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The Role of Facebook in the Marketing Activities of the Schools

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Abstract. *Having chosen a school nowadays it plays even more important role in the lives among of the fourteen and eighteen year old students than a few decades ago. At the same time, schools lay emphasis on convincing the students to choose them. Mainly this explains the recent increase of the schools and trade offers. However the number of students has decreased. Earlier, having a good reputation was enough for a school to attract many students. Today, high schools, colleges and universities have to use different tools to have a decent number of students. During the last decades, the significance of the marketing communication tools increased in order to form and influence the customer needs. Having recognised this, educational institutions apply these tools to gain students. The problem is that it matters that which tool and how intensively it is applied. In the 21st century, the most popular communication channel is the Facebook among students, which has two serious advantages. One of them is that it has several users, therefore almost everyone can be reached. The other is that – since most of the users are almost always online - students can be reached very quickly. It is an important question to answer that whether schools have recognised this opportunity, and if so, then to what extent and how they use Facebook as a marketing communication tool to persuade students. The other important question is that whether the students who are active users of Facebook prefer schools to reach them via Facebook. In my presentation I seek to demonstrate-the opportunities that Facebook offers to schools in order to convince students to choose them. Furthermore, I would also like to show that how common is this marketing communication tool among the educational institutions.*

Keywords: Facebook, further education, marketing activities, Z-generation

Specifics of Z-generation

The Z- generation includes those children/young adults who were born between 1995 and 2010. They were born in this defined 15-year time period and these young adults now are before the graduation of secondary school and the children from primary schools are included here also.

Sooner or later from this age everyone will have the experience in difficulties of school choice.

The generation of young people is called nowadays Z-generation and this is a very special group, the gaps between this generation to the other generations are the widest. The world they were born into, they live it naturally. The Internet, and the use of multimedia tools, they did not learn it, because they were growing up with these elements. The problem is that they know more about this world than their parents and their bosses. Their work attitude is also very different from the previous generations. The success and the career are the most important things for them, but, that's why, they only willing to perform the mandatory minimum from their side which creates conflict situations with the elder generation. One of the most- or perhaps the greatest- concern is that there is a gap in the usage of social networking. The concept of privacy "net generation" completely transformed the perceptions of the personal life, their experiences are published on Facebook and kept on Instagram. They use so kind of unknown concepts as "on-demand entertainment" (Tari, 2011).

The generation gap problems appears at all parts of life. There are some of the older generations which are affected negatively, and there are also some which affect the Z-generation. One of the most important thing among these is the further education, as in that case, there appear highly conceptual differences between the groups. On the one side Z - generation students are facing the decision, while on the other side there are policy makers and academics, teachers from X-generation.

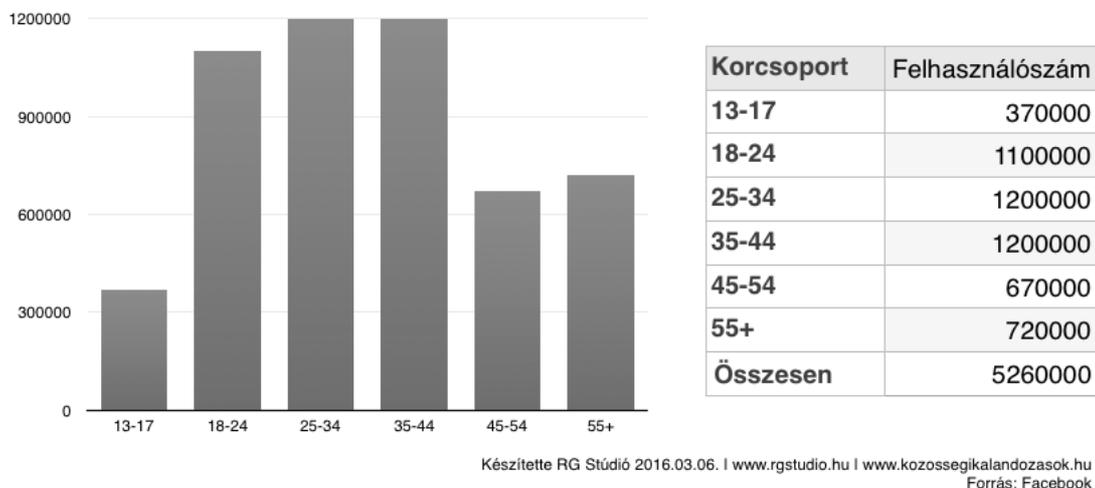
The problem lies in the fact that there is a big gap between the two generations concept, so it is hard to find common ground between the methods and goals. It lies in the world of multimedia and the Internet generation is born and growing up and it requires completely different from the life, so from the higher education as well. They are able to absorb a lot of information in a short period of time, the information is achieved through new channels, while the previous generation of educators previously proven communication and training methods are preferred and difficult to adapt to the expectations of the 21st century. This origin of problems is from the fact that between the generations there is a "habit-difference" in the every days. There is a very good example of this change in the purchasing habits. In contrast to previous generations of the Z-generation is much more selective, that is selective in that how they spend their money. In addition, the experience is very important to them about the product itself. These are all the factors that may be important for higher education institutions to have, since if you want to increase the number of students, you have to adapt to the expectations of Z-generation, which members represent the main target group.

The Facebook as a potential marketing tool to convince young people

Facebook, which started from one of Harvard's room on February 4, 2004. has become one of the most popular Internet site in the world. The stock market reports of 2015 show that the number of active users per month reaches 1.44 billion. This is an almost incomprehensible figure that is enough to understand that nowadays Facebook has become a part of our life over the 11 years from its foundation. Why is the use of Facebook essential for higher education institutions?

As the chart shows below, on the Spring of 2016, the number of 13-24-year-old ones, it almost reaches the 1.5 million users, so it means that almost everyone is available via Facebook. In addition, another important conclusion can be drawn from this figure that is the parents' age group we can see the high number of users. This is also important in that regard that the parents also should be persuaded not only the students.

Figure 1. The composition of the Hungarian Facebook users in 2016 Spring
Magyar Facebook felhasználói összetétele
2016.03.06.



Although in the 18-24 year old age group there is a decrease in number of users can be seen, but it still can be said, that this is the easiest way to reach them through this channel. The Facebook, as a social network for Z-generation, is no longer the most popular, but the events of creation and this track is still the most commonly used. Research has also shown that four out of five users don't spend a single day without to join the Facebook. Average daily spend is 86 minutes on the site.

The retail sector has quickly realized how to take advantage from of the use of Facebook. Advertisements, ads could increase the turnover. Several studies have made use of Facebook based on which very well could be integrated into the marketing strategy. The key principle is that the information has to be other than printed advertisements, websites as

the way to attract the visitor's attention. That's why if you have more sources you should provide different information, not always the same on the same sources, one source one topic, more sources other topics. It has also been shown that it is worth to post in the second half of the week, because then more people use Facebook.

It is worth paying attention on the length of the text because the shorter posts get more attention. This can be especially important in schools, because the characteristics of the Z-generation members, that they can adopt many, but short information. Based on the above data and the results achieved in sales, that can be said that in terms of the educational institutions would be a mistake if you wouldn't use of the possibilities offered by Facebook, as one of the most active user group includes young people facing further education. In the following part I'd show you how the universities lived or live with the given social networking capabilities.

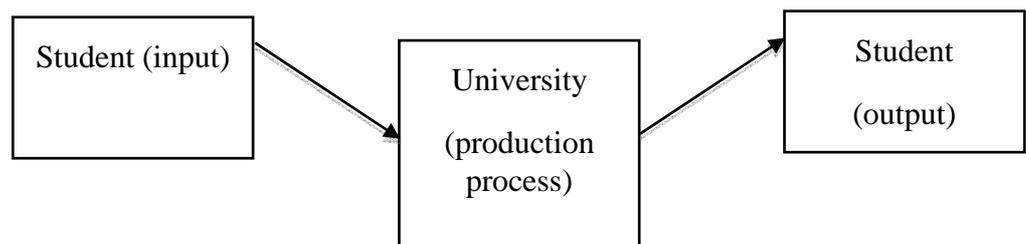
Higher Education Marketing features

In recent decades, more and more new companies appear to the market and their aim is to convince consumers with their products. As a result - mainly in the product market - the role of marketing has significantly increased. Companies spend a lot of money to the marketing strategy in order to reach their goals. Different marketing departments want to hire better and better marketing professionals, in addition their marketing managers have even more influence in the decisions.

The result of these activities is that when, for example, if you walk out from the door, you face with posters, and ads and meet a large part of the newspaper columns that are completed by the companies with better and better offers. We cannot have any of the television shows, movies, without break up with advertisements on several occasions. In essence, we can say that ads - although often consciously we do not realize - completely planted in the mind.

Although at the first hearing it can also be surprising, but the education market carries the characteristic of the features of the "ordinary sense" market.

Figure 2. The educational process of production operation



As the chart above shows, the central role is performed by the student, a special role, as one person in the process input and output as well. Input as a resource appears sells itself and one output of the institution, because the graduates will be the result of the production process.

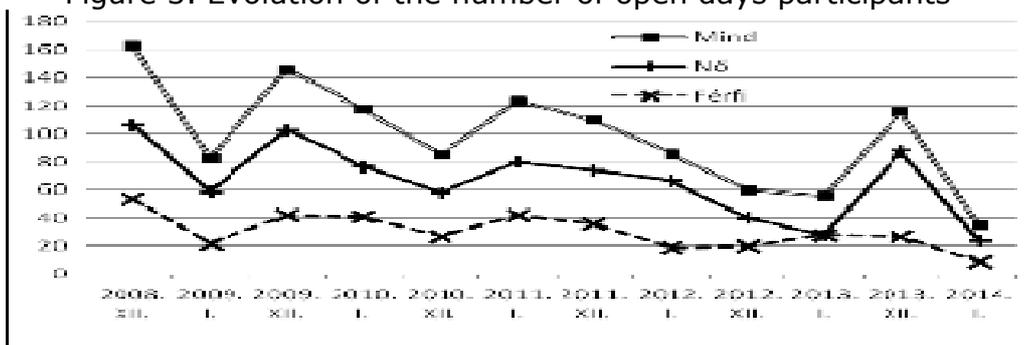
Like the commodity markets, the higher education market causes more sellers to appear, so the earlier a privileged situation seems come to end. Previously few institutions with little expertise were in the market, the number of students was quite high, so the schools did not have to make efforts in order to convince the students. Today, this has changed a lot. On the one hand, the number of universities has increased significantly, but it also would mean less of a problem.

Much bigger problem is that a lot of new skills for students to choose from. As it was becoming increasingly difficult filling the frame numbers. Recognizing this situation, a solution was found for higher education institutions to amplify the marketing activity, but overall we can say that it is still in its infancy. The biggest deficiency can harm that the institutions don't form a single marketing strategy and mainly concentrate on enrolment (Piskóti, 2011).

Certainly, it is not a bad idea that the centralelement of the marketing strategies should be the enrolment. The primary reason - like, as well as with reference to Figure 1 presented - that the student is an actor from its dual side. The university is primarily judged on the basis of the results. The results of the institutions to reach thru students so this is very important to enroll well-educated and motivated students.

The problem is that most institutions only applies to the marketing activities of the enrollment period and they do it not organized. The instruments used are the most common organization of university open days, which is within the framework of the visit the students selected institutions where students can ask teachers. The results of a survey have shown that these events is a problem that primarily academic training and basic training are interested in visiting, so the organizers are only made this target group, however the number interest of master trainings keep increasing (there are more and more Bachelor's degree graduated entrants are). The survey also showed that the open day significantly reduced the number of participants, which is illustrated in the figure below (Kun & Svantner, 2014).

Figure 3. Evolution of the number of open days participants



Another problem what comes from the lack of organized marketing strategy is that shortage of the universities' uniform appearances, and the image building should be the first step. A prestigious universities are in an easier situation, since their reputation, their popularity can solve temporarily the problem of the lack of image, but they also may be in danger in the long term.

Fortunately, we can meet from time to time with those initiatives which demonstrate the force of the higher education marketing to a new level. There is a very good example of the program of the University of Pécs, which bears the name of the "Dancing University". Its main goal - over of the community shaping- is the culture and behavioural development. Of course, this project also had to fight with the rapidly evolving challenges of the 21st century's Internet, but it seems that it has successfully received the obstacles. It is important to note that this program has the leading position who is filled by a marketing professional who has the experience to lead the project to the success.

In conclusion, we can say that, the higher education institutions should develop their marketing activity ideas. Necessary to appoint a person who is fully engaged to this area, who considers the implementation of the strategy in a well organized system. This is justified on one hand the reduction in the number of students and a growing number of institutions, on the other hand, changes in the characteristics of the target properties warrant.

The relationship between higher education institution in Hungary with Facebook

The selection of schools was based on the HVG Diploma 2017 rankings. The overall rankings have been made based on the number of candidates, the point average, the number of teachers with scientific degrees and the number of teachers MTA titles. TOP 10 Faculties in Hungary: Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Humanities (ELTE BTK), Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences (ELTE TTK), Semmelweis University, Faculty of Medicine (SOTE-MS), University of Szeged, Faculty of Arts (University of Szeged, Faculty of Arts), Faculty of Arts, University of Pécs (PTE- BTK), University of Debrecen Medical School (DE-MS), Catholic University Humanities and Social Sciences (PPKE-BTK), University Medical School of Szeged (off), Budapest University of Technology and Economics Faculty of Natural Sciences (BME TTK) , University Medical School of Pécs (Pécs University Medical School).

I took the following aspects for the comparison:

1. Have the institutions/faculties Facebook pages or not?
2. How often do they post?
3. What kind of types of post do they update?
4. How many follower do they have?
5. How active are the followers?

Table 1. Top 10 institutions of higher education on Facebook

University faculties	Facebook site?	Frequency of posts	Type of post	Number of followers	Activities of followers
ELTE-BTK	yes	event based	open day, conferences	9959	not actives
ELTE-TTK	yes	rare	enroll information	1489	not actives
SOTE-ÁOK	only university	frequent	Academic, student-centered	7037	not actives
SZTE-BTK	yes	frequent	student-centered	4442	not actives
PTE-BTK	yes	frequent	student-centered	4298	not actives
DE-ÁOK	only university	frequent	student-centered	34446	not actives
PPKE-BTK	yes	weekly	Academic, student-centered	6709	not actives
SZOTE	yes	frequent	student-centered	3273	not actives
BME-TTK	yes	rare	student-centered	394	not actives
PTE-ÁOK	yes	weekly	just student posts	104	not actives

I summarized the top 10 academic institution / faculty Facebook pages in a table above. In general we can say, with two exceptions (SOTE-MS, MS-DE), that each faculty has its own Facebook page and a half of users regularly use it to share new information. Considering the nature of the posts, usually trying to tell the students and it pay the attention to the latest programs, academic events and shares the achievement of the teachers and students.

During the investigation there is a surprising result that although there are many followers of individual pages, the students are not active, which means that there is very little willing to like e.g. sharing and commenting on the surface. The Z-generation is not typical to express their emotions related to a topic. There are more studies about the institutions of higher education marketing strategy focuses on enrolling first. A very few post on Facebook can be connected to this theme in contrast.

It is especially interesting in the winter time, because now there are open days approaching which should be filled with applications and there is no other information than some of the advertiser's open day post. The result of this short research shows that universities have recognized the potential of Facebook opportunities, but have not set a complex marketing strategy activities yet.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is essential to the education market to create a marketing strategy. The reason that the increase in the number of schools and reduction in the number of students exacerbate competition between the institutions. Beyond the traditional marketing communication tools and it is realized in the sales sector in Facebook's opportunities. The result is increasingly being used to convince the students mainly at Z-generation.

Although an increasing number of marketing communication tools are disposal to the education market, unfortunately to create a complex marketing strategy is not established even today. In particular, the focus is on the enrolment marketing and related activities. The study highlights the fact that there were many researches about Facebook that give very good tips on increasing efficiency, but this advantage of higher education institutions apply it not properly. The top 10 faculties have Facebook profile and just in very few places in the conscious elements of marketing strategy can be detected. The priority finding is that the activity of students is so slight. The phenomenon can be explained by the thought of a such popular Facebook site will be replaced by other channels.

Summarizing it can be said that higher education institutions should take more serious steps in order to achieve the marketing activities of the expected efficiency. The first and most important step is to build a complex forum for the generation of adaptive expectations and develop marketing strategies.

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