

# HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICES. STUDY REGARDING THE OPTIONS OF XII GRADERS

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**Abstract:**

*The paper contains a study conducted in 2009 in several high schools in Timisoara and Timis County regarding the options of XII graders, concerning higher education. This case study was based on a survey conducted in these schools, and interpretation of the respondents answers.*

**Key words:** *higher education, questionnaire, students, education services*

**JEL classification:** *I23*

To capture the best possible customer service behavior of higher education, we used the market survey, as our research method. This is the preferred way of solving practical market research, as they provide appropriate solutions in situations where there is lack of material resources and time granted for research.

Because we wanted to get the needed information from this market study, we used the research tool of this method, namely the questionnaire. In providing a satisfactory representativeness, the market study was conducted on large samples, and the conclusion of this study is based on the laws of mathematical statistics and the probability theory.

The market survey followed a sequence of steps, which are similar to those of the research sample:

- Establishing the research topic;
- Setting objectives through the implementation of the survey;
- Determining the population under investigation and the sample size;
- Establishing the types of questions used and drafting the questionnaire;
- Collection of data by applying the questionnaire;
- Post-codification of responses;
- Data processing and interpretation;
- Preparation and submission of the final report.

The subject of this market survey was to identify the main features of the behavior of higher education services in Timis County. We set this subject for the survey, because consumer behavior is the main factor influencing how the choice of these services is made.

The population subject to investigation was from Timis County. Starting from the number of inhabitants of Timis County, we have determined the sample size by dispersion. Thus, the sample size resulted to be 657 people.

In establishing the questions used in the questionnaire, we wanted to get the necessary information, but also to have an ease in the post-codification process. Therefore, the types of questions we used were as follows: open questions and closed questions. The open ones have been formulated so that they can be transformed into closed ones (at the moment of post-codification), and then processed as closed questions.

The reason to establishing the questions comprised in the questionnaire was the following:

- **Question 1.** - "From what you have heard, what do you think about the private higher education?"- This question was included in the questionnaire in order to identify the opinion of XII graders on private higher education;
- **Question 2.** - "Did you know that the tuition fee at a private university is lower than the one at a public university?" -The motivation to that question was on the one hand the knowledge of the situation by the students, and, on the other hand, their information;
- **Question 3.** - "Have you heard of “Tibiscus” University in Timisoara?" - The question was to see if this institution of higher education is known among XII graders in Timis County;
- **Question 4** - "If so, from what source have you heard of Tibiscus University, Timisoara?" - This question was included in the questionnaire in order to identify the information sources of the respondents;
- **Question 5** - "After finishing high school, which is the area in which you want to specialize?" – The motivation to that question was to determine the specialization or specializations pursued by the respondents;
- **Question 6** - "Factors influencing the decision to continue studies" – the purpose to that question was to identify the main factors determining graduates to choose to continue their studies in a higher education institution;
- **Question 7** - "Reasons to choose a private university – identifying the reasons concerning graduates alternatives for choosing a higher education institution.

When we drafted the questionnaire, several factors have been taken into account, such as method of administration (on site), the population investigated (the characteristics of respondents), the language used, etc.

When we drafted the questions, we followed the rules for the formulation of questions of a questionnaire, namely:

- The questions were simple and short;
- The questions were formulated so that all respondents could interpret them the same way;
- All the terms used in the questionnaire were basic and easy to understand;
- We made sure that the questions would not lead to a certain answer;

In formulating the questions, we sought the capacity of responsiveness and interpretation of subjects undergoing the questionnaire.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE NO.

Good afternoon. We represent the Faculty of Economics of “Tibiscus” University, Timisoara and we conduct a market study on options for XII graders. The questionnaire includes several questions, to which we invite you to give us your honest answers. We guarantee full confidentiality.

Thanks!

1. From what you have heard, what do you think about the private higher education?

- Very good;
- Good;
- Satisfactory;
- Unsatisfactory;

- I do not know.
- 2. Did you know that the tuition fee at a private university is lower than at a state university?
  - Yes;
  - No.
- 3. Have you heard of "Tibiscus" University in Timisoara?
  - Yes;
  - No.
- 4. If yes, from what source have you heard of "Tibiscus" University in Timisoara?
  - Friends;
  - Media;
  - Internet;
  - Family;
  - Other sources, which .....
- 5. After finishing high school, which is the area in which you want to specialize?
  - Economics;
  - Computers;
  - Design;
  - Law;
  - Journalism, communication and modern languages;
  - Psychology;
  - Others, which .....
- 6. Factors influencing the decision to continue their studies:
  - Tuition;
  - Reputation of the university;
  - Size of the institution;
  - Location and distance from home;
  - Family tradition;
  - Opportunities in obtaining a job;
  - Method of admission;
  - Area of study.
- 7. Reasons for choosing a private university:
  - Faculty profile;
  - I have friends who are students at this university;
  - Family tradition;
  - I want a career in the field;
  - I want to work in the field;
  - I want to develop my own business;
  - Other reasons, which .....
- 8. Name:
- 9. Address:
- 10. City:

#### 11. Email address:

Data collection was performed in June 2009. During this stage, field operators wanted to know the opinion of all the respondents in what concerns their options about higher education services. After finishing the collection of data, they started to check the questionnaires.

The next step was to post-codify the data obtained from applying the questionnaire. This post-codification operation was performed using the SPSS statistical program. Thus, a database was created, in which all the gathered information were placed.

Data processing and interpretation was done using the database of the SPSS Statistical program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The univariate analysis of data contains a series of statistical analysis techniques that address to a single variable. Depending on the objective, we can distinguish two types of single-varied analysis:

- The univariate descriptive analysis;
- The inferential univariate analysis.

In this research, we used the univariate descriptive analysis that involves the description of the results observed on a sample. Thus, by using the SPSS statistical software and starting from the database, a series of results in the form of frequency tables were generated.

From the survey we conducted and the obtained data, we were able to achieve the following information:

1. In what concerns the main view on the subject of the private higher education, we got the following data:

Table no. 3.2.3.

#### Respondents' opinion

		Number of answers	Percent age
<b>Valid answers</b>	I do not know	51	7,8
	Very good	123	18,7
	Good	348	53,0
	Satisfactory	102	15,5
	Unsatisfactory	33	5,0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>100,0</b>

We observe that out of 657 respondents, 348 had a good opinion about the private higher education (53%), 123 had a very good opinion (18.7%), 102 people had a satisfactory opinion (15.5%) and 33 respondents had a poor opinion. Only 7.8% of all the respondents had no opinion about this school system.

2. The question of tuition fee offered us the following information:

Table no. 3.2.4.

**Higher Education Tuition Fee: Public vs. Private**

		<b>Number of answers</b>	<b>Percent age</b>
<b>Valid answers</b>	Yes	181	27,5
	No	476	72,5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>100,0</b>

From Table. 3.2.4. we observe that 72.5% of the respondents know that the tuition fee in private higher education institutions is less than that of similar public institutions and only 27.5% knew that. With the choice of response, the respondents were aware of this.

3. Another aspect that we watched was to see if "Tibiscus" University, Timisoara is known to the graduates.

Table no. 3.2.5.

**Reputation of "Tibiscus" University, Timisoara**

		<b>Number of answers</b>	<b>Percent age</b>
<b>Valid answers</b>	Yes	572	87,1
	No	85	12,9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>100,0</b>

According to these answers, we observed that over 80% of the respondents, i.e. 87.1% know of the existence of "Tibiscus" University, Timisoara, and only 12.9% have no information about this private higher education institution.

4. In what concerns the question of knowing about the existence of "Tibiscus" University, Timisoara, the respondents were asked to tell us the source of information. The results were as follows:

Table no. 3.2.6.

**The main source of information on "Tibiscus" University, Timisoara**

		<b>Number of answers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Valid answers</b>	I don't know	85	12,9
	Friends	466	70,9
	Mass-media	48	7,3
	Internet	28	4,3
	Family	30	4,6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>100,0</b>

The results were as follows: 70.9% of the respondents have indicated friends as the main source of information about the existence of the educational landscape of "Tibiscus" University, Timisoara, the leading source in the rankings; second on the site, at long distance from the first, lies the media with an average of 7.3%, followed by family (4.6) and Internet (4.3%).

5. Next, the interviewed students were asked to indicate their choice in terms of specializations that they would follow, with further studies in higher education institutions.

Table no. 3.2.7.

#### Options of respondents regarding the specializations they would choose

		Number of answers	Percentage
<b>Valid answers</b>	Other options	167	25,4
	Economics	201	30,6
	Computer Science	72	11,0
	Design	46	7,0
	Law	77	11,7
	Journalism & Languages	59	9,0
	Psychology	35	5,3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Regarding the specialization indicated by the respondents, the following results were obtained - 30.6% chose Economics, Law and Computer Science obtained about 11%, 167 respondents, that is 25.4%, chose those areas of study, fields that "Tibiscus" has not yet constituted.

6. The next question the respondents had to answer was related to the factors that might persuade them to continue their studies.

Table no. 3.2.8.

#### Factors influencing the decision to continue studies

		Number of answers	Percentage
<b>Valid answers</b>	I don't know	18	2,7
	Tuition fee	105	16,0
	Reputation of the university	73	11,1
	Institution's size	8	1,2
	Location – distance from home	31	4,7
	Family tradition	22	3,3
	Job opportunities	320	48,7
	Method of admission	23	3,5
	Area of study	57	8,7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>100,0</b>

On this question, namely what factors may influence the continuation of studies, we have identified the following responses - the main factor has been identified with approximately 50%, the opportunities that would help respondents to find a job in the field after finishing their studies, followed later by tuition fee (16%), university reputation (16%) and area of study (8.7%).

7. Another issue pursued was to identify the reasons that respondents have for choosing a faculty within a private higher education institution. Responses to this question and the related percentages are included in Table. 3.2.9.

Table no. 3.2.9.

**Reasons for choosing a private university**

		<b>Number of answers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Valid answers</b>	I don't know	44	6,7
	Area of study	239	36,4
	Friends	36	5,5
	Tradition	6	0,9
	Career	155	23,6
	Job	114	17,4
	Business	63	9,6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>100,0</b>

**CONCLUSIONS**

In January 19, 2007 the Presidential Commission for Analysis and Policy Making in Education and Research was established, a committee of experts that submitted a report released on July 12, 2007 entitled "Romania of Education", "Romania of Research", which presented the diagnosis system, as well as the main solutions to the problems identified. Based on the Report and the subsequent public discussions, the National Education Pact was prepared, signed on March 5, 2008 by leaders of all parliamentary political parties and, subsequently, the Romanian Academy and other 22 representatives of trade unions, students, parents association, other NGOs interested in the smooth running of education and research in Romania.

The strategy to develop education and research in the period 2009-2015 is based, therefore, on two types of approaches: expertise and major political commitment. Now is the time to say clearly:

- Where we want to go;
- What measures have to be taken;
- What actions should be taken to achieve our proposed targets.

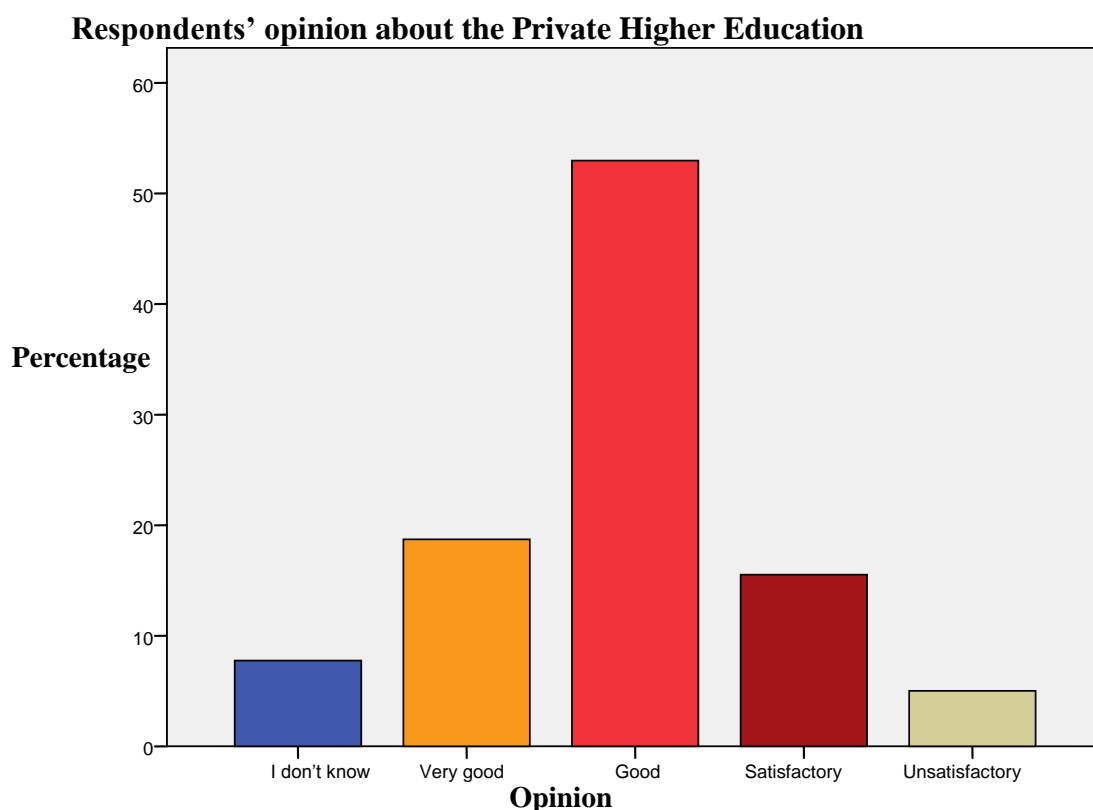
Objectives

Promoting the four pillars of the knowledge society: education, research, development and innovation, does not mean just the support of these social activities; it means, in the first place, a new grid of values.

The ultimate objective of this strategy is taking social, real responsibility of a new scale of values required to achieve consistent options corresponding to a knowledge economy.

Regarding the participation rate in lifelong learning, Romania is situated in the last position in Europe with a share of only 1.6% to 10.8% as the average in the EU. This means that in Romania, lifelong learning is more a figure of speech or the conscious choice of a minority of the competitive advantage that such an option gives you, rather than an institutional arrangement, supported by the state. There is a lack in what regards the culture of learning and constant education, and also an integrated and coherent view on all forms of education and training which may have an individual during his lifetime. We have no institutional mechanisms to certify and validate the learning that takes place in informal and formal learning contexts, although the construction of these mechanisms came firmly on the European agenda. There are no specific incentives for individuals or for employers to motivate participation in lifelong learning, although the state can earn so much more with a better educated workforce.

Figure no. 4.1.



Sooner or later, a lifelong education of the individual will become a mass phenomenon in Romania, too. Most will benefit from the institutions of higher education - it is true that among these institutions, and I mean the two big camps, public and private universities, competition is uneven in many respects.

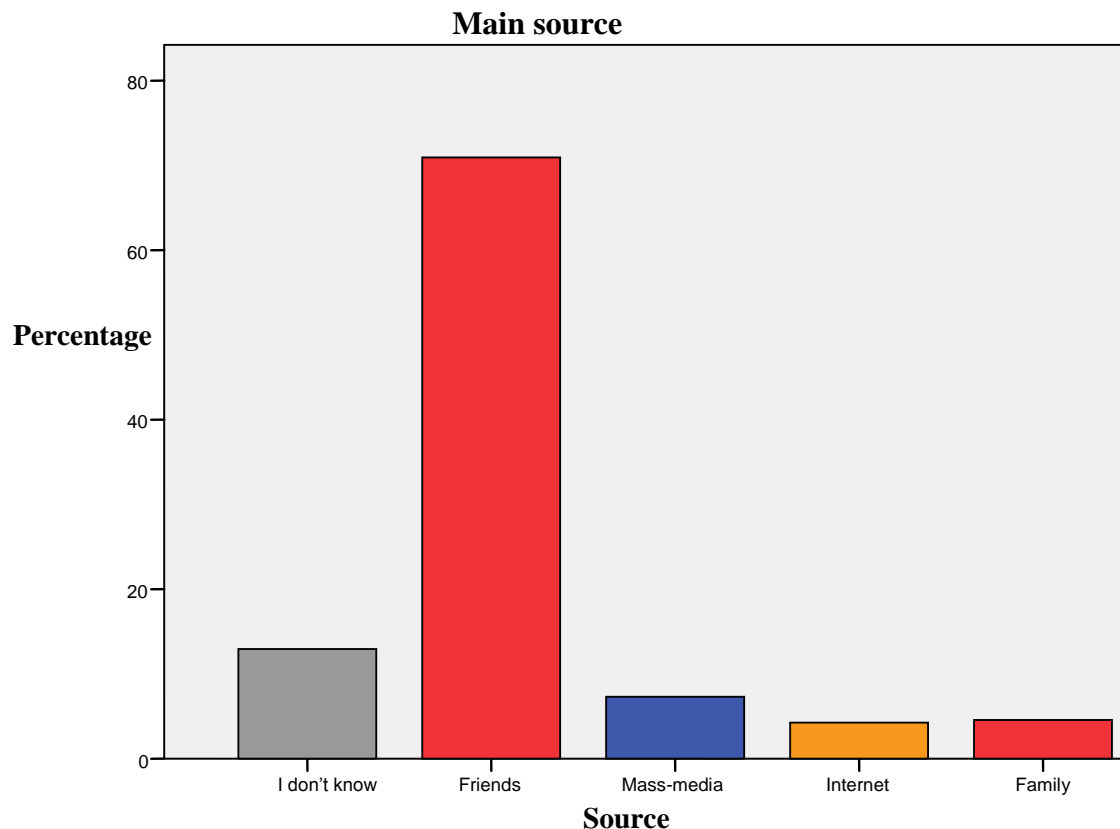
71.7% of the respondents have a very good and a good opinion about the private higher education, as can be seen in Figure. 4.1.



The promotion of student-centered university. Universities need to continuously improve the quality of services they offer to students. Students will be treated as equal members of the academic community. Student participation in decision must be real, not decorative, in order to contribute to the efficiency, quality, equity and an increased relevance of higher education.

Students are an important image vector - it depends on us, because they are the ones who can promote a positive image of the university. When asked where they heard of the existence of the "Tibiscus" University, 75.5% identified friends or family as their sources, ie, former or current students, compared to 11% with the Internet and media as their sources.

Table no. 4.2



Universities need to actively contribute to ensuring equal opportunities, both through their daily practices and through financial measures. However, Romanian universities must become attractive to a large number of foreign students. Internationalization will bring substantial benefits for both the university and for their students.

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