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EXAMINATION OF EFFICIENCY ISSUES OF THE MARKETING FUNCTION IN THE OPERATION OF THE FOURTH GENERATION UNIVERSITIES

THESES

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1. The purpose of the research and its contribution to the scientific discourse

Marketing tools used in higher education often become one-dimensional, which may be explained by the fact that the planners and implementers of university marketing activities do not consider the historical, so-called generational characteristics of universities at all, or only marginally.

The thesis aims to contribute to the scientific discourse by developing a social marketing-oriented university (marketing)management model that fits the university generations, primarily the regional and society-oriented characteristics of the so-called fourth generation universities (4GU).

Due to the very intense domestic and international changes in higher education institutions, conducting the research is not only of theoretical significance, but also has a raison d'être due to its practical applicability. The reason for this is, on the one hand, that the examination of social marketing-oriented marketing models that examine the historical background of higher education institutions and fit them into it has not yet appeared in the international scientific discourse, while on the other hand, that the transformation of higher education institutions in our country is currently underway (e.g. change in financing model and change in operational approach with a marked increase in publication focus, etc.), so the examination of the topic in a national context is of particular importance today.

(1) In the first stage of my dissertation – as a basis for the later, empirical studies of my research – I present in detail the specificities of the development of universities dating back several hundred years, and then I summarize the most important experiences and knowledge of this stage of my research in a comparative perspective.

(2) Then I summarize the most important paradigms of marketing and social marketing primarily in an exploratory manner, while also applying a comparative approach in some stages of my analysis.

In the third stage of the literature review, I examine **(3)** the measurement and evaluation models of universities, the exploration of which – as a motivator influencing the operation of

universities by the maintainer – can have significant explanatory power and can also support the formulation of the theses supporting the connection of selected sub-areas.

(4) After formulating the theses and **(5)** presenting the applied method, the focus is on **(6)** validating the theses. Finally, after presenting a **(7)** international best practice, I close my dissertation by formulating **(8)** summary statements and drawing conclusions.

2. Literature review

2.1. University generations

In this chapter, I reviewed and systematized the most important stages of the development of universities and their specific features. I examined in detail the changes in the basic activities of universities, the changes in their financing, the management factors that characterize them and the most important triggers that induce the changes. It was concluded that from the point of view of this research, one of the most important characteristics of 4GUs is their special role in knowledge creation and utilization, the strategic basis and prerequisite of which are their regional approach, commitment to the development of society, and the social marketing-oriented management approach that aims at and supports their implementation.

2.2. Evolution of marketing approaches

The aim of the systematization of marketing definitions was to explore the theoretical research context relevant to the topic of higher education marketing, focusing on social marketing, in order to place social marketing, which serves as the basis of the research, on the time and content horizon of the scientific field. The content focus of social marketing became the content focus of marketing in the era of Kotler's paradigm shift and disciplinary expansion (1975-), especially from the 2010s, which coincides with the appearance of the 4GUs in the scientific discourse. Both concepts aim to respond to the conflicts formulated by social marketing, which are characteristic of previous marketing eras, according to which there is a conflict between short-term consumer (and institutional) needs and long-term interests of society.

2.3. Chronology of Higher Education Rankings

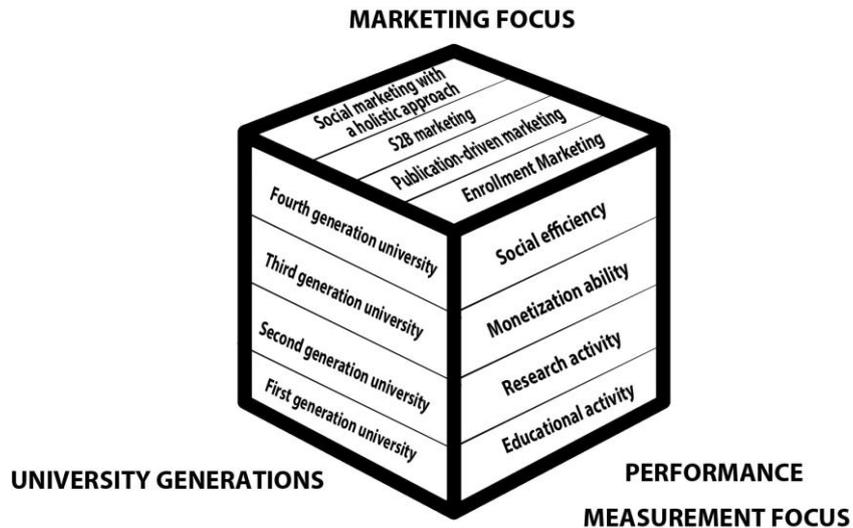
In this chapter, I have explored and systematized the measurement and evaluation models of higher education institutions. It becomes clear from the systematization of the rankings that the measurement of the performance of universities and their ranking cannot be narrowed down to a single focal point, since the goals of the rankings fundamentally define the dimensions of performance measurement, to which the models must provide answers. The “Achilles heel” of higher education rankings is the recognition and understanding of the consistency of goals and means, and ensuring their coherence. The set goals fundamentally determine what information is needed during the measurements, they determine the measurement methodology, and thus the results derived from the measurements.

3. What do the revealed results explain? Summary of information revealed during the literature review

Based on the literature review that underpins the empirical research of the dissertation, it can be stated that the combined consideration of measurement and evaluation models quantifying university performance, the generations of higher education institutions, and a paradigm based on a social marketing approach can form the basis for the expansion of the marketing tool system used in university marketing and the development of a social marketing-oriented university (marketing)management model that fits the specificities of the targeted fourth-generation universities (4GU). This connection process can be described with the following three-dimensional matrix.

The ‘*UNI-MARKETING cube*’ expresses that a direct connection can be assumed between **(1)** universities, their organizations and tasks, their desired goals, mission and core activity(ies), as well as **(2)** the measurement and evaluation models used as motivators and **(3)** the dominant/applied marketing approach (and marketing tools), through which the set university mission can be kept in operational focus and the set goals can be realized.

The UNI-MARKETING Cube



Source: own editing

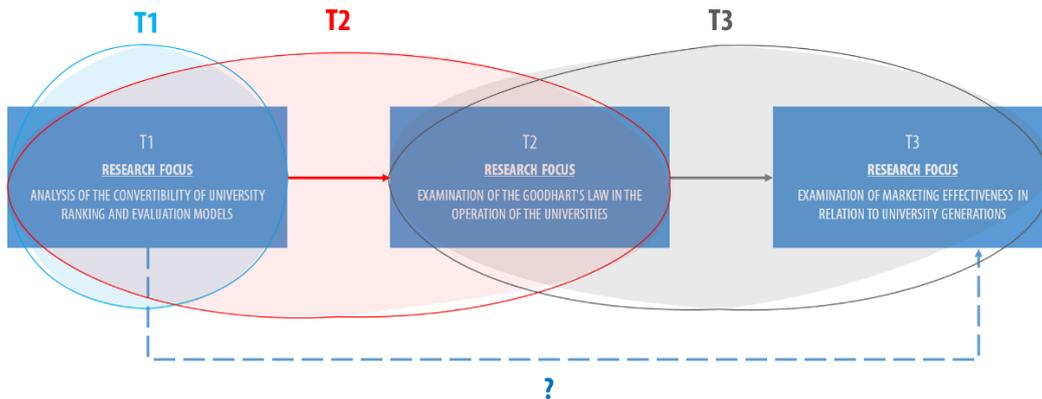
Based on the literature review, the following questions deserve attention:

- How is the social marketing-oriented model defined, which is necessary for it to be successfully adapted to the strategy of fourth-generation universities?
- Can it be proven that the most advanced, third- and fourth-generation university models have already surpassed the focus of the currently applied – ranking-based – university performance measurement?
- Can a relationship be identified between university measurement-evaluation models, university generations, and the breadth and depth of university marketing activities?

4. Research question and theses, methodology, results and conclusions

What theoretical framework, i.e. how defined is the university measurement and ranking model, is necessary in order to successfully implement it in the strategy of fourth-generation universities?

The presumed causal system of the research theses



T1: A measurement and ranking model adapted to the examined university generation can be successfully implemented in the operation of universities, i.e. the implementability of the model is determined by the characteristics of the university generations.

Background (T1): The focus of the thesis H1 is the examination of the convertibility of currently used university measurement and evaluation models. If the thesis (T1) of the generation-appropriate model creation can be justified, then the ranking models have a high degree of convertibility, they can be well adapted to all university generations, and at the same time they are suitable to provide a credible signal about university performance to the most important stakeholders.

T1.1: The indicators of the examined university measurement and evaluation models are consistent with those contained in the mission statements of the examined domestic universities, so they can be implemented in the operation of domestic universities. (*Thesis of alignment with the mission of universities*)

Methodology (T1.1): I wanted to prove the thesis by means of a fundamentally qualitative validation procedure – by analysing a case study. Based on the typology of case selection, I followed the typical case method when selecting the cases to be examined. The subject of the study was the verification or rejection of the correspondence between the mission statements of the universities examined and the specific features of the university measurement and evaluation models, where successful implementation was defined by the complete alignment of the elements of the evaluation models with the mission statement.

Results (T1.1): Considering that I previously determined the successful implementation of university rankings in the operation of domestic universities in terms of the full alignment of the elements of the evaluation models with the mission statements, **I therefore rejected thesis T1.1**, since, taking into account also ELTE, which is in a rather unique situation, only an average of 29% alignment can be observed between the contents of the mission statements and the criteria of the measurement and evaluation models. To put it another way: in the context of the examined domestic universities, these models can be seen more as a kind of quickly publishable, easily understandable marketing communication element for the reader, than as a management tool supporting the mission and assessing its quality. Of course, all the statements made earlier assume that the universities form their activities exactly according to the contents of their mission statements, so the above findings can be considered valid if this is recorded.

T1.2: The goals and indicators of the examined university measurement and evaluation models are consistent with the needs of the university's external stakeholders, so the rankings provide a credible signal to these interested parties. *(Thesis of alignment with stakeholder needs)*

Methodology (T1.2): In the verification of the thesis, I relied on the application of both quantitative and qualitative tools. After selecting the key stakeholders, I decided to accept the thesis based on a questionnaire survey conducted by myself in the case of the "students" group, and on the conduct and evaluation of in-depth interviews in the case of the "labour market" group.

Results (T1.2): Based on my quantitative and qualitative studies, **I rejected thesis T1.2**, as the examined rankings are not suitable for providing a credible signal to the examined stakeholders. Based on the students' responses to the questionnaire survey, it was concluded that if a ranking service provider wishes to provide a ranking that is truly relevant to students, the emphasis should be placed on a system of criteria that focuses on the presentation of career paths and the available income. The models examined in this research not only ignore these factors, but also mislead/may mislead young people who are faced with a career choice due to their indicators are irrelevant to students.

At the same time, in-depth interviews with labour market actors showed that the senior manager of the selected company in the high value-added sector urged the renewal of university education, while the interviewee from the government sector considered it desirable to produce young people with high-level digital knowledge from universities and their integration into the labour market/office. Since the aspects they highlighted were in no way represented in the examined measurement and evaluation models, these models can in no way serve as a credible source of information for either for-profit or government actors.

T1.3: The indicators of the examined university measurement and evaluation models are suitable for being adapted to the presented Bouckaert's 4E model, thus their evaluation approach is able to focus on the aspects of social effectiveness. (*Thesis of the internal consistency*)

Methodology (T1.3): By classifying the selected measurement and evaluation models, I wanted to verify the presence or absence of indicators focusing on social effectiveness – primarily of the final outcome or impact type – in the examined models.

Results (T1.3): The biggest shortcoming of the models examined is that the spectrum of their examination is narrowed exclusively to the narrowly institution-centered measurability of universities, while ignoring the aspect of the social embeddedness of institutions. This not only worsens the internal distribution of indicators (strong predominance of input-output- or intermediate outcome indicators in the models examined), but in fact the rankings examined are also unable to shed light on the extent to which the activities of higher education institutions have proven to be value-creating for society. Accordingly, **I rejected thesis T1.3**, during the examination of which I pointed out that the approach of the current measurement-evaluation models can at most focus on the approach of the Humboldt universities.

T2: Goodhart's law also applies to the operation of higher education institutions, meaning that university measurement and evaluation models not only measure the performance of universities, but also influence their activities.

Background (T2): The aim of thesis T2, which examines the governance preferences of university decision-makers, is to provide an answer to the presence of the Goodhart Law in Hungarian higher education. If the operation based on the Goodhart Law can be justified, then universities will devote their resources to improving the key indicators of university

measurement and evaluation models, i.e. de facto the socially oriented operation of universities cannot be realized.

Methodology (T2): In proving the T2 thesis, I primarily relied on document analysis data. In validating the thesis, the previously selected universities were defined as the units of analysis and I examined the content of their publicly available public service financing contracts with the aim of pointing out whether there might be a causal relationship between the rankings and the focus of the universities' core activities.

Results (T2): Based on my research, **I accepted the T2 thesis in case of model-changing universities**, as the examined rankings not only measure but also direct the activities of domestic universities in order to access resources. I illustrated and justified the general presence of the Goodhart law in higher education through numerous examples, while I pointed out the impact of university rankings on directing institutional activities based on the analysis of the examined public service financing contract.

T3: The generational characteristics of higher education institutions determine the expansion of the institutions' marketing activities, so socially oriented marketing activities, which are desirable for the development of the region, cannot be realized in many university operating constellations.

Background (T3): The theory of university generations, which focuses on the operational characteristics of higher education institutions, provides an opportunity to understand how knowledge creation and innovation can become a catalyst for regional development. The basic idea of thesis T3 is to synthesize the basic tasks that fit the university generations and the university marketing activities– with an innovative approach that is missing from scientific discourse, thus proving that region- and society-oriented operation can only be implemented in a social marketing-driven university model, which is closely related to the motivators of university operation.

Methodology (T3): During the validation of the thesis, I relied on synthesizing the three key areas revealed during the literature review: **(1)** university generation models, **(2)** theoretical premises of marketing, and **(3)** university measurement and evaluation models, as well as the correlations verified during the proof of previous theses.

Results (T3): Based on my research, I accepted thesis T3, as the generational characteristics of higher education institutions strongly determine the expansion of universities' marketing activities, determine the totality of marketing tools used, determine the implementation of marketing tools used, i.e. together they capture whether a socially oriented marketing perspective desirable for the development of the region and society can appear in the operation of universities.

5. Conclusion, final statements

As a starting paradigm of the research, as a kind of subminimum, I formulated that the development of a social marketing-oriented marketing management model, which is the goal, cannot be limited to the scientific foundations of a single discipline. This can be traced not only to the presumed causal relationship between the effectiveness of universities and the efficiency of the marketing discipline, but also to the recognition of the complex, multidimensional system of relationships that universities cannot be examined as independent entities from the aspect required by the research topic, since they do not carry out their activities autonomously, independently of other entities, but they are integrated into a complex socio-economic-political (institutional) system, between which systems a relationship exists.

As a result of my research, it can be stated that the domestic institutional practice intends to give a kind of supporting role to the applied paradigms of marketing science, in which marketing science appears only as a tool for achieving a short-term, "single-pointed", profit-driven institutional objective. Until this practice changes, the proposals discussing the socially-centered expansion of university marketing do not and cannot be relevant, thus the marketing practice of domestic universities cannot go beyond the pre-1970 approach of the marketing discipline, which seriously undermines the social effectiveness of both marketing science and universities.

The social marketing-oriented university marketing management model offers an opportunity to manage the above professional-moral dilemma. By applying the model, marketing science moves from its complementary and/or misinterpreted role in university management to a guiding one, accompanying and guiding the entire university management cycle from the definition of policy and university objectives to the realization of regionally desirable socio-economic effects. The application of the model realizes the strengthening of the third mission, which is significantly underrepresented in the operation of domestic universities. The social marketing-oriented university marketing management is committed to promoting and guiding how the university can effectively interact with society in order to address complex socio-economic challenges, and how it can shape its research activities so that it turns from the perspective of publishing publications to the satisfaction of social needs, values, and expectations. Today, the recognition and understanding of the needs shaped by society and the economy is of only marginal importance in the life of domestic universities, so the market shaped by society and the economy remains untouched and untapped for universities. The full toolkit of the social marketing-oriented university marketing management model offers a good basis for grasping the high-level theoretical paradigms of marketing science at an operational level within the framework of university-socio-economic cooperation and organizing them into knowledge transfer processes at the university operational level in accordance with strategic goals.

The approach of this research synthesizing scientific fields offers a new perspective on the reform of university management processes, which contrasts with the writings appearing in the domestic and international scientific discourse, which typically capture the processes from the perspective of a single discipline. The multidisciplinary approach of the social marketing-oriented university marketing management model increases the robustness of the research findings and strengthens its explanatory power.

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