THE USING OF WEBSITES OF THE UNIVERSITIES FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS FOR PURPOSE OF INSTITUTIONAL PROMOTION

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THE USING OF WEBSITES OF THE UNIVERSITIES FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS FOR PURPOSE OF INSTITUTIONAL PROMOTION[1]

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ABSTRACT

The institutional promotional activities are more important nowadays because of the pressure of globalization and developing communication systems. The websites have more advantages than the newspaper, radio, television, magazine and billboards. As a public institution, universities devote a greater share to websites and social media for their promotions. In this research it was used the analysis method of websites. It is determined the websites of the 24 state universities and 12 foundation universities for the needs of prospective students in Turkey. Foundation universities had given more space than the state universities which is needed by prospective students. Also, the universities which was established before 2000's had given more space for the needs of prospective students than the universities which was established after 2000's.

Keywords: Internet, websites, university, institutional promotion

JEL classification: JEL: M 31, JEL: M 33, JEL: O 39

1. INTRODUCTION

The effect of rapid development and changes in communication technology, information reach on each side of the world within seconds. Institutions spend a great effort to survive and promote themselves.

Promotion covers activities to realize, to adopt and to support the features, corporate identity, products and services and technological possibilities for people. Promotional efforts of organizations are performed by using television channels, radio, newspapers and magazines, internet, print media or with any other promotion since the past. The products and services of organizations, corporate identity are transferred to the target group by using design, presentation and various ways according to their characteristics of each medium that are used (Demirtaş, 2012, p. 212). Internet is a communication network which is common worldwide and growing where the computers are connected each others. Internet is a technology that emerged why the people thought the storage/sharing of information and easily accessible to it. People can be accessed to many areas of information easily, cheaply, fast and safely (Tutar, Yılmaz, & Erdönmez, 2003, p. 260). Economic nature of web provides the small businesses to access to it easily. Small businesses can easily convert opportunities to the competitive advantage. Web accelerate the small businesses move forward the local markets to global markets (Zerenler, 2007, p. 44).

Though online advertising spending is a mere fraction of what is spent on print and broadcast, its revenue is increasing significantly for a medium still in its infancy. As mentioned, the web's targeting and tracking capabilities have the potential to make it one of the most responsive media available to advertise (Zeff & Aranson, 1997, p. 12).

Although the web may not yet be mature as a marketing medium, it has the potential to offer benefits not found in any other mass-market medium. It's inexpensive, it's often more immediate and it's interactive (Fahey, 1998, p. xii). Websites are the flagship of institutions indicating the possible converging points of the institutional and public interest (Murthy & Rahman, 2011, p. 2). Table 1 shows benefits and drawbacks of the major media.

Table 1: Pros and Cons of Major Media

Medium	Benefits	Drawbacks
Television	True to life. Everywhere. Reaches masses.	High cost. Brief exposure. Ad clutter.
Radio	Local appeal. Targeted audiences. Low cost. High frequencies. Close to point -of-purchase. Flexible messages.	Background message. Audio only. Brief message life. Fragmented audience.
Newspapers	Timely. Desirable audience. Editorial impact. Local/regional flexibility.	Brief message life. Active readers. Weaker color capabilities.
Magazines	Upscale audiences. Reader involvement. Long issue life.	Long lead time. Higher CPMs.
Outdoor/Billboards	Larger than life. Ethnic targeting. Supporting medium.	Brief message exposure. Environmental impact.
Internet/Interactive	Flexibility. Targeted message. Reach. Measurability.	Consumer irritation. Confusion. Non-standard metrics.

(Katz, 2003, p. 97)

The major uses of the websites can be listed as follows (Okay & Okay, 2001, pp. 669-670):

1. Provide information to media organizations,
2. To communicate to all target group day by day on time,
3. To gather information about different target groups,
4. To develop image of the institution,
5. To strengthen corporate identity,
6. To communicate with employees,
7. To create a status symbol for an organization,
8. To sell online,
9. To reach international markets,
10. To reach a person who is browsing on internet,
11. To fulfill other public relations functions.

Such as all public institutions universities give special importance the promotion activities. In recent years, increasing the number of foundation universities trammeled the race of prospective students. Web and social media are important tools about promotion today.

Web sites combine all people who will enter the university exam, students who are studying at the university, faculty members and all university staff. On their websites they give the institutional information, opportunities for students, academic members, social and sporting facilities, physical facilities, libraries and laboratories, educational facilities and industrial cooperation. Now almost every university benefits from social media medium and communicates with students by using their Twitter and Facebook accounting who are the target groups (Demirtaş, 2012, p. 219). The number of universities has reached 179 today in Turkey. So the websites must contain certain information for an effective promotional medium.

Website data of the universities which should take place can be listed under three headings (Irgat & Kurubacak, 2002, pp. 5-6);

1. Promotional information of the university:

    a. Contact information

    b. Location of the university

    c. University units

    d. Announcements

    e. Library service

2. Necessary information for current students:

    a. Syllabus

    b. Online registration

    c. Student affairs

    d. Job opportunities

    e. Dormitories

    f. Academic calendar

    g. Orientation training

3. Necessary information for visitors:

    a. Scientific research

    b. Link to other institutions

    c. Library service

Literature Review

    Yurdakul & Coskun (2007) examined websites of Marmara University, Anadolu University and Istanbul University Faculties of Communication. In conclusion, information flow, communication, participation, visuals, accessibility subjects were good level but there was no data about their campaign. Atalı & Sertbaş (2006) examined the websites of Sport Faculties in Turkey. Considering the innovations caused by internet technology the web sites of Physical Education and Sport Higher School should be reviewed by their responsible again and visual, audio and the other technological supports should be available in the web sites of the higher schools. To establish such components, the higher schools should work on standardization among themselves and working committees should be established. Demirtaş (2012) examined the students who registered the Istanbul Aydın University. According to research, institutional websites of universities were the top priority with 90.2 % in providing awareness of the universities. R.Jeyshangar & Babu (2009) studied the websites of 45 universities in Tamil Nadu comprising of 27 state and 18 private universities. Reflects that some universities in Tamil Nadu have higher number of web pages but correspondingly their link pages are very small in number and websites fall behind in their simple, self link and external link web impact factor. Dönmez, Kabakçı Yurdakul & Sahin İzmirli (2011) evaluated 102 state universities' website in terms of their user friendliness. Results suggest heavy use of typographic components like font faces and color contrasts. However, researchers observed little use of location indicators and no supportive tools for disabled people. Ocholla & Onyancha (2007) examined the external out-links in order to determine the institutions targeted by South African and Kenyan universities. Results indicate that Kenyan universities, like most African universities, have embraced the web and its constructs fairly recently, hence most of their websites are at initial stages of construction.

Theory

    Firstly this research is based Yurdakul & Coşkun's (2007) "the analysis method of research the communication faculties on the websites". Secondly we have applied "public disclosure model" of Grunig and Hunt to study how to websites have been perceived informative for the prospective students. The most basic function of public disclosure model is to inform the target group of a person or organization and its activities (Okay & Okay, 2001). The purpose of this model is to spread of knowledge to society correctly. Because the aim is transmission of accurate information rather than to convince and to influence to the target group (Kalender, et al., 2013)

Research Hypothesis

H 1: General information about the university for prospective students on websites of the foundation universities is higher than the state universities.

H 2: Academic affairs information for prospective students on websites of foundation universities is higher than the state universities.

H 3: Campus life information for prospective students on websites of foundation universities is higher than the state universities.

H 4: Websites of universities which were established before 2000's give more information than the universities which were established after 2000's.

H 5: There is a significant difference between the scores of state and foundation universities.

2.   PURPOSE AND METHOD

The aim of the study is to determine the institutional promotion level by using of websites of the universities for prospective students in Turkey. This research is based Yurdakul & Coşkun's (2007) "the analysis method of research the communication faculties on the websites". Various additions were made according to the today's changing situations and needs. 40 questions were prepared with addition ones. Later, these questions were placed into 3 main categories based on their characteristics. The issues of analysis form were examined whether they are on the websites. Research conducted only on university websites. Social media sites of universities have not been studied.

Sample

The population of the research is the universities of Turkey. There are total of 179 universities in Turkey today. They are 108 state and 71 foundation universities. We choose 36 universities by 20%. These 36 universities were composed of 22 state universities and 14 foundation universities. Simple random sampling was used in this study on universities websites. Research was conducted between January 20-30, 2014.

Data Analysis

Institutional Web Site Analysis method was used for analysis. Analysis form consists of three main parts. These sections are general information about the university, academic activities and campus life departments. SPSS statistical program was used for conducting analysis. With the help of SPSS the arithmetic mean (AM), the percentages of T-test analysis were also performed. Questionnaire is as follows:

A-*General Information About the University*

1	Link for prospective students
2	Information about the city
3	Contact information for university (telephone, address, fax, e-mail address)
4	University in pictures
5	University movie
6	Link to social media pages of the university
7	History of the university
8	Awards
9	Why our university
10	Social responsibility projects
11	Research (Centers, scientific research and projects)
12	Page in English or the other languages
13	Frequently asked questions

B.   Academic Affairs

14	Academic divisions
15	Contact information for faculty members (telephone, e-mail address)
16	Syllabus
17	Scores to register
18	Student quotas
19	Tuition fees
20	Scholarship
21	Graduate programs
22	Double major program
23	Transfer to another university
24	Transfer to university from high school
25	International students
26	Exchange programs

C.   Campus Life

27	Library
28	Dormitories
29	Transportation
30	Map
31	Postal and banking services
32	Health affairs
33	Counseling (psychological counseling and development)
34	Nutrition
35	Sports affairs
36	Cultural and social activities
37	Computer support and internet
38	Student union clubs
39	Disability services
40	Career support

3.   FINDINGS

Analysis had done on the three main parts. These sections are "general information about the university", "academic activities" and "campus life" departments. We selected 24 state universities and 12 foundation universities for this research. At the end of the research, data is shown the tables 2-6.

Table 2 shows all features of universities websites. All universities were listed according to their arithmetic means. In this list, 4 state universities and 6 foundation universities are located at the top ten. Also, 8 universities were established before 2000's and 2 universities were established after 2000's at the top ten. Foundation universities are more informative than state universities.

Table 2: All Features of University Websites

No	University	State/ Foundation	Establishment Date Before 2000 After 2000	Arithmetic means			
				Total	General information about the university	Academic affairs	Campus life
1	Orta Doğu Teknik	state	Before 2000	0,98	0,92	0,92	1,00
2	İ.D.Bilkent	foundation	Before 2000	0,98	0,92	0,92	1,00
3	Çankaya	foundation	Before 2000	0,95	0,92	0,92	0,93
4	Boğaziçi	state	Before 2000	0,93	0,85	0,92	0,93
5	Sabancı	foundation	Before 2000	0,93	0,77	0,92	1,00
6	İstanbul Ticaret	foundation	After 2000	0,93	0,85	0,92	0,93
7	Hacettepe	state	Before 2000	0,90	0,77	0,92	0,93
8	İstanbul Bilgi	foundation	Before 2000	0,90	0,85	0,77	1,00
9	İzmir Ekonomi	foundation	After 2000	0,90	0,85	0,92	0,86
10	Atatürk	state	Before 2000	0,88	0,85	0,77	0,93

Table 3 shows the arithmetic means of university websites. The arithmetic mean of foundation universities is 0,81 for total and the arithmetic mean of state universities is 0,72 for total. The arithmetic mean of foundation universities is 0,74 and arithmetic mean of state universities is 0,68 for general information about the university category. According to this result we accept the hypothesis 1. The arithmetic mean of foundation universities is 0,86 and arithmetic mean of state universities is 0,74 for academic affairs category. According to this result we accept the hypothesis 2. The arithmetic mean of foundation universities is 0,75 and arithmetic mean of state universities is 0,68 for campus life category. According to this result we accept the hypothesis 3. Foundation universities have the higher score for "total", "general information about the university", "academic affairs" and "campus life" sections.

Table 3: Means of University Websites as State or Foundation

University	Arithmetic means			
	Total	General information about the university	Academic affairs	Campus life
State university	0,72	0,68	0,74	0,68
Foundation university	0,81	0,74	0,86	0,75

Table 4 shows the means of universities as establishment date. Arithmetic mean of the universities which were established before 2000's is 0,78 and after 2000's is 0,73. According to this result we accept the hypothesis 4. The universities which were established before 2000's are more informative than after 2000's.

Table 4: Means of University Websites as Establishment Date

University Establishment Date	Arithmetic Means
Before 2000's	0,78
After 2000's	0,73

Table 5 shows the arithmetic means of university websites. The arithmetic mean of foundation universities is 0,8093 and arithmetic mean of state universities is 0,7218. But we do not make sure this difference shows the foundation universities is more success. Table 6 shows independent sample tests. Sig(2-tailed) value is seen 0,081. This value is greater than 0,05 significance value. So there is no significant difference between websites of state universities and foundation universities. Although foundation universities have more arithmetic means, it is not possible to say foundation universities are more success than the state universities. According to this result we reject the hypothesis 5.

Table 5: Group Statistics

University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
State university	22	0,7218	0,13817	0,02946
Foundation university	14	0,8093	0,14850	0,03969

Table 6: Independent Sample Tests

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
mean of the row	Equal variances assumed	1,799	34	0,081	-0,08747	0,04862
	Equal variances not assumed	1,770	26,323	0,088	-0,08747	0,04943

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The arithmetic mean of foundation universities is 0,74 and arithmetic mean of state universities is 0,68 for general information about the university category. Yurdakul & Coskun (2007) find the 0,69 for general information about the university. Our results are similar. Atalı and Sertbaş (2006) studied the websites of Physical Education and Sport Higher School on the

internet (n=38) Consequently, some failures in the basic criteria of the internet (web site) such as updating, scope, standardization, conformity to the target people and design of web sites of higher schools have been found out. Considering the innovations caused by internet technology the web sites of Physical Education and Sport Higher School should be reviewed by their responsible again and visual, audio and the other technological supports should be available in the web sites of the higher schools. To establish such components, the higher schools should work on standardization among themselves and working committees should be established. We found the same problem in this research. There is no standard about university websites in Turkey.

This study showed that some universities give the all institutional information to prospective students on their websites. But some of them give the information by using promotion catalog on their websites. Universities give more important academic affairs than the other sections on their websites. University consists of students. But only 23 universities of 36 gave a link for prospective students on their websites. Awards, social responsibility projects and base points are the minimum score of 40 questions. State universities have more advantage than the foundation universities because of budget. The budget of the state universities come from government budget but the budget of the foundation universities come from their founder foundation. For that reason foundation universities must work harder than the state universities. As seen, the efforts of the foundation universities are more than the state universities about institutional promotion. Foundation universities in Turkey, have more score on total, general information about the university, academic affairs and campus life subjects.

Our universities have some problems. So our recommendations for universities which can be listed as follows.

✓ In Turkey, there is not a standard about the websites of the universities. For that reason prospective students are spending more time. We need a standard for the university websites.

✓ Some universities do not have press and public relations branches. So, they give different message each others. Their messages are not integrated. All universities should employ public relation employee.

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