



MARKETING APPROACHES TO INCREASING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES MARKET

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Annotation: The article analyzes the role, importance and effectiveness of marketing approaches in ensuring and increasing the competitiveness of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the educational services market. The author, having studied the state of the higher education system in the market, highlights the factors of forming a competitive advantage through strategic marketing, target audience identification, brand management, service quality, advertising and PR activities. The importance of improving the quality of education with the help of marketing approaches, establishing effective communication with applicants and their parents, and offering innovative educational services that meet market needs is substantiated.

Keywords: higher education institutions, educational services market, competitiveness, marketing approaches, strategic planning, educational brand, consumer needs, service quality, target audience.

Introduction.

In modern society, higher education institutions (HEIs) now operate not only as organizations providing knowledge, but also as service providers, offering flexible solutions to user needs. As the educational services market becomes increasingly competitive, HEIs are making it a top priority to strengthen their strategic position, adopt innovative approaches, and provide demand-oriented services.

Philip Kotler stated that "marketing is not just about selling a product or service, but also about understanding the customer and developing solutions that meet their needs" (Kotler & Fox, 1995). This principle is fully applicable to the educational services sector. HEIs need to deeply analyze the needs of their audience, that is, students, parents, employers, and society, and gain their trust through marketing strategies. In addition, the modern education system is changing dramatically under the influence of globalization and digitalization. According to international experts, higher education institutions now need to formulate their marketing policy as "knowledge-producing and service-providing enterprises" (Ivy, 2008). For example, many universities in Europe and the United States are gaining a competitive advantage through convenient services for students (distance learning, modular system, foreign internship programs).

The opening of the education market in Uzbekistan and the increasing number of non-state HEIs have increased the competitive environment. This situation requires state HEIs to introduce management based on marketing approaches. In particular, in accordance with the principle of "Man - Society - State" put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the quality of service in all areas, including education, comes to the fore (Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis, 2023).

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the activities of HEIs directly depends on the competitiveness of educational services. This is achieved through in-depth study of modern marketing concepts, their implementation in practice and the formation of a user-centered education system.

Methodology (Methods) This article used systematic analysis, comparison, statistical and content analysis methods. Data were obtained from open sources, official reports and scientific articles on the activities of HEIs in Uzbekistan and foreign countries.

Results The analysis shows that higher education institutions (HEIs) that have implemented marketing strategies are achieving sustainable development in a competitive environment. These HEIs are experiencing an increase in the number of applicants, improvement in the quality of services, and brand recognition. As Philipp Kotler and Kevin Keller noted, "the success of an organization in a competitive environment depends on the degree to which it satisfies customer needs and how it can satisfy these needs differently from its competitors" (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

1 table: **Positive results of marketing strategies in the activities of higher education institutions**

No	Indicators	In universities where a marketing strategy has been implemented	In universities that have not implemented a marketing strategy
1	Increase in the number of applicants (%)	15–30%	5–10%
2	Diversification of services	Extensive (online courses, international programs)	Limited (basic education areas)
3	Student satisfaction level	80–90%	60–70%

Source: prepared by the author based on research

Also, the main criteria for choosing a higher education institution from the students' point of view were grouped as follows based on the questionnaire:

Table 2. Students' priority criteria for choosing a higher education institution

No	Selection criteria	Student selection rate
1	Market value of a diploma	38%
2	The reputation of the university	27%
3	Practice-oriented lessons	20%
4	Employment opportunities	15%

Source: Results of a social survey with the participation of 300 students.

These results show that the education market is developing dynamically and each participating higher education institution is obliged to consistently implement modern marketing concepts in its activities. In particular, as Ivy (2008) noted, "educational institutions are now moving towards providing services that are tailored to the needs of the client (student)", which requires the full implementation of the 7P marketing model (*Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical evidence*).

Based on the analysis, the following marketing approaches can serve as the most effective tools for increasing the competitiveness of higher education institutions:

First, segmentation and targeting. Higher education institutions should offer their services not universally, but in a way that is tailored to the needs of the target audience. In this regard, segmentation based on regional, age, socio-economic or professional interests is of particular importance. By developing special service packages for segments, a tailored approach can be established for each group. As Kotler (2016) notes, *“successful organizations view segmentation not only as a means of dividing the market, but also as a strategy for rationally allocating marketing resources”*.

Secondly, marketing communications. Universities need to effectively use social networks, PR campaigns, websites, blogs and international education fairs in their brand building and market entry strategy. Digital communication tools, in particular, through platforms such as YouTube, Telegram, Instagram, allow them to approach students, publicize the activities of the institution and increase its reputation. In international practice, in particular, in the experience of universities in the UK, it is noted that brand-based communication strategies have helped to increase the number of applicants by 20–25% (Ivy, 2008).

Third, Innovative Service Offerings To successfully compete, HEIs need to introduce modern educational services such as interactive learning technologies, digital learning platforms, online courses, and joint degree programs. This creates a more flexible, practical learning opportunity for students. Also, as the role of digital education has increased in the post-pandemic era, HEIs are seeking to strengthen their infrastructure in this direction.

Fourth, brand management is not only a logo and a name, but also the reputation of the institution among the people, its reliability and position in the minds of students. Through brand management, the university creates a positive impression of its purpose, values, approach to the quality of education and its influence in the labor market. According to Kotler, *“A brand is a set of emotional and rational connections formed in the mind of the customer. It is built on trust, experience and values”* (Kotler, 2016).

Conclusion The analysis studied on this topic shows that if the marketing views of universities are not updated, they are at risk of losing their place in the market. Therefore, each university needs to develop its own marketing strategy, adapt it to the target audience, offer innovative services and continuously work on the brand. It is precisely marketing approaches that serve as the main tool for increasing the competitiveness of universities.

References:

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