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**ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS’  
OPTION IN CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to analyze factors influencing the behavior of high school students in Bucharest in choosing a university. Research is a quantitative, descriptive. For this they were developed and tested five hypotheses. The instrument used was the questionnaire that was administered to 134 respondents, students in the last year. They are the major beneficiaries of Romanian higher education. After analyzing the responses it was found that the most important factors in choosing a university are tradition and extent of absorption of graduates into the labor market. High school students have the main options areas economic, technical, and medical. Also, for most high school students, education is a priority to develop professionally and personally. This study may help universities in formulation of strategies for attracting students. Research is limited by the fact that it was achieved only in Bucharest, the most important university center in the country. The sample is not statistically representative, therefore it is necessary to expand the research and to other cities in Romania.

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**1. Introduction**

This research offers an overall image of the preferences that the students have in their last year of high school, when it is about continuing their studies at a university, about the means of information that they have at their disposal and the involvement of the ones around, when taking a decision.

On the other hand, a university providing educational services, but it enjoys a special status and prestige in the eyes of the direct beneficiary (the student). However, even in these circumstances of prestigious academic status, meets user requirements and even negotiating some aspects of educational



with it is presented as an instrument of organizational success, proving a coherent and thoughtful strategy, a good academic management and helping to attract students.

The university customers are not only the students (direct beneficiaries), but also the parents (who expect the schools to convey knowledge to their children), the employers (who expect universities to provide people with professional training appropriate to their needs).

The analysis of the factors that influence behavior of the high school students leads to adapting the offer of higher education to meet the aspirations and needs of all those involved in the educational process (Blythe, 1998).

## 2. Literature Review

The evolution of approaches consumer behavior is marked by achievements while on the plane of human knowledge in general, consumer behavior is treated in terms of anthropological, sociological, psychological or economic, which is reflected in an abundance of concepts and interpretations (Britt, 1970).

The consumer's behavior, generally speaking, shows the characteristics of that consumer when buying the products and services, as well as when consuming them. In a more specific approach, „the consumer's behavior can be defined as a concept through multidimensional excellency, as a specific result of a dynamic relational system of the perception processes, together with the processes of information, attitude, motivation and effective manifestation, which describes the integration of the human being or of a certain group in a given open space by the whole system of products and services that exist in the society at a certain time, through decisional individual or group acts” (Cătoi & Teodorescu, 2004). In his view Olteanu (2006) said: “all acts, buyer attitudes and decisions on the use of part of its income to purchase services define the purchasing behavior of consumer services”.

The notion of the consumer cannot be understood only by looking at it in relation to its peers. The circumstances in which the consumer or purchasing process often involves other people than the consumer may depend decisively on their behavior (Wilkie, 1990). Before reaching the stage of making decision, the individual is under the influence of personal factors such as needs, motivations, experiences, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 1999) and external factors (socio-cultural information available about the product/service, the institution's image, positioning product/service etc.), which induce buying motivations and brakes. Of these, cultural factors exert the broadest and deepest influence. On another hand, the university services offer has to combine the university services consumers' expectations and the *labor* market requests with the missions of the university. This can happen by promoting those specializations that provide the students higher chances on the *labor* market, by ensuring the educational standards and not least, by focusing on the quality of those services, on tested performances after the graduation (Manea, 2015).

The marketing strategies in the high level education can be developed only if the client's needs are understood. The relationship with universities involves not only purchase and use the product, but is extended to a level of interaction product - consumer - supplier exceeding the norms and rules of marketing (Svensson & Wood, 2007).

### **3. Methodology**

The purpose of this research is studying the university educational services consumer's behavior, among the youth, students of high schools in Bucharest.

Objectives of the research are the following:

- Q1. Determine the main reason that drive students to continue their studies in a university
- Q2. Identifying the personal domain the students wish to follow and develop a future career
- Q3. Determine the most important criteria in choosing a university/faculty
- Q4. Identifying the most important sources to obtain information to choose a university/faculty.
- Q5. Identifying the first university to take into account to continue the studies.

The Hypotheses of the research are:

H1. For most of the students (over 70%), the main reason for continuing studies is that they could obtain a well-paid working place after the graduation.

H2. The most known domains and most targeted by the students are the economic, technical and medical ones.

H3. For the most part of the students, the most important criterion is the prestige of the university/faculty.

H4. Most of the respondents (over 60%) have as information sources mass media, colleagues/friends and family.

H5. The first university taken into account by the respondent is from the domain studied during high school.

The research stands on many variables categories: the main variables (the main reasons that are taken into account when choosing a university), descriptive variables (age, sex), situational variables (the financial situation of the respondents), independent variables and dependent variables (the perception upon universities). The research was done among the students from the high schools in Bucharest, high schools with economic, theoretic and technic, from the last year. The data collection happened throughout month April, when students from 12th grade already knew what courses they will take for the university, have gathered all the information needed for the selection and chose some possible faculties that they would wish to follow for future studies. Obtaining the information was a process assisted by the questionnaire, applied face to face.

The information obtained is primary, specially used for attaining the objectives of the research. The observation unit is the person, the student from the 12th grade.

The way to gather all the information is the survey, and the instrument used to collect the data is the questionnaire. The sample dimension used was 134 observation units, and the sampling method chosen was the simple random method, which means that each member of the population had the chance to be selected.

### **4. Results**

The data analysis was done based on the information resulted from the 134 observation units. Therefore, the unvaried analysis took into consideration each and every question, and the bivariated

analysis was used exactly where there were noticed relationships between the variables.

The first objective was accomplished through the answers to the question which are the reasons that determine you to continue your studies at the end of your study year? The answers are displayed in the table 1.

**Table 1.** Reasons for students to continue their studies

Reason	Percentage
Higher chances to find a well-paid working place	59%
The youth with superiors studies are better seen in the society	24%
I am not professionally ready to get employed	12.5%

The main reason why students from last year classes choose to continue their studies is that the faculty helps them to find a better paid working place (59%). A percentage of 24% from respondents consider that the superior studies offer them a certain status in the society, whereas only 0.5% wants to improve their potential. Therefore, the hypothesis that the majority of the students (over 70%) the main reason for continuing their studies is that they can obtain a better paid working place after the graduation, disproves. The second question, “in which domain which you like to continue your studies?” had the next answers: the main domain where respondents wish to continue their studies are the economic sciences, with a percentage of 15%; the following domains chosen by the respondents are medicine, automatics/computers/engineering with e percent of 11%; the domains that are least preferred by the respondents are journalism, plastic arts and architecture with a percentage of 1%. This aspect shows that the economic sciences are a priority, and maybe this occurs because once graduating a high school with economic profile, you can take a job even during faculty.

Automatics and computers are a very coveted domain because of the fact that after graduating faculty you have the opportunity to get a job with a higher salary. The hypothesis that the most known and targeted domains by the students are economical, technical and medical, confirms.

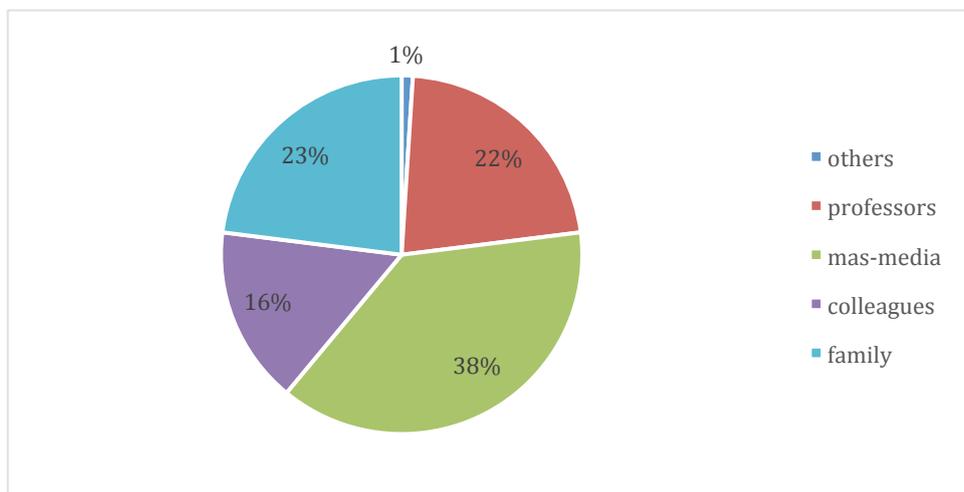
The third objective was achieved through the analysis of the respondents’ answers: Which are the most important criteria that lead to choosing a faculty/university. Therefore, there were marks given, ranging from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important) for each criterion taken separately. The frequency of the answers can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2.** Determine the most important criteria when choosing a faculty/university

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1	Average
The possibility to find a better paid working place when graduating	70	39	16	6	3	<b>4.24</b>
The family tradition	18	20	28	12	56	<b>2.49</b>
The prestige of the university or faculty	40	51	22	12	9	<b>3.75</b>
The available seats paid by the state	39	45	21	11	18	<b>3.56</b>
The home proximity	12	17	29	18	58	<b>2.30</b>

After analyzing the answers, it can be noticed that the most important criterion when choosing the university is the possibility to find a better paid working place when graduating with an average of 4.24 that is followed by the prestige of the university/faculty with an average of 3.75 and available seats paid by the state with an average of 3.56. From here we can highlight the following conclusions: the superior studies help the graduates to find a better paid working place. In addition to that, the prestige of the university/faculty is important when choosing a place where to study, but this is not the most important. The fact that there are available seats paid by the state is on the third place as criteria importance, can mean that the graduated faculty does not even matter, as long as the seat for study is paid by the state. On the other hand, there is the home proximity. It can be seen that this criterion is the least important when choosing a faculty. Therefore, the hypothesis that For the most part of the students, the most important criterion is the prestige of the university/faculty disproves. Another objective of the research is determining the measure in which the students from the last years of high school gather information about the universities/faculties offer. To accomplish this objective, the students have answered the question “Which are the sources of information when choosing a university/faculty?”.

In figure 1 it can be seen that 38% of the students have as sources of information mass-media (here I have taken into consideration newspapers, magazines and internet). The site of the universities/faculties is one of the most appreciated information sources. Also, family and professors are one of the most important sources for future students. From here, derives the fact that more than 60% of the respondents have as information sources: mass-media, family and colleagues/friends. Thus, the hypothesis that the majority of the respondents (over 60%) have as sources of information mass media, colleagues/friends and family confirms.



**Fig. 1.** Information sources taken into account by the students

The last objective of this research is identifying the first university to be taken into account when continuing the studies. The data are presented in table 3.

**Table 3.** The first university to be taken into account when continuing the studies

University	Percentage
Police Academy “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”	3%
Bucharest University of Economic Studies	15%
The Information National Academy “Mihai Viteazu”	2%
Military Technical Academy	1%
Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest	2%
University “Titu Maiorescu”	2%
The University of Bucharest	21%
The Christian University “Dimitrie Cantemir”	3%
The Urbanism and Architecture University “Ion Mincu”	3%
The University of Pharmacy and Medicine “Carol Davila”	17%
The Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine University, Bucharest	2%
The Theatre Arts and Film National University “I.L. Caragiale”	1%
The Physical Education and Sports National University, Bucharest	3%
University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest	18%
The Romanian American University	2%
Political and Administrative Sciences National School	5%

The University of Bucharest is the institution most frequently met in the preferences of the respondents with a percentage of 21%. Close percentage, taken into consideration the number of the respondents, belongs to the University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest (18%), the Academy of Economic Studies (17%) and the University of Pharmacy and Medicine “Carol Davila” (15%). It can be seen that the first three universities that appear in this top, can be found also in the top 5 universities in Romania, according to University Web Ranking (2016). These data confirm the fact that the students have chosen university depending on the high school profile that they are in. Therefore, the hypothesis is a fact that the first university taken into account by the respondents is from the domain studied throughout the high school. We can see that very few students are willing to change their field of study in high school, and those who do this have a solid base of information that can help. After the evaluation of the answers provided by the respondents, I have found out that the chances to find a better paid working place, is the main reason to continue studies in a higher level study institution. The main domain areas are: economic, technic and medical, as were in the previous years.

As far as the information sources among the students are concerned, mass-media represent the main information source, followed by the family and professors.

## 5. Discussions

After analyzing factors that influence the Bucharest high school students behavior in choosing a university, we can say that the main reason why pupils terminals choose to continue their studies is that faculty help them to find a better paid job. This is the opinion of students before receiving the services

provided by universities, but in practice it is not. May be unemployed educated people who no longer find a job because the question is not sought on the labor market.

The most popular areas and targeted by students are economic, technical and medical fields. Graduates in economics can find work easier, because businesses will always need specialists in economics. Also technical field is targeted by students, especially the IT, where wages are very high right after graduation. It is true that many specialists who complete their studies in Romania go abroad to offer their services. The same thing happens in medicine. Many students prefer to study medicine just because it offers opportunities after graduation.

Data analysis shows that the prestige of the university/faculty is not the most important criterion in choosing the university/faculty in vision of the high school students. Probably they're only interested in obtaining a degree, no matter where they obtained the university diploma.

Respondents receive information from the media, colleagues/friends and family. The media is an important factor in choosing universities, especially students finding information in the virtual environment, forums and faculties websites. Also, family and friends are sources of information for students, but also may influence their choice for a particular faculty/university based on experiences with it.

## 6. Conclusions

After analyzing the responses of respondents, we have found that the chances of finding a better paid job are the main reason to continue their studies at a higher education institution. Key areas of study remain the economic, technical, and medical fields, as in previous years, because it provides most jobs. Still there is demand for IT field, although the number of graduates is increasing every year.

As regards the sources of information among high school students, the media is the main source of information, followed by family and teachers. It is recognized that the information is knowledge. The information helps high school students to know the university before becoming their students.

After the analysis of university selection, we can see that the majority of the students that wish to pursue their studies at the Academy of Economic Studies are from a high school with economic profile, most of the students that wish to pursue their studies and the University of Bucharest are from a literature and soft arts profile high school, and those who wish to study at the University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest are from a high school with more technical profile. It is important that the students that choose to study relate to the field of study in high school, because they ensure a minimum level of knowledge during college. Lack of knowledge in the field could hold graduation.

As a conclusion, we can draw a line and say that the majority of the students when they finish high school they still have as a priority to continue studies at a university and it is highly important for their professional development. Also, factors considered by the high school students are important for the universities because they can use them to adapt supply to market requirements.

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