

Benchmark Models and Technologies in Marketing Management

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Abstract

The paper describes the opportunities provided by validating the authors' innovation—a benchmark model of the work of the university's enrolment board, which is relevant for contemporary educational institutions that already use the marketing management concept and those intending to implement it. The authors describe the following stages: planning, analysis of the application results, and marketing management prospects aimed at the growth of intermediate and final state metrics; the first is represented by functional sections and aggregated assessment model, and the latter includes the conversion of customer flows based on the results of the activities of the enrolment board. Additionally, these stages are aimed at improving the results of a specific university's marketing activity in the education market. The model was tested in the higher education market of the Belgorod Region in 2019–2020, which provided the authors with new applied results, allowing the authors to determine and assess high-potential marketing management opportunities connected with an enhancement of tactical marketing functions of contemporary universities.

Keywords

Benchmarking · Education marketing · Benchmark model · Marketing audit · Consumer behavior model

JEL Code

I21

1 Introduction

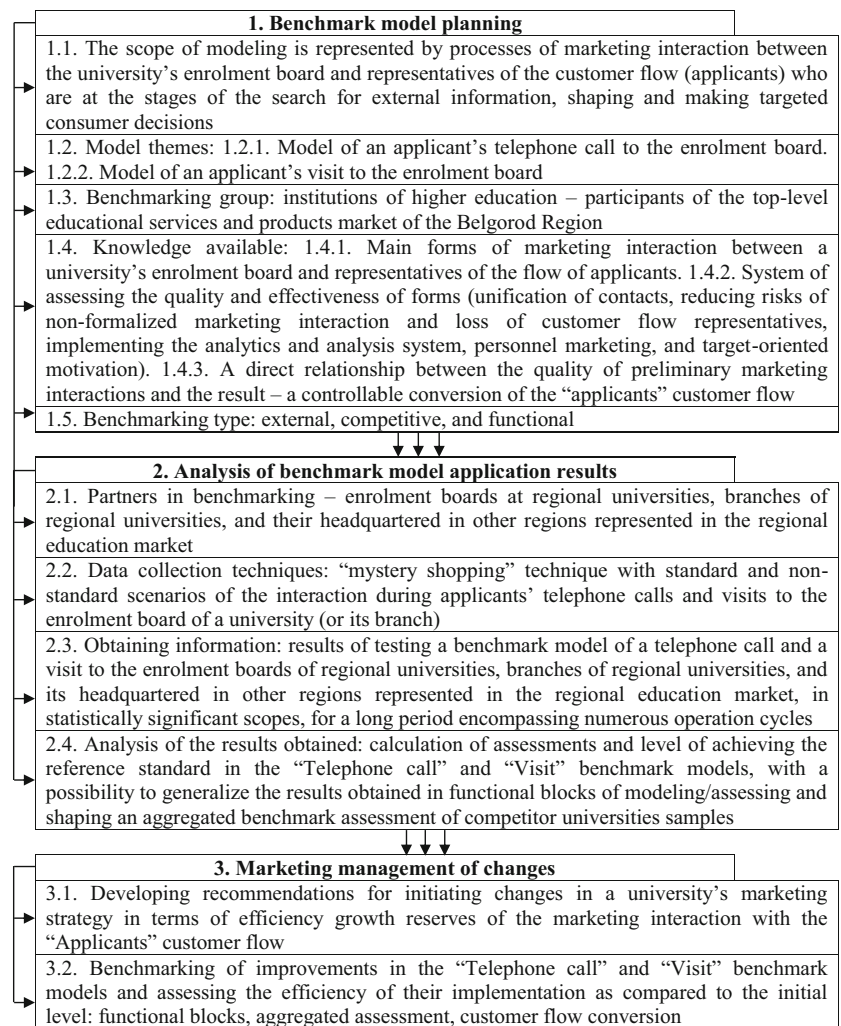
The implementation of the marketing management concept at contemporary educational institutions requires the use of the latest basic paradigms of holistic (comprehensive) marketing and interaction marketing. An effective application of the above is possible only given a complete rethinking of the information efficiency of marketing, using traditional and well-known marketing research tools, marketing information systems, and marketing intelligence, and advanced research technologies and methods aimed at revealing competitive advantages and drawbacks of major marketing and operational processes at a specific university, as well as at implementing remedial fit-for-purpose solutions ensuring the improvement of a university's competitive ability. Such marketing technologies include benchmarking. We believe its scope and efficiency in education marketing are largely underestimated. As of today, it is not applied in due scope and with due efficiency.

2 Materials and Methods

Contemporary benchmarking tools, models, and methods have already been described by such scholars as Akhmadiev (2017) and Bagiyev as part of the research team in cooperation with Dligach and Solovyova (Bagiyev et al., 2016), Blazhevich (2016), Zubenok and Nikonova (2018), Kaufman (2017), Naumova and Sboeva (2018), Pivtorypavlo (2016), Senuyk (2015, pp. 140–156), Chalova and Belozerova (2018), Chechetka (2015, pp. 141–142), and Sheremetyeva and Mitropolskaya-Rodionova (2016). Various aspects of using the benchmarking technology in education marketing have been studied by Zakharova and Emelyanova (2018), Krolevetskaya as part of the research team in cooperation with Eroshenkova and Mikhailyukov (Krolevetskaya et al., 2019), Larina (2016), Mishchenko (2016), Ponomareva (2017), and Porunov as part of the research team in

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Fig. 1 A formalized description of the benchmark model for the activity of the university's enrolment board. *Source:* Developed by the authors



cooperation with Zemlyansky, Zhadayev, and Tigranyan (Porunov et al., 2017).

However, there are some specifics and limitations in the use of the above tools, models, and methods in contemporary marketing management:

- Benchmarking of operational and marketing processes is quite an efficient marketing management tool that allows creating reference models of processes and procedures and assessing their actual development in terms of their completeness, sustainability, quality, and expected results
- Developing the benchmark model of the process is aimed at a search for reserves to enhance its efficiency by testing various configurations and functionality of subjects and objects of benchmark comparisons in situations with variable input parameters
- Specific goals of using benchmark models in marketing management of contemporary institutions include a continuous refinement and optimization of the forms and content of marketing operation interactions in an internal organizational environment which allows determining, formalizing, and providing an actual management thereof

3 Results

To solve the applied tasks aimed at improving the competitive ability of educational institutions in the regional market in the context of the implementation of the marketing management concept, we have developed and validated a benchmark model for the activity of the university enrolment board, considering the specifics of major types of the university's marketing and communication interaction with the customer flow (applicants) at the most important stages of the consumer decision-making process concerning the search for external information on consumer options and the stage of taking a specific decision on the field of training, a form of training, tuition payment, or the university that which provides the educational service.

A formalized description of the authors' benchmark model is provided in Fig. 1.

Table 1 shows the benchmark model of a telephone call to an enrolment board used to implement specialized marketing research in the regional market.

Table 1 Benchmark model for assessing the “Telephone call to a university’s enrolment board” marketing interaction form

Factor/Index	Reference score
1	2
1. The “Access” model block	
<i>Technical access parameters</i>	
1.1. Successful connection at first attempt	5
1.2. Availability of a navigation chatbot during the call	10
1.3. Waiting time	
1.3.1. Immediate connection	10
1.3.2. Waiting for under 1 min	7
1.3.3. Waiting for 1–5 min	5
1.3.4. Waiting for over 5 min	1
Total reference score in the “Access” block per one call	25
2. “The start of interaction” model block	
<i>Introduction of the enrolment board officer, a counselor</i>	
2.1. The officer introduced himself/herself by saying his/her name	3
2.2. The officer introduced himself/herself by saying his/her job capacity	3
2.3. The officer greeted the applicant	3
2.4. The officer has politely asked the applicant for identification in order to address them during the conversation	5
2.5. The officer has provided initial profiling of the customer request	10
Total reference score in the “Start of interaction” block per one call	24
3. The “Identification of the customer request, offering consumer choice options, the customized offer of educational product” model block	
<i>Identification of the needs and requests</i>	
3.1. Identifying the applicants	3
3.2. Identifying persons who directly take decisions on purchasing an educational service/product	3
3.3. Determining possible fields of training, depending on the State Exams and internal tests	5
3.4. Determining the preferable and possible forms of training	3
3.5. Determining the preferable and possible methods of payment	3
3.6. Determining the university department to provide the training (choice of an institute, department, chair, or other structural units)	5
3.7. Determining whether the applicant has all documents necessary for admission	3
3.8. Comparing the applicant’s level of training with the “secondary school graduation certificates competition” data and minimum admission scores of the previous year’s enrolment campaign	5
3.9. Forming a customized offer of an educational product	5
3.10. Offering to contact the head or representatives of the academic unit where the applicant intends to study	3
3.11. Determining the priority offer that complies most with the customer request	5
3.12. Making an appointment to visit the enrolment board	5
Total reference score in the “Identification of the customer request” block per one call	48

Source: Developed by the authors

The authors’ model of the “Telephone call to the university’s enrolment board” comprises six functional blocks allowing for a structurization and a benchmark comparison of major factors and indices accompanying the form of contact under study, from the technical feasibility of access and waiting time to final analysis. The suggested model enables us to do the following:

- Assess a telephone call with a maximum of 193 reference scores
- Determine its actual quality and marketing value
- Motivate/demotivate the staff, considering the quality of implementing the marketing and communication function
- Compare the data of various universities

- Determine specific promising directions for improving the situation in a given educational institution

Table 2 shows the benchmark model of a visit to the enrolment board, which was used in specialized marketing research of the regional market.

The authors’ model of the “Visit to the university enrolment board” comprises seven functional blocks allowing for a structurization and a benchmarking comparison of major factors and indices accompanying the form of contact under study, from the technical feasibility of access and waiting time to final analysis. The suggested model enables us to assess a visit with a maximum of 390 reference scores.

Table 2 Benchmark model of assessing the “Visit to the university’s enrolment board” marketing interaction form

Factor/index	Score
1. The “Access” model block	
<i>Technical access parameters</i>	
1. Making a preliminary appointment to visit the enrolment board	5
2. Assistance of the university staff in finding a way to the enrolment board office	3
3. Waiting time at the enrolment board	
3.1. 0–5 min	10
3.2. 5–15 min	5
3.3. 15–30 min	1
3.4. Over 30 min	0
Total reference score in the “Access” block per one visit	18
2. “The start of marketing interaction” model block	
<i>Introduction of the enrolment board officer, a counselor</i>	
2.1. The officer introduced himself/herself by saying his/her name	3
2.2. The officer introduced himself/herself by saying his/her job capacity	3
2.3. The officer greeted the applicant	3
2.4. The officer has politely asked the applicant for identification in order to address them during the conversation	5
2.5. The officer has provided initial profiling of the customer request	10
Total reference score in the “Start of marketing interaction” block per one visit	24
3. The “Identification of the customer request, offering consumer choice options, the customized offer of educational product” model block	
<i>Identification of the needs and requests</i>	
3.1. Identifying the applicants	3
3.2. Identifying persons who directly take decisions on purchasing an educational service/product	3
3.3. Determining possible fields of training, depending on the State Exams and internal tests	5
3.4. Determining the preferable and possible forms of training	3
3.5. Determining the preferable and possible methods of payment	3
3.6. Determining the university department to provide the training (choice of an institute, department, chair, or other structural units)	5
3.7. Determining whether the applicant has all documents necessary for admission	3
3.8. Comparing the applicant’s level of training with the “secondary school graduation certificates competition” data and minimum admission scores of the previous year’s enrolment campaign	5
3.9. Forming a customized offer of an educational product	5
3.10. Offering to contact the head or representatives of the academic unit where the applicant intends to study	3
3.11. Determining the priority offer that complies most with the customer demand	5
Total reference score in the “Identification of the customer request” block	43
4. The “Signing a contract” model block	
<i>Formalizing relationships and signing a contract</i>	
4.1. Offering to sign a contract for education on a fee-paying basis	10
4.2. Providing a detailed explanation of the terms and conditions of the contract for education on a fee-paying basis	10
4.3. Amending the contract terms and conditions at the customer’s request	3
4.4. Specifying a fixed price of the contract, terms of payment, and fulfillment dates	5
4.5. Planning a route to the bank for making payment, or consultation on immediate online payment	5
Total reference score in the “Signing a contract” block	33
5. The “Supplementary offers: invitation to see the university website, attend supplementary events” model block	
<i>Supplementary offers</i>	
5.1. Finding out what education the applicant received prior to the customer request	2
5.2. Offering an educational trajectory inside the university	5
5.3. Offering to see the website of the educational institution	2
5.4. Offering to attend an Open Day	3
5.5. Finding out the need to obtain an education loan	3

Source: Developed by the authors

The suggested models were validated in the education market of the Belgorod Region in 2017–2019 during comprehensive marketing research, which encompassed all subjects of the studied market. Only a military institution of

higher education was not included in the research, owing to its specifics in attracting the applicants’ customer flow and its belonging to a specific segment, which is not significantly connected with the location of the regional market.

4 Conclusion

To summarize the above, we would like to stress that the development and implementation of benchmark models for marketing management of contemporary educational institutions are promising lines of activity. These models should be used throughout the whole process of the interaction of universities with target customer groups and flows. The described benchmark models, as well as potential ones, represent an efficient, specific, and informative tool of effective marketing control, which accompanies the implementation of the marketing management concept and allows ensuring a systemic and comprehensive character of assessing specific forms of interaction between university representatives and potential or actual consumers.

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