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ІНТЕРНЕТ ЯК КОМУНІКАЦІЙНИЙ ІНСТРУМЕНТ НА СЛУЖБІ ВИЩИХ ОСВІТНІХ ЗАКЛАДІВ – ПЕРСПЕКТИВА ДЛЯ ОСВІТНІХ РИНКІВ ПОЛЬЩІ ТА УКРАЇНИ

Ринок освіти на сьогодні змушує ВОЗ активно працювати в сфері управління маркетингом. З цього боку роль Інтернету є інструментальною. У статті подано окремі результати дослідження використання Інтернету у загальній маркетинговій діяльності ВОЗ Польщі та України. Результати, що збігаються в обох країнах, вказують на важливість та маркетинговий потенціал веб-простору, а відмінності, пов’язані зі сприйняттям цього середовища серед респондентів двох країн, не повинні розглядатися як ознаки різноманітних тенденцій. Істотніші розбіжності можна простежити щодо конкретних маркетингових заходів в Інтернеті, які можуть стати предметом окремого дослідження.

Ключові слова: маркетинг вищих навчальних закладів, Інтернет-маркетинг, електронний маркетинг, управління вищою освітою.

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INTERNET AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL AT THE SERVICE OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION – A PERSPECTIVE FOR THE EDUCATION MARKETS OF POLAND AND UKRAINE

The education market nowadays forces higher education institutions to be active in the field of marketing management. In this respect, the role of the Internet is instrumental. Dynamic changes on the educational services market, especially in the domain of e-marketing in higher education, are multidimensional and require a separate study. The article presents the selected results of the study of the use of the Internet in the general marketing activity of higher education institutions in Poland and the Ukraine. An analysis along these lines becomes additionally relevant in the context of comparative research of two markets of educational services (i.e. Polish and Ukrainian). The results obtained uniformly hint at the importance and marketing potential of the Web, and the differences relating to the perception of this medium among the respondents in the two countries should not be taken as indicating diverse trends. The results presented are yet to be analyzed in more detail and call for a broader discussion.

Part of the research was conducted under the international research project entitled "the Internet in the marketing activity of higher education institutions" and the results obtained will constitute the subject matter of separate publications. More significant differences were noted with respect to the specific online marketing activities, which may constitute the subject matter of separate research.

Key words: marketing of higher education institutions, Internet marketing, e-marketing, higher education management.

Formulation of the problem. One of the consequences of the Polish and Ukrainian economic transformation ever since the 90's of the 20th century was the formation of a free market of educational services, including the higher education level. The need to gain competitive advantage and compete for students – clients called for the implementation of the concept of marketing management of a higher education institution.

Marketing programs based on standard marketing tools, among which the Internet deserves special attention in the era of digitization, have become elements of schools' new strategies. Dynamic changes on the educational services market, especially in the domain of e-marketing in higher education, are multidimensional and require a separate study. Both these areas get integrated at the level of higher education institutions and provide a testing ground for studies oriented in the first place at general issues relating to the role of the Internet in the marketing activity of a higher education institution. An analysis along these lines becomes additionally relevant in the context of comparative research of two markets of educational services (i.e. Polish and Ukrainian).

Analysis of recent research and publications. Back in the early 90's of the 20th century, S. P. Robbins and D. A. DeCenzo [1, p. 44] pointed out that due to the high cost of obtaining higher education, the presence of competitive companies offering alternative educational services as well as cuts in the federal university spending, American universities had implemented systemic actions in order to analyse their own targets and identify the niches in which "they would be able to survive, function and implement effective strategies".

Each and every marketing activity must be customer – oriented. Thus, it is clients' needs that serve as a point of reference for the entire management process and determine its functions. Therefore, for an organisation to gain and maintain competitive advantage and thus secure its existence on the market in the long run, it is crucial that all the activities it undertakes should be marketing – driven. Each decision, process or even a single action, as well as the entire campaign, must allow for the demands of the market.

The fusion of focus on marketing and functional management calls for the introduction of yet another important term, i.e. marketing management, which, according to B. Tarczydło, encompasses: "the planning, coordination and control over all the marketing activities carried out for the sake of a specific market project (...) which means giving up chaotic and selective actions and implementing reliable, targeted and well designed marketing efforts" [2, p. 248].

In recent years, the marketing activity of higher education institutions has been the subject matter of an extensive exchange of opinions on both domestic and international arena. The topic has been discussed by M. J. Armstrong [3], B. R. Clark [4], H. Hall [5] and A. Pabian [6], among others. Nowadays, it is not the question of whether such institutions should adapt to the concept of marketing management, but rather what strategies, methods and instruments they should use for that purpose.

Internet marketing (e-marketing, online marketing) came into being in the mid '90s of the 20th century in the USA and has been developing very rapidly ever since. A few, perhaps several years ago, it may have been considered an eccentric choice, but these days it practically conditions the functioning of a business enterprise in the market reality. The selection of relevant instruments to conduct online marketing activity, in particular online advertising, should be regarded as both a theoretical and a practical problem. Researchers and managers need analyses illustrating market dynamics and outlining the most effective

trends. Particularly useful are the data that zoom in on markets other than the local market, as they offer a broader perspective on the evolution of the phenomenon.

Each and every medium destined for mass communication with the recipients is possesses some intricate characteristics. In case of the Internet, one hint at the following:

- it is *interactive*, i.e., it renders two-directional communication and recipient control over the received content possible;

- it constitutes a medium of individual communication, i.e., it allows full personalisation of the presented content and individualised dialogue between the enterprise and the client;

- it is available 24/7;

- it belongs to the pull-type media – as opposed to push-type, where the content depends solely on the sender / broadcaster, i.e., it engages the recipient by allowing them to decide which information (and in what order) they want to get, which makes it easier for the enterprise to identify potential clients and their needs;

- as a medium, it allows everybody to provide content as long as they have access to the Web;

- it is egalitarian, i.e. widespread in the developed countries as well as the majority of the countries classified as developing,

- it allows the integration of the elements of the marketing mix – there are tight connections of both substitutive and complementary type between the instruments of the promotion mix, and their common goal is to create a positive image and build trust in an organisation.

It is due to these characteristics that the use of the Internet for marketing activity, initiated in the mid '90s of the 20th century, has become the predominant trend in the development of the entire marketing sector. The system started out as a tool has developed into the environment of marketing activity. Once this fact is correlated with the latest IT knowledge, the emerging picture is that of digitized marketing.

Initially, e-marketing was an attempt to tailor the traditional marketing rules to the needs of Web 1.0, which is why websites resembled company product catalogues and banners, looked like advertisement boards. Yet, it immediately started to evolve, as marketers quickly discovered the potential of the interaction with Internet users and the crucial role of the latter (a customer, partner, etc.) in the communication. The emergence of Web 2.0 enabled a dynamic growth of e-marketing perceived in this way. As in the case of the Web, e-marketing seems to have gone through certain developmental stages and nowadays one can speak of marketing 2.0 or even 3.0 (the numeration is informal, the digits are used to stress the influence of new technologies, procedures and ideas).

Marketing 2.0/3.0 draws on the concept of open communication based on trust (key element of any long-term e-marketing activities, given that the effects of such activities are typically visible in the long run) and consumer participation. This peculiar involvement serves to contribute to the image of a given product or brand in the way that cannot be modelled by the marketing specialists initiating the specific activities. It appears that a given company / brand / product gains full credibility by allowing its customers to take a stand [7, p. 217].

D. Chaffey, F. Ellis-Chadwick, R. Meyer, K. Johnston [8, p. 279–286] have analysed the influence of the Internet on the specific elements of the marketing mix. In terms of the product, they stress the influence the Web exerts on its core as a consequence of adding new products in the digital version and their personalisation. The Internet provides broad perspectives for marketers in terms of the extended product, as the spectrum of possible enhancement options is very wide, ranging from applications constituting added interactive and personalised services, through offline services ordered online, extended guarantees, to various forms of opinion sharing on the particular product. The Internet may also serve to shorten the life cycle of a product by facilitating the marketing research process virtually getting involved in the creation of the concept of a new product along with the circle of present customers – prosumers. As pointed out by M. Dziekoński [9, p. 18–19], due to the development of Internet marketing, the Ansoff matrix is becoming a strategic tool, extended by two additional categories, i.e. the virtual product and market.

As regards the price, Chaffey et al. observe [8] the instrumental role of the Internet on increasing price transparency which, in turn, generates pressure on reducing prices and creates a new approach towards price policy among the entrepreneurs dealing in e-commerce. Activity in the field of e-commerce renders the possibility of using the effect of scale, reduced operating costs in the case of certain sectors, low entry thresholds, as well as new sales forms, e.g. various tender systems, price comparison search engines or group-buying platforms.

Distribution constitutes yet another element of the marketing mix which has been irreversibly affected by online technology. The influence of the web is visible in the following areas: the possibility of selecting an additional distribution channel, the need to adjust the distribution strategy to the new channel, including the problem of telling reintermediation and disintermediation apart. The influence of the Internet on Porter's five forces calls for a separate analysis.

Definition of previously unsolved parts of the general problem. By offering a vast array of new tools, the Internet has changed the elements of the promotion mix and created a new quality in each of its elements, to be discussed in the course of the discussion presented here. Figure 1 presents the influence of the web on the specific elements of the marketing mix.
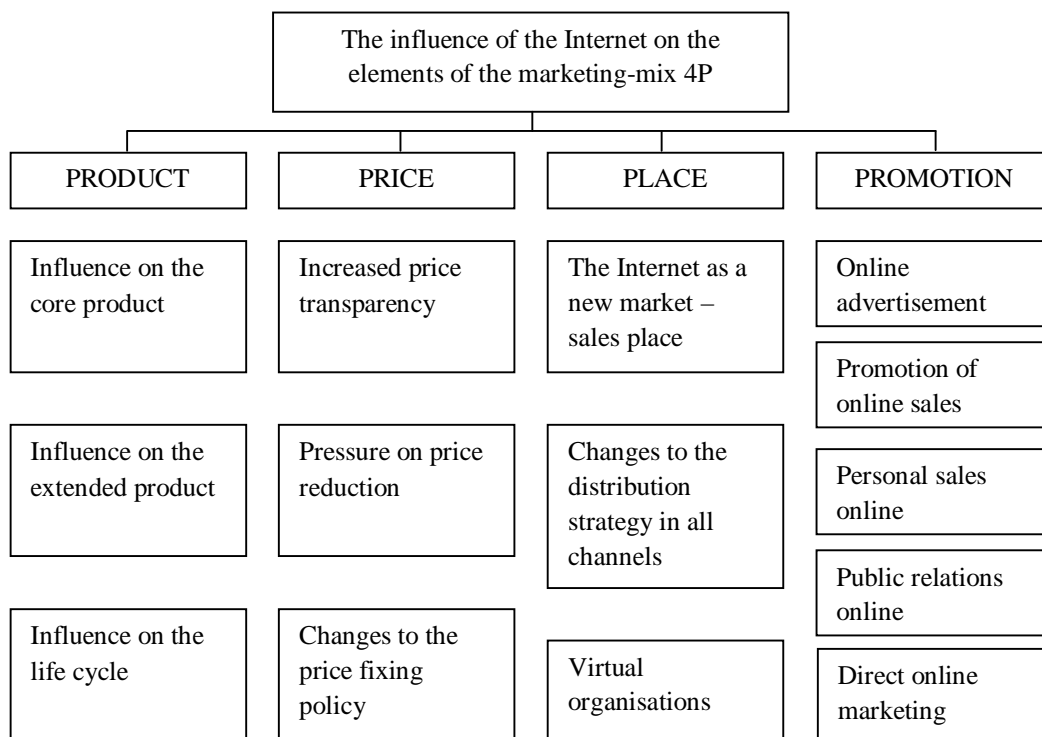
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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│  The influence of the Internet on the │
│   elements of the marketing-mix 4P    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘

  PRODUCT        PRICE          PLACE        PROMOTION

Influence on   Increased     The Internet   Online
the core       price         as a new       advertisement
product        transparency  market –
                             sales place    Promotion of
                                            online sales
Influence on   Pressure on   Changes to the
the extended   price         distribution   Personal sales
product        reduction     strategy in    online
                             all channels
                                            Public relations
Influence on   Changes to                   online
the life       the price     Virtual
cycle          fixing        organisations  Direct online
               policy                       marketing
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Fig. 1. The influence of the Internet on the concept of 4P

Source: Authors' own compilation based on [8, p. 279–286].

Aim of the article. One of the areas of marketing activity is the market of services, with the sector of higher education – related services constituting one of the niche areas. The aim of the article is to present the opinions regarding the use of the Internet in the marketing activity of higher education institutions in Poland and the Ukraine.

Presentation of the main material. The study was carried out in the period from 6 Feb. 2017 to 28 June 2017 as part of the international research project entitled "The Internet in the marketing activity of higher education institutions". The data was collected by means of computer assisted web interviews (CAWI). 123 Polish and 62 Ukrainian schools took part in the study. Out of the Polish higher education

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institutions, 32 % were public schools and the remaining ones were private. As for the Ukraine, the ratio was 93,5 % (public) to 6,5 % (private). Figure 2 represents the distribution of the research sample.

82 % and 95 % of the respondents from, respectively, the Polish and the Ukrainian higher education institutions agreed with the claim that the Internet is a medium that significantly supports the creation of the image of a higher education school. In similar vein, the vast majority of the respondents subscribed to the view that online marketing activity is cheaper in comparison with the traditional media (66,7 % and 79 % of the respondents in Poland and in the Ukraine, respectively, see Figure 3).
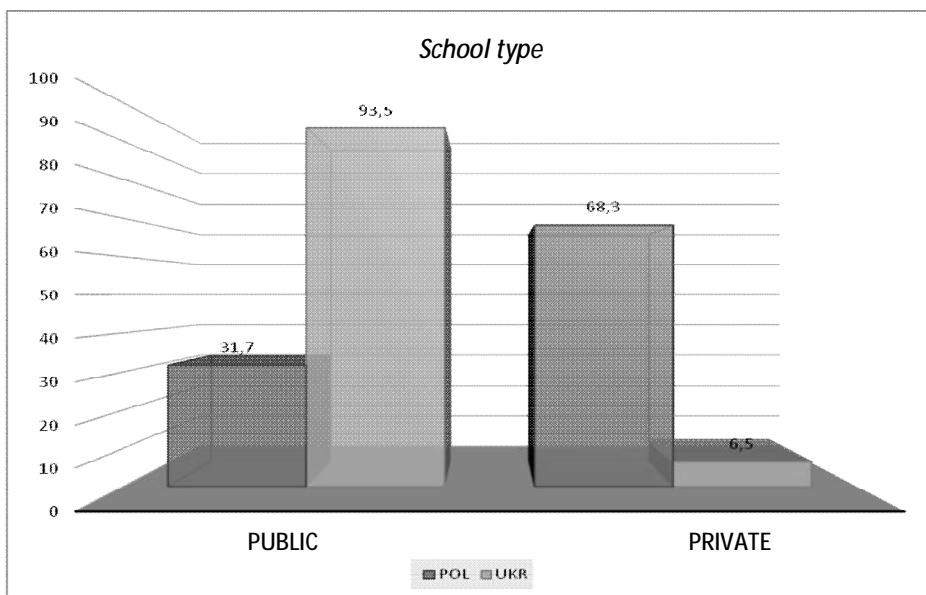

Fig. 2. Distribution of the research sample
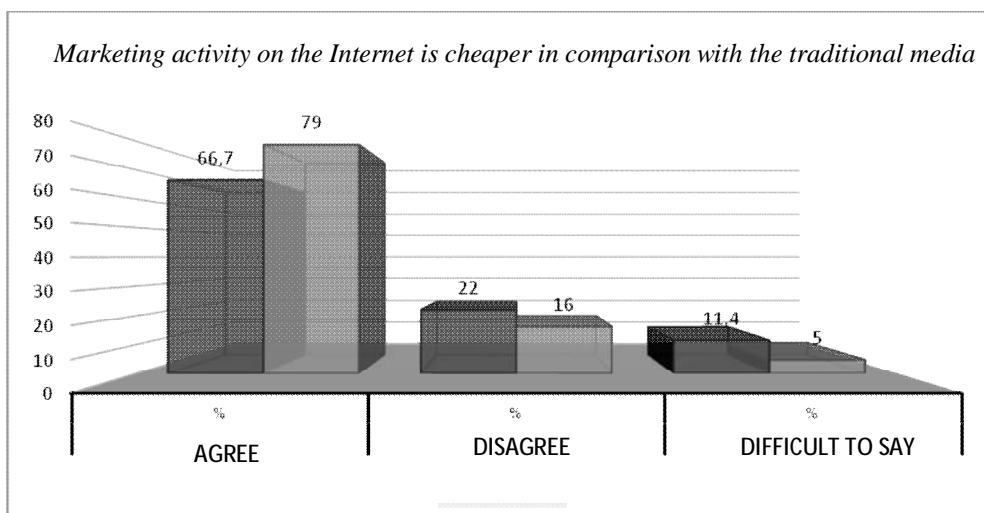
Source: Authors' own compilation.

Fig. 3. Respondents' answers to questions concerning the cost
of e-marketing activity in comparison with the traditional media

Source: Authors' own compilation.

The conspicuous discrepancy between the respondents in both the countries is difficult to account for. In that respect, the assumption that e-marketing services in the Ukraine are relatively cheaper seems rather risky. This area calls for further analyses. The differences in the perception of the cost of marketing activity with reference to the traditional media between the higher education institutions in Poland and in the Ukraine are presented in Figure 3.

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75 % of the Polish respondents and 65 % of the Ukrainian ones also agreed that *the Internet allows reaching the target groups of potential students in the market sectors currently served by the school with great precision*. 61 % (Poland) and 50% (the Ukraine) of them stated that *the Internet allows reaching new market segments precisely*. In both the countries almost all respondents ascertained that *the Internet renders quick access to information on the educational services market possible*. Similarly, the vast majority of them agreed that *the Internet serves to tighten positive, interactive relations with the students* (Poland – 93,5 %, the Ukraine – 89 %).

They also supported the claim that *the Internet is conducive to the improvement of the quality of student service* (Poland – 95 %, the Ukraine – 86 %). While the statement that *the Internet allows a better understanding of students' needs* was not obvious to 47,2 % of the respondents in Poland, 60 % of the Ukrainian respondents found it true. The fairly significant difference between the respondents from Poland and the Ukraine may indicate that the two groups have different expectations and pursue different approaches towards this medium in the scope subjected to scrutiny. Figure 4 represents the relation between the obtained answers.
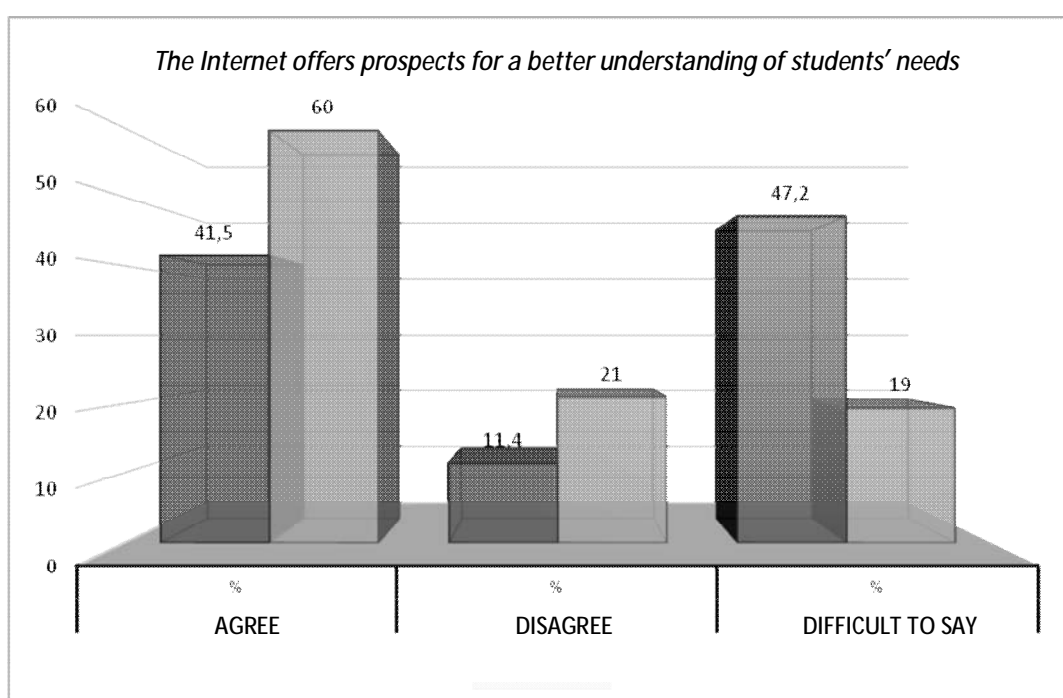

Fig. 4. Respondents' answers to questions relating to the better use of the perspectives created by the Internet as regards understanding students' needs

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Less significant discrepancies were noted with respect to the question whether *the Internet strengthens the feeling of ties between the school and its students*. While the Polish respondents (43 %) chose the 'difficult to say' option, the Ukrainian ones (47 %) supported it.

As for the question whether *the Internet allows to acquire detailed information on the current and potential students*, the majority of the respondents in both the countries (48 % and 53 %, respectively) found it true. 84 % and 77 % of the Polish and the Ukrainian students of higher education institutions, respectively, ticked 'agree' next to the claim that *the Internet supports the introduction of new elements of the educational offer to the market*. The last point subject to evaluation was the claim that *the Internet is a medium that stimulates the sales of educational services*. Both the Polish and the Ukrainian students found this statement correct, yet a significant disproportion was observed (95 % of the former and 66 % of the latter). The detailed statistics are presented in Table 1.

**Opinions regarding the use of the Internet in the marketing activity
of a higher education institution**

Answer	Country	Agree	Disagree	Difficult to say	TOTAL
		%	%	%	%
The Internet is a medium that plays a significant role in the creation of the image of a higher education institution	Poland	82,1	0	17,9	100
	Ukraine	95	0	5	100
Marketing activity on the Internet is cheaper in comparison with the traditional media	Poland	66,7	22	11,4	100
	Ukraine	79	16	5	100
The Internet allows precise access to target groups of potential students in the market segments currently served by the school	Poland	75,6	4,1	20,3	100
	Ukraine	65	21	15	100
The Internet allows to reach new market segments	Poland	61	5,7	33,3	100
	Ukraine	50	8	42	100
The Internet offers quick access to information on the market of educational services	Poland	100	0	0	100
	Ukraine	98	0	2	100
The Internet serves to strengthen positive, interactive relations with students	Poland	93,5	0.8	5,7	100
	Ukraine	89	3	8	100
The Internet contributes to the improvement of the quality of student service	Poland	95,1	1.6	3,3	100
	Ukraine	86	7	8	100
The Internet creates prospects for a better understanding of students' needs	Poland	41,5	11,4	47,2	100
	Ukraine	60	21	19	100
The Internet strengthens the bond between the school and the students	Poland	40,7	15,4	43,9	100
	Ukraine	47	23	31	100
The Internet allows to obtain detailed information on current and potential students	Poland	48	21,1	30,9	100
	Ukraine	53	21	26	100
The Internet supports the launch of new elements of the school's educational offer on the market	Poland	84,6	1,6	13,8	100
	Ukraine	77	11	11	100
The Internet is a medium that supports the sale of educational services	Poland	95,1	0	4,9	100
	Ukraine	66	3	31	100

Source: Author's own compilation.

The analysis of the type and degree of implementation of online marketing activities implemented by the Polish and the Ukrainian higher education institutions, it may be observed that the Internet is primarily used for communication with student and student service – related affairs. The *student service* function was relevant for as much as 57 % and 48 % of the Polish and the Ukrainian respondents, respectively. In similar vein, communication with students was rated high, i.e. 60 % and 55 % of the votes, respectively.

Yet another important activity is *online advertisement*. As the judgments indicate (54 % and 44 % of the Polish and the Ukrainian respondents, respectively), its use is at a medium level. As for *sponsorship*,

55 % of the respondents in Poland are of the opinion that its use is rather insignificant. In turn, 32 % and 31 % of the Ukrainian respondents, respectively, either do not know whether their schools use it or believe it to have little influence.

While public *relations were* rated high (55 %) in the Ukraine, in Poland they were considered to reach a medium (55 %) or a high level (29 %). Despite discrepancies between the specific results, they serve to show another area of high marketing activity of higher education institutions. With respect to *supplementary promotion*, 40 % of the Polish respondents claimed it was used at a medium level, and 27 % of the Ukrainian subjects admitted they did not know whether this type of promotion was used by their schools. In both countries, e-learning was rated high (38 % and 44 % of the respondents, respectively). The last category, i.e. E-commerce was rated rather low (43 % and 3 %, respectively). The detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The popularity and degree of implementation of selected e-marketing activities
by higher education institutions in Poland and the Ukraine

Answer	Country	Not used	Low use	Medium use	High use	Very high use	I don't know	No answer	TOTAL
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Marketing research	Poland	20	15	39	16	7	4	0	100
	Ukraine	7	10	45	27	3	8	0	100
student service	Poland	0	3	18	57	22	0	0	100
	Ukraine	2	7	24	48	19	0	0	100
communication with students	Poland	0	2	20	60	18	0	0	100
	Ukraine	0	8	29	55	8	0	0	100
advertisement	Poland	0	7	54	28	12	0	0	100
	Ukraine	3	16	44	21	16	0	0	100
sponsorship	Poland	23	42	22	7	2	4	0	100
	Ukraine	11	31	8	13	3	32	2	100
Public relations	Poland	0	7	55	29	9	0	0	100
	Ukraine	0	3	34	55	8	0	0	100
Supplementary promotion	Poland	31	19	40	8	2	0	0	100
	Ukraine	11	13	16	24	8	27	0	100
e-learning	Poland	30	12	7	38	13	0	0	100
	Ukraine	13	7	15	44	23	0	0	100
e-commerce	Poland	15	43	24	10	2	7	0	100
	Ukraine	10	32	16	11	31	0	0	100

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Conclusions and perspectives for further research. The results of the study reveal that the Internet is an important element of the marketing activity of higher education institutions in both Poland and the Ukraine. There is general awareness of the potential of this tool, used not only as a channel of marketing communication. Still, not all the virtues of this medium, in particular in the field of gaining information on present and potential students, are fully recognized.

The analysis of the popularity and degree of implementation of selected e-marketing activities by higher education institutions in Poland and Ukraine reveals the significance of the aspects relating to the communicative usefulness and student service with the use of the Internet. Advertisement and Public Relations took the second place, which seems compatible with the expectations given the current trends in marketing communication (not only in the context of higher education institutions). The high score obtained by e-learning deserves special attention, as it seems indicative of not only the typical marketing benefits, but also the complex transformation of the educational service, especially at the level subjected to scrutiny.

The results presented are yet to be analyzed in more detail and call for a broader discussion. Part of the research was conducted under the international research project entitled "the Internet in the marketing activity of higher education institutions" and the results obtained will constitute the subject matter of separate publications.

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