

Research on International Students' Perceptions of University Marketing Strategies (Part I)

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Abstract

The main objective of the case study was to conduct research to identify international students' perceptions of the Romanian higher education market, as well as the marketing elements that universities use to attract international students. The present work explored three specific aspects: The conceptual framework in which the scientific approach was launched, setting forth the standards to ensure research questions' definition (Part I); The method applied in the approach of the empirical scientific work, relying on systematic data collection, observation, and experimentation to test hypotheses representing the core of a theory (Part II); Interpretation of the results of the scientific approach, conclusions and proposals for improvement (Part III). Part II and Part III will be presented in the next HMM issues.

Keywords: Higher Education Market, University Marketing Strategies; International Students' Perceptions

JEL Classification: I23; M31; M37; D11; D83

Part I: The conceptual framework in which the scientific approach was launched

1. Research objectives

Objective 1: Establishing the percentage of respondents by category, depending on age, country of origin and current country of residence.

Objective 2: Establishing the level of attractiveness that Romania offers to international students.

Objective 3: Establishing students' perception in relation to the costs of studying in Romania, the quality of the curriculum taught, but also the relationship with professors.

Objective 4: Identifying the motivating factors that contributed to choosing Romania as an optimal study opportunity.

Objective 5: Identifying students' perception of the marketing strategies used by universities to promote programs and attract international students.

Objective 6: Identifying the main driver through which students learned about the university in Romania at which they chose to study.

Objective 7: Measuring the quality of the experience that students have or have had studying in Romania, the ease with which they were able to apply to a program, but also the cultural differences between Romania and their country of origin.

2. Research hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The descriptive coordinates of the sample include students from different age groups, from different countries of origin and from different countries of current residence.

Hypothesis 2: Over 50% of respondents will find the Romanian study market to be an attractive country.

Hypothesis 3: 50% of respondents will identify Romania as a relatively expensive country to study in.

Hypothesis 4: Over 50% of respondents will appreciate the quality of the courses taught and over 50% of respondents will note a good and very good relationship with the professors. Over 50 respondents will rank the factors “Fast Internet”, “Diverse and unique culture”.

Hypothesis 5: Good growth opportunities”. Exceptional culinary recipes” as the main motivating factors that contributed to the choice to study in Romania.

Hypothesis 6: Over 50% of respondents will identify “Email Marketing Campaigns” and “Alumni Student Marketing” as the main marketing strategies they have observed to attract international students, with marketing on social media platforms also being observed.

Hypothesis 7: Over 30% of respondents will identify a global educational portal as the source through which they learned about the University.

Hypothesis 8: Over 50% of respondents will find it easy or very easy to navigate life in Romania. Over 50% of respondents will find it easy or very easy to apply to a university in Romania and more than 40% of them will notice cultural differences between Romania and their country of origin.

3. Variables definition

No. Crt.	Variable	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
1.	General variables used to classify respondents in the case study.	Age category [1] – The age of the respondent to the questionnaire who falls into one of the groups presented. Country of origin [2] – The country in which the respondent was born, the respondent's native place of origin. Country of residence [3] – The country in which the respondent currently resides.	18-29/29-39/39-49/30-39/49+ Rural/Urban Country of origin Country of residence
2.	Measuring the level of appreciation for Romania.	The action through which the respondent manages to measure and classify the experience he had in Romania as a result of his stay to study in the country.	Not at all / A little / Neutral / A lot / Very much.
3.	Identification of the university at which the respondent studied or continues to study in Romania.	The action by which the respondent identifies the university among those listed.	University of Bucharest / Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca / Transylvania University of Braşov / West University of Timişoara / Polytechnic University of Bucharest / Bucharest University of Economic Studies: ASE / Technical University of Cluj-Napoca / Technical University 'Gheorghe Asachi' of Iaşi / Romanian-American University in Bucharest
4.	Measuring the level of appreciation towards the costs of studying in Romania.	The action by which the respondent ranks the costs of studying in Romania.	Very cheap / Cheap / Neutral / Expensive / Very expensive.
5.	Measuring the level of appreciation for the quality of the curriculum taught at the university in Romania.	The action to raise awareness of the quality of studies and the subject matter taught in universities in Romania. [4]	Very little useful / Little useful / Neutral / Useful / Very useful.
6.	Reasons why respondents chose to study in Romania.	Elements that the respondent took into account when choosing to study in Romania.	Low tuition fee / Quality education / Diverse and unique culture / Excellent cuisine / Diverse and unique culture / Fast and mobile internet / Opportunities for growth / Nature and views / Easy citizenship process

7.	Measuring cultural differences between Romania and the respondents' country of origin.	Respondents' appreciation of cultural differences between Romania and the respondents' country of origin.	Not at all different / Slightly different / Neutral / Different / Very different.
8.	Measuring respondents' experience of applying to a university in Romania.	Students' appreciation of the application process at one of the universities in Romania.	Very difficult / Difficult / Neutral / Easy / Very easy.
9.	Attractive features of Romania that respondents were attracted to when choosing to study here.	The elements of attractiveness that respondents identified and were attracted to when deciding to study in Romania.	Unique traditions / Different linguistic opportunities / Vibrant urban life / Natural beauty / Gastronomy / Rich history / Diverse culture and different ethnicities.
10	Identifying marketing elements recognized by students that universities have used to attract international students.	Universities marketing strategies that students have identified.	Video Marketing / Brand Management / Email Marketing Campaigns / Alumni Marketing / Social Media Marketing / Content Marketing / SEO Optimization

References

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