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IMPLEMENTATION OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION POLICY OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: REGIONAL CONTEXT

РЕАЛІЗАЦІЯ МАРКЕТИНГОВОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ КОМУНІКАЦІЙ ЗАКЛАДУ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ: РЕГІОНАЛЬНИЙ КОНТЕКСТ

The article examines the marketing communication policies of higher education institutions amidst growing competition and regional differentiation in the educational services market. It highlights the formation of communication strategies considering social and economic challenges such as demographic changes, migration, and economic instability. Regional aspects, including adaptation to local markets, population mobility, and household income levels, are analyzed to understand their impact on education choices. The research explores differentiated pricing strategies to attract students from various social groups, focusing on competitive advantages like cost optimization, discounts, and flexible financial conditions. Monitoring competitors' pricing policies is emphasized as part of strategic management. The effectiveness of modern marketing tools, including SEO, contextual advertising, targeted social media campaigns, PR, and affiliate programs, is assessed. The role of image events, exhibitions, and public relations in enhancing brand recognition is also detailed. The article advocates an integrated marketing approach tailored to regional contexts and target audiences, combining online and offline communication channels to expand reach and build long-term relationships. Recommendations for improving marketing communications in the context of digital transformation and demographic challenges are provided.

Keywords: marketing policy, communications, higher education institutions, regional context, pricing, digital technologies, educational services.

У статті досліджено маркетингову політику комунікацій закладів вищої освіти в умовах зростаючої конкуренції та соціально-економічних викликів, спричинених демографічними змінами, міграційними процесами та економічною нестабільністю. Проаналізовано регіональний контекст реалізації комунікаційних стратегій, зокрема їхню адаптацію до локальних ринків, врахування географічної мобільності населення

та рівня доходів домогосподарств, які впливають на вибір місця навчання. Дослідження зосереджене на механізмах ціноутворення освітніх послуг, акцентуючи увагу на використанні диференційованих стратегій ціноутворення для залучення студентів з різних соціальних груп. Наголошено на важливості оптимізації вартості навчання, надання знижок і створення гнучких фінансових умов. У статті також розглянуто процес моніторингу цінової політики конкурентів як елемента стратегічного управління. Особливу увагу приділено ефективності сучасних інструментів маркетингових комунікацій, серед яких SEO-оптимізація, контекстна реклама, таргетовані кампанії у соціальних мережах, профорієнтаційні заходи, PR-кампанії та розвиток партнерських програм. Досліджено роль іміджевих заходів, виставкової діяльності та зв'язків із громадськістю у побудові довіри та підвищенні впізнаваності бренду університету. Запропоновано інтегрований підхід до формування маркетингової стратегії, який враховує регіональні особливості та потреби цільової аудиторії. У дослідженні підкреслюється необхідність поєднання онлайн- та офлайн-каналів комунікації для збільшення охоплення потенційних абітурієнтів і налагодження довгострокових відносин із ними. Практична значущість дослідження полягає у рекомендаціях щодо підвищення конкурентоспроможності університетів в умовах цифрової трансформації та регіональних відмінностей. Зокрема, акцентується на необхідності адаптації стратегій до умов регіональних ринків і запровадження цифрових технологій для підвищення ефективності профорієнтаційної роботи. Наголошено на важливості гнучкого ціноутворення як основного інструменту конкуренції, що дає змогу залучити студентів із різних соціально-економічних груп. У статті також зазначено, що інтеграція сучасних цифрових технологій із традиційними методами комунікації сприяє розширенню аудиторії, підтримці довіри серед абітурієнтів та їхніх батьків, а також швидкому реагуванню на зміни в інформаційному середовищі. Отримані висновки підкреслюють важливість систематичного моніторингу конкурентного середовища, аналізу ефективності рекламних кампаній і розробки персоналізованих пропозицій для цільової аудиторії. Особливу увагу приділено розвитку бренду університету, підтримці позитивного іміджу через соціальні мережі, залученню випускників до побудови репутації та організації заходів, що посилюють взаємодію з місцевими громадами. Такий підхід забезпечує стійкість закладів вищої освіти в умовах високої конкуренції та сприяє їхньому розвитку в умовах соціально-економічних викликів.

Ключові слова: маркетингова політика, комунікації, заклади вищої освіти, регіональний контекст, ціноутворення, цифрові технології, освітні послуги.

Statement of the problem. The activities of higher education institutions under martial law are affected by a large number of factors that have a significant negative impact. These factors include decrease in the level of income of the population, decrease in the number of school graduates, departure of potential applicants abroad, the need to organize training under the threat of missile attacks, additional requirements for the availability of shelters and the rapid movement of students to them in conditions of air raids, closure of a significant number of higher education institutions in the occupied territories and their relocation from frontline regions to Central and Western Ukraine.

In addition, the competition between higher education institutions is intensifying due to the reduction in demographic potential and changing geography of demand for educational services. The decrease in the number of applicants in regions affected by population migration and the increase in competition between institutions that have been relocated to safer regions require a review of traditional approaches to attracting students.

Changes in the behavior of consumers of educational services caused by social and economic instability encourage higher education institutions to improve their marketing communication policy. In particular, there is a need to activate digital technologies, optimize pricing policies, and increase the effectiveness of career guidance activities. It is important to take into account the specifics of regional markets and adapt strategies to local characteristics of demand for educational products.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The research on marketing communications in the field of education attracts attention of many foreign and Ukrainian scientists. Thus, foreign studies, such as P. Kotler & K. Fox [9] focus on the importance of

multi-channel promotion strategies, emphasizing an integrated approach to communications. They believe that effective communication requires the coordination of all marketing tools to achieve a synergistic effect. J. Burnett & S. Moriarty [1] describe marketing communications as the transmission of information about a product to a target audience, emphasizing the convincing elements of communication influence. J. Lambin et al. [3] interpret marketing communications as interaction between marketing system entities through various information signals, which contributes to the establishment of long-term relationships. Ukrainian scientists, such as A. Pilko & O. Lukan [11], emphasize the integration of marketing communications, pointing to the need to combine advertising, direct marketing, personal sales, PR, and sales promotion to achieve efficiency. T. Prymak [12] defines marketing communications as a tool for two-way information exchange that ensures constant communication between universities and their audience. Regarding the educational sphere, S. Harkavenko [5] considers marketing communications as a process of creating and maintaining permanent connections between universities and the market, focusing on forming a positive image and activating demand. V. Volkova & V. Ohlih [4] explore the role of digital platforms and social networks as key tools for student engagement. They emphasize the importance of creating interactive content and maintaining a constant dialogue with the audience. S. Ilyashenko et al. [7] stress the importance of branding and reputation management for creating competitive advantages of universities. They suggest the implementation of comprehensive PR campaigns and the active use of direct marketing tools.

Previously unresolved parts of the general problem. With the growing role of digital communication channels

and the increasing influence of social media on potential applicants' decision-making, higher education institutions face challenges in developing and implementing effective marketing strategies. These strategies must take into account the specifics of regional markets, demographic changes, and economic and social difficulties caused by martial law.

Despite the existence of numerous studies in the field of marketing communications in education, insufficient attention has been paid to the comprehensive analysis and adaptation of marketing tools to wartime conditions and regional differentiation. The issues of optimizing the pricing of educational services, brand management, and forming long-term relationships with the target audience in an unstable social and economic environment require further research. The issue of integrating traditional approaches to career guidance work with the latest digital technologies that allow expanding audience reach and increasing the effectiveness of marketing communications also remains unresolved.

Formulation of the research task. The purpose of the article is to analyze and substantiate effective approaches to the formation and implementation of marketing communication policy of higher education institutions in a regional context, taking into account the challenges of martial law, economic instability, and growing competition in the educational services market. The research is aimed at studying pricing mechanisms, optimizing career guidance activities, and using digital technologies, such as SEO, SMM, and contextual advertising, to increase student engagement, strengthen trust in the educational brand, and ensure the sustainability of universities in the face of demographic, and social and economic changes.

Summary of the main research material. Different universities, training specialists in the same specialties, actually offer different educational and professional programs (EPP), which differ in structure and content of training. Applicants cannot influence the content and structure of the EPP during the admission process, but they have the right to familiarize themselves with them on the websites of the universities and can choose the EPP that they think is the best (i.e., they have the right to choose the higher education institution). Therefore, the main task of a university is to develop EPPs that will be more attractive to potential applicants, as opposed to outdated or uncompetitive educational products of other universities.

The product of higher education is the development of competences, which is carried out in accordance with the educational and professional program. The results of learning are embodied in changing the qualities of an individual and are the basis for further employment and increasing the material well-being of a person, career advancement, and self-realization.

The main tool of competition between higher education institutions in a particular city or region is the improvement of their unique product offerings, namely educational and professional programs and specific educational components within them.

Pricing policy plays an important role in the activities of higher education institutions. Due to the intensification of competition, the annual decrease in the number of school graduates, and the increase in the cost of providing educational services, the operation conditions of higher education institutions are constantly becoming more

complicated. Therefore, the goal of marketing activities is survival in the market and creating conditions for further development.

Today, price is one of the most important communication channels because through its level, future applicants can assess the quality of teaching in a higher education institution and determine its reputation. Given the decline in incomes and high inflation, price is becoming one of the key factors when applicants choose between similar educational and professional programs of different higher education institutions.

The educational product is characterized by a long-term period of its provision, and as a result, price determination is a complex procedure. The price for tuition is set for one year, although it can also be calculated for the entire period (for example, 4 years for a bachelor's degree).

The process of price formation begins with collecting the necessary information. It is especially important to determine the range of price levels, identify the predicted reaction of competitors and school graduates to price changes. Marketing research on prices is carried out by determining actual prices on the market; identifying the pricing policy of competitors; determining the personal attitude of school graduates and their parents to actual prices on the market.

Exploring the regional context of the implementation of marketing communications and pricing policies, we will consider some aspects of this issue in dynamics, according to the statistical data on higher education in Rivne region. The Stepan Demianchuk International University of Economics and Humanities, the first private educational institution in Western Ukraine, was chosen as a case for detailed consideration. Its development began in 1993. Over the past 31 years, this university has trained more than 37 thousand highly qualified specialists. Today, the educational process at the IUEH is provided by 44 professors, doctors of sciences, academicians of industry and international academies, 138 candidates of sciences and associate professors. The International University of Economics and Humanities closely cooperates with higher educational institutions in Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Spain, Great Britain, and the USA.

The product policy of the IUEH includes a number of EPPs and is differentiated by specialties, levels of higher education, and forms of study. Table 1 provides summarized information on the number of applicants by the IUEH faculties for 2020–2024.

Analyzing the data for the last five years presented in Table 1, we can conclude that in 2021, there was a trend towards a decrease in enrollment (more than one and a half times), with a further significant increase in 2022–2023 (more than twice comparing to 2021), and a return of enrollment rates in 2024 to the level of 2020. At the same time, there is differentiation among faculties when comparing the indicators of 2024 and 2020. Thus, an increase in enrollment is observed at the Faculty of Economics (+149%), the Faculty of European Education (+70%), and Cybernetics (+43%). A significant decrease in the number of enrollments is observed in pedagogical specialties (-49%).

According to the internal statistics, the vast majority of students who enter the IUEH live within 200 kilometers of the city of Rivne, except for the students from Zakarpatska

Table 1

Dynamics of the number of the IUEH applicants, 2020–2024

| Number, people | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2024/2020 |
|--|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Faculty of European Education | 170 | 100 | 108 | 37 | 289 | 170 % |
| Faculty of History and Philology | 122 | 68 | 130 | 64 | 62 | 51 % |
| Faculty of Geography, History and Tourism | 71 | 58 | 180 | 235 | 64 | 90 % |
| Faculty of Economics | 170 | 109 | 288 | 370 | 424 | 249 % |
| Faculty of Health, Physical Education and Sports | 307 | 173 | 590 | 386 | 315 | 103 % |
| Faculty of Cybernetics | 106 | 87 | 305 | 423 | 152 | 143 % |
| Faculty of Journalism | 28 | 35 | 22 | 58 | 32 | 114 % |
| Faculty of Pedagogics | 562 | 287 | 488 | 568 | 286 | 51 % |
| Faculty of Law | 83 | 77 | 82 | 98 | 68 | 82 % |
| Total | 1619 | 994 | 2193 | 2239 | 1692 | 105 % |

Source: developed by the authors based on [10]

region, where the university conducts an active career guidance campaign, attracting them to study and providing them with dormitories (Table 2).

Table 2

Geographical distribution of the IUEH applicants by regions, 2024

| Region | Number of applicants, people |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| Rivne | 1014 |
| Zhytomyr | 40 |
| Zakarpatska | 166 |
| Kyiv | 34 |
| Lviv | 81 |
| Volyn | 35 |
| Ternopil | 15 |
| Khmelnyskyi | 53 |
| Total | 1438 |

Source: developed by the authors based on [10]

We focus the research on pricing mostly on the segment of specialties of an economic profile. The dynamics of tuition fees and discounts offered by the biggest higher education institutions of Rivne region in 2024 are presented in Tables 3–4.

Analyzing the data in Tables 3–4, it can be noted that for all economics specialties at the IUEH, the price (tuition fee) is set 6–19% lower than the prices of competitors at the first (bachelor’s) level of higher education. At the second (master’s) level of full-time higher education, the discount is from 21% to 28% of the price level of the main competitors.

Table 5 shows the dynamics of the cost of studying in economic specialties in the first year of full-time study for one year in 2020–2024. Over the past five years, the cost of studying increased annually, and in 2024, the price of one year of study is on average 54–66% higher than the 2020 level.

Based on the received information, pricing objectives are set. In the IUEH, such objectives can be:

- if the specialty is popular, then the goal may be to maximize profit (for example, in 2024, high price was set for specialty 073 Management);
- if the specialty has the potential to increase the number of students, then the goal may be to increase the

market share (a low price is set; for example, in 2024 such a specialty was 075 Marketing);

- if the specialty is in low demand and it is necessary to keep it during the bad times, then the goal may be to ensure a break-even existence (a low price is set; for example, in 2024 such specialties were all those with the recruitment of less than 10 people);

– when setting prices for all specialties, the IUEH management tacitly sets the goal of “orientation on competitors”, since the university’s position in the market of educational services in Rivne region is not a leader, and it adheres to the strategy of “following the market leader”, which is the National University of Water and Environmental Engineering. Therefore, when setting prices for the next year, they are compared with the prices of the National University of Water and Environmental Engineering. If the price exceeds the price of this competitor, then the price is lowered.

Typically, prices for educational and professional programs for one year of study at the IUEH are set at a level 16–26% lower than prices at the NUWEE.

That is, the main method of pricing is market, but in some cases, the cost pricing method can also be used to determine the minimum price. The main cost items that make the largest contribution to the final price are costs for the remuneration of scientific, pedagogical, and other employees (administrative and service personnel); costs for utilities; costs for maintaining the university’s facilities. To make management decisions regarding price setting, the IUEH systematically monitors competitors’ prices. Typically, such monitoring is conducted annually in May–June as a prerequisite for setting prices for the next academic year.

The high level of competition in the field of higher education determines the need to intensify the university’s marketing communication policy, the formation of which is influenced by both internal and external factors. External factors include the state of the economy as a whole, market conditions, political, environmental and economic situation in the country, and consumer behavior. Internal factors are the communicative focus of the university’s activities, the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education institution, the skills of personnel in the field of communications, and available financial and technological resources.

According to the staffing and organizational structure of the IUEH, the position of a marketing specialist is not

Table 3

**Information on the cost of the first year of full-time and distant education
in higher education institutions of Rivne region in 2024, UAH per year**

| Specialty | International University of Economics and Humanities | Rivne State University of the Humanities | National University of Water and Environmental Engineering | National University of Ostroh Academy |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Full-time education | | | | |
| Bachelor degree | | | | |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | 26900 | – | 32000 | 30700 |
| 073 Management | 26900 | 28600 | 32000 | – |
| 075 Marketing | 26000 | 28600 | 32000 | 30700 |
| Master degree | | | | |
| 051 Economics | 27000 | 36500 | 36000 | – |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | 28500 | – | 36000 | 39600 |
| 073 Management | 28500 | 36500 | 36000 | 39600 |
| 232 Social security | 27000 | – | – | – |
| Distant education | | | | |
| Bachelor degree | | | | |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | 18500 | – | 25000 | 20700 |
| 073 Management | 18500 | 22100 | 25000 | – |
| 075 Marketing | 18500 | 22100 | 25000 | – |
| Master degree | | | | |
| 051 Economics | 22000 | 29600 | 27000 | – |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | 22500 | – | 27000 | 23400 |
| 073 Management | 22500 | 29600 | 27000 | 23400 |
| 232 Social security | 22000 | – | – | – |

Source: developed by the authors based on [10]

Table 4

**Information on the level of discounts on the cost of the first year of full-time
and distant education in higher education institutions of Rivne region, 2024, % per year**

| Specialty | International University of Economics and Humanities | Rivne State University of the Humanities | National University of Water and Environmental Engineering | National University of Ostroh Academy |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Full-time education | | | | |
| Bachelor degree | | | | |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | – | – | –16 | –12 |
| 073 Management | – | –6 | –16 | – |
| 075 Marketing | – | –9 | –19 | –15 |
| Master degree | | | | |
| 051 Economics | – | –26 | –25 | – |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | – | – | –21 | –28 |
| 073 Management | – | –22 | –21 | –28 |
| 232 Social security | – | – | – | – |
| Distant education | | | | |
| Bachelor degree | | | | |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | – | – | –26 | –11 |
| 073 Management | – | –16 | –26 | – |
| 075 Marketing | – | –16 | –26 | – |
| Master degree | | | | |
| 051 Economics | – | –26 | –19 | – |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | – | – | –17 | –4 |
| 073 Management | – | –24 | –17 | –4 |
| 232 Social security | – | – | – | – |

Source: developed by the authors based on [10]

Dynamics of the cost of studying in economic specialties at the IUEH in the first year of full-time study for one year in 2020–2024, UAH

| Specialty | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2024/2020, % |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|
| Bachelor degree | | | | | | |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | 16200 | 17850 | 22500 | 25500 | 26900 | 166 |
| 073 Management | 16200 | 17850 | 22500 | 25500 | 26900 | 166 |
| 075 Marketing | 16200 | 17850 | 22500 | 25500 | 26000 | 160 |
| Master degree | | | | | | |
| 051 Economics | 17500 | 19200 | 24200 | 26500 | 27000 | 154 |
| 072 Finance, banking, insurance and stock market | 17500 | 19200 | 24200 | 26500 | 28500 | 163 |
| 073 Management | 17500 | 19200 | 24200 | 26500 | 28500 | 163 |
| 232 Social security | – | – | – | – | 27000 | – |

Source: developed by the authors based on [10]

provided. The structure of this university also lacks a sales department, the functions of which are performed by the IUEH admissions commission represented by the chairperson and the executive secretary. The main factor that influences the effectiveness of the admissions campaign is the quality of training of specialists at the university (product policy). Effective factors of influence include also career guidance activities carried out among school and college graduates, advertising campaigns using the Internet and social networks (communication policy). The technology of information dissemination in social networks is effective.

The main goal of implementing the marketing communication policy of the IUEH is to create a positive image in the eyes of school graduates, to provide information about its educational products to potential applicants, about the advantages of obtaining higher education at this institution, as well as the benefits that a student will receive upon completion of the studies. Achieving the goal also involves building trust in the IUEH among students and potential applicants (their parents).

The formation of a positive professional reputation is the basis on which the entire system of marketing communication policy of the IUEH is built.

Marketing communications of the IUEH are a set of means of information influence on the components of the educational services market in order to form effective demand: advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and direct sales. Let us consider in more detail each element of the marketing policy of the IUEH communications.

The most convenient tool for conveying information to potential applicants is advertising campaigns. The IUEH uses the following types of advertising:

1. Billboards and city lights (bought media). The specificity of using billboards is that the university contracts them for three months a year (June, July, August) and only in the city of Rivne. The goal is to attract attention and interest at the stage of considering various admission options.

2. Advertising on trolleybuses in the city of Rivne (bought media). As in the previous case, the contact audience is the residents of the regional center. In contrast to a billboard, which is static and only those people who are nearby (passing or driving past it) contact it, advertising on a trolleybus is dynamic (the trolleybus is constantly in motion) and its route is usually laid along densely populated streets and districts of the city. Another

advantage of advertising placed on trolleybuses is its long-term nature. The purpose of advertising on trolleybuses is to attract attention to the university, as well as to leave a lasting impression on potential applicants and their parents.

3. Television advertising (bought media). Broadcast of thematic television programs on the ITV channel, which is part of the ITV MEDIA GROUP (Rivne).

4. Radio advertising (bought media). The IUEH uses this type of advertising annually for three months (June, July, August). For this purpose, annual contracts are concluded with the advertising group “RadioDim Rivne” (<https://radiodim.rv.ua/>), which is engaged in sound recording, creation of a media plan, its implementation, collection and processing of information on the effectiveness of radio advertising. Advertising group “RadioDim Rivne” places advertising with the radio stations Avtoradio, Radio Friday, Radio Energy, Hit FM, Radio NV, Lux FM, Radio Maximum, Nashe Radio, Relax FM, which young people listen to in the background while traveling by car, visiting cafes, shopping centers, or when listening through their smartphones.

5. The official website of the IUEH (own media) provides digital content that is posted on own website and which the university fully controls. The website contains information about all educational products (educational and professional programs), information about the achievements and qualifications of scientific and pedagogical staff by faculties and departments, as well as a huge amount of other related information that is necessary to convince a potential applicant of the advantages of entering the IUEH. According to the statistical data on the activity of the IUEH website users during the 2024 admission campaign (June, July, August), the main group of channels associated with the first attraction of website users is organic search (which has 50 thousand clicks to the site), the second place are direct links to the site and special referrals (which have 5.8 and 1.4 thousand clicks to the site, respectively). These are links to the site from the university’s pages on social networks. Paid search (contextual advertising) has 3 thousand clicks to the site.

6. Own pages on social networks (own media) are digital content that is posted on the IUEH pages on the following social networks:

- Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/megu.edu.ua/>);
- Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/megu.edu.ua/?locale=uk_UA);

- TikTok (<https://www.tiktok.com/@megu.edu.ua>).
- YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCY4KbP0gE0bU7PM5wR3tLig>);
- Telegram (https://t.me/megu_university);

In addition, there is a university chatbot on Telegram @meguChatbot

The university is present on all these social networks, as each of them has its own target audience. For example, Instagram users are young people from 15 to 25–30, TikTok users are children and young people from 10 to 15–20, and Facebook users are adults from 30 to 45–50. That is, when the university develops a message for parents of applicants, it should be official, with an emphasis on social importance and usefulness, compliance with legislation, etc. and be posted on Facebook. If an entertaining, funny 15-second video is being prepared, it should be posted on TikTok. If a message is being prepared for a student, it should have a bright picture or video and be posted on Instagram. YouTube and Telegram users are of all age groups.

7. Banner advertising on third-party sites (bought media). The IUEH has a partnership with ITV MEDIA GROUP (Rivne) and banner advertising of the university was placed on their news site, however, this type of advertising was used only in 2023 and due to the low conversion rates to the IUEH site, the placement of such advertising was discontinued.

8. Contextual (SEM) advertising (bought media). This is a new type of advertising that was used for the first time in 2024 and proved itself very positively. During the 2024 admission campaign, the IUEH bought paid online advertising using the Google Ads digital advertising platform. This type of advertising is the most effective because it is aimed at a specific target audience (people aged 18–25) who showed interest in educational services and studied the websites of various higher education institutions in the previous 6 months. The Google Ads system can most likely identify such people as “a person who is planning to enter a higher education institution and actively consumes the appropriate type of content”. That is, the Google Ads system helps the university clearly focus the display of the IUEH online advertising to this target audience.

A significant advantage of the search engine marketing (SEM) technology is that it helps to significantly increase the reach of the target audience in a specific geographical region, bring a potential applicant to the university website, increasing its traffic. However, all effective tools are quite expensive, which is why this technology was used only in the two most important months of the admissions campaign (June and July 2024).

9. Printed advertising (own media). The IUEH publishes its own newspaper “7th Floor”, the summer issue of which is annually dedicated to the admission campaign and on the pages of which the advertising campaign is carried out. In addition to the own newspaper, the university publishes booklets, leaflets, calendars. All these printed products are distributed by teachers when visiting schools in the surrounding regions, offered at exhibitions, and distributed during various public events. Orders for printing advertisements in other newspapers or magazines are not placed, since the production of paper newspapers in the Rivne region and neighboring regions is decreasing every year, and the current generation of young people aged 17–25 do not use such a source of information as printed newspapers and magazines at all.

Therefore, the IUEH makes significant efforts and spends a significant portion of the admission campaign budget on producing, placing, and communicating to potential applicants information about the benefits of studying at the university, presented in the form of various types of advertising. The most effective types of advertising are search (contextual), radio advertising, and distribution of own printed materials.

Next, let us consider such an element of marketing communication policy as Public relations, and describe its components:

1. The IUEH Alumni Association. The university created an association of successful graduates of different years and of whom the university is proud. They are constantly involved in holding various events, and through their participation in various initiatives, they demonstrate the high level of quality of educational services and contribute to the formation of a positive reputation of the IUEH.

2. The Open Doors Days. This event is held two or three times a year in December, March, and April. Its main purpose is a visual demonstration of the university buildings and classrooms, meetings of future entrants with deans, heads of departments, guarantors of educational programs at the university, communication with potential applicants, and creating a positive impression of both the university as a whole and a specific educational and professional program in particular.

3. Holding scientific and practical conferences, seminars, meetings, presentations, as well as extracurricular events (concerts, entertaining events, sports competitions, etc.) at the university.

4. Exhibition activities. The IUEH constantly participates in various exhibitions organized in Rivne region by the Department of Education and Science of the Rivne Regional State Administration, as well as during conferences, Open Days, and various competitions. The university exhibits stands and presents scientific works and achievements of teachers and the university as a whole.

5. Participation in grant projects and active international activities of the university. Every year, the IUEH expands cooperation with foreign partner universities in holding joint scientific events, participation in grant projects and academic mobility projects for scientific and pedagogical staff and students. A very fruitful cooperation is being built now with Bath Spa University (Great Britain), with which a joint grant project is being implemented. In addition, a joint student scientific conference is to be held in April 2025 and various workshops and master classes are held. In April-May, a program of advanced training for teachers and students of the IUEH on leadership problems in higher education was organized, in which more than 60 students and scientific and pedagogical workers took part. There is also fruitful cooperation with universities in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

6. Event marketing activities. The university annually holds a large number of various ceremonial events (Dedication in students, Graduation ceremony), parents meetings, meetings of students with the rector and representatives of state authorities, cultural flash mobs (Vyshyvanka Day, Sports with Champions, Freshmen Concert, Teachers' Concert, Volunteering with the Star etc.). The information about the events is highlighted in the media and helps the university to make itself known in the information space of Rivne region.

Sales promotion tools are used by the IUEH to a limited extent, since the price of the university's educational services is the lowest among competitors, and additional discounts lead to unprofitable operation of the university. Discounts are provided only in individual cases. They are given either to own employees or to students who have special achievements or merits (in this case, they should be considered as a certain compensatory reward for a certain range of achievements). Direct sales of educational products are carried out by involving the IUEH employees in career guidance work. The university annually develops a career guidance work plan in educational institutions of the region. Almost all scientific and pedagogical employees of the university are involved in visiting secondary education institutions. The IUEH teachers visited educational institutions of Rivne, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytskyi, Volyn, and Zakarpatska regions. Currently, school graduates from almost all regions of Ukraine study at the university.

The analysis of the survey results shows that when choosing an educational institution, applicants are guided by the educational program and predicted learning outcomes. The most important factor among family circumstances is the cost of education. The most important personal factor when choosing an educational institution is positive feedback about the university and advice from friends. Among advertising activities, the Internet and social networks are the priority. Relatively few applicants noted the importance of meetings with university staff at the educational institution. The smallest number of applicants mentioned printed advertising materials and television advertising. Very few students participated in mass events aimed at applicants. The work of the admissions commission was rated quite high. Thus, the feedback from students who entered the IUEH shows that the most effective means of promoting the university's educational products are positive reviews from students who are already studying at the university, as well as from acquaintances and friends. The main source of information about the educational and professional programs and the university is the Internet and the IUEH website. A promising direction of promotion is search (contextual) advertising and SMM.

Conclusions. Marketing of educational services is a socially oriented process aimed at meeting the needs of students, forming long-term relationships with them, and increasing the competitiveness of the university. The conducted research confirmed that an effective marketing communication policy, developed taking into account regional characteristics and challenges of the modern market, plays a key role in ensuring the sustainability and

development of the university. Regional characteristics, including demographic changes, migration processes and declining solvency of the population, have a significant impact on the choice of educational services. Higher education institutions should adapt their strategies to the needs of local markets, taking into account the geographical mobility of applicants, the availability of housing, and the availability of infrastructure for studying in a safe environment.

The research confirmed the importance of flexible pricing as one of the main tools of competition. Universities should use differentiated approaches to pricing, offering competitive prices and discounts for socially vulnerable categories of students, while maintaining financial stability. Adjusting prices taking into account the economic situation and pricing policies of competitors helps to attract more students.

Digital marketing tools, such as SEO optimization, contextual advertising, and targeted advertising in social networks (SMM), are the most effective for reaching a youth audience. At the same time, traditional methods, including career guidance events, PR campaigns, participation in exhibitions and organization of Open Days, etc., remain important for shaping the image of the university and creating long-term connections with regional communities. The study confirmed that the maximum effect is achieved when combining modern digital technologies with traditional approaches to communication. Such an integrated approach allows universities to expand their audience, maintain trust among applicants and their parents, and quickly respond to changes in the information environment.

The research identified the need for constant monitoring of the competitive environment, analysis of the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and development of personalized offers for target audiences. Particular attention should be paid to developing the university brand, maintaining a positive image through social networks, involving graduates in building a reputation and organizing events that strengthen interaction with local communities. Higher education institutions must be prepared for new challenges related to economic instability, changes in educational trends, and the development of digital technologies. Thus, the implementation of a marketing communication policy that takes into account regional characteristics, market needs, and modern digital promotion tools will help strengthen the positions of higher education institutions in conditions of high competition and ensure their sustainability in the face of social and economic challenges.

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