

Positioning University in the Market of Educational Services: Regional Aspect

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Abstract—Authors consider the university position in educational market through the prism of such parameters as the university development strategy, orientation of the university to internal and external consumers, philosophy, ideology, university development mission, traditions and customs, formed values, established norms and rules, behavioral patterns, identification of potential consumers of educational services; university prestige, university branding (image creation), interaction with potential employers. The research field is localized in the framework of the study and comparative analysis of fundamental characteristics of the university when applicants choose places of their future education. The conducted analysis makes it possible to identify general and specific fundamental characteristics of a university when students select a place for their future education from the perspective of students, as well as the staff of regional universities.

Keywords—higher education, modernization, competitiveness, characteristics of university environment, educational services market

I. INTRODUCTION

The highest form of efficiency manifestation of a university is the satisfaction of both internal and external consumers of educational services. Internal consumers of services (clients) provided by a higher educational institution include students, teachers, university administration, employees, and students of advanced training courses. The specificity of the internal consumer involves the combination of role positions of the user (client) and the participant of internal university processes, the results of which are evaluated by an external consumer [1]. The external consumers of educational services include applicants, parents, employers.

The positioning of the university in educational market is the manifestation of organization philosophy; the product that meets consumer expectations; internal-organized processes; employees who are carriers of competencies; customer service of educational environment.

The structural platform combination, integration of internal and external consumers into sociocultural environment of the university, as well as consistent links and transformations of external consumers into internal ones, form the client-oriented direction in the university development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The education system study as a social institution is adequately represented in academic community. Researchers consider the functioning impact of the institution of education with various spheres of social life.

According to modern researchers, the main task facing educational institutions today is to adapt their activities to the needs of the market and business in order to produce higher-quality “products” [2]. At the same time, the operating results of the universities are in demand in two markets - the labor market (in the form of graduates, whose “consumers” are enterprises and organizations) and in the educational services market (in the form of implementing basic educational programs, conducting basic and applied research, developing additional types of professional activities, etc.).

Recognizing the fact that improving the quality of educational institutions is possible only if there is healthy competition, many universities have begun to actively develop marketing concepts in order to increase their competitiveness in the educational market [3]. The result of this activity is the improvement of the forms and methods of management of the educational institution, and the improvement of the quality indicators of the “products” produced, built into the system of “quality management” created by innovative universities [4].

Various aspects of the formation and development of organizational culture of educational institutions in higher professional education are described in the works of T. Antopolskaia [5]. From the position of the author, influencing the development of each subject, organizational culture creates conditions for their activities as unique “I”, united in a single

space and manifested in the sense of “We”, gives rise to the phenomenon of complicity. The complicity appears in mutual acceptance, trust, respect, and empathy for success of a common business.

K. Anderson and C. Kerr in their works consider the problems of customer-oriented management as a factor of competitiveness increase in modern organizations [6]. Consideration of general specific features of the sociocultural component of higher professional education institutions was based on the ideas of D. Peppers, M. Rogers, allowed identifying problems in the relationship of modern universities with internal and external clients [7]. According to A.A. Chubatiuk, a client-oriented approach involves active integration of a marketing philosophy, marketing concept and toolkit into the business management system [8]. A.B. Zigalenko presents an organizational culture of the university as a changing organism, the foundation of which are the historically established basic values of an organization, in turn, being the basis for developing a specific impact on external factors [9].

The analysis of domestic and foreign sources on the research problem allows us to conclude that at present, within the framework of the humanities, a considerable amount of theoretical and empirical material on the effectiveness of specialists training by higher education institutions has been accumulated. At the same time, it is possible to detect a shortage of empirical research aimed at studying current trends in the development of the university environment, with regard to modern realities, as well as the specifics of regional development.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this work is to study the directions of development of the university environment, the level of satisfaction of internal and external consumers in the context of the positioning of a regional university in the market of services provided.

IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Within the study of development areas of the university environment, level of satisfaction of internal and external consumers, the authors conducted a research among students of universities in Belgorod region (N=801), as well as faculty members of regional universities (N=50). The sample structure of student youth includes the following social demographic groups. By gender: men - 45.02%, women - 54.98%. Depending on the professional orientation of universities, where the respondents study, the number of them was distributed as follows: in a humanitarian university - 61.86%, in a technical one - 38.14% of respondents. State universities students in the context of university status position amount to 71.48%, in commercial - 28.52%. According to the purposes of the study, one of the quoting features is the course in which the respondents are trained. Thus, in the structure of the sample population, the respondents of the 1st course are 29.55%, 2nd-3d - 35.74%, and 4th course - 34.71%. The structure of the sample population of the faculty members includes the following social demographic groups. By gender: men - 22%,

women - 78%, depending on the professional orientation of universities: 66% in a humanitarian university, 34% of respondents - in technical one, 76% - in the context of a university status, state universities, 24% - in a commercial. In the context of age groups: 21-25 years - 2%, 26-30 years - 14%, 31-40 years - 38%, 41-50 years - 22%, 51-60 years - 14%, over 60 years - 10%, depending on length of employment in the university: less than 1 year - no, 1-3 years - 6%, 4-6 years - 14%, 7-10 years - 10%, 11-15 years - 36%, over 15 years - 34%.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reforming the education system as one of the most important institutions of modern society directly influences not only the future prospects for the social sphere development as a whole, but also determines the direction of application by higher educational institutions of new strategies in the provision of educational services and university positioning. The need for integration indicates the transfer to a two-level system of education at the university and the unification (correlation) of Russian specialties and areas of training with those adopted in world educational practice [10].

According to modern researchers, the main task facing educational institutions today is the task of adapting activity to the needs of the market and business in order to produce high quality “products”. At the same time, the results of the university activities are in demand in two markets – the labor market (in the form of graduates, whose “consumers” are enterprises and organizations) and in the educational services market (in the form of implementing basic educational programs, conducting basic and applied research, developing additional types of professional activities, etc.).

Recognizing the fact that improving the quality of educational institutions is possible only if there is healthy competition, many universities have begun to actively develop marketing concepts in order to increase their competitiveness in the educational market. The result of this activity is the improvement of forms and methods of the educational institution management, and the improvement of quality indicators of the released “products”, built into the system of “quality management” created by innovative universities.

The main parameters of the study are the development strategy of the university; orientation of the university on internal and external consumers; philosophy, ideology, mission of the university development; traditions and customs; formed values; formed norms and rules; behavioral patterns; identification of potential consumers of educational services; university prestige; university branding (image creation; interaction with potential employers.

The distribution of answers to the question about fundamental characteristics of a university when applicants select a place for their future education are presented in Table I (total amount of answers exceeds 100%, since multiple choice is possible).

TABLE I. FUNDAMENTAL FEATURES OF THE UNIVERSITY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE APPLICANTS

What, in your opinion, is fundamental when applicants choose the university where you work?	Amount	
	abs.	%
quality education provided by university	19	38.00%
specialty of interest	32	64.00%
example of friends, relatives	13	26.00%
advice of parents	8	16.00%
it is the most prestigious university in the region	8	16.00%
tuition fee is suitable for the family	22	44.00%
university is well advertised	10	20.00%
minimum requirements for admission to the university	4	8.00%
beautiful university building, developed infrastructure	6	12.00%
process of further employment is adjusted at the university	5	10.00%
vocational guidance work carried out at school has a great influence	3	6.00%
inertia	1	2.00%

Thus, the faculty members of Belgorod universities believe that the applicants' choice of their future education place the greatest extent is indicated by:

- specialty of interest - 64% of respondents;
- tuition fee is suitable for the family - 44%;
- quality education provided by university - 38%.

On the one hand, the obtained results reflect the realities of modern times, which are expressed, firstly, in providing the market of educational services with required and relevant specialties and areas of university training at the moment; secondly, the acceptability of tuition fees characterizes the population well-being of the region; thirdly, quality education as an unreserved condition for the development strategy of higher education.

However, in a more detailed consideration of the obtained data, we can conclude that the choice of applicants for the place of their future education, according to teachers, has the following vector: specialty - payment - quality of education. The first two positions are, of course, due to objective factors of modern life, but the quality of education, in our opinion, should be fundamental, since the future intellectual and labor potential of not only the region, but also the country as a whole depends on the quality of education. And, according to the results of our study, the quality of education occupies only the third position; nevertheless, it is selected by a third of the respondents.

Moreover, as shown by the results of a mass survey of students, the basic for respondents when choosing a university is a specialty of interest (64.60%), quality education provided by the university (49.83%), and university prestige (25.77%).

Consequently, almost half of the student youth of the respondents choose the university, wishing to get a quality education concerning a specialty of interest, while only a third of domestic customers of high school environment (faculty members) choose the quality of education as the fundamental item of a study place.

The following characteristics of the university when selecting for the place of applicants' future education, according to faculty members, are localized in the positions of:

- example of friends, relatives – 26%;
- university is well advertised – 20%;
- advice of parents and it is the most prestigious university in the region – 16% of respondents equally.

These data suggest that according to the opinion of the surveyed faculty members, an example, advice, PR-activity and the university positioning as the most prestigious in the area are fundamental items for applicants.

In this case, internal customers (faculty members) determine one of the conditions for the formation of a client-oriented development of the university that is ensuring the commitment of clients of this organization through the formation of appropriate samples of organizational culture. This condition is expressed in the creation of groups of loyal consumers (adherents), preserving the loyalty of necessary consumers for the university. An adherent of an organization is a consumer who, in a situation of choice, consciously prefers its brand and is willing to pay a certain price for it. These buyers are insensitive to competitor actions, such as changes in the cost of education, a variety of training programs, social security, etc. Thus, according to the respondents, a predictable group of customers, which can bring and brings maximum benefit to the institution, has been formed.

According to faculty members, the following answers close the list of fundamental characteristics of the university when applicants choose the place of their future education:

- beautiful university building, developed infrastructure -12 %;
- process of further employment is adjusted at the university – 10%;
- minimum requirements for admission to the university – 8%.
- vocational guidance work carried out at school has a great influence – 6% of respondents.

In this case, high school teachers believe that the university building and its infrastructure to a lesser extent may affect the choice of applicants for the future place of study, while objectively assessing the requirements for admission to the university. But such characteristics as “process of further employment is adjusted” and “vocational guidance work carried out at school”, the selected teachers to a lesser extent, in many ways demonstrate significant shortcomings in the existing system of higher education. In our opinion, the interaction with employers, employment process should occupy the highest positions in the framework of the university positioning in the market of provided educational services. As for the vocational guidance work carried out at the university and, according to teachers, taking the last position, it is also a significant negative signal, demonstrating, on the one hand, the isolation of higher education from secondary education, on the other hand, with the existing advertising of the university, the absence of one of the leading directions of PR activity.

If we look at the results in more detail, we may find significant differences in the distribution of answers to this

question depending on the professional orientation of the university (Table II).

TABLE II. FUNDAMENTAL FEATURES OF THE UNIVERSITY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE APPLICANTS (DEPENDING ON THE PROFESSIONAL DIRECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY)

What, in your opinion, is fundamental when applicants choose the university where you work?	Work at:					
	humanitarian university		technical university		Total	
	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
quality education provided by university	14	42.42%	5	29.41%	19	38.00%
specialty of interest	20	60.61%	13	76.47%	33	66.00%
example of friends, relatives	5	15.15%	8	47.06%	13	26.00%
advice of parents	5	15.15%	4	23.53%	9	18.00%
it is the most prestigious university in the region	5	15.15%	3	17.65%	8	16.00%
tuition fee is suitable for the family	18	54.55%	4	23.53%	22	44.00%
university is well advertised	8	24.24%	2	11.76%	10	20.00%
minimum requirements for admission to the university	3	9.09%	1	5.88%	4	8.00%
beautiful university building, developed infrastructure	5	15.15%	1	5.88%	6	12.00%
process of further employment is adjusted at the university	4	12.12%	1	5.88%	5	10.00%
vocational guidance work carried out at school has a great influence	3	9.09%	-	-	3	6.00%
inertia	1	3.03%	-	-	1	2.00%
Total	33	100.00%	17	100.00%	50	100.00%

Thus, despite the fact that such a fundamental characteristic as a specialty of interest is equally distinguished by teachers, regardless of the professional orientation of the university, so the teachers of a technical university distinguish it to the greatest extent (76.47% relative to 60.61% of respondents). If half of the teachers of humanitarian universities (54.55%) single out acceptable tuition fees as a fundamental characteristic when choosing a place of study, then in a technical university this characteristic is indicated by only one fifth of the respondents (23.53%). It should be noted that this characteristic is significant to a lesser extent in a technical university, since this university provides more budget places.

The difference in the responses of respondents when choosing such a characteristic as a quality education provided by a university is quite noticeable. So, 42% of teachers of humanitarian universities consider the above mentioned characteristic as fundamental, while only 29.41% distinguish it as significant.

Herewith, commitment as one of the conditions for the formation of a client-oriented in the development of a university is largely determined by the teachers of a technical university, namely, example of friends, relatives - 47.06% to 15%; advice of parents - 23.53% to 15.15% of respondents, depending on the university orientation.

The university prestige is also more emphasized by the teachers of technical university – 17.65% to 15.15% of respondents.

At the same time, the teachers of humanitarian universities highlight such characteristics as university advertising – 24.24% to 11.76%, a beautiful university building, developed infrastructure 15.15% to 5.88%, as well as adjusted process of further employment - 12.12% to 5.88%, respectively.

It should be noted that only teachers of humanitarian universities highlight such characteristic as vocational guidance work conducted at school - 9.09%. In this case, the administration of a technical university can only be offered to implement the career guidance mechanism for the formation and development of this kind of activity.

TABLE III. FUNDAMENTAL FEATURES OF THE UNIVERSITY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE APPLICANTS (DEPENDING ON THE STATUS OF THE UNIVERSITY: IS IT STATE OR COMMERCIAL)

What, in your opinion, is fundamental when applicants choose the university where you work?	Your University:					
	state		commercial		Total	
	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
quality education provided by university	11	28.95%	8	66.67%	19	38.00%
specialty of interest	25	65.79%	8	66.67%	33	66.00%
example of friends, relatives	12	31.58%	1	8.33%	13	26.00%
advice of parents	8	21.05%	1	8.33%	9	18.00%
it is the most prestigious university in the region	8	21.05%	-	-	8	16.00%
tuition fee is suitable for the family	13	34.21%	9	75.00%	22	44.00%
university is well advertised	9	23.68%	1	8.33%	10	20.00%
minimum requirements for admission to the university	3	7.89%	1	8.33%	4	8.00%
beautiful university building, developed infrastructure	5	13.16%	1	8.33%	6	12.00%
process of further employment is adjusted at the university	2	5.26%	3	25.00%	5	10.00%
vocational guidance work carried out at school has a great influence	3	7.89%	-	-	3	6.00%
inertia	1	2.63%	-	-	1	2.00%
Total	38	100.00%	12	100.00%	50	100.00%

Significant differences are also found in the analysis of the results to this question, depending on the status of the university - state/commercial (Table III).

With a practically equal distribution of results, a response within the framework of such a characteristic as a specialty of interest (65.79% to 66.67%, respectively), there are obvious differences in the allocation of the following characteristics by teachers:

1) state university teachers more strongly emphasize commitment, developed PR-technologies and infrastructure. The fact is that such a characteristic as prestige and career guidance work is highlighted only by teachers of state universities;

2) commercial university teachers to a greater degree distinguish such characteristics as a suitable tuition fee, quality education provided by the university, as well as adjusted process of further employment.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus, based on the obtained results, we can identify specific features that determine the characteristics of the university environment by internal customers (faculty members):

1) teachers of humanitarian universities to a greater extent distinguish such characteristics as a specialty of interest, suitable tuition fees, quality education provided by the university, developed PR-technologies, a university building, developed infrastructure, an adjusted process of further employment, as well as vocational guidance;

2) teachers of technical universities are more likely to distinguish a specialty of interest, commitment (adherence) and university prestige.

The students, when choosing state universities, are primarily guided by a specialty of interest, quality education and prestige of the university; when choosing commercial - specialty of interest, suitable tuition fees and the provision of quality education, as well as minimum requirements for admission to the university. University advertising and minimum requirements for admission, as well as tuition fees and career guidance work are the least motivated features for students of state universities. University infrastructure, process of further employment, university advertising, as well as vocational guidance work are the least motivators for students of a commercial university.

Thus, the analysis allowed us to identify the general and specific fundamental characteristics of the university when applicants choose the place of their future education from the

perspective of students, as well as the faculty members of regional universities.

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