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Vectors of promotion of economic educational services in Ukraine

Abstract

Introduction. The market of educational services is characterised by excess of supply over demand. As a result, there is a need for a detailed research of the criteria for choosing a university by consumers. The competition between universities for attracting potential consumers has intensified in the face of declining demand for most types of educational services. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the competitiveness of universities and to ensure the possibility of their survival on the basis of the maximum consideration of school leavers' expectations.

The purpose of the article is to define vectors of promotion of economic educational services in Ukraine based on the results of the cluster analysis of consumers who take into account the criteria which determine the choice of higher education institutions.

Methods. While processing empirical data, the following methods were used: statistical analysis was used to find structural relationships between the elements of the system; factor analysis was used to compress data, i.e. to reduce a large number of variables (factors) which were used for clustering and cluster analysis made it possible to identify 4 clusters of consumers of economic educational services.

To determine the priority of the criteria for choosing a university, we researched the data related to first-year students studying economics at seven universities of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Poltava, Vinnytsia, Lviv, Zaporizhzhia and Odesa during a period of six months in 2017. The total sample was 898 respondents, 587 of whom gave full answers to all the questions posed.

Results. The priority criteria which determine the choice of the university were identified as a result of the conducted marketing research of consumers. They are: «positive feedback from friends», «availability of interesting specialty», «university's brand», «high qualification of teaching staff», etc. As a result of the conducted cluster analysis, we identified the following clusters: «assertivists», «realists», «those who are oriented to status», «minimalists-followers». Their basic characteristics are given concerning the criteria for choosing a university.

Conclusions. The vectors of promotion of economic educational services have been suggested. They are the formation of positive reputation of the university, expansion of the range of criteria which determine the choice of the university in the following researches, presentation of career growth stereotypes, display of the results of the university's international academic cooperation on website, development of social support programs for students. The use of these vectors will allow universities to form loyalty programs for consumers of economic educational services and improve the competitiveness of higher education institutions.

Keywords: Educational Service; Promotion; Cluster Analysis; Criteria; Competitiveness; University; Career; Economic Education

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Вектори просування економічних освітніх послуг в Україні**Анотація**

У статті запропоновано вектори просування економічних освітніх послуг в Україні, які було визначено на основі результатів факторного та кластерного аналізів. У результаті проведеного маркетингового дослідження визначено пріоритетні критерії вибору вищого навчального закладу студентами. Виявлено чотири групи споживачів освітніх послуг та дано основні характеристики цих груп. Реалізація векторів просування економічних освітніх послуг дозволить сформулювати програми лояльності для споживачів і забезпечити конкурентоспроможність вищих навчальних закладів.

Ключові слова: освітня послуга; вектори просування; кластерний аналіз; критерії; конкурентоспроможність.

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Векторы продвижения экономических образовательных услуг в Украине

Аннотация. В статье предложены векторы продвижения экономических образовательных услуг в Украине, которые были определены на основе результатов факторного и кластерного анализов. В результате проведенного маркетингового исследования определены приоритетные критерии выбора высшего учебного заведения студентами. Выявлено четыре группы потребителей образовательных услуг, а также определены основные характеристики данных групп. Реализация векторов продвижения экономической образовательной услуги позволит сформировать программы лояльности для потребителей и обеспечить конкурентоспособность высших учебных заведений.

Ключевые слова: образовательная услуга; векторы продвижения; кластерный анализ; критерии; конкурентоспособность.

1. Introduction

In modern conditions of management, education becomes an integral part of the market system. There are many educational institutions of various forms of ownership and types in the market of educational services in Ukraine that provide a wide range of educational services, which favours the competition. The competitive struggle between universities is observed in two main directions:

- training of students on a paid basis, which allows the university to receive a stable income and improve its facilities;
- search and selection of talented students who will enhance the image of the university and become successful famous professionals after graduation.

The negative consequences of the demographic changes of recent decades, the requirements of a structurally and qualitatively changing labour market, which puts forward increasing demands related to the competence of graduates of higher education institutions, the growing system of state control of educational activity become especially significant during the transformation of the education system. The changing requests and preferences of potential consumers regarding the quality of educational services help to change supply and demand in the market, which leads to the modernisation of competitive relations in the system of higher education [1]. The market of educational services is characterised by excessive supply of services. The competition between universities for attracting potential consumers has intensified in the face of declining demand for most types of educational services. In this regard, there is a need to improve the competitiveness of universities and ensure the possibility of their survival on the basis of maximum consideration of school leavers' expectations. The processes taking place in the market of educational services require a detailed study of the criteria for choosing universities with regard to various groups of consumers. This will allow a university to determine how to increase its competitiveness, attract more students and, as a result, how to promote educational services. This article considers the priorities relevant to the choice of higher education institutions which provide economic educational services, which is explained by the considerable demand for persons with graduate diplomas in economics in the labour market.

2. Brief Literature Review

Sierra J. Sanchez (2012) analysed students' choice of higher education options in Spain and, as a result, came to the conclusion that the leading criteria for Spanish students in choosing a university are the university's reputation and the quality of educational programs [2]. In their empirical studies, D. W. Holsworth and D. Nind (2005) mentioned that the most important factors that students take into account when choosing a university are the reputation of the university, career opportunities, the graduate employment rate, the qualification of teaching staff and other specific aspects (timetables, services, etc.) [3]. T. L. Hungerford and R. W. Wassmer (2004), considered K-12 Education in the USA economy as essential to the success of transition from high school to higher education or the labour market [4]. T. Pitman (2000) studied perceptions of academics and students as customers [5]. H. Haase (2011)

suggested a cross-sectional study of the motives underlying the career intentions in German universities, which he grouped and systemised according to the main components [6].

The works of foreign scientists such as G. Becker (2003), M. Blaug (1987), S. Bowles (2011), B. Weisbrod (2008), J. Mintsera (1994), T. Shultz (1972) and others are devoted to theoretical aspects and separate problems of the development of the market of educational services [7-14]. The problems of analysis of the competitiveness of education, the quality of educational services are considered in the works of such scientists, as D. Bell (2004), M. Castells (2000), M. Porter (2006), F. Fukuyama (2003) [15-18]. The origins of problems in the market of educational services studied V. Dmitriev (2015), V. Ivanov (2011), S. Ilyashenko (2016), O. Karpuyuk (2012), G. Chkalovskaya (2012), N. Shornikova (2010), I. Zharskaya (2015), O. Komarova (2015), A. Salo (2015), E. Raevneva (2016), E. Chernyshova (2012), T. Yashchuk (2013), et al. [19-31]. Institutional changes in vocational education and training (VET) in conditions of the new century and moving the focus to the personal well-being as well as formation of «green» working skills are considered by Simon McGrath and Lesley Powell (2015) [32]. However, the above mentioned authors did not suggest the results of clustering of consumers by the criteria of choosing a university; they did not analyse the vectors and prospects for the promotion of economic educational services, which justifies the topicality of the article.

3. The purpose of the article is to determine the vectors of promotion of economic educational services on the basis of cluster analysis of target consumers of economic educational services.

To achieve this purpose, we have formulated the main tasks that define the logic and internal structure of the article: to conduct factor analysis of the criteria for choosing universities in order to reduce the number of basic variables when clustering; to perform cluster analysis of consumers of economic educational services according to the criteria for choosing universities; to characterise each of the chosen clusters and identify its special features; to define vectors of promotion of economic educational services.

4. Results

On the basis of the analysis of the market of educational services, we identified classical criteria for choosing universities by potential consumers of economic educational services (Table 1). These criteria are analysed by scientists studying barriers or prospects of modernisation of higher education [26; 33].

To determine the priority of the criteria for choosing a university, we researched the data related to first-year students studying economics at seven universities of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Poltava, Vinnytsia, Lviv, Zaporizhzhia and Odesa during a period of six months in 2017. The total sample was 898 respondents, 587 of whom gave full answers to all the questions posed. Therefore, the number of valid values is 587. It was recommended to assess the criteria by a 5-point scale (1 is the least important, and 5 is the most important). Based on the results of

the research, we have built a rating of the criteria for choosing a university by consumers of economic educational services.

The respondents consider positive feedback from friends to be the most important criteria for choosing higher education institutions (1st place in the rating). Other important criteria include the availability of the specialty of interest at the university (2nd place), the university's brand (3rd place), high qualification of teaching staff (4th place) and the status of the university (national) (5th place). We used cluster analysis to cluster consumers of economic educational services according to the criteria for choosing a university. Statistical data processing was carried out using the statistical software «STATISTICA» by StatSoft, Inc., version 6, and IBM SPSS «Statistics», version 22. When processing the empirical data, we used statistical analysis, system analysis, as well as factor and cluster analysis.

Taking into account the fact that the number of declared criteria for choosing universities is significant (21 criteria), it is necessary to perform a factor analysis procedure to compress the data at the first stage, i.e. to reduce a large number of variables. The variables that can be used to segment consumers while using cluster analysis are reduced to some basic set of composite variables (factors), which is then used for clustering. The results of the performed factor analysis are presented in Table 2. Name and explanation to each factor is given in the text below.

Thus, the accumulated percentage of variation attributable to the identified factors is 54.72%. This allows us to conclude that the result of the analysis is sufficient to determine the main macro-attributes relative to the criteria for choosing universities by respondents.

The matrix of factor loadings, constructed within the framework of factor analysis using the statistical software «STATISTICA», allows us to state that **the first factor** is the most influential one. It explains 21.33% of the total variation of the indicators (Table 2). From the point of view of limiting the importance of 54.72% of the load, the most significant

influence to this factor is provided by criteria such as «positive opinions of acquaintances» (0.729), «university brand» (0.725), «my friends' opinion about the university» (0.667), «university status (national)» (0.657) and «friends studying at this university» (0.541). The first factor is oriented to the opinion of reference groups and the university's image.

The second factor, which explains 9.82% of the total variation of indicators, has close correlation links with the «ability to additionally study abroad and get a second diploma» (0.834), «contacts with foreign universities and other organisations» (0.829), «teaching of disciplines in a foreign language» (0.545) criteria. On the basis of the content and essence of this factor, it is advisable to interpret it as oriented to international practice (international contacts).

The third factor accounts for 7.31% of the total variation and is quite influential. This factor is characterised by the variables such as: «hostel accommodation» (0.67), «rate of tuition fees» (0.635), «possibility of studying at the expense of the state» (0.586). The third factor is oriented to social assistance and outside support.

The fourth factor accounts for 6.2% of the total variation of the indicators. This factor is characterised by two variables, namely «parents who studied at this university» (0.724), «famous graduates» (0.683). This factor can be interpreted as focused on the experience of close and well-known people.

The fifth factor combines three criteria, which are «presence of a master's degree course» (0.671), «acquisition of classical education» (0.628) and «availability of a specialty of interest at the university» (0.577), which explains 5.23% of the cumulative variation. It can be identified as targeting potential career growth.

The sixth factor includes three variables, namely «sports facilities of the university» (0.698), «convenient location of the university» (0.616), «possibility of military training» (0.509). It explains 8.75% of the total variation of the indicators. This factor is oriented to obtaining comfort with minimal effort.

Thus, six significant factors have been determined.

Clustering of consumers of economic educational services according to the criteria for choosing a university was carried out on the basis of the procedure of cluster analysis by using the K-medium method.

To combine the clusters, the Ward method was used.

The quality of the conducted cluster analysis is confirmed by the results presented in Table 3.

Thus, on the basis of cluster analysis, 4 clusters were defined. The results of the cluster analysis are reliable, since the error rate (p-level) tends to zero (it should not exceed 5%).

The data of Table 4 indicate that, by the criterion of small size or the absence of changes in the position of cluster centers, convergence was achieved. The maximum absolute change in the coordinate of any cluster is zero, which indicates the reliability of the calculations.

It should be noted that Clusters 1 and 3 (Euclidean distance is equal to 0.675) are relatively close to each other and clusters 2 and 3 (Euclidean distance is equal to 0.684) with respect to distances between other clusters.

Based on the average values of the factors in each of the clusters, Figure 1 shows the factorised profile of the centers of the chosen clusters.

The visualisation of the resulting clusters (Figure 1) indicates the differences. The graph shows the mean values of the factors for each cluster (the variables (factors) participating in the classification are laid down horizontally, and the average values of the variables taken in the context of the clusters obtained are positioned vertically).

Thus, four clusters were identified as a result of the cluster analysis procedure.

The first cluster included 133 respondents (22.7%). The most distinctive feature for the

Tab. 1: Rating of criteria for choosing universities by consumers of economic educational services

No.	Name of criterion	Rating of the criterion
1	Convenient location of university	15
2	Strong material and technical base of university	10
3	Sports facilities of university, availability of sports sections	19
4	Dormitory accommodation	17
5	Availability of a specialty of interest at the university	2
6	Acquisition of classical education	11
7	Presence of a master's degree course	9
8	Possibility of military training	21
9	Possibility to studying at the expense of state	12
10	Tuition fees	14
11	Teaching of disciplines in a foreign language	16
12	Contacts with foreign universities and other organisations	7
13	Possibility to acquire additional training abroad and obtain a second diploma	8
14	High qualification of teaching staff	4
15	Status of university (national)	5
16	University's brand	3
17	Positive feedback from friends	1
18	Opinion of friends about university	6
19	Friends studying at this university	13
20	Parents who studied at this university	20
21	Famous graduates	18

Source: Compiled by the authors based at own survey

Tab. 2: Results of factor analysis

	Eigenvalues	Percentage of variation due to factors, %	Accumulated eigenvalue	Accumulated percentage of variation, which is attributable to factors, %
Factor 1	4.479998	21.33332	4.48000	21.33332
Factor 2	2.062681	9.82229	6.54268	31.15562
Factor 3	1.534176	7.30560	8.07686	38.46122
Factor 4	1.301442	6.19734	9.37830	44.65856
Factor 5	1.97356	5.22550	10.47565	49.88406
Factor 6	1.015144	4.83402	11.49080	54.71808

Source: Compiled by the authors

consumers from this cluster is that the opinion of reference groups and the reputation of the university are not taken into account; the requirements for international practice and social support are slightly above the average level, while the orientation toward potential career growth and experience of close and well-known people is lower in comparison with other clusters. This cluster is named «assertivists».

The second cluster includes 138 respondents (23.5%). The representatives of this cluster are characterised by the following: the level of requirements for the reputation of the university is slightly higher than the average; social support from the outside and the need for career growth are observed; there is no need for international practice; slightly the adaptability (taking into account the experience of close and well-known people) and the comfort of learning with minimal effort are lower than the average. The recommended name for the second cluster is «realists».

The third cluster is the most numerous - 192 respondents (32.7%). When choosing a university, the representatives of this cluster take into account the availability of international practice, the reputation of the university and the opinion of reference groups; social support and assistance from the outside are not taken into account. This cluster is «oriented to status».

The fourth cluster is represented by 124 respondents (21.1% of the total number of respondents). The most significant differences for this cluster in comparison with others are the possibility of comfortable learning with minimal intellectual effort, taking into account the experience of close and well-known people. A positive influence on the choice of the university is provided by the availability of social support, international practice and the reputation of the university. The suggested name of the cluster is «minimalists-followers».

Clustering of consumers of economic educational services was carried out according to the criteria for choosing a university.

The results of the research show that there is an accent on humanitarian and mathematical subjects in the schools that the students finished in all the four clusters. No significant differences are observed in the clusters by this characteristic.

In the course of the research, the priority of the language in which students wanted to study at higher education institutions was determined. The representatives of the 3rd cluster («oriented to status») prefer teaching in the native and English languages, which is understandable due to their desire to occupy a certain position in the society. There is a significant percentage of those who wish to study in their native language or English among the «assertivists» (59.2%) and «minimalists-followers» (53.3%). The representatives of the second cluster (the «realists») prefer teaching in their native language (58.2%).

The desire to obtain higher education in the context of clusters is explained in the following way. For the representatives of all the clusters, «getting a good job» is the first place in their need for higher education, while «self-education» is their second priority. It is important for the students «oriented to status» to raise their cultural level and social status. The respondents noted the least important purpose, which is «career growth», i.e. career growth is associated with higher education to a lesser extent.

With the aim of forming a variable component of curriculum at universities, it is important to know in which field of economic activity university graduates prefer to work. A significant proportion of respondents in each of the clusters give preference to areas such as advertising (1st place), development of new products (2nd place), branding (3rd place) and development of market plans (4th place), with no significant differences observed in all the clusters.

The responds that touch upon the material return from the received specialty also seem to be interesting. A salary of over UAH 15,000 (EUR 500, as for July, 2017) per month is expected by the majority of the respondents. There are minor deviations in the respondents' answers by clusters.

Tab. 3: Results of cluster analysis

	Distance between clusters	Number of degrees of freedom	Distance in clusters	Number of degrees of freedom	F-criterion	p-level
Factor 1	286.1112	3	299.8888	583	185.4052	0.000000
Factor 2	291.9500	3	294.0500	583	192.9454	0.000000
Factor 3	100.9826	3	485.0174	583	40.4610	0.000000
Factor 4	122.0808	3	463.9192	583	51.1390	0.000000
Factor 5	27.9428	3	558.0573	583	9.7306	0.000003
Factor 6	176.2290	3	409.7710	583	83.5764	0.000000

Source: Compiled by the authors

Tab. 4: Distances between the chosen clusters

Number of cluster	Euclidean distances between clusters			
	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4
1	0.000000	0.868762	0.675028	0.859948
2	0.932074	0.000000	0.684054	0.863193
3	0.821601	0.827075	0.000000	0.759863
4	0.927334	0.929082	0.871701	0.000000

Source: Compiled by the authors

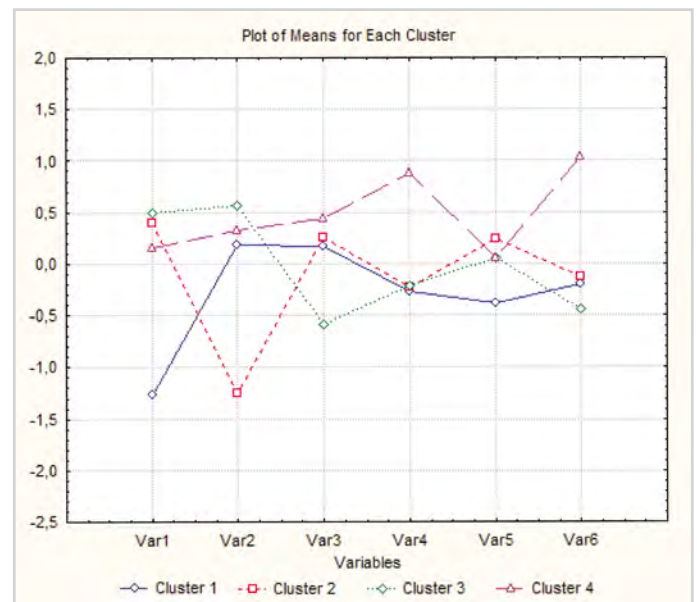


Fig. 1: Factored profile of the chosen clusters' centers
Source: Compiled by the authors

The requirements for high salary are mainly due to high financial positions of the respondents' families. The most well-to-do financial positions are observed among those who are «oriented to status» and the «minimalists-followers».

The analysis of the respondents' hobbies by clusters is needed in order to organise events involving university entrants and students. The results of the analysis show that the preference is given to the viewing of films by the representatives of the first and second clusters. For the first three clusters, all kinds of hobbies, excluding sports, are important. At the same time, the respondents forming the 4th cluster are focused on sports.

It is noteworthy that in terms of sources of information about the university the respondents made the following conclusions.

The respondents consider the website of the higher education institution to be the most important source of information about the university. Information from parents and acquaintances is in the second place in terms of importance, followed by information from university representatives and participation in the open day. Meanwhile, advertising booklets, television, printed publications and underground advertising are viewed to be less important sources of information.

In our research, we determined the motives for choosing a profession by students. A significant discrepancy between the opinions in terms of different clusters is observed for

«high pay», which is the most important for the «assertivists» and the «realists», «prestige of the profession» and «career opportunities», which is a significant motive for those who are «oriented to status» and the «minimalists- followers». The importance of the «demand for the profession in the labour market» is noted by the «realists», and they consider the «possibility of self-development and self-realisation» to be less important than the representatives of the other clusters.

With regard to the question «Who influenced your decision when choosing a university?», the answer «own decision» prevails, followed by the answers indicating the influence of parents, friends, acquaintances or relatives who graduated from the university or work in it. Basically, the respondents were able to choose the university on their own (the valid percentage varies from 68.1% (the «realists») to 83.5% (the «assertivists»).

5. Conclusion

When developing marketing activities and choosing vectors of promotion of economic educational services, it is necessary for the specialists to take into account all relevant information.

Based on the conducted research, we have identified clusters of consumers of economic educational services. They were identified with regard to the criteria related to the choice of the university and their main characteristics. The latter allowed the authors to designate the vectors of promotion of economic educational services, which presupposes the choice not only of

the form of marketing communications and its content, but also of the ways to collect preliminary information about students' expectations. In this regard, the following vectors of promotion of economic educational services are proposed:

- 1) formation of a positive reputation of the university, which ensures consumer's trust to the higher education institution;
- 2) expansion of the range of criteria for choosing a university by entrants in subsequent researches, since each new generation of future students presents new requirements to the university and expects more variable competencies under the influence of the labour market;
- 3) presentation of career growth stereotypes for graduates on the basis of contacts with future employers;
- 4) display of the results of the university's international academic cooperation on its website;
- 5) development of social support programs for students whose success in learning is confirmed annually for more than 3 years.

The process of promotion of economic educational services on the basis of the results of cluster analysis of consumers of this service and the choice of criteria of the university has been highlighted in the article. The latter made it possible to determine the vectors of promotion of economic educational services that should be taken into account in the development of consumers loyalty programs and provide the competitiveness of higher education institutions.

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