

**GALATASARAY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

**PORTER'S GENERIC STRATEGIES WITHIN
MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS CONTEXT: A
RESEARCH INTO THE USAGE OF GENERIC
STRATEGIES BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN
TURKEY**

MASTER THESIS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMA	: American Marketing Association
ARWU	: Academic Ranking of World Universities
CASE	: The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education
CBO	: Chief Business Officer
EUA	: The European University Association
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GNP	: Gross National Product
HEEACT	: Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan
IMC	: Integrated Marketing Communications
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSYM	: Center of Student Selection and Placement
PR	: Public Relations
QS	: Quacquarelli Symonds Limited
R & D	: Research and Development
THE	: Times Higher Education
TUIK	: Turkey Institution of Statistics
YOK	: Turkish Higher Education Council

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BREF RESUME

LES STRATEGIES GENERIQUES DE PORTER DANS LE CONTEXTE DES COMMUNICATIONS MARKETING: UNE RECHERCHE SUR L'UTILISATION DES STRATEGIES GENERIQUES PAR LES UNIVERSITES PRIVEES EN TURQUIE

BekirYeşilyurt

Le monde global de la concurrence a rendu les communications marketing difficiles pour tous les secteurs, l'enseignement supérieur pas moins. Dans ce contexte, les établissements d'enseignement supérieur privés ont eu l'obligation d'adopter des stratégies de communication marketing qui se sont avérées utiles dans d'autres secteurs. Spécialement en Turquie, où les établissements d'enseignement supérieur sont nouveaux dans les activités de marketing, les stratégies génériques de Porter peuvent devenir une pratique applicable, car, en raison de sa nature simpliste et complète, elle s'est révélée utile dans d'innombrables secteurs divers. Dans cette recherche, les stratégies de communication marketing du secteur turc de l'enseignement supérieur privé ont été examinées par les médias sociaux, et leur utilisation par les établissements d'enseignement supérieur privés a été examinée par une analyse de contenu en catégorisant la manière de ces messages dans le cadre de Porter.

Mots-clés: Communication Marketing, Enseignement Supérieur, Enseignement Supérieur Privé Turc, Stratégies Génériques

Code de la Science:

ABSTRACT

PORTER’S GENERIC STRATEGIES WITHIN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS CONTEXT: A RESEARCH INTO THE USAGE OF GENERIC STRATEGIES BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN TURKEY

Bekir Yeşilyurt

The global world of competition has made marketing communications challenging for all sectors, higher education no less. Within this context, it has become an obligation for private higher education institutions to adopt marketing communications strategies that have proven useful in other sectors. Especially in Turkey, where higher education institutions are new to marketing endeavors, Porter’s generic strategies can rise as an applicable practice, because due to its simplistic and comprehensive nature, it has proven useful in innumerable diverse sectors. In this research, the marketing communications strategies of Turkish private higher education sector have been examined through social media, and how much these strategies are utilized by private higher education institutions have been examined via a content analysis by categorizing the manner of these messages into Porter’s framework.

Key Words: Marketing Communications, Tertiary Education, Turkish Private Higher Education, Generic Strategies

Science Code:

KISA ÖZET

PAZARLAMA İLETİŞİMİ BAĞLAMINDA PORTER'IN JENERİK STRATEJİLERİ: TÜRKİYE'DE ÖZEL ÜNİVERSİTELERİN JENERİK STRATEJİLERİ KULLANIMINA YÖNELİK BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Bekir Yeşilyurt

Rekabetçi küresel toplum pazarlama iletişimini yüksek öğretim de dahil olmak üzere bütün sektörler için karmaşık bir hale getirdi. Bu çerçevede içerisinde, özel yükseköğretim kurumları için diğer sektörlerde faydasını ispatlamış pazarlama iletişimi stratejileri edinmek bir zorunluluk haline geldi. Özellikle yüksek öğretim kurumlarının pazarlama çalışmaları konusuna henüz yeni olduğu Türkiye'de, Porter'ın jenerik stratejileri kullanışlı bir uygulama olarak yer bulabilir; çünkü bu yapı indirgeyici ve kapsayıcı doğasından dolayı sayısız değişik sektörde işlevselliğini ispatlamıştır. Bu araştırmada, Türkiye'deki özel yükseköğretim sektörünün pazarlama iletişimi stratejileri sosyal medyada incelenmiş ve bu stratejilerden ne kadar faydalandıkları bir içerik analiziyle bu mesajların yapısını Porter'ın çerçevesine kategorize ederek araştırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pazarlama İletişimi, Yükseköğretim, Türk Özel Yükseköğretimi, Jenerik Stratejiler

Bilim Dalı Sayısal Kodu:

RESUME

La communication stratégique fait référence à toutes les activités de communication planifiées qui visent à former une perception, une attitude ou un soutien souhaité pour un produit, une idée ou une organisation (Çınarlı, 2009). La communication marketing, avec une nature prééminente et un but ultime d'obtenir une image corporative désirée, est un genre de communication stratégique. Pour approfondir les sous-unités des communications marketing, il faut aborder l'essence de ses principales composantes. Le terme marketing couvre tous les processus de gestion qui cherchent à maximiser les rendements en établissant des relations solides avec les clients et développer des stratégies qui génèrent une supériorité différenciante (Vural, 2013). Alors que la ligne entre les communications marketing et marketing devient obscure dans de nombreux contextes, les communications marketing peuvent être définies comme toutes les interactions entre une organisation et ses publics cibles qui ont un effet sur la performance marketing. (Pickton and Broderick, 2005). Les communications marketing peuvent être pratiquées de diverses manières, cependant, les principaux types de communication marketing sont la publicité, la promotion des ventes, les relations publiques et la publicité, le marketing direct, le marketing interactif et la vente personnelle (Kotler et Keller, 2009).

Ces différents types de communication marketing sont réalisés à travers différents supports: TV, journaux, magazines, outdoor, le web mondial, etc ... Alors que certains de ces médiums sont au centre des communications marketing depuis plus d'un siècle, d'autres sont plus récents et de nouvelles formes apparaissent chaque jour; et à cause de ces changements, le contexte et les méthodologies des communications marketing changent aussi. À titre d'exemple, une couverture médiatique réalisée avec seulement quelques chaînes de télévision il y a cinquante ans peut être atteinte avec pas moins d'une centaine de chaînes de télévision aujourd'hui. Au contraire, l'augmentation de l'impact de la publicité par le bouche-à-oreille est devenue beaucoup plus facile grâce aux médias sociaux; un message peut maintenant atteindre l'autre bout du monde pour une population inimaginable en quelques heures. Les mêmes changements sont survenus en termes de structure de marché. Beaucoup de nouvelles entreprises ont vu le jour, beaucoup sont mortes, de nombreuses politiques de marketing ont perdu leur avantage et beaucoup sont devenues importantes. Cependant, il est devenu certain que maintenant les modèles

de marketing exigent une planification beaucoup plus élaborée et l'intégration de divers aspects.

Des études récentes sur le sujet ont également prouvé que la fidélité à la marque est un accomplissement plus significatif que d'attirer de nouveaux clients. En raison de l'évolution des paradigmes économiques et sociaux et du souci d'obtenir une loyauté comportementale et attitudinale, les chercheurs et les praticiens de la communication marketing se sont efforcés de proposer des méthodes de communication marketing plus complètes. Dans cette étude, deux d'entre eux ont été abordés: le marketing mix et les communications marketing intégrées.

Le marketing mix implique les 4P du marketing, qui ont été modifiés ou étendus plusieurs fois par de nombreux académiciens. Parmi ceux-ci, le 4P a été le plus souvent mentionné, représentant le produit, le prix, le lieu et les aspects promotionnels du marketing. La deuxième méthodologie, les communications marketing intégrées, suit un chemin différent et plus prescriptif, indiquant ce qui doit être fait étape par étape. La base de ceci est le processus de communication bien connu de l'expéditeur, du message, du support et du récepteur par Shramm (1948). Toutefois, les communications de marketing intégré ajoute plusieurs éléments pour améliorer ce processus afin de répondre aux demandes des spécialistes du marketing dans un environnement plus difficile.

La boucle de communication entre une entreprise et son public cible peut être unidirectionnelle, bidirectionnelle asymétrique ou bidirectionnelle symétrique (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). La communication à sens unique fait référence aux processus de communication sans retour d'information du public cible. La communication asymétrique bidirectionnelle fait référence à une forme similaire, mais avec peu de retour. La communication symétrique bidirectionnelle, qui est la plus souhaitable parmi les trois, englobe le dialogue simultané entre la source et le récepteur. Bien que le domaine de la gestion stratégique traite des aspects pratiques de ces phénomènes, des arguments éthiques entourent également ce sujet. Certains croient que la communication symétrique bidirectionnelle est insondable dans les processus de communication stratégiques puisqu'ils sont toujours générés, dirigés et structurés par une partie et que la réponse du récepteur n'a de valeur que pour un résultat final souhaité par la source.

La différence entre ces cadres et ceux de Porter est que ce dernier est plus descriptif. Porter (1980, 1985) suggère que chaque entreprise doit choisir une stratégie générique si elle désire un leadership sur le marché. Le leadership sur le marché peut prendre trois formes seulement: être un différenciateur, un leader des coûts ou un cibleur. Grosso modo, les différenciateurs recherchent un avantage compétitif grâce à des prix élevés et des offres suffisamment importantes pour exiger des prix élevés. D'autre part, les leaders des coûts offrent des prix plus bas pour un produit de qualité raisonnable. Le point clé ici est de déterminer la bonne quantité de prix parce que les prix élevés pourraient signifier la perte de clients, alors que les prix bas pourraient signifier la perte de profit ou de prestige. La stratégie générique finale est un focuser. Les «focusers» sont ceux qui recherchent le leadership en ciblant de petits segments que d'autres entreprises ne peuvent pas en raison de l'emplacement, de l'expertise ou de l'ampleur du marché. Porter affirme également que les focusers doivent faire une certaine différence s'ils veulent rester compétitifs ou au moins survivre.

L'orientation du marché dans l'organisation de l'éducation est devenue le point central de nombreuses recherches au cours de la dernière décennie. La simple recherche du profit, la nature privatisée de l'éducation, la globalisation du monde ou l'éducation devenant un outil de la compétition internationale entre les gouvernements sont parmi les nombreuses raisons de l'intérêt élevé dans ce domaine. Des pays comme la Grande-Bretagne, où l'éducation en tant que marché a largement contribué au bien-être de l'économie, ont donné des exemples pour d'autres pays. En outre, un autre retour de l'investissement dans l'éducation est le fait qu'il fournit à un pays le pouvoir de travail et le savoir-faire dont il a tant besoin pour devenir économiquement et culturellement compétent dans le monde en développement.

Au sein de cette structure économique mondiale compétitive, les établissements d'enseignement supérieur doivent également rester compétitifs, car on attend maintenant beaucoup d'eux, notamment en offrant un large éventail de programmes, une supériorité universitaire, des possibilités d'emploi et des installations sur le campus. Par conséquent, les stratégies de communication marketing de l'enseignement supérieur sont également devenues une préoccupation majeure.

Dans la nature, l'enseignement tertiaire est considéré comme relevant du secteur des services car les services éducatifs sont intangibles, hétérogènes, inconstants, périssables et inséparables du personnel qui les dispense (Walker et Hayes, 1996) comme dans l'enseignement supérieur. Cependant, lorsqu'on l'examine de près, la pratique des communications marketing pour l'enseignement supérieur dépend de nombreux paramètres que peu d'autres marchés ont. La nature unique de l'éducation collégiale en tant que marché est directement liée au fait que peu d'autres préférences de produits ont autant d'impact sur sa vie. C'est aussi parce que c'est la plupart du temps une décision prise une fois dans une vie par de très jeunes gens, dont les facultés de décision dépendent davantage de facteurs holistiques et sentimentaux. Le défi final et peut-être le plus important que l'enseignement supérieur présente aux planificateurs du processus est que les résultats de l'enseignement supérieur n'ont pas été pleinement établis. Pour expliquer, la mesurabilité d'une stratégie de communication est primordiale pour le succès de l'opération. Cependant, il est soutenu que le résultat de l'enseignement supérieur est la population étudiante comme si elles n'avaient jamais existé auparavant et toutes leurs qualités finales sont dues à l'éducation tertiaire qu'ils reçoivent. Il est également soutenu que le résultat de l'enseignement supérieur est le programme, l'éducation et la recherche (Maringe, 2005); cependant, Canterbury (2000) affirme que l'enseignement supérieur doit être considéré comme une somme d'opportunités et que ce sont les opportunités qui doivent être centrées dans toutes les recherches concernant les résultats de l'enseignement supérieur.

À la lumière de cela, les caractéristiques inhabituelles et stimulantes de la conception des communications marketing nécessitent également la réduction de tous les paramètres affectant le processus de conception d'une stratégie de marketing lors de l'adaptation du contexte de l'enseignement supérieur dans les domaines de l'orientation marché. Par conséquent, il faut supposer que l'enseignement supérieur est axé sur le marché et que toutes les organisations à but lucratif, qu'elles soient ou non un établissement d'enseignement, ont besoin de politiques de communication marketing claires et simplifiées. Par conséquent, ils doivent évaluer le contexte du marché, les règles et règlements, et la rivalité dans des lieux de marché particuliers et acquérir des stratégies de communication marketing qui leur conviennent. Un aperçu de la portée de l'orientation du marché dans les établissements d'enseignement

supérieur peut présenter des arguments valables pour l'académie tout en enrichissant en même temps le domaine de la gestion.

Les préoccupations mentionnées ci-dessus sont les motivations motrices de cette étude. En tant que marché émergent, l'enseignement supérieur privé a besoin de politiques claires et de cadres de communication marketing prouvés dans d'autres entreprises, et les stratégies génériques de Porter offrent un cadre simple mais complet à l'énigme des politiques d'enseignement supérieur privé. En Turquie, en particulier, où les établissements d'enseignement supérieur privés n'existaient pas il y a trente ans, un tel cadre pourrait servir énormément. Des stratégies génériques en tant qu'outil de communication marketing en Turquie pourraient simplifier cette transition et ouvrir de nouvelles portes pour de nouvelles recherches. En bref, il est important d'examiner les circonstances uniques de l'environnement de communication marketing dans le secteur de l'enseignement supérieur privé turc à travers la perspective des stratégies génériques de Porter.

Différentes perspectives existent vers la vision Porterienne des communications marketing. Beaucoup de recherches contredisent les stratégies génériques de communication marketing, prétendant qu'il est trop simple de couvrir tous les domaines du marketing, ou qu'il ne suffit pas dans les économies en transition où l'imprévisibilité rend beaucoup plus difficile de suivre une stratégie générique. D'autres le critiquent en disant qu'essayer de devenir un chef de coût ou un différenciateur pour une entreprise nouvellement florissante pourrait signifier sa fin. En outre, certaines recherches montrent des cas où les stratégies hybrides se sont avérées beaucoup plus pratiques pour de nombreuses entreprises florissantes. Tout ceci étant dit, même si l'aspect prescriptif de la vision Porterienne ne s'avère pas fonctionnel pour le succès d'une entreprise, son applicabilité réside aussi dans sa pratique descriptive par laquelle les organisations et les académiciens peuvent mieux connaître plus de cas que tout autre cadre.

Pour examiner le point de vue Porterien dans l'enseignement supérieur, deux prérequis existent. Premièrement, les paramètres doivent être définis, à travers lesquels les établissements d'enseignement supérieur peuvent être classés comme des différenciateurs, des chefs de coûts et des focalisateurs. Lorsqu'ils sont adaptés à l'enseignement supérieur privé, les critères de différenciation sont le prestige, les

frais de scolarité plus élevés, le succès scolaire et les qualités physiques. Cependant, pour un chef de file, les frais de scolarité seraient moins élevés et le même genre de qualités qu'un différenciateur, mais à un niveau inférieur mais acceptable. Pour les focusers, ces paramètres changent, car comme mentionné précédemment, les focusers peuvent acquérir un avantage concurrentiel en ciblant différentes spécialités. Ceux-ci peuvent être spécialisés dans certains départements ou se concentrer sur un emplacement spécifique.

La deuxième condition préalable serait de regarder en profondeur les tendances actuelles de l'enseignement supérieur, à savoir la massification, la privatisation et la concurrence, qui se sont toutes conjuguées. Après les années 90 jusqu'à nos jours, l'enseignement supérieur est devenu une institution qui ne sert plus seulement exclusivement à l'élite, mais elle est maintenant considérée comme un service communal auquel chaque individu a droit. Cela devient plus évident lorsqu'on fait remarquer que chaque personne sur trois a un diplôme d'études collégiales, ce qui est bien au-dessus de la distinction de 15% d'élite-masse inventée par Trow (1974). C'est un facteur qui affecte directement les tendances de la privatisation dans le monde. Tout comme de nombreux autres pays, la Turquie a également accéléré ce processus de privatisation. Aujourd'hui, 33,3% de tous les établissements d'enseignement supérieur sont devenus privés. L'un des résultats les plus évidents de cette privatisation et de cette massification est la concurrence.

Les universités privées doivent maintenant rester compétitives à la fois contre d'autres universités privées et contre les universités d'État, qui n'ont pas à lutter pour le profit.

Cette recherche s'est penchée sur le défi structurel de l'adoption d'une stratégie générique dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur turcs. Dans le contexte susmentionné, trois universités privées ont été choisies: Université Bilkent, Université Koç et Université Sabanci. Elles ont été sélectionnées en raison du fait qu'elles jouissent d'un plus haut niveau de performance en termes de classement international (QS Ranking System, 2018) et de scores d'acceptation des étudiants (urapcenter.org, 2017). Une recherche qualitative sur l'analyse du contenu a été menée en examinant les publications sur les médias sociaux de ces trois universités pendant la période de sélection des étudiants universitaires. L'objectif était d'observer

l'efficacité du cadre de Porter sur les activités de communication marketing des universités privées en Turquie. Les questions de recherche suivantes ont été abordées dans l'étude: 1) En ce qui concerne leur contenu, quelle est la stratégie générique de Porter dans les médias sociaux des universités? 2) Quelle distribution les médias sociaux où les universités partagent leurs contenus montrent-ils en termes de contenu de message et de stratégie générique à laquelle ils appartiennent?

On a observé que les universités n'utilisaient pas les trois stratégies du cadre de Porter. Le plus souvent, leur intention était de transmettre des messages différenciateurs qui favorisaient les meilleures opportunités académiques et les installations du campus. De plus, certains messages pourraient être interprétés comme différenciateurs et focalisateurs en même temps que de nombreux messages mettaient l'accent sur l'expertise de certains départements. La stratégie de gestion des coûts, cependant, n'avait presque aucune présence dans leurs postes. Ces résultats ont montré qu'en Turquie, les communications marketing pour l'enseignement supérieur impliquent principalement des stratégies de différenciation ou des stratégies de focalisation. Les raisons en sont peut-être multiples, comme le fait que les dirigeants des coûts n'ont pas de lignes aussi définitives que les mécanismes de prestige / prix peuvent ne pas avoir une contrepartie directe dans les esprits, en particulier pour un service distinct qui est intangible mais en même temps une grande partie de la vie des clients.

Cependant, avec son économie en développement mais changeante, des législations éducatives en constante évolution et des universités nouvellement ouvertes - 20 nouvelles universités ont été ouvertes en mai - (NTV news website, mai 2018), la Turquie restera toujours un territoire difficile mais généreux pour ceux qui continuent leurs services d'enseignement supérieur ici. Cette étude aidera ceux qui s'efforcent de survivre dans ce marché exigeant à comprendre leur position et la direction à prendre, et aidera également ceux qui ont l'intention d'apporter un ensemble de normes plus fines au système d'enseignement supérieur turc.

SUMMARY

Strategic communication refers to all planned communicative activities that aim to form a desired perception, attitude or support for a product, idea, or an organization (Çınarlı, 2009). Marketing communications too, with a preeminent nature and an ultimate goal of achieving a desired corporate image, is a genre of strategic communication.

To go deeper into the sub-units of marketing communications, one must address the essence of its main components. The term marketing covers all management processes that seek to maximize returns by establishing sound relationships with customers and develop strategies that generate differentiating superiority (Vural, 2013). While the line between marketing and marketing communications become obscure in many contexts, marketing communications can be defined as all the interactions between an organization and its target audiences that have an effect on marketing performance (Pickton and Broderick, 2005). Marketing communications can be practiced in a vast variety of manners, however, the main types of marketing communications are advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing and personal selling (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

These different types of marketing communications are accomplished through different media: TV, newspapers, magazines, outdoor, the worldwide web, etc... While some of these media have been in the center of marketing communications for more than a century, others are more recent, and some new forms arise each day; and because of these changes, the context and methodologies of marketing communications change too. To exemplify, a media coverage achieved with only a few TV channels fifty years ago can be achieved with no less than a hundred TV channels today. On the contrary, increasing the impact of word-of-mouth advertising has become much easier through social media; a message can now reach the other end of the world to an unimaginable population within hours. The same alterations have happened in terms of market structure. Many new businesses arose, many have died, many marketing policies have lost edge, and many have become prominent. However, it has become certain that now the marketing patterns require much more elaborate planning and integration of various aspects.

Recent studies in the subject have also proven that brand loyalty is a more significant accomplishment than attracting new customers. Both because of the shifting economic-social paradigms and with the concern of securing behavioral and attitudinal loyalty, both scholars and practitioners of marketing communications have been endeavoring to come up with more comprehensive marketing communications methodologies. In this study, two of them have been addressed: the marketing mix and integrated marketing communications.

The marketing mix involves the 4Ps of marketing, which have been modified or extended many times by many academicians. Of these, the 4Ps has been the most commonly referred one, representing the product, price, place and promotion aspects of marketing. The second methodology, integrated marketing communications, follows a different and more prescriptive path, stating what should be done step-by-step. The basis of this is the well-known communication process of sender, message, medium and receiver by Shramm (1948). However, integrated marketing communications adds several items to enhance this process to meet the demands of marketers in a more challenging environ.

The communication loop between a firm and its target audience can be one-way, two-way asymmetric or two-way symmetric (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). One-way communication refers to communication processes without feedback from the target audience. Two-way asymmetric communication refers to a similar form, yet with little feedback. Two-way symmetric communication, which is the most desirable among the three, encompasses simultaneous dialogue between the source and the receiver. Although the field of strategic management deals with the practical aspects of these phenomena, ethical arguments also circle around this subject. Some believe that two-way symmetric communication is unfathomable in strategic communication processes as they are always generated, directed and structured by one party and the receiver response is only valuable for an end-result desired by the source.

The difference between these frameworks and Porter's is that the latter is more of a descriptive nature. Porter (1980, 1985) suggests that every firm needs to choose a generic strategy if they covet market leadership. Market leadership may come in three forms only: being a differentiator, a cost leader, or a focuser. Roughly speaking, differentiators seek competitive advantage through high prices and

offerings great enough to demand high prices. Cost leaders, on the other hand, offer lower prices for a reasonably quality product. The key point here is to determine the right amount of price because high prices might mean loss of customers, while low prices might mean loss of profit or prestige. The final generic strategy is being a focuser. Focusers are those who seek leadership by targeting little segments that other companies cannot due to location, expertise, or magnitude of the market. Porter also claims that focusers need to make a certain difference as well if they desire to remain competitive or at least survive.

Market orientation in educational organizations has become the focal point of much research within the past decade. Mere profit seeking, the privatized nature of education, globalizing world, or education becoming a tool of international competition between governments are among the many reasons for the elevated interest in this area. Countries like Britain, where education as a market has made great contributions to the welfare of the economy, have set examples for other countries. Besides these, another return of investment in education is the fact that it provides a country with the much needed work power and know-how to become economically and culturally competent in the developing world.

Within this competitive economic world structure, higher education institutions need to remain competitive as well because now much is expected of them, such as offering a wide range of curriculum, academic superiority, job opportunities and campus facilities. Hence, the marketing communications strategies of higher education too has become a major concern.

In nature, tertiary education is considered within the domains of service industry as educational services are intangible, heterogeneous, fickle, perishable and inseparable from the personnel who delivers it (Walker and Hayes, 1996) as is the case in higher education. However, when examined closely, the praxis of marketing communications for higher education depends on many parameters that few other markets have. The unique nature of college education as a market is directly correlated with the fact that few other product preferences have so much impact on one's life. It is also because it is mostly a once-in-a-lifetime decision that is made by very young people, whose decision-making faculties depend more on holistic, sentiment based factors. The final and perhaps the most significant challenge higher

education presents to the planners of the process is that the outcome of higher education has not been fully established. To explain, the measurability of a communicative strategy is paramount to the success of the operation. However, it is argued that the outcome of higher education is the student population as though they never existed before and all their end qualities are due to the tertiary education they receive. It is also argued that the outcome of higher education is the curriculum, the education and research (Maringe, 2005); however, Canterbury (2000) states that higher education must be regarded as a sum of opportunities and it is the opportunities that must be centered inside all research concerning the outcomes of higher education.

Within this scope, the unusual and challenging characteristics of marketing communications design also requires the reduction of all parameters affecting the process of designing a marketing strategy when fitting higher education context into the domains of market-orientation. Therefore, it must be assumed that higher education is market driven and that all profit-oriented organizations whether they might be an educational institution or not, need clear-cut, simplified marketing communications policies. Hence, they must assess the market setting, rules and regulations, and rivalry in particular market locations and acquire marketing communications strategies suited to them. An insight into the scope of market orientation in higher education institutions may present worthy arguments for academy while at the same time enriching the field of management.

The aforementioned concerns are the driving motivations behind this study. As a newly emerging market, private higher education needs clear policies and marketing communications frameworks that have proven practical in other businesses, and Porter's generic strategies offer a simple yet comprehensive framework to the conundrum of policy adopting processes of private higher education. Especially in Turkey, where private higher education institutions did not exist as back as thirty years ago, such a framework could serve grandly. Generic strategies as a marketing communications tool in Turkey could simplify this transition, and open new doors for further research. In short, it is important to examine the unique circumstances of the marketing communications environment in Turkish private higher education sector through the perspective of Porter's generic strategies.

Different perspectives exist towards Porterian view of marketing communications. Plenty of research contradict generic strategies of marketing communications, claiming that it is too simple to cover all marketing domains, or that it fails to suffice in transition economies where unpredictability makes it much more challenging to follow one generic strategy. Others criticize it saying that endeavoring to become a cost leader or a differentiator for a newly blossoming business might mean its end. Moreover, some research shows instances where hybrid strategies proved much more convenient for many thriving businesses. All these being said, even if the prescriptive aspect of the Porterian view fails to prove functional for a company's success, its applicability also lies in its descriptive practicality via which organizations and academicians may become better acquainted with more cases than any other framework.

To examine Porterian view in higher education, two prerequisites exist. Firstly, the parameters must be set, through which higher education institutions can be classified as differentiators, cost leaders and focusers. When adapted into private higher education, the parameters for differentiators are prestige, higher tuition fees, academic success and physical qualities. For a cost leader though, they would be lower tuition fees, and the same sort of qualities as a differentiator, yet at a lower but acceptable level. For focusers, these parameters change, because as mentioned before, focusers can acquire competitive edge by targeting different specialties. These can be specializing in certain departments or focusing on a specific location.

The second prerequisite would be to take a deep look at the current tendencies in higher education, which are massification, privatization and competition, all of which have led to one another. After the 90s until today, higher education has become an institution that no longer only serves exclusively to the elite, but it is now regarded as a communal service that every individual is entitled to. This becomes more evident when it is pointed out that now every one person out of three has a college degree, which is way above the 15 percent elite-mass distinction coined by Trow (1974). This is a factor directly affecting the privatization tendencies around the world. Just like many other countries, Turkey has also accelerated this privatization process. Now 33,3 percent of all higher education institutions have become private. One of the most obvious outcomes of this privatization and massification is competition. Private universities now have to stay competitive both

against other private universities and against state universities, which do not have to struggle for profit.

This research looked into the structural challenge of adopting a generic strategy in Turkish higher education institutions. Within the aforementioned context, three private universities have been chosen: Bilkent University, Koç University and Sabancı University. They were selected because of the fact that they enjoy a higher achievement level in terms of international rankings (QS Ranking System, 2018) and student acceptance scores (urapcenter.org, 2017). A qualitative research of content analysis was conducted examining the social media posts of these three universities during the college selection period for university student candidates. The aim was to observe how effective Porter's framework was on the marketing communications activities of private universities in Turkey. The following research questions were addressed in the study: 1) In terms of their content, which generic strategy of Porter's do the social media posts of the universities belong to? 2) What distribution do the social media where the universities share their contents show in terms of message contents and the generic strategy that they belong to?

It was observed that the universities were not making use of all three strategies of Porter's framework. Most commonly, their intention was to convey differentiator messages which promoted the higher academic opportunities and campus facilities. Moreover, some of the messages could be interpreted as differentiator and focuser at the same time as many messages stressed expertise in certain departments. Cost leadership strategy, however, had almost no presence in their posts. These results showed that in Turkey, marketing communications for higher education mostly involves differentiating strategies or focusing strategies. The reasons for this might be many, such as cost leadership not having such definitive lines as prestige/price mechanisms may not have a direct counterpart in people's minds, especially for such a distinct service that is intangible, but at the same time constitutes for such a wide part of the customers' life.

However, with its developing yet shifty economy, ever changing educational legislations, and newly-opening universities – 20 new universities were opened in May – (NTV news website, May, 2018), Turkey will always remain a tough but bountiful territory for those who continue their higher education services here. This study will help those who strive to survive in this demanding market in

understanding their stance and which direction they must go, and also help those who intend to bring a finer set of standards to the Turkish higher education system.



ÖZET

Stratejik iletişim bir ürün, fikir ya da kuruluş için arzulanan bir algı, yaklaşım, ya da destek oluşturmayı hedefleyen tüm planlanmış iletişim faaliyetleridir (Çınarlı, 2009). Pazarlama iletişimi de, önceden tasarlanan doğası ve arzulanan bir kurumsal imaj oluşturmak gibi nihai bir hedefe sahip olarak bir stratejik iletişim türüdür.

Pazarlama iletişimin alt birimlerinden daha detaylı bahsetmek için ana bileşenlerinden bahsetmek gerekmektedir. Pazarlama terimi, müşterilerle sağlam ilişkiler kurarak dönütleri artırmayı ve farklılık oluşturan bir üstünlük sağlayan stratejiler geliştirmeyi hedefleyen bütün yönetsel süreçleri kapsar (Vural, 2013). Birçok bağlamda pazarlama ve pazarlama iletişimi kavramları arasındaki çizgi muğlaklaşsa da, pazarlama iletişimi bir kurum ve hedef kitleleri arasında pazarlama performansı üzerinde etkisi olan bütün etkileşimler şeklinde tanımlanabilir (Pickton and Broderick, 2005). Pazarlama iletişimi devasa bir çeşitlilikte yöntemlerle uygulanabilir, fakat pazarlama iletişiminin ana türleri reklamcılık, satış tutundurma, halkla ilişkiler ve tanıtım, doğrudan pazarlama, interaktif pazarlama ve kişisel satıştır (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

Bu farklı pazarlama iletişimi türleri farklı medyalardan gerçekleştirilmektedir: televizyon, gazeteler, dergiler, açık hava, internet, vb. Bu medyalardan bazıları yüzyılı aşkın süredir pazarlama iletişiminin merkezindeyken diğerleri daha yakın bir geçmişte oluşmuştur ve her geçen gün yeni formlar ortaya çıkmaktadır; dolayısıyla bu değişimlerden dolayı pazarlama iletişiminin de bağlamı ve metodolojileri değişmektedir. Örneklendirmek gerekirse, elli yıl önce sadece birkaç televizyon kanalıyla ulaşılabilen bir medya yayın alanı bu gün en az yüz tane televizyon kanalıyla elde edilebilmektedir. Bunun aksine, ağızdan ağıza reklamcılığın etkisini artırmak sosyal medya aracılığıyla çok daha kolay hale gelmiştir; bir mesaj dünyanın diğer ucuna, hayal edilemeyecek bir nüfusa saatler içinde ulaşabilmektedir. Aynı farklılaşma pazar yapısında da meydana gelmiştir. Birçok yeni sektör ortaya çıkmış, birçoğu kaybolmuş, birçok pazarlama politikası etkinliğini yitirmiş, birçok yeni pazarlama politikası etkin hale gelmiştir. Buna mukabil, pazarlama kalıplarının artık çok daha girift planlama süreçlerine ve farklı özellikleri entegre edebilmeye muhtaç olduğu artık kesinleşmiştir.

Son zamanlarda yapılan bu alana ait arařtırmalar, marka sadakatının yeni müşteriler çekmekten daha kıymetli bir başarı olduğunu göstermiştir. Hem deęişen ekonomik-sosyal paradigmalardan, hem de davranıřsal ve tutumsal sadakati elde etme kaygısından dolayı pazarlama iletiřiminin hem arařtırmacıları hem de uygulayıcıları daha kapsamlı pazarlama iletiřimi metodolojileri geliřtirmeye çabalamaktadır. Bu arařtırmada, bunlardan iki tanesine dikkat çekilmektedir: pazarlama karması ve bütünleřik pazarlama iletiřimi.

Pazarlama karması, birçok akademisyen tarafından tadil edilmiř ya da geniřletilmiř olan pazarlamanın 4P formülünü içerir. Bunların arasında 4P en sık başvurulandır ve pazarlamanın ürün (product), fiyat (price), mekan (place) ve tutundurma ya da tanıtım (promotion) süreçlerini temsil eder. İkinci metodoloji olarak bahsedilen bütünleřik pazarlama iletiřimi ise adım adım ne yapılması gerektiğini öngörerek daha buyurgan bir yol izler. Bunun temeli Shramm (1948) tarafından öne sürülen kaynak, mesaj, medya ve alıcıdan oluřan meřhur iletiřim sürecine dayanır. Bununla birlikte, bütünleřik pazarlama iletiřimi bu süreci zenginleřtirmek için sürece daha zorlu bir pazarlama ortamında bulunan pazarlamacıların taleplerini karřılamak amacıyla birkaç yeni madde katmaktadır.

Bir firma ve hedef kitle arasındaki iletiřim tek yönlü, iki yönlü asimetric ya da iki yönlü simetric olabilir (Grunig ve Hunt, 1984). Tek yönlü iletiřim hedef kitleden dönüt almadan yapılan iletiřime tekabül eder. İki yönlü asimetric iletiřim benzer bir formdur fakat az bir dönüt içerir. Bu üçü arasından en arzu edileni olan iki yönlü simetric iletiřim, kaynak ve hedef kitle arasındaki eř zamanlı iletiřimi kapsamaktadır. Stratejik yönetim alanı bu olguların uygulanabilirlikle ilintili yönleriyle ilgilense de, bu konuya dair etik tartıřmalar da mevcuttur. Kimileri, stratejik iletiřimde iki yönlü iletiřimin mümkün olmadığını ifade etmektedir, çünkü bu süreçler her zaman tek taraf tarafından üretilir, yönetilir ve yapılandırılır; üstelik alıcının tepkileri yalnızca kaynak tarafından arzulan bir nihai hedef açısından deęerlidir.

Bu çerçevlendirmelerle Porter'ınkinin farkı, Porter'ın çerçevesinin daha ziyade tanımlayıcı bir doęası olmasıdır. Porter (1980, 1985) eęer pazar liderlięi arzuluyorsa her firmanın bir jenerik strateji seçmesi gerektiğini ifade eder. Pazar liderlięi yalnızca üç şekilde tezahür edebilir: bir farklılařan, fiyat lideri, ya da

odaklanıcı olarak. Genel hatlarıyla, farklılaşanlar rekabetçi avantajı yüksek fiyatlar ve yüksek fiyat talep edecek ölçüde üstün olanaklar sunarak yapar. Diğer taraftan, fiyat liderleri makul kalitede ürünü daha düşük fiyatlarla sunar. Buradaki esas nokta doğru fiyatlandırmayı yapabilmektir zira yüksek fiyatlar müşteri kaybı anlamına gelebilirken düşük fiyatlar da kazanç ya da prestij kaybı anlamına gelebilir. Son jenerik strateji ise odaklanıcılıktır. Odaklanıcılar, diğer firmaların lokasyon, uzmanlık, ya da pazar büyüklüğü sebebiyle hedef alamadığı pazarları hedef alarak liderlik arayan firmalardır. Porter aynı zamanda odaklanıcıların rekabetçi kalabilmek, ya da en azından hayatta kalabilmek için belirli bir farklılık oluşturmaları gerektiğini iddia eder.

Eğitim kurumlarındaki pazar odaklılık geçtiğimiz on yılda çokça araştırmanın odak noktası haline gelmiştir. Salt kazanç sağlama amacı, eğitimin özelleşmiş yapısı, küreselleşen dünya, ya da eğitimin devletlerarası rekabette bir araç haline gelmesi bu alana yönelik artan ilginin çokça sebebinden birkaçıdır. Eğitimin bir pazar olarak ülke refahına büyük katkılarda bulunduğu İngiltere gibi ülkeler diğer ülkelere de örnek teşkil etmiştir. Bunların dışında, eğitimde bir başka yatırım dönüşü, ülkelere gelişen dünyada ekonomik ve kültürel olarak yetkin olabilmeleri için çokça ihtiyaç duyulan iş gücünü ve bilgi birikimini kazandırmasıdır.

Bu rekabetçi ekonomik dünya düzeninde, yükseköğretim kurumları da rekabetçi kalmalıdır, çünkü onlardan geniş bir müfredat, akademik üstünlük, iş olanakları ve kampüs imkânları sunmak gibi birçok şey beklenmektedir. Bu sebeple, yükseköğretimin pazarlama iletişimi stratejileri de ana kaygılardan biri haline gelmiştir.

Doğası gereği, üniversite eğitimi hizmet sektörünün bir etkinlik alanı olarak görülür, çünkü eğitim hizmetleri elle tutulamayan, heterojen, değişken, kaybolan ve o hizmeti sunan personelden ayrılmazdır (Walker and Hayes, 1996), tıpkı yükseköğretimde olduğu gibi. Bununla birlikte, daha yakından incelendiğinde, yükseköğretimde pazarlama iletişimi uygulamaları çok az başka pazarın sahip olduğu parametrelere bağlı olduğu görülmektedir. Üniversite eğitiminin bir pazar olarak farklılığı, çok az diğer ürün tercihinin kişinin hayatında böylesi bir etkiye sahip olmasında yatmaktadır. Bu aynı zamanda bu tercihin genellikle hayatta bir kez yapılan ve karar verme mekanizmaları bütüncül, duygusal bazlı faktörlere bağlı genç

kişiler tarafından yapılan bir tercih olmasındandır. Sürecin planlayıcılarına yükseköğretimin sunduğu son ve belki de en önemli zorluk ise yükseköğretim süreçlerinin çıktısının ne olduğu konusunda henüz bir mutabakat mevcut değildir. Açıklamak gerekirse, bir operasyonun başarısı açısından iletişimsel faaliyetlerin ölçümlenebilirliği çok önemlidir. Buna mukabil, sanki daha önce var olmamışlar ve bütün meziyetlerini aldıkları üniversite eğitime borçlularmış gibi yükseköğretimin çıktısının öğrenciler olduğu iddia edilmiştir. Aynı zamanda yükseköğretimin çıktısının müfredat, verilen eğitim ve araştırma olduğu da iddia edilmiştir (Maringe, 2005); fakat, Canterbury (2000) yükseköğretime bir fırsatlar bütünü olarak bakılması gerektiğini, ve yükseköğretimin çıktılarıyla ilgili araştırmaların merkezine fırsatların koyulması gerektiğini söylemektedir.

Bunların ışığında, pazarlama iletişimi dizaynının farklı ve zorlayıcı karakteri aynı zamanda yükseköğretim bağlamını pazarlama güdümlü bir alana adapte ederken bir pazarlama stratejisi tasarılma sürecini etkileyen bütün parametrelerin indirgenmesini de gerektirir. Bu yüzden, yükseköğretimin pazar hedefli olduğu ve bir eğitim kurumu olsun veya olmasın her kar amacı güden kurumun net hatlara sahip, basitleştirilmiş pazarlama iletişimi politikalarına ihtiyacı olduğu varsayılmalıdır. Dolayısıyla bu kurumlar pazar şartlarını, kural ve düzenlemelerini, belirli pazar lokasyonlarındaki rekabeti yorumlamalı ve kendilerine uygun olan pazarlama iletişimi stratejileri edinmelidir. Yükseköğretim kurumlarındaki pazar hedefleyici yapının kapsamına dair bir anlayış, yönetim alanını zenginleştirirken akademi için de kıymetli argümanlar sunacaktır.

Bu bahsi geçen kaygılar bu çalışmanın ardındaki itici gücü teşkil etmektedir. Yeni yükselen bir pazar olarak özel yükseköğretim, net politikalara ve diğer iş sahalarında pratikliği ispatlanmış pazarlama iletişimi çerçevelerine ihtiyaç duymaktadır ve Porter'ın jenerik stratejileri özel yükseköğretimin politika edinme süreçlerindeki açmaza basit ama kapsamlı bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Özellikle de daha otuz yıl öncesine kadar özel yükseköğretim kurumlarının var olmadığı Türkiye'de, böyle bir çerçeve büyük hizmetler sunabilir. Türkiye'de bir pazarlama iletişimi aracı olarak jenerik stratejiler bu geçiş sürecini kolaylaştırabilir ve daha çok araştırmaya kapı açabilir. Kısacası, Türk özel yükseköğretiminin kendine has şartlarını Porter'ın jenerik stratejileri penceresinden incelemek önem arz etmektedir.

Pazarlama iletişiminin Porteryen yaklaşımına dair farklı görüşler mevcuttur. Birçok araştırma pazarlama iletişiminin jenerik stratejilerine karşıt sonuçlar vermekte, onların bütün pazarlama sahalarını kapsamak için fazlaca indirgeyici olduğunu, ya da belirsizliğin tek bir jenerik stratejiyi takip etmeyi çok daha zorlaştırdığı geçiş ekonomilerinde yetersiz kalacağını iddia etmektedir. Diğerleriyse bu yaklaşımı yeni kurulmakta olan bir firmanın bir fiyat lideri ya da farklılaşan olmaya çalışmasının sonu olacağını belirterek eleştirmektedir. Üstelik bazı araştırmalar melez stratejilerin birçok başarılı işletme için çok daha uygulanabilir olduğunu ispatlayan örnekler göstermektedir. Bütün bu söylenenlere rağmen, Porteryen bakış açısının buyurgan tarafı bir firmanın başarısı için fonksiyonel olmaktan aciz kalsa bile, onun kullanılabilirliği aynı zamanda tanımlayıcı bir çerçeve olarak pratikliğinde yatar; ki bu pratiklik sayesinde kurumlar ve akademisyenler bütün diğer çerçevelere nazaran daha çok örnekleme aşına olabilmektedirler.

Porteryen bakış açısını yükseköğretimde incelemek gerekirse, iki ön koşul bulunmaktadır. İlk olarak, yükseköğretim kurumlarının farklılaşanlar, fiyat liderleri ve odaklanıcılar olarak kategorize edilmesini sağlayacak parametreler belirlenmelidir. Özel yükseköğretime adapte edildiğinde, farklılaşanlar için parametreler prestij, yüksek öğretim ücretleri, akademik başarı ve fiziksel üstünlüklerdir. Bir fiyat lideri için ise bunlar daha düşük öğretim ücretleri ve daha düşük olmakla birlikte kabul edilebilir düzeyde olmak kaydıyla farklılaşanların sahip olduğu özelliklerin aynılarıdır. Odaklanıcılar için bu parametreler değişmektedir, zira daha önce belirtildiği üzere odaklanıcılar farklı özellikleri hedef alarak rekabetçi farklılık kazanabilirler. Bu özellikler belirli bölümlerde uzmanlaşma veyahut özel bir lokasyona odaklanma olabilir.

İkinci ön koşul, kitleselleşme, özelleşme ve rekabetçileşme şeklinde özetlenebilecek olan ve birbirinin oluşumuna sebebiyet veren, yükseköğretimde son zamanlarda oluşan eğilimlere daha yakından bakmak olacaktır. 90'lardan itibaren günümüze kadar gelen zaman diliminde yükseköğretim yalnızca ayrıcalıklı elit bir kesime hizmet veren bir kurum olmaktan çıkmış, artık her bireyin hakkı olan bir kamu hizmetine dönüşmüştür. Bu şu anda her üç kişiden birinin bir üniversite mezuniyetine sahip olduğu göz önünde bulundurulduğunda daha bariz bir şekilde görülecektir; ki bu düzey Trow (1974) tarafında öne sürülen yüzde 15'lik elit-kitle ayrımından çok daha yukarıda bir rakamdır. Bu tüm dünyadaki özelleşme eğilimini

direkt olarak etkileyen bir faktördür. Diğer birçok ülke gibi, Türkiye de bu özelleşme sürecini hızlandırmıştır. Şu anda, yükseköğretim kurumlarının tamamının yüzde 33,3'ü özel üniversitelerden oluşmaktadır. Bu özelleşme ve kitleleşmenin en bariz çıktılarında birisi rekabettir. Artık özel üniversiteler hem diğer özel üniversitelere, kâr kaygısı taşımayan devlet üniversitelerine karşı rekabetçi kalmak zorundadır.

Türk özel yükseköğretim kurumlarında bir jenerik strateji edinmenin yapısal zorluğunun incelendiği bu araştırmada, daha önce bahsi geçen bağlamda üç özel üniversite seçilmiştir: Bilkent Üniversitesi, Koç Üniversitesi ve Sabancı Üniversitesi. Bu üniversiteler uluslararası derecelendirmelerde (QS Ranking System, 2018) ve öğrenci kabul puanları açısından (urapcenter.org, 2017) yüksek bir başarı sergiledikleri için seçilmiştir. Bu üniversitelerin, üniversite öğrenci adaylarının üniversite seçme dönemi boyunca yaptıkları sosyal medya paylaşımlarını inceleyen nitel bir içerik analizi yürütülmüştür. Bundaki amaç Porter'ın çerçevesinin Türkiye'deki özel üniversitelerin pazarlama iletişimi aktiviteleri üzerinde ne kadar etkili olduğunu gözlemlemektir. Yapılan araştırmada şu sorulara cevap aranmıştır: 1) Üniversitelerin sosyal medya paylaşımları mesaj içerikleri açısından Porter'ın jenerik stratejilerinden hangisine dahil olmaktadır? 2) Üniversitelerin sosyal medyada paylaştıkları mesajların paylaşıldıkları sosyal medya ortamı, mesaj içerikleri ve dahil oldukları jenerik strateji bakımından nasıl bir dağılım göstermektedir?

Üniversitelerin Porter'ın çerçevesindeki üç stratejinin her birini kullanmamakta olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. En yaygın olarak hedeflenenin, yüksek akademik fırsatları ve kampüs olanaklarını öne çıkaran farklılaşan mesajlar aktarmak olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bunun yanında, bazı mesajlar aynı zamanda hem farklılaşan hem de odaklanıcı olarak yorumlanabilmiştir çünkü birçok mesaj belirli departmanlarda uzmanlığı vurgulamıştır. Fakat fiyat lider stratejisi, üniversitelerin paylaşımlarında hemen hemen hiç yer bulamamıştır. Bu sonuçlar göstermiştir ki, Türkiye'de yükseköğretim pazarlama iletişimi faaliyetleri çoğunlukla farklılaşan ve odaklanıcı stratejilere sahiptir. Fiyat liderlerinin prestij/fiyat mekanizmalarının insanların zihinlerinde direk bir karşılığının olmamasından dolayı çok belirgin hatlarla sınırlarının belirlenememesi bunun sebeplerinden biri olabilir, özellikle de elle tutulamayan, ama aynı zamanda kişilerin hayatında bu kadar geniş yer tutan böylesi farklı bir hizmet için.

Bütün bunlarla beraber, gelişen ama değişken ekonomisi, sürekli değişen eğitim kanun ve yönetmelikleri ve yeni açılan üniversiteleriyle – Mayıs 20 yeni üniversite açıldı – (NTV Haber Sitesi, Mayıs, 2018), yükseköğretim hizmetlerini burada sunan kurumlar için Türkiye her zaman zorlu ama kazanç imkânları sunan bir ülke olarak kalacaktır. Bu araştırma, bahsedilen yukarıdaki tüm sebeplerden dolayı zorlayıcı olan bir pazarda hayatta kalmaya çalışmak için çaba gösterenlere durdukları pozisyonu ve hangi yöne ilerlemeleri gerektiğini anlamada yardımcı olacak ve aynı zamanda Türk yükseköğretim sistemine daha yüksek bir standartlar seti getirmeyi hedefleyenlere yardımcı olacaktır.



INTRODUCTION

A firm's capacity of acquiring and sustaining competitive lead in their market is vital to its survival and improvement, particularly in markets where uncertainty exists. A deep insight into which holistic and focused strategies are to be put into practice in a firm's inner and outer communication is a direct determiner of how well they will accomplish a cherished position and stay there. In a world where competition is an ever-growing reality, whether it be private or state funded, higher education institutions too, try to achieve a better position to grow, and to stay in the market.

The global tendency of education from a conventional communal service towards a profit-oriented sector has brought it into the center of a lot of research, firstly because now educational institutions also have a necessity to commit to a plan in their programmes, and secondly because strategic planning wants an extensive comprehension of the inner and the outer elements of an institution. The inner factors that are most influential are the ones concerning how to remain intact in a competitive world, administrative methods, personnel, and corporate communication. The most obvious outer factors can be seen as rules, regulations, customer demand, and the international and domestic competition.

With its growing economy, and privatization and massification of its educational policies, Turkey has an ever-pushing race for a better market positioning. The higher education institutions in Turkey now face elevated demands from the government, with higher education becoming a powerhouse for the production of value, both economically and culturally. Doing this, state universities try to improve their research and campus facilities, academic staff and student profile, while private universities need to do all these with even more know-how, as they have a primary concern that state universities need not struggle for: profit.

To accomplish this, as other profit-oriented market-driven organizations, private universities need to adopt marketing strategies that have proven practical in other industries, especially service industry. One such classification of generic strategies has been provided by Porter with a simplistic and comprehensive nature, which basically classifies businesses as differentiators, cost leaders and focusers and regards these strategies as a must-have of every firm that intends to have a clear-cut

marketing policy for its survival. According to Porter, all marketing communication activities that an organization renders must remain within the realm of one such strategy, or they are bound to perish.

This study seeks to understand the marketing communications nature of private higher education institutions in Turkey within the context of Porter's generic strategies. To do this, firstly, the extents and nature of marketing communications as a separate field in the literature will be examined in detail. The main types of marketing communications, namely advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing and personal selling will be defined and as in any communicative activity, the media and target audiences of these processes will be scrutinized. Also, the most commonly-resorted techniques for their effectiveness will be referred to in the first section of the study.

As suggested before, the heated competition and the increase in the number of stakeholders in an organization in the contemporary market made some of the previous marketing techniques obsolete, thus requiring more integrated techniques that reckons with as many participants as possible. The first section of the literature will also cover two such marketing communications frameworks: marketing mix and integrated marketing communications, whose main edge lies in the fact that they incorporate several techniques in one, and doing so, they also formulate the marketing process, making them easier to follow.

The marketing mix is concerned with the 4Ps of marketing, namely, product, price, place and promotion. Although the framework has been re-formulated by many scholars according to needs, context, or the nature of the marketing communications processes, these four Ps will be examined. The other framework, integrated marketing communications is of a more prescriptive fashion, which includes elements related to convenience such as time, feedback, or similar small tactical units.

Higher education bears the basic characteristics of service industry, which are in principle, offering an intangible product and having people as the end result of the interaction between the buyer and the provider. However, it also bears unique characteristics that make it harder to examine. For instance, no other product takes up as much time of an individual's life as college education, few other product decisions

have a greater impact on one's life, and concepts like the customer, end result, or feedback cannot be defined as clearly as those of other markets. With this being the case, while handling tangible and intangible products, the study will also cover the differences between them, and the challengingly unique nature of the marketing communications of private higher education, which separates it from other service markets.

The second section of the literature will look into Porter's framework in detail, explaining each generic strategy, namely, differentiators, cost leaders and focusers. Differentiators refer to firms that aim high profitability through products that revolutionize the concepts related to the product, or the ones that stand out amongst others in the market in other ways, thus demanding higher prices. On the other hand, cost leaders aim for high profitability with products that are acceptable in terms of quality, yet come with a lower price. Lastly, focusers' profit strategy concerns targeting a specific market niche where mass producers would not or cannot dare to venture. However, companies which fail to follow one strategy or another also exist, which are addressed as those stuck in the middle.

As will be discussed thoroughly in the same section, there have been plenty of research that contradict or support Porterian view on marketing, some criticizing that it is too simplistic to cover all areas of business, or that it falls short in developing economies where an unpredictable business environment makes it harder to stick to one method. Others criticize it saying that endeavoring to become a cost leader or a differentiator for a new business might mean its bankruptcy. Furthermore, some research puts forward instances where hybrid strategies proved much more convenient for many successful firms. All these being said, even if the prescriptive aspect of the Porterian view fails to suffice for the success of a company, its applicability also lies in its descriptive nature via which organizations and academicians may become better acquainted with more cases than any other framework.

Section two will also cover Porter's view applied to private higher education institutions. As intimated earlier, one superior aspect of the generic strategies is that it applies to a large variety of businesses. Higher education institutions, being relatively new to the fierce competition without concerning themselves with such avocations besides academic work since their emergence, are in dire need for such

strategies, so the convergence of the two – higher education and marketing – becomes inevitable. In this respect, both Porter’s generic strategies and market-driven policies will be discussed within the light of higher education perspective.

The aforementioned privatization also brings about such inclinations as massification and competition to the private higher education sector. All these recent tendencies will also be covered for the meaningful interpretation of the research. Lastly, for the contextual relevance, the higher education structure in Turkey will be given in a general outline. The short history, the rules and legislations surrounding it, the government organs controlling it, their missions and visions will be the primary topic of discussion in this section.

The third and final section will cover the research itself, whose objective is to measure to what extent private universities in Turkey pursue Porter’s generic strategies and how much effect it has in their marketing communications activities. Three private universities holding top positions in Turkey in terms of international rankings and student acceptance scores were selected to construe the implications of Porterian framework in determining how successful a higher education institution follows marketing communications endeavors. Two of these universities, Koç University and Sabancı University are located in İstanbul and Bilkent University is located in Ankara. To assess these variables, the social media activities of these universities during the university selection period of university student candidates will be presented. All the cumulative data will be examined with a content analysis and the results will be assessed in detail with all their implications concerning Turkish higher education in general.

1. FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Strategic communication is an umbrella term that deals with all planned communicative activities, which is why it covers a very wide range of sub-fields: political communication, public relations, advertising, corporate communication and diplomacy. Besides planning, the second common feature of all strategic communication activities is that they must also have an eventual purpose. The end-goal of strategic communication is to produce a desired perception, attitude and support for a product, idea, or a whole organization or even a country (Çınarlı, 2009). Marketing communications too, requiring elaborate planning and bearing in nature the goal of lasting profitability for shareholders is a strategic communication process.

Before going deeper in defining marketing communications, its sub-units need explaining: market and marketing. Brown (2011) defines market as a medium of coordination where demanders meet suppliers and where these two consolidate on a price standardization. In this sense, it refers to the group of consumers or companies who are interest groups, and have the means to buy the product. In an even simpler context, it is the place where buyers and sellers meet to trade; so it can cover a range of different environs varying from a marketplace set in a town center, a business sector, or even to a website where business transactions occur.

American Marketing Association (AMA) defines marketing as *“the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”* (www.ama.org, 2017) the main aim of which is to accomplish customer interest and satisfaction. The Chartered Institute of Marketing (2015) defines it as *“the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably”*. Both definitions suggest that marketing can be regarded as a corporate policy whose intention is to satisfy the customers or all stakeholders, yet to some scholars; it should serve to elevate shareholder value, i.e. maximize profitability for business owners. Within this framework of shareholder centered approach, marketing is *“the management process that seeks to maximize returns to shareholders by developing relationships with valued customers and creating a competitive advantage”* (Paliwoda and Ryans, 2008).

Marketing is a management process whose intention is to maximize the profits of stakeholders by establishing a trust-based relationship with high-value clients, and developing strategies that will generate a differentiating superiority (Vural, 2013). According to Vural (2013), two major determinants affect the nature of how firms conduct their communication activities. The first is the way how global marketing tendencies work towards a more divided market, where players are becoming more and more focused on a specific segment, and specializing in them is paramount. The second factor affecting how firms operate in their communication activities is that companies are now becoming more informed about the needs of their clientele due to the developing technology and easier communication. Companies can easily equip themselves with all forms of data about potential clientele. Today, the track of every user activity is being recorded, their behavior is researched, and their tastes and likes are being scrutinized every day. The impetus pushing the market is the flow of information. The way customers perceive a service or a specific good depends entirely on the amount and quality of the information that they have a form of interaction with. For this reason, the success of an organization is directly correlated with how effectively they conduct their marketing communications activities (Pickton and Broderick, 2005).

As for marketing communications or marketing promotions, according to Pickton and Broderick (2005, p.4) it is “*all the promotional elements of the marketing mix which involve the communications between an organization and its target audiences on all matters that affect marketing performance*”. These processes have many participants, not just a firm and its customers; but a firm and its target audience who are not just customers, but all the stakeholders. Stakeholders are all the parties that affect or be affected by all the activities of a corporation. They vary from shareholders, employers, employees to the government, media, policy makers, etc... Marketing communications is carried out by agents inside and outside the organization. Target audience can be described as all parties who have a direct or indirect interest in the business outcome of a given organization. As a result, the most important task in this process of communication is to consider every party that is affected by the results.

Kotler & Armstrong (2006) present another definition for marketing, breaking it down to its core ingredients, stating that marketing is managing profitable

customer relationships and consists of two basic purposes: first one being to gain new customers through creating an expectation for a higher service, and the second to maintain and increase the number of those customers by keeping them content with the provided service. In accordance, marketing communications cannot be viewed merely as the combination of sales and advertisements, but it requires the intertwined handling of many activities as a sum. In this sense, marketing communications should not be regarded as persuading people to buy products, but it should be regarded as living up to customer expectations. When the seller realizes the expectations and provides the customer with higher value, economy, delivery, and promotion, the process of selling becomes much less challenging. As the above definition suggests, sales and advertisements are just subcategories of the ‘marketing mix’ – a combination of marketing strategies in which firms form value for clients and receive value from them by achieving sound customer relationships.

1.1. Marketing Mix

Customer loyalty has become the main goal of many companies, particularly because gaining new customers is an expensive policy that companies all around the world spend billions on every year. As a result, most marketing strategies now focus on preserving the clientele at hand. It is also noteworthy that loyalty will contribute to the customers’ engagement in the brand, their resistance against temptations to divert to other brands, along with more patience towards mistakes made by the brand (Thaichon & Quach, 2015). A company’s durable success is not ensured by new customers, but can only be safe when loyalty is achieved.

Thaichon, Lobo, and Mitsis (2014) assert that customer loyalty is a behavioral phenomenon, meaning the continual purchase and usage of the product. Yet in another perspective, it is not about behavior but about attitude (Day, 1969; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1997; Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978; Bagozzi, 1981; Mellens, Dekimpe, and Steenkamp, 1996). Repetitive behavior by itself means an impermanent customer, but their inclinations, engagement, or perspective have a much greater importance. Attitudinally loyal customers are thus easier to serve in terms of cost, being less responsive to higher prices, and are more inclined to suggest the brand to others (Thaichon and Quach, 2015). According to a study by Han, Lu, and Leung (2012) which probes into the mobile phone service industry in China, for the betterment of company performance, customer acquisition and customer retention are of equal

significance. The study submits empirical data supporting this theory, and shows that a 2 percent increase in customer retention rate has the same returns as a 10 percent decrease in the cost of customer acquisition.

Keller (2009) states that there are four different levels of customer loyalty, one or several of which should transpire between a company and its customers, and none of which is inherently superior over another:

- 1- *Behavioral loyalty*: Customers' buying the product in a recurrent way, or the market share of a certain product compared to its counterparts; in other words, it is about how often and how much a product or service is purchased.
- 2- *Attitudinal attachment*: Customers' perceiving the product as exclusive in some characteristics.
- 3- *Sense of community*: Customers' having a sense of belonging in the social group represented by the brand.
- 4- *Active engagement*: Customers' willingness to dedicate their time, money, or other assets to the brand.

Whichever type of loyalty a firm might covet, all these are obvious indicators that forming a strong brand image i.e. the personality and perception of a brand in customers' mind, is paramount to marketing strategies, and to form such an image depends on some factors, which in sum are called the marketing mix. These phenomena are categorized as the 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) of marketing.

The 4Ps have been in the marketing terminology since 1940s, first known mention being by a marketing professor Prof. James Culliton. According to Culliton (1948), marketers were 'mixers of ingredients', and McCarthy (1960) established the practiced methods for the 4Ps. McCarthy's 4Ps, which have been adapted into many marketing frameworks, can be broken down as follows (Banting and Ross, 1973):

1.1.1. Product

A product is an item that is built or manufactured to meet the needs of a targeted group of people, which includes both tangible and intangible products offered by a company, which are to satisfy customer demands. This definition shows that the first aspect of a product should be about people's needs, so companies must make sure that what they offer is in demand. Hence, during the process of procuring

a product or service, the marketers of the product have to conduct a thorough examination of the life cycle of their product. By life cycle, it is meant that a product has an expansion phase, a maturity phase, and lastly the sales downtrend phase, which is marketers' cue to initiate the next reinvention procedure to stay competitive in their market.

Marketing mix has multiple facets and the first would be to create the right product mix. The need to invent a nouvelle product does not merely generate from a downtrend, it may also be indispensable for firms to diversify their offerings or to upgrade the depth of selections to notch up the optimal product mix for their line of production. In summary, the product aspect of the marketing mix for marketers is about what can be done to offer a more desirable product to a certain group of people than the competition (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2015).

Reaching the right product line includes such processes as product design, branding, packaging, labeling and sizing. These processes each serve different concerns and result from varied screening procedures. In the above section, it is intimated that the top priority of the production line is concerned with what the customer expects from the product or service, by which it is meant how and where the client is going to use it. This concern directly refers to what attributes should the product have to meet customer expectations, and after considering this, what attributes the company has missed out to fully serve the clientele. Another detail to cover is whether they have added features that are completely redundant for the client, which must be seen just as important as diversifying (Kotler and Keller, 2003).

The product aspect of the marketing mix also involves branding. A clear, well-defined brand name communicates the purposes of a product and a brand's entire identity – its personality, recognition and differentiation rest with its name. The distinguishing features of the brand accounts for its personality, whose existence imparts utility to the customer that is greater than the basic aspects of the product. Consequently, the main distinction between a product and a brand lies in their function. While a product's function is to fulfill a need, brands form an added value, as a result, the consumer demands more than what the product originally offers (Christopher, 1996). For instance, while a car is simply a means of fulfilling the

transportation needs of people, the brand of a car might induce a feeling of comfort or prestige.

1.1.2. Price

Price is about the decision-making processes concerning list prices, discount prices, special offer prices, and payment terms. Some scholars argue that pricing depends on both fiduciary and physical-psychological cost of products, such as time, expense, effort, logistics, or even what sacrifices customers are going to make to obtain the product (Blythe, 2009). Pricing policies of marketing also need to involve customer-perceived value, in other words, how much they are willing to pay, or how much of their time and effort they would sacrifice. The communication activities concerning price must be designed according to these as well, not by simple calculations of how much it costs to the firm in basic financial terms.

Another vital importance of pricing has to do with the profit and survival of the firm. Regulating the price of the product has a major influence on the overall marketing strategy as well as greatly affecting the sales and demand of the product. Especially during the emergence of a business, it plays an effective role because companies would desire a high enough price to survive, at the same time a low enough price to appeal to customers, and yet in some cases high enough to imply a certain quality. Also, it is harder to determine prices according to what stage of business it adheres to, for instance, it is harder for a newly founded company which has not made a name for itself yet to demand high prices. That is why for the same product, some different pricing policies exist: a) market penetration pricing, which is the price determined while entering the market to attract customers, b) market skimming pricing, which is also consorted while entering the market, but a higher price as the nouvelle product can be considered unprecedented, and c) neutral pricing, which is usually determined by the market in accordance with the competitors' pricing policies. In summary, it is crucial to ask how much the product costs, how much the product's perceived value is, whether a price decrease would affect your business, and whether your price can keep up with the competitors' pricing (Pickton and Broderick, 2005).

1.1.3. Place

Placing and distributing the product covers a major concern for all companies. Place can be explained as the direct or indirect channels to market, geographical distribution, territorial coverage, retail outlet, market location, catalogues, inventory, logistics and order fulfilment. It encompasses both customer access to the product with ease and convenience, and company strategies to reach the customers, that is, a firm must be accessible by potential clientele, and the target clientele must be accessible by the firm. The reciprocal nature of logistics can be considered the gist of place related concerns of every firm (Blythe, 2009).

The paramount to placement strategies is a thorough understanding of the target audience, and designing the distribution channels with a direct contact with customers. The most commonly implemented distribution genres are:

- *Intensive distribution*, through which a company seeks to position its services in a wide variety of places. In this way, the customer encounters the product in as many places as possible. Everyday goods such as soft drinks, pasta, or cigarettes are usually presented with intensive distribution.
- *Exclusive distribution*, where the producer or supplier enter a mutual agreement with a specific distributor to merchandise a special product. For instance, many smart phone producers have such agreements with telecommunication companies to sell their products along with what they already offer.
- *Selective distribution*, which can be located between intensive and exclusive distribution, and in which a limited number of retailers manage a designated geographical area. This type of distribution is deemed more befitting to the kind of products categorized as high-end or designer goods.
- *Franchising*, a type of arrangement between two parties, namely the franchiser and the franchisee, which encompasses the right to utilize a company's trademark, trade name, its business framework and regulations in manufacturing and marketing its products. The franchisee pays a one-time franchise fee and/or a percentage for royalties, thus in return, acquiring instant brand recognition, products that have proven adequate, standardized decorum, business techniques that have also proven adequate, staff training, and maintained support. The return of this process for the franchiser are

accelerated business enlargement and profits with less capital investment (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2015).

The other decision-making processes concerning placement strategies involve where clients look for the product or service in question, how to access various distribution channels, how to make the strategy more time and cost efficient, whether the company will take part in trade fairs and whether it will have an online distribution involvement.

1.1.4. Promotion

Promotion is often used interchangeably with marketing communications or marketing promotions, however, in a marketing mix perspective, it must be regarded as a main subcategory of marketing communications, which targets an increase in demand, hence the sales of a product (Blythe, 2009). It is perhaps the most comprehensive element in the marketing mix involving concepts such as advertising, public relations and sales promotion. Promotions is the kind of communication that marketers make use of to inform, convince, or remind the customers to affect their opinion or receive a desired response (Pickton and Broderick, 2005).

No matter how successfully developed, priced or distributed, few products or services are able to survive in the market without effective promotional actions. The overall function of promotion strategies is forming a perspective in the target audience that indicates a differentiating advantage imparted by the goods or services (Lamb, Hair and McDaniel, 1996). The achievement of this relies on the perceptive combination of the constituents of all the promotional elements. Within this scope, all the promotional operations must be regarded as the use of elements that are not interrelated as part of a bigger marketing theme to increase contact between customers and a company by providing their active participation in company products and activities.

All in all, marketing communications is a set of activities intertwined with each other, and the most commonly referred set of marketing communications framework is the marketing mix. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is yet another phenomenon through which a firm combines and coordinates its multiple means of communications to send a consistent message to the target audience about itself and its products and services.

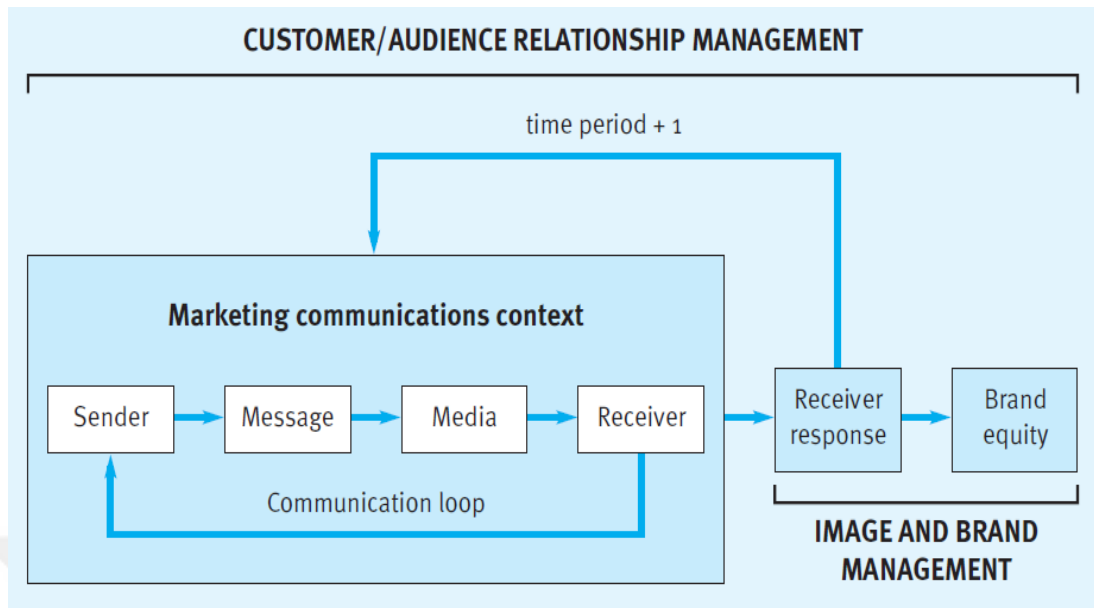
1.2.Integrated Marketing Communications

According to some researchers (Kotler, 2003; Pickton and Broderick, 2005), it means designing the whole marketing process through the perspective of customers. To go deeper in understanding the concept of integrated marketing communications, one must address Shramm (1948)'s well renowned four key components which are the basis of the whole IMC model: sender (the source of message, or those who design the message in the name of the source, such as advertisers, spokespeople, etc...), message (the original piece of information that is intended to be communicated), media (the channels that are used to communicate the message and can take many forms), and receiver.

Based on this simple process, which has been adopted and adapted in many different contexts of communicative needs, IMC combines these four parties with new concepts. Figure 1 shows these items and the manner of how each serve as the outcome of another. The first additional item is marketing communications context, which can be described as the micro, or macro background where all communicative activities take place. The second item, communications loop, characterizes the two-way disposition of communication and deals with the matters of encoding, decoding, and noise, by which it is meant all the communicative challenges that interfere with smooth communication. The communication loop can inherently be one-way, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric communication (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

One-way communication is the one where there are no receiver responses, hence no dialogue. Advertising or other marketing activities through traditional media are common examples of this and the mere form of feedback is via research. Two-way asymmetric communication encompasses some form of feedback as well, yet without simultaneous dialogue, which also makes it insufficient in terms of receivers' ability to reciprocate whatever message they are being exposed to, hence without smooth interaction.

Figure 1: Integrated Marketing Communications



Source: Broderick, A. and Pickton, D. (2005). Integrated marketing communications. Pearson Education UK. p.43 Retrieval Date 14 January 2018

When it comes to two-way symmetrical communication, there are two main conflicting perspectives towards it. Ethically speaking, some authors (e.g. Çınarlı, 2009; Banerjee, 2008) argue that there is no two-way symmetric communication in any PR activities. The reason for this is that all the aforementioned processes are started, directed, shaped, and ended by one party, where the receiver is either the passive voice, if they have any, or their voice is merely heard for the purposes of promoting the marketing activities. Another factor hindering a perfect symmetry is that the party that shapes the process consists of professionals of communicative sciences, or at least those who are familiar with the inner-workings of how they are designed, whereas the receiving party, more often than not, has no such familiarity.

The second perspective towards symmetrical communication is merely a functional one, i.e. it is through the marketers' perspective, which seeks a more practical framework for the concept and for marketing purposes. The technical and conceptual definition is about how the sender and receiver act in the process. In that sense, two-way symmetrical communication can be described as a direct dialogue of the source and the receiver, which makes it the richest form of communicative activity. In a more technology-savvy world, the media for two-way symmetrical communication has become abundant, making even the traditional media more

interactive with such practices as direct response TV or call centers. Two-way symmetrical communication provides a more enhanced marketing structure by limiting noise and encoding-decoding errors thanks to more unequivocal interaction.

The third extra item in the table is receiver response to the marketing communications activities, which can be purchase, recommendation, even attitudes or the perspective of the customers about the brand. All customer responses constitute the fourth item, brand equity. Brand equity is the strength, currency, and value of a brand's name and everything that represent it (Yoo and Donthu, 2001).

The t+1 item of IMC represents the improvements that occur during a specific time until the next chapter of a communications campaign or strategy. The t+1 element acknowledges that brand equity is constructed and altered over time and repeated exposure and/or response to a marketing communication can affect the following step and outcome of a communication activity in a certain time period +1.

'Customer/audience relationship management' and 'image and brand management' are stressed as external factors around the IMC Model. To simplify, customer/audience relationship management appreciates the lifelong importance of customers, which means the perpetual repeat of purchase when a mutually satisfying relationship is accomplished. It is mostly concerned with one-to-one interaction. As for image and brand management, it is the multiple-targeted version of the former, meaning that it is concerned with distant interaction. It is commonly regarded as the main purpose of all PR activities that are one-to-many.

Some main types of marketing communications are as follows: advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity, direct/interactive marketing and personal selling (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

1.2.1. Sales Promotion

Sales promotion refers to short-term motivations to render the testing or purchase of the product, making use of marketing methods for a planned timespan to promote consumer and market demand or product availability. Sales promotions may target end clients, sales representatives, and distribution channel members such as retailers and wholesalers. Sales promotion activities targeting the end customers are consumer sales promotions and those that target retail and wholesale are trade sales

promotions. Most common sales promotion activities are; free gifts, discounts, joint promotions (where the brand offers free products of another brand to its customers), free samples, vouchers and coupons, competitions and prize draws, cause-related and fair trade products and finance deals. As can be seen, these activities are generally focused on end-customers; however, several of these sales promotion tactics are also directed towards intermediaries, manufacturers or distributors with incentives to boost the product with their customers as well. Staff-directed promotions come in the form of trainings, seminars, seasonal meetings, catalogues, personnel competitions, and bonuses; while promotions directed towards wholesalers may be showroom products, free samples, sales partnerships and sales letters (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2015).

Sales promotions' utilization is mainly about adding value to consumers, wholesalers, retailers, or other organizational customers to stimulate immediate sales, but not a long-term organizational policy or strategy. For example, discounts are the most commonly resorted form of sales promotion and they aim to affect customer behavior while shopping, not in a long-term behavioral manner. For this reason, it has some disadvantages such as encouraging customer anticipation for further service or hurting the brand image by damaging long-term customer relationships (Farhangmehr and Brito, 2015). It is designed to be a short-term tactic to boost sales, and should not be regarded as a convenient method to build customer loyalty.

Farhangmehr and Brito (2015) frame the main characteristics of sales promotion as follows:

- It has short-term effects and duration.
- It functions and executes the activities merely at the last phase of the buying process.
- It performs an aiding part in the marketing communications process.
- It is not one technique, but a synergy of techniques utilized for a single goal.

New technologies have presented a variety of new possibilities for sales promotions. Loyalty cards, personal shopping assistants, electronic shelf labels, and electronic advertising displays procure more personalized experiences and more targeted information at the point of purchase. For example, shoppers can receive

notices for special offers while they walk by a specific product in a store, or they may receive daily notifications informing them of such offers (Manfred, 2006).

1.2.2. Public Relations and Publicity

Being an activity that helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other (Public Relations Society of America, 1982), public relations' rise as a separate field corresponds with the beginning of the 20th century. Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays are regarded as the founders of it and they are renowned for their campaigns supporting major industrial corporations of steel, automobile, railways and tobacco. Lee pioneered the use of magazines and gazettes to elevate employee morale, along with management newsletters, stockholder reports, and news releases to the media. He also represented some publicly despised figures in restoring their public image, the most famous of whom would be John D. Rockefeller during the coal mining rebellion. Likewise, Bernays is also famous for some notorious campaigns including the 1929 female smoking "Torches of Freedom" ads, and the political campaign of overthrowing the Guatemalan government in 1954 while representing the United Fruit Company. The early definition of the term coined by Bernays (1923) states that public relations is a management function 'tabulating' public opinion, defining policies, procedures and interests of an organization; following this comes the execution of a strategy to earn the understanding and acceptance of the public.

Later, these practices spread through Europe during World War II, when the use of public relations was directed towards justifying war and demonizing the enemy. It has been used several times for the same purpose including the Iraq invasion or Afghan invasion (Marshall, 2003). The term has often been in the center of ethical controversy as professionals of the field have also been associated with activities such as justification of war policies, manipulation and spin. Scholars have argued that as public relations have elevated the effect and control over the opinions of the publics, it has limited the public sphere and that it seeks persuasion and management of consent (Çınarlı, 2009). Ewen (1996)'s argument summarizes the ethical perspective towards public relations. He states that public relations can be a real menace to democracy as it renders the public discourse and sphere powerless and coerced. Corporations are able to hire public relations professionals, transmit

their messages through the media channels, and exercise a huge amount of influence upon the individual who is defenseless against such a powerful force. He claims that public relations is a weapon for capitalist deception and the best way to resist is to become media literate and use critical thinking when interpreting the various mediated messages.

Along the years, the aforementioned ethical concerns affected the practices and definitions of public relations. Public Relations Society of America's (2012) revised definition manifests a different wording: "*Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.*" A more technical definition by Keller (2009) suggests that it is the sum of communicative strategies designed to elevate a company's image or products.

Public relations is often mistakenly used interchangeably with advertising; however, while public relations also seek media coverage, it does so in a non-paid way (Keller, 2009). To elaborate, while advertising implies a paid, designed method of sending messages, PR needs to appear non-paid and non-designed as one of its main goals is to be perceived natural by the public. When a target audience sees an advertisement, they are aware of the fact that it is intended for the selling of a product or service. On the other hand, PR often seeds journalists newsworthy stories so that they have a media coverage that appears to be conveyed by an impartial side. This gains the media coverage more credibility (Hall, 1993). PR is conducted through a variety of media such as newsletters, articles, tweets or other social media coverage, sponsorships, and various specially designed activities that boost corporate image.

An example of public relations could be having an article written, featuring a client, instead of paying for the client to be advertised next to the article. The aim of public relations is to inform the public, prospective customers, investors, partners, employees, and other stakeholders and ultimately convince them to hold a positive or favorable position about the organization, its leadership, products, or political decisions. Public relations experts' job is to form and sustain relationships with an organization's target audience, the media, relevant trade media, and other opinion leaders. Common responsibilities of PR are planning communications campaigns,

writing news releases and other content for news, working with the press, arranging interviews for company spokespeople, writing speeches for company leaders, preparing clients for press conferences, media interviews and speeches, writing website and social media content, managing company reputation (crisis management), managing internal communications, and marketing activities like brand awareness and event management. Success in the field of public relations requires a deep understanding of the interests and concerns of each of the company's many stakeholders (Botan and Hazleton, 2010).

The professionals of public relations represent the image of a firm, organization or an individual in the face of media. The audience of any public relations process is all the stakeholders, however, public relations disciplines are determined in accordance with what facet of corporate identity or the identity of the individual in question need to be presented. With this perspective, the most commonly applied public relations disciplines are mentioned below (L'Etang, 2004):

- *Financial public relations*: discourse of economic and business strategies.
- *Consumer/lifestyle public relations*: rendering publicity for a specific product or service.
- *Crisis communication*: the process of determining discourse at times of crises.
- *Internal communications*: all communicative activities within the organization.
- *Government relations*: engaging the public or government organs to exercise effect on policies.
- *Media relations*: building and sustaining strong relations with the news media in order to publicize a business.
- *Celebrity public relations*: publicizing a celebrity via media.
- *In-house public relations*: sustaining relations between entertainment networks, production companies and the media.
- *Food-centric relations*: rendering publicity about specific food or beverages, or a center of gastronomy.

1.2.3. Direct/Interactive Marketing

Direct marketing is using one-to-one media such as phone, e-mail, etc. for dialogue with particular clients or candidates. It allows the receiving and sending parties a bilateral measurable communication whatever may be the location. Briefly, it is the sum of operations directed towards a target audience using one medium or several to receive a response (American Marketing Association, 2018)

Forms of direct marketing are (Henley, 2001);

- *Direct mail*, which allows a communication of a more personal nature. It also accommodates instant and measurable feedback, however, unless the source of the message is well-known by the target, it may also be regarded as distrustful and negative.
- *Direct response television and radio* was also a commonly resorted form of direct interaction until the rise of the internet and it gained a worldwide popularity. It was an efficient method of direct marketing where consumers contacted the company via telephone. However, now such information is easily accessible on the internet.
- *E-mail* is a convenient method of sustaining communication with an organization's units mainly due to the relatively low cost. Furthermore, it also provides companies with the opportunity of paying much less effort and attention than direct mail.
- *World Wide Web* has become the most interactive media to convey intended messages as it does so in the most targeted way possible, according to what specific information the receiver might be investigating. WWW offers many ways to do so such as internet conferences, instant messaging services, video channels, etc...

Former direct marketing activities also made use of letters, catalogues, brochures to reach particular segments of clientele; however, these types of direct marketing bear some challenges such as delivery to the person who is actually not the intended target audience. With the invention of Web 2.0, MMS and SMS services, direct marketing became cheaper, more efficient and focused. Now one can reach the exact target audience through these services without time or place-related concerns. Another superiority of the internet in direct marketing is that it allows

simultaneous response, increasing the chance of achieving a two-way efficient communication.

1.2.4. Personal Selling

Personal selling is the direct in-person interaction with potential customers in order to make presentations, respond to their demands or get direct orders. It is realized through the actual encounter of a sales representative with a potential client for the purposes of a sale transaction. In other words, it refers to the process of face-to-face interaction between a company and a prospective client, in which the company is better informed about the customer's requirements and works towards satisfying those requirements by presenting the customer with the opportunity of purchasing something valuable, such as a good or service. According to American Marketing Association (2018), personal selling is all the face-to-face efforts that resides outside advertising and public relations and done in specific periods for consumers, retailers or wholesalers to direct customers towards purchase or trial of a product and to increase the efficiency of intermediaries.

Personal sales may transpire in various formats. Area representatives may call on clients, who tend to be business clients; door-to-door sales teams call on house-makers, sales personnel may operate in a retail or wholesale market where sales personnel may deal with customers by taking orders or sales may transpire in a telephone-marketing environment where the sales representative phones prospective clients. As for the number of transactions, most sales occur at the retail level; but when value is concerned, most selling occurs at the high-end business-to-business level. Along with these, some common personal selling methods are order taking and order getting, which refer to the preparation and procurement of orders, missionary selling, which seeks to inform and aid the main selling activities, cold calling, which is making a phone call to the client without notice, and lastly, relationship (consultative) selling, which is conducted by customer representatives in the form of maintaining a close relationship with the already existing customers (Van Heerde, Leeflang and Wittink, 2004).

1.2.5. Advertising

Derived from Latin *advertere*, meaning *to steer, to turn towards* (Oxford Latin Dictionary, 1982), in its most basic form, advertising can be defined as any kind of paid services designed to promote a product at a mass level (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Although the history of advertising can be dated as back as 4000 BC in the forms of wall paintings and rock art paintings or oral poetry for commercial messages and political campaign displays, modern advertising as it is defined today started in the 19th century, when economy expanded throughout the world, and mass media started to prevail. In June 1836, the French newspaper *La Presse* became the first to print paid advertisements, thus making it possible to reduce its price, widen readership and boost profits – a method soon adopted by all. 1840 was the year when Volney B. Palmer founded the first advertising agency and started buying spaces in newspapers cheaply and selling them in a higher price. Although Palmer was merely a space trader, without offering to prepare the advertisements, by the end of the century, another advertising agency – N. W. Ayer & Son was founded and had become a focal point of creative planning and designing. In the 20th century, with the introduction of radio and TV, advertising became much more common and integrated. Radios allowed sponsored programmes and each was allotted to a single business, however, they soon came to realize that they could sell smaller time allocations, and make this practice more profitable. After the 1950s, the same practice became common for TV channels. 1990s were marked as the “dot-com” boom years with the invention and spread of the World Wide Web, later evolving into e-mail marketing, search ads and display ads, finally reaching today’s internet advertising – a practice covering the most varied and effective forms of advertisements as of 2017, when it surpassed the share of broadcast advertising (US Ad Spending: eMarketer's Updated Estimates and Forecast for 2017, September 2017) (McDonald and Scott, 2007).

Through these historical changes, the modern definition of advertising by Bovee (1995) says: it is the paid, non-personal communication by a known sponsor via the mass media in order to persuade or change attitude. The major forms of media to transmit messages of all modern advertising activities can be named as;

- *Television*; which presents the synthesis of visual and audio, making it more viable in terms of audience empathy. As it appeals to more senses, it also leaves room for more creativity. Although it is a mass service, it can also target smaller audiences by strategically selecting airing time, channel and types of programmes. The success of TV advertisements can also be attributed to repeated exposure, familiarizing the audience to the product with dramatic and effective messages that make use of both sight and sound with a varied scope of graphic stimuli. Although some advertisers regard it as momentary and quite expensive, with an inclination to become annoying or confusing, it presents an opportunity to reach the audience in their homes, where they are most relaxed (Hanekom and Scriven, 2002).
- *Newspapers*; which are still able to reach the second highest number of audiences in many countries, can both function as a targeted means of advertising via local newspapers, and also as a mass-effective media via national newspapers. The numbers of readership and circulation are usually definite with newspapers, which makes it possible for advertisers to draw a clearer strategic planning (Hanekom and Scriven, 2002). One downside of them would be the fact that after they are seen, they tend to be discarded, so newspaper advertisements often need to be published several times. In addition, Wells (2000) warns against advert clusters in newspapers, which lead to an overload of information and eventually loss of interest on the readers' side.
- *Magazines*; which are considered a targeted advertising medium with a higher level of audience attention not only because of focused interest but also because they might remain within reach of the audience for a longer time period. The audience tends to hold on to magazines for a while before they discard them. Furthermore, the messages conveyed in magazines are considered to possess a higher level of credibility (Henley, 2001). Another upside of magazines is that they are able to deliver a more detailed message to an audience who are relaxed and open to persuasion. They provide advertisers with even more targeted reader segments than those of newspapers. They are also printed on better quality paper than newspapers, which adds to the prestige of the adverts on magazines (Hanekom and Scriven, 2002).

- *Outdoor* encompasses billboards, street furniture (bus shelters, kiosks, etc...), transit advertising (buses, cabs, subways, etc...), mobile billboards, banners, hot air balloons, fireworks, supermarket trolleys, hospital waiting areas, and sports grounds. For this reason, it can be considered one of the most versatile advertising venues. Frequency of exposure is one of the advantages of this type of advertising, which is why they are more befitting to the kind of messages whose aim is to boost corporate image. Outdoor advertisements are designed to intrigue or introduce the name of a brand as mostly they are observed for only a very short period of time (Henley, 2001). Hence, they are not designed to inform customers about the details of a product.
- *Radio* is also a medium that mostly reaches people on the move. Companies could acquire semi-selective messages depending on the genre of the radio station. Radios also function with a frequency policy and they are particularly convenient to publicize special events and sponsorships. People usually listen to radio when they are occupied with other activities such as commuting to work or school, or tending to a household task. Consequently, they might not pay enough attention to it, as they regard it as a background entertainment. Other downsides of it would be the limited creativity and limited primetime that it offers. However, counter opinion suggests that limited stimuli may not necessarily present a handicap for radio advertisements because it may also push the listeners to stimulate their imagination by making use of verbal communication, sounds and intonation, which, in the end, would make the experience more persisting in their minds (Dahlén and Edenius, 2000).
- *Cinema* presents the same creative faculties as television as it also allows advertisers to use sound and visuals at the same time. When Davis and Zerdin (1996) compare it to television, they accentuate the superiority of cinema, in that in cinema, the audience is captivated in front of a large screen in a dark auditorium surrounded by superior sound technology. All the while, they also mention that segmentation will be more challenging for this media as not all members of a targeted segment will be exposed to the message because of the small percentage of the population who will visit the cinema.
- *Internet*, which has paved way for many nouvelle advertising practices, has taken over many traditional advertising practices as well. The internet has made it possible for firms to advertise their products globally with a much

lower cost than conventional advertising. Its other advantage is that it can establish both global and national awareness, also with immediate interaction.

Trade advertisements tend to seek more consumption of their products or services via branding, associating the brand name or brand image with desired attributes in the perception of potential buyers. Non-commercial entities such as non-governmental organizations, political parties, interest groups, foundations and government organs also resort to advertising to promote services and ideas. The overall advertising budget in the world in 2015 was US\$ 530 billion and its current distribution in terms of media are 40.4% for TV, 33.3% for digital, 9% for newspapers, 6.9% for magazines, 5.8% for outdoor and 4.3% for radio (Wall Street Journal, 2016).

All these varied types of integrated marketing communications serve different goals and target audiences in different levels of efficiency. Direct marketing, being the most focused of all these activities, is now delivered with better efficiency through internet and social media. Seeing this, and that now the internet has become a prevailing tool of direct marketing with a great share in the sector, this study aims to assess its efficiency in higher education as well.

2. PORTER'S GENERIC STRATEGIES

Porter (1980) states that a company is able to acquire competitive advantage against its rivals via two basic methods. It may provide a product or service in a smaller price than its competitors or it can differentiate its products to a degree that customers are willing to give a higher amount of money for its services or products. Besides these means, another facet of Porter's characterization is to determine the range of its functions, which means the company resolves whether to do business in a specific or large market segment. These strategies are defined as cost leadership, differentiation and focus. A company, which follows one of these strategies in a dedicated way, has a chance to gain benefit, whereas the ones trying to adopt more than one are 'stuck in the middle'.

Figure 2: Generic Strategies

		Strategic Advantage	
		Strategic Target	Industrywide
Particular Segment	Differentiation Focus		Cost Focus

Stuck in the Middle

To break this down into a little more detailed conceptualization, Porter (1985) puts forward three successful generic strategies in theory, through which a firm or organization should seek competitive advantage with the targeted audience.

The first of the generic strategies is overall cost leadership, which highlights low cost against competitors. The second strategy, differentiation, focuses on producing an exclusive product or service that distinguishes itself in the target market in such a way that the company can expect higher than average prices. The third and last strategy is focus where the firm aims for a specific segment, location or product. Porter (1985) asserts that a firm's durability in a certain market rests upon

either one of these strategies: cost advantage or differentiation. In other words, two main genres of competitive advantage that a company can utilize exist: low cost or differentiation. The focus strategy, on the other hand, represents the range of activities that a company plans to do. Thus, the focus strategy constitutes the third strategy.

As seen in Figure 2, the focus strategy is two folds: cost focus and differentiation focus, cost focus meaning the company's emphasis on low cost within a focused market. Likewise, cost differentiation could be defined as the diversification of products or services within a focused market. Porter (1998: p.11) illustrates the distinction between these generic strategies as follows: *"The cost leadership and differentiation strategies aspire to competitive advantage in a wide spectrum of business segments, whereas focus strategy aims for cost advantage or differentiation in a narrower segment."*

All in all, the consistent success of a business in a specific market is based upon the meticulous and correct choosing of these three generic strategies. That is, any company, if it aims for success and getting ahead, has to determine a strategy and its extent before taking action. Firms following the 'everything for everybody' perspective tend not to prosper because they will have no competitive advantage whatsoever (Porter, 1998).

2.1.Differentiation

The next type of business is differentiators, who pursue the strategy of offering a product or service with rare functions that are appreciated by buyers. To explain further, the buyers regard the product or service as superior or distinguished from the ones offered by competitors. Hence, the difference gets the company to afford asking for a higher price for it and the extra value of this exclusiveness leads to higher prices that are supposed to be more than enough to compensate for the added costs having been induced. Porter (1998) illustrates that the ways of differentiation are unique to every field and argues that differentiation is to be accomplished via the product itself, convenience, through which the product or service becomes reachable, or the business method, so on and so forth. Considering this, the must-haves of a differentiator, are of a much bigger variety: great inner facilities, which will have the capacity to procure or conduct scientific groundwork

itself, a very efficient R&D department, a viable business approach that can craftily publicize the superiority of the product or service and a high brand image of quality and newness. Unlike cost leadership, which has been described before as a simple straightforward strategy, differentiation strategy can be employed in innumerable different formulae, which is the first challenge to be encountered in the implementation of it. Another challenge is to be informed about the fickle taste of the buyer or the fast-evolving market where there is always another actor doing or endeavoring to do the same thing.

2.2. Cost Leadership

Cost leadership strategy means being the low cost provider in a certain market. This being said, it could be considered as the most straightforward of all strategies. Any company following this strategy seeks to sell its products at medium or below-medium prices in order to conquer the market and get to the top. The prevalent marketing setting for the cost leadership strategy is more often than not a broad market. Porter (1998) stresses that depending on the industry where the company functions, multiple ways exist to gain cost advantage. For instance, a wholesaler of grocery finds a way to produce or transport the product itself just as a furniture manufacturer tries to find the cheapest wood provided in the market. However, it is obvious that these have to be executed with tact and no less quality than the competitors; as low cost by itself cannot ensure the way to the top.

At this point, it is important to accentuate the two vital factors to be considered in practicing this strategy. The first is that only one company be the cost leader. Porter (1998) argues that if multiple firms go for this position, competition among these rivals is bound to be intense and the repercussions might turn out to be catastrophic. The second essence is; cost leadership also requires differentiation in a particular way. Although this may sound like a dilemma in the light of what has been put forward before, the quality of the low-cost products or services presented by the cost leader must be desirable, or if not anything, buyable. *“A cost leader, on the other hand, is in no position to oversee the basics of differentiation. Should their product not be regarded on par or at least adequate by customers, a cost leader will be pushed towards discount prices much lower than that of competitors to achieve selling, which might cancel out the profitability of its superior cost position.”* (Porter, 1998: p. 13)

2.3.Focus

The final generic strategy for competitive edge is focus. Unlike the ones covered so far, focus strategy focuses on a limited segment and/or a specific area of business, it works towards accomplishing the targeted success with either cost or differentiation. A focuser chooses a category or a group of categories in the market and formulates its path to serve them to the exclusion of others (Porter, 1998).

Porter (1985) puts forward two derivatives of focus strategy: cost focus, where the company tries to gain cost advantage in a specifically targeted segment whereas in differentiation focus, the company pursues differentiation. Either way, the focuser's basic objective is to handle and captivate a distinct segment that is unlikely to be served by others. Porter (1998) states that the focuser should be well informed about the target segment and ensure the existence of a fraction in society who is not content with what is being offered to them by mass-producers. Porter (1998) also accentuates the potential dangers of focus strategy that it inherently has: loss of demand, mass-producers invading the sector, and of course, other focusers focusing on the sector.

2.4.Companies Stuck in the Middle

Porter (1985) claims that companies which fail to elevate themselves with one generic strategy are not likely to gain any competitive advantage against others and names them as 'stuck in the middle'. Because cost leaders, differentiators and focusers will have assumed their position in the market, a company stuck in the middle is doomed to settle with mediocre at best, even though they may have an original or revered business plan. Porter (1998), on the other hand, also argues that there may yet be hope for those companies, which are stuck in the middle to prosper. One possible alternative is if the industry itself has a very high market share. The second alternative is that the rivals also have the same stuck in the middle structure.

Directing their energy to one generic strategy is usually a desired scenario and will probably yield profits in the long term. Yet, there might also be instances where inner dynamics, outer forces, and circumstances unique to the product or service make multiple strategies viable. When a firm has rivals who do not have the sources to take advantage of a promising industry, this makes it possible for that firm to be both a cost leader and a differentiator at the same time. Yet again, Porter

(1998) still claims that this would make the firm more vulnerable because it is always possible that one competitor will implement one generic strategy and become the market leader.

2.5.Varying Research on Porterian Perspective of Marketing Communications

In sum, the key question is to use one strategy or not, deciding to what extent to follow a certain strategy without interference from others for the sake of short-term outcomes. Porter's (1980, 1985) position about this is clear: gaining a competitive edge depends on well-determined application of either low cost or differentiation while acknowledging the fact that neither strategy is essentially preferable over the other. Yet he also makes it clear that a company, if in search of making use of each method, it is doomed to achieve a moderate position at best.

Research provides conflicting opinions concerning the topic. Particularly those entrepreneurs who are newly introduced to the market might be better off if they do not apply a cost leadership, as it demands an extensive line of services and resources. Hence it is wiser for them to choose the focus differentiation strategy because it requires novelty, original designing, and top-notch aspects (Miller and Toulouse, 1986).

More varied research exists in light of Porterian view. Some indicate that companies must adopt one particular strategy to enhance their performance while others bear a different result, proving that hybrid strategies – in other words strategies that blend aspects from both generic competitive strategies – tend to yield higher performances (Parnell, 2013). To exemplify, Manev, Manolova, Harkins and Gyoshev (2015) measured the applicability of Porter's perspective within the context of new entrepreneurs struggling to survive in developing economies. The research provided numeric data, which proved that hybrid strategies are a better means of success. In the study, it is indicated that many junior firms in developing countries opt for hybrid strategies over a pure strategy in order to gain competitive advantage. On the contrary, another study conducted by Thornhill and White (2007) in Canada concludes that Canadian companies tend to achieve higher success by using one pure strategy rather than adopting a hybrid one.

Despite the similarity between the two separate researches in many aspects, the outcomes are in stark contrast, which can only be explained via the two very different contexts. Canada is not a transition economy where companies do not have to deal with uncertainty whereas for firms which struggle in an underdeveloped, or developing economy, profitability lies in being an opportunist and thus adapting to the fluctuating circumstances. This might also imply that Porterian view for marketing may not be so convenient for new or minor businesses that function in unpredictable market conditions where hybrid strategies may become inherently superior. These two different studies might also imply that pure strategies are more favorable in countries with a steady economy.

Other authors such as Miller (1992) and Mintzberg, Quinn, and Ghoshal (1995) too have scrutinized the performance of the generic strategies. Stonehouse and Snowdon (2007) are also of the opinion that following a pure strategy is not the only way to achieve a higher ground in the market stating that a lot of research exist which prove that many firms purposely adopt a hybrid strategy making their products or services more appealing by providing them in a low price, but also with a certain difference and they are surprisingly successful. There are others too who claim that generic strategies fall short to form a single ground for a competitive edge and argue that every firm needs to formulate their own plan discovering their own strengths and weaknesses.

These being the criticisms, Porter's generic strategies are quite comprehensive when looked into with depth. Porter (1985) is persistent about his theory claiming that to accomplish cost leadership and differentiation at the same time is contradictory more often than not, because differentiation is inherently pricy. However, he himself depicts the three exceptional circumstances where an organization might synchronically execute both of them. Firstly, if the rivals are stuck in the middle, thus unable to force the firm's hand, then it is perfectly viable to lower the prices without any concessions in terms of differentiation, i.e. if the competition is not so fierce in an industry, the more prominent firms can easily adopt a hybrid strategy. Saying this, Porter (1985) still asserts that this cannot be a permanent policy, and in the end, the firm will have to choose a pure one to sustain its position. The second of these circumstances arises when the firm has unparalleled interconnectivity, which is superior to its competitors and when the firm purveys its

resources unreachable to others. These resources can vary from raw materials to particular technology, or even acquaintances with people in strategic positions. The final circumstance is that the firm becomes a pacesetter with one or several revolutionary features, which again may make it viable for the firm to reduce cost and exalt differentiation nonetheless.

Porter (1985) also supports his theory saying that any organization must insist on pursuing any chances of reducing cost if differentiation is not at stake, while also pursuing any chances of differentiation when affordable. However, they will ultimately have to determine a competitive advantage clearly. As a response to the aforementioned criticisms that hybrid strategies may be the ideal answer in certain contexts, Porter's (1980) three scenarios demonstrate the applicability of manipulating two strategies at the same time, and yet still, it is wiser to ultimately purify the strategy that has been opted for.

Porter (1980, 1985) himself points out the contingencies for all the strategies and warns that companies need to beware what potential dangers lie ahead and take measures against them to retain their competitive advantage. To start, being a cost leader necessitates much struggle. The first challenge they must overcome is to stay up-to-date about the latest novelties concerning manufacturing processes and risk throwing away all former efforts or expenditures, should such innovative steps must be taken. Such costs are especially threatening with all the new ventures competing in the same industry, who are more likely to develop imitative strategies and adopt cost leadership with less expense due to an upper hand in learning to produce less expensively or reaching a better interconnectivity.

As for differentiation, the most likely threats may come from imitation, with new players venturing in the sector and instigating the rivalry, which would ultimately jeopardize the cost policy of the firm, and relinquish its differing position. This may also cause malcontent in the customer profile hence lead to even less profitability. Lastly, the danger that focusers might encounter is the large-scale firms forcing their ways into the niche, as they have substantial means. The focused group of customers may alter and eventually conform to the taste of general population; also the sector becomes so appealing that it is overcrowded with competitors.

2.6. Porter's Generic Strategies in Private Higher Education Institutions

In parallel with what has been told before, an inclination towards market-driven policies in universities needs savvy strategies being found and put into practice.

Figure 3: CBOs' projections about their schools for the next decade

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	All	Public	Private
	%	%	%
I am confident my institution will be financially stable over the next five years.			
%5 Strongly agree	21	25	17
%4	35	35	34
%3	28	28	30
%2	12	9	15
%1 Strongly disagree	4	3	4
I am confident my institution will be financially stable over the next 10 years.			
%5 Strongly agree	16	16	16
%4	32	30	33
%3	33	38	29
%2	15	13	17
%1 Strongly disagree	3	2	4

2017 INSIDE HIGHER ED/GALLUP SURVEY

Source: Gallup News (2017) retrieved from: http://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/215006/higher-business-chiefs-fear-financial-future.aspx?g_source=HIGHER_EDUCATION&g_medium=topic&g_campaign=tiles Retrieval Date 24 January 2018

A research conducted by Gallup News (2017) presents discomfoting news about private higher education sector. Figure 3 shows the percentages of chief business officers' (CBO) projections about the next 5 years and 10 years concerning how well their institutions will do. When the CBOs were asked about their short-term (5 years) survival, 44% were either neutral or hesitant. The same percentage is 49 for public CBOs.

That is why generic strategies may become an adoptable answer in that it paves way for generalization. Taking into account the considerably competitive structure of higher education market in the world and in Turkey, to grasp how effectively these strategies can be acquired and applied by these institutions could be particularly helpful. For instance, while one college may provide a large variety of

programmes, proficient academic personnel, exclusive campus facilities and research possibilities and could charge a greater tuition fee, others might develop strategies targeting cost advantage by offering humbler educational possibilities at a lower price. Moreover, others could also opt for a narrow market niche with their know-how in particular departments and make use of cost or differentiation leadership strategies in a specific market niche.

Concisely, the overall purpose of higher education is improving students' education with a curriculum in a sufficient setting, in a convenient way to the institution. Hence, both potentials and applicability must be considered. Likewise, university boards should have a complete calculation of how expensive their actions are going to be. Given that universities are more attentive about effectiveness and cost, they are able to follow a strategy that is more cost-friendly and at the same time pay attention to the outer environment and their competitors' situation. Open University in the UK or Faculty of Open University in Anadolu University can be considered great cases where cost leadership has been efficiently executed. It is vital that organizations pay attention to some variables while exploiting cost leadership strategy as it might necessitate a large number of students, bigger market percentage and consistency in graduates to accomplish a favorable position (Fornaciari et al., 1999). Bigger universities may achieve a bigger percentage of market place; however, other universities may find it inapplicable and may have to follow a more focused cost leadership strategy.

Other universities could choose differentiation strategy, endeavoring to achieve extraordinary feedback and thus brand loyalty. When one aims for a student (or parent) profile, which is not so concerned about cost, they might provide a prestigious diploma, specific answers to various student demands, distinguished courses and the most qualified professors. Prominent universities in the world like Harvard could be named as differentiators. The universities that follow the focus strategy intend to appeal to just a specific group of students and business markets. In Finland's educational system, for example, a subdivision of the University of Helsinki has specialized in a continual training curriculum for teachers and principals in primary and middle school. In rare instances, major national institutions of prestige might follow multiple strategies, using a focus strategy (focus differentiation) to advocate their ultimate strategy (differentiation) to bolster a long-

term competitive advantage against competitors in both limited and wider market niche (Wright, 1987).

Fornaciari et al. (1999 p. 41-42) also reformulate Porter's (1980) portrayal of the stuck-in-the middle strategy to higher education institutions: *“Colleges stuck in the middle are nearly certain to achieve low profits. They either risk the high numbered students who seek low fees or must sacrifice their profits to get their business away from low-cost colleges. However, they sacrifice high-margin students as well, who are deemed the cream to the colleges, which are focused on high-margin targets or have achieved differentiation at a complete level. The colleges stuck in the middle also inevitably end up with an obscure corporate culture and a conflicting set of organizational inner workings and motivation system.”*

This implies that lack of commitment to adhere to one single generic strategy (or a unique blend of two in specific circumstances) lead to great disadvantage for higher education institutions.

2.7. Market Positioning in Private Higher Education Institutions

As stated by Shanks, Walker and Hayes (1996), higher education possesses all the characteristics of a service industry. Educational services are intangible, heterogeneous, and inseparable from the person delivering it, variable, perishable and the customer (student) participates in the process. This clearly shows that when developing a marketing communications strategy for higher education institutions, one must adopt that of service industries. Yet, the challenge does not lie in adapting educational strategies to already existing marketing communications strategies for intangible products, but it lies in determining the differences between the two (Canterbury, 2000). When one probes into the following differences between the higher education market and other service industry markets coined by Canterbury (2000), it becomes more evident that higher education, while being partly compatible with other markets, is a completely unique area to analyze.

Firstly, university choice, unlike other purchasing decisions, is for most people, a once-in-a-lifetime decision. Litten (1980)'s description of this process is quite striking; student candidates make this kind of a big life-changing decision probably for the first time in their lives, they are informed very little about the other options or their strengths about specific features, or even which features count as

important in making such decisions. Also because of its intangibility, university experience cannot be subjected to trials, which is yet another factor that increases the risk of the purchase (Newman and Jahdi, 2009).

The second unique attribute of colleges is that they are ‘total institutions’ like religious schools such as monasteries or madrassahs of Islam, or like prisons, foster homes, orphanages, or elderly care centers. Just like these facilities, colleges are also institutions providing food, accommodation, entertainment, exercise, security; but additionally job and social opportunities, education, and guidance.

The third and fourth differences have to do with the fact that the decision makers of this process are mostly teenagers, whose decision-making depends more on holistic, sentiment-based faculties, which can be summarized as the ‘human development’ factor, and the other is importance, which refers to the fact that very little product or service will take up as much time and effort as those of higher education institutions. Educational background or status can be deemed as one of the most significant determiners of what life circumstances will occur in a teenager’s adult life (Karp, Gray, Lytle Holmstrom, 1985). It even has a deep influence in a person’s familial bounds, friend circles, and in many countries the parameter of family success before the eyes of others (Gallotti, 1996).

The fifth item is concerned with the outcome of higher education services. As in all marketing processes, the outcome of higher education must be measurable. So when it comes to the conundrum of what is the product of higher education, the answers vary: some believe it is the programmes and the curriculum, while others claim it to be the student body itself, as though they never existed before college and remained the same after. Another perspective by Maringe (2005) says it is the research and teaching. However, Canterbury (2000) states that higher education industry sells unforeseen, interactive, shifting opportunities to its customers, putting opportunities to the very heart of defining the end-result or offerings of higher education. He also suggests that this perspective will provide colleges a more realistic definition of themselves thus enabling them to drive a better marketing strategy, also allowing teenagers to make a more informed decision rather than being taken in by the ‘creative puffery’ that many advertising policies have to offer. All in all, choosing a college requires the consideration of opportunities towards academic

and personal improvement while weighing the risks and reducing the prospective dangers of the matter to the bare minimum.

Such a unique and fickle market also requires the reduction of all parameters affecting the process of building a communicative argument when designing higher education context into the molds of market-orientation. In that sense, taking into account that the feasibility and effectiveness of generic strategies in all markets is based on the assumption that the companies or institutions are market driven, all profit oriented organizations whether they might be an educational institution or not, need clear-cut, simplified marketing communications policies. Hence, they must assess the market setting, rules and regulations, and rivalry in a particular market location and acquire marketing communications strategies suited to them. An insight into the scope of market orientation in higher education institutions may present worthy arguments for academy while at the same time enriching the field of management.

In addition, while globalization aggravates more speedily and consumer anticipation is elevated, the higher education market meets an ever growing rivalry in which services are also revered because of their contribution to gaining and sustaining competitive advantage (Voon, 2008). As well as the other marketing fields and their methods of action, market orientation could become a vital constituent of higher education as well. Seeing that, Brown (1994) suggests a relationship marketing approach in which the interaction between the organization and its customers are crucial to the communicative strategies of such organizations. This paradigm depends entirely on the acquisition of a student centered corporate culture and the quality of service (Narver and Slater, 1990). Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka's (2010) comparative research looks into the possible disparities between Israel and England within the context of higher education institutions' business driven policies. Applying a business orientation rating, the researchers came to the conclusion that in the two countries, higher education institutions that were scrutinized were driven towards realizing the needs of the students in their educational practices. Another finding they came up with was that a market-driven, and student-driven approach can be followed as an organizational structure as an alternative to curriculum-driven educational system. As it invokes the possible application of Porter's generic

strategies in higher education institutions, market orientation can be the first step of adopting the most viable generic strategy.

As for the main driving forces of the process, Chapleo and Sullivan (2017) summarize the key marketing communications components determining market positioning in higher education institutions as brand, reputation and image. Image is composed of four strategic elements: external communication and corporate values conveyed to the customers, recognition at both a national and international level, economic well-being, and facilities offered by the university. Corporate identity, which represents the real attributes presented by an organization, is the starting point of corporate image perceived by people. Teaching quality and facilities serve as the backbone of brand management in tertiary education, while in some instances brand and image are shaped by location, which may give them a distinctive identity, thus emphasizing place marketing.

2.8.Recent Tendencies in Higher Education

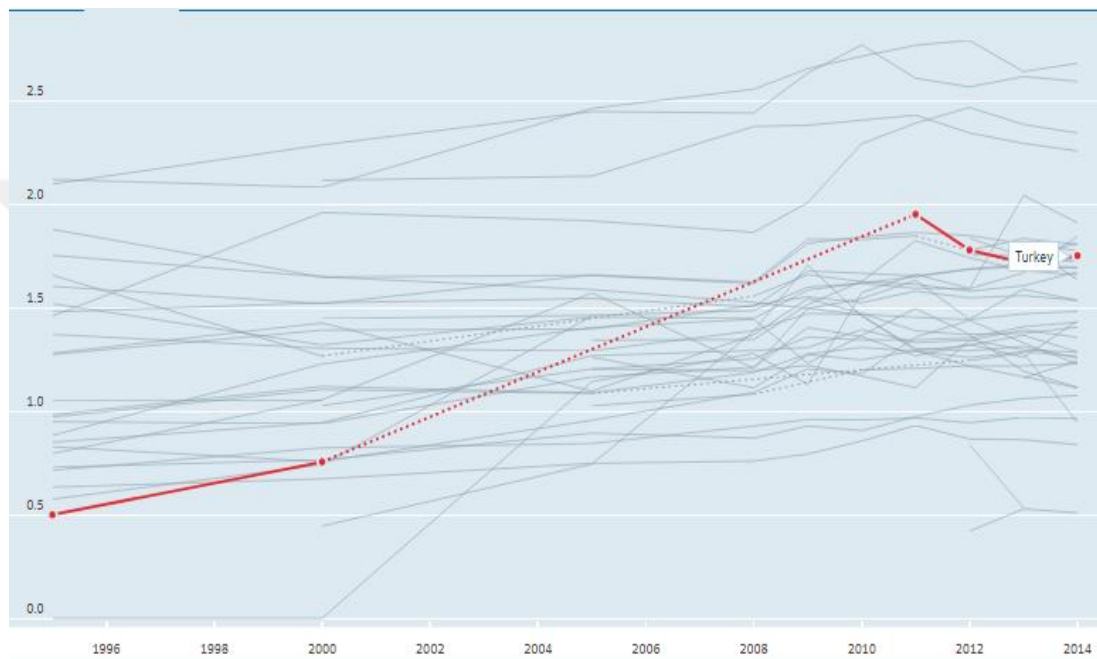
Currently, higher education is going through significant changes in terms of student population, legislations, educational goals and facilities. These came as a direct result of the changing political-economical world conjecture and it is vital that these be addressed for the sake of preparing the basis of the research. The main tendencies that higher education faces today are privatization, massification and competition. These tendencies have altered the structure and motivations of higher education having triggered each other; so it is vital for any marketing communications strategy that these tendencies be taken into consideration.

2.8.1. Privatization

Within the past few decades, higher education has witnessed a sizable bloom all around the world, some more than others (Trow, 2010). Before this expansion, throughout the 20th century, the most frequently resorted form of higher education was public universities, both in Turkey and worldwide. The governments funded, initiated, structured, supported, and supervised higher education processes, namely all the managerial details, especially in the post-war era. Partly because of globalization and neo-liberalism policies becoming more prevalent in the last few decades, there has been considerable growth in private higher education. It now accounts for 33.3 percent of the world's overall higher education sector-even greater a number than that of the USA, where this number is 27.5 percent (Levy, 2015). This

percentage being much smaller in Turkey (7.9 percent) (YOK, 2017); it has doubled within the past decade and rises with great impetus each year (being 5.2 in 2015). Turkey trying to live up to EU anticipation, grow its economy, and its need for qualified staff and fiducially-satisfied new class rising above the moderate economical scale, demanding also the betterment of intellectual standards have also contributed to the need for private education institutions.

Chart 1: Private spending on tertiary education in OECD countries



Source: OECD (2017) retrieved from: <https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/private-spending-on-education.htm#indicator-chart> Retrieval Date 24 January 2018

Chart 1 shows data of OECD countries' private funding on tertiary education by percentages compared to GDPs of the countries between the years 1995-2014. The red line shows that of Turkey, which has risen since 1995 from 0.5 percent to 1.751 percent with only minor falls through the past two decades. Chart 1 also indicates the general rise in OECD countries in terms of private funding of higher education.

These numbers have risen in Europe since the fall of communism in 1989, making it become a part of a universally effective stream of privatization, although it happened here almost a decade after it did in communist China. In 1989, it had almost no presence especially in Eastern and Central Europe, where by 2010s, it accounts for 3.6 million students out of a total of 21.9 total number of students

attending higher education (16.6 percent) (UNESCO Institute for statistics, 2017). Between 1963 and 1972, Turkey witnessed a bloom of profit-oriented higher education institutions, which, however, had to be terminated because of political instability, and a military coup, whose result was the interference of the army in not only politics, but educational policies as well. Yet again, the post war tendency of the state-controlled private sector was to return, ending this period of privatization until 1989 (Mizikaci, 2003). Another reason private universities are such late-bloomers in Turkey is the economical challenge that there were few private businesses until after the arrival of the new millennium, hence universities had little to offer other than government positions and much more of the population compared to today were occupied with agriculture (Turkey Institution of Statistics, 2017). All these are factors contributing to the opening of new private universities.

However, privatization does not only come in the form of new private universities; it also affects the policies of public universities. It is granted that they almost never turn into private universities, yet they tend to become “privatized” in some parts and policies. The clearest occurrences of privatization come in the form of funding. Fees, fund-raising, contract research, and private sector partnerships are the most striking versions of private interference in public universities (Glade, 1986) (Levy, 2015). The administrations of universities also fall into the hands of private persons or organizations which is in line with rather a profit-driven institution (Clark, 1998). This can also be considered a result of government policies pushing public universities into demanding fewer funds, all the while demanding higher enrollment for each department each year. Another catalyst of privatization of public universities is the challenge introduced by private universities, offering job-oriented departments or facilities, at which public ones can be deemed slower. For instance, this year in Turkey there have been cases of public universities airing TV commercials and offering special scholarships although they offer their services without a tuition fee.

These institutions becoming much more common has made the student body more crowded and more sophisticated in population, which led to the rise of cost, and this led to a stricter policy-making process in their funding. This is yet another reason why governments support the privatization of higher education; this way they reduce the cost all the while raising competition, which, in theory, would lead to an elevated quality in higher education and other sectors (Rossi, 2010).

There is separated, even conflicting literature when it comes to marketization of higher education and marketing it. The discussions circling around marketization of higher education often refer to it as a destructive force hurting educational processes (Brown, 2010; McMurtry, 1991; Shumar, 2004). On the other hand, scholars with a marketing-management perspective seldom see the issue as an ethical one; only trying to apply marketing communications theories to higher education, grasp the decision-making perspectives of students, simply to heighten the economic situations of higher education institutions without much emphasis on the more general higher education conditions (Nedbalová, Greenacre and Schulz, 2014). Brown (2010) argues that higher education institutions must be independent in determining fees, programmes, awards, enrollments and recruitment. The European University Association (EUA) defines four facets on how an organization should have autonomy: organizational, financial, recruitment and academic. Organizational autonomy can be interpreted as election or displacement of administrative staff, also the ability to determine academic presence. Financial autonomy is about funding, keeping surpluses, loans or charging student fees. Recruitment autonomy focuses on choices about staff, their hiring, dismissal, salaries and promotions. Lastly, academic autonomy is the competence of choosing student presence, admission criteria, or choosing educational programmes, education language, curriculum of any degree programmes, or research fields (Estermenn, Nokkala and Steinel, 2011). However, whether it be for the sake of autonomy, or marketing; there is wide criticism about the fact that governments and private sector interfere with higher education because it is still regarded as a public good, and it accounts for a noteworthy added value to economy (Nedbalová, Greenacre and Schulz, 2014).

Further ethical debates exist concerning marketization of higher education, arguing that marketing in nature has a deep influence in changing the nature of higher education, and not necessarily for the better. When marketing is the main instrument to programme and plan educational processes, particularly when it is perceived as a means to achieve the societal higher aspirations, it no longer is an instrument to achieve such targets, but it becomes a target itself (Gibbs, 2011). This way, marketing tends to drag educational processes into a transformation of becoming a technical endeavor which is practicality-driven. From then on, scientific work starts merely to serve the purposes of work-power, economical advancement, or to elevate the brand value of the institution or the country, rather than to produce

scientific work, which is supposed to add to the sum of wisdom owned by all the humanity (Gibbs and Murphy, 2009).

Another potential problem brought about by marketization in higher education is that university administrators might also abandon the pursuit of real personal improvement for the sake of the market-driven goals that are mentioned above. According to Giroux and Giroux (2004), consumerist policies introduced by marketing and liberal perspectives of education are inherently contradictory and either one is destined to dominate the other. Gibbs (2007) argues that marketization of education unfavorably raises individuals who become less participative and less vigorous in the process of learning which basically is the very opposite of what is meant to be achieved through education. Gibbs (2007) takes this further and states that higher education institutions that aim to improve education by presenting hedonistic satisfaction and a step to desirable careers position tertiary education as just another product to consume.

A research by The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE, 2010) reveals the magnitude of marketing concern in the USA: in medium sized colleges or universities marketing expenditures have risen to \$800,000 from \$333,000 within the last decade. These numbers may be up to \$1.4 million for bigger universities (with populations of 6000 students or more). In the research, it is also mentioned that the big spenders have the highest competitive advantage in terms of brand positioning and student quality. In addition, a recent report by Times Higher Education (THE) indicates that a four-year state college spends 1,127 pounds for each student enrolled. Another research by THE has shown that the overall sum spent on advertising for higher education exceeds 300 million pounds in the UK per year.

These circumstances have led to an even harsher competition and in Europe, now we observe that even some state universities demand student fees. Their endeavor to stay in the competition has led to their engagement in professional advertising, instead of improving their academic and social contributions (Gibbs and Murphy, 2009). Furthermore, while promoting their rankings or their reputation, universities are now making use of non-academic features, such as athletic achievements or star professors with whom students will probably have no direct teaching experience. Yet again, in their ethical argument, Gibbs and Murphy

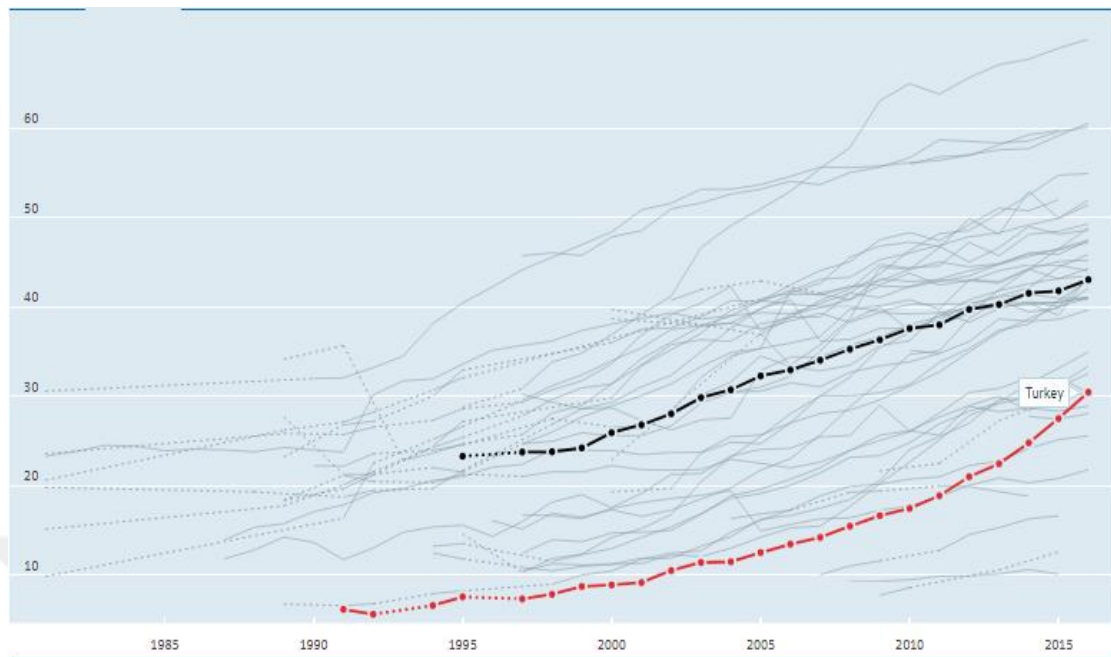
conclude that universities are one of the most value-laden institutions in a modern society and they have an ethical, social and cultural role; however, instead of this reputation they prefer that of a technically progressive service organization who is willing to undertake any mission given to them by stakeholders who now appear to be in charge of all educational processes.

2.8.2. Massification

The higher education system has seen a transition process from ‘serving the elite’ into a position of massification due to an unprecedented growth of the number of universities since 1989 (Hawkins, Mok and Neubauer, 2014). Furthermore, many advanced economies have gone through this surge almost simultaneously; in mid-1960s, early 1980s and mid-1990s. Today, in such developed countries as the UK and the USA, approximately one out of every three 19-23 year-olds has a higher education registry (Douglass, 2004). This number is much higher than Trow’s (1974) bench mark of 15 percent for the elite-mass distinction; which states that any product that is accessible by a population of more than 15 percent ceases to be regarded as exclusive or elite and thus becomes a mass produce. This shows that university education has been seen as not ‘elite’ for a few decades now. The OECD data in Chart 2 shows the percentage of people with tertiary education in all OECD countries through the years 1981 to 2016 compared to the whole population. The black line shows the average of all OECD countries, which has risen from 23.30 percent to 43.07 in two decades. Almost all countries have shown a rising inclination as the chart suggests. The red line represents Turkey, which has risen from 6.15 to 30.46 in two and a half decades despite being below the average higher education data, yet bearing a significant rise compared to the average.

In addition, the aforementioned privatization of higher education institutions has generated a substantial need for professionalism in marketing their services and also to diversify their products, which in this case are educational opportunities. This massification around the globe has also brought about new difficulties as now universities are in a position to harbor a more heterogeneous student profile (van Vught, 2009), which has led them to proliferate their offerings to get the attention of a wider range of population, also to compete effectively, and to specialize in certain fields. This not only reduces their cost, but also provides them with a greater competitive advantage (Duchesneau and Wihry, 2002; Glass et al., 2002).

Chart 2: Population with tertiary education in OECD countries



Source: OECD (2017) Retrieved from <https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm#indicator-chart> Retrieval Date 24 January 2018

Tendencies of massification have also led to the rise of a new genre – mega universities, which exploit computerized telecommunication technologies for the purposes of mass education, whose student body reach up to 100.000. While in 1996 there were only 11 mega universities with a total of 2.830.000 students, today 33 operate with over 10 million students (collegestats.org, 2009).

With the conviction that improving higher education enrollment numbers would also improve the standards of their society and also add to their struggle in surviving or gaining advantage in the globalizing world, governments have been strictly pursuing this policy of massification (Teixeira et al, 2013). This is especially true about the countries with developing economies; in line with the global tendencies, European and Asian countries' decision-makers are putting these policies into practice to further their position worldwide (Deem, Mok, and Lucas, 2008). Massification does not only raise expectations about the student population, but also its diversification (Scott, 1995). Another outcome that is expected of mass higher education is that it will perform a more diversified range of roles than the former form of 'elite' education by promoting a broader spectrum of work-skills, hence elevating the adaptation faculties of a country to new technological developments,

and also to social advances. The task that higher education institutions are expected to accomplish as promoters of economical advance and enlargement are to satisfy policy-makers in these matters (Yusuf and Nabeshima, 2007).

The massification process that the world has undergone has also brought about new sectors and new departments, which were founded and funded to serve the aforementioned function of diversifying universities' professional offerings. They were also founded because it is much less costly for higher education institutions to start new departments than it is to sustain research-based exclusive departments; moreover, they can serve better the above-mentioned heterogeneous student population this way (Teichler, 1988; Palfreyman and Tapper, 2012). Although one would assume that as a result of the profit-oriented structure of private universities, they would be more precautionary and would undertake a less risky policy of founding fewer departments, some studies have suggested that they lean towards founding the most demanded and the least financially demanding departments of their public competitors, thus having more departments without having to take great risks (Teixeira and Amaral, 2001; Wells et al., 2007). This shows that private universities do not always provide less departmental options than public ones.

2.8.3. Competition

Higher education in many countries has been witnessing an elevated competition due to the endeavor for a better position in the world economy, the world-wide mobile nature of research and development, and the race for the acquisition of the best-skilled information staff throughout the world (Naidoo, 2014). These being the most obvious reasons for the competition in higher education, Shahjahan and Morgan (2016) suggest that the world-wide competition is not only linked with economic or political roots, but it can also be rooted in sociological self-image. Countries' self-confidence, derived from its people feeling part of the global world, though often ignored by researchers, has a pushing effect in their higher education policies. Gaining value and having a sense of ownership in the ruling cultural values are just as determinative as the rest in the extent to which a country becomes a part of this competition.

As for the competition in a university-based scale, it is a direct result of their efforts to have a bigger percentage of allotment from private firms and NGOs (Rossi,

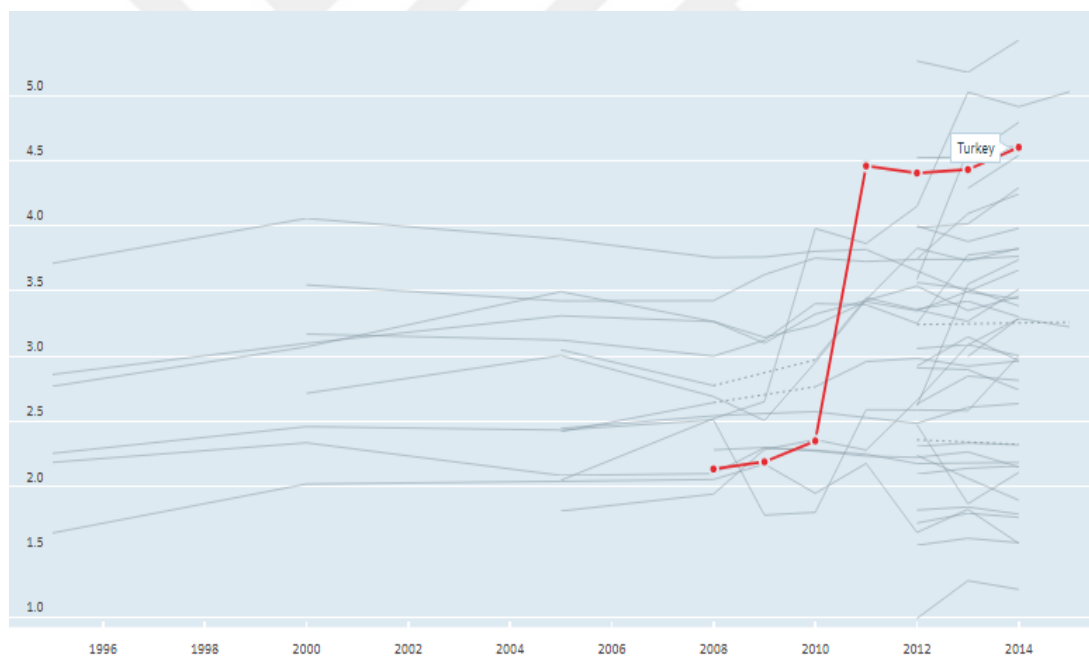
2010). However, the research on this matter is quite conflicting. Some researchers such as Parsons and Platt (1973) have asserted that higher education institutions are by nature inclined to ramify and widen their structures as a result of competition; yet some others (Dimaggio and Powell, 1991) are convinced that the case is quite the opposite; they will diminish their multifariousness. There is much conflict about the consequences of competition on diversity, too. Aldrich (1979) put forward the idea that competition makes universities hunt after specific areas, others (Hannan and Freeman, 1977; Aldersley, 1995) claim that competition hinders renovation.

Another aspect competition brings to higher education is that they now need to attract more achieving students. This has a profound effect in the way that they determine their pricing strategies. It is not only paramount to offer their services with a reasonable price, pricing is also vital to form an image that is befitting to the marketing strategy they intend to follow; because while a corporation would not desire to determine a price so high that it would be stripped of its potential clientele, it would also not desire to determine a price so low that their brand image is hurt (Gu, 2015). This pricing contest –as can be named – has also become geographically critical too; for now many factors affect a student’s choice of university, including location, facilities, grants, etc. To exemplify; two universities offering the same educational and extra-curricular opportunities may have very different fees as a result of their location; which can be a direct result of the competitors existing in the same area, or other means which can be called the perks of the geographical location (Gu, 2015). Singell and Waddell (2007) manifest more surprising results regarding the price determining strategies followed by higher education institutions. Their study showed that universities negotiate intentionally, in a planned process with their competitors who function within the same area regarding their tuition figures, which we can interpret as their pricing strategies are being formed both by them and their opponents. This is perfectly in line with the Nash equilibrium. They act together to survive, or to thrive in their market. The well-renowned theory basically suggests that no actors in a market will lose unless they deviate from the game strategy that is determined via a consensus of all the players (Nash, 1950).

As the above information intimates, universities do not only compete for students, but they also compete for reputation. Namely, being called a research university, or to make a name in that field are mostly about reputation; however,

undergraduate programmes are more affected by location-based parameters, and are more affected by the competitors in that area (Gu, 2015). Competition for reputation comes in a national level, which makes reputation another important factor in quality and pricing strategies. Chart 3 shows the percentages of public spending on tertiary education in OECD countries compared to their GDPs. The red line represents Turkey, which has shown a dramatic increase from 2.134 to 4.601 in only one decade. In the chart, Turkey shows the most abrupt increase, which can be explained by the number of private universities rocketing in those exact years. The Turkish government has tripled its investment in higher education within the past decade, because of the aforementioned concerns of national development trying to match that of the fast developing world, and also the competition, along with a growing number of students attending higher education.

Chart 3: Public spending on tertiary education in OECD countries



Source: OECD (2017) Retrieved from <https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/public-spending-on-education.htm#indicator-chart> Retrieval Date 24 January 2018

Another topic that captivates the interest of a considerable number of decision-makers is international ranking scores as students look at it deciding which university to go to, university chair-people for recruitment, investors while deciding whether to fund a university. The human capital that governments have is also measured by the international status of their universities. The added value that

governments expect of universities, the work-power, and another venue which is international students are also major concerns that are covered with universities of international reputation (Marconi, 2013). University administrations try to attract foreign students for tuition fees, to increase quality or simply to elevate cross-cultural relations. For this reason, international rankings contribute to the competition among universities because the simplest way to improve their ranking is the betterment of university resources, namely the lecturers, research and facilities (Marconi and Ritzen, 2015).

Many universities now use global rankings as a determinant of their short and long-term strategic planning (Hou, Morse, and Chiang, 2012). For example, University of Minnesota has declared that it will be among the top three research universities in the world (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2007) and Taiwan University aims to reach the top 100 by its 80th anniversary (National Taiwan University, 2008). Many Turkish universities have also determined a similar policy, for example Ibn-i Haldun University set out ‘to become a real research university that ranks among the top 100 universities in the world’ (Ibn-i Haldun University Mission Statement, 2017). Likewise, Gebze Technical University has in its strategic plan this objective: “to become a world-class university with high quality education and research” (Gebze Technical University Strategic plan, 2017).

There are quite a few world-wide ranking systems which make use of different parameters in their measurements, most famous of which are QS ranking (Quacquarelli Symonds Limited) of Times Higher Education Supplement, ARWU (Academic Ranking of World Universities) of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and HEEACT’s (Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan) ‘Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities’. Some of the common criteria for these institutions are quality of research, academicians, academic freedom, administration, facilities, and funding (Hou et al.).

Turkish universities have yet to enjoy a position in the top 100 in any of these ranking systems. In Table 1, there are the names and rankings of the Turkish Universities in 2017 according to the QS ranking system.

Table 1: Turkish Universities in QS Ranking System-2018

University Name	Rank
Bilkent University	421-430
Koç University	431-440
Sabancı University	461-470
Middle East Technical University	471-480
Bogazici University	491-500
Istanbul Technical University	601-650
Hacettepe University	751-800
Ankara University	801-1000
Çukurova University	801+
Gazi University	801+
Istanbul University	801+

Source: QS Ranking System (2018) Retrieved from <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2018> Retrieval Date 11 July 2018

2.9.A Brief Overview of the Higher Education Structure in Turkey

Higher education includes all educational programmes in colleges, higher institutions and vocational schools. Besides these, military and police colleges, art schools, and vocational schools are part of this higher education system. Currently, 185 universities function in Turkey, 73 of which are private-funded while these numbers were much lower only 15 years ago with a total of 76, only 23 of which were private universities. 6.627.505 undergraduate students receive education today, and higher education graduates make up for 11 percent of the population with 5.913.187 (TUIK, 2013). Despite the recent inclination towards higher statistics, this is quite a low participation rate and it means the rise on the demand for higher education will keep up an escalatory disposition. Although now the number of universities is higher than ever, still two third of university applicants are unable to attend any kind of universities, making it still a sort of privilege (Mizikaci, 2003). 1970s witnessed one of the first major changes in university admittance system as a result of a considerable change in demand which was the direct result of the sharp

upward movement in the number of secondary-school graduates and the low capacity of universities being unable to meet this demand.

When it comes to the administrative structure of universities in Turkey, in 1946, a university bill passed granting academic autonomy to universities, only to be altered after the military coup of 1980 with which a new constitution was written in 1981 stripping universities of their full autonomy and institutionalizing government involvement in universities with a new entity – Turkish Higher Education Council (YOK) (Turkish Constitution Legislation Number 2547). From then on, YOK became the organ overseeing all structural and curricular decisions in Turkish Higher Education Institutions. The same legislation also gives the government the authority to establish new universities and the right to appoint tasks to YOK to modify universities. The president of the country stations university presidents and faculty deans are stationed by a YOK committee, a regulation which also includes private universities, and their educational programmes are supervised by YOK as well.

Currently, Turkish higher education is structured as a quite centralized and controlled phenomenon as the ultimate puissance over it is YOK itself, which is also an institution without complete autonomy. YOK (2000) sets the following manifestation of mission and framework:

- Universities that have more than one faculties are founded by the state and by law as public institutions.
- Universities can also be founded by private foundations with the supervision and regulation of the state.
- Turkish higher education institutions belong to three sub-categories: universities; military schools, police academies, and vocational schools which are subordinate to the ministry of education.
- The university is the principal higher education institution to have academic autonomy and a public legal identity. Its responsibility is to practice high-level educational performance, scientific research, and publications. It consists of faculties, graduate degree programs, faculties of higher education, conservatories, vocational schools and centers of research and applied education.
- There is a tuition fee for universities. However, academically higher achieving students are offered full or partial bursary.

- Attending higher education is dependent on the result of a centralized exam practiced by the Center of Student Selection and Placement (OSYM).

Public universities and other public higher education institutions are funded by the state. Average expenses per student in higher education as of 2014 is 8.927 US Dollars (OECD, 2018), (UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, 1998). Likewise, in a report provided by Turkish Institute of Statistics (TUIK, 2016) public spending on education was 6.2% of the Gross National Product (GNP) 74.2% of which was state funded and 29.8% of the total expenditure was on tertiary education.

A bill passed in 1986 endowing non-profit foundation universities which is the basic factor pushing the impetus towards more private higher education institutions. Presently, of the total enrolments in higher education, private universities constitute for 13.2%, which seemed unimaginable as back as 2000 according to Mizikaci (2003) compared to the 2.3% private enrolment rate in that year.

3. A RESEARCH INTO THE USAGE OF GENERIC STRATEGIES BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN TURKEY

The study will look into three private universities in Turkey to understand how befitting their marketing communications activities are to Porter's framework. Bilkent University, Koç University and Sabancı University were selected as a result of screening their performances in terms of international and domestic rankings. The marketing communications activities of these universities will be scrutinized through new digital media, which is where young population mostly resort for information. A research by TUIK shows that the rate of internet users among young population between ages 16-24 is 90.0% (TUIK, 2017). Moreover, according to data provided by Ministry of Youth and Sports and IPSOS (2014), the three most commonly used social media in Turkey among young population (aged between 19-30) are Facebook (89%), Instagram (56%) and Twitter (45%). In light of this information, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts of these universities will be examined. These universities have been selected for the research because, as mentioned before, they hold the top three positions from Turkey in international QS ranking system (2018), and private universities' student acceptance scores in Turkey. The three universities will be compared in terms of how many messages they share belonging to each generic strategy in these social media during the university selection period of 2017.

3.1. The Objective of the Study

As stated before, the survival of private higher education institutions has become much harder due to the recent tendencies of massification, privatization and competition. As a result, the need for professionalism within the marketing communications context of higher education has become much more acute, and the most straightforward way to achieve it is to adopt marketing strategies that have proven practical for other sectors. Porter's generic strategies can be adoptable in such markets not only because of their comprehensive methodology, but also because they are of a rather simplistic nature, which makes them much more applicable in new sectors (Porter, 1980).

Turkey is yet another country where privatization has taken hold within the past decade, and where private universities now face the challenge of competing against other private universities and state universities as well. In this fierce

environment, some have risen to the challenge by keeping their prices reasonable while providing acceptable educational opportunities, while others made their offerings more appealing in terms of academics, facilities and other lanes of competition, and some kept their target limited to some departments, or locations, appealing to a specific clientele. This study seeks to evaluate the marketing communications activities of private universities in Turkey on most preferred social media in Turkey by young generation: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter according to a research by Ministry of Youth and Sports and IPSOS (2014).

The main objective of this study is to measure the usage of Porter's strategies in the marketing communications of Turkish private higher education. Many studies have been conducted to measure the applicability of the Porterian framework, not only in many countries of different financial and cultural settings, but also in various sectors; yet few have focused on its applicability in education, let alone tertiary education. In light of this obvious exigence, it is intended in this study to provide insight on how well this aim is achieved by investigating and categorizing the new media messages of three accomplished private universities in Turkey.

3.2.Statement of the Problem

With the elevation of a global, market-oriented economic structure, the circumstances of higher education have also shifted from run-of-the-mill into demanding, shifty inclinations. Universities now face a ramification of expectations and requirements. As elaborated before, both developed and developing economies have come to acknowledge the significance of higher education in terms of economic development. Furthermore, the World Bank (2000) regards tertiary education as the propulsive force leading the knowledge economy, all the while encouraging the European Union to promote European higher education and research (Gibbs and Murphy, 2009).

This ever-growing private higher education market, whose growth has especially rocketed within the last five years (UNESCO Institute for statistics, 2017), has also led to an increase in the competition. Because of this, now they need to come up with strong action plans and put them into practice in a rewarding way. Public universities have a head start because they do not need to make profit, they have a longer history, and they are provided by the state; as a result, private higher

education institutions must survive against both other private universities and public universities as well. Furthermore, they are not only to concern themselves with the matters of economy and the amount of enrollments, they also need to remain lucrative and competitive as well as providing a satisfying range of educational programmes with a good price. Taking into account all these special circumstances in a difficult market, it is especially vital to have a deep understanding of the sector and the marketing communications strategies that are to be followed in it (Wilkins and Huisman, 2011).

Higher education as a market has now been widely accepted throughout the world, especially in countries like Britain, The USA, Canada and Australia where English is the first language and the practicality and convenience of following marketing policies which have proven useful in the business world have been well-established (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006). Palihawadana and Holmes (1999) state that higher education became more market oriented in that they now prioritize marketing in management methodologies, regard students as customers of educational opportunities, have a more solid view on what these customers need, and measure how satisfied they are, all of which are the standard processes of all strategic communication activities. We now face higher education institutions who have adopted a customer centered perspective instead of the former production-oriented one (Smith, 1989). Unlike former tertiary education institutions, whose main concern was academic work, today's higher education institutions are now obliged to at least consider, if not prioritize financial concerns too.

Despite the aforementioned inclination, higher education institutions still do not have so much expertise in corporate communication or marketing communications as different market players do, such as telecommunication or computer firms; which raises questions as to how they try to sustain their competitive positions. Different marketing communications strategies have been proposed to understand the educational context, and yet few have been put forward about marketing in universities (Knight, 2003). Furthermore, according to Volberda and Elfring (2002), environs is very important in terms of business and management activities. As a result, we need to have a better look into the education sector, particularly at the university level, to understand which path they follow in their marketing endeavors, and how successfully they reach their targets via these paths.

As the hitherto context suggests, universities usually make use of marketing strategies that have been validated in the other sectors. There are many reasons for them to adopt these strategies, most important of which are a) to be prepared for any unforeseen circumstances, b) to appeal to students, and c) to offer a higher-quality education (Narver and Slater, 1990). However, more importantly, they adopt these strategies d) to acquire a competitive edge in their sector (Cheung and Chan, 2010). Being stuck in the dilemma of keeping the already-existing educational culture, or the contemporary tendency of acquiring a profit-oriented structure; higher education institutions are now in an even harder equation to acquire and sustain this competitive edge.

The topic of strategic management has undergone a considerable change in terms of how every company used to be perceived as one single case comparable only with itself whereas now they tend to be categorized into larger segments, finding shared features between them (Dess and Davis, 1984). So, in a specific market, companies are compared, and more integrated perspectives are developed. Porter's (1980) generic strategies are particularly helpful in that they successfully categorize a countless number of strategies into a few, and quite comprehensively so (Kim, Nam and Stimpert, 2004). As has been thoroughly explained, Porter's generic strategies suggest that a company, which does not follow a consistent path, is unlikely to be successful and have competitive edge in its sector. Thus, they have to acquire one of the given strategies if they wish to survive in the market (though some exceptions exist who have acquired a mix strategy and prospered). Porter (1980) asserts that his theory is applicable in innumerable different cases, and his claim has been supported by research, too (Dess and Davis, 1984).

Taking into account that higher education institutions desire to adopt strategies whose use and viability have been demonstrated in other markets, and also taking generic strategies' practicality in many different businesses into account, a research on generic strategies and their use in higher education institutions will particularly benefit academicians and those who strive in the market. Despite several studies in the field that are centered on state and private funded universities and their marketing strategies, they are more concerned with the developed economies in the world while developing countries too are adapting their higher education policies to the world tendencies (Deem, Mok and Lucas, 2008). Turkey, another developing

country, has also been undergoing a noticeable change in its higher education. After the 80s, the number of universities has risen dramatically – right now 185 universities function in Turkey. But this improvement in numbers came to private universities in the last 5 years. Now that there are many more private universities in Turkey, they face new challenges; they look for new paths to grow the number of their students, elaborate their research and facilities, and to have international recognition. In addition to these, they have to arrange their cost and services in accordance with public universities. All in all, the nouvelle profit-oriented higher education institutions have to invent methods to acquire a recognized position, whereas the old ones have to invent methods to keep theirs.

In conclusion, it is important that generic strategies' use be researched in higher education, both for the sake of higher education, which is in dire need for such a framework, and for the sake of understanding how much use it has provided in yet another market. It is also important that how much contribution it does to the marketing communications activities of successful universities be assessed thoroughly.

3.3.Limitations of the Study

The study at hand harbors several limitations concerning the number of cases and variety of media. Although three most common social media in Turkey (Ministry of Youth and Sports and IPSOS, 2014) have been examined, digital media contains a vast variety. For a study in this field, parameters must be abundant, yet few have been established.

Secondly, classifying the communicative messages on digital media depends on non-measurable concepts. Furthermore, qualitative findings may fashionably present a subjectivity factor, making it more challenging to assess the results.

Lastly, the three universities are located in Istanbul and Ankara, which are the two most populated cities in Turkey. This is of particular significance in terms of limitations because each university can be deemed a focuser of location.

3.4.Research Design

This research utilizes a comparative content analysis focusing on the specific aspects of a social sharing platform. Content analysis is defined as a systematic,

repeatable technique whereby the words of a text are summarized through smaller content categories with encodings based on certain rules. Content analysis is applied to determine the existence of specific words or concepts within a bulk of context. In social sciences, content analysis can be used as a means of analysis in platforms like figures, letters, historic documents, newspaper headlines, etc (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). The primary operation carried out via content analysis is to put together similar data within the framework of particular themes and phenomena and to interpret these organizing them in a way that the reader can understand. To accomplish this basic goal, there are some steps to follow during the execution of content analysis. They are the encoding of the data, determining the categories, organizing the codes and categories and interpreting the data after identifying them (Şimşek and Yıldırım, 2011).

The content under examination in this study is the contents of the marketing communications activities of three universities. They will be categorized by looking into what kind of message is conveyed. Three accomplished private universities have been chosen and their social media messages during student college selection period of 2017 have been examined by looking into what generic strategy these messages fall under.

The contents of the Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts of the universities will be analyzed by determining their generic category. Topic by topic, what these posts tell and whether they are differentiator, cost leader or focuser messages will be shown in tables. The overall numbers of these posts and their strategies will be shown in another table in evaluations. The answers to the following questions were sought after:

RQ1: In terms of their content, which generic strategy of Porter's do the social media posts of the universities belong to?

RQ2: What distribution do the social media where the universities share their contents show in terms of message contents and the generic strategy that they belong to?

3.4.1. Selection of the Cases

The universities were selected according to QS international ranking scores and their admittance scores of Turkish Higher Education Exam. They are the top three private universities in Turkey in both categories. As shown in Table 1, Bilkent University ranks between 421-430, Koç University 431-440 and Sabancı University 461-470 in QS ranking system. Table 2 shows the private universities' ranking in Turkey in terms of their admittance scores. Bilkent University accepts full scholarship students between scores 650-699. Koç University and Sabancı University accept full scholarship students between scores 600-649.

Table 2: Private Universities' Rankings in Turkey in Admittance Scores

Uni. Rank	University	Score Range
1.	İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University	650-699
2.	Koç University	600-649
3.	Sabancı University	600-649
4.	Başkent University	500-549
5.	Atılım University	450-499
6.	Yeditepe University	450-499
7.	Çankaya University	450-499
8.	TOBB University of Economics and Technology	400-449
9.	Acıbadem University	400-449
10.	Doğuş University	400-449

Source: http://tr.urapcenter.org/2016/2016_t6.php Retrieval Date 12 July 2018

3.4.1.1. Case 1: Bilkent University

Being the first private university in Turkey, Bilkent University was founded in 1984 in the Turkish capital Ankara, starting its educational activities in 1986. It has a student population of 13.000, 65% of whom are bursary students. It has 29 undergraduate, 58 graduate programmes. The language of instruction is English. The

campus area covers an area of 500 hectares, also hosting the largest academic library in the country (Bilkent University, 2018).

3.4.1.2.Case 2: Koç University

Having been founded in 1993 in İstanbul, Koç University has a student population of 6.700, 73% of whom are bursary students. It has 22 undergraduate, 51 graduate programmes. The language of instruction is English. The main campus covers an area of 160 hectares along with many research centers located in different parts of the city (Koç University, 2018).

3.4.1.3.Case 3: Sabancı University

Having been founded in 1994 in İstanbul, Sabancı University currently harbors around 5.000 undergraduate and graduate students in total. 61% of the students have a scholarship. It has more than 500 foreign students, which is higher than most universities in Turkey in percentages (YOK, 2017). The language of instruction is English. It also has a top place in terms of academic publications (around 2 annually per academician). The campus covers an area of 119 hectares. Within the campus, they harbor a technology transfer office to promote scientific research and business collaboration (Sabancı University, 2018).

3.5.Data Collection and Analysis

The data has been collected through social media – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which have the most usage rate among young population (Ministry of Youth and Sports and IPSOS, 2014). For the sake of determining the contribution of Porter’s generic strategies to the success of universities, the top three private universities in Turkey were selected. To determine their level of achievement, QS ranking system and admittance scores of Turkish central exam were taken into account (QS Ranking System, 2018) (urapcenter.org, 2017). The sampling process has been conducted purposively – the universities were chosen according to the needs of the research. Data collection is vital in all studies, as the data is intended to develop a better insight of a theoretical framework (Bernard 2002). Later, it becomes necessary that selecting the method of gathering data and from what medium the data will be collected be carried out with reasonable judgment, particularly because no

amount of analyses can compensate for improperly gathered data (Bernard et al. 1986).

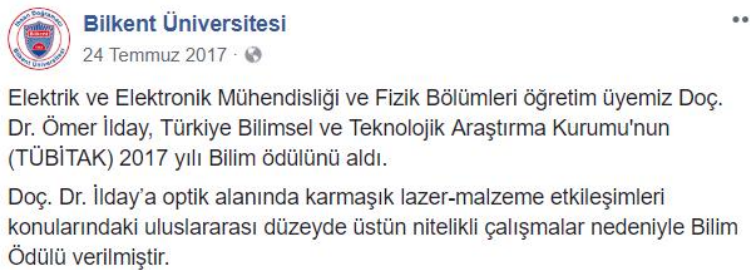
The purposive sampling method is the deliberate selection of a participant or cases owing to the qualities that they possess. It is a non-random method of selecting participants. To explain, the conductor of the research determines what is to be learnt and sets out to find cases which can offer the sought-after information (Bernard, 2002; Lewis and Sheppard, 2006). In this research, the universities, which have a leading position in the market, were assumed to provide the desired insight into what kind of an effect the generic strategies hold over the success of educational marketing communications activities.


3.6. Findings

The findings show the posts by each university during the university selection period of 2017 and 10 days before – between July 1 and July 26, 2017. The contents have been categorized into the mediums where they were shared, and the repetitive data has been excluded. Most of the contents were shared in all three mediums. The contents have been labelled as the generic strategy they belong to. Below the posts, a short description has been given as to what message content they give.

3.6.1. Bilkent University's Advertising Activities

3.6.1.1. Facebook Posts



 **Bilkent Üniversitesi** 24 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

Elektrik ve Elektronik Mühendisliği ve Fizik Bölümleri öğretim üyemiz Doç. Dr. Ömer İlday, Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu'nun (TÜBİTAK) 2017 yılı Bilim ödülünü aldı.

Doç. Dr. İlday'a optik alanında karmaşık lazer-malzeme etkileşimleri konularındaki uluslararası düzeyde üstün nitelikli çalışmalar nedeniyle Bilim Ödülü verilmiştir.



Post about the accomplishment of a university academician – Differentiator Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

21 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Fizik Bölümü'nü tanımak ister misiniz?

Fizik, bilinmeyeni araştıran ve keşfeden bir bilimdir. Madde ve enerjinin yapı ve etkileşimini inceleyerek evrenin işleyişini aydınlatır.

Fizik Bölümü Tanıtım Filmi: <http://bit.ly/2uDqJtL>



www.youtube.com

YOUTUBE.COM

Video post about a department introducing its higher attributes –
Differentiator/Focuser Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

20 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Kimya Bölümü'nü tanımak ister misiniz?

Maddenin özelliklerini atom ve molekül düzeyinde inceleyen kimya bilimi, bu özelliklerin değişimindeki temel doğa yasalarını araştırır; elde ettiği verilerle yeni ürün ve üretim yöntemleri geliştirir. #TercihimBilkent

Kimya Bölümü Tanıtım Filmi: <http://bit.ly/2uaYb8b>



www.youtube.com

Video post about a department introducing its higher attributes –
Differentiator/Focuser Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

19 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Bilkentli Rehberler sizi bekliyor!

Tanıtım Turlarımıza 26 Temmuz'a kadar hafta sonları dahil her gün sabah saat 9'dan akşam saat 7'ye kadar dilediğiniz zamanda gelebilirsiniz.

#TercihimBilkent

Meslek Seminerleri: <http://bit.ly/2vCMdnt>



Post announcing a service of university selection counselling – Differentiator Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

19 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Moleküler Biyoloji ve Genetik Bölümü'nü tanımak ister misiniz?

Evrenin gizlerine ışık tutan moleküler biyoloji ve genetik bilimi, genlerin yapısını ve işlevlerini, canlıların evrimini ve biyolojik özelliklerini inceler.

#TercihimBilkent

Moleküler Biyoloji ve Genetik Bölümü Tanıtım Filmi: <http://bit.ly/2uBXWFi>

Video post about a department introducing its higher attributes – Differentiator/Focuser Message

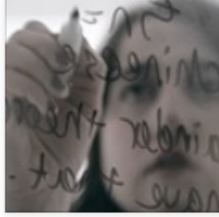


Bilkent Üniversitesi

18 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Matematik Bölümü'nü yakından tanımak ister misiniz?
Matematik, insan aklının yarattığı en eski ortak değerdir. İnsanlık tarihi boyunca kuşaktan kuşağa aktarılan soru ve buluşlarıyla bu bilim, tüm pozitif bilimlerin ve teknolojik gelişmelerin merkezindedir. #TercihimBilkent
Matematik Bölümü Tanıtım Filmi: <http://bit.ly/2tBY1oi>



Matematik Bölümü - Teaser

YOUTUBE.COM

Video post about a department introducing its higher attributes – Differentiator/Focuser Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

17 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Elektrik ve Elektronik Mühendisliği Bölümü'nden Yrd. Doç. Dr. Emine Ülkü Sarıtaş, Bilim Kahramanları Derneği tarafından Genç Bilim İnsanı Ödülüne layık görüldü.
<http://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/www/genc-bilim-insani-odulu/>



Post about the accomplishment of a university academician – Differentiator Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

16 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Üniversite adaylarına meslekler ve iş alanları konusunda seminerler düzenleniyor. Meslek Seminerleri: 19, 22, 24 Temmuz 2017
www.meslektanitim.bilkent.edu.tr
#TercihimBilkent



Post about educational seminar – Differentiator Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

14 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Kampüsten...
#TercihimBilkent
www.adaybilgi.bilkent.edu.tr



Video post introducing the campus – Differentiator Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

13 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

Gelecekteki mesleğinizi seçerken yanınızda Bilkent var. Bilkent Üniversitesi, tercih döneminde üniversite adaylarına meslekler ve iş alanları konusunda bilgi vermek amacıyla Meslek Seminerleri düzenlemektedir.
www.meslektanitim.bilkent.edu.tr
#TercihimBilkent

Post about educational event – Differentiator Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi

11 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

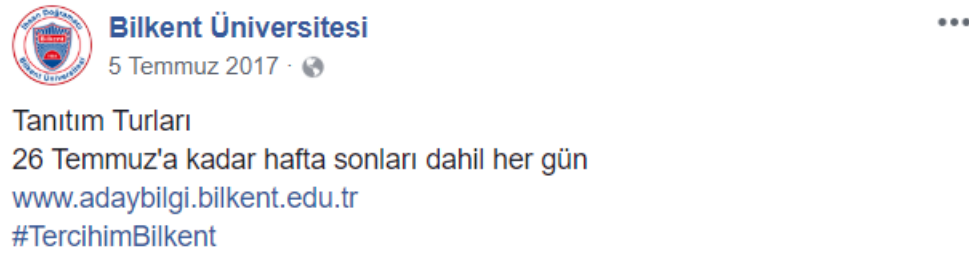
LYS sonuçları açıklandı! Geleceğinizi belirleyecek tercihlerinizde başarılar diliyoruz ve sizi desteklemek için buradayız.
www.adaybilgi.bilkent.edu.tr
#TercihimBilkent #LYS



Post declaring support for university candidates – Differentiator Message



Video post introducing the campus – Differentiator Message



Post informing about campus tours – Differentiator Message

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/BilkentUniversitesi/> Retrieval Date 14 July 2018

Table 3: Bilkent University Facebook Posts Categorization

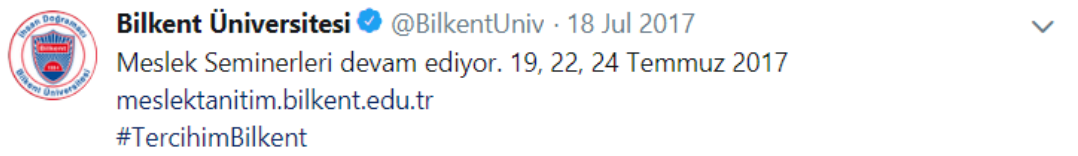
Bilkent University	Facebook Posts
Differentiator Messages	13
Cost Leader Messages	0
Focuser Messages	4

Table 3 shows the numeric summary of Bilkent University's Facebook posts. They include 13 differentiator messages and 4 focuser messages which possess the characteristics of a differentiator.

3.6.1.2. Twitter Posts



Post about educational event – Differentiator Message



Post about educational event – Differentiator Message



Post about special scholarship – Cost Leader Message



Bilkent Üniversitesi @BilkentUniv · 6 Jul 2017
Bilkent eduroam ailesine katıldı. eduroam.bilkent.edu.tr @Tubitak
@TubitakUlakbim



Post informing about a new service – Differentiator Message

Source: <https://twitter.com/BilkentUniv> Retrieval Date 14 July 2018


Table 4: Bilkent University Twitter Posts Categorization

Bilkent University	Twitter Posts
Differentiator Messages	3
Cost Leader Messages	1
Focuser Messages	0

Table 4 shows the numeric summary of Bilkent University’s Twitter posts that are not shared on Facebook. They include 3 differentiator messages and 1 cost leader message.

3.6.1.3.Instagram Posts



 bilkentuniv • Takip Et

bilkentuniv Yaz yağmurunun güzelliği...
buketbayraktaar @reburak
jakewhatevs Kampüsün güzelliği ❤️
esins11 ❤️ 🌈 🌿 🍀 😊
kkaya674 İnallah birgün orda izlemek n olur :D
umutonderr1 güzel okulumm♥
garden.stone_ Oxford kitapları için dm (İngilizce ders kitapları aradığınız hersey burada)
enuygunlar En yeni ayakkabı ve çanta modelleri ile buyurun sayfamıza
erkinsahsuvar Ses olsa daha güzel olaca
chileksu Bilkent Üniversitesi'ni seçecek olursanız pişman olmayacaksınız emin ol Çünkü ben pişman girdim, gururla ayrıld Hep de burnumda tüter!

❤️ 💬
4.548 görüntüleme
22 TEMMUZ 2017

Video post showing the campus – Differentiator Message

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/bilkentuniv/> Retrieval Date 14 July 2018

Table 5: Bilkent University Instagram Posts Categorization

Bilkent University	Instagram Posts
Differentiator Messages	1
Cost Leader Messages	0
Focuser Messages	0

Table 5 shows the numeric summary of Bilkent University’s Instagram posts that are not shared on Facebook. They include 1 differentiator message.

3.6.2. Koç University’s Advertising Activities

3.6.2.1. Facebook Posts



Post about student activity – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

26 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

Tüm öğrencilere hayallerine giden yolda başarılar dileriz. #HikayeniYarat #Tercih2017



Post about university selection – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

25 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

Öğrenci dediğin özenlidir 😊 #hikayeniyarat #tercih2017



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

24 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

Öğrenci dediğin... #HikayeniYarat #Tercih2017



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

22 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

Öğrenci dediğin... #HikayeniYarat #Tercih2017



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message



Post informing about departmental variety – Differentiator Message



Post informing about a special service – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

20 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Öğrenci dediğin doğayı sever... #hikayeniyarat #tercih2017



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

19 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Üniversite öğrencisi dediğin güzel havanın tadını çıkarır. #HikayeniYarat #Tercih2017



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

19 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Uluslararası eğitim imkanlarımız ile başarı #hikayeniyarat! #Tercih2017



Post informing about international educational opportunities – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

18 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Kampüsten küçük ipuçlarında bugün: öğrenci dediğin... #hikayeniyarat #tercih2017



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message

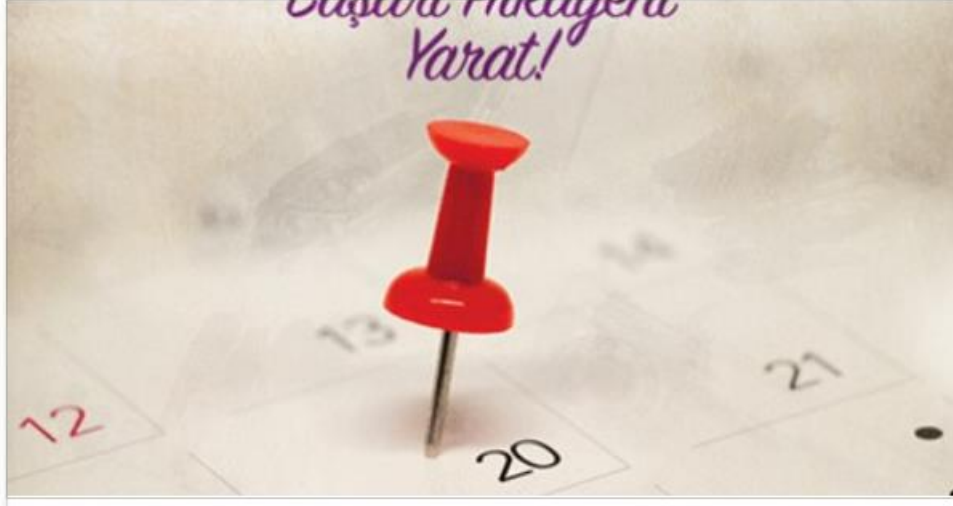


Koç Üniversitesi

18 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Koç Üniversitesi'nde iş hayatına eksiksiz şekilde hazırlanırsın...
#HikayeniYarat #Tercih2017



Post informing about university opportunities – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

18 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Koç Üniversitesi hakkında merak ettiğin tüm soruların için... #HikayeniYarat
#Tercih2017



Post informing about a special service – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

17 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Üniversiteli bir öğrencinin hayatından kesitlerimiz devam ediyor. Öğrenci dediğin... #hikayeniyarat #tercih2017



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message



Koç Üniversitesi

13 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Öğrenci dediğin ne yapar, günlerini nasıl geçirir bilmek ister misin? Senin için kampüsün çeşitli yerlerine ufak ipuçları bıraktık. Tanıtım döneminde bizi takip et, üniversiteli olmaya bir adım yaklaş. #hikayeniyarat #tercih2017



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/kocuniversity/> Retrieval Date 14 July 2018

Table 6: Koç University Facebook Posts Categorization

Koç University	Facebook Posts
Differentiator Messages	15
Cost Leader Messages	0
Focuser Messages	0

Table 6 shows the numeric summary of Koç University’s Facebook posts. They include 15 differentiator messages.

3.6.2.2. Twitter Posts

No extra posts besides the ones shared on Facebook were shared on Koç University’s Twitter account.

3.6.2.3. Instagram Posts



Post about a social media competition promoting campus – Differentiator Message



kocuniversity • Takip Et

kocuniversity Koç Üniversitesi'nde tercih dönemi tüm hızıyla devam ediyor! #HikayeniYarat #tercih2017

Video post showing the campus – Differentiator Message

Source: <https://twitter.com/kocuniversity> Retrieval Date 14 July 2018

Table 7: Koç University Instagram Posts Categorization

Koç University	Instagram Posts
Differentiator Messages	2
Cost Leader Messages	0
Focuser Messages	0

Table 7 shows the numeric summary of Bilkent University's Instagram posts that are not shared on Facebook. They include 2 differentiator messages

3.6.3. Sabancı University's Advertising Activities

3.6.3.1. Facebook Posts

 **Sabancı University** 25 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

Değişim programıyla Hong Kong'a giden öğrencimiz Ipek Köse, sırt çantasıyla gezdiği 10 ülke ve 21 şehri bu dans videosuna sığdırmış! #SabancıOlmak

 **Dancing in 7 countries 13 cities and 100 streets | Ipek from Turkey**
Merhabalar, Sırt çantamla 10 ülke , 21 şehir ve sayısını...
YOUTUBE.COM

Video post about a student accomplishment – Differentiator Message

 **Sabancı University** 25 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

SoruSU Olan?

Lisans adayları ve aileler, sadece linke tıklayarak sorunuzu sorabilirsiniz:
<http://bit.ly/2uvyBe1...> Devamını Gör



Post informing about a special service – Differentiator Message



Sabanci University

24 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Öğrencimiz Melih Kurtaran bir yıl içinde Sabancı Üniversitesi'nde neler yaptığını 50 madde ile anlattı!

Üniversitemizi merak edenlerin yazıyı okumasını tavsiye ederiz 😊

#SabancılıOlmak



Post about a student promoting university – Differentiator Message



Sabanci University canlı yayındaydı.

21 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Bilişim Teknolojileri Profesyonel Yüksek Lisansı



Video post promoting a school programme – Differentiator/Focuser Message



Sabancı University
20 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Mezunumuz ve Malzeme Bilimi ve Nanomühendislik programı öğretim üyemiz Özge Akbulut'un lisans adaylarına bir mesajı var:

"Tercihlerinizi yaparken lisans düzeyindeyken araştırma projelerinde aktif rol alıp araştırmalarda yetkinlik kazanabileceğiniz okulları tercih edin."

Video mesajının tamamını dinlemek için tıklayın.



Video post of a professor/alumni promoting a department – Differentiator/Focuser Message



Sabancı University
19 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Artık nerede olursan ol kampüs turuna çıkabilirsin! 360 Kampüs Turu videomuzla kampüsümüzü gezmeye başla.

İpucu: 360 Kampüs Turu videomuzu cardboard (karton) sanal gerçeklik gözlükleriyle izlemek 360 video deneyimini zenginleştirir 😊



Post about a special service – Differentiator Message

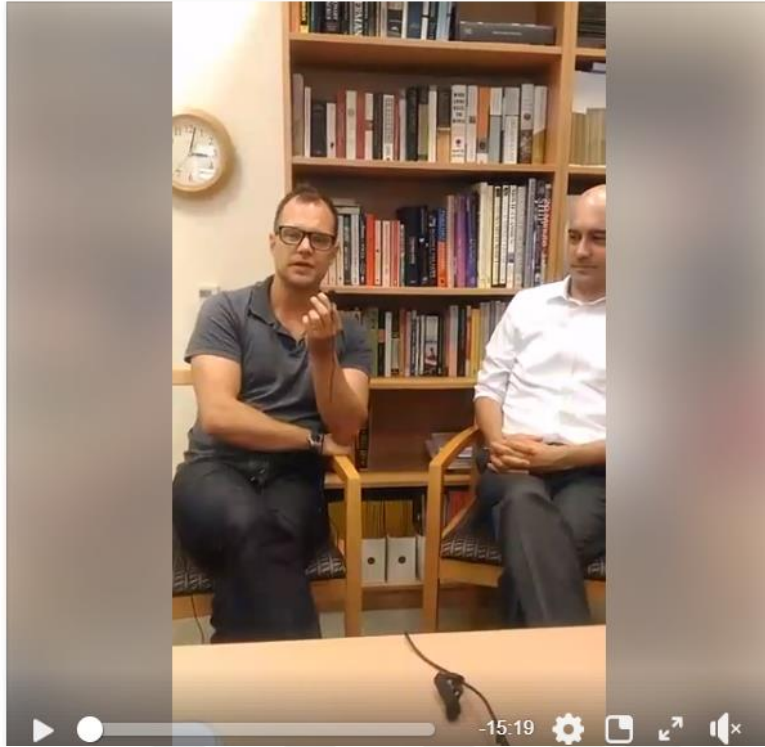


Sabanci University canlı yayındaydı.

18 Temmuz 2017 ·



Endüstri Mühendisliği Lisans Programı



Video post promoting a school programme – Differentiator/Focuser Message



Sabanci University

18 Temmuz 2017 ·



Kurucu Mütevelli Heyeti Başkanımız Güler Sabancı'dan #SabancılıOlmak

<http://tercihim.sabanciuniv.edu/>



Video post of the school foundation CEO promoting university – Differentiator Message



Sabancı University

17 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



YÖK Program Atlası'nda üniversitemizle ilgili arama yaparken "Mühendislik ve Doğa Bilimleri Fakültesi", "Endüstri Mühendisliği Programları", "Sanat ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi" ve "Yönetim Bilimleri Fakültesi" başlıklarıyla arama yapabilirsiniz.



<http://tercihim.sabanciuniv.edu/>

LİSANS ADAYLARININ DİKKATİNE!

YÖK ATLAS HAKKINDA

Üniversitemizin özgün sistemi nedeniyle lisans programlarına değil fakültelerimize öğrenci almaktayız. Bu yüzden YÖK ATLAS VE TERCİH SİHİRBAZI'NDA lisans programlarımız listelenmemektedir.

Sıralama ve kontenjan bilgileri için, "Mühendislik ve Doğa Bilimleri Fakültesi", "Endüstri Mühendisliği Programları", "Sanat ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi" ve "Yönetim Bilimleri Fakültesi" başlıklarıyla arama yapınız.



Post about a special feature of university – Differentiator Message



Sabancı University

17 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Sabancı Üniversitesi öğrencilerinden #SabancıOlmak

Tanıtım Günleri 11-26 Temmuz

<http://tercihim.sabanciuniv.edu/>



Video post of students promoting university – Differentiator Message



Sabanci University canlı yayındaydı.

16 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Yönetim Bilimleri Lisans Programı



Video post promoting a department – Differentiator/Focuser Message



Sabanci University

14 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Tanıtım Günlerimize gelemiyorsan ama aklında sormak istediğin sorular varsa gönüllü öğrenci grubumuzun oluşturduğu WhatsApp grubuna görseldeki QR kodu okutarak ya da bit.ly ile başlayan adresi internet tarayıcına yazarak girebilirsin!



Post introducing a special service – Differentiator Message



Sabanci University canlı yayındaydı.

14 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Siyaset Bilimi Lisans Programı



Video post promoting a department – Differentiator/Focuser Message



Sabanci University

14 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Mezunlarımızdan #SabancılıOlmak

Tanıtım Günleri 11-26 Temmuz

<http://tercihim.sabanciuniv.edu/>



Video post of an alumni promoting university – Differentiator Message



Sabanci University canlı yayındaydı.

13 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Bilgisayar Bilimi ve Mühendisliği Lisans Programı



Video post promoting a department – Differentiator/Focuser Message



Sabanci University

13 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Bugünkü Facebook canlı yayınlarımızda Bilgisayar Mühendisliği ve Mekatronik Mühendisliği programlarımızı anlatıyoruz.

Programlarla ilgili sormak istediklerinizi Öğretim Üyelerimizi dinlerken yorum olarak iletebilirsiniz.

<http://tercihim.sabanciuniv.edu/>



Post introducing a school promotion event – Differentiator Message



Sabancı University

11 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



#LYS sonuçları açıklandı! "Taban Puan ve Kontenjanlar" tablomuzu incelemeyi unutmayın: <http://tercihim.sabanciuniv.edu/taban-puan-ve-kontenjanlar> #SabancıOlma



Post about school introduction activity – Differentiator Message



Sabancı University

10 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐



Lisans programlarımız hakkında öğretim üyelerimizle sohbet etmeye devam ediyoruz! Bugün saat 15:00'da, en çok merak edilen alanlardan birini, Moleküler Biyoloji, Genetik ve Biyomühendislik Lisans Programımızı çok değerli Öğretim Üyemiz Sn. Hüveyda Başağa ile canlı yayında konuşacağız. Davetlisiniz!



Post introducing a school promotion event – Differentiator Message



Sabancı University kapak fotoğrafını güncelledi.



5 Temmuz 2017 · 🌐

Tanıtım Günlerimiz 11 Temmuz'da başlıyor!

Detaylı bilgi: <http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/tr/aday-ogrenciler>

Sabancı Üniversitesi Tanıtım Günleri 11-25 Temmuz 2017... Devamını Gör



Post about school introduction activity – Differentiator Message

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/sabanciuniv.edu/> Retrieval Date 14 July 2018

Table 8: Sabancı University Facebook Posts Categorization

Sabancı University	Facebook Posts
Differentiator Messages	19
Cost Leader Messages	0
Focuser Messages	6

Table 8 shows the numeric summary of Sabancı University's Facebook posts. They include 19 differentiator messages and 6 focuser messages which possess the characteristics of a differentiator.

3.6.3.2. Twitter Posts



Post about alumnae achievements – Differentiator Message



Video post of an alumni promoting university (there are eight more similar posts of different alumnae and students) – Differentiator Message

Sabancı Üniversitesi Retweeted



Bulent Aras @arasbulent · 19 Jul 2017

Uluslararası İlişkiler tercih edeceklere, Google Scholar Türk Dış Politikası listesinde ilk dörtte iki @sabanciu öğretim üyesi. @mmuftuler

Translate Tweet



Professor of International Relations, Koc University Istanbul

Verified email at ku.edu.tr

Cited by 6655

Globalization International political economy European Union Turkish politics Turkish foreign policy



Bulent Aras

Sabancı University

Verified email at sabanciuniv.edu

Cited by 2025

Turkish Foreign Policy Geopolitics Middle East Central Asia

Post informing about professor achievements – Differentiator/Focuser Message



Sabancı Üniversitesi @sabanciu · 17 Jul 2017

Malzeme Bilimi Müh. ve Nanoteknoloji Lisans Prog.'na ilgi duyuyorsan, mezunumuz ve öğretim üyemiz @matist_ozge'nin projelerine mutlaka bak!



Sabancı Vakfı @SabancıVakfi

.@sabanciu mezunu ve öğretim üyesi Dr. Özge Akbulut'un liderliğini yaptığı meme kanseri farkındalığı projesi SU'da. surgitate.com

Post informing about professor projects – Differentiator/Focuser Message

Source: <https://twitter.com/sabanciu> Retrieval Date 14 July 2018

Table 9: Sabancı University Twitter Posts Categorization

Sabancı University	Twitter Posts
Differentiator Messages	12
Cost Leader Messages	0
Focuser Messages	2

Table 9 shows the numeric summary of Sabancı University's Twitter posts that are not shared on Facebook. They include 12 differentiator messages and 2 focuser messages which possess the characteristics of a differentiator.

3.6.3.3. Instagram Posts



Post informing about student activity – Differentiator Message

Source: https://www.instagram.com/sabanci_university/ Retrieval Date 14 July 2018

Table 10: Sabancı University Instagram Posts Categorization

Sabancı University	Instagram Posts
Differentiator Messages	1
Cost Leader Messages	0
Focuser Messages	0

Table 10 shows the numeric summary of Sabancı University’s Instagram posts that are not shared on Facebook. They include 1 differentiator message.

3.7. Evaluations

Table 11: Number of Messages from Each Generic Strategy

Generic Strategy	Bilkent University	Koç University	Sabancı University	Total
Differentiator Messages	17	17	32	66
Cost Leader Messages	1	0	0	1
Focuser Messages	4	0	8	12

Table 11 shows the number of messages shared by each university from each generic genre. It was observed that the most commonly coveted message was differentiation. Bilkent University shared a total of 18 different messages: 17 differentiation, 1 cost leadership and 4 focus. All the focus messages possessed a differentiating nature. Koç University shared a total of 17 messages, all of which are differentiation messages. Sabancı University shared a total of 32 messages, all of which are differentiation messages and 8 of these also share the characteristics of focus.

Evidently, the most commonly intended generic strategy is differentiation with 66 messages – only one message does not bear its characteristics. With 12 posts, focus strategy holds a significant position, too. Of all the 67 messages that have been combed through, only one had cost leadership characteristics. Furthermore, that message did not directly mention cost, reasonable offerings or any other cost leader qualities, but it implied less costly education with a bursary statement for a specific group of student candidates.

Table 12: Message Contents in Numbers

Message Contents	Bilkent Uni.	Koç Uni.	Sabancı Uni.	Total
Academician Accomplishment	2	-	3	5
Departmental Promotion and Variety	4	2	7	13
Special Services, Events and Activities	6	3	8	17
Campus	3	10	-	13
Student Candidate Support	1	1	-	2
Fees, Bursaries	1	-	-	1
Job Opportunities	-	1	-	1
Student Achievement	-	1	3	4
Students, Alumnae Promoting University	-	-	11	11

In terms of the topical description of the posts, all the contents have been categorized into 9 main topics. According to the analysis, the most accentuated features of the universities were special services, events and activities, departmental qualities and campus superiority. However, different universities accentuated different features. While special services, events and activities and departmental superiority were important for each, Koç University put more emphasis on its campus. Similarly, Sabancı University shared many posts of its students and alumnae speaking highly of their university. In terms of contents, fees, bursaries and job opportunities were the least popular in numbers.

According to Porter (1980), a differentiator demands high prices for a quality product or service, thus increasing profitability. If this is modified to higher education, a differentiator college's name commands prestige, its campus and social facilities are favorable, its academic staff and achievements are worthy, and it has high tuition fees and other expenses. In this dataset, cost leadership, which implies reasonable price and offerings, has almost no presence. Porter (1980, 1985) again

states that focusers can target different special segments to achieve competitive advantage. While some firms execute this by working towards a more differentiating identity, others do this leaning towards cost leadership. In a higher education context, focusers may specialize in different departments and promote their expertise at them or they may target specific locations. While almost all of the communicative activities conducted by these three universities bear the characteristics of a differentiator, some of these messages can also be construed as focusers. The universities promoted some of their departments, trying to manifest a level of specialization in them.

These results may have other implications. Firstly, it might be deduced that the most common features affecting university selection are departmental offerings, academic staff and campus. This might also imply that cost leadership strategy is not applicable for higher education institutions. As mentioned before, because of the fact that university choice is a major life decision that has a bigger effect on one's life than most other service choices, it may be ill advised for such institutions to promote messages stating humble offerings and reasonable prices.

To summarize, it can be claimed that Porter's framework has a certain effect in the digital marketing communications activities of Turkish private higher education institutions. Universities covet messages of a differentiation nature, and avoid mentioning having a lower tuition fee or cheap facilities. They also make use of focus strategies, however, the message within this domain tend to be of a differentiating disposition, intimating expertise in certain areas.

CONCLUSION

In the first section, literature concerning the basic aspects of marketing communications was covered. Marketing communications refers to every communication activity that a firm utilizes to promote its brand name and image whose main categories include advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity, direct/interactive marketing and personal selling.

Marketing communications as a separate field used to regard all communication policies as different activities serving different aspects of a corporate goal. However, at the turn of the new century, all these different endeavors had to be considered as part of a whole big picture of marketing. Especially after the rise of a stakeholder approach in the 90s, there arose a need for a more comprehensive approach to marketing communications. The stakeholders approach basically puts forward the idea that for a company to survive, it has to consider the interests of not only the shareholders or the owners of the company, but also of those who affect or be affected by its corporate activities. This was particularly meaningful in terms of acquiring customers, but its real significance lied in maintaining customer loyalty, both behaviorally and attitudinally. Lots of research has proven that as a corporate policy, the acquisition of customer loyalty was far more lucrative than the acquisition of new customers.

The stakeholder approach originally rose from ethical and profit-related considerations. Yet besides the short-term projections, the other perspective that the stakeholder approach laid emphasis on was that considering all the parties' interests in a marketing policy also yielded long-term profitability. Seeing this, some scholars came up with prescriptive methodologies such as 4Ps of marketing, or integrated marketing communications to promote marketing communications activities and secure brand loyalty. These methodologies were designed to meet the needs of firms and organizations in a marketing communications environment where more parameters were to be considered for success.

In the first section, the most common of these formulations, the 4Ps of marketing, in other words, product, price, place, promotion, were explained in detail. Besides the marketing mix, integrated marketing communications is another

prescriptive framework that hypothesizes a sum of communicative activities, which, when applied in harmony, also secured a long-term success for the firm.

This study sought to serve in having a deeper understanding of the marketing communications structure of Turkish higher education institutions. To achieve this, the generic strategies coined by Porter was used as a framework. Porter (1980, 1985) suggests that every firm has to adopt a generic strategy to gain and sustain competitive advantage in a market. In this study, higher education institutions as a newly emerging market were scrutinized through the window of generic strategies.

The second section covered Porter's framework in detail. As mentioned before, for a company to gain and retain competitive advantage, it has to adopt one generic strategy, and all the aforementioned communicative methods that a company follows must complement the big puzzle of one such corporate policy. Porter's framework is quite simplistic in that it categorizes all organizations into three main genres: differentiators, cost leaders and focusers. Differentiators are companies that make a difference with at least one organizational feature thus making it possible to demand higher prices. Cost leaders, however, need to reduce their costs while at the same time providing a reasonable product or service to achieve market leadership. The last generic strategy, focuser, encompasses firms that target a specific segment of a market where mass producers do not dare or care to target. Focusers may be of different specialties, carrying out their focusing strategy through cost, difference or other features.

The second section also dealt with higher education through Porterian view of marketing, as it is now in dire need of adopting marketing communications strategies in unknown territory, which is the profit-oriented higher education structure. After this, the marketing orientation in higher education was explained in detail, with new tendencies in higher education being covered: massification, privatization and competition. The worldwide tendency of higher education becoming a mass service has made it a hub point of research, but at the same time has made its significance much greater both for governments and for investors. They are now regarded as the main medium carrying countries further in their struggle to produce science and work power. Therefore, the transition into massification has made privatization inevitable, which consequently led to competition between universities to attract

more students and for higher quality. Numeric data has been presented regarding these tendencies worldwide and in Turkey.

Conflicting opinions about the benefits and harms of this tendency of competition in higher education sector have also been addressed in this section. Some scholars claim that competition has brought a certain level of quality because higher education institutions now pay more attention to their curriculum, academic structure and facilities. However, it has also been asserted that it has shifted the scientific emphasis that such institutions were originally established upon by prioritizing marketing concerns.

Lastly, the circumstances circling the higher education structure in Turkey were depicted in terms of numbers and legislations to make the setting of our research more evident and more understandable.

In the third and final section, the research, which adopted a qualitative content analysis method, was explained. Three of the highest achieving private universities were selected for the study in terms of international rankings (QS Ranking System, 2018) and student acceptance scores: Bilkent University, Koç University and Sabancı University. The problematique was to assess how much Porter's generic strategies were utilized in their communicative activities. As the internet has become the main reference point for young people of this age, three most commonly used social media according to Ministry of Youth and Sports and IPSOS (2014): Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have been examined during the college selection period of 2017. The aim of this procedure was to categorize these messages into Porter's genres and evaluate the findings accordingly. The research tried to address two questions:

RQ1: In terms of their content, which generic strategy of Porter's do the social media posts of the universities belong to?

RQ2: What distribution do the social media where the universities share their contents show in terms of message contents and the generic strategy that they belong to?

According to the results, all the messages except one shared by the three universities bore the characteristics of differentiation strategy. Only one message was

categorized as cost leader. Of the differentiator messages, 12 were categorized as both differentiator and focuser, all of which implied departmental specialization. The most common theme of the messages were the special services, events and activities, variety and superiority of the departments and a desirable campus. Other common themes were academicians' and student and alumnae's achievements.

These results showed that despite the fact that Porter's strategies have been adopted to some extent in Turkey, they are not fully applied. These results also imply that in Turkey, successful private colleges tend to follow pure strategies. Although they make use of focuser strategies to some extent, those messages too, stress superiority in a specific area, which is befitting to an overall differentiation path. The other valuable information that this research provides is which factors universities pay the most attention to while designing their promotional messages: they tend to accentuate events and activities, academic variety and superior campus. On the other hand, this study also showed how thoroughly this topic has to be studied. Although our study served to understand the general limits of the matter at hand, it has also helped understand the limitations. It is evident that the topic requires much larger sampling and much more comprehensive studies.

In conclusion, this study will contribute to the marketing communications and higher education field at the same time. It will also provide some insight for the Turkish educational policy makers to look deeper into this marketing communications approach in higher education. Most importantly, seeing that it is now inevitable, this study will contribute to the successful marketization of this new field, which should be one of the main concerns of any further study on higher education.

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