

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON THE MARKETING MIX OF UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDY PROGRAMS WITHIN THREE STATE UNIVERSITIES IN BUCHAREST

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ABSTRACT

Over time, marketing in the field of education has become more and more used, as the proper use of the elements of the marketing mix has been the basis of successful strategies used by higher education institutions. In this article, three faculties with the profile 'Public Administration' of three state universities in Bucharest were analyzed: The Faculty of Administration and Public Management (FAMP) within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE), the Faculty of Public Administration (FAP) within the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (SNSPA), and the Faculty of Administration and Business (FAA) within the University of Bucharest (UniBuc). Using the comparison method, we studied the offers of the three faculties in terms of the elements of the marketing mix, namely: product, price, placement, and promotion. The results we have obtained show that universities are trying to adapt to the online environment and the ever-changing society so as to offer young people quality study programs that contribute to the training of specialists capable of facing the challenges and innovations that constantly arise in the public sector. People interested in educational services (pupils, students, graduates) are using technology and social networks more and more frequently to find out about topics of interest and to cover the needs of knowledge.

KEYWORDS: *marketing mix, educational marketing, higher education, public administration.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In an ever-changing society with increasingly powerful technologies and web tools, the role of marketing is becoming crucial. Universities have started to use the basic marketing mix (product, price, promotion, and placement) more and more frequently, realizing the importance of marketing in the activities they carry out. The efficient use of the marketing mix offers the possibility for specialists to fulfill their established objectives. To achieve optimal results, it is necessary to use all the elements in the best possible way, and universities should implement the methods tested and adopted that companies have been using for decades.

In this context, universities are looking for new ways to improve their market presence and increase stakeholder satisfaction. Marketing can be one of the solutions due to the fact that a correct approach and the use of a proper marketing strategy can lead to the collection of new information and the improvement of the decision-making process and the quality of decisions. Studies (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001; Teixeira et al., 2006; Williamson, 2021) have shown that the ever-changing environment and growing pressure from social groups and the public are leading higher education institutions to develop improved ways to address market challenges.

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Thus, the main objective of this paper is to investigate the perceptions of perhaps the most important stakeholders of universities, namely undergraduate and graduate students, regarding the marketing mix of the faculty where they study. In this way, we aim to identify the elements of the marketing mix that have the potential to improve the image of higher education institutions by looking at elements such as the level of student satisfaction with the program, determining the degree of student satisfaction with fees, and also the identification of the methods by which the faculties are promoted.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Authors such as Sereikienė-Abromaitytė (2013) and Pruskus (2015) state that through the marketing mix, we consider all the elements related to products, distribution, promotion, and prices to satisfy the target markets. In addition, marketing is a complex range of marketing mix solutions used in the institution that tries to sell its products and services to interested customers.

In recent years, the education market has become increasingly dynamic and complex. For this reason, there are several variables that have an impact on moderating the education market. Competition between universities is increasing and will continue to increase as the number of students decreases due to the declining number of students enrolled in primary and secondary education. Furthermore, the decrease in the birth rate has an impact on the number of students enrolled in education. (Zumeta et al., 2021)

It has been found that as more and more money is paid for tuition and other taxes, people are paying more and more attention to higher education. Therefore, authorities are becoming increasingly attentive to this situation, while universities focus on achieving the objectives that consider the satisfaction of students, but also the satisfaction of employers when graduates enter the labor market (Braun & Brachem, 2015).

Knowing which are the main variables that influence the market and what are the expectations of customers, marketing has developed tools to address the situation, the first tool being the marketing mix, which appeared in 1964 (Luca & Verzea, 2005). Considering that educational products encompass the entire features of services (intangibility, inseparability, variability, perishability), the most appropriate field of applicable marketing is that of services (Zeithaml et al., 1985).

Specialists such as Kotler & Fox (1995) believe that educational marketing should be approached with the following features in mind:

- Heterogeneous character;
- Perishability;
- Property;
- Inseparability;
- Intangibility.

Based on these features, it was concluded that educational marketing has a multitude of characteristics, some of which also refer to the price, product, placement, and promotion of the educational activity. Therefore, in order to develop a marketing strategy, there is a broad process that must be designed using educational strategies and policies that highlight both the direction and the objectives, methods, and selected means (Chișu, 2007).

For the marketing mix to be successful, equal proportions of the four components of the mix should not be used, but harmony can be created as there must be a balance between them. According to Chișu (2007), the 4 Ps represent the essential elements with which any higher education institution can carry out its activity so as to register an impact at the highest possible level, and the factors with the highest influence are: financial, technical resources and information, the university's management structure and its organizational structure.

According to Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2012), education marketing is a 'mandatory managerial function' without which no university can survive in such a competitive and changing environment. Through educational marketing, a close link is created between two main actors: the target audience, i.e. future students and the university itself. That is why a university could not function without

making the elements of its marketing mix known to the public. The most difficult task for universities is to attract a sufficient number of competent and motivated people who want to assimilate as many notions as possible related to the field they choose to study. Another very important aspect is the competition between universities regarding the offer of educational products and services that they make available to the target audience.

Therefore, marketing in the field of education plays a key role in the development of higher education institutions as they have to face the challenge of ensuring a correlation between the main needs and aspirations of consumers of educational services and the existing requirements on the labor market. The educational marketing adopted by universities contributes both to the determination of the competitive advantage and the market position, as well as to the increase or decrease of the university's visibility on the market, depending on the degree of fulfillment of objectives and success generated by the use of marketing mix.

Service marketing offers the opportunity to work with seven marketing approaches. Along with the four elements of traditional marketing (product, price, placement, and promotion) there are three more options available: people, process, and physical evidence (Orîndaru, 2016). These three complementary strategies are intended to provide relevant information about educational products and useful tools to develop successful marketing strategies that the university can use.

In educational marketing, methods and techniques designed for the service market are used, being a subcategory of service marketing (Olteanu, 1998). One of the most important approaches is the 7 P approach. Each of the seven elements has a unique role in the marketing mix, having an impact on the student throughout the consumption of educational services. All components of services have the ability to increase or decrease the impact of the other components. Each component with its role is briefly described in the following.

2.1. Product

The product is maybe the most important part of the traditional marketing mix, being considered the "heart of marketing" by authors such as Haedrich and Tomzak (1996) or Gussek (2013), because without it organizations would not be able to operate. All the qualities of a service are present in the educational product through intangibility, inseparability, variety, and perishability. Because the educational product is perishable, higher education institutions have a duty to provide services until they no longer have consumers for the educational program. The product strategy can be seen from two points of view.

First of all, we can think of the educational service as a product, and the student as a consumer. On the other hand, the student is considered a "product" distributed on the labor market. Analyzing the first variant in which the student is a client, it is observed that educational institutions will focus on the satisfaction of the students. An extreme example of student-centered universities is "diploma factories" where, in order to attract more students, these universities do not use a strong selection of enrollments, and the educational program offered is not always suitable for the labor market. When we consider the labor market as a client, the institution has as a priority the fixation of the knowledge that the student needs in order to have a successful career. Thus, the product within the institution will be correlated with the current needs that exist in the labor market. In order to benefit both students and institutions, there should be a balance so that the gaps disappear as the needs of students and the labor market are equally important (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2021)

2.2. Price

The strategic pricing option directly influences a university's revenue. Competitors' costs, prices, and offers all have an impact on the price of an educational program or schooling (Balaure et al., 2002; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2021). Due to the fact that Romanian universities receive additional money directly from the state budget, the cost of a program is the most important element in setting the price. As a result, there is a significant correlation between a university's pricing strategy and the financial plan it adopts.

A high demand for a certain educational program will increase the number of students enrolled. The price will also be higher if the program is unique in the market or if the competition in that branch is weaker. Furthermore, a higher cost of the educational program may indicate that the university program is new or less common in the market.

2.3. Placement

The strategic placement or distribution option identifies the most effective techniques for transmitting knowledge to students. Over time, access to information has become easier and faster (Enache et al., 2013; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2021). Higher education institutions can distribute their study offerings through television or radio services. By providing information online, web portals can help universities increase their visibility.

If the communication process is two-way, it can also be a useful feedback tool. Contact with the economic sector is becoming increasingly crucial in the second instance. The placement strategy will be successful if the educational product is designed to meet the requirements of the economy. Otherwise, the knowledge passed on to students will be irrelevant to the requirements of the labor market or society. Although the placement strategy may seem like a far-fetched idea, it can provide additional services that can make the difference between meeting and exceeding expectations.

2.4. Promotion

Students are one of the most important groups of beneficiaries, so the strategic promotion option must focus on determining the best ways to reach the desired audience (Enache et al., 2013; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2021). The website is an essential means of communication at the moment, and a website that can inform and lead candidates to the next step is an important element in a successful information process. The institution must then effectively communicate its expectations and opportunities. An online portal of relevant information could be a significant tool, given the characteristics of the students. Contact with former students after graduation will allow the institution to evaluate the performance and usefulness of the educational program.

The Public Relations Office can be another powerful tool for improving the promotion strategy of the higher education institution. However, the image of the institution has a huge impact on the approach of a promotion strategy. The image of a university has the ability to enhance the message conveyed. Universities are interested in creating and maintaining a good image and having increased visibility, as the educational environment is proving to be a difficult branch for rebranding. As a result, reputation management is becoming more common in contemporary higher education institutions.

2.5. People

The educational service is inextricably linked to the people who provide it because it is an indivisible and constantly changing product. To attract students and financial resources, while providing a quality service, both teaching and administrative staff are essential (Manea, 2015; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2021). In addition, the human resources strategy has a significant impact on the product strategy, pricing strategy, process strategy, and promotion strategy. The component of building a successful educational service is having the right staff to generate and provide information. The ability to distribute information appropriately is essential. The way university academics interact with the media and public opinion can improve the image of the university, and the promotion strategy can be improved. A university could begin to develop a successful marketing mix by properly evaluating employees and matching strengths with market opportunities.

2.6. Process

The strategy of the process, together with the administrative staff plan, is responsible for the smooth delivery of educational services to consumers. As long as services require action and bureaucracy, the procedural approach can be seen as a key component in reducing dissatisfaction among all parties involved. The enrollment process is one of the most important responsibilities of a university's

process strategy. As it is the only procedure that turns a candidate into a student, all the methods used are of the utmost importance (Manea, 2015; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2021). The strategy of the process, together with the strategy of the staff, contributes to strengthening the visibility of the institution and can attract more candidates.

2.7. Physical evidence

The intangibility of the educational product highlights the quality of the services offered and also the knowledge that students accumulate over the years to obtain the graduation diploma. During the enrollment period, the value of the services offered is reflected in the visual elements: the buildings and facilities that the campus offers. Students' first impression of the university environment is influenced by all aspects of physical evidence (Manea, 2015; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2021). Given that all other strategic options have little impact on any of the five senses, physical evidence is responsible for the tangible meaning of the educational offer.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Purpose and Objectives of the Research

We believe that in order to improve the image of the higher education institution, it is important to know the perceptions of students in the bachelor's and master's cycles on the marketing mix of the faculty where they study. To fulfill the purpose of the research, the research approach pursued the following objectives:

Objective 1: Establish the level of student satisfaction with the study program followed.

Objective 2: Determine the degree of satisfaction of students with the fees charged by the faculties.

Objective 3: Identify methods for promoting faculties.

3.2. Research hypotheses

The following are the three hypotheses that have been tested to achieve the purpose and objectives of the research.

Hypothesis 1: Students consider that the fees charged reflect the quality of the services provided.

Hypothesis 2: Instagram is the most used information method chosen by students to obtain faculty-related information.

Hypothesis 3: Current students chose the faculty they attended because of the information they found on the website before enrolling.

The practical part of this study is presented as a result of the analysis in the following sections. We used three research methods (document analysis, benchmarking, and opinion polling) to identify and evaluate the views of FAMP, FAP, and FAA students on the marketing mix of the faculty where they study.

The application of the questionnaire took place between 02.09.2021-18.09.2021 and was addressed to all students from FAMP, FAP, and FAA. It was distributed on WhatsApp groups of the targeted faculties and retrieved 352 valid answers. The questionnaire contained 18 questions, of which the first 4 were identification questions, while the other 14 were used to test the three hypotheses regarding the products and promotion policies of the faculties, as they were questions of opinion / perception and matrix.

Based on the questionnaire, we can see Table 1 which considers the profile of the respondents and describes the research sample by the faculty where they study, gender, age, and background.

Table 1 - Data on the identification of the respondents

Gender	Age	The Faculty of Provenance	The Environment of Origin
Female: 60 % Male: 40 %	18-21 years: 47 % 22-25 years: 35 % 26-29 years: 16 % Over 30 years: 2 %	FAMP (ASE): 65 % FAA (UNIBUC): 14 % FAP (SNSPA): 21 %	Rural: 16 % Urban: 84 %

Source: Own processing

4. RESULTS OF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BASED ON THE 4P

4.1. General description of the faculties analyzed

4.1.1. Faculty of Administration and Public Management

The Faculty of Administration and Public Management, abbreviated as FAMP, is located in Piata Romană, Bucharest, in the headquarters of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. It was born in the academic year 2010 - 2011, initially starting with only one bachelor's program called "Public Administration" (AP). From the academic year of 2014-2015, the bachelor's program "Human Resources" (RU) will be created.

The educational offer of FAMP also includes three master's programs, namely 'Administration and Public Management' (AMP), 'Public Administration and European Integration' (APIE) and 'Public Sector Human Resource Management' (MRUSP) (FAMP, 2021).

4.1.2. Faculty of Public Administration

The Faculty of Public Administration (FAP) has its headquarters in District 1 of the Municipality of Bucharest on Exhibition Boulevard no. 30A, 6th floor, represents one of the five faculties that are part of the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (SNSPA). The year 1991 marks the creation of the Department of Administrative Sciences within SNSPA based on the Government Decision no. 183 regarding the organization of SNSPA, following that 4 years later the FAP will be established. Ten years after the establishment of the faculty, its capabilities are recognized, and it is accredited by a government decision (FAP, 2021).

In October 2000, FAP expanded its educational offering by launching master's degree programs and introducing the possibility of distance learning for both undergraduate and master's degree programs. The year 2008 marks the recognition of European public administration programs by the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA).

4.1.3. Faculty of Administration and Business

In 2000, the Faculty of Administration and Business (FAA) was created within the University of Bucharest (UniBuc), which has the following fields of study: Public Administration; Business Administration; Marketing; Economic Cybernetics. On the basis of these fields, bachelor's and master's degree programs have been formed with the role of supporting students' lifelong learning.

This faculty offers its students unique facilities through partnership agreements and ERASMUS mobilities. The FAA stood out in the academic year 2019-2020 by the total number of partnerships concluded with different national and international universities, 66 in number from 18 countries. In addition to the above, an opportunity for both students and teachers is that the FAA has a chance to develop partnerships with various US universities (FAA, 2021).

4.2. Product Policy

4.2.1. Faculty of Administration and Public Management

Within the FAMP there are two undergraduate programs, namely AP and RU, and at the master's level there are three programs, these being the following: AMP, APIE and MRUSP, all of these programs being with IF type teaching (full-time education). Below we will describe the offer of each program regarding the number of places put up for competition for the academic year 2021-2022.

The 'Public Administration' bachelor program has been introduced within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies since the 1995-1996 academic year in the Faculty of Management and has been operating within the FAMP since its establishment in the 2010-2011 academic year. This program is accredited by ARACIS and EAPAA at the European level in the field of "Administrative Sciences" (FAMP, 2021). For the program presented, the educational offer related to the year 2021-2022 is the following:

- The total number of places put up for competition is 305 of which:
 - 126 places financed from the budget;
 - 179 with tuition fees.

The academic year 2014-2015 marks the beginning of the operation of the bachelor program "Human Resources", within the faculty. Like the previous bachelor program presented, this program is also accredited by ARACIS. (FAMP, 2021). For the Human Resources program, the number of places put up for competition in the academic year 2021-2022 is the following.

- A total of 104 places of which
 - 42 places financed from the budget;
 - 62 with tuition fees.

In the next part we will show the tuition figure for the year 2021-2022 for the three master's programs within the faculty.

For the AMP program, the tuition is:

- A total of 50 places, of which:
 - 35 financed from the budget;
 - 15 with tuition fees.

For the APIE program, the number of places put up for competition is as follows:

- A total of 45 places, of which:
 - 24 financed from the budget;
 - 21 with tuition fees.

Under the MRUSP program, the following places are put up for competition.

- A total of 45 places, of which:
 - 27 financed from the budget;
 - 18 with tuition fees.

4.2.2. Faculty of Public Administration

FAP within SNSPA has three undergraduate programs, two of which are full-time: "Public Administration" and "European Administration" and one distance learning program (ID): "Public Administration" (FAP, 2021). According to the faculty website, the number of places put up for competition for undergraduate studies for the academic year 2021-2022 is as follows.

- At the 'Public Administration' (IF) program: 200 places;
- At the "European Administration" (IF) program: 150 places;
- In the 'Public Administration' (ID) program: 100 with tuition fees.

Within the FAP there are three master's fields that include a total of 13 master's programs (FAP, 2021).

The first field is the field "Administrative Sciences" IF in which there are seven programs with a total enrollment for the year 2021-2022 of 310 places divided by the seven programs, these being:

- The program "Public Integrity and Anti-Corruption Policies" which has a capacity of 45;
- The program "Management of Public Affairs" with a capacity of 45;
- The program "Public Sector Management" with a capacity of 45;
- The 'Public Sector Management' program in English with a capacity of 40;
- The program "Executive Power and Public Administration" with a capacity of 45;
- The program "European Public Space" with a capacity of 45;
- The program "European Administrative Studies" has a capacity of 45.

The second field is the "Administrative Sciences" IFR (e-Master), where there are four master's programs, with a total enrollment of 140 places, the programs are as follows:

- "Public Sector Management" Program;
- The program "Executive Power and Public Administration";
- The 'European Public Space' program;
- The program 'European Administrative Studies'.

The third area is the IF field 'Law' in which there are two programs, with a total tuition of 75 places, divided as follows:

- The program "European Law and Governance" with a capacity of 40;
- The program "Local Government Law" with a capacity of 35.

4.2.3. Faculty of Administration and Business

The Faculty of Administration and Business (FAA) of the University of Bucharest (UniBuc) has five undergraduate programs that are integrated into three areas, namely: "Administrative Sciences", "Economic Sciences" and "Cybernetics, Statistics, and Economic Informatics" (FAA, 2021). The "Public Administration" program is part of the "Administrative Sciences" field; it has been operating since 2000 and welcomes future students with many specialized disciplines in the administrative field and with a total of 250 places put up for competition for the academic year 2021- 2022.

As a master's degree, the FAA has three fields: "Business Administration," "Administrative Science," and "Marketing," which includes a total of 11 master's programs in both English and Romanian (FAA, 2021). The educational offer of the programs includes the following places put up for competition for the year 2021-2022:

- "Business Consulting" program with teaching in English, 50 places;
- 'Behavioral Economics' program with teaching in English, 50 places;
- 'Business Consulting' program, 50 places;
- 'Small and Medium Business Administration' program, 50 places;
- The program "Administration of Public Policies in the European Union", 50 places;
- Human Resources Management and Development Program, 50 places;
- The program 'Public Administration and Efficiency of the Administrative System', 50 places;
- The program 'Public Relations Administration and Management Assistance', 50 places;
- 'Crisis management' program, 50 places;
- 'Public procurement management' program, 50 places;
- "Strategic Marketing and Sales Management", 50 places.

4.3. Price policy

4.3.1. Faculty of Administration and Public Management

Along with the submission of the application file for undergraduate studies, the registration fee of 120 RON is also paid, which includes the possibility to choose two options, for example, Human Resources-budget and Public Administration-budget. After the first two options are exhausted, 40 RON/ additional option is paid. The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, respectively, FAMP, has as a fee for undergraduate programs for students who pay tuition fees in the amount of 4,000 RON / academic year. This fee is paid in two equal installments at the beginning of each semester (ASE, 2021).

Regarding the master's programs, respectively: AMP, APIE and MRUSP, the tuition fee is 5,000 RON / academic year. As with undergraduate programs, the fee for master's programs is paid in two equal installments. Unlike the registration fee for undergraduates, the one for the master's degree is 250 RON (ASE, 2021).

4.3.2. Faculty of Public Administration

Within the FAP, both for the bachelor's and master's programs, a registration fee for the admission contest is paid, in worth of 80 RON. After registration, another registration fee must be paid, representing 100 RON. For undergraduate programs in both full-time and distance education, FAP charges annually the amount of 2900 RON / academic year. This amount is paid in three installments during the year (SNSPA, 2021).

When it comes to master's programs, tuition fees differ depending on the language of instruction of the program. The programs with full-time education and part-time education, taught in Romanian, have a tuition fee of 3300 RON / academic year; this fee can be paid in three installments. In the case of master's programs taught in English, the tuition fee is 4,000 RON (SNSPA, 2021) and, like the rest of the programs, can be paid in three installments. Installments for programs taught in English have the same deadline as for the rest of the programs.

4.3.3. Faculty of Administration and Business

Within the FAA, there are several taxes to consider, most of which have the option of paying taxes in full or in installments. The first fee to be paid under the bachelor programs is the registration fee for the admission competition in the amount of RON 150 (UniBuc, 2021).

For those candidates who have to pay tuition fees, the amount is 3300 RON / academic year. As with undergraduate programs, the tuition fee for master's programs is also 3300 RON / academic year (UniBuc, 2021).

4.4. Distribution policy

4.4.1. Faculty of Administration and Public Management

When we talk about distribution policy, we are talking about several aspects that can be analyzed in universities. In the case of FAMP, we will further analyze the following aspects:

- The form of education of the study programs, i.e., the way of providing educational services;
- Faculty headquarters;

Both undergraduate and post-graduate FAMP programs, i.e. 'Public Administration' and 'Human Resources', as well as master's programs: AMP, APIE, and MRUSP are characterized by the organization of courses only in the mode of full-time education.

The location of the FAMP headquarters is in the Ion N. Angelescu Building, this being located on Căderea Bastiliei Street no. 2-10 and being one of the most emblematic buildings in the capital. This gives the faculty a competitive advantage because it is located in the center of Bucharest and there are many transportation routes to reach its headquarters. In previous years, students had to walk between several buildings to attend classes and seminars.

4.4.2. Faculty of Public Administration

Unlike the faculty presented above, FAP differs in the category of "form of education". The differences are set out below:

- In undergraduate studies, this faculty has three specializations which are divided as a form of education:
 - 'Public Administration' which has two ways of learning:
 - Full-time education (IF);
 - Distance learning (ID).
 - "European Administration" is a form of full-time education.

- When we talk about master's studies offered by FAP, we are talking about two ways of learning: full-time education and part-time education.

The Faculty Headquarters is a weak point, as students can only get by bus 105 or tram 5 on Exhibition Boulevard.

4.4.3. Faculty of Administration and Business

The FAA has the largest and most diverse range of study programs, with a total of five undergraduate and eleven master's degree programs. Even though it has the largest number of programs among the three faculties from our analysis, these programs have only the form of learning - "full-time education".

This faculty operates within UniBuc and is located on Regina Elisabeta Boulevard no. 4-12. As in the case of the FAMP, the FAA headquarters contributes to its competitive advantage being in the center of the city and having a lot of public transport options.

4.5. Promotion policy

4.5.1. Faculty of Administration and Public Management

In recent years, promotional activities have been more widely used regardless of the field of activity. This is also due to the substantial increase in the number of people using the Internet and the number of users of social networks. Due to these things, online promotion is nowadays indispensable. FAMP uses a variety of online promotional activities to make itself known, thus attracting potential future students.

The platforms through which FAMP makes itself known in the on-line environment are: the faculty website; FAMP Facebook page; FAMP's Instagram page; FAMP's Tiktok account, and FAMP's YouTube channel.

4.5.2. Faculty of Public Administration

FAP was promoted through traditional methods, but also through online methods. In recent years, online methods have predominated, and the faculty has adapted to these changes and has begun to be more and more active on social networks and thus to reach as many future students as possible.

In the online environment, FAP has a well-structured website and accounts on the following social networks: FAP's Facebook page and FAP's Instagram page.

4.5.3. Faculty of Administration and Business

Like the rest of the faculties, the FAA relies mainly on online promotion, but has not given up on traditional methods either. The social networks that the faculty use to promote themselves are: the FAA website; FAA Facebook page; FAA Instagram page; and FAA YouTube channel.

4.6. Summary of the comparative analysis of the three faculties studied

Table 2 summarizes the comparative analysis based on the 4Ps of the marketing mix and provides an overview of the compared elements.

Table 2 - Comparative analysis of the three faculties

Criteria	FAMP	FAP	FAA
The initiation of the 'Public Administration' program	Academic year 1995-1996	1995	2000
Educational offer - undergraduate programs	2 programs	3 programs	5 programs

Educational offer - Master's programs	3 programs	13 programs	11 programs
Enrollment figure - "Public Administration" program	Budget: 129 Tuition fee: 176	200	250
Enrollment figure - Master's degree programs	Budget: 84 Tuition fee: 56	525	550
Tuition fees (price policy)	Bachelor: 4000 RON/academic year Master: 5000 RON/academic year	Bachelor: 2900 RON/academic year Master in Romania: 3300 RON/academic year Master in English: 4000 RON/academic year	Bachelor: 3300 RON/academic year Master: 3300 RON/academic year
Form of education	Bachelor: IF Master: IF	Bachelor: IF, ID Master: IF, IFR	Bachelor: IF Master: IF
Facebook account	3.364 likes	5.800 likes	8.149 likes
Instagram account	1.135 followers	467 followers	386 followers.
YouTube account	93 subscribers	-	250 subscribers
TikTok	579 followers.	-	-

Source: Own elaboration

5. DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Approximately 280 students admit to being satisfied with the chosen study program, with a percentage of 79%. Only a small number of students claim to be not satisfied with the study program they are pursuing, namely 62 students, representing 18%. After completing their studies, most graduates are looking for a job, but not all agree that they are prepared for the challenges of the labor market. Out of a total of 352 respondents, 198 believe that they are well prepared to face the obstacles encountered at work (56%) and 140 respondents (40%) do not consider that they will overcome the obstacles that may arise.

To the question "If you had the opportunity to choose the study program again, would you choose the same program?" the majority of respondents, i.e., 210 respondents representing 60% of the total respondents, stated that they would choose the same curriculum. Only 137 (39%) of the respondents would have chosen another program. These answers represent the satisfaction of the students with the study program they are currently following and are graphically presented in Figure 1.

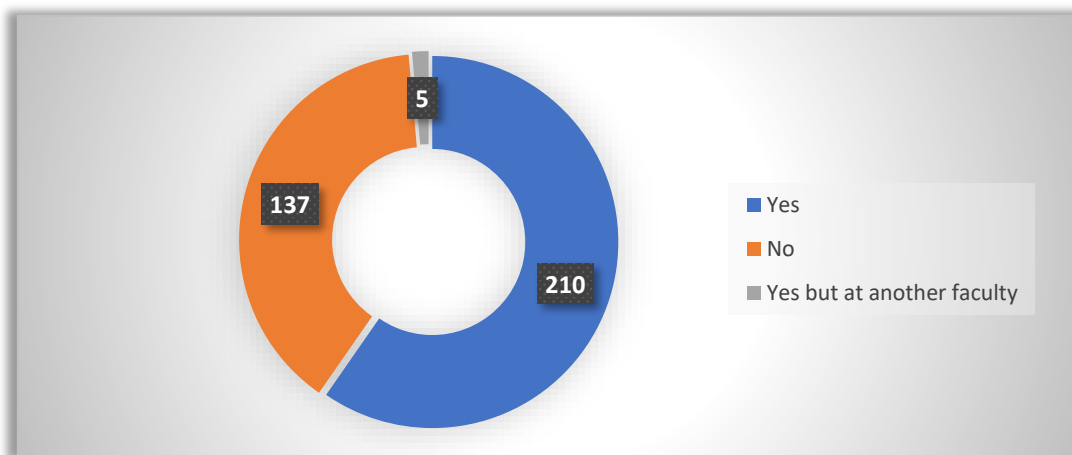


Figure 1 - Choosing the study program

Source: Own processing

As we can see in Figure 2, among the students who responded to this questionnaire, 215 of them (52%) said that they were informed about the program chosen through online promotion methods. Only 55 (14%) were informed by traditional methods. A fairly significant number of students claim to have learned about the study program from friends, namely 132 (32%) respondents, and 9 students chose other sources of information, for example: teachers, family, etc.

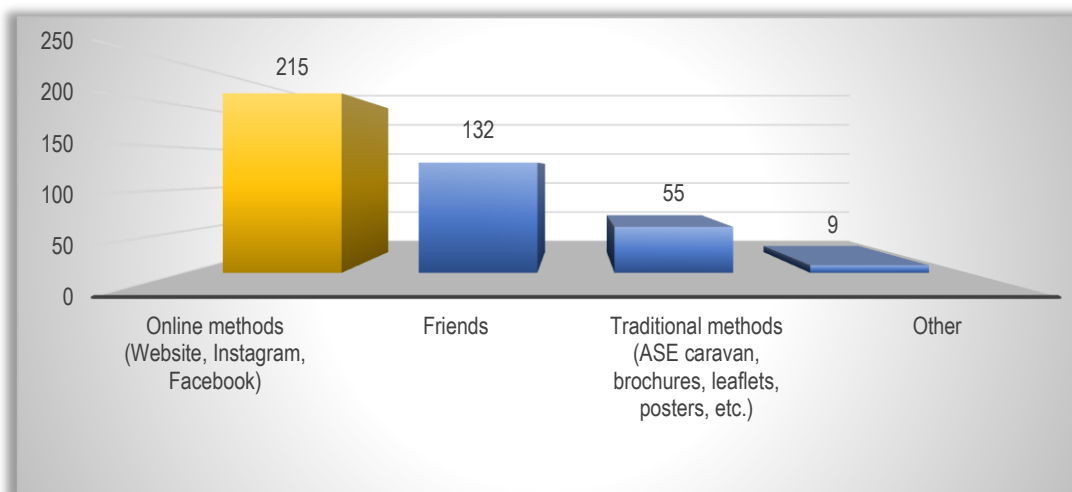


Figure 2 - Information method regarding the study program chosen

Source: Own processing

To the question "Did you visit this website before enrolling in college?" most of the students confirmed (286 respondents, i.e. 81%) that they visited the faculty website before enrolling. Only 58 respondents (17%) said they had not visited the website before. These answers show that the website is an important tool for the competitive advantage of faculties to attract future students. Out of the 352 respondents, 134 claim that the information found on the website is very useful for future students, because here they find information about study programs, admission, subjects taught, etc. On the other hand, there are 9 respondents who consider the information on the website irrelevant.

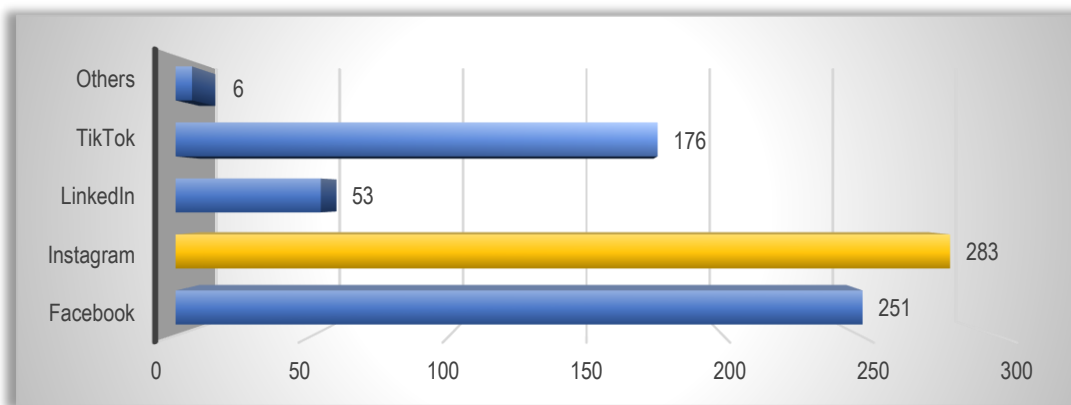


Figure 3 - Social networks on which students have accounts

Source: Own processing

As we can see in Figure 3, most of the respondents responded that they have an Instagram account, respectively, 283 respondents, followed by Facebook with a number of 251 responses. On the TikTok social network, only 176 respondents claim to have an account, and on the LinkedIn network, we notice that very few students have an account, 53 respondents. Based on the responses received, it can be deduced that the students' favorite social network is Instagram, which was chosen by 273 respondents, which represents 78% of the total responses.

Social networks have become an essential element in people's lives, so the faculties have adapted to social change and created pages on various platforms in order to keep in touch with current students and graduates and to promote educational services. The perception of 231 students (66%) about the Instagram platform is that it is an effective method of information, and 98 students consider that it is not such a useful method. The data collected showed that more than 50% of the respondents often or very often use the Instagram platform to find out about the activities of the faculty, of which 86 respondents claim to be informed very often, and 95 students said they use the platform often for this purpose. At the other end of the spectrum, we have 54 students who admit that they rarely use Instagram in this regard.

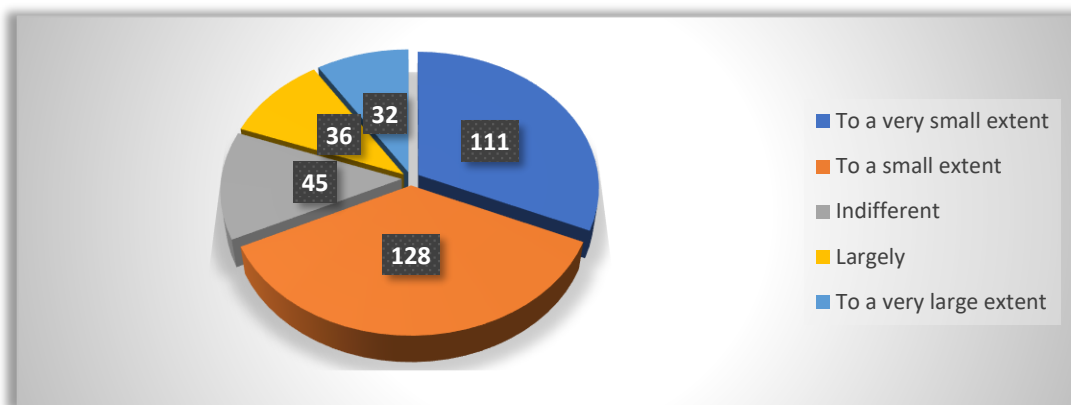


Figure 4 - Student perception of the accessibility of the tuition fee for undergraduate programs

Source: Own processing

When it comes to fees, the majority of respondents (236, that is, 67%) consider that the value of the tuition fee was not the decisive factor in choosing the faculty. Only 104 respondents (30%) chose the faculty based on the value of the fee. We can conclude that the students from the 3 faculties did not consider that the fee is a decisive factor in choosing the faculty. On the other hand, as we can see in Figure 4, 111 students consider that the tuition fee for undergraduate programs is very affordable and 128 responded that it is accessible to a very small extent. These answers show that the tuition fee may

be considered too high for some students, but basically affordable. Furthermore, a significant number of 249 respondents (71%) believe that the value of the tuition fee for master's programs does not have a high degree of accessibility, as we can see in Figure 5.

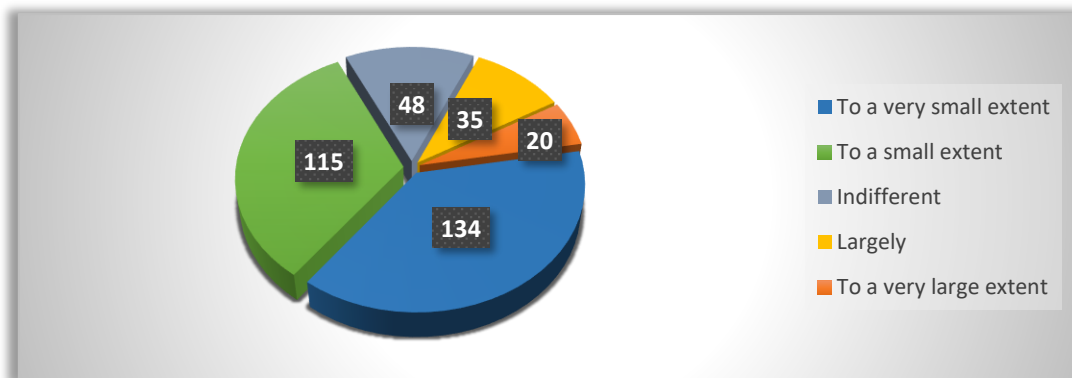


Figure 5 - Student perception of the accessibility of the tuition fee for master's programs

Source: Own processing

In the case of the fee for taking the nonpassed exams, the opinions of the respondents are divided. Thus, the answer to this question depends on several aspects: the student's financial resources, the number of arrears he has to pay, and, in particular, his interest in passing all his exams and completing his studies successfully. This question considers the ambition, involvement, and interest of students in passing their exams to get the best grades. Thus, they will have more chances to receive a merit or performance scholarship.

Finally, in the question "Do you think that a higher tuition fee always means better quality of the educational services?" the majority of students answered no, 293 representing 83% of the total respondents. Only a small percentage of students (11%) represented by 39 respondents answered yes to this question.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As a result of applying the questionnaire, the answers of 352 students contributed to the formulation of the research conclusions. Based on these, two of the hypotheses were confirmed and one was not. Therefore:

- *Hypothesis 1: "Students consider that the fees charged reflect the quality of services provided" is not confirmed.*
- *Hypothesis 2: "Instagram is the most used method of information chosen by students to obtain information related to the faculty" is confirmed.*
- *Hypothesis 3: "The current students chose the faculty attended due to the information they found on the website before enrolling" is confirmed.*

Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed by the following questions: "Was the value of the tuition fee a decisive factor in choosing the faculty?", "To what extent do you consider the fees applied within the faculty to be affordable?" and "Do you think that a higher tuition fee always means higher quality educational services?" Following these questions, it was found that the value of the tuition fee is not a defining factor in the choice of faculty by students. However, the students of the three faculties claim that the tuition fees for the bachelor's and master's programs are quite high given the financial resources they have. Another conclusion that contributed to the invalidation of this hypothesis is the students' perception that educational services are not of better quality as long as tuition fees are higher.

Hypothesis 2, "Instagram is the most used information method chosen by students to obtain information related to faculty", is confirmed by the questions: "What is your favorite social network?" - with the help of this question we determined which social network students use most often, namely the Instagram platform; "Do you consider Instagram to be an effective way to inform about your

faculty?" - through this question we learned the students' perception that the Instagram platform is an effective method of informing about the activities of the faculty, as the students stated this; "Compared to other social networks, how often do you use Instagram to inform yourself about faculty?" In this question, it was highlighted that most students often use the Instagram platform to find information about the faculty.

Hypothesis 3 "Current students chose the faculty they attended because of the information they found on the website before enrolling" is confirmed by the questions "Before enrolling in faculty, did you visit its website?" and "To what extent do you think the website has enough information to help future students?" Through these questions, we highlighted the fact that most of the current students checked the website of the faculty before enrolling and consider that it has very useful information for future students. In conclusion, the website is a very important element of promotion and must continuously evolve to attract as many future students as possible.

5.1. Recommendations

A first recommendation that contributes to the development of the educational process is the interaction between future students and graduates. Current students can get a clear idea of their professional development through the exchange of experience offered by graduates. They are already active in the labor market and can provide students with real-life examples of workplace situations. In this way, students will have better training and information about the field in which they study.

One of the recommendations regarding the increase of visibility in the online environment refers to the creation of an information section such as "Did you know that?" on the faculty's Facebook and Instagram page. This aims to inform students in the most concrete and interactive way possible about the activities and opportunities that they can benefit from during the courses and after graduation. It is important for prospective students to be informed about the faculty of choice because it will play a key role in the professional career they will pursue after graduation.

5.2. Research Limitations

Following the application of the research tool, some difficulties were encountered. One of these refers to the accumulation of the number of respondents within two faculties: FAP and FAA. Access to the social networking groups of the two faculties was limited. Therefore, the number of FAP and FAA respondents is lower than the number of FAMP respondents. Another difficulty was the Covid-19 pandemic and switching to online education which did not allow face-to-face interaction with respondents.

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