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Jomir Eudochia

**EDUCATIONAL MARKETING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ENHANCING
UNIVERSITY ATTRACTIVENESS AND STRENGTHENING ITS IMAGE**

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The thesis was elaborated within the Doctoral School, Academy of Economic Studies of
Moldova

Scientific Supervisor:

BELOSTECINIC Grigore, Doctor Habilitatus in Economics, University Professor, Academician

Members of the Doctoral Thesis Advisory Committee:

SAVCIUC Oxana, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor

MELNIC Igor, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor

MITNIȚAIA Lidia, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor

Composition of the Committee for Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis:

1. **President** – **COTELNIC Ala**, Doctor Habilitatus in Economics, University Professor, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova;
2. **Scientific Supervisor** – **BELOSTECINIC Grigore**, Doctor Habilitatus in Economics, University Professor, Academician, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova;
3. **Official Reviewer** – **STRATAN Alexandru**, Doctor Habilitatus in Economics, University Professor, Academician, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova;
4. **Official Reviewer** – **SAVCIUC Oxana**, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova;
5. **Official Reviewer** – **CHIRIAC Lilia**, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Technical University of Moldova;
6. **Official Reviewer** – **SLUTU Rodica**, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Alecu Russo Balti State University.

The public defense will take place on **16 October 2026**, at **14:00**, during the meeting of the **Committee for the Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis** at the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, at the following address: MD-2005, Chișinău, 61 G. Bănulescu-Bodoni Street, Senate Hall (Building A).

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**President of the Public Defense Committee
for the Doctoral Thesis:**

Doctor habilitatus,
university professor



Ala COTELNIC

Scientific Supervisor,
Doctor Habilitatus,
University Professor, Academician



Grigore BELOSTECINIC

Author



Eudochia JOMIR
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CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Relevance and Importance of the Research Topic. The phenomenon of globalization and the rapid digitalization of all areas of social and economic activity require the alignment of educational processes in the Republic of Moldova with the characteristics and development trends of higher education at the global, European, and regional levels, with university development increasingly focused on quality, competitiveness, and attractiveness. Universities must acknowledge that global and regional competition has significantly affected higher education in the Republic of Moldova, insofar as education is no longer constrained by national borders, and that in the future they will operate in an increasingly competitive environment, characterized by a considerable rise in academic mobility and greater opportunities for young people to pursue their studies at European universities, alongside intensifying competition within the higher education services market of the Republic of Moldova.

In light of the above, it becomes increasingly important to adopt a new approach to the way higher education institutions conceptualize and carry out their activities, one grounded in the principles of the modern marketing concept. Marketing orientation and market orientation are becoming indispensable for universities in the Republic of Moldova in order to adapt to new social, economic, and educational realities, particularly in the context of increasingly intense competition at both national and international levels. The effective integration of marketing into managerial activity can contribute to enhancing institutional attractiveness, strengthening university image, and improving relationships with students as well as with social and economic partners. At the same time, a considerable share of marketing efforts is directed towards improving student recruitment activities, with universities seeking to become the preferred choice of prospective students. This issue is becoming increasingly relevant and of major importance to universities and, consequently, substantiates the significance of the present research.

Degree of Investigation of the Research Topic. Over time, numerous studies in the field of marketing have focused on the application and development of marketing orientation within profit-oriented enterprises and organizations, while the specialized literature confirms, through a considerable body of empirical research, the positive relationship between the degree of marketing orientation within a firm and its ability to achieve its objectives. In this context, the works of prominent marketing scholars such as Ph. Kotler, K. Keller, G. Armstrong, W. E. Baker, J. R. Brown, N. Morgan, C. H. Lin, and others are widely recognized. Although marketing is primarily associated with the business environment, and universities possess characteristics that differ from those of commercial enterprises, a number of studies have demonstrated that marketing principles may also be applied within nonprofit organizations, including higher education institutions. Among such contributions are the works of Z. G. Voss and G. B. Voss in the field of the arts; V. R. Wood, S. Bhuian, and P. Kiesker in the healthcare sector; G. L. Drummond, A. Ensor, and A. Laing in public services; L. I. Alvarez and L. I. Vazquez in relation to various nonprofit organizations; as well as M. Niculescu, G. M. Hamton, F. Muya, B. A. Mokoena, M. A. Zebal, M. A. Bugandva, J. Rivera-Camino, C. Tanrikulu, and others in the field of higher education.

Education has also become a subject of economic research, including marketing research, in the Republic of Moldova, where relevant contributions have been made by authors such as Gr. Belostecinic, A. Cotelnic, O. Savciuc, R. Slutu, L. Chiriac, T. Bucos, A. Suslenco, G. Bulat, L. Casap, E. Şişcan, and others.

Thus, a clear interest can be observed among international researchers in the transfer and adaptation of the market orientation concept to the university sector. At the same time, this topic remains relatively underexplored and insufficiently developed within economic and marketing research in the Republic of Moldova.

The aim of the research is to provide a theoretical foundation and an empirical assessment of the role of marketing orientation in enhancing the attractiveness of universities in the Republic of Moldova, by analysing the level of marketing orientation of higher education institutions, the factors influencing prospective students' choice of university, as well as the role of institutional image and reputation in shaping the perceived attractiveness of the university, and by developing directions and recommendations aimed at strengthening the marketing orientation of universities.

The proposed aim led to the formulation of the following main **research objectives**:

1. To analyse and systematize the theoretical and conceptual approaches to educational marketing and marketing orientation in higher education, highlighting their role in enhancing university attractiveness and strengthening institutional image.
2. To analyse the context, as well as the main trends and challenges of higher education in the Republic of Moldova, from the perspective of universities' orientation towards the market and towards the needs and expectations of prospective students.
3. To identify and analyse the factors influencing prospective students' choice of university and to assess their relative importance in the decision-making process.
4. To conduct a content analysis of the development strategies/strategic development plans of universities in the Republic of Moldova in order to identify the elements of marketing orientation reflected in institutional strategic documents.
5. To assess the level and main dimensions of marketing orientation in the activities of universities in the Republic of Moldova and Romania and to identify the specific features of applying marketing principles and instruments within these institutions.
6. To determine the influence of marketing orientation on university attractiveness and to examine the role of perceived image and reputation in this relationship.
7. To develop directions and recommendations for strengthening the marketing orientation of universities in the Republic of Moldova with a view to improving their image and enhancing their attractiveness in the higher education services market.

Research Hypotheses:

1. Universities' marketing orientation has a positive effect on university performance, perceived image, and attractiveness among prospective students.
2. The perceived image of the university positively influences prospective students' intention to choose the university for further studies.
3. University reputation and perceived image act as linking elements in the relationship between marketing orientation and university attractiveness for prospective students.

4. Universities in the Republic of Moldova predominantly exhibit a moderate level of marketing orientation, while the integration of marketing principles and practices is mainly focused on the use of traditional marketing instruments.

Research Methodology. The research results presented in this thesis were obtained through the use of established research methods, including the examination, systematization, and comprehensive analysis of both theoretical and applied scientific literature, such as legislation and policies related to education, development programmes, official statistics, studies, reports, and articles in the relevant fields, available in both printed and electronic formats. Primary data were collected through quantitative survey-based research, while attitude measurement scales, including the semantic differential and Likert scale, were used to assess respondents' perceptions. The formulation of the questionnaire items was guided by the aim and objectives of the research, as well as by the information sought from the respondents. The items were developed by adapting and extending factors identified in the specialized literature so as to reflect information specific to the respondents and to the context in which the study was conducted. The questionnaires were developed in Romanian, with the questions formulated in accessible language in order to facilitate respondents' understanding. The research samples were formed using non-probability sampling based on accessibility and willingness to participate. The study assessing marketing orientation covered all 19 universities operating in the Republic of Moldova at the time the research was conducted, as well as 12 universities within the Romanian higher education system. Questionnaires completed face-to-face were collected in hard-copy format, and the corresponding data were subsequently entered into Google Forms. Questionnaires completed online were exported to an Excel file for data processing and analysis. Statistical data processing was carried out using *SPSS Statistics, version 25*. To assess the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaires, *Cronbach's alpha coefficient* was calculated. Descriptive statistics and frequency analysis methods were applied to analyse the results of the three questionnaires. In order to evaluate the homepages of universities in the Republic of Moldova, a direct assessment was conducted using *EyeQuant*, an artificial intelligence-based method.

Author's Personal Contributions:

- the need to strengthen the marketing orientation of universities in the Republic of Moldova was substantiated in the context of increasing competition in the higher education services market and changes in the information-seeking and decision-making behaviour of prospective students (Chapter I);
- the main factors influencing prospective students' choice of university were identified and systematized, highlighting the multidimensional nature of the decision-making process and the importance of factors associated with image and reputation (Chapter II);
- the relationship between marketing orientation, perceived image and reputation, and university attractiveness was substantiated by highlighting the role of image and reputation as mechanisms through which marketing activities can translate into enhanced institutional attractiveness (Chapter II);

- an analysis was conducted of the marketing orientation reflected in the development strategies of universities in the Republic of Moldova at the higher education system level, highlighting the degree to which marketing principles are integrated into strategic objectives, priority areas, and institutional actions (Chapter III);
- the level of marketing implementation in universities in the Republic of Moldova was analysed from the perspective of university managers, and a comparative analysis was conducted with the practices and components of marketing orientation in Romanian universities (Chapter III);
- the need to shift from a predominantly promotional and fragmented use of marketing instruments towards a strategic and integrated approach, centred on the needs of prospective students and aimed at building a competitive institutional image and reputation, was conceptualized (Chapter III);
- the importance of digital marketing as a strategic direction for improving university communication, increasing the level of information available to prospective students, and strengthening the perceived image of higher education institutions was substantiated (Chapter III).

The scientific novelty and originality of the research lie in substantiating and developing an integrated approach to university marketing aimed at enhancing the attractiveness and strengthening the perceived image of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, by correlating the dimensions of marketing, institutional image, and reputation with the factors influencing prospective students' choice of university.

Object of the Research: universities forming the higher education systems of the Republic of Moldova and Romania; prospective students applying to higher education institutions; digital marketing instruments and channels.

The scientific problem addressed consists in the scientific substantiation of the mechanisms for applying educational marketing in order to enhance university attractiveness and strengthen its image, through the identification and correlation of the factors influencing prospective students' choice of higher education institution, the assessment of the accessibility, availability, and relevance of the information provided to them, and the determination of the level of marketing orientation and implementation of the marketing concept within universities in the Republic of Moldova.

The theoretical significance of the research lies in the development and further refinement of the conceptual framework of university marketing and in explaining the relationship between marketing orientation, perceived image and reputation, and the attractiveness of higher education institutions. The results obtained may also serve as a theoretical and methodological basis for further research on prospective students' behaviour, the competitiveness of higher education institutions, university image and reputation management, digital marketing, and the development of universities' market orientation.

The practical value of the research is determined by the possibility of using the results obtained in the development and improvement of marketing policies and strategies, communication and promotional strategies, marketing plans, and policies aimed at attracting prospective students to higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the research findings may provide

a basis for developing training and professional development programmes for university staff involved in marketing, communication, public relations, and admissions activities.

Validation of the Research Results. The research findings have been published in 13 scientific papers, including articles in accredited scientific journals, and presented at several scientific events, such as the International Scientific Conference “Competitiveness and Innovation in the Knowledge Economy” (2023, 2024, 2025), the International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers “Development through Research and Innovation” (2021, 2022), the Scientific and Practical Seminar “Marketing in the Digital Era: Trends, Challenges, Opportunities” (2025), the International Scientific Conference “Economic Security in the Context of Sustainable Development” (2021), and the International Scientific and Practical Conference “Sustainability and Economic Resilience in the Context of Global Systemic Transformations” (2026). The model for evaluating university websites using the EyeQuant platform was awarded silver medals at the “European Exhibition of Creativity and Innovation – EUROINVENT 2025”, Iași, Romania, and at the 19th edition of the International Specialized Exhibition “INFOINVENT”, Chișinău, 2025.

The research findings, conclusions, and recommendations were accepted for implementation in the marketing activities carried out at the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova and the Cooperative-Commercial University of Moldova, as confirmed by the implementation certificates attached to the thesis.

Structure and Content of the Thesis. The thesis includes abstracts in Romanian and English, an introduction, three chapters, conclusions and recommendations and a bibliography comprising 307 references. The main text extends over 158 pages and includes 69 figures and 6 tables.

Keywords: marketing, higher education, university, student, prospective students, marketing orientation, market orientation, image, perceived image, attractiveness, reputation, competitive advantage, competitiveness.

THESIS CONTENT

The first chapter, “**Marketing Implications in Higher Education: Theoretical and Applied Aspects,**” is devoted to the analysis of the developments, trends, and challenges facing higher education in the Republic of Moldova in the context of globalization, internationalization, and increasing competition in the educational services market. It also presents conceptual approaches to university marketing and its evolution, the specific characteristics of higher education services, as well as the marketing mix models developed in the specialized literature for the educational sector. Particular attention is given to examining marketing orientation as a fundamental resource for universities in achieving sustainable competitive advantages.

Higher education remains one of the priority areas in the Republic of Moldova, with the importance of education being supported and encouraged through various governmental measures. Throughout the entire period since the country gained independence, the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova has undergone numerous reforms, unfortunately often in the absence of a coherent medium- and long-term strategic vision. Despite multiple reforms and reconceptualizations, universities in the Republic of Moldova continue to face a number of challenges and difficulties,

including those related to promoting their educational offerings and attracting students, against the background of a significant decline in student numbers across most study programmes, modes of study, and study cycles and, consequently, a reduction in the number of universities (Figure 1).

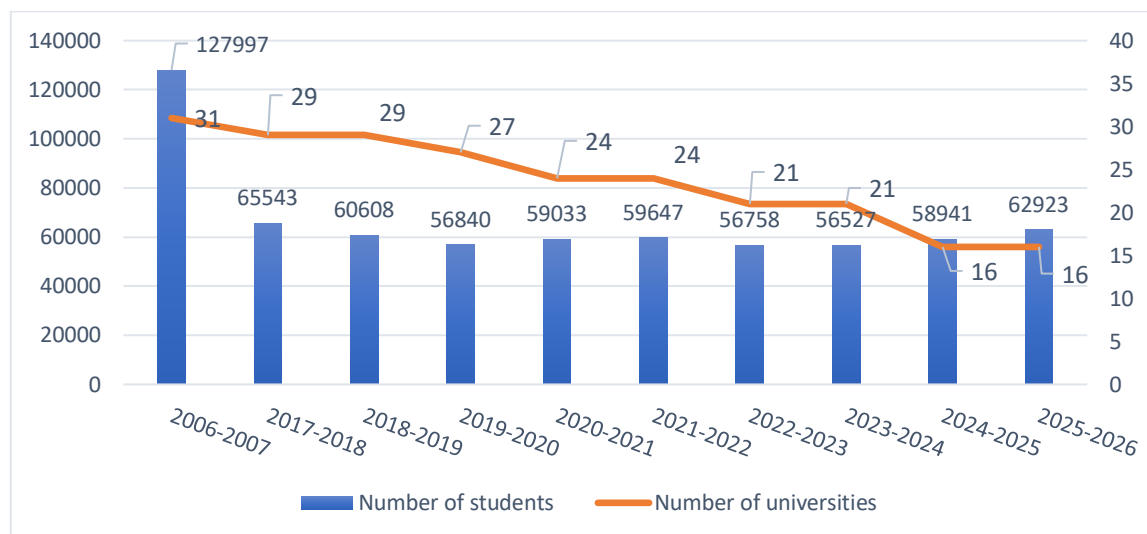


Fig. 1. Evolution of the Number of Students and Universities in the Higher Education System of the Republic of Moldova

Source: Developed by the author based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova [6]

Among the challenges facing higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova is also the absence of Moldovan universities from major international rankings such as ARWU, QS, CWTS Leiden, CWUR, Times Higher Education (THE), and URAP. Although all universities are included in the Webometrics ranking, they are generally positioned relatively modestly [10], which may pose a risk of decreasing their attractiveness to prospective students.

The results of the SWOT analysis of the higher education systems in the Republic of Moldova and Romania revealed that, alongside a number of strengths, opportunities, and threats arising from the environment in which they operate, universities in the Republic of Moldova identified several weaknesses of the national higher education system. These include the declining attractiveness of universities; the continuously decreasing number of students in most institutions; increasing competition among universities within the country and between domestic and foreign universities; intense unfair competition between public and private institutions; universities' limited capacity to adapt to a continuously changing society; low international visibility; high student dropout rates; the lack of coherent marketing strategies; limited marketing and promotional activities within universities; restricted use of university promotion instruments by academic staff; insufficient use of alumni potential in promoting university values and enhancing institutional visibility through their activities; insufficient funding and excessive dependence on a limited number of funding sources; insufficient internationalization and a relatively low level of academic mobility; and the low social status of academic staff, among other issues.

Another objective of the research was to identify the main challenges currently faced by universities in the Republic of Moldova and Romania. Increasing competition in the higher education services market proved to be one of the major challenges confronting universities in both countries.

It should also be noted that all surveyed universities in Romania and 89.5% of those in the Republic of Moldova considered the presence of competition in the higher education services market to have a beneficial influence on the overall trend towards improving the quality of education. At the same time, while the overwhelming majority of Romanian universities (83.3%) considered competition in the market in which they operate to be open, fair, free from excessive practices, and conducted within the limits established by current legislation, thus indicating a high degree of confidence in the mechanisms of the higher education market, this option was selected by only 31.6% of universities in the Republic of Moldova. A further 26.3% considered competition to be non-transparent and unfair, involving violations of legal provisions. With regard to acts of unfair competition, most universities in the Republic of Moldova (66.7%) referred to the misleading of prospective students and the general public concerning the activities carried out by competing universities for the purpose of attracting prospective students. Romanian universities, by contrast, were primarily concerned about the dissemination of false or misleading information capable of damaging universities' image, an issue reported by 45.5% of the universities participating in the survey. Thus, it may be concluded that a vulnerable competitive environment is emerging in the higher education services market of the Republic of Moldova, where misleading communication and the manipulation of information represent significant challenges for universities.

In the context of the challenges mentioned above, alongside other issues specific to higher education (Figure 2), there is a need for universities to continuously adapt to the changing conditions of the environment in which they operate and to reconsider the way in which they conduct their activities. In this regard, university marketing may serve as an important support mechanism by ensuring alignment between what universities are able to offer and the needs of students, prospective students, and society as a whole. Furthermore, understanding the context of market orientation within universities may be regarded as a first step towards strengthening this orientation within the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova. In its initial conception, marketing was regarded as a purely commercial activity, a business philosophy, and a way of organizing the management of an enterprise [5, p. 11]. At the same time, universities worldwide increasingly recognize marketing as an important instrument associated with the ability to effectively manage the contemporary challenges of higher education [3, 16], achieve better performance and competitive advantage [2, 17, 29, 32], and foster positive attitudes among different social groups, particularly prospective students [26]. It is therefore natural that the application of marketing in higher education should take into account the specific characteristics of these services, among which the specialized literature generally identifies [4, 22] inseparability, variability, perishability, and intangibility. At the same time, marketing is not a rigid doctrine; it is dynamic and continuously evolving over time, differs in content across various types and fields of activity, and has become adaptable to the specific characteristics of higher education institutions.

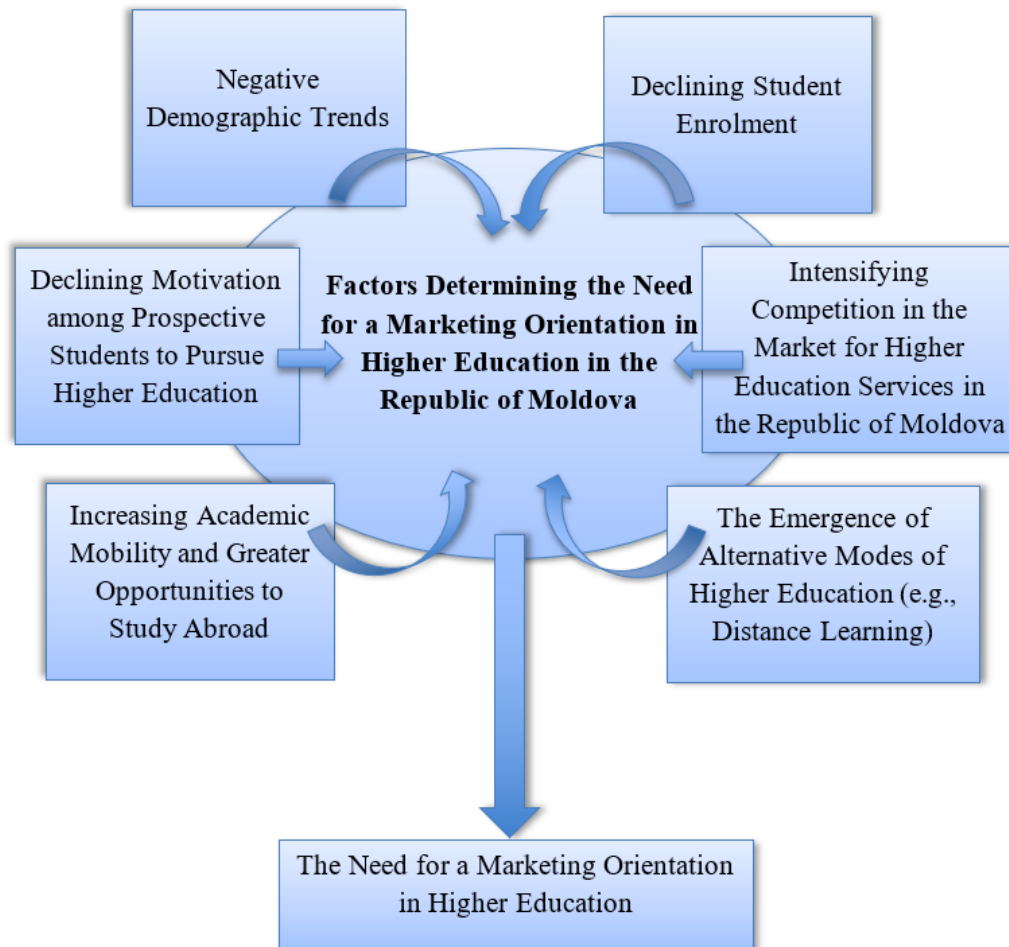


Fig. 2. Determinants of the Need for a Marketing Orientation in Higher Education in the Republic of Moldova

Source: elaborated by the author

Philip Kotler considers the marketing mix to be one of the dominant ideas in modern marketing theory and practice [24, pp. 134–135]. The concept of the marketing mix has evolved over time from the four traditional variables proposed by McCarthy [27], commonly known as the “4Ps”: product, price, place (distribution), and promotion. For the services sector, Booms and Bitner [7] supplemented these four variables with three additional elements: “People”, involved in service delivery; “Physical Evidence”, referring to the environment in which the service is provided; and “Processes”, through which the service is delivered, thus creating what is now known as the seven elements of the marketing mix, or the “7Ps”. Lafuente-Ruiz-de-Sabando, Forcada Sainz, F. J., and their colleagues [25] proposed a university marketing mix consisting of 13 variables on which universities should focus their marketing and management activities (Figure 3). The authors identify holistic marketing philosophy as the core of this university management concept, emphasizing the need to address different stakeholders, insofar as “everything matters in marketing: the consumer, employees, other companies, competitors, and society as a whole” [25, p. 300].

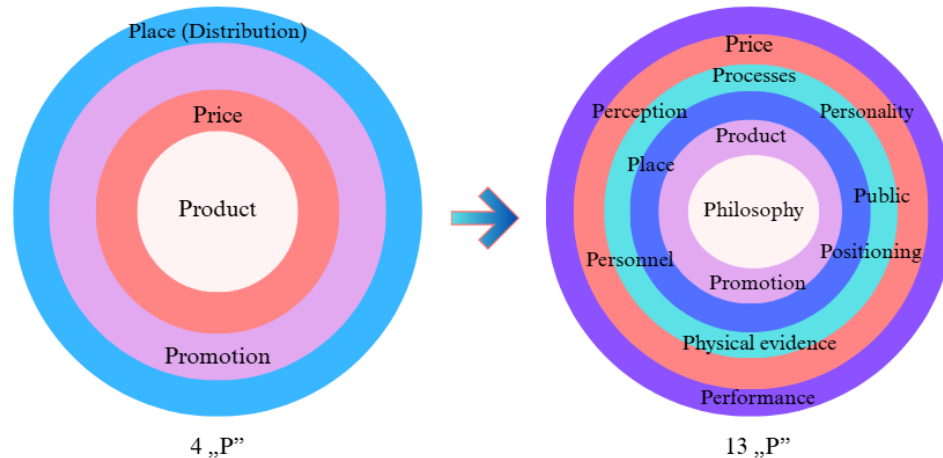


Fig. 3. Evolution of the University Marketing Mix Concept

Source: Elaborated by the author based on [25]

The specialized marketing literature offers a variety of definitions and perspectives on market orientation and marketing orientation. Although there is no universally accepted approach, the need for customer orientation lies, almost without exception, at the core of this concept. In this context, Helfert, Ritter, and Walter [19, cited in 20, p. 206] consider that “market orientation represents the extent to which an organization generates and uses information about customers’ current and future needs, develops a strategy to satisfy them, and implements this strategy in order to respond to these needs and wants.” Other benefits of marketing orientation for universities identified in the literature include a potential increase in student enrolment and retention rates [18 p. 16; 25, p. 40; 30, pp 2, 11], a positive impact on research and teaching processes within universities [15, p. 91], as well as strong associations with students’ perceived service quality, satisfaction and loyalty, word-of-mouth recommendations, and perceived brand value [1, 8, 17, 23, 31, 33, 34]. At the same time, in the field of higher education, it is argued that universities in developing countries tend to replicate the factors that led higher education institutions in the developed world to adopt marketing orientation as a strategic option [26, p. 129].

Based on the study conducted, the thesis proposes defining marketing orientation in universities as a culture and a set of behaviours shared across all university subdivisions, embodied in a range of activities, methods, and techniques aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the needs of current and prospective students, as well as those of other stakeholders and society as a whole, and at identifying ways to continuously adapt to their needs and requirements in an innovative and sustainable manner. In this context, when developing their marketing policies, universities should begin with an analysis of the competitive environment and of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to competing universities. At the same time, strategic and tactical decisions, the entire set of marketing instruments, as well as marketing programmes and plans, should be directed towards creating and developing competitive advantages and strengthening the overall competitiveness of the university.

The second chapter of the thesis, entitled **“Image as a Determinant of University Attractiveness,”** is devoted to the theoretical and methodological substantiation of the concept of institutional image and its evolution, the analysis of the impact of marketing on university image and attractiveness, as well as the orientation towards the needs of prospective students as a factor contributing to the improvement of university image and the enhancement of its attractiveness. In the specialized literature, image is analysed from multiple perspectives, both in general terms and as adapted to specific fields, including education, with the concept of “image” being interpreted differently by representatives of various areas of research. The view that universities compete to a considerable extent at the level of their perceived image is also becoming increasingly relevant in the academic environment [35, p. 458].

Alongside the concept of university image, the notion of the “university brand” has also gained increasing prominence [21, pp. 1-3], while the importance of branding in developing university image and enhancing institutional competitiveness is highlighted in a number of studies [9, 11, 13, 28, 36, 37].

The studies conducted made it possible to propose a holistic model of the relationship between university marketing, institutional identity, image, and attractiveness, as presented below (Figure 4). The model is based on the premise that marketing research provides empirical and relevant data concerning the needs and expectations of stakeholders, particularly prospective students, as well as current students, graduates, employers, institutional partners, and other interested parties.

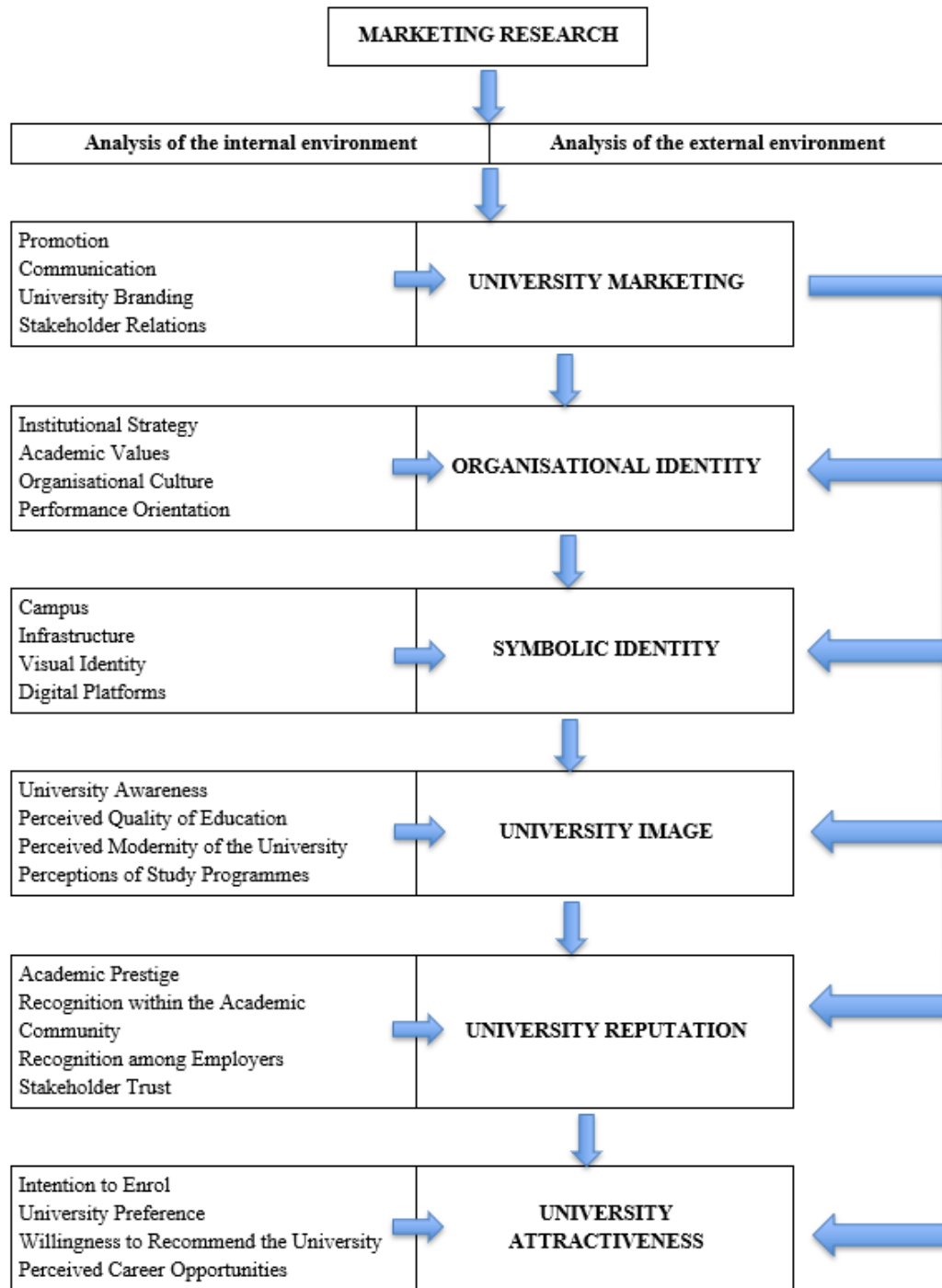


Fig. 4. Holistic Model of the Relationship between University Marketing-Institutional Identity- Image - Attractiveness

Source: elaborated by the author

The analysis of this information, with reference to both the internal and external environments in which the university operates, provides the basis for substantiating all strategic university marketing decisions. At the same time, marketing research supplies the information required to shape the institution's strategic identity, both institutional and symbolic, and to develop coherent promotion and

communication with the general public and stakeholders, aimed at developing the university's image and strengthening its institutional reputation. These, in turn, represent key determinants in prospective students' decision-making process and influence the level of university attractiveness in the higher education services market.

Organizational identity represents the starting point of the model and reflects the values, norms, rules, procedures, and traditions specific to the university, as expressed through its vision, mission, organizational structure, study programmes, research projects, academic performance, major events, as well as its university culture, reflected in the working environment, materials published about the university, the university website, and other related elements. In other words, organizational identity refers to what is unique to the university and distinguishes it from other higher education institutions.

Symbolic identity refers to the way in which university buildings and spaces are designed, both in terms of functionality and visual appearance, as well as to the visual elements associated with the university, such as its logo and colours. These elements create impressions within the external environment and also influence the perceptions of employees and students and the way in which they understand the university's identity, thereby contributing to the development of the university's image and attractiveness. As universities become increasingly dependent on online marketing, the symbolic aspects of identity are becoming progressively more important.

Both image and reputation represent interpretations of how the institution is perceived predominantly from the outside, whereas identity develops within the organization. In this context, image may be regarded as playing a mediating role between identity and reputation, serving as a linking mechanism between the university's internal identity and its external reputation. Naturally, image is conveyed through promotional and communication activities directed towards stakeholders and should reflect the university's actual identity, while also having the potential to influence its reputation.

Although reputation is generally regarded as an external evaluation, influenced by governments, funding institutions, the labour market, and other external actors, it also plays an important role as a driver of university reform and development. Institutions may also build their reputation by developing relationships with stakeholders, promoting social responsibility initiatives, and undertaking promotional and strategic communication activities. Moreover, positive media coverage can influence both reputation and perceived image.

It should also be noted that university attractiveness, perceived image and reputation, as well as the elements that shape the university's identity and attractiveness, should be subject to periodic marketing research aimed at identifying the perceptions of target audiences and stakeholders, as well as potential directions for improvement, using relevant performance indicators for this purpose (Table 1).

Table 1. Performance Indicators of the Components of the Holistic Model of the Relationship between University Marketing-Institutional Identity-Image- Attractiveness

No.	Model components	Performance indicators
1.	University organizational identity	1.1. The university has a clear vision and mission; 1.2. The university's values are reflected in its academic activities; 1.3. The university promotes excellence in education and research; 1.4. The university adapts to the requirements of the economic and social environment; 1.5. The university's activities reflect a coherent institutional strategy.
2.	Symbolic identity	2.1. The university campus is attractive and modern; 2.2. The university's infrastructure facilitates the teaching, learning, and research processes; 2.3. The university's visual identity is clear and professional; 2.4. The university's website provides useful and easily accessible information; 2.5. The information shared by the university through social media is accurate, relevant, and up to date; 2.6. The university's facilities contribute to a positive academic experience.
3.	University image	3.1. The university has a positive image in society; 3.2. The university is perceived as a modern institution; 3.3. The university offers study programmes that are relevant to the labour market; 3.4. The university is known for the quality of its education; 3.5. The university is recommended by students and graduates.
4.	University reputation	4.1. The university is considered a prestigious institution; 4.2. The university is recognised for its academic achievements; 4.3. The university's degrees are valued in the labour market; 4.4. The university has a good reputation within the academic community; 4.5. The university is highly regarded by employers.
5.	University attractiveness	5.1. The university is an attractive option for study; 5.2. The university is recommended by current students and graduates to prospective students; 5.3. The university offers good opportunities for professional development; 5.4. The university is more competitive than other institutions.

Source: elaborated by the author

It should also be noted that, although the university's image is perceived by several target audiences, the present research focuses primarily on the university image as perceived by prospective students.

The results of the survey on prospective students' perceptions and preferences showed that the most important reasons for pursuing university studies include increasing the chances of achieving a higher quality of life, followed by the development of skills and knowledge and access to better employment opportunities. At the same time, given that a considerable proportion of prospective students choose to continue their studies abroad, it was of particular interest to identify the reasons underlying this choice. Accordingly, the largest share of survey participants, 53.7%, indicated as the main reason the prospect of greater opportunities for developing a successful professional career by obtaining a diploma "recognized at the European level". This perception is also influenced by the frequent circulation, including in the national media, of the claim that diplomas issued by universities in the Republic of Moldova are not internationally recognized, which does not correspond to reality and should therefore be taken into account when promoting educational offerings.

The research findings also revealed higher **top-of-mind awareness** of the country's largest public universities, which have the highest numbers of students and are more actively involved in promoting their educational offerings in the domestic higher education market (Figure 5).

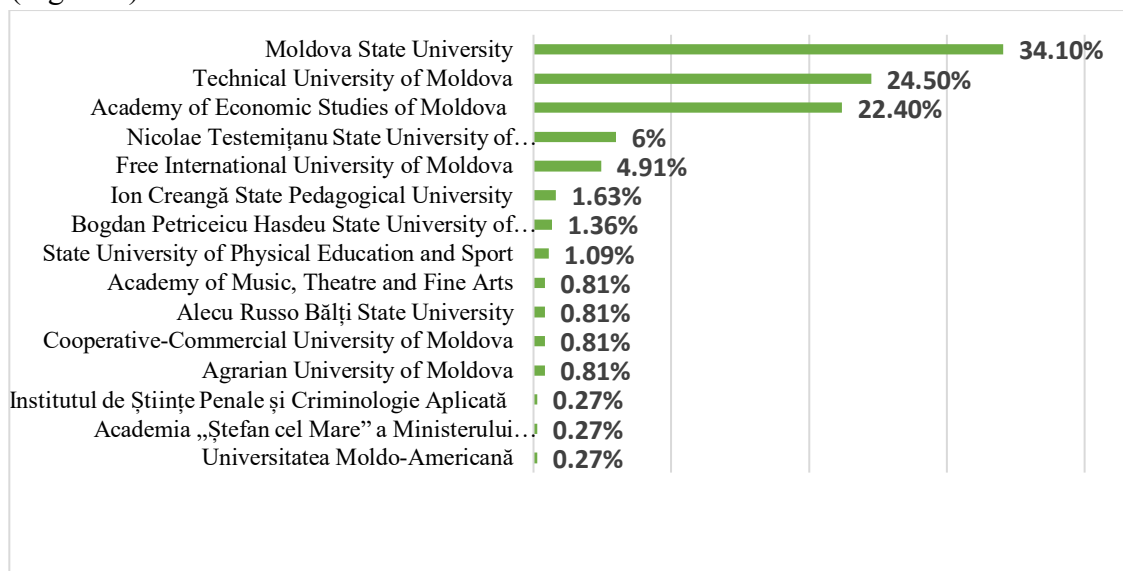


Fig. 5. Top-of-mind awareness of universities in the Republic of Moldova

Source: elaborated by the author

The research findings also revealed considerable differences in the level of recognition of university logos, ranging from 25.1% for the Slavonic University of Moldova to 88.2% for the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova. The results showed that the most recognizable logos (Figure 6) contain the university's full or abbreviated name and a limited number of visual elements, whereas the least recognizable logos (Figure 7) either lack such identifying information, resemble or

are almost identical to those of other universities, thereby creating confusion, or contain an excessive number of visual elements.



Fig. 6. Logos with a high level of recognition

Fig. 7. Logos with a low level of recognition

Source: elaborated by the author

At the same time, given the significant role of image in university choice, the most important factors influencing the perceived image of a university were identified. These were found to include (Figure 8): the quality of education, mentioned by 72.8% of respondents; the facilities and opportunities provided by universities, such as scholarships, academic mobility opportunities, well-equipped laboratories, sports facilities, libraries, and opportunities for entrepreneurial development, mentioned by 57.3%; and the university's international reputation, mentioned by 48.4%. To a somewhat lesser extent, respondents also indicated the professional career success of university graduates (36.6%) and the availability of scholarships provided to the institution by companies and other university partners (36.4%).

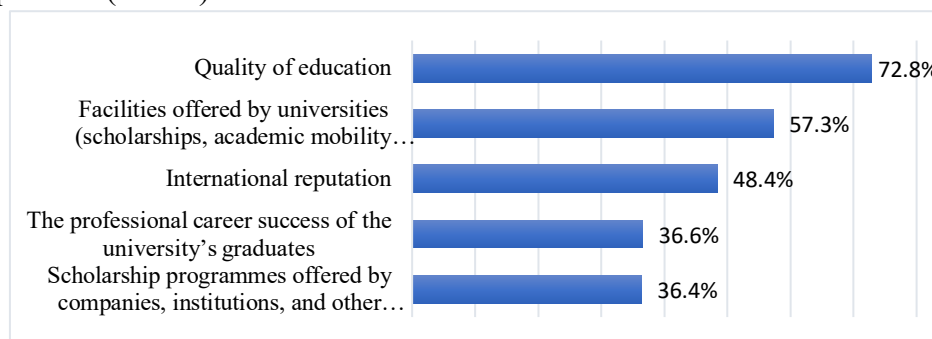


Fig. 8. Factors influencing the perceived image of a university

Source: elaborated by the author

Among the factors influencing university choice, survey participants indicated, first and foremost, the university profile and the study programmes offered, mentioned by 60.2% of respondents, followed by employment opportunities after graduation (56.8%), university image (49.7%), and facilities and physical infrastructure, such as the campus, libraries, laboratories, sports facilities, and canteens (49.7%). To a lesser extent, respondents mentioned recommendations from high school teachers (14.7%) and recommendations from peers and friends (18.3%).

At the same time, among the sources of information consulted by prospective students to learn about universities and their educational offerings, the university website proved to be the most important, mentioned by 75.7% of respondents, followed by social media (65.4%) and admission guides (40.1%).

The fact that the university website ranks first in importance as a source of information about educational offerings demonstrates that it is no longer perceived merely as a means of presenting the

institution, but as an active platform for promotion, attraction, and relationship building with its target audience, namely prospective students in the case of universities.

Although survey participants considered all information available on university websites to be important in influencing their choice of university, they assigned greater importance to information concerning the study programmes offered, mentioned by 84% of respondents, admission requirements (69.1%), and tuition fees (63.1%).

Overall, prospective students have positive perceptions regarding access to the information provided by universities. However, in order to fully meet the informational needs of the target audience, improvements are required in the way study programmes and career opportunities are presented. Information regarding the quality of education is not always communicated clearly; difficulties are encountered in identifying comparative data across universities; and some information is not regularly updated. Young people should be provided with the means to assess study conditions and the state of university campuses more objectively. Some prospective students also perceive a lack of sufficient information about university staff and express a need for greater transparency regarding the quality of the learning environment. This indicates that universities should intensify their information and guidance efforts and reflects a clear expectation for more personalized, transparent communication oriented towards the actual needs of higher education consumers.

The third chapter of the thesis, entitled **“Marketing Strategies, Instruments, and Techniques Aimed at Improving University Image and Enhancing Attractiveness,”** is devoted to assessing the degree of implementation of the marketing concept in the activities of universities in the Republic of Moldova, in comparison with universities in Romania; examining the importance of online marketing for improving university image and attractiveness among prospective students; and identifying opportunities for optimizing university websites as important and relevant sources of information for prospective students and for supporting their university choice.

The study on the implementation of marketing and marketing orientation in the activities of universities in the Republic of Moldova and Romania showed that the overwhelming majority of universities in both countries attach high or very high importance to university marketing activities and demonstrate a strong awareness of the role of marketing in strengthening university image and attractiveness among prospective students.

At the same time, the research also revealed differences in the organization of marketing activities between universities in the two countries. Thus, Romanian universities, to a greater extent than those in the Republic of Moldova, tend to embrace university marketing thinking as an institutional philosophy shared by the entire university staff (Figure 9). They also carry out marketing activities predominantly through their own personnel and are more likely to have a specialized marketing unit, thereby confirming a stronger integration of the marketing function into the institutional structure.

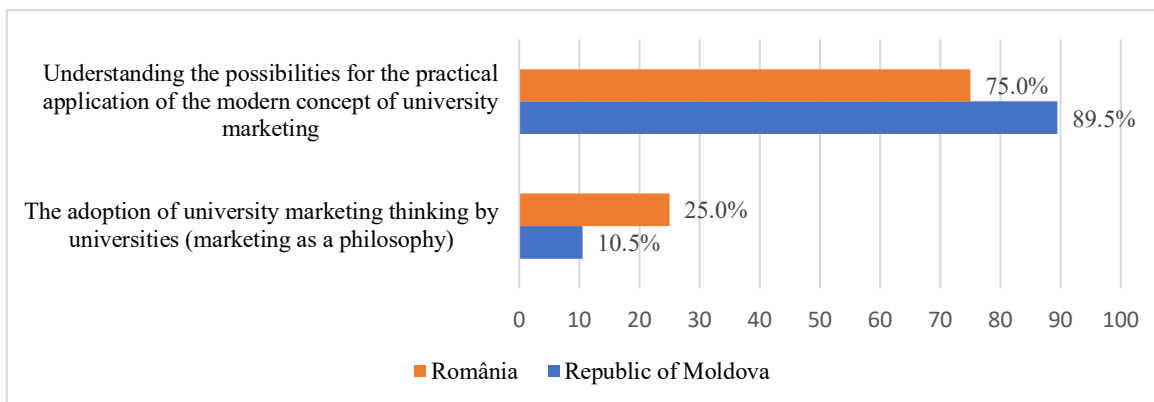


Fig. 9. Aspects considered priorities in the implementation of marketing in higher education institutions

Source: elaborated by the author

The study also demonstrated that, in both universities in the Republic of Moldova and Romania, the coordination of marketing activities is most often the responsibility of the university rector (52.6% and 41.7% of the surveyed universities, respectively) or of one of the vice-rectors, indicating a high degree of centralization in decision-making. In both cases, the role of the head of the marketing unit is relatively limited, suggesting that specialized structures have not yet achieved full autonomy in strategic decision-making.

In this context, the study also revealed that most universities in both countries do not have separate marketing strategies, with marketing activities being integrated into the university's strategic development plan. Where such strategies do exist, they are often insufficiently substantiated and lack clarity in terms of implementation.

Although all elements of the marketing mix are important for universities, greater emphasis is placed on product, promotion, and communication policies. Universities in the Republic of Moldova predominantly rely on traditional marketing instruments, whereas Romanian universities place greater emphasis on decisions related to the educational product, including study programmes and services provided (Figure 10). At the same time, less attention is given to the elements of the extended marketing mix specific to the service sector, such as people, processes, and physical evidence.

Likewise, only a limited number of universities develop annual marketing plans. Most universities do not have a separate marketing budget, while the financial resources allocated to marketing are considered insufficient for the efficient and effective implementation of marketing activities.

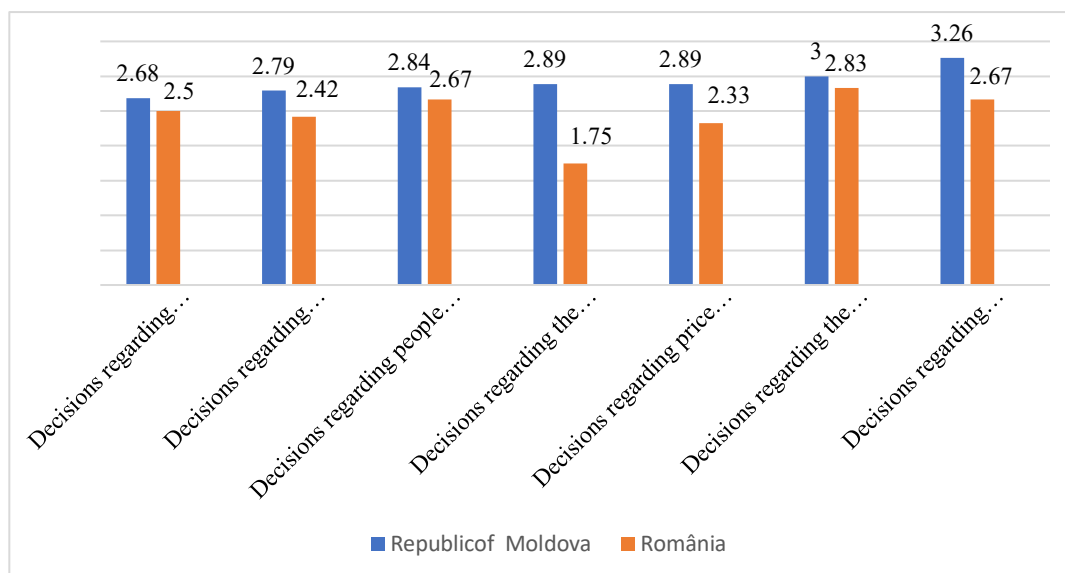


Fig. 10. Prioritisation of the components of the extended marketing mix (7Ps) in university activities

Source: elaborated by the author

It should also be noted that, in their marketing activities, universities are increasingly using a diverse range of channels to promote their educational offerings and strengthen their institutional image, with varying levels of intensity depending on the specific characteristics of each institution. Thus, among universities in the Republic of Moldova, visits to high schools and colleges proved to be the most frequently used channel, as they allow direct contact with prospective students, followed by Internet (online) advertising (Figure 11). This indicates that universities place particular emphasis on channels with a direct and immediate impact on the target audience, such as school visits, events for prospective students, and online promotion, while traditional mass-media advertising is used only sporadically and has a more limited role in current communication strategies.

The content analysis of the strategic development plans of universities in the Republic of Moldova showed that the overwhelming majority of institutions have a strategic vision for their development. Across universities, the most frequently identified marketing actions are those aimed at promoting university identity and image at both local and international levels, as well as increasing the visibility and attractiveness of their educational offerings.

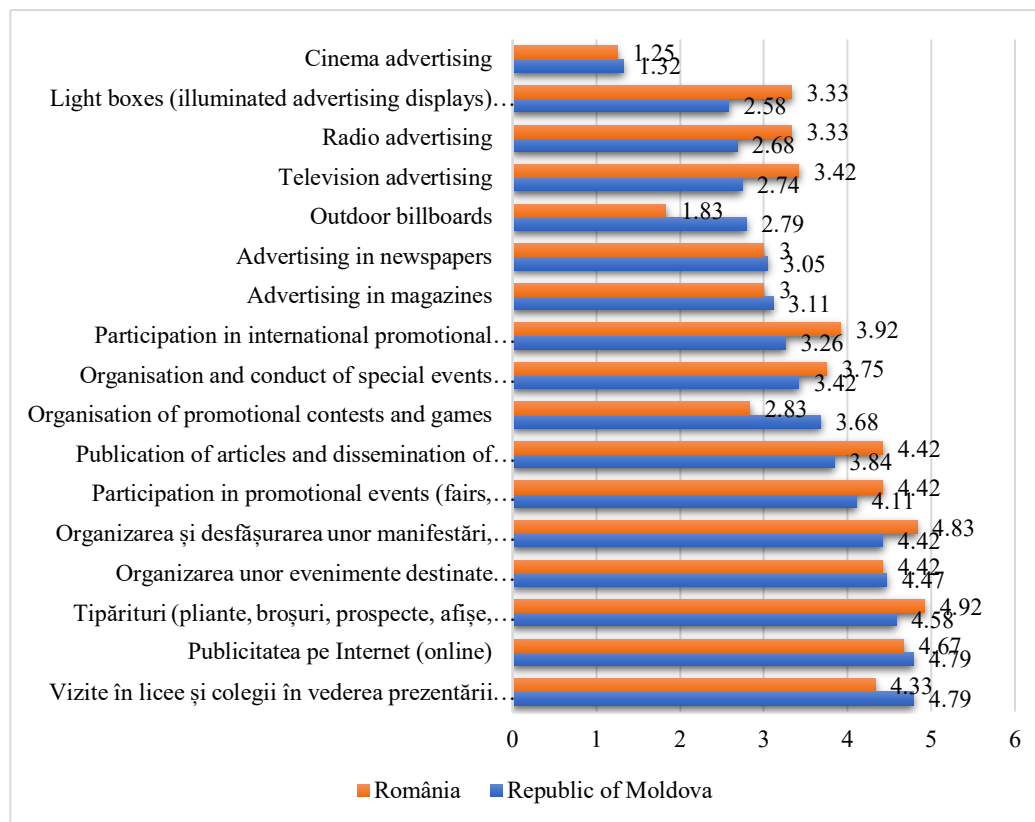


Fig. 11. Tools and channels used by universities to promote their educational offerings

Source: elaborated by the author

At the same time, in their marketing approaches, universities place limited emphasis on satisfying the needs and wants of students and a broad range of stakeholders, as well as on several other aspects specific to marketing orientation. These include employee orientation, in the sense of treating employees as internal customers and participants in the creation and dissemination of new knowledge; employer orientation; orientation towards cultural development; competitor orientation and interfunctional coordination; the development of marketing information systems based, among other sources, on relevant information obtained through marketing research; and aspects related to market segmentation and positioning within the higher education market. These limitations make it difficult to regard universities as being clearly market-oriented.

Universities need a strategic approach to organizing their activities and a marketing orientation aimed at building and strengthening a favourable image of both the university as a whole and the study programmes it offers, including through the use of modern online university marketing instruments. In this context, integrating all elements of the university marketing mix into institutional development strategies, or potentially into dedicated marketing strategies, becomes particularly important in order to remain competitive in the higher education services market.

Studies conducted with reference to universities in the Republic of Moldova and Romania also revealed that universities recognize online marketing as an essential strategic instrument for promoting the institution, improving its image, and enhancing its attractiveness to prospective students, using a diverse range of techniques for this purpose. The institutional website is recognized

as one of the main instruments for communicating with both internal and external audiences, followed by social media. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are the platforms most frequently used for information, promotion, and strengthening the image of universities in both countries, confirming universities' orientation towards visual platforms that are particularly appealing to younger audiences.

With the aim of formulating scientific and practical conclusions and recommendations regarding the optimization of university websites, a direct study was conducted using the artificial intelligence-based EyeQuant [14], method, which simulates real users' responses to various visual sections of a website. The study assessed the homepages of all universities in the Republic of Moldova according to several indicators, including the level of visual clutter, user excitement, design perception, attention distribution, and the sequence in which attention is directed towards different website components (Figures 12–14). The results for these evaluation criteria fell within varying ranges, in some cases differing considerably from one university to another, thus highlighting the need for modifications aimed at improving website performance.

The importance of evaluating a university website's homepage lies in the crucial role it plays in shaping first impressions, guiding users, and, to a considerable extent, reflecting the institution's image and the overall impact of the website on visitors.

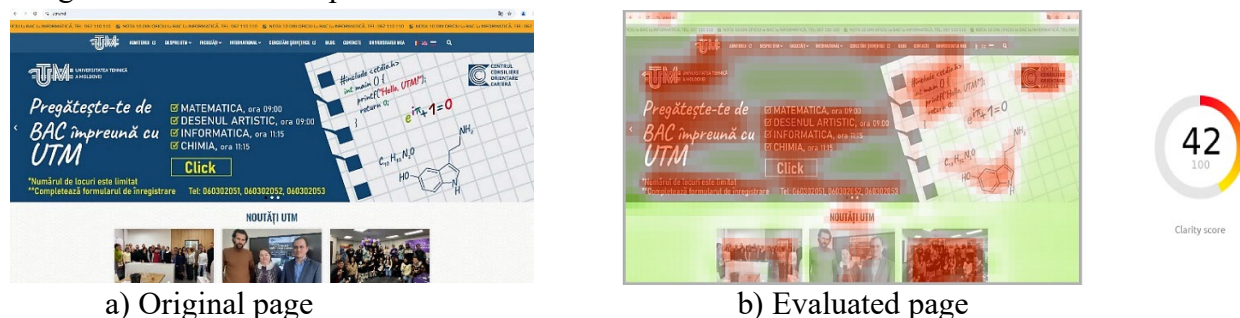


Fig. 12. Evaluation results of the Technical University of Moldova website homepage based on the “Design Clutter Level” indicator

Source: elaborated by the author

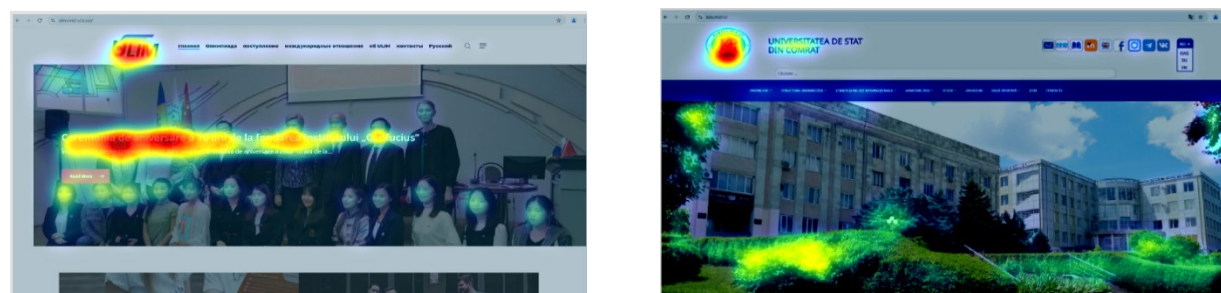
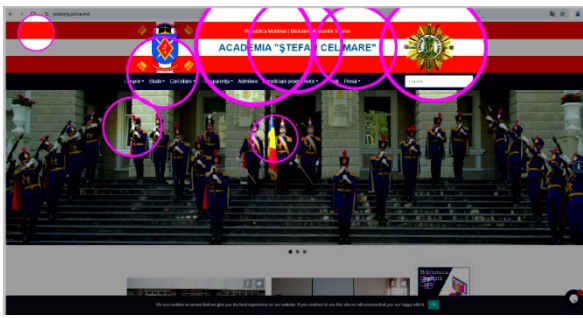
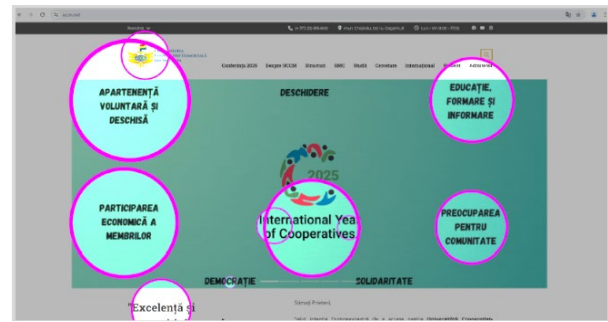


Fig. 13. Attention distribution map on the homepages of the websites of the Free International University of Moldova and Comrat State University

Source: elaborated by the author



a)



b)

Fig. 14. Sequence of attention fixation on the homepages of the websites of the “Ștefan cel Mare” Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova (a) and the Cooperative-Commercial University of Moldova (b)

Source: elaborated by the author

Adjusting the most important design elements and the overall layout of university websites is essential for directing users' attention towards the most relevant sections and increasing the time spent on these pages. Such improvements contribute to a better user experience while also supporting the achievement of institutional objectives.

It therefore follows that, in order for university websites to better meet the needs of users and visitors, their attractiveness and usability should be periodically reassessed. At the same time, the use of artificial intelligence-based tools such as EyeQuant may serve as a complementary instrument for evaluating and optimizing the visual elements of websites, without replacing testing with real users or traditional user experience research methods.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of the specialized scientific literature, the examination of strategic and institutional documents, and the results of the empirical research conducted, the following general conclusions can be formulated:

1. Recent demographic, economic, technological, and social transformations have significantly altered the competitive environment in which higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova operate and have increased the pressure on universities to define more clearly their distinctive advantages and their relationships with key stakeholder groups. In this context, authentic institutional communication based on relevant information becomes an important condition for strengthening trust, image, and university reputation, while university marketing may serve as an important support mechanism by ensuring alignment between what universities are able to offer and the needs of students, prospective students, and society as a whole.
2. The analysis of the digital visibility and online presence of universities in the Republic of Moldova in the Webometrics ranking highlights a low level of digital impact and global

visibility for most Moldovan universities across all indicators influencing their position in the ranking, as well as considerable differences between institutions. This may pose a risk of reducing universities' attractiveness to prospective students. Although Webometrics is not a traditional ranking of educational quality, online visibility represents a relevant component of an institution's digital presence and may influence prospective students' and other stakeholders' access to information about the university, while also contributing to the improvement of institutional image, reputation, and attractiveness among prospective students, including those from outside the Republic of Moldova.

3. The theoretical and empirical analysis confirms that marketing orientation represents a relevant dimension of universities' capacity to respond to changes in the external environment. In this regard, adopting a marketing orientation involves not only the use of promotional instruments, but also the development of institutional mechanisms for collecting and utilizing market information, identifying and anticipating the needs of different categories of beneficiaries and partners, competitor orientation, interfunctional coordination, and the integration of a marketing perspective into strategic decision-making.
4. The research highlights that the implementation of marketing within higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova is undergoing a process of consolidation and institutionalization. Although universities recognize the importance of marketing for promoting educational offerings, strengthening institutional image, and enhancing institutional attractiveness, the integration of marketing as a managerial philosophy across the university as a whole remains limited. Therefore, a gap can be observed between the declared recognition of the importance of marketing and the actual degree to which its principles are integrated into university management.
5. The results of the comparative research conducted with reference to universities in the Republic of Moldova and Romania indicate that the universities in the two countries display different levels of institutionalization of marketing orientation in relation to certain components. Romanian universities show a stronger integration of the marketing function into their organizational structures, more frequent use of their own human resources, and a more pronounced adoption of the marketing philosophy at the institutional level. In the case of universities in the Republic of Moldova, limitations related to internal marketing capacities, the existence of specialized structures, and the systematic organization of marketing activities are more evident.
6. In both higher education systems analysed, marketing practices are predominantly focused on the traditional components of the marketing mix, particularly product, promotion, and communication. At the same time, the components specific to services marketing—people, processes, and physical evidence—receive comparatively less attention. This situation indicates the predominance of an operational and promotional approach over an integrated marketing approach.
7. The limited emphasis placed on systematic market research, audience segmentation, competitor analysis, strategic positioning, the development of marketing information systems, and interfunctional coordination represents a set of factors that constrain universities' market

orientation. Consequently, the development of marketing capabilities should be understood not merely as an expansion of promotional activities, but as a process of organizational and managerial development within the university.

8. The research on prospective students' behaviour and preferences confirms the importance of the university's perceived image in the process of evaluating and choosing a higher education institution. Image functions as a mechanism through which information about the university is synthesized and transformed into an overall evaluation, thereby contributing to its differentiation from competing institutions. Consequently, perceived image may constitute a strategic resource for building attractiveness and developing competitive advantage.
9. University image should not be considered in isolation, but rather in relation to institutional identity and reputation. Identity expresses what the university is and what it seeks to communicate about itself; image reflects how it is perceived by different stakeholder groups; and reputation represents a cumulative evaluation developed over time on the basis of available experiences and information. Coherence among these dimensions constitutes an important prerequisite for strengthening institutional credibility and attractiveness.
10. The conceptual model developed within the research, based on the relationship between university marketing, institutional identity, image, reputation, and attractiveness, highlights the interdependent nature of these constructs and provides a framework for understanding how marketing activities can contribute to shaping perceptions of the university and, subsequently, to strengthening its attractiveness. The findings support the need for an integrated approach to these dimensions within universities' development and marketing strategies.
11. The research findings confirm the important role of the digital environment in shaping university image and attractiveness. Institutional websites and social media represent important sources of information for external audiences, while content quality, information accessibility and currency, platform structure, and visual appeal contribute to shaping the first impression of the institution.
12. The analysis of university websites using the EyeQuant method revealed relevant differences between institutions in terms of the visual characteristics assessed. The findings support the need for a systematic approach to users' digital experience and for the periodic evaluation of web interfaces. At the same time, artificial intelligence-based tools such as EyeQuant may serve as complementary instruments for evaluating and optimizing the visual elements of websites, without replacing testing with real users or traditional user experience research methods.
13. Overall, the research findings support the hypothesis that marketing orientation may constitute a relevant factor in strengthening university attractiveness, while perceived image and reputation represent important mechanisms through which this relationship may be manifested. Thus, the competitiveness of universities in the Republic of Moldova may be considered to depend not only on the quality of their educational offerings, but also on their ability to identify market needs, credibly communicate the value they provide, and build long-term relationships with key stakeholder groups.

In line with the research findings, the following recommendations can be formulated:

a) Recommendations for Universities in the Republic of Moldova:

1. Universities in the Republic of Moldova should undergo continuous modernization in order to become more efficient, competitive, and attractive to prospective students. In this regard, university marketing can serve as an important support mechanism by ensuring alignment between what universities are able to offer and the needs of students, prospective students, other stakeholders, and society as a whole.
2. Universities should adopt marketing orientation as a strategic option at the institutional level. In developing their marketing policies, they should take into account the competitive environment and assess their strengths and weaknesses in relation to competing universities. Strategic and tactical decisions, the full range of marketing instruments, as well as marketing programmes and plans, should be directed towards achieving specific objectives, such as building a positive image in society, attracting prospective students, increasing enrolment and student retention rates, enhancing student satisfaction and loyalty, improving overall institutional performance, and creating and developing competitive advantages and the university's overall competitiveness.
3. Promoting and developing a positive and favourable image among stakeholders, both within and outside the university, should be regarded as a priority in university marketing activities. In this context, institutional marketing strategies should consider image as playing a mediating role between university identity—what is unique to the institution and distinguishes it from other universities—and its external reputation. University attractiveness, perceived image and reputation, as well as the elements that shape university identity and attractiveness, should be subject to periodic marketing research aimed at identifying the perceptions of target audiences and stakeholders, as well as possible directions for improvement, using relevant performance indicators for this purpose.
4. As university visibility and awareness are becoming increasingly important in prospective students' choice processes, universities should intensify the promotion of both the institution and its study programmes. Greater use should be made of visual identity elements, including university logos, in promotional messages aimed at shaping the university's image in the minds of prospective students. Universities should also select the most appropriate information channels and improve their websites so that all information required by visitors is available, clearly understandable, and well structured, given the important role of the website in creating a first impression of the institution. In this context, the qualitative dimension of communication should be strengthened through the development of interactive digital tools for comparing university offerings, the continuous updating of information on the quality of education and career prospects, and the intensification of direct dialogue with target audiences through educational guidance and counselling campaigns.
5. In order to enhance the effectiveness of marketing activities as a factor contributing to the strengthening of university image and attractiveness, it is important to promote a marketing mindset and philosophy among all university staff and to shift from a product-oriented approach, focused primarily on study programmes, towards a more customer- and stakeholder-centred approach. Universities should also expand their internal marketing capabilities, including through the development and strengthening of specialized marketing units; develop and implement distinct and relevant marketing strategies aimed at achieving institutional objectives, including those related to image, reputation, and attractiveness, while also enabling higher education institutions to respond

effectively to the continuous changes occurring in their operating environment; devote greater attention to the components of the marketing mix specific to service organizations, such as people, processes, and physical evidence; and continuously diversify the channels and instruments used to promote both the institution and its study programmes, with particular emphasis on online promotion. 6. University websites should function as essential information and communication tools, with a well-organized structure, clear and up-to-date content, an attractive and functional design, and the capacity to ensure effective interaction between the institution and its users. In this context, periodic evaluation and subsequent adjustments are necessary in order to improve website quality and usability, provide a better user experience, and, at the same time, support the achievement of institutional objectives. For this purpose, and with a view to increasing operational efficiency and reducing operating costs, the use of the EyeQuant method is recommended. Based on artificial intelligence algorithms, EyeQuant simulates real users' responses to various visual sections of a website.

b) Recommendations for the Government of the Republic of Moldova:

Considering the benefits that the effective implementation of the modern marketing concept in university activities may generate for all categories of stakeholders, and in the event of future amendments to the regulatory framework, it is recommended that consideration be given to integrating into public policies for the development of higher education principles related to the marketing and market orientation of institutions, as well as to supporting the development of universities' institutional marketing capacities.

b) Recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Research:

It is recommended to strengthen the mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of universities' institutional development strategies, with particular emphasis on aligning stated objectives with the actions undertaken, while also encouraging the exchange of good practices among higher education institutions in the development and implementation of marketing strategies, educational market research, digital communication, and institutional image and reputation management.

c) Recommendations for the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research:

It is recommended to consider the possibility of integrating into external quality evaluation mechanisms indicators related to universities' capacity to identify and take into account the needs and expectations of students and other stakeholders, insofar as these are relevant to quality assurance and quality enhancement processes.

Overall, the research findings allow for the confirmation of the formulated hypotheses. These findings support the existence of a relevant relationship between university marketing orientation, perceived image and reputation, and institutional attractiveness, while also highlighting the need to strengthen the marketing capabilities and market orientation of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the assumption that universities in the Republic of Moldova predominantly use traditional marketing instruments was only partially confirmed, as both the analysis of university development strategies and the results of the opinion survey revealed an increasingly pronounced orientation towards the use of digital marketing instruments and channels.

Research Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The findings of the research conducted in this thesis are not without limitations, although they provide a basis for further research. One of the main limitations concerns the scope of the analysis of

university image, as the research focused primarily on how it is perceived by prospective students. However, the image of a higher education institution is formed in relation to multiple stakeholder groups, whose expectations, experiences, and evaluation criteria may differ. These include current students, their parents, graduates, academic staff and other categories of employees, competing and partner universities, the business environment, public authorities, the media, and society as a whole. In this regard, an important direction for future research would be the comparative analysis of university image across different stakeholder groups, with the aim of identifying both common elements and differences in perception. Such an approach would make it possible to outline the university's image within each stakeholder segment, while also developing an integrated perspective on institutional image. It would also be valuable to investigate the dynamics of university image over time, including comparisons between prospective students' perceptions before enrolment, students' perceptions during their studies, and graduates' perceptions after completing their studies.

A second important limitation concerns the size and structure of the sample used to assess universities' marketing orientation. In the Republic of Moldova, data were collected from individuals holding managerial positions in all universities within the national higher education system, whereas in Romania the research covered 12 universities. This limitation could be addressed in future research by extending the study to a larger number of universities and countries, thereby allowing for more robust comparisons across different higher education systems.

Furthermore, the assessment of marketing orientation in the present research was based primarily on the views of individuals holding managerial positions within universities. Although this category of respondents is highly relevant with regard to institutional policies and practices, it does not reflect the perceptions of other members of the university community or external stakeholders. Future research could therefore adopt a broader approach by including academic staff, students, graduates, and other relevant stakeholder groups. Comparing these perspectives would make it possible to identify potential discrepancies between the marketing orientation declared at the managerial level and that perceived or manifested at the organizational level.

It would also be of interest to investigate the relationship between marketing orientation and university performance. Future research could examine the extent to which student orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional cooperation contribute to different dimensions of institutional performance, such as student attraction and retention, university reputation and image, student satisfaction and loyalty, research outcomes, and graduates' employment outcomes. Such an approach would make it possible to move beyond a descriptive analysis of marketing orientation towards examining the effects and mechanisms through which it may contribute to institutional performance in the medium and long term.

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LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE THESIS TOPIC

2. Articole în reviste științifice

2.2. în reviste din străinătate recunoscute

1. **Eudochia Jomir**, FOCUSING ON THE NEEDS OF PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AS A FACTOR IN INCREASING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE UNIVERSITY În: European Journal of Accounting, Finance & Business. Suceava, România, Volume 13, Number 1, Year 2025, **ISSN: 2344 - 102X, ISSN-L: 2344 - 102X. pp. 109-117, Baze de date:** Indexat în: Research Papers in Economics – RePEc, Directory of Research Journals Indexing – DRJI, Open Academic Journals Index OAJI, J-Gate, ERIH PLUS, Index Copernicus. Disponibil la: <https://www.accounting-management.ro/index.php?pag=showcontent&issue=37&year=2025>

2.3. În reviste din Registrul Național al revistelor de profil, cu indicarea categoriei

2. **Eudochia, Jomir**, Grigore, Belostecinic. Inteligența artificială în marketingul universitar: unele realități și posibilități de aplicare. În: „Economica”, nr. 1 (131), 2025, pp. 7-27, 1,2 c.a., ISSN 1810-9136, Disponibil: www.ase.md/files/publicatii/economica/ec_2025_1.pdf (Categorie B)

3. Belostecinic G., **Jomir E.** Marketingul educațional online prin prisma creșterii atractivității și consolidării imaginii universității, In: Revista „Economica”. Nr.3 (125), 2023, p 7-27, ISSN 1810-913. Disponibil: https://ase.md/files/publicatii/economica/ec_2023_3_r2.pdf (Categorie B)

4. Grigore Belostecinic, **Eudochia Jomir**. Digital Marketing – a new stage in the evolution of the modern marketing concept. In: „Economica”. Nr.1 (123), 2023, p. 7-22. ISSN 1810-0136. Disponibil: https://ase.md/files/publicatii/economica/ec_2023_1_r1.pdf (Categorie B)

3. Articole în culegeri științifice

3.2. în lucrările conferințelor științifice internaționale (Republica Moldova)

5. Grigore Belostecinic, **Eudochia Jomir**. Online University Marketing: Opportunities and Strategies/ „Competitiveness and Innovation in the Knowledge Economy”. International Scientific Conference, September 22-23, 2023, Chisinau: Conference Proceeding. – Chișinău, ASEM, 2023, p. 167 – 176. ISBN 978-9975-167-39-0 (PDF). (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53486/cike2023.16> UDC: [339.138:004.738.5]:378.4). Disponibil: https://ase.md/files/publicatii/epub/conf_09.23_Proceedings.pdf

6. **E. Jomir**, The role of university image and its impact to competitive advantage, International Scientific Conference ”Development Through Research and Innovation - 2022”, 77-84, ISBN 978-9975-3590-5-4(PDF) , DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7533819, https://ase.md/files/publicatii/epub/conf_08.22_proceedings.pdf

7. **JOMIR, Eudochia, BELOSTECINIC, Grigore**. Education and university research as a factor for improving national security = Educația și cercetarea universitară ca factor de ameliorare a securității naționale. In: Economic Security in the Context of Sustainable Development [online]: The collection

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8. E. Jomir, Premises and possibilities of applying educational marketing in order to improve the image of the university, In: International Scientific Conference "Development Through Research and Innovation - 2021", p. 109-117, ISBN 978—9975-155-54-0, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5732859. Disponibil: https://ase.md/files/publicatii/epub/conf_08.21.pdf

4. Teze în culegeri științifice

4.1. în lucrările conferințelor științifice internaționale (peste hotare)

9. Jomir Eudochia, Belostecinic Grigore. Using the EyeQuant model to evaluate university websites/ Proceedings of The 17-th Edition of EUROINVENT European Exhibition of Creativity and Innovation. ISSN Print: 2601-4564; Online: 2601-4572, p.205-206 Disponibil: https://www.euroinvent.org/cat/EUROINVENT_2025.pdf

4.2. în lucrările conferințelor științifice internaționale (Republica Moldova)

10. Jomir, E., & Belostecinic, G. (2026). Marketing orientation in universities as a fundamental resource for gaining sustainable competitive advantages. În *Sustainability and Economic Resilience in the Context of Global Systemic Transformations* (ediția a 5-a, pp. 45–56). Chișinău: Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova. <https://doi.org/10.53486/ser2026.04>

11. Eudochia Jomir, Grigore Belostecinic, STUDY ON THE EVALUATION OF MARKETING ORIENTATION IN THE ACTIVITY OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA. International Scientific Conference "COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY" September, 26-27, 2025 Chisinau. Book of Abstracts, p.45., Available at: https://conference.ase.md/files/conferinte/main/Programme_and_Abstracts_2025_r5.pdf

12. Grigore BELOSTECINIC, Eudochia JOMIR. SOME DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS SPECIFIC TO THE MODERN CONCEPT OF MARKETING. International Scientific Conference "COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY" September, 26-27, 2025 Chisinau. Book of Abstracts, p.39., Available at: https://conference.ase.md/files/conferinte/main/Programme_and_Abstracts_2025_r5.pdf

13. Grigore Belostecinic, Eudochia Jomir. Using Artificial Intelligence in Evaluating University Websites. – 28-th International Scientific Conference Competitiveness and Innovation in the Knowledge Economy", September, 20-21, 2024, Chișinău. Book of Abstracts, p.15-16., Available at: https://conference.ase.md/files/publicatii/epub/conf_09.24_Abstract.pdf

ADNOTARE

Jomir Eudochia. „Marketingul educațional prin prisma creșterii atractivității și consolidării imaginii universității”. Teză de doctor în științe economice.

521.04. Marketing și logistică.

Chișinău, 2026

Structura tezei: introducere, trei capitole, concluzii și recomandări, bibliografie (307), 158 pagini text de bază, 6 tabele, 69 figuri și 11 anexe. Rezultatele studiului sunt publicate în 13 lucrări științifice

Cuvinte-cheie: marketing, învățământ superior, universitate, student, potențiali la studii, orientare de marketing, orientare spre piață, imagine, imagine percepută, atractivitate, reputație.

Scopul lucrării constă în fundamentarea teoretică și evaluarea empirică a rolului orientării de marketing în creșterea atractivității universităților din Republica Moldova, prin analiza nivelului de orientare spre marketing al instituțiilor de învățământ superior, a factorilor care determină alegerea universității de către potențialii studenți, precum și a rolului imaginii și reputației instituționale în formarea atractivității percepute a universității, elaborarea unor direcții și recomandări de consolidare a orientării de marketing a universităților.

Obiectivele cercetării: analiza și sistematizarea abordărilor teoretice și conceptuale privind marketingul educațional, orientarea spre marketing în învățământul superior; analiza contextului și a principalelor tendințe și provocări ale învățământului superior din Republica Moldova; identificarea și analiza factorilor care determină alegerea universității de către potențenții la studii; analiza de conținut a strategiilor/planurilor strategice de dezvoltare ale universităților din Republica Moldova; evaluarea nivelului și a principalelor dimensiuni ale orientării de marketing în activitatea universităților din Republica Moldova și România; determinarea influenței orientării de marketing asupra atractivității universităților; elaborarea unor direcții și recomandări privind consolidarea orientării de marketing a universităților din Republica Moldova în vederea consolidării imaginii și creșterii atractivității acestora pe piața serviciilor de învățământ superior.

Noutatea și originalitatea științifică constă în fundamentarea și dezvoltarea unei abordări integrate a marketingului universitar, orientată spre creșterea atractivității și consolidarea imaginii percepute a instituțiilor de învățământ superior din Republica Moldova, prin corelarea dimensiunilor de marketing, imagine și reputație instituțională cu factorii care determină alegerea universității de către potențenții la studii.

Problema științifică soluționată: constă în fundamentarea științifică a mecanismelor de valorificare a marketingului educațional în vederea creșterii atractivității și consolidării imaginii universității, prin identificarea și corelarea factorilor care determină alegerea instituției de învățământ superior de către potențenții la studii, evaluarea accesibilității, disponibilității și relevanței informațiilor oferite acestora și determinarea nivelului de orientare de marketing și de implementare a conceptului de marketing în universitățile din Republica Moldova.

Semnificația teoretică rezidă în dezvoltarea și aprofundarea cadrului conceptual privind marketingul universitar și în explicarea relației dintre orientarea de marketing, imaginea, reputația percepută și atractivitatea instituțiilor de învățământ superior.

Valoarea aplicativă este determinată de posibilitatea utilizării rezultatelor obținute în procesul de elaborare și perfecționare a politicilor și strategiilor de marketing, a strategiilor de comunicare și promovare, a planurilor de marketing și a politicilor privind atragerea potențenților la studii ale instituțiilor de învățământ superior din Republica Moldova.

Implementarea rezultatelor științifice: Rezultatele cercetărilor au fost publicate în 13 lucrări științifice, inclusiv în reviste științifice acreditate, și prezentate în cadrul mai multor manifestări științifice naționale și internaționale. Concluziile și recomandările înaintate au fost acceptate spre implementare în activitatea de marketing desfășurată în cadrul Academiei de Studii Economice din Moldova și Universității Cooperatist-Comerciale din Moldova, fapt confirmat prin anexarea la teză a certificatelor de implementare.

ANNOTATION

Jomir Eudochia. "Educational marketing through the prism of increasing attractiveness and strengthening the image of the university." Doctoral thesis in economic sciences.

521.04. Marketing and logistics.

Chişinău, 2026

Thesis structure: introduction, three chapters, conclusions and recommendations, bibliography (307 sources), 158 pages of main text, 6 tables, 69 figures, and 11 appendices. The research results have been published in 13 scientific papers.

Keywords: marketing, higher education, university, student, prospective students, marketing orientation, market orientation, image, perceived image, attractiveness, reputation.

The purpose of the research is to provide a theoretical foundation and an empirical assessment of the role of marketing orientation in increasing the attractiveness of universities in the Republic of Moldova. This is achieved by analysing the level of marketing orientation of higher education institutions, the factors determining prospective students' choice of university, and the role of institutional image and reputation in shaping the perceived attractiveness of universities, as well as by developing guidelines and recommendations for strengthening universities' marketing orientation.

Research objectives: to analyse and systematise theoretical and conceptual approaches to educational marketing and marketing orientation in higher education; to analyse the context and the main trends and challenges facing higher education in the Republic of Moldova; to identify and analyse the factors determining prospective students' choice of university; to conduct a content analysis of the development strategies/strategic development plans of universities in the Republic of Moldova; to assess the level and main dimensions of marketing orientation in the activities of universities in the Republic of Moldova and Romania; to determine the influence of marketing orientation on university attractiveness; and to develop guidelines and recommendations for strengthening the marketing orientation of universities in the Republic of Moldova, with a view to enhancing their image and increasing their attractiveness in the higher education services market.

The scientific novelty and originality lie in substantiating and developing an integrated approach to university marketing aimed at increasing the attractiveness and strengthening the perceived image of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova by correlating the dimensions of marketing, institutional image, and reputation with the factors determining prospective students' choice of university.

The scientific problem addressed consists in providing a scientific foundation for the mechanisms through which educational marketing can be leveraged to increase university attractiveness and strengthen its image. This is achieved by identifying and correlating the factors determining prospective students' choice of higher education institution, assessing the accessibility, availability, and relevance of the information provided to them, and determining the level of marketing orientation and implementation of the marketing concept in universities in the Republic of Moldova.

The theoretical significance lies in developing and expanding the conceptual framework of university marketing and explaining the relationship between marketing orientation, perceived image and reputation, and the attractiveness of higher education institutions.

Practical value: is determined by the possibility of using the research findings in the development and improvement of marketing policies and strategies, communication and promotional strategies, marketing plans, and policies aimed at attracting prospective students to higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova.

Implementation of the scientific results: The research results have been published in 13 scientific papers, including papers published in accredited scientific journals, and presented at several national and international scientific events. The conclusions and recommendations put forward have been accepted for implementation in the marketing activities conducted by the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova and the Cooperative-Commercial University of Moldova, as confirmed by the implementation certificates appended to the thesis.

JOMIR EUDUCHIA

**EDUCATIONAL MARKETING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ENHANCING
UNIVERSITY ATTRACTIVENESS AND STRENGTHENING ITS IMAGE**

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