

# THE MARKETING OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES. A STUDY REGARDING THE GRADUATES' PROFESSIONAL PATH

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**Abstract:** *The present article begins with a short analysis of the scientific literature, followed by a quantitative research study applied on university graduates with reference to their professional path. The main theme of this research is: attitudes, opinions and behaviours of students graduating from Transilvania University regarding their professional path after graduating from university courses. The present paper continues with some of the results obtained from the research and the conclusions drawn from them.*

**Key words:** *marketing of educational services, market research, career path*

## 1. Introduction

This article begins by counting down the main theoretical aspects related to educational marketing. Taking into account the fact that for young people it is very challenging to find a job after graduating from university, a quantitative marketing research study was conducted on graduates of the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Administration from *Transilvania* University, on students who have graduated in the last 3 years. The research was performed in November and December 2012 and it dealt with the students' professional path after graduating from university courses.

Based on the results, we have reached the conclusion that courses should contain more practical knowledge than theory if we want the students to have success in their future careers and find a suitable job. To increase their chances of finding a job and put theory into practice, young people need

to keep up with the latest technological improvements.

## 2. Literature Analysis

The concept of marketing was defined in 1957 by John B. McKitterick, the president of General Electric, who stated the following in a meeting of The American Marketing Association: „the concept of marketing is the philosophy of reaching a consumer, which implies whole and coordinated actions, as well as setting a target”. [1]

Kotler proposed the following definition: social marketing is the development, implementation and control of programs aimed at increasing adherence to an idea, a cause or a social behaviour in one or more of the groups concerned. [2]

Social marketing is found in specializations such as: public services marketing; marketing of ideas and social causes; marketing of services and cultural

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values. In turn, public service marketing majors include: marketing of educational services, cultural services, healthcare, professional services transportation etc. [3]

The specific features of educational activities determine a particular application of the educational marketing concept, these particularities arise from the fact that the educational institution sustains market relations with three categories of customers: with companies in the national economy (the education institution is the workforce provider), with high school students (as potential customers); with students (as effective customers). [4]

As mentioned above, the university considers high school students as potential customers. Thus, over the years, there has been a need to increase marketing efforts among high school students to guide them to a specific university. Each university is promoted as a distinct brand and, in order to be able to attract high performing students, the reputation and rank of educational institutions are extremely important.

Universities create their brand image. For example, the force of the name "Harvard" is widely recognized as a symbol of excellence and educational pre-eminence.[5]

The essence of university education is to create a defined professional horizon, with the aim of creating the necessary conditions for the integration on the labour market and social inclusion of young specialists [6]

The role of marketing is very important, given the interest of high school students in continuing their studies abroad. The dynamics of the external environment, the increasingly strong competition for gaining new markets and for maintaining them, together with globalization, require marketing to be a continuous process, not by integrating daily routines, but through prospects that are based on strategies and strategic objectives resulting from the university's mission. [7].

### **3. Marketing research**

Based on marketing research, we can identify the needs of consumers which are the necessary elements in guiding marketing policies. [8]

Taking into account the fact that for young people it is very challenging to find a job after graduating from university, a market research was performed on graduates from the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Administration from *Transilvania* University, with students who have ended their studies in the last 3 years. Research was undertaken in November and December 2012. The present research focuses on identifying the graduates' professional path.

The main objectives of this research were: to identify key behaviours of graduates with regard to the professional path after completing undergraduate studies (1<sup>st</sup> cycle according to the Bologna process), to identify graduates' carrier intentions and their opinions towards the improvements that should be put into practice by the Faculty in order to increase their employability in their field of study.

#### **3.1. Research Methodology**

To achieve the research objectives, a survey has been conducted among the graduates who completed their undergraduate studies during the last three years. The data have been collected using a questionnaire comprising closed questions.

The sample from which the data was collected consists of 200 individuals and the sampling method used was the weighted stratified sampling which takes into account the heterogeneity of the population based on specific characteristics. The stratifying variable was the study program graduated (students' specialization).

#### **3.2. Research results**

The results obtained from the data processing are listed below:

For the item referring to the extent to which respondents believe that the

education system helped them acquire skills graphically. needed for careers, results are presented

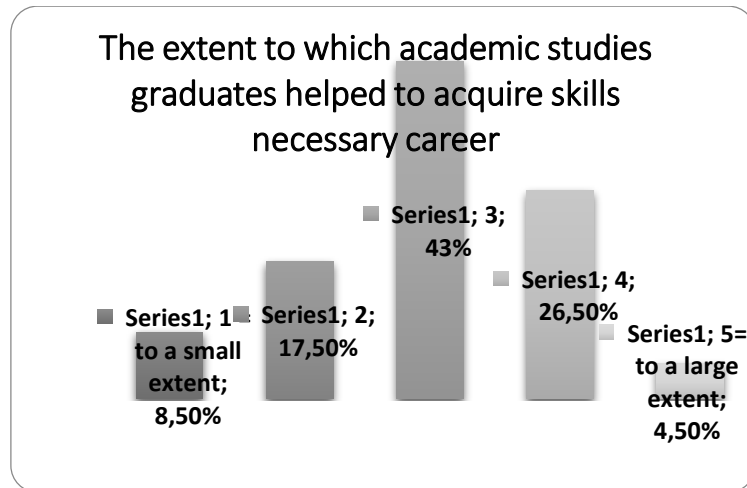


Fig. 1. *The extent to which academic studies graduated helped in the acquisition of skills necessary in the career*

The chart above shows that the highest frequency of responses was recorded by step 3. To this question, 43% of respondents provided level 3, and 26.5% of respondents indicated rank 4. The fewest answers, 4.5%, were registered for those who consider that the Romanian system helped them acquire the necessary competences for their professional careers to a great extent. On the other hand, 8.5% of respondents consider

that these competences did not help them. The next question, "How important do you consider the following ways of searching for a job?" has as indicators the help of the family, of friends or acquaintances, online job portals, human resources agencies and the job had during university courses. Next, we compared the averages obtained for every indicator.

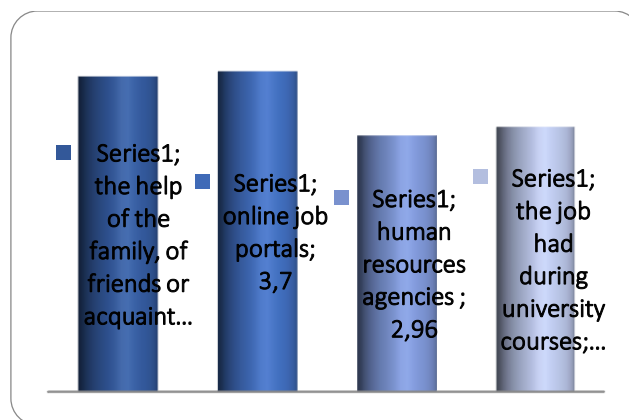


Fig. 2. *Average scores (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 means the most important) connected to the importance of ways of finding a job*

As shown in the previous chart, there is a balanced distribution around level 3 of the scale.

The average of the responses about the importance of ways to find a job was between 2.96 and 3.70. The lowest average registered (at a value of 2.96 points) was to obtain a job by contacting human resource agencies.

This is due to the evolution of the internet. In this era in which internet has become a necessity, jobs are found online. Moreover, the majority of jobs are found on the internet, so the human resources agencies will suffer a decrease in the amount of employers. The highest average was registered by online job portals, with an average of 3.7 points.

The importance of family, friends and acquaintances obtained an average of 3.64 points. This is due to the Romanian

employment system from the last years (until the economic crisis began), when getting hired at an important company depended on knowing somebody inside the company. But this habit has disappeared and knowledge and competences are the most important.

Another important element is the job they had while still studying in the university, an indicator that obtained an average of 3.06. This is a crucial factor and we cannot forget that it had an average that surpassed level 3 of the scale. We can draw the conclusion that the average of responses for the 4 indicators analysed are between level 3 and 4 of the scale.

At the question: "From graduating university until the present moment have you had at least one job?" we obtained the following results, shown in the next chart.

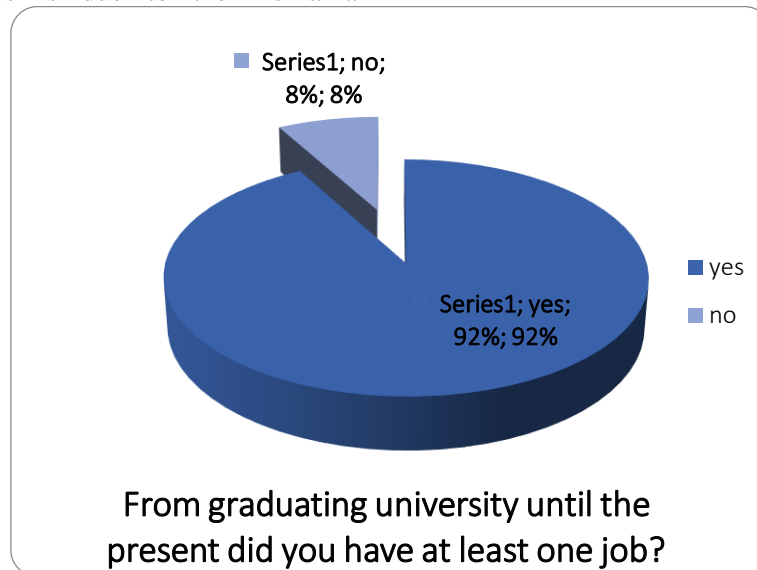


Fig. 3. *The structure of responses regarding employment after graduating*

At this question, 92% of the respondents answered affirmatively, whereas 8% answered negatively. This percentage is very important because its highest value shows that the majority of graduates have

had at least one job since graduation up to the present moment. This rate encourages young high school graduates to continue their studies.

Next, references were made to the time

which passed from graduation to the moment of searching for a job.

the time which passed since graduation until finding a job.

We continued with a question related to

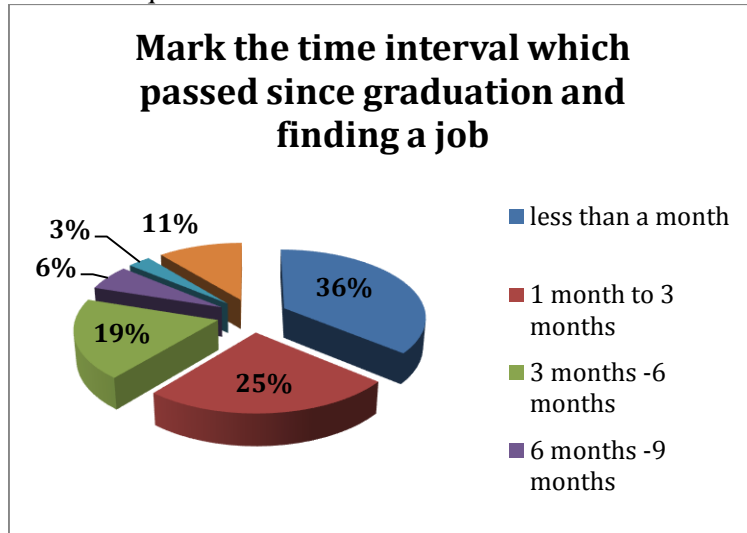


Fig. 4. *The structure of responses regarding the time passed since graduation until finding a job*

We can notice that the majority of respondents found a job in less than a month from graduation - 36.5% responses. 25% found a place to work within 3 months from graduation, and the lowest percentage 3.3% was registered for people who found it between 9 months and 1 year from graduation.

Further on, a filtering question was applied, that referred to the present situation of the graduates concerning their professional status (see fig. 3.6). A percentage of 21% of the graduates are currently unemployed, while 79% have a job at present.

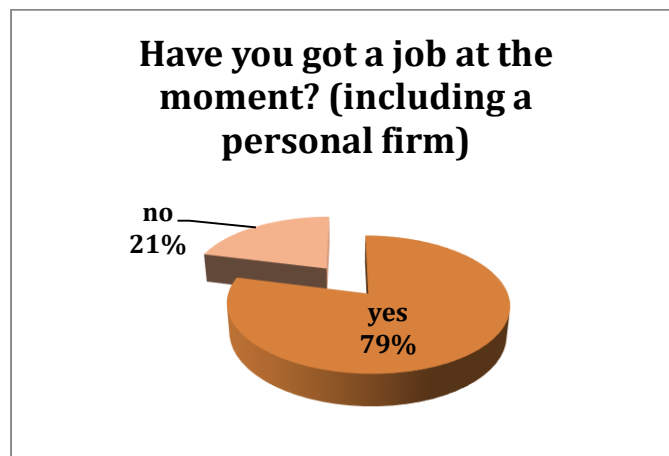


Fig. 5. *The structure of responses regarding professional status*

The following question was "Are you currently looking for a job" (Whether you are already employed or not.)

As seen in the chart, 49% of the respondents are not currently searching for

a place to work, being satisfied with their job, while 51% are currently in search for one. We can see the slight difference between the two categories.

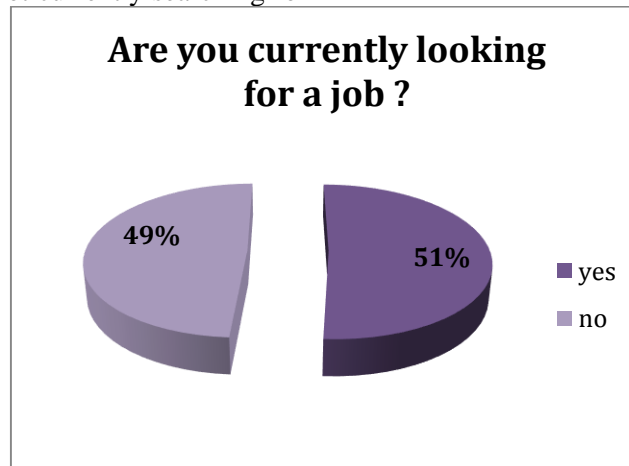


Fig. 6. *The structure of responses regarding the current looking for a job*

Further on, we wanted to identify the way in which graduates found the current place of work. The highest percentage for finding a job, 36.3%, was obtained with the help of the family, friends and acquaintances, 29.4% used the internet, while 13.8% found

their current place of work through direct contact with the employer. 10.6% initiated their own business. The lowest percentage was obtained by human resources agencies and academic help (3.1% - 2.5%), as illustrated in the following chart.

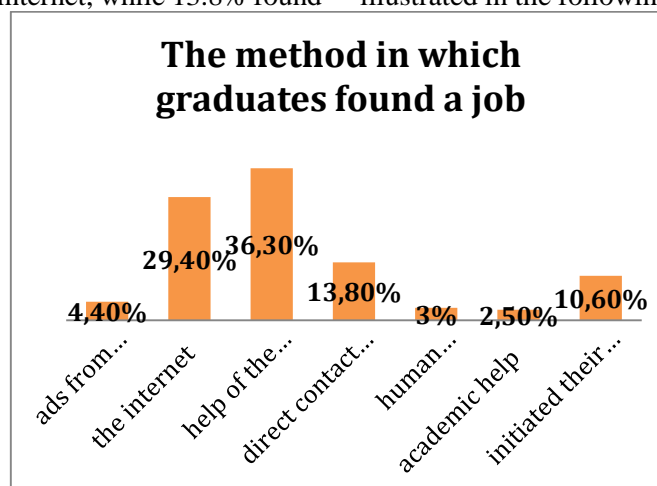


Fig. 7. *The structure of responses regarding the method which graduates used to find a job*

Moreover, we wanted to measure the level of satisfaction regarding the work place. The following chart represents the results found.

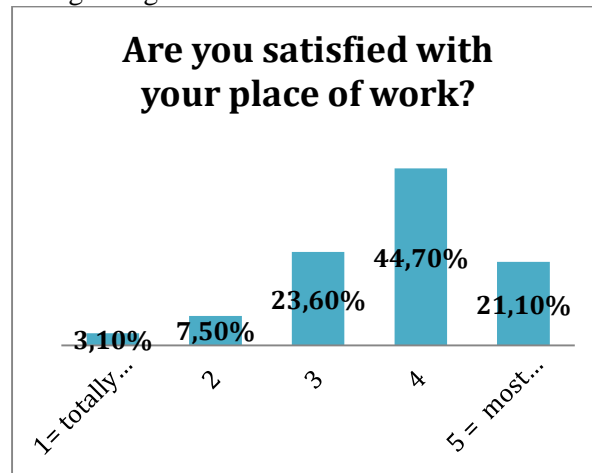


Fig. 8. *The structure of responses regarding the satisfaction with the work place*

We can notice a balanced distribution around level 4 of the scale. Thus, 44.7% of respondents graded level 4, 23.6% level 3 and 21.1% level 5. The lowest ratio was obtained for the totally dissatisfied ones, with a total of 5 respondents.

#### 4. Conclusions

The economic development of a country is strictly related to the quality of human resources. The growth of the educational system is essential to the Romanian economy. Barro's studies, applied in more than 100 countries between 1965 and 1995, demonstrate that education (especially higher education) directly influences the rate of economic growth. [9]

Thus, it is necessary to focus on the quality of educational services in the next period.

It should not be forgotten that universities have connections with 3 categories of clients: with operators in the national economy (the education institution is the workforce provider), with young people (as potential customers) and with students (as de facto customers).

The present study tried to measure students' satisfaction regarding the help of university studies in the acquisition of professional competences necessary to their future professional career. Based on the responses graduates provided, the study revealed the graduates' employment rate, the amount of time allocated to searching for a job and the actual hiring rate, and also the level of satisfaction at the workplace.

We have reached the conclusion that courses should contain more practical knowledge than theoretical one in order to provide students with successful future career prospects and to help them find a suitable job. To increase their chances to find a job and put theory into practice, young people need to keep up with the latest technological improvements.

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