

Does the University Need a Marketing Communication Strategy?

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Abstract: Marketing has full application in the service sector is already historically confirmed. However, a number of questions and problems may arise in the conditions of educational services, in particular in the conditions of universities. Such questions are also raised by the existence of the Rector's departments with competence in the field of marketing communication and marketing strategic planning at this organizational level. In defining the university's strategy, this is a crucial decision regarding the university's target market and its related marketing mix. The paper presents a method and procedure of preparatory activities that precede the creation and implementation of an integrated marketing communication strategy at the level of a whole-university specific department — the Department for Marketing at the University. From a large number of marketing activities performed at the university, the focus is devoted to marketing communication by setting communication goals for individual segments of partners from the external environment and for the employee segment in the internal environment. The communication goals are identified on the basis of an analysis of the university's communication opportunities from the rector's office, from the position of partners and employees. The subject of the research also focuses on the creation and evaluation of alignment of communication tactics and strategy in the implementation of communication campaigns across the university in order to achieve the preconditions for the effectiveness of the tools of integrated marketing communication external partners of the selected university and its employees.

Key words: marketing of university; marketing communication strategy; strategic planning; goals of strategy

JEL codes: M31, I23, I25

1. Introduction

Services are understood as a separate tertiary sphere or economic activity, the output of which is usually not a material product. The essential features of services, through which we can define services as such, are based on the perception of service activities, service processes, and achievements in service delivery, service potential, or service potential. It is possible to integrate essential features with each other. The use of marketing in this area is sometimes understood only as the visibility of services, thus facilitating the customer's decision-making process when choosing a service provider. It is understood in particular to evoke the first impression, the so-called. the moment of truth, building the image, promoting the perception of the service by the senses, as well as the human factor itself expertise, behaviour, reactions, the way of providing the service, etc. (Dado J., 2006).

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Marketing within the condition of a university has its place and justification. The main task of higher education institutions in fulfilling their mission is to provide higher education and creative scientific research or creative artistic activity. As part of its activities, the university carries out management processes, implementation processes and support processes. Implementation processes are the focus of marketing. They include the basic services provided by the university to its customers, i.e., educational services and research services. Despite the fact that we understand the university as a service enterprise, it is necessary to differentiate in greater detail between higher education institutions and businesses providing services. The differences result partly from the position of the university as a public institution and partly from the nature of the services provided. The university cannot exclude certain groups of customers from the provision of services on the basis of the Constitution of a guaranteed freedom of choice for the profession and training.

At the same time, its flexibility to respond to market demands is limited by the fact that it may not decide to open new study fields or change them separately, but it must obtain approval from the Accreditation Commission (Corejova, Genzorova, Rostasova, 2017). Another difference is the university organizational chart. Individual units (faculties and institutes) are relatively independent, often do not cooperate and do not perceive themselves as part of the whole, but as self-existing units. This makes it often difficult to assert the concept of university marketing in the management of the university. The specifics of universities are also the way they are funded, the provision of funding by the state, and the fact that part of the university's performance is free. The status of the university as a public institution also affects its external relations. The university as a social system serves students and business practice, but also the entire society. Its mission is to protect knowledge and to develop learning based on scientific knowledge and creative science and research activity as well as artistic activity.

Based on customer requirements, the university creates a service offer, selects the right pricing policy, distribution channels and communicates in an appropriate and effective way. On the basis of various forms of communication, it informs its customers, persuades, reminds, strengthens the image or supports the placement of its products (Svetlik, 2006).

In terms of the demographic development of the population number, there is a permanent decrease in the number of inhabitants and thus a decrease in the potential university students. The competitive environment in the field of higher education is exposed to more intense competition between universities. Particularly significant is the rivalry of public universities and private universities, which have many times better material, human or financial resources. Other educational entities are also competitors of higher education institutions for the field of "complementary" educational services (e.g., different courses). A similar situation exists in the area of research services, which other institutions may provide in addition to the universities. Figure 1 provides a brief overview of the main reasons for application of the university marketing, which is reflected in its marketing activities.

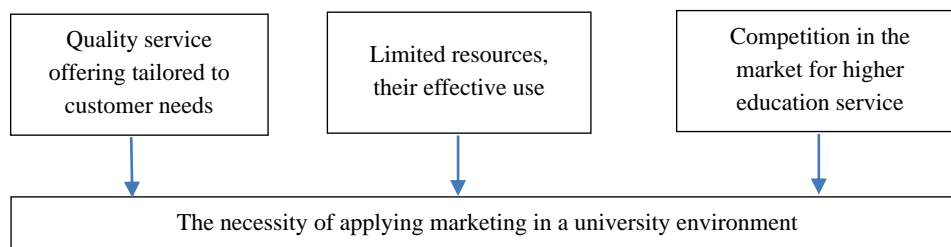


Figure 1 Necessity of the University Marketing (Svetlik, 2006)

Generally speaking, marketing is the analysis, planning and control of programs designed to align the desired exchange processes with the requirements of selected markets (Nash, 2003; Zamazalova et al., 2010). Then there are also two fundamental pillars of the university marketing: customer service, mutually beneficial exchange. The exchange relationship can only be realized if it is beneficial for the participants in the relationship. This means that if a customer is to use the services of a particular university, these services must be of a high quality, tailored to their needs and requirements (Payne, 1996). In the past, universities had almost no sales problems. At most, they were willing to accept buyers of higher education. However, even non-acceptance had no negative consequences. The ultimate goal of marketing is to position the customer and his/her satisfaction in the centre of thinking and acting at the university. The image conveyed mainly via marketing communication affects the interest of customers and their relationship with the university (Rostasova & Kremenova, 2017).

2. Marketing Communication at the University

The current state of the solved issue as well as the proposal part of the paper is bound to the conditions of the selected university of the technology (further “UNI”). The external activity of the university in question depends crucially on its presentation through a communication policy. The image of the university in the eyes of the public is not determined by the education and research services actually provided, but rather by how the service is perceived in both external and internal environments. As part of its communication policy, four basic tools of the communication mix are emerging: advertising, including e-marketing, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion. All these tools are also useful in university marketing, but they differ in their communication tools in terms of classical marketing by their importance:

- Advertising: the main problem in implementing this communication mix tool is the high cost of using advertising media (Pitra, 2006). However, there are also those options where such high costs do not arise at the university, one of which is the use of free or low cost advertising media (notice boards informing on the offer of university fields of study and study programs at secondary schools, labour offices or at their own university) or finding partners for whom some of the tasks of science and research at the university are solved (businesses, state). Relatively cost-effective is reaching out to specific target segments, especially those with a multiplier effect (such as educators or career advisors) through direct marketing. Another option is to reach out to a limited number of students with excellent results, provide them with information tailored to their needs. Afterwards these excellent students address other potential students. The current concept of university advertising is linked to the use of e-marketing in a social networking environment (Madlenak & Rostasova, 2015, Nash, 2003).
- Public Relations are the most important communication tool of the university. Through the targeted dissemination of information, the university addresses the potentially indeterminate or negative image in the eyes of the public (which arises, for example, as a result of prejudice) or reinforces the already existing positive image. In doing so, PR focus on certain limited external segments (potential students, career advisors, media, etc.). Communication with external target segments is successful at the university on condition that internal communication works. The internal public is made up not only of scientific, pedagogical and other university staff but also of students. The majority of those interested in studying at this university are in contact with already enrolled students who inform them of the study offer. That is why it is necessary to reinforce the students' identification with the university so that they

are able to convey its positive image to potential students. Effective public relations tools are conferences, congresses and events, not only at the jubilee of the foundation of the university.

- Personal offer of educational and research services of the UNI represents personal communication with target segments. While impersonal communication through the media and social networking sites is particularly useful for alerting potential students to the UNI and its achievements, personal communication plays an important role in the actual choice of study at UNI (e.g., visits of university representatives at secondary schools, activities of career advisors, education fairs, open days, etc.).

Thus, communication policy can be considered the core of the marketing mix at UNI. However, it must also be borne in mind that communication policy is just one of the tools.

Under the UNI conditions, other tools can be assigned to traditional marketing mix tools such as human resources at the UNI, material conditions, and UNI equipment, as well as processes and their management, i.e., management of educational and research processes at the UNI.

From the specific conditions that apply to universities and thus for the UNI, the tools of the marketing mix are also shifted to further areas: personalities at the university, process pedagogical approaches at the university and participatory activation — the participation of a university customer (student, company, public administration body etc.).

3. Goal and Methodology

The main objective is to propose the integrated marketing communication or marketing communication mix more effective and systematic at the university level. Specific objectives include as follows:

- Strengthening the quality and competence of marketing staff;
- Activating communication campaigns performed through specific marketing communication tools organized in direct relation to established communication goals;
- Activating the work with the media, with a strong focus on the adoption of measures to eliminate the impact of the opening of particularly negative topics by the media (but also by the state) in relation to universities;
- Increasing the continuity of communication (both external and internal) at the whole-university level;
- Stronger application of the evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing communication.

The analytical work was based on the SWOT analysis. It concerns the current state of marketing communication at the university level as a starting point for determining the optimal communication strategy for the next five-year period (Cravens, 1997). The identification of communication objectives at the university level, based on analysis of UNI communication opportunities with partners and employees has been accomplished. Likewise, key partners in education and research have been identified and communication opportunities have been defined with relevant external partners (together with prioritizing the UNI objectives), with a direct link to market segmentation that the UNI serves within its activities.

In performing the analytical work, a reference panel of evaluators was compiled, consisting of 11 members including 7 faculty members, 4 panel members from the UNI. Evaluation methods were used; namely arithmetic mean and pairwise comparison or standard deviations (Bradley, 2010; Foret & Stávková, 2003; Meloun & Militky, 2012).

The evaluation of the individual aspects of the SWOT analysis took place in terms of defining the strengths

and weaknesses that characterize the university's internal environment and the opportunities and threats affecting the university from the outside (Cooper & Lane, 1999, Project within LLL 511491).

4. Results

SWOT analysis of the marketing communication in the UNI includes the description and weights of individual aspects (see Table 1 and Table 2). The individual strength and weaknesses are evaluated, e.g., overall evaluation of S = product of the effect of the given aspect (evaluated in a five-degree rating scale) and the importance of the given aspect (evaluated in a three-degree rating scale).

Table 1 S-W Analysis of the Marketing Communication at the UNI

Internal factors	Description	Weights
S1	Existence of a department specializing in the application of selected marketing communication tools at the UNI	11.18
S2	Quality and competent staff of the department	11.36
S3	UNI systematic communication with all stakeholders of the UNI	11.18
S4	Elaborated design manual of the UNI	7.55
S5	UNI promotional materials of high quality and their availability for all marketing activities and campaigns	9.55
S6	Comprehensive market segmentation of educational and scientific research services	9.64
S7	Use of social networking sites in UNI communication	9.55
S	TOTAL Strengths	70.00
W1	Not unified content and design style of the website of the UNI, faculties and individual UNI workplaces	7.27
W2	Insufficient number of employees dealing with marketing and Public Relations activities at the UNI	11.45
W3	Non-existent marketing strategy of the UNI/non-existent marketing communication strategy of the UNI	10,00
W4	Low percentage of the UNI budget dedicated to communication activities)	10.64
W5	Reducing the use of methods to determine the efficiency of communication tools used	8.82
W6	The trend of weakening the UNI brand perception compared to the brands of faculties:	10.64
W	TOTAL Weaknesses	58.82

If we focus on the selected strength, e.g., S3: "UNI systematic communication with all stakeholders of the UNI", it can be stated that the UNI uses all its currently available channels to communicate with stakeholders:

- **UNI staff:** dissemination of information mainly through the web (news), direct e-mail to all employees, via TV screens at the university campus, through posters, flyers, direct contacts during events, meetings, etc.
- **UNI students:** dissemination of information mainly through the official FB fan page, the web (news - for example, 171 current announcements, e-learning etc. were published in the year of 2016), direct marketing using e-mail marketing for all students (the problem is that not all students use the university e-mail service and not all teachers require it; the interest in using this communication channel has quadrupled yearly), through student organizations, university TV screens, posters, leaflets, direct contacts. In order to facilitate the start of the academic year for the 1st year students, INFOPOIN is organized in cooperation with the student part of the Academic Senate as an information point for better orientation of them in the UNI campus area.
- **Media:** press releases (press releases archive available on the web), direct, telephone, e-mail contact,

sending topics tips to specific programmes sessions (e.g., VAT), press conferences, FB fan page of the UNI, UNI website and so on. The department publishes about 20 press releases annually, and has been flexibly addressing dozens of requests for information from regional and national media. Media representatives used a list of UNI experts who spoke to the media on various topics as independent experts. The department provided advertising centrally for all the faculties in national newspapers, in the annex on universities and also dealt with other cases of paid advertising. The department organizes expert lectures with marketing communication experts who come from outside and are regarded as important experts in this field.

- **General public (includes potential students and their parents):** direct contact — during events (fairs, UNI Day in the most visited shopping centre, Christmas at the University, Research Station, etc.), FB fan page of the UNI, web, through media outputs, etc. By the end of 2016, FB fan page registered 4,100 fans and their number is still growing. A total of 225 contributions were published on FB of the UNI in 2016, dozens of reports were answered, especially from prospective students.
- **Partners:** The department has contacts to cooperating foreign universities, namely cooperating companies, universities as well as the local firms and institutions. Within the UNI, mainly faculties, departments and other UNI workplaces communicate with them.
- **Graduates:** Faculties and departments communicate with this target group on their own.

Focusing on the selected weakness, e.g., W2: “Insufficient number of employees dealing with marketing and public relations activities at the UNI” possible solution is as follows:

- In the future, the ideal situation would be to create a department, which would include exclusively the marketing communication of the UNI and PR and at the same time create the position of a marketing and PR specialist at the faculties. For comparison, the Department for Marketing and External Relations at the Brno University of Technology has 11 employees in total¹. When creating large advertising campaigns, the VUT Brno uses the services of the professional agency Cinebonbon².

Table 2 O-T Analysis of the Marketing Communication at the UNI

External factors	Description	Weights
O1	Support from the university top management employees towards UNI communication activities	11.09
O2	Existence of a promotional material distribution channel through the EDIS University Shop	8.09
O3	Own EDIS Publishing House - cost effectiveness of some kinds of promotional materials	6.36
O4	Sponsors willingness to contribute to major whole-university events — memorials, celebrations, balls	9.18
O5	Initiation of the cooperation of the municipality towards the university	8.82
O6	A worldwide trend in the use of social networking sites for communication activities	11.00
O	TOTAL Opportunities	54.55
T1	The autonomy of the faculties and thus the resulting uncoordinated procedure of some marketing activities	11.00
T2	Adverse demographic development in target segment of customers — students	13.64
T3	Lower level of cooperation in some areas at large employers in the region:	11.45
T4	Dissemination of the negative image from the level of the state on the state of higher education:	11.45
T5	In particular, the opening of negative topics by the media in relation to universities	12.82
T	TOTAL Threats	57.00

¹ <https://www.vutbr.cz/o-univerzite/organizacni-struktura/rektorat/utvar-vnejsich-vztahu>.

² <http://www.feedit.cz/wordpress/2017/01/23/holky-na-techniku-patri-rika-nova-kampan-vut/>.

As an example and evidence of existing opportunities from the University's external environment, we can mention the opportunity of O₂: "The existence of a promotional material distribution channel through the EDIS University Shop":

- EDIS Shop, e.g., when buying promotional items with the UNI logo. From the items listed in the catalogue that the EDIS Shop has developed, it is possible to select the desired type and quantity (e.g., a paper bag, T-shirt, pen), which is then provided by the EDIS Shop. Especially students, who are interested in various stationaries (some of them with the logo, what is added value and positive for us), mainly do shopping in the shop and the faculties also use the shop when they need promotional items on various occasions (e.g., in case of unexpected visits, when they need a gift with the university logo for guests promptly).

As an example and proof of the existence of threats from the external environment of the university, we mention the threat T₂: "Adverse demographic development in the target segment of customers-students":

- Generally, there has been a long-standing negative demographic trend in the number of young people who have finished secondary school, which is related to the population curves in Slovakia. Thus, in relation to education and towards customers-students, the UNI reaches an ever smaller market and the intensity of competition for students is increasing in Slovakia, as higher education funding is tied to the number of students in this sector.

Determination of the UNI marketing strategy and graphical representation using the arithmetic mean method:

$$S - W = 70.00 - 58.82 = + 11.18$$

$$O - T = 54.55 - 57.00 = - 2.45$$

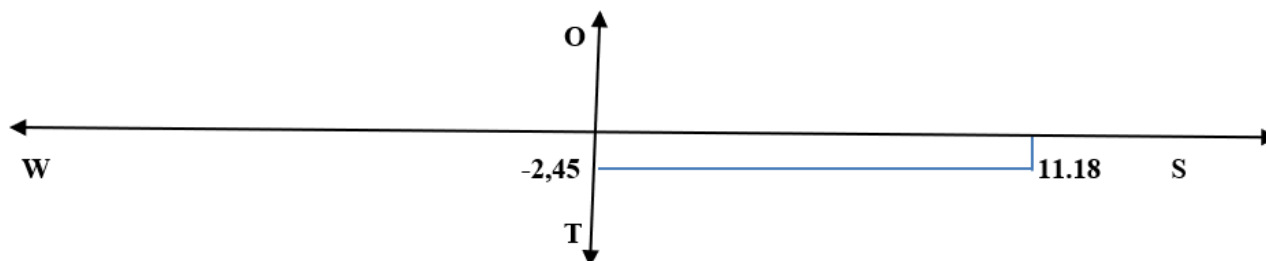


Figure 2 Result of the SWOT Analysis Processing — Proposal of Suitable Communication Strategy: ST Strategy

The implementation of the ST strategy implies, on the one hand, the exploitation of the strengths in such a way that the UNI's Marketing Department, through its activity, further works on them and thus achieves an even greater effect of the action of these aspects. On the other hand, the strategy is based on making every effort from this department to eliminate the impact of the identified threats affecting the university from the external environment.

In connection with the determination of specific proposals for the fulfilment of the UNI's marketing communication strategy, the order of importance of processes for achieving even higher **impact of strengths** using the paired comparison method was determined based on standard deviation (Table 3).

Table 3 The Importance of Using Individual Strengths in the UNI Marketing Communication Strategy

Strengths	The order of occurrence in the matrix
S2: Quality and competent staff of the department	1
S1: Existence of a department specializing in the application of selected marketing communication tools at the university	2
S3: UNI systematic communication with all stakeholders of the UNI at the level of the Rectorate	3
S6: Comprehensive market segmentation of educational and scientific research services	4
S5: UNI promotional materials of high quality and their availability for all marketing activities and campaigns	5
S7: Use of social networking sites in UNI communication	6
S4: Elaborated design manual of the UNI	7

The order of importance of eliminating **the impact of threats** using the pairwise comparison method was also determined based on the standard deviation (Table 4).

Table 4 Order of Importance in Eliminating the Impact of Threats in the Marketing Strategy of the UNI

Threats	The order of occurrence in the matrix
T2: Adverse demographic development in the target customer segment — students	1
T5: In particular, the opening of negative topics by the media in relation to universities	2
T4: Dissemination of the negative image from the level of the state on the state of higher education	3
T1: The autonomy of the faculties and thus the resulting uncoordinated procedure of some marketing activities	4
T3: Lower Level of Cooperation In Some Areas at Large Employers In The Region	5

As mentioned above, these conclusions could be reached by using the paired comparison method (based on the determination of the standard deviation). The calculations were based on the results of the evaluation by individual experts who acted as respondents in this research activity (Table 5).

Table 5 Results of the Evaluation of Strengths by Experts

Results of the evaluation of strengths by experts														
	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Expert 8	Expert 9	Expert 10	Expert 11	Together	\bar{x}	σ
A	9	15	12	12	9	12	6	12	12	12	12	123	11.18	2.25
B	9	15	12	12	9	12	8	12	12	12	12	125	11.36	1.87
C	12	12	6	9	6	12	15	12	12	12	15	123	11.18	2.89
D	9	9	6	8	2	5	6	12	6	12	8	83	7.55	2.84
E	9	9	12	8	9	8	8	12	12	12	6	105	9.55	2.02
F	9	15	6	6	12	15	12	9	6	6	10	106	9.64	3.34
G	12	15	6	6	6	15	6	9	6	12	12	105	9.55	3.58
Together	69	90	60	61	53	79	61	78	66	78	75	770	70.00	

Table 6 Results of the Evaluation of Weaknesses by Experts

The results of the evaluation of weaknesses by experts														
	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Expert 8	Expert 9	Expert 10	Expert 11	Together	\bar{x}	σ
A	0	9	6	8	6	6	6	12	9	12	6	80	7.27	3.19
B	6	12	15	12	6	9	6	15	15	15	15	126	11.45	3.80
C	12	12	6	15	15	3	15	12	6	6	8	110	10.00	4.13
D	12	15	6	6	15	9	6	12	6	15	15	117	10.64	3.91
E	9	9	3	15	4	6	12	15	4	12	8	97	8.82	4.11
F	15	15	6	12	25	6	6	6	6	12	8	117	10.64	5.74
Together	54	72	42	68	71	39	51	72	46	72	60	647	58.82	

Table 7 Results of Evaluation of Opportunities by Experts

Results of evaluation of opportunities by experts														
	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Expert 8	Expert 9	Expert 10	Expert 11	Together	\bar{x}	σ
A	15	15	8	12	12	9	15	12	8	8	8	122	11.09	2.87
B	12	6	6	6	15	12	2	12	6	6	6	89	8.09	3.78
C	12	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	6	6	6	70	6.36	1.87
D	6	10	8	12	12	15	8	8	8	8	6	101	9.18	2.66
E	6	8	8	15	6	9	6	8	8	8	15	97	8.82	3.07
F	15	15	8	15	6	12	6	9	8	12	15	121	11.00	3.54
Together	66	60	44	66	57	61	43	55	44	48	56	600	54.55	

Table 8 Results of Threat Assessment by Experts

Results of threat assessment by experts														
	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Expert 8	Expert 9	Expert 10	Expert 11	Together	\bar{x}	σ
A	12	6	12	12	15	6	8	12	15	15	8	121	11.00	3.30
B	15	15	12	15	15	12	15	12	12	12	15	150	13.64	1.49
C	15	8	6	4	15	9	8	6	6	6	6	89	8.09	3.50
D	15	8	15	15	15	3	10	15	15	12	3	126	11.45	4.60
E	15	8	15	15	15	6	10	12	15	15	15	141	12.82	3.19
Together	72	45	60	61	75	36	51	57	63	60	47	627	57.00	

Statistical evaluation was followed by creation of matrices S, W, O, T based on pairwise comparison with the following results (Table 9).

Based on this procedure, a proposal of priority areas in the marketing communication strategy was developed (proposal of projects focusing on the fulfilment of the UNI's marketing communication strategy — of the Department for International Relations and Marketing) (Table 10).

Table 9 Evaluation Matrix S, W, O, T Based on Pairwise Comparison

Strength assessment matrix								Weakness assessment matrix							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A	X	B	A	A	A	A	A	A	X	B	C	D	E	F	G
B	B	X	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	X	B	B	B	B	B
C	A	B	X	C	C	C	C	C	C	B	X	D	C	F	C
D	A	B	C	X	E	F	G	D	D	B	D	X	D	D	D
E	A	B	C	E	X	F	E	E	E	B	C	D	X	F	E
F	A	B	C	F	F	X	F	F	F	B	F	D	F	X	F
G	A	B	C	G	E	F	X								

Opportunity Evaluation Matrix							Threat assessment matrix						
	A	B	C	D	E	F		A	B	C	D	E	F
A	X	A	A	A	A	A	A	X	B	A	D	E	F
B	A	X	B	D	E	F	B	B	X	B	B	B	B
C	A	B	X	D	E	F	C	A	B	X	D	E	F
D	A	D	D	X	D	F	D	D	B	D	X	E	F
E	A	E	E	D	X	F	E	E	B	E	E	X	F
F	A	F	F	F	F	X							

Table 10 The UNI Proposal of Priority Areas in the Marketing Strategy of the UNI

Strategic orientation (SO) — partial tasks (in the next stage of the solution elaborated into projects)	Aspect of the SWOT analysis	The order of occurrence in the matrix
SO1: Further strengthening of the quality and competence of the department	S2	1/S
SO2: Implementation of communication activities by implementing specific marketing communication tools suitable for university communication with target markets	S1, S3	2/S, 3/S
SO3: Adoption of measures aimed at eliminating the impact of unfavourable demographic development in the target customers segment — students	T2	1/T
SO4: Elimination of the media impact when opening negative topics in relation to higher education	T5	2/T
SO5: Measures against the dissemination of negative image by the state on the state of higher education	T4	3/T

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The paper, which deals with the creation of the marketing communication strategy in the UNI conditions, defines the basic procedures for the creation of this strategic document for the following periods. Obviously, it would then be necessary to address the selection and implementation of individual marketing communication sub-tools (communication mix) to stimulate partnerships at different institutional levels (Madlenak & Rostasova, 2015; Payne, 1996). Further it is also necessary to deal with proposals to systematize the UNI branding work through partnerships in both external and internal environments, thereby raising awareness of the UNI in Slovakia and abroad. Creating proposals for the appropriate methodology for creating a UNI marketing communication budget, including alternative proposals for the creation of a system for measuring the effectiveness of the integrated marketing tools used towards individual segments (to the UNI external partners and the UNI employees), is inherent to this issue. Last but not least, it is extremely important (in order to achieve a

comprehensive and systemic solution to this issue) to think about the creation of procedures for systematic alignment of communication tactics and strategies in the implementation of communication campaigns across the university.

This marketing planning process is an example of how the university accomplishes the subject matter. However, the specificities of each higher education institution mean that the recommended approach needs to be adapted both to the conditions in which the university is located and to adapt to changing market conditions. Therefore, it is necessary to make corrections to objectives, target segments, strategies and measures. Moreover, such an ideal marketing planning process can often only be realized with significantly higher costs. In addition, universities may encounter some major problems in their efforts to implement it. In general, university marketing has to some extent affected the lack of “marketing awareness” to date. This has caused some universities to have only the necessary knowledge that is not sufficient as a basis for marketing-oriented planning and management. The possibilities of implementing marketing measures are subject to considerable financial constraints and there are even some doubts as to whether marketing can be precisely organized in terms of universities. Universities, as already mentioned, consist of a number of autonomous units (e.g., faculties), which often do not sufficiently cooperate. This results in possible problems in determining and approving, e.g., strategic goals of universities in the quality of the educational process, links to the business environment and so on. The specific conditions of university marketing imply the necessity of including an external factor in the process of provided services (e.g., the student is in the customer’s position). Another important factor is the fact that universities implement their product policy under special conditions resulting from restrictions on supply flexibility. For example, the possibilities of flexible response to market demands are limited by the fact that a possible opening of new fields of study or study programmes, eventually their change cannot be decided by the university itself, but the approval must be obtained by the competent authorities. In addition, certain customer segments cannot be excluded from the process of providing educational services, as the Constitution guarantees a free choice of profession and training for the profession. However, experts point out that these doubts cannot lead to a rejection of the marketing concept and suggest a number of solutions to address these issues. First of all, the basics of systematic marketing must be developed as soon as possible at universities (Pitra, 2006). Existing statistics on labour market demand, demographic change, analysis of other educational institutions, etc. must be constantly updated and complemented through effective market research. Financial barriers are insignificant if the tools of marketing communication are tailored to a particular university.

The marketing concept for the university as a whole should inevitably lead to a relatively unified presentation in the public, but at least to the compatibility of objectives, the unification of common goals and agreed action plans at individual faculties, departments and other parts of the university. University marketing activities should be created from the perspective of the customer and not from the perspective of different university interest groups. Product policy should be applied separately to products that are not subject to any restrictions (e.g., further education/training) and to less flexible offers (e.g., for accreditation of study fields and programmes).

Given the above-mentioned doubts about the market-oriented university management as well as by the results of research projects (APVV, VEGA, institutional research) it is natural that the process of integrating marketing into an educational institution needs to be realized gradually over a longer period of time. The first possible step is to use marketing as a student acquisition. In the second phase it is then necessary to involve students studying at the university on important marketing tasks. As far as possible, in the next step, the university should, on the basis of marketing principles, seek to redesign its educational and scientific research services. The

university must actively create its image and plan its position in the educational services market. At the end of this process, there is the knowledge that meaningful marketing can function as an integrated part of the entire university.

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