

Quantitative Researches of Marketing Concerning Consumer Behavior of Educational Services Offered by Private Universities in Romania

by

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Abstract. Studying the behavior of access and use the educational services offered by universities in Romania represents for their managers a real source of information that can be valued in the process of foundation of marketing policies and strategies which have a decisive role in increasing the efficiency of institutions of higher education. For achieving this demarche is required designing and implementing quantitative marketing researches to determine the main characteristics of the segments of candidates targeted by the universities. Addressed in this paper is a quantitative research aimed at studying the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of students and graduates concerning the educational services offered by private universities in Romania.

Key words: consumer behavior, marketing research, educational services, private universities

JEL classification: M31

1 Introduction

Studying the behavior of access and use of educational services offered by the universities in Romania represents for their managers a real source of information that can be valued in the process of foundation of marketing policies and strategies which have a decisive role in increasing the efficiency of institutions of higher education. To achieve this approach it is required designing and implementing quantitative marketing research to determine the main characteristics of segments of candidates endorsed by the university.

The quantitative marketing research *Opinions, attitudes and behaviors of faculty students and graduates of educational services offered by private universities in Romania* is an applicative and descriptive one, aiming to study the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of the faculty students and graduates of the educational services offered by private universities in Romania.

In order to obtain the primary data, was used the sample survey method, which was based on a series of face to face and online interviews, based on a questionnaire of 40 questions. The survey was conducted during January-February 2014.

2 Methodological considerations regarding the conduct of research

The main objectives which formed the basis of this marketing research were:

- Analysis of opinions of students and graduates of private higher education in Romania on the results obtained of private universities compared with those of state universities.
- Determination of the behavior of candidates for entry in a private higher education institution in Romania.

- Analysis of attitudes and opinions of students and graduates regarding the offer of private universities in Romania.

- Characterization of the respondent population.

The general assumptions upon which was projected the quantitative research can be summarized as follows:

- Most of the students and graduates of private higher education in Romania appreciates the level of Exam passing in private universities as high compared to those in the state.

- Most of the students of private higher education in Romania considers that the actions to promote private universities are effective
- Most students and graduates appreciate that the annual fees charged by state universities as much higher than those established by private

institutions.

- Most of the students and graduates considers that the educational offer of private universities is diversified.

The sampling frame to which the research is represented by students and graduates of eight private universities in Romania, which were subject to the quantitative research.

Having available a list of students and graduates of private universities that have undergone the quantitative research, was used a predetermined proportional stratified sampling, which consisted in creating the sample by extracting the components of each layer in proportion to the relative size of the population in total population investigated.

3 Summary of the results of the quantitative marketing research

Sample survey results showed that most students and graduates (292 of 384 subjects) considers that the the main advantage of attending a form of higher education is the acquisition of large amounts of knowledge in various fields, this option being followed by the employment opportunity of full time / part time before completing university studies (indicated by 164 respondents) and the opportunity to develop individual skills within student organizations (response chosen by 109 subjects).

Moreover, 77.1% of respondents indicated that public universities do not offer a grounding better than private ones (Figure 1):

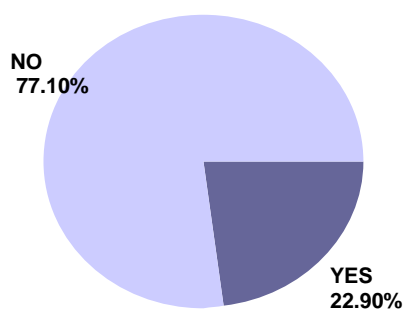


Figure 1. Percentage of students and graduates who considers that state universities do not offer a better preparation than the private ones

When asked about how they judge the level of Exam passing in private higher education institutions in Romania in relation to that remarked within the state ones, the subjects indicated the "high" rate of 46.9% respectively "no low / no high" rate of 38.5%.

The research results also shows that a proportion of 20.3% of subjects had graduated, so far, at least a form of higher education, and a percentage of 79.7% of respondents are to the first college (Figure 2).

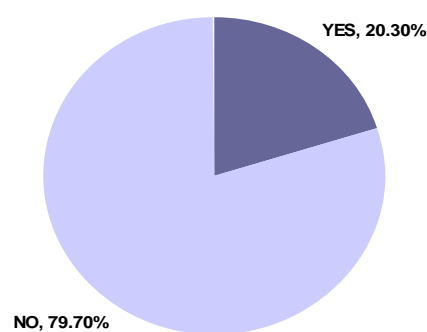


Figure 2. Percentage of subjects who have completed so far, at least a form of higher education

Analyzing the students feedback on the degree of influence of the field of study in the high school of their decision to choose a private college profile, from those that opted, it was found that 31% of them indicated to "any low / no high", 21.9% opted for "high", 16.9% - for "low", 15.9% - to "very low" and 14.3% - to "very high".

Being interviewed on the entrance examination at the private faculty that they have opted, the respondents indicated for the "ranking candidates based on averages obtained from baccalaureate and / or during the four years of high school" a rate of 93.2%, this being followed at great distance from "written examination - multiple choice" (3.6%) and the "teaching / supporting of an essay" and "written exam - type summary", each of these responses were indicated by 1.6% of subjects.

Regarding the level of quality of teaching, the students chose to "high" (54.9%), followed by "no low / high no" (28.6%) and "very high" (15, 6%).

Among the main methods of assessment used so far by academic staff in examination sessions are distinguished: written exam - type summary (29.2%), written exam - multiple choice (28.3%) and individual projects (20.4%) - figure 3.

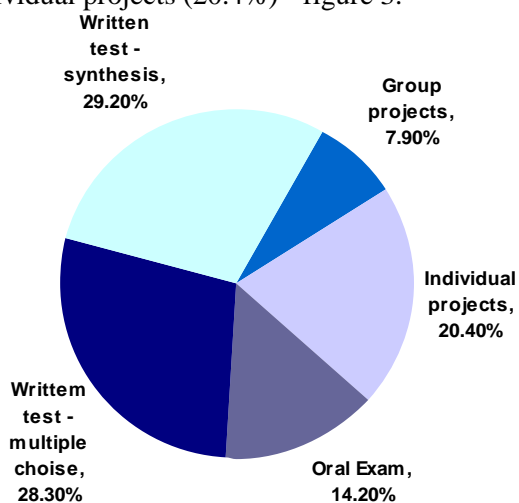


Figure 3. The main methods of assessment used so far by academic staff in examination sessions

Analysis of opinions of students and graduates regarding the technical and material facilities of private universities showed a percentage of 92.7% of respondents who consider these features as adjusted to the standard and disciplines requirements in the educational curriculum of each specialization. And by testing the hypothesis related to this issue, it was found that the percentage of students and graduates of private higher education in Romania who considers that material and technical facilities of private universities do not conform is greater than 10%.

As regards the activity of promoting undertaken by private universities, six of 10 students consider this effectively, respectively very efficient (Figure 4).

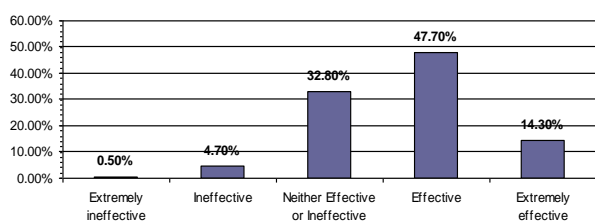


Figure 4. The appreciations of students regarding the promotion of private universities

Respondents also indicated that the main media and promotional tools that should be used by private universities to attract a large number of candidates, the following: informing candidates regarding the educational offer of the faculties of the institution (244 subjects from 384) and continuous updating of the website of the university (232 of 384 subjects).

In order to improve the educational offer of private universities, the respondents indicated, mainly, the involvement of institution in insertion steps of graduates in the labor market (50.1%), avoid regular changes in the structure of faculty (49.9%), awarding scholarships / deserve (43.8%), and providing mobility programs for students (41.7%). Questioned about the evolution of private university education in Romania in the next five years, 56.8% of respondents indicated that it will become a central component of higher education in Romania, 16.7% believe that many private universities will close due to lack of students, and 8.9% abstained.

4 Conclusions

Most students and graduates surveyed consider that one of the most important advantages of attending some form of higher education is to acquire a large amount of knowledge in various fields. Moreover, they put great emphasis on employment opportunity on full-time / part time before completing university studies.

Although qualitative research results have shown that, in general, graduates of private universities are disadvantaged in the labor market, compared with those who attended a state faculty, in the quantitative research 8 of 10 subjects interviewed indicated that state universities does not provide a better preparation than of private. Testing the hypothesis related to this issue revealed that the percentage of students and graduates of private higher education in Romania who considers that state universities offer a grounding better than private ones is not less than 20%.

As regards the level of Exam passing in private higher education institutions in Romania compared to that registered in the state where it is estimated

approximately half of the respondents as being a "high" one.

Two of the 10 subjects follow for the second time a form of higher education courses, the main reason being the desire and / or the need for professional reorientation. The main issues considered in making the selection of a private university were: the possibility to attend courses even when they work full time, respectively the insurance of courses and electronic courses.

More than half of the interviewed subjects indicated a high level of quality of teaching, respectively the evaluation system practiced in private universities. Also, 9 of the 10 students considers that the technical and material facilities meets the standards and requirements of disciplines from the curriculum of each specialization. After testing the hypothesis on this issue, it was found that the percentage of students and graduates of private higher education in Romania who considers that material and technical facilities of private universities do not comply is not greater than 10%.

Annual fees charged by private universities are perceived by one third of students as relatively high, the perception level of annual expenses

incurred to attend a private faculties depending both on the marital status of students and the net monthly income of the family.

In order to improve the educational offer of private universities, the respondents indicated mainly the involvement of insertion of the steps institution graduates in the labor market, avoiding periodic changes in the structure of the teaching body, granting scholarships / deserve, respectively provision of programs mobility for students.

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