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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MARKETING RESEARCH IN UNIVERSITY WEBSITES: INSIGHTS FROM KAZAKHSTAN⁶

This study utilized a multi-faceted approach to explore marketing research strategies employed by Kazakhstani higher education institutions and their corresponding websites. The research highlighted gaps in current theory amid contemporary global crises and identified opportunities for enhancing the efficacy of marketing research. Utilizing official data from both Kazakhstani and foreign sources, the study conducted a comparative analysis of the 2016 and 2021 international Webometrics ratings of the top 10 university websites in Kazakhstan, observing a generally positive trend. The results generated actionable recommendations for improving marketing research, promoting educational services, and augmenting the effectiveness of university websites as primary marketing tools. These findings are expected to guide higher education institutions and policymakers in enhancing national educational competitiveness and efficiency amidst socioeconomic instability.

Keywords: Marketing of educational services; digital technologies in education; tools for promoting educational services; higher educational institutions

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are the sphere of training highly qualified personnel for the national economy. The significance of such training is enormous since highly trained

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professionals are the future of the country, its development and progress. New socio-economic challenges are making adjustments and creating the need to change many areas. For example, with the beginning of a period of socio-economic instability in 2020 (the emergence of global challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic, etc.) around the world, completely new approaches and socio-economic tools have become in demand (Dzhulai, 2022).

For the first time, the education sector was compelled to swiftly adapt and introduce new teaching strategies. The focus here is on distance learning, which was practised before, but never at the current scale. The ongoing pandemic thrust both educators and students into an unprecedented situation. Many faced challenges due to the lack of necessary technical resources, as curriculums and software were not initially intended for this modality (Fomina, Kolomiets, 2022). Furthermore, extended hours in front of a screen, an unavoidable component of distance learning, pose health concerns. The world has quickly transformed, and society is necessitated to adjust to these shifts. It's a common understanding that the world, as we knew it, has forever changed. This crisis has significantly accelerated the progress of distance education. This development is not without its merits – specific groups of students exhibit a preference for consistent online learning at the university level. Typically, these are students from rural areas or distant cities who would benefit from being able to continue living at home while attending, for instance, an urban university (Dolhikh, 2023). This mode of education differs considerably from part-time learning and even surpasses it in some respects. When compared to traditional, full-time (in-person) education, the learning process in this new format is arguably less rigorous. The potential of this new educational form is bolstered by the technical resources now available to educators and students alike. The current demand is for the creation of specialized curriculums tailored to this mode of learning. Information about this type of education should be easily accessible on university websites. However, most higher education institution websites in Kazakhstan have yet to include such specific sections. These sections should provide comprehensive details about the necessary equipment, software for learning, course selection guidance, and so forth.

The purpose of the study is to identify new methodological approaches to conducting marketing research on the websites of universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan in conditions of socio-economic instability. The disclosure of the goal involves solving a number of tasks in the study:

- to investigate the theoretical approaches of Kazakh and foreign marketing in the field of educational services;
- to analyse modern global experience, to identify successful practices and effective tools for promoting educational services using the website in the face of global challenges and risks;
- to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the websites of the main universities in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- to determine the main criteria for increasing the competitiveness of universities, including through the refinement and improvement of websites;
- to develop methodological recommendations for evaluating the university website;

- to develop recommendations for improving the effectiveness and improvement of university websites to improve the promotion of educational services in conditions of socio-economic instability.

The object of study is the university website as the main tool for promotional marketing of educational services. The originality of the study is conditioned by the fact that the object of the study was considered in modern conditions of socio-economic instability in the world and the Republic of Kazakhstan. Difficult socio-economic conditions were formed with a significant degree of influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. These conditions caused significant systemic changes in the entire global economy in 2020, the education sector was also subjected to the strongest impacts and underwent changes requiring regulation (Silagadze et al., 2022).

Therefore, there is a need for new research and scientific refinement of the mechanisms and tools of marketing research in the field of higher education, the studies by other authors on a similar object and problems have a certain gap in research. This is conditioned by the emergence of crisis phenomena and problems that are completely new for society and economic institutions in 2020 and continue to this day (Makaliuk et al., 2022). Marketing in the field of higher education has become much more widespread in foreign countries than in Kazakhstan (Leonow et al., 2019). Most universities in developed Western countries have been using marketing for a long time to improve the efficiency of their activities. For example, in the USA the idea of marketing in the field of education began to be implemented in the second half of the 20th century, and in Germany, the first comprehensive concept was formulated in 1980 by W. Sarges and F. Haeberlin (1980).

The issues of the general theory of marketing and marketing research were dealt with by world-famous researchers: F. Kotler, W. Wong, D. Saunders (1990; 2007; 2019), J.R. Evans, B. Berman (1990), J.-J. Lambin (2019), Ch. Shiv, A. Hyam (2017). Theoretical and practical problems of marketing in higher education have been addressed in the studies by reputable authors: M.Zh. Serikbayev (2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2017), R.Ya. Vakulenko, A.A. Bulgachev, E.A. Ryzhova (2017), A.N. Sergeev (2016), N.I. Zelenskaya, Yu.V. Lavnikova (2013), I.I. Topilina (2010), I.L. Khizamutdinova (2015), O.B. Istomin (2019).

This manuscript has significant socio-economic implications, especially in the context of higher education and digital transformation in the face of unprecedented challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. From a social perspective, the manuscript underlines the necessity for educational institutions to adapt and evolve their methods of instruction and communication to accommodate the changing dynamics of the learning environment.

2. Literature Review

The effectiveness of university websites as marketing tools has been explored extensively in the literature. Abuova et al. (2021) conducted a case study in Kazakhstan, highlighting the increasing role of the Internet in marketing strategies. Concurrently, Mogaji (2016) discussed the international student recruitment process and the impact of website design on the decisions made by potential students. These studies underscore the importance of website

design and content in attracting prospective students, affirming the significance of the current research on the marketing research of university websites in Kazakhstan.

The issue of content is a critical one. Kasemsarn et al. (2023) identified the types of information that students sought from a postgraduate design course website, pointing out the necessity of a user-centred design. In the same vein, Ashraf and Thongpapanl (2015) investigated the impact of website interface features on sales performance, emphasizing that more information content is not always beneficial. These insights are crucial for the current study as they shed light on the importance of strategic content selection and presentation. Digital marketing strategies extend beyond the university websites themselves. Omar et al. (2021) demonstrated the impact of viral marketing strategies on social network sites on students' image. Such findings highlight the need for higher education institutions to adopt a comprehensive online marketing approach that encompasses both their own websites and social media platforms.

The role of marketing in enhancing the world ranking of universities is another important area of focus. Salahaldin and Atua's (2022) exploratory study in Iraqi private universities and colleges emphasized the potential benefits of effective marketing in higher education. Such a concept is pertinent for Kazakhstan universities that aspire to improve their global standing. Considering the broader perspective, Britz et al. (2006) provided a moral reflection from the perspective of the developing world on the fair distribution of information in the marketplace in the context of global capitalism. This view allows for a comprehensive understanding of the overarching dynamics that can influence the marketing strategies of universities, especially in developing countries like Kazakhstan.

Utepbergenov et al. (2019) study on the statistical research of problems of information support for innovative activity of enterprises in Kazakhstan provides valuable insights into the specific context of the current study. It may help identify the unique challenges faced in the local digital marketing landscape (Idrysheva et al., 2019). It is also important to note the role of digital tools in student interaction and perception. Alqudah et al. (2019) conducted an experimental study revealing the impact of educational infographics on students' interaction and perception in higher education. This study could offer valuable insights on how to optimize digital tools for improved user engagement.

Moreover, the quality of web information is an essential factor to consider. Macedo-Rouet et al. (2019) studied the benefits and limits of prompting on adolescents' evaluation of web information quality. Similarly, Firdaus et al. (2019) examined the openness of government website content using a text analysis method. Both studies may provide guidelines on how to present and structure information on university websites effectively.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature provides a comprehensive view of the various aspects of digital marketing in higher education. It underlines the importance of effective website design, strategic content selection, integrated marketing approaches, and the quality of web information. The current study will contribute to this body of knowledge by examining the marketing strategies of university websites in Kazakhstan, thus filling the gap in context-specific research in this field.

3. Materials and Methods

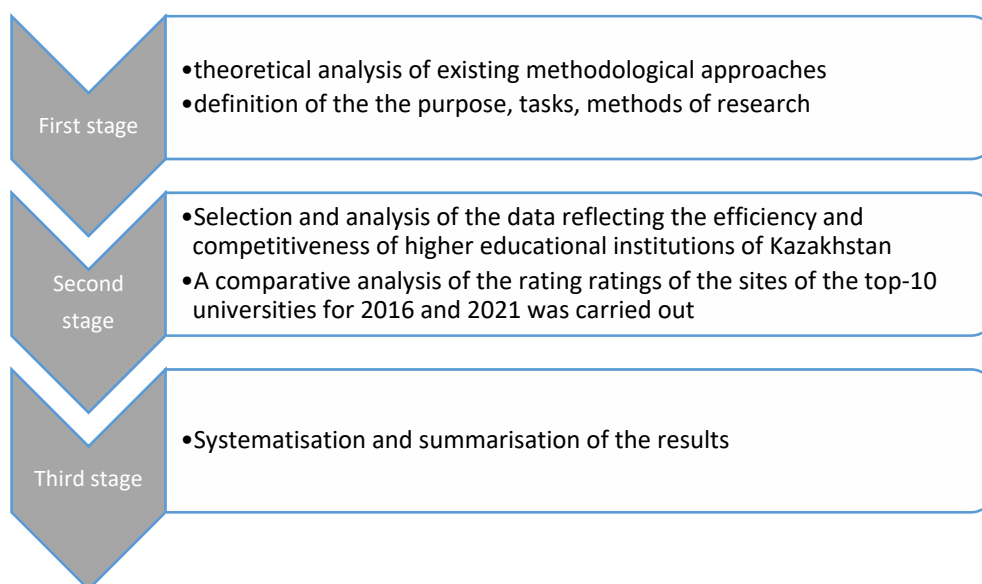
The study used a number of modern approaches to investigate the problem of marketing research. Theoretical methods and approaches, analysis and synthesis were used: analysis of Kazakh and foreign theoretical positions on marketing research and promotion of educational services, increasing competitiveness. The study pays attention to the identification of gaps in the theory, in connection with the acute crisis conditions that have arisen in the world today. Using the method of concretization and generalization, problems and gaps in research and theory were identified. The shortcomings and opportunities to improve the effectiveness of marketing research on websites of higher education institutions were investigated. The data were selected and a comparative analysis of the 2016 and 2021 rankings of the websites of the top-10 universities in the Republic of Kazakhstan in the international Webometrics rating was carried out. The use of Webometrics in this research is based on its broad scope, encompassing not just academic output but also other online activities pertinent to the university's mission. Given the study's focus on evaluating the marketing effectiveness of university websites in Kazakhstan, Webometrics offers a relevant and robust methodology. It allows us to quantitatively analyze and compare the digital marketing strategies of these institutions, as reflected in their web presence and visibility.

The results of the analysis indicated, in general, a positive trend. Over the past five years, the websites of higher educational institutions have been actively improved and filled up, and some of them have advanced to higher positions in the world ranking, which is very important in conditions of socio-economic instability. The degree of validity and reliability of the research of scientific statements and conclusions is provided by the analysis of a large array of official data from authoritative Kazakh and foreign sources. The following materials were considered: The Message of the Head of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (The President of Kazakhstan announced..., 2021); The State Program "Digital Kazakhstan" (State program "Digital Kazakhstan", 2017) and the Rating of universities in Kazakhstan according to the criteria of Webometrics, 2021 (Rating of universities ..., 2021).

The study was carried out in several stages. These stages are illustrated in Figure 1.

The study results can be used by specialists of higher educational institutions and public authorities in developing a strategy for the development of higher education in the country, improving its competitiveness and efficiency. Methodological recommendations can be used for a universal assessment of the website of a higher educational institution and the definition of targets for its further improvement. The wider use of qualitative research would allow the forming of a marketing strategy to increase the effectiveness of the promotion of educational services in difficult conditions of socio-economic instability.

Figure 1. Stages, on which the study was provided



4. Results and Discussion

Websites of universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan form the opinion of the international community about the entire system of higher education in the country. They are a kind of showcase by which they judge the university and where they find all the necessary information. The importance of developing and raising the level of the site has increased so much in recent years that the study of this aspect is included in the category of beyond relevant. And this relevance in the conditions of socio-economic instability continues to grow. The development of a marketing strategy by universities is necessary to increase their competitiveness and sustainability. The basic component of such sustainability, in addition to increasing state funding for the development of universities, is to increase the level of intensification of digital technologies (including the university website and social networks).

In the theory of modern marketing of educational services of higher educational institutions, it is the website that is the main marketing tool for promotion. However, not all universities in Kazakhstan realize the importance of the role of the official website in the establishment of the scientific and educational image in the Kazakh and foreign space.

The authoritative international rating, which is held twice a year by Webometrics testifies to the insufficient effectiveness of the websites of higher educational institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The main criteria for ranking are occupancy, degree of support, and popularity of university websites (Rating of Universities..., 2021).

According to the international Webometrics rating (July 2021), the highest in the rating of Kazakh universities is Nazarbayev University. It ranks 915th out of 15.843 universities in the world. The top 10 universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Top-10 universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the international Webometrics ranking in 2021 and 2016

Name of the university	Rating in 2021 among universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan / among world universities		Name of the university	Ranking in 2016 among universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan / among world universities	
Nazarbayev University	1	915	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	1	2011
Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	2	1782	K. Satbayev Kazakh National Technical University	2	2253
L.N. Gumilov Eurasian National University	3	2000	L.N. Gumilov Eurasian National University	3	2721
K. Satbayev Kazakh National Technical University	4	3792	S.D. Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University	4	3110
S.D. Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University	5	3792	S. Toraighyrov Pavlodar State University	5	3822
Akhmet Yesavi International Kazakh-Turkish University	6	3867	Karaganda State Technical University	6	4706
D. Serikbayev East Kazakhstan Technical University	7	4110	Shakarim Semipalatinsk State University	7	5573
Kazakh National Agrarian University	8	4505	E.A. Buketov Karaganda State University	8	5773
Karaganda State Technical University	9	4805	Auezov South Kazakhstan State University	9	6017
Abay Kazakh National Pedagogical University	10	4881	D. Serikbayev East Kazakhstan Technical University	10	6351

The study of the Webometrics rating data in comparison for 2016 and 2021 showed the characteristic dynamics of changes in the ratings of the websites of leading universities over the past five years. Nazarbayev University came out on top in 2021, although in 2016 it was not even among the top 10 leaders. It is a young (founded in 2010 on the initiative of N. Nazarbayev), a progressive university with a full, well-structured website. The university has a fairly high world ranking – 915th place (out of 12.000 participants). Abay Kazakh National Pedagogical University and Akhmet Yesavi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Kazakh National Agrarian University entered the top 10 in 2021 for the first time. Some universities left the top 10 in 2021 (compared to 2016). These include Toraighyrov Pavlodar State University, Shakarim Semipalatinsk State University, E. A. Buketov Karaganda State University, and Auezov South Kazakhstan State University. The indicators of many university websites have grown in the world ranking over the past five years, which indicates

the positive dynamics of development. But, nevertheless, it is necessary to further develop and improve such a basic promotion tool as a website.

As for the Webometrics rating methodology, for all its authority, it operates with a limited list of criteria: the fullness and popularity of sites. But very important criteria are not considered – the location (capital or peripheral city), the number of specialties, faculties, teaching staff, and students. It is necessary to use general marketing criteria considering the needs of applicants, since they are the target audience of higher education services. In this regard, the results of the survey of a focus group with first-year students (in the number of 30 people) are of interest (Serikbayev, 2016a). The survey determined that the sections that attract the most attention on university websites are the following: admission rules, tuition fees, virtual tours, links to social networks and mobile version of the site.

A study of the websites of higher educational institutions included in the top 10 showed that the standard rules for admission of applicants are posted on all these sites in the "admission information" sections. The standard admission rules were approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 12.05.2016 N 288. Not all sites have posted information about important dates and contacts of the admissions committee, this information appears immediately before the start of the admissions committee. This procedure is not convenient for applicants and their parents, who are starting to search for a higher educational institution in advance. Students who choose paid education would like to see the cost of tuition and the payment procedure on the website. However, only some universities post this information on their websites. The exact information about this is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The fullness of information on the websites of the top-10 universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Tools	Number of Universities Performing		
	Well	Moderately	Poorly
Admission Rules Posted	8	2	0
Virtual Tours	2	3	5
Important Dates	6	3	1
Contact Information	8	2	0
Tuition Information	4	4	2
Feedback Availability	3	3	4
Social Media Presence	3	5	2
Mobile Website Version	3	4	3

The placement of a virtual tour of an educational institution on the university website, as evidenced by foreign experience, greatly motivates applicants to enrol in this educational institution. On the websites of foreign educational institutions, it is almost always possible to find such a tour and see everything from the inside (classrooms, equipment, dining room, dormitory, etc.). In Kazakhstan, virtual tours have just begun to be published on websites. Currently, not even all websites of top-10 universities have a section with such a tour. It is necessary to focus on this in terms of improving websites, as this is a very effective modern promotion tool and Kazakh universities have something to show: modern equipped classrooms, scientific laboratories, libraries, etc. All these are strong points that are still poorly communicated to the target audience – applicants (Zaki et al., 2023).

An additional contemporary marketing tool that bolsters the efficacy of university websites is an online consultant capable of providing prompt information on all queries made by potential students. Only about 10% of all universities in Kazakhstan have adopted this marketing tool by integrating online consultants into their websites. Over 50% of higher education institutions still lack mobile versions of their websites. In 2016, 30% of universities did not have social media accounts. However, the situation has improved and the majority now have active social media accounts. In 2016, social media was regarded with considerable skepticism, but recent years have witnessed a dramatic shift, with social media accounts becoming a valid marketing tool for promoting educational services (Zaitsev, 2016). While website feedback is usually minimal, given it primarily serves an informational role, extensive feedback is characteristic of social media platforms. The abundance of reactions, reviews, comments, likes, and questions enables the collection of a continuous flow of valuable primary marketing data. Along with this, the capability to conduct polls provides a quick method of gathering essential information. Consequently, potential students, upon connecting to the university's main social media accounts, can quickly acquire a wealth of information about their university of interest, ranging from faculty reviews and their competencies to the conditions of learning.

Targets in the promotion of educational services are associated with the development of social networks of higher educational institutions, professional ability to form content for them, competent positioning, and emphasizing the strengths of an educational institution. Research of the target audience, identification of demand, and transformation of preferences of applicants and students is also associated with the active involvement of social networks for marketing research and surveys (Boiko, 2023). But the website today is the official representative of a higher educational institution on the Internet. The website forms the image and increases the competitiveness and rating of the university. The analysis of the structure and content of the websites of the leading universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan (included in the top 10) allowed the identification of a number of criteria characterizing the effectiveness of the site. First, it is the availability of high-quality content – texts, images, audio, video (how modern, logical, high-quality, relevant, and whether it is new). Second, the context is how attractive the design is, whether the text is readable, whether there is congestion on the page and how easy it is to work with the site (convenient navigation, fast loading of the website and subsections). Third, are there any guarantees of transparency of educational and scientific activities on the website? Fourth, good visibility of the website in the main search engines. Fifth, the presence of cross-links on the website to go to other sites (a very important function for obtaining additional information). Sixth, interactivity and feedback (Kotler, Keller, 2019). In general, there is extensive globalization of the higher education system, characterized by: the instability of the preferences of the target audience, the contradiction between the professional training of graduates of higher education institutions and the expectations of the labour market (in specialists of certain specializations and their qualifications), the rapid development of digital-Internet technologies, the aggravation of internal competition in higher education, the socio-demographic situation (Istomin, 2019)

Amid the current socio-economic instability in Kazakhstan and globally, the competition among universities for prospective students has intensified. Consequently, the utilization of marketing tools has become increasingly important. Marketing is the linchpin of efficient

operations and successful growth in the realm of educational services. However, as F. Kotler noted, "Modern marketing requires more than just developing a high-quality product, setting an appealing price, and making it accessible to target consumers. Companies must still engage in communication with their customers" (Kotler, 1990). Now, during these challenging and volatile times, the ability to foster effective communication plays a pivotal role. It's this interaction with future students (even before they enrol in higher education), during their studies, and post-graduation that offers competitive edges.

When Kotler (2007) updated this line of action, digital technologies were not in the picture, and the focus was primarily on personal communications. However, at this stage, with the advent of digital technologies, there is an array of methods to facilitate communication. A responsive website stands as a principal tool for interaction. The importance of communications as a tool for marketing promotion has grown exponentially. Given the escalating competition among educational institutions, it's prudent to formulate an effective communication policy. Therefore, the marketing elements that facilitate achieving the set objectives are delineated. This means selecting tailored marketing strategies that transmit the necessary information and incentives to applicants and students. These include public relations, advertising, promotional marketing at mass events, open days, and so on.

The main feature of marketing communications of a higher educational institution is the focus on two groups – external: schoolchildren and their parents, graduates of colleges and universities, entrepreneurs, employers, public organizations and government agencies; and internal: university students, parents of students, staff, and teachers. The split orientation of marketing communications is based on the fact that internal consumers (teachers and students) influence external ones (through the media, acquaintances and in person), thus forming this or that attitude toward the university even before admission and personal acquaintance with the educational institution.

In the context of increasing competition among educational institutions and the importance of marketing in attracting students, effective communication becomes crucial. As noted by Utepbergenov et al. (2019), modern marketing goes beyond creating a quality product and requires implementing communication with customers. In the current era of digital technologies, the main communication tool is the website, which has become instrumental in conveying information and incentives to applicants and students.

Promoting a higher educational institution through the website involves utilizing various communication channels and tools, such as personal pages of teachers, video materials, and the placement of conference and scientific event materials. Furthermore, qualitative research plays a significant role in marketing research for higher educational institutions. Qualitative research provides insights into consumer behaviour, opinions, and preferences. It is particularly relevant in the current context of socio-economic instability, where there is a need for new educational services, including distance learning. Qualitative research methods like focus groups, in-depth interviews, and protocol analysis can help understand the decision-making factors of potential groups suitable for distance education.

The author has developed methodological recommendations for the marketing evaluation of the university website. The evaluation of the site is carried out in accordance with the blocks in which the criteria are thematically combined. Rating scale in each block: high level,

medium, and low. This approach allows for quickly, universally and reliably conducting site research. The methodological approach is universal. When using it, it is necessary to conduct a marketing analysis of the users of the university website and more accurately determine the main segments of the target audience of the site.

1. The first block. Website design – evaluation is carried out according to the following criteria: design style, font readability, compatibility with the design of subsites, cross-browser compatibility and the convenience of viewing photos and videos.
2. The second block. Site navigation – site map, warning when switching to third-party resources, navigation menu, search engine performance, ease of navigation in general.
3. The third block. Content – information about contacts, documentation and basic information, educational process, extracurricular activities, open days, Olympiads, and admission committee.
4. The fourth block. Interactivity – the presence of feedback, links to social networks, the ability to register on the site, regular updating of the site (at least 1 month) and the presence of an internal information system with access via login and password.
5. The fifth block. Visibility – Yandex CY, Google PageRank (PR), Webometrics Word Rank, Alexa Rank.

The methodology proposed by the author offers a comprehensive and detailed evaluation of university websites from a marketing perspective, which is distinguished by the following blocks: website design, site navigation, content, interactivity, and visibility. Existing methodologies often neglect some of these important dimensions, emphasizing a single aspect such as design or visibility, but rarely all together.

Existing evaluations often focus on measuring quantitative aspects, such as website traffic, without considering qualitative factors like the site's design or interactivity level. Similarly, many existing methodologies concentrate on the site's academic content and overlook the marketing dimension, which involves creating a compelling and attractive online presence for potential students, staff, and other stakeholders.

Moreover, current methods may overlook regional specifics, treating all university websites alike, regardless of their local context. In contrast, the author's approach offers a universal framework but recommends conducting a marketing analysis of the specific users of the university website, allowing for more accurate segmentation of the target audience.

The author's approach also appears more thorough and systematic, providing a clear structure for the evaluation process with set criteria for each thematic block. This way, it enables the user to conduct the site research quickly, universally, and reliably. It also allows the method to be adapted to various contexts, ensuring its versatility and broad applicability.

The promotion of a higher educational institution using the website is based on the use of channels and tools of the communication environment: personal pages (blogs) of teachers, video materials (lectures, additional research), placement of materials of conferences and scientific events, placement of materials of university publications.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the analysis of Webometrics rating data comparing 2016 and 2021 revealed significant changes in the rankings of leading university websites. Nazarbayev University emerged as the top-ranked university in 2021, showing remarkable growth. Several universities entered the top 10 for the first time. While many university websites have improved in their world rankings, there is a need to further enhance and optimize these websites as a fundamental promotional tool. The Webometrics rating methodology has limitations, as it focuses on completeness and popularity while overlooking factors like location, specialities, and faculty. Incorporating general marketing criteria that consider the needs of applicants is essential. A survey of first-year students highlighted the website sections that attract the most attention, including admission rules, tuition fees, virtual tours, links to social networks, and mobile versions of the site.

Examining the websites of the top 10 universities revealed that standard admission rules were present, but information about important dates and contacts of the admissions committee was not always readily available. Universities should provide transparent information about tuition costs and payment procedures. Virtual tours, commonly used by foreign institutions, significantly motivate applicants and should be implemented more widely to showcase modern facilities. Online consultants play a crucial role in providing prompt information to applicants, yet their presence on university websites is still limited. Additionally, many universities lack mobile versions of their websites. Social media accounts have become important marketing tools, offering valuable feedback and engagement. It is necessary to develop social networks of higher educational institutions and create tailored content to highlight strengths and conduct marketing research.

Overall, the effectiveness of university websites lies in high-quality content, attractive design, transparency, search engine visibility, cross-linking capabilities, and interactivity. To promote educational services successfully, it is essential to focus on the website as the official representative of the institution, shaping its image, competitiveness, and ranking. Despite the global nature of higher education, universities must adapt marketing methods to effectively communicate with their target audiences, both internal and external. Incorporating qualitative and quantitative research methods can provide valuable insights into consumer behaviour and preferences, particularly in emerging areas such as distance learning. In an era of increasing competition and socio-economic instability, effective marketing communication plays a decisive role in the success of higher educational institutions.

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