

Scientific article

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION INSTRUMENTS ON THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS BY POTENTIAL STUDENTS REGARDING THE SELECTION OF AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: This case study analyzes the results of the questionnaire which aimed to test to which extent certain integrated marketing communication instruments affect the decision-making process of potential students regarding the choice of a higher education institution, which was the subject of study. The questionnaire was carried out on a yearly basis, during the 2013/14 school year entry exam period, and the candidates were for the first time allowed to opt for several offered options. The questionnaire was not anonymous. The obtained responses underwent qualitative processing and analysis in this paper. The sample consisted of 85 respondents (candidates) of both genders, and the research showed that certain marketing communication activities which the higher education institution had applied during its promotional campaign had a significant impact on the choice of institution for continuing further education. The obtained results confirmed that word of mouth communication continues to represent the most efficient means of integrated marketing communication, and that certain instruments, such as Internet marketing (web pages, Facebook and similar), continue to gain in significance, especially among the young.

Key words: *Higher education institution, integrated marketing communication instruments, word of mouth communication, advertising, Internet marketing, public relations*

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INTRODUCTION

Considering that there is a strong competitive market in the area of higher education, most higher education institutions, especially from the private sector, need to carry out dynamic marketing campaigns in order to reach their target groups and sign up as many students as possible. Such a campaign is also carried out by the College of Sports and Health from Belgrade (hereinafter: the College, or CSH), which is the subject of this case study, and which educates specialists to work in the area of sports and health. During the signing up of each new generation of students, the College carried out an evaluation of the marketing communication program in progress. Considering there is no universal formula, as the situation involves an environment which is inclined towards constant changes, it is necessary to constantly assess the efficiency of certain integrated marketing communication instruments, in the unremitting search for new and efficient ways to approach target groups; in the case of higher education institutions, the most significant target group are secondary school graduates, which are the source of the majority of potential students. The result of this assessment, which implies collecting and analyzing information, should aid in the process of creating, planning and carrying out a future marketing communication program. Every year, during the signing up of a new generation of students, the assessment also includes a questionnaire which determines how potential students had found out about the College. This data is of a paramount significance, as it gives some guidelines for a further choice and application of an adequate marketing communication strategy and investing resources in certain activities and integrated marketing communication instruments.

Word of mouth communication

It is well known that marketing success depends on those clients who come back to purchase another time, that is, those who reuse the same products/services.² Thus, it is very significant that an organization secures a permanent benefit for users, that is, that it sustains service quality. An efficient appealing to clients and their retaining is a challenge for marketing. Thus it is of a crucial significance that the promise specified within a marketing communication mix corresponds to real service quality, if the desire of the organization is to realize long term success (loyalty, return of users), as it must be kept in mind that a client will make use of an inferior service only once (Smith, 2002).

² In order not to be overwhelmed by an overload of text, and considering the situation involves services in the area of higher education and their users, the paper will avoid using the terms products and buyers, in spite of the fact that everything mentioned about services and service user is generally also valid for products and buyers

Despite the fact that word of mouth communication is not formally acknowledged as an integrated marketing communication instrument, its significance is unquestionably large. Positive oral communication represents one of the best types of promoting every organization, and thus also higher education institutions, considering it has a higher degree of credibility and reliability than communication via the media. Word of mouth communication is a process by which one person verbally conveys a message to another person. Everyone who is talking about the organization or its services is included in this process: all those employed, whether they formally or informally communicate with the service users or other outside public. The employees who are in direct contact with the service users directly impact the image of the organization. However, this process is hard to control, as it has a very big potential. It represents a powerful media in spreading information on the organization and its services (Bond, 2001).

According to certain research, it has been determined that one individual may share his or her positive impressions about the organization, that is, services, with at least three persons; however, discontent will be shared in average with 11 individuals. This is a fact which is to be borne in mind by everyone who wishes to build and maintain the good image of an organization. Quick problem-solving, that is, resolving complaints, is of vital significance to avoid the spreading of negative word by mouth communication at the very start, as negative feelings in regards to some services can be maintained for a long time (Kotler, 2006).

It must be borne in mind that that circle of influence is significantly increased when people communicate over the Internet, and so word of mouth communication via the Web is joined by the spoken word, as a significant stimulus for purchasing (Kotler, 2006). With the emergence of social networks (Facebook, Twitter), every user has the possibility to communicate and exchange opinions and experiences with an enormous number of other users at practically the same moment, which should be taken into consideration as it involves a young population, which on one hand is the most numerous group of social networks users, and on the other hand, it is one of the most significant target groups of higher education institutions - potential students.

Word of mouth communication, thereby, is directly linked with the quality of services in higher education institutions. This is especially significant when referring to educational services in the private sector, considering that market growth, development and the survival of institutions such as these depend directly on the quality and successful carrying out of their activities, which is in a direct correlation with the number of students signed up. Thusly, in order to merit a recommendation by word of mouth users, these higher education institutions must invest a great deal in the quality of their services, which primarily refers to the quality and a constant innovating of curricula, careful selecting of employees, investing

in post-sales services, which in turn implies care about the users (that is, the students) after enrollment, as well as an ceaseless meeting of their needs as well as following comments, acting in coordination with them and a rapid resolving of potential problems. It is also necessary to invest in new teaching aides, classrooms and IT equipment which contributes to the quality of the teaching process.

Advertising

According to expectations, one of the basic instruments of integrated marketing communication – advertising, has shown to be very efficient in promoting higher education institutions. Many experts consider this instrument sufficiently powerful to stimulate users, due to large visibility and suggestibility.

“Economic propaganda is constituted of every kind of activity which thanks to audiovisual or combined means informs consumers and endeavors to create in them a positive image about certain products or services and in that way to exert a direct influence on their attitudes in choosing and purchasing products, that is, the choice and use of their services” (Vračar, 1999, 112). Economic propaganda is a form of mass communication, that is, direct communicating with target groups via media outlets (printed or electronic); one of the most popular forms of paid service presenting in the media, whose aim is to create a demand for a certain service in the minds of the public (Vračar, 1999). It has great power, considering that it is directed towards the wide audience. Using different media, it combines information and messages about certain services, by which it stresses and stimulates users to use the services and increase the profit of the organization (Filipović, Kostić, 2001). “Advertising is every type of impersonal presentation and promoting of ideas, goods, or services, which is paid by a known sponsor” (Kotler, Keller, 2006, 568).

While creating a propaganda message, the relevant elements are the following: what to say and how to say it. “A propaganda message is the use of words, symbols, and illustrations for communicating with the target auditorium via the media” (Jobber, Fahy, 2006, 258). These messages can be more or less artistically formed, or just informative; longer or shorter, with more or less information, and can be based only on associations or images in color. These kinds of decisions depend on the aim of the message, whether it is the presenting of a new service, an attempt of (re)positioning on the market, or simply a reminder of the features of certain services, or something else entirely. The basic function of economic propaganda, i.e. convincing and motivating the consumer to buy the product, is achieved by an appropriate text. A strong text of an economic-propaganda message is one of the most powerful means of communication (Filipović, Kostić, 2001, 253). Thus, it is important to produce new ideas, to avoid repetition and use means already used by somebody else. A good advertisement usually stresses one or two essential features of a product/service.

After choosing a message, the media which is to carry it out is chosen, in

regards to the range, frequency and influence. The range is the most significant during the launching of a new service, as well as poor demand. Frequency is the most important if there are strong competitors, or resistance by the user. The media refer to different target segments of the market, especially divided according to age, life style, interests. Mass-media increasingly refer to certain target groups and exert influence on them. The choice of a good media outlet is of a crucial and vital importance, as without the appropriate media, the carrier of a promotional message, it is not possible to carry out successful marketing communication. Thus understanding the features of different media outlets is a significant prerequisite for using their potential wisely (Bond, 2001).

The media which use economic propaganda are the following (Filipović, Kostić, 2001): the press, audio and audio-visual means of entertainment and advertising: the radio, TV, film, the Internet (www, e-mail, Facebook), as well as the means of external economic propaganda (which include all the areas which are graphically processed in the aim of advertising: billboards, posters, neon signs, advertising space, or ads on streets, bus stops, shopping malls, sports fields; and buses or taxis with advertisements on them).

Of course, the available budget is of a crucial impact on the choice of media, the frequency of advertising, as well as the quality of the ads. Economic propaganda, that is, advertising, is one of the most frequent and most preferred instruments of integrated marketing communication in promoting educational institutions, regardless of the relatively high price of advertising space.

In regards to content and time, economic propaganda must be in accordance with the other integrated marketing communication instruments and must augment them in order to achieve a maximum effect of the sales efforts of the organization. It is relevant that all the activities of integrated marketing communication have a joint aim. It is also necessary to compile a detailed plan of marketing communication, taking in view the compatibility of all their instruments. Such a plan should have an optimal effect on creating a corporate image and organization identity, as well as a successful realizing of the sales of its services (Filipović, Kostić, 2001).

Internet marketing

Internet marketing is defined as “meeting marketing aims via Internet use and technologies based on this” (Jobber, Fahy, 2006, 281). The phenomenon of the Internet has fundamentally impacted the developing of personal and business communications. It can be used for informing, promotional activities and sales (Morris, 2001, 105). One of the key presumptions of modern business implies the existing of Internet presentations, which is a contemporary, efficient and attractive way to presents a higher education institution to its users and other interested parties. Higher education institutions use their Internet pages for developing public relations, presenting the most vital information about an

institution (aims and mission, teaching staff, material resources), presenting services (study programs and eventually, other activities) and advertising.

The Internet enables establishing direct communication between the organization and its multiple and diverse target groups. In order for business communication on the Internet to be successful, it is necessary for it to be included in the total plan and strategy of business communication, as well as a firm link with traditional communication instruments (Filipović et al., 2001). "Internet marketing must be creative, interesting and prone to constant changes, due to a variety of information supplied to users. On the other hand, though it is relatively easy to create a positive image on the net, thus it is equally quick and easy to create a negative impression" (Vukmirović, 2001, 404).

The content of a Web presentation must in no way be neglected at the expense of form. The message content must be adapted to the demands of the users. According to Dragutin Vračar, "information is what sells products on the Web" (1999, 247). Thus, information must be presented clearly and as simply as possible and it must be significant and useful for the site visitors. The aim should be to establish an interactive relationship and communication between the visitors of the Internet presentations and the organization.

In the past years, an increasing number of higher education institutions with their target groups (most often these are current or potential students, as well as their parents; also, potential business partners) also communicate via social networks (in Serbia, the most popular are Facebook and Twitter), whose development has also enabled an easier and quicker linking of these institutions and their target groups. The interaction is practically momentary, it transpires 24 hours a day due to the nature of social networks and the possibility of exchanging various contents (photographs, video clips, music, and entertaining material), and it is more direct and has a greater flexibility. It can be said that it is devoid of the rigor typical for business communication which on the other hand is typical for e-mail or official Internet presentations, as it takes part in a somewhat more relaxed, virtual ambience, even when this involves an official Facebook page of a higher education institution.

Some public relations activities

The definitions of public relations are various and numerous, and here we will mention some of the most recent ones. Namely, in March of 2012, thanks to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), with the help of 12 other vocational organizations and associations and a industry-wide public, based on a public vote, hundreds of submissions, abundant commentary and nearly one year of research, the profession's choice for the modern definition of PR profession is: *Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.*

This sort of communication between higher education institutions and their target groups is realized via numerous PR activities which, among other things, encompass: consulting the management in regards to the policy of the institutions and communications with the public, researching attitudes and the behavior of the public in the aim of planning an adequate strategy of public relations, relations with the media, crisis management and many others, among which this paper will mention the following: organizing special events, presenting higher education institutions and/or its services and creating a visual identity.

Organizing special events is carried out for the purpose of attracting attention to the services of higher education institutions, or some of their activities. Special events include the following: organizing diverse conferences and seminars, participating at fairs, organizing exhibitions or competitions, celebrating anniversaries and one-time or regular events, whose aim is to attract as much media attention as possible (publicity), as well as exerting influence on targeted public organizations (Lawrence, 2001).

One of the more significant PR activities are also presentations of higher education establishments or their services, which occur at fairs, seminars, while visiting secondary schools and talking with pupils whenever there is an opportunity for this. Power Point presentations, as clear demonstrations and oral presentations are always received well, as they present the possibility of interaction and establishing contact with the public, which can take part and ask questions (Lawrence, 2001).

Creating a visual identity of higher education institutions, especially private establishments, is usually focused on. A visual identity represents all that an establishment is recognizable to the public by, starting from the name, logotype, slogan, banner, to a variety of promotional material (pens, organizer, T-shirts, caps), to branded vehicles and business space.

METHOD

The questionnaire which assesses the influence of integrated marketing communication instruments on the decision-making process on the potential students of the College of Sports and Health is conducted every year, and this paper presents the results of the questionnaire carried out during the signing up of students in the 2013/14 school year. All the integrated marketing communication instruments which are strategically planned and used to promote the College were mentioned in the questionnaire.

Applied was the methodology of transversal processes, that is, a process which is carried out in the planned periods of research (in this case, once a year, during enrollment), orientated towards elementary descriptive statistics. The questionnaire technique was used for gathering data, and the questionnaire was not anonymous, offering some 14 options (14 communication channels), while the candidates were expected to respond how they had found out about

the College. The sample consisted of 85 candidates of both genders, applicants for the a new generation of students in 2013/14, which was 77% of the total number of those who applied for all three study programs (Sports Coach, Sports Management, Vocational Physiotherapist) and signed up for the first year of study. The candidates were allowed to choose more than one answer.

The obtained responses of the respondents were processed and qualitatively analyzed. The data processing implied creating a spreadsheet of the number of candidates who opted for this higher education institution based on certain communication activities.

RESULTS

The offered options (communication channels) in the questionnaire, as a response to the question how the candidates had heard about the College, and sorted according to frequency of choice, were the following (Table 1):

Table 1. *Communication channels according to the frequency of choice (in percentage and absolute value)*

	Communication channel	No (%)
1.	Recommendation of friends, relatives ³	40 (47,06%)
2.	CSH student recommendation	31 (36,47%)
3.	Recommendation from sports club	16 (21,18%)
4.	Recommendation of friends from secondary school	15 (17,65%)
5.	College site	13 (15,29%)
6.	College Facebook page	11 (12,94%)
7.	TV	11 (12,94%)
8.	Press	9 (10,59%)
9.	Something else	4 (4,71%)
10.	Billboards	3 (3,53%)
11.	Posters in public transportation	3 (3,53%)
12.	Posters in the Tašmajdan Sports Center	2 (2,35%)
13.	Presentations in secondary schools	2 (2,35%)
14.	Education Fair	2 (2,35%)

The questionnaire enabled potential students to choose only one option (one communication channel), which was decisive for their enrollment to the College (Table 2).

³ This option is the least specific, considering it is unspecified whether the friends/relatives are College students (former or current), or coaches in sports clubs or whether they found out about the College from some of the marketing activities carried out by the College.

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Table 2. *Opting of candidates based on only one communication channel (percentage and absolute value)*

	Communication channel	No (%)
1.	Recommendation of friends, relatives	22 (25,88%)
2.	CSH student recommendation	10 (11,76%)
3.	Recommendation from sports club	3 (3,53%)
4.	Recommendation of friends from secondary school	-
5.	College site	2 (2,35%)
6.	College Facebook page	1 (1,18%)
7.	TV	2 (2,35%)
8.	Press	1 (1,18%)
9.	Something else: - CSH professor recommendation - attendance of professional training in the College - training in the College fitness center - recommendation of secondary school teacher	4 (4,71%)
10.	Billboards	-
11.	Posters in public transportation	-
12.	Posters in Tašmajdan Sports Center	1 (1,18%)
13.	Presentation in secondary school	1 (1,18%)
14.	Education Fair	2 (2,35%)

Thus, 37 candidates (43.53% of those polled) made up their minds based only on word of mouth communication, that is, a direct recommendation, while 10 candidates (11.76%) decided based only one marketing activity. Two of them (2.35%) made a decision on the basis of something else. This makes up 57.64% of all those polled, that is, 49 candidates (Table 3).

Table 3. *Frequency of choice of only one communication channel according to category ⁴ (percentage and absolute value)*

	Communication channel	No (%)
1.	Word of mouth communication	37 (45,53%)
2.	Marketing activities	10 (11,76%)
3.	Something else	2 (2,35%)

⁴ Here the word category implies a gathering of communicational channels which belong to a larger group. For example, the category word of mouth communication also includes the recommendation of former students, and friends/relatives, and teachers, i.e. coaches; in the same way, the category marketing activities includes every kind of advertising, as well as Internet marketing, participating at education fairs and similar.

The remaining candidates, some 36 (that is, 42.36%), opted to study at the College based on several combinations of the offered options (communication channels), among which the most frequent are the following (Table 4):

- Recommendation of friend/relatives and (former and current) College students – 11 candidates, that is, 12.94%,
- Recommendation of friends/relatives, combined with TV/press – 6 candidates, that is, 7.06%,
- Recommendation of friends/relatives, in combination with the Internet (College site or College Facebook page) – 5 candidates, that is, 5.88%.

The other candidates, 14 of them (that is, 16.47%), opted for some other combinations, that is, they were exposed to information about the College through several different communication channels at the same time (three and more), with the condition that none of these cases had a combination of different marketing activities which omitted some of the word of mouth communication forms.

Table 4. *Frequency of chosen combinations of the offered communication channels (percentage and absolute value)*

	Combination of communication channels	No (%)
1.	Recommendation of friends, relatives – recommendation of (former/current) College students	11 (12,94%)
2.	Recommendation of friends, relatives –advertising on TV/ in the press	6 (7,06%)
3.	Recommendation of friends, relatives - Internet marketing (College site /Facebook page)	5 (5,88%)
4.	Various communication channels	14 (16,47%)

To sum up, we have the following data (Table 5):

- Based on one of the word of mouth communication forms (friends or relatives, former or current students, talks in the sports club, friends from secondary school, College professors, teachers from secondary school) or their combinations, some 48 candidates applied, that is, 56.47% of those polled;
- Based on marketing activities (advertising on TV or in the press, the College site or FB page, billboards, posters in public transportation or in the Tašmajdan Sports Center, at the Education Fair or presentations in secondary schools) – 10 candidates, that is, 11.76% of the polled;
- Based on the combinations of one of the word of mouth communication forms and some marketing activities (or several of them together), 25 candidates applied, that is, 29.42% of the polled;
- Something else (via professional training programs or training sessions in the College fitness center) – 2 candidates, that is, 2.35%.

Table 5. *Recapped replies of candidates according to communication channel categories (percentage and absolute values)*

	Combination of communication channels	No (%)
1.	Some word of mouth communication form	48 (56,47%)
2.	Some applied marketing activities	10 (11,76%)
3.	Some word of mouth communication and marketing activity together	25 (29,42%)
4.	Something else	2 (2,35%)
	Total	85 (100%)

DISCUSSION

It is important to stress that this questionnaire differs from previous ones in the way that for the first time, students could choose more than one response, as well as due to the fact that different marketing activities were offered separately, in order to obtain precise data and effective insight into which communication channels are the easiest and quickest for reaching potential students.

All the obtained results testify of the power of the recommendation of a trustworthy person conveyed by word of mouth communication. In accordance with expectations and previous experience, the largest number of new students continue to apply on the basis of a recommendation of a friend/relative, whether (former or current) College students or not. This is logical, considering it involves lasting education which, on one hand, is relatively expensive, and on the other, decisive for every young person. A possible reason for such a result is the fact of insufficient differentiation and affirmation of good quality institutions (appearance of new institutions, insufficient assessment of their quality, etc.). Thus it is clear that it the recommendation of a trustworthy person, that is, one with experience with this service, which will exert a crucial influence while choosing the future profession, as well as the establishment which will enable quality education. The latest research carried out during the first and second registration period (July and September 2013), points to the fact that 56.47% of the polled students applied based on some form of word of mouth communication (including here also the recommendation obtained in a sports club or a secondary school), and if we add to that the fact that students, along with word of mouth communication, were also exposed to some marketing activity, this number increases to as many as 85.88% of the employed.

Last year, the College used the press, audio-visual means of advertising and entertainment (TV and the Internet) and means of outdoor advertising: namely, billboards, posters in public transportation and in the rooms of the Tašmajdan Sports Center (Image 1).

Image 1. College of Sports and Health poster



After a careful selection of the College spokesmodels (Ivana Maksimović – a silver medal winner at the 2012 Summer Olympics, student of the Sports Coach study program (sport shooting); Marko Pantelić – former Serbian football national team member, graduate of the Sports Management study program; Draženko Mitrović – Paralympic vice-champion in athletics, student of the Sports Coach study program (Athletics) and Aleksandar Bulatović – a renowned vocational physiotherapist), a poster was created and two commercials were shot, which in the period from April to mid-July 2013, as well as the first half of September, were aired on the first and second channels of RTV Serbia.

These commercials were made painstakingly. The first one was focused primarily on young people in sports and in it Ivana Maksimović exclaims the following: “The College of Sports and Health – my choice, as education and top sports go together”. At the end of the video spot there is a list of study programs and relevant College information, while the speaker intones the official slogan: “Learn from the best – achieve the most”.

The second commercial focuses on all those interested in the Vocational Physiotherapist study program. It features a former student, and today a renowned and successful physiotherapist, Aleksandar Bulatović, who says: “Invest in your future – become a vocational physiotherapist; the College of Sports and Health – my choice”. At the end of this commercial, the official College slogan is heard.

These commercials last a mere 10 seconds. The focus was on achieving a synergy with the contents of the TV program, and thus the commercial with Ivana Maksimović was aired mostly before the start of a Champions League match. The commercial for vocational physiotherapists was aired mostly in the RTS morning show, addressing not only the primary target group – secondary school graduates, but also their parents, who have a great influence on the decision-making of their children in regards to their future profession.

In regards to the press, school competitions were published in Politika and Večernje novosti newspaper supplements dedicated to higher education, as well as in the dailies Sportski žurnal and Sport, which covered some of the most significant target groups for College application: namely, expect for secondary school graduates (and their parents), these are also young people interested in sports, sportspeople, coaches and, generally speaking, individuals who work in sports, or follow sports with some regularity (Image 2). There is an insistence on an optimal positioning of the advertisement (always best on the right hand side).

Image 2. Presenting the College in a supplement dedicated to higher education in the Večernje novosti newspaper

ЕДУКАЦИЈА СПОРТСКИХ ТРЕНЕРА, МЕНАџЕРА И СТРУКОВНИХ ФИЗИОТЕРАПЕУТА

Три студијска програма

ВИСОКА спортска и струковна школа у области спорта, струковних студија, специјализована струковна је 1987. године. Експертна организација, издана је рад у области спорта, на три студијска програма високог струковног образовања.

СПОРТИСТ тренери и струковни радници у области спорта, на три студијска програма високог струковног образовања.

Струковна школа у области спорта, на три студијска програма високог струковног образовања.

ВИСОКА спортска и струковна школа у области спорта, струковних студија, специјализована струковна је 1987. године. Експертна организација, издана је рад у области спорта, на три студијска програма високог струковног образовања.



ИВАНА МАКСИМОВИЋ студентка и здравствена школа

Студентка и здравствена школа



ВУКОБРАТ ПЕТРОВИЋ тренер и струковни радник



Струковна школа у области спорта, на три студијска програма високог струковног образовања.



Струковна школа у области спорта, на три студијска програма високог струковног образовања.

КОНКУРС

за упис 17. генерације студената

ОСНОВНИ СПОРТИСТИЧКИ ШКОЛОВАЊА 2013/14. године, за степен

ПРВОГ СТЕПЕНА ВИСОКОГ ОБРАЗОВАЊА СТРУКОВНИХ СТУДИЈА

на студијском програму

СПОРТСКИ ТРЕНЕР (25 кандидата) за спорт: фудбал, кошарка, рукомет, тенис, одбојка, тенис, стони тенис, гимнастика и водени спортови, атлетика, борбени спортови

СПОРТСКИ МЕНАџМЕНТ (25 кандидата)

СТРУКОВНИ ФИЗИОТЕРАПЕУТ (45 кандидата)

Услови уписа у 1. и 2. степену основних струковних студија су завршено средње образовање и испитни квалификациони испит.

Пријављивање кандидата обавља се током јуна месеца. Пријемни испити биће одржани у периоду од јуна до јула, након чега ће испитивани уписати у основне струковне студије.

Школари су могуће платити у више месечних рата. Студенти 1. године добијају бесплатан смештај.

У складу са Законом о спорту и подзаконским актима, дипломирање студената степенује право на пензију за рад у спорту.

Упис студената на специјалистичке струковне студије за степен

ДРУГОГ СТЕПЕНА ВИСОКОГ ОБРАЗОВАЊА СТРУКОВНИХ СТУДИЈА

на студијском програму

СПОРТСКИ ТРЕНЕР (25 кандидата)

СПЕЦИЈАЛИЗАЦИЈА ЗА РАД СА ДЕЦОМ И МЛАДИМ КАТЕГОРИЈАМА СПОРТИСТА

Услови уписа на специјалистичке струковне студије су завршено високо школо или факултет у области спорта и физичке васпитања, и испити у струковном раду. Пријављивање кандидата обавља се у септембру месецу.

**УЧИТЕ ОД НАЈБОЉИХ
- ПОСТИГЛИТЕ НАЈВИШЕ**

ВИСОКА СПОРТИСКА И ЗДРАВСТВЕНА ШКОЛА
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In regards to the means of outdoor advertising, College advertisements were shown for three weeks on LED billboards at three attractive and carefully chosen locations in Belgrade: across from the building of the Republic of Serbia government (on the corner of the Knez Miloš and Nemanjina streets), on Slavija Square and the Square of the Republic (Image 3).

Image 3. *The billboard of the College of Sports and Health*



The mentioned posters were placed on four public transportation bus lines which cover the vicinity of the College.

From May to end-September, or a full 5 months, the College poster was positioned at the entrance and within the Tašmajdan Sports Center, which is daily visited by a large number of young people who are interested in sports.

As can be seen, in the 2013 campaign, except for the regular College slogan “Learn from the best – achieve the most”, a new slogan was also used – “The College of Health and Sports – MY CHOICE”.

Internet marketing deserves special attention. Namely, except for the questionnaire results obtained during enrollment which indicates the increasing significance of this integrated marketing communication instrument, it has also come to our attention that in 2013 the largest number of those seeking information over the telephone in regards to education responded that they had found out about the College over the Internet.

The College Facebook page was started in April 2012. By the end of 2013 (when this paper was written), it had over 1,200 fans, which indicates the great impact of Facebook on the young population. Such a large number of fans, which grows day after day, imposes the obligation to keep up the Facebook page with seriousness and great attention, as it represents an influential marketing instrument, and is, for all intents and purposes, free. From the aspect

of profitability, Facebook is unrivalled. For now, information linked with sports, nutrition and school events are being posted. The page viewers have the opportunity to ask questions in regards to education, and the task of the page administrator is to give precise, concrete and useful responses, and as quickly as possible. Interaction is enabled 24 hours a day, and takes place almost instantly.

In regards to special events, the College traditionally participated in the EduFair Educational Fair, which was held at the beginning of March 2013 in Belgrade. On that occasion, the College presented its study programs to secondary school graduates, their parents and teachers. This kind of promotion can be very efficient, as it enables a direct contact between the higher education establishment and its target groups, when two-way communication and a direct dialogue are established. Every year, within the framework of practical teaching the subjects Communication, PR and the media in sports, engaged were all the students of the third year Sports Management program and a number of students of the Sports Coach program, which were in charge of distributing the promotional material (flyers, pens, pads with the College logo and similar), as well as direct communication with secondary school graduates, to which they were closer in age, features, style and way of communicating from the College staff, who on the other hand was in charge of giving detailed information regarding teaching. Also included were a number of students of the Vocational Physiotherapist program, which had the task of giving information to all those interested in their study program.

Considering that the fact that the decision on college-attending is in June and the fair takes place in March, the Power Point presentation, as well as the airing of commercials, are an inevitable part of the presentation. By using a plethora of photographs and stills which demonstrate the teaching process and College activities, studying at the College is depicted in an interesting and dynamic way and adds on to the information which interested parties get on the spot.

The Power Point presentation is also shown during presentations organized in secondary schools, where there are also promotions of study programs through direct presentations and interaction with secondary school graduates, accompanied by a distribution of promotional material (flyers). The College presentation was held in 2013 in two secondary medical schools in Belgrade, in the aim of acquainting the pupils with the Vocational Physiotherapist study program.

CONCLUSION

After an analysis of the questionnaire, the same conclusions as before can be drawn: in the case of a higher education institution which is the subject of this case study, promoting via word of mouth communication continues to

represent the most efficient means of marketing communication. This means that investing in the quality of services should be continued. This primarily relates to the quality and a constant innovating of curricula, the quality of teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as investing in post-sales services. It is also necessary to invest in new teaching equipment, classrooms and IT which contributes to the quality of the teaching process.

As it has already been stressed in a previously carried out research, quality is crucial and the most significant factor in attracting new students. The activities of marketing communication are significant, but the activities of marketing communication are not and cannot be sufficient if there is no solid quality to support them (Krstić, 2007). Such a research result also corroborates how significant it is to develop firm, correct and consistent relations with all those studying at the College.

In regards to integrated marketing communication instruments, Internet marketing is gaining in significance, in order to be seen as the most efficient in this polling, as well as the most profitable. It is taking precedence over the traditional means of advertising – the press, even TV, especially with those of the young generation (secondary school pupils), who represent one of the most significant target groups of higher education institutions.

Somewhat less efficient is outdoor advertising (billboards, posters), as well as promoting the College at the Educational Fair and presentations in secondary schools. However, when the number of those who found out about the College via these activities is summed up, there is the conclusion that these forms of marketing communication should not be neglected or left out in the future, as each one of them, both individually and collectively, not only impact the decisions of potential students, but also contribute to strengthening and creating the public image of the College.

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