

Priority Areas for Using Marketing Research to Increase the Competitiveness of the Higher Education System in the Country

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ABSTRACT

There are several priority areas in Uzbekistan where marketing research can be used, or is already being used, to improve the quality and competitiveness of higher education. These priority areas correspond to the country's strategic goals and help eliminate the shortcomings identified in the analysis.

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In the process of globalization, many countries, enterprises, and manufacturing organizations around the world have begun to focus primarily on quality. Quality is becoming one of the key factors ensuring competitiveness. Quality, as a general concept, refers to the set of characteristics and specific features of products, materials, types of work, labor, services, and similar objects that are based on meeting people's needs and requirements. It is also characterized by their full compliance with established requirements and intended functions. Today, several local and foreign higher education institutions operate in our country.

Table 1.

Higher Education Institutions in the Republic and the Number of Students Studying in Them

Indicators	2016–2017 academic year	2017–2018 academic year	2018–2019 academic year	Change	Growth rate, %
Number of higher education institutions	70	72	98	28	140
Including branches of foreign higher education institutions	7	7	9	2	128.6
Students of higher education	268.3	297.7	360.2	91.9	134.2

Indicators	2016–2017 academic year	2017–2018 academic year	2018–2019 academic year	Change	Growth rate, %
institutions, thousand people					
Including students studying in departments:					
Full-time, thousand people	267.9	287.5	313	45.1	116.8
Evening, thousand people	—	—	1.2	1.2	—
Part-time/distance, thousand people	0.4	10.2	46	45.6	11500
Admitted students, thousand people	61.2	85.7	114.5	53.3	187.1
Graduated specialists, thousand people	64.1	67.4	70.3	6.2	109.7

In the 2019–2020 academic year, the number of students studying in higher education institutions of the Republic amounted to 410 thousand bachelor’s degree students and 13 thousand master’s degree students. Over the last three years, the number of students increased by 1.7 times. The demand of the population of our country for obtaining higher education is increasing year by year. Such compliance is mainly determined by standards, agreements, consumer requirements, and needs. The main aspects here are the quality of education and the growing demand for education. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 8, 2019, “On Approval of the Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030,” serves as a basis for raising the higher education system in our country to a qualitatively new level.

Education quality is a social category that determines the state and results of the educational process in society, as well as the extent to which the formation and development of an individual’s professional, everyday, and civic competence correspond to the demands and needs of society. Education quality is assessed through a set of indicators describing various aspects of the educational and upbringing activities of an educational institution. These indicators include the content of education, teaching forms and methods, material and technical base, and staff composition, all of which ensure the development of students’ competencies.

Education quality is the body of knowledge acquired under specific conditions that is necessary for improving the quality of human life and achieving a specific goal. In higher education, education quality is a multidimensional, multilevel, and dynamic concept related to the contextual indicators of the educational model, institutional goals and objectives, specific standards of the education system, educational institutions, curricula, and academic disciplines.

When assessing the quality of education, it is also necessary to take into account the concept of educational efficiency. Quality is evaluated by the ratio of the obtained result to the goal, or vice versa, while efficiency is evaluated by the ratio of the obtained result to the costs. Education quality and education efficiency are among the main factors reflecting the quality of life in society. The more the state and society invest in general and professional education, and the more the results meet the highest international standards, the higher the quality of life will be. In determining educational efficiency, it is necessary to achieve high education quality based on the calculation of optimal costs.

Table 2.
Efficiency Indicators According to the Marketing Concept of Managing the Activities of Higher Education Institutions

Marketing efficiency indicator	At the national level	At the higher education level
Economic effect	Increase in national income	Increase in the income of a higher education institution
	Development of infrastructure	Increase in the volume of educational services provided to the population
	Development of economic sectors and localization of industries	Opening of new specialties and improvement of personnel training
	Development of regions	Development of the education sector
Social effect	Development of the social image of society	Increase in the status of a higher education institution
	Increase in investment attractiveness and expansion of the investment absorption process	Awareness of citizens about recent changes
	Development of the population's culture	Formation and development of loyal citizenship in the country
	Formation and development of a positive socio-psychological environment among the population	—

The competitiveness level of an educational institution can be calculated using the following formula:

$$RD = \frac{K_{\text{norm}} \times K_{\text{techn}}}{K_{\text{price}}}$$

where:

- **K_{norm}** — normative indicators of quality;
- **K_{techn}** — technological indicators of quality;
- **K_{price}** — price indicators of quality.

The quality of educational services, on the one hand, means the compliance of educational content and processes with the requirements of educational standards, and on the other hand, it means ensuring a sufficient level of technological effectiveness of the educational process. Achieving educational efficiency also requires maintaining optimal cost calculations.

In our country, attention to education is increasing year by year. In Uzbekistan, 12–13% of GDP is allocated to the education sector. As can be seen, in 2017, 32.4% of state budget expenditures were allocated to education. In 2018, this indicator amounted to 31.4%, and by 2019 it reached 34%, which was 1.6% higher than in the initial years.

During the research process, we came to the conclusion that the effectiveness of marketing activities in higher education institutions can be determined based on the analysis of the stability of their activities. Therefore, for its assessment, we propose using the coefficient of development stability of a higher education institution according to selected indicators:

$$K_u = \frac{N}{N_{\text{total}}}$$

where:

- **Ku** — the coefficient of development stability of the higher education institution during the period under study according to the selected indicator;
- **N** — the number of positive changes in the indicator;
- **Ntotal** — the total number of changes in the indicator, including cases where the change is equal to zero.

Since different results have a certain place in the set of formed indicators, namely the combination of actual results of the higher education institution’s activities and expert assessments, they are combined based on the calculation of an integral indicator:

$$K_{\text{uye}} = \frac{\sum Y_i \times K_{\text{ui}}}{n}$$

where:

- **Kuye** — the aggregate integral indicator of development stability of the higher education institution;
- **Yi** — the weight of the i-th criterion in assessing marketing activity for the relevant indicators;
- **Kui** — coefficients calculated according to the indicators;
- **n** — the number of coefficients.

The efficiency of distributing marketing activity costs of a higher education institution is calculated using the following ratio:

$$E_z = \frac{E_M}{Z_M}$$

In this case, we propose determining the obtained result (**EM**) as follows:

$$E_M = (KS \times V \times N) - Z_M$$

where:

- **KS** — the number of first-year students, persons;
- **N** — the cost of educating one student at the higher education institution, in soums;
- **V** — the “marketing choice coefficient.”

This coefficient is determined as the ratio of the number of students who chose the higher education institution as a result of marketing campaigns to the total number of students. It is formed based on questionnaires completed after first-year students are admitted to the higher education institution.

In turn, the following formula is used to calculate marketing activity costs (**ZM**):

$$Z_M = KS \times N \times MP$$

where:

- **MP** — the share of marketing expenditures in the annual budget of the higher education institution, in percent.

The proposed methodological approach was tested in the regional higher education market using the example of Bukhara State University.

Comparative dynamic series based on the effectiveness of marketing activities and their results make it possible to determine the influence of each indicator on the final result and the main trends in changes in efficiency. They also allow forecasting the achievement of future goals in order to ensure and maintain the competitive advantage of the university.

The comparative analysis of Bukhara State University’s marketing efficiency showed a stable growth trend. The overall growth rate of the share of operating costs in the structure of marketing expenditures ensured a positive trend in the change of this indicator. The obtained results made it possible to quantitatively justify the effectiveness of the university’s marketing activities and the profitability of its self-sufficiency.

To achieve completeness and comprehensiveness, the assessment is carried out through two components: the efficiency of implementing marketing management and the efficiency of organizing it. The criteria for assessing the efficiency of marketing management implementation are grouped into three levels:

1. Management of activities and management of the higher education institution as an open system in the development of communicative relations with the market.
2. Demand management: creating, coordinating, satisfying, and proactively forming demand among all categories of clients.
3. Ensuring the development of marketing mechanisms within the higher education institution.

Accordingly, we assess the efficiency of organizing marketing management through the following set of criteria:

1. Professional activity of the marketing department

This includes studying competitors, researching consumers, managing educational activities, organizing new ideas for educational services and programs, pricing services, promoting educational services, organizing effective sales, and developing a marketing strategy.

2. Integration of the marketing department into the management system of the higher education institution

This includes the interaction of the marketing department with structural divisions of the higher education institution and the possibility of assessing the consequences of marketing decisions made. This ensures correction of the obtained results through feedback and characterizes the level of participation of the marketing department in carrying out control.

3. Internal environment of the marketing department

This includes the qualifications and professionalism of marketing department employees, the structure of marketing expenditures, and the methods of financing the marketing department.

Issues related to the efficiency of higher education have previously been and are currently interpreted as an investment in the potential market value of a person as a labor market agent. In this context, efficiency, competitiveness, direct educational services, economic efficiency of funds spent on education, and social effects that have the nature of externalities are all evaluated.

Similarly, human capital theory considers the efficiency of higher education from the point of view of the state, society, and employers. In the context of the increasing number of higher education institutions, each university must find its own place and distinguish itself from competitors. Therefore, with the help of marketing research, segments in the higher education market are identified, such as universities specializing in the training of academic and scientific personnel or institutes that train specialists in a particular field. The most appropriate position is then determined for each institution.

In this direction, the priority task is to rely on research in forming and promoting the brand of higher education institutions.

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