (2006), is missing theoretical models that would concern the specific nature of higher education facilities. Available studies focus mostly on strategies prepared for the business sector (for example on the 7P concept (Ivy, 2008)). However, some authors notice the inadequacy of such an approach, mainly due to the inability to adapt these models to specific conditions, in which higher education facilities operate (Durkin et al., 2012; Emiliani, 2005; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Majercakova & Madudova, 2016; Maringe, 2005; Ramachandran, 2010). In the opinion of Akonkwa, universities differ from companies and the market context (Bugandwa Mungu Akonkwa, 2009). Fur-

thermore, they should consider various stakeholder groups, which requires the adaptation of activities to their needs and expectations. In the model perspective formulated used in the systemic study of the marketing context of a higher education institution, the role of stakeholders so defined should be a permanent element of the analyses undertaken. An important argument with regard to verification of the legitimacy of use of models taken from the business sector is also the issue of diverse ways of perception of students, defined both as clients and products of higher education. This issue, raised repeatedly in the literature (Calma & Dickson-Deane, 2020; Emery et al., 2001; Guilbault, 2016), has not yet been explicitly settled. Observations in this respect may constitute a basis for expanding the scope of entities taken into consideration when modelling the marketing orientation of a higher education facility, with the assumption that a student, as a subject of marketing considerations, still remains an important element for developing canons of thought and motives of strategic planning.

Therefore, the main objective of this article is to propose an integrated marketing model for a number of higher education institutions. This model is discussed through the prism of factors affecting the selection of marketing activities undertaken by higher education institutions.

1. MARKETING MODELS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

In the issues of marketing models, strategy is often identified with operating activities (Almurshidee, 2017; Emiliani, 2005; Naudé & Ivy, 1999). On the other hand, Musingafi et al. (2014) believe that marketing should be treated as a philosophy rather than merely a function. Naudé & Ivy (1999) suggest the need for preparation of strategies by the universities that do not have any yet. Conway et al. (1994) are of a similar opinion, adding that universities should consider the demand of potential clients and be more stakeholder-oriented. Shima & George (2014) place marketing at two levels: management (i.e. faculty coordinators) and professional, where the professional responsibilities of lecturers are fulfilled.

Results of the research of Newman (2002), conducted on 100 randomly selected universities, showed that the marketing activities used cover strategic planning, advertisement, marketing planning, and target marketing. This research emphasises technical and organisational issues, as well as the substantive profile of marketing activity. However, they do not show sets of marketing activities and their attributes.

Maringe (2005) attempted to prepare a model strictly dedicated to a university, the CORD model. However, it does not take account of factors and conditions such as the type of university, its environment, or types of barriers. Therefore, with regard to higher education facilities, it is necessary to determine sets of marketing activities, as well as to identify and analyse the relations between them. Despite multiple sources and broad interpretation of the problem in literature on the subject, there is no common understanding about the justified

character of the use of marketing activities at universities (particularly with regard to Polish universities). The heterogeneous approach to the use of marketing instruments at a university results from the distinctness of the message addressed to the higher education and the conviction relating to the unethical nature of marketing. However, there are concerns with regard to the possibility to reconcile marketing activities undertaken by the university with the university's pursuit of autonomy and work in the service of the truth.

The literature pays more attention to the need to adapt the undertaken marketing activities to the type of university (Ho & Hung, 2008). The emphasis is placed on the importance of conditions, both internal and external, as a determinant of the selection of marketing activities. The issues presented above, resulting from an analysis of the subject literature, demonstrate a certain system of causal relations with feedback showing dynamic adaptation of marketing activity of an HEF. The selection of marketing activities is also affected by certain internal conditions and conditions derived from the environment. The result of these relations and feedbacks is a defined set of marketing activities undertaken by a higher education facility, which is presented in Figure 1.

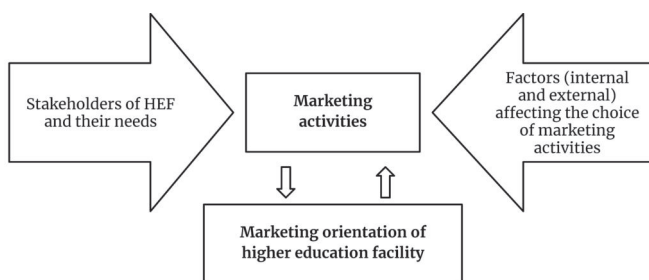


Figure 1. Integrated marketing model at a higher education facility.

Source: authors elaboration

The interrelation system and impacts presented in Figure 1 is referred to as the integrated marketing model framework of an HEF. It demonstrates the system of relations between marketing activities, their attributes, taking account of expectations and needs of various stakeholders. This system defines the type of marketing orientation of an HEF that should be the basis for formulating the appropriate marketing strategy.

2. RESULTS

The literature on the subject draws attention to the need to market-orient the higher education facility, consisting of shaping active relations with its environment. Thus, it may be justified to use marketing instruments as tools for the implementation of long-term goals of the organisation, both economic and social. Marketing activities from this perspective might contribute to improvement in the competitive position of the university on the market, giving it an opportunity to develop, shape its image, or provide services in the direction expected by the environment. The implementation of the

university's social goals, which are strongly connected to the labour market, requires the university to educate students and prepare future graduates for the requirements and expectations of employers. This requires the university to recognise the needs and expectations of stakeholders of a higher education facility, particularly students.

The literature on the subject emphasizes the factors limiting market activity of many Polish universities, and thereby the use of marketing activities. The first group of factors, related to the lack of willingness to implement marketing management methods to manage universities, results from the attachment to traditional methods of operating a higher education facility and the lack of sufficient managerial knowledge among the management of Polish universities and administrative employees. Therefore, it seems reasonable to identify factors affecting the effectiveness of management decisions made in the scope of marketing operations conducted by the university, taking into account various groups of stakeholders from a higher education institution.

Difficulties related to the use of marketing also result from the specific nature of the product offered by the higher education facility and the diverse needs of the university's stakeholders (Naudé & Ivy, 1999). Attention is also drawn to the problem in identifying the right client for the market of educational services (Nicholls et al., 1995). Therefore, identification of stakeholders and their needs in the context of marketing activities carried out by higher education institutions is significant.

In the opinion of some researchers, the specific character of educational services, different from production and sale of tangible products, substantially affects the marketing perception by the academic environment (Anctil, 2008). The approach in which the costs of the service being provided are the main determinant of management activities is in conflict with the fundamental aim of the university's functioning, namely as a public benefit organisation, where emphasis is put on the social role of the university. Concerns related to the use of marketing in public benefit organizations include stereotypes concerning management or the imperfection of the marketing theory in public organizations. Furthermore, university management – in the context of diverse tasks set for this facility – requires it to search for the happy medium between creation of the economic potential and achievement of social objectives. Reconciliation of inherently contradictory activities (e.g. gainful and charity activities) in a manner that would provide the largest social benefit seems to be an ongoing problem. Universities should thus be able to quickly respond to market expectations and skillfully create pro-market attitudes. These actions should be characterized by high effectiveness and adjustment to the resources owned by the university, as well as to external conditions. Therefore, it is important to indicate all sources of problems and difficulties that affect marketing activities carried out by universities and to identify the relationships between both internal and external factors. Considering

that “the market and the competition have become important verifiers of activities of higher education facilities” (Majercakova & Madudova, 2016), taking effective marketing actions in accordance with the marketing model in place at the university is important for the development of the university. The literature draws attention to the fact that the marketing activities undertaken must be consistent with the university's strategy adopted by the university. In Polish universities, these actions are carried out to a large extent independently of the strategy formulated and are not carried out based on the marketing model in place at the university.

Privatization of educational services in the public and social sector that occurs in connection with globalization seems to be an irreversible phenomenon. Currently, marketing is part of the nature of many universities' functioning. A factor diversifying the degree of its use is university involvement in the creation of demand for educational services and the type of university itself, as well as the ability to create and conduct marketing activities. Therefore, it is necessary to identify marketing activities carried out by various types of universities and to indicate the difficulties and constraints related thereto.

The authors believe that the prepared integrated marketing model allows indicating causal relations demonstrating dynamic adaptation of marketing activity of a higher education facility. As a consequence, it will also allow one to identify the type of marketing orientation applied by universities.

The originality of the model presented in this article is due to the fact that it is primarily dependent on internal and external conditions related to the type of universities and the type of marketing activities they undertake. According to the authors, it is extremely difficult to explain how factors and their influence on the choice/intensification of marketing activities undertaken reflect the competitive position of universities. On the other hand, learning about the relationship between the factors determining the choice of marketing activities should help to identify the type of marketing orientation of a higher education institution, and consequently enable the formulation of an appropriate marketing strategy.

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