

# The Determinants of Brand Positioning in Higher Education – What Dominantly Influences Students’ Satisfaction?

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## **Abstract**

*Brands have become an important factor in the survival of organizations in modern society. They are present in all spheres of life: economic, social, educational, cultural, sports, etc. Powerful brands are the result of thoughtful and imaginative planning. Brand positioning has a strategic importance for a company, because it represents the process of creating an impression in consumers’ minds in a way that the consumer connects the brand with something specific and desirable, which distinguishes one brand from others. Brands have a financial value as they create an image of the values themselves in the minds and hearts of consumers. A brand can make consumers believe in its usefulness, exclusivity and superiority, and it also creates emotional attachment. There are numerous factors that influence the position of a brand in the consumer’s mind. University students are considered consumers, too. The aim of this paper is to research students’ satisfaction with faculties by using the parameters that are considered to be relevant. In this process, we will apply the factor analysis and, instead of focusing our attention on a large number of initially determined factors, thanks to the process of their reduction, we will create the conditions that will allow us to design a strategy for the optimization of the selected factors. Using this method, we will mark the factors that explain the researched phenomenon, i.e. the factors that can explain the largest part of its overall variability.*

**Key words:** *brand identity; brand personality; higher education; marketing communications; university brand.*

## **Introduction**

The marketing strategies and tactics used in the process of building brand values have significantly changed with social and economic development. In modern market conditions, organizations apply integrated marketing, which includes the combination and harmonization of the whole range of marketing activities in order to maximize individual and common benefits. The goal of such marketing is to create a brand's competitive advantage, which implies the ability of a brand to be distinguished, so that the competition cannot easily follow it. A brand is one of the most valuable intangible assets; it requires careful planning, long-term commitment and creatively designed and implemented marketing. In the conditions of modern marketing, brand management has a strategic significance. Branding is strategically important because it represents the process of creating an impression related to the brand in consumers' minds so that consumers can connect the brand with something specific and desirable, which distinguishes one brand from others. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a very significant impact on the development of future generations through their education and training, which is relevant for future business profiles, too. The positioning of a brand in the mind of consumers (including university students) is influenced by a large number of factors. Students' decision to start their educational and professional careers at a certain higher-education institution depends on these factors.

### ***The Aim of the Research***

The research is focused on the analysis and understanding of the factors that influence the branding of universities. The aim of the paper is to analyze students' satisfaction according to the parameters relevant for the selection of a particular higher education institution. In terms of the strategic significance of a brand, the importance of identification of the most valuable factors that a brand generally depends on has been confirmed by a large number of scientific papers dealing with this issue (Agrey & Lampadan, 2014; Dennis et al., 2016; Mourad et al., 2011; Rutter et al., 2016; Voss et al., 2007). This is especially the case in the field of higher education, which is becoming more competitive every day. The survey was conducted on a sample of 213 respondents, who answered 26 questions on a satisfaction scale from 1 to 5 (1 for the least satisfied, 5 for the most satisfied). A specially designed questionnaire was created based on the previously conducted research in this particular field (Agrey & Lampadan, 2014; Bennett & Choudhury, 2007; Dennis et al., 2016; Joseph et al., 2012; Mohar et al., 2008). The specificity of this questionnaire in relation to many others is its universality of questions and a greater number of variables included. Using the factor analysis, we marked a certain group of factors that stand out as the most important ones for the perception of the brand: motivation of students, interpersonal relations, the uniqueness of the brand and its recognizability through marketing and social media. We applied the factor analysis, so, instead of focusing on a large number of the originally determined parameters, we implemented the process of their

reduction, which created the conditions for the optimization strategy of the factors. The aim of the research is to extract those factors that can explain the examined phenomenon, i.e. students' satisfaction, or, in other words, the factors that can explain the largest part of the overall variability of the phenomenon.

### ***Defining the Research Hypotheses***

In this research, we started with a single general hypothesis:

H0. A large number of factors affect students' perception of a brand's quality and their satisfaction with a university brand.

The auxiliary hypotheses are as follows:

H1. The motivation of students and their interpersonal relations are important factors in the perception of a brand.

H2. In the perception of a brand, the brand's uniqueness and its recognition through marketing and social networks are important factors.

### ***Brand Interpretation***

The marketing environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century promises to be knowledge-rich and very turbulent (Achrol, 1997). Marketing activities, aimed to create a strong brand in order to strengthen the demand and loyalty of customers, are becoming more important. A brand orientation represents the strategic focus of an organization (Urde et al., 2011), and is therefore becoming one of the most important elements of recognizability of an organization in the business environment. A brand is defined in many different ways and for different purposes. However, regardless of the way it is used or measured, the value of a brand must eventually be marketed depending on the words and actions of consumers (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). Gabbott and Jevons (2009, p. 121) highlighted the fact that there would never be a unique definition of a "brand", but only "a constantly evolving series of contexts or lenses through which the phenomenon is viewed". They conclude that, in an environment loaded with different contexts, there may be a large number of different definitions and perceptions, as well as different approaches to the "brand" definitions.

A successful brand is a product, service, person or place that can be identified as the element through which customers or users obtain the relevant and unique added values that mostly meet their needs. Moreover, its success results in the possibility of preserving these added values compared to the competition (D'Allesandro, 2001). Leone et al. (2006, p. 3) define a brand image as the "perceptions of an organization reflected in the associations held in the consumer's memory". At the basic level, brands represent signs or symbols. The purpose of marketing is to identify and distinguish one product from another or one organization from another (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007). According to De Chernatony and McDonald (1998), a brand represents a promise and a signal of continuous customers' loyalty, created thanks to a certain set of products and services. Fichter and Jonas (2008) state that a brand is actually

the stereotype held toward a brand. A brand is not just a name; it is a challenge to develop a deep group of positive branding associations – a strong image of the brand. The most successful brands have created value by attracting and retaining customers, which is the result of an efficient combination of products, a recognizable identity and added value in the customer's mind (Walley et al., 2007). Gabbott and Jevons (2009, p. 119) state that the term “brand” means a “highly contextualized entity of diverse contemporary approaches and understandings; and therefore the never-ending theory of the development process”. Brand awareness is the power of the brand, the position of the brand in consumers' minds (Ross, 2006). In a word, brands are the confirmation of quality (Jobber, 2004).

Design and branding are all the more important for the purpose of differentiation. Relevance, simplicity and humanity – not technology – will lead to a brand distinction in the future (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007). In order to create successful branding strategies and brands themselves, consumers must notice significant differences between diverse brands of products or services (Morgan et al., 2007). The dominant paradigm of an organization determines the understanding of a brand, as well as the process and content of a brand strategy, and therefore their potential influence on a competitive advantage (Louro & Cunha, 2001). Satisfying consumers' needs is an important issue, but only within the boundaries of a brand, with a lesser orientation toward the market approach (Urde et al., 2011).

Organizations are motivated to invest in building a strong emotional relationship between consumers and a brand, because such a link leads to a greater degree of consumer loyalty and better financial results (Malär et al., 2011). Brands, in the end, remain in the minds of consumers (De Chernatony, 2010). Therefore, the name of a brand should be different from competitors' names, so that the target group of consumers can quickly remember, recognize and easily pronounce it. The name should be able to survive for a long period of time, but it should also be available for legal registration. An effective name should be at the top of consumer's mind when they think of the need they want to satisfy. In the focus of all marketing efforts there is a consumer or the concept of customers' satisfaction, since satisfaction is the basic prerequisite for brand loyalty. Generally speaking, satisfaction is based on a comparison between the user's expectations regarding the service to be delivered and the actual perceptions of the delivered service (Grönroos, 1984). Any weaknesses in improving and preserving trust in a brand institution would certainly have adverse effects on the success of the organization (Alam & Yasin, 2010).

A brand is made of “rational” and “emotional” elements. While functional advantages are considered to be the most important for corporate brands, emotional or personal benefits can offer a basis for differentiation (Aaker, 2004). The rational quality of a brand consists of three dimensions: product quality, service quality and distribution quality, whereas the emotional dimensions of a brand are: the consistent style of advertising, a brand image, the image of the country of origin and the identity of the seller. All these dimensions positively affect customers' satisfaction and brand

loyalty (Elsäßer & Wirtz, 2017). Brands often represent the most valuable asset of a company (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Brand equity is a premium value that an organization can derive from a product with a distinctive name, compared to its generic equivalent. Companies can create brand equity for their products by making them memorable, easily recognizable, superior in quality and reliability (Page & Herr, 2002). A successful brand offers sustainable competitive advantages and always results in superior profitability and market performance (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2005). Based on the review of the current literature, it is clear that the initiators of the implementation of marketing activities in non-profit organizations were Kotler and Levy (1969) who undoubtedly laid the foundation for further theoretical and practical research in this field.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The Concept of Branding in Higher Education***

A university (faculty) brand aims to create specific associations and the desired image in the minds of consumers. Higher education branding is now considered as the key factor for success (Rutter et al., 2016). Good brands are the key resources for creating a competitive advantage (Aaker, 1996) of all organizations, including higher education institutions. Higher education is a complex system, with 11 different types of experiences, including students' feedback, graduation, curriculum design, communication with the service staff, grading, classroom behavior, classroom studies, individual studies, teaching methods and a course design (Koris et al., 2015).

In an increasingly competitive higher education sector, universities face significant challenges when the recruiting of new students is concerned (Joseph et al., 2012). Many universities offer the same study programs, meaning that programs are diminished as a potential differentiator when a university is striving to attract students in a cluttered market space (Rutter et al., 2017). Many researchers, such as Dennis et al. (2016), examined the influence of the higher-education brand identity, the brand meaning, and the brand image on brand equity, which turned out to be the result of strong attachment, commitment, trust, and overall satisfaction of students and graduates. Similarly to consumers' confusion in a cluttered marketplace (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010), prospective students may find the decision-making process of selecting a university confusing. Increasingly, students are viewing their higher education experience as a commercial transaction with a financial return expected in the future (Palfreyman, 2012). Jabbar et al. (2017) argue that there is evidence that some students enter the higher-education system in order to acquire a diploma, i.e. to buy a product, expecting a good diploma in exchange for the fees paid to the university in order to use it to secure work on the labor market.

A study of business schools and their corporate brands found that a brand personality was as important as their perceived service or educational attributes (Alwi & Kitchen, 2014). A university brand is the result of its quality perception. It reflects the quality of the following areas: study programs, the teaching staff, research

levels, the infrastructure, organization and the degree of international cooperation (Mourad et al., 2011). A university brand reflects the ability of the institution to distinguish themselves from others, the ability to deliver a particular type, level and quality of higher education in order to meet students' needs. A faculty brand is made of physical and emotional benefits for users (customers), the social environment, the learning environment, a mission and a vision, the structure of student organizations, the quality of facilities, safety and security, the symbols (the name, the logo, the color) that describe the brand (Bennett & Choudhury, 2007). According to Chapleo (2015), the factors that influence the creation of a strong brand are visible, "rational" elements, such as professional staff, educational programs, physical infrastructures and locations, as well as the "emotional" elements that create added value within an organization and that give the brand a competitive advantage, such as the atmosphere at the institution and the satisfaction of studying. It is a prevailing scenario in the higher education sector, where the branding of private higher education institutions (PHEIs) provides the key stakeholders with a much easier way to identify and distinguish them from other competing institutions (Waerass & Solbakk, 2009). In their article, Henri et al. (2017) corroborate the pedagogical literature suggesting that providing students with opportunities to act autonomously and develop confidence is a key to the creation of the graduates who have the independence that they need in order to be successful in the workplace.

Positive relationships with peers and staff are very important to students. This involves building the pedagogical relationships of trust with staff in order for students to achieve confidence in the techniques and tools that are characteristic of university practice (Tett et al., 2017). A study by Brown and Mazzarol (2009) confirmed the impact of service quality on satisfaction through the perceived value. The quality of the service has an extremely important role in making purchasing decisions and as such affects satisfaction (Caruana et al., 2000). One of the basic problems of higher education is the significance and applicability of the acquired knowledge and skills in practice. In this regard, David et al. (2011) state that there is a gap between teaching and the real needs of companies. Bearing in mind the fact that students split their time into two, namely the time dedicated to education and the time they invest in other activities (Mason et al., 2003), it can be safely argued that the student's unwillingness to "sacrifice" his/her time for other activities for the benefit of the time devoted to education can hardly lead to the improvement of the quality of this service. A large number of authors, including Arambewela and Hall (2006), did research studies on the quality of educational services; they also dedicated their efforts to the creation of an adequate instrument for measuring this construct. The obtained results point to the existence of differences in students' attitudes, depending on the country of origin, as well as on the culture from which respondents originate. Arnet et al. (2003) present a model of a successful marketing relationship applied to the non-profit sector. They point to the need of building good relationships with alumni (graduate students) while they are still studying in order for them to spread a good word about

the university after graduation. The authors of this model highlight the existence of the four factors that encourage the development of relationships with alumni: participation, reciprocity, prestige and satisfaction.

Athiyaman (1997) was among the first authors who studied the quality of the service and student satisfaction, as well as their influence on the future intentions of students' behavior (related to spreading positive interpersonal communication, among other things). He concludes that a perceived quality is the predictor of satisfaction, and that satisfaction is the predictor of loyalty. According to Bleiklie and Kogan (2007), the leaders of higher education institutions (the Rector, the President, the Dean, etc.), who once behaved as "the first among equals", now look more like executive directors leading a corporation. They are allowed to have more autonomy in work and fewer disturbances by the authorities in terms of the regulations and laws regulating the daily operations of these institutions. A greater emphasis is now placed on the management aimed at achieving goals and the best possible results.

As confidence is built over time, users initially have some beliefs related to the organization and the purchasing experiences that lead to the development of expectations for their future cooperation (Vázquez-Casielles et al., 2010). Taking into account the confidence-building process, it is concluded that users' beliefs consist of the two dimensions: credibility and benevolence (Vázquez-Casielles et al., 2010). Based on the conducted research studies (Voss et al., 2007), a conclusion is drawn that professors' behavior and attitudes should be the primary determinant of students' perception of the quality of the services provided by higher education institutions. In the case of higher education, what students expect from their professors is related to their teaching skills and methods, communication skills, accessibility, enthusiasm, expertise, sense of humor and cordiality (Voss et al., 2007).

New media studies have analyzed the brand personality communicated through written text online (Rutter et al., 2015). The location of an HEI has been shown to influence the brand personality of an institution (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014). The location of an institution relative to a prospective student's home is also quite important (Briggs, 2006; Vrontis et al., 2007). Communications play an important role in establishing and changing the perceived brand image of the university. Not surprisingly, the perceived quality (primarily manifested by the courses offered) and the reputation of an institution are among the strongest influences on the student's choice of an institution (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). In order for a brand identity to be enduring within a changing HE environment, it needs to be dynamic and flexible so as to meet consumers' expectations (Da Silveira et al., 2013). Melewar and Jenkins (2002) identified four corporate identity sub-constructs (communication and a visual identity, behavior, corporate culture and market conditions) that they applied to HEIs, which, if managed effectively, can become the source of a competitive advantage. The higher the quality of the relationship with a brand is, i.e. the consumer's views of a brand as a satisfactory partner in an ongoing relationship (Algesheimer et al., 2005), the stronger the attachment will be.

Trust can lead to managing a relationship more efficiently, which could have a positive effect on satisfaction (Andaleeb, 1996). A strong brand personality, conveyed through different media, can increase brand equity and organizational performance (Rutter et al., 2017). Brand trust can be eroded if there are poor perceptions around authenticity (Eggers et al., 2013). According to Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), word-of-mouth (WOM) is considered as a vital component in influencing the student's decision on the selection of private higher-education institutions. Joseph et al. (2012) applied this idea to higher-education institutions by stating that negative WOM decreases their market worth.

## **Research Methodology**

In marketing research, the application of the factor analysis is extremely important. Using this multivariate analysis technique can provide decision-makers with very useful inputs from the aspect of setting a focus on several factors rather than on a large number of the defined parameters that are responsible for positioning a brand on the market. As the aim of this paper is the research that basically reveals the satisfaction of private-faculty students according to all of the relevant parameters, the application of the factor analysis should provide a good basis. Therefore, the focus will not be on a large number of the originally determined parameters. Through the process of their reduction, the conditions that will allow us to create a strategy for the optimization of the selected factors will be created, which consequently leads to the growth of the business.

As an interdependence technique, factor analysis finds a model of the relationship between studied variables, which is meaningful from the research aspect. It is mostly related to the questionnaire design, which faces the problem of the selecting questions, as in the subject research. In that sense, one of the main reasons in favor of the factor analysis in this case is finding groups of similar respondents' statements, since they express the same basic ideas we want to identify. On the other hand, all variables in the subject research can be treated as independent, and the general idea is contained in finding the relationship model between them, which is why the technique of multiple regression analysis is not suitable.

The factor analysis was used in the research, after which the obtained results were accounted for by using the SPSS statistic software. In addition to this technique, the basic indicators of descriptive statistics, as well as the key conclusions of the correlation analysis conducted among all of the pairs of the observed variables, are given.

## **Research and Discussion**

As stated, the basic indicators of descriptive statistics are shown in the first part. Table 1 accounts for the average score achieved according to the offered statements (the answers are ranked on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest, and 5 is the highest grade), along with their average deviations. For the statements included in



this research, the obtained average indicator is above 4 in over 96% of the questions. Such a high average grade reflects the satisfaction of the examined students in all the categories, which confirms a significant degree of their affirmation according to the set standards of the faculty.

Table 1

*Descriptive statistics for the parameters of the Faculty climate*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
The brand is unique (original) and differs from the brands of other faculties.	4.44	.78	213
The brand of the private faculty identifies the brand's unique value.	4.37	.81	213
The brand of the private faculty creates a clear image in your mind, which makes it different from the competition.	4.36	.87	213
The brand of the private faculty is motivational and easy to remember.	4.59	.80	213
The brand of the private faculty is easy to understand.	4.44	.86	213
The brand of the private faculty enables growth.	4.31	.92	213
The brand of the private faculty has a good position for a long-term success.	4.31	.89	213
The brand of the private faculty is capable of dealing with the competition.	4.45	.82	213
The slogan of the private faculty is convincing.	4.37	.94	213
For the brand of the private faculty it is important that professors have good contact with students.	4.73	.66	213
The teaching staff is demanding.	3.57	1.05	213
At the private faculty, students are respected.	4.65	.70	213
The brand of the private faculty is characterized by a good atmosphere.	4.72	.64	213
The brand of the private faculty offers satisfactory knowledge and skills necessary for future work.	4.27	.92	213
Satisfaction in learning is the strength of the private faculty brand.	4.31	.95	213
The brand of the private faculty offers good prospects for a career.	4.24	.93	213
The brand of the private faculty offers the opportunity to engage in students' organizations.	4.55	.78	213
The brand of the private faculty has an affordable tuition fee.	4.04	1.12	213
The brand of the private faculty encourages ambition and interests.	4.39	.82	213
The brand of the private faculty encourages creativity.	4.40	.84	213
The brand of the private faculty has good study programs.	4.55	.72	213
The brand of the private faculty stimulates scientific research.	4.27	.99	213
The brand of the private faculty has good promotion (marketing, communication).	4.50	.94	213
The brand of the private faculty has a good location.	4.15	1.11	213
Rate from 1 to 5 the website of the private faculty.	4.58	.79	213
Rate from 1 to 5 the Facebook page of the private faculty.	4.34	.99	213

Further in the research, a correlation analysis was carried out on all pairs of the observed variables, and in all of the cases a statistically significant correlation dependence ( $p < 0.05$ ) of a positive direction was established. Beside the confirmation of a direct link among all the pairs of the categories that the respondents rated, this method provides the first level of the factor analysis from the aspect of grouping the mentioned variables into certain factors (groups).

Subsequently, an adequate test was carried out, which verified the suitability of the data for the factor analysis. The very high value of the KMO indicators is close to 1, as well as the  $p$  value obtained from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and indicates the sampling adequacy.

The calculated common values for all of the variables indicate which of them should be kept in the model, namely which variables will be contained in the individual factors. After the rotation, in order to ensure that all of the selected variables are contained in one factor at the most, in Table 2 the factors explaining the major part of the variability of the studied phenomenon are presented. The results show that the high degree, i.e. 64.14%, of the total variability can be explained by the total of the four factors. It should be mentioned that the difference between the first and the second eigenvalue is very large.

Table 2

*The total variance explained*

Comp.	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
1	12.45	47.87	47.87	5.66	21.76	21.76
2	1.81	6.95	54.82	5.65	21.72	43.48
3	1.31	5.02	59.84	2.88	11.07	54.55
4	1.12	4.30	64.14	2.49	9.59	64.14
5	.88	3.39	67.53			
6	.87	3.31	70.84			
7	.84	3.25	74.09			
8	.70	2.67	76.76			
9	.67	2.59	79.35			
10	.59	2.26	81.61			
11	.49	1.88	83.49			
12	.47	1.82	85.31			
13	.45	1.72	87.03			
14	.43	1.65	88.69			
15	.41	1.58	90.24			
16	.38	1.48	91.72			
17	.31	1.21	92.93			
18	.28	1.08	94.01			
19	.25	.98	94.99			
20	.24	.93	95.92			
21	.23	.87	96.79			
22	.21	.83	97.62			
23	.19	.73	98.34			
24	.16	.63	98.97			
25	.14	.54	99.52			
26	.13	.48	100.00			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

In the final stage, in order to define the separate factors that can explain the studied phenomenon, or the factors which can explain the largest part of its overall variability, the usual rule, which requires retaining the variables whose loading is greater than 0.6 within the factor, was applied. Table 3 shows the final rotated solution with the selected variables for each of the four determined factors.

Table 3

*The rotated component matrix: the varimax rotated solution (varimax method)*

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
The brand is unique (original) and differs from the brands of other faculties.	.28	<b>.73</b>	-.03	.24
The brand of the private faculty identifies the brand's unique value.	.26	<b>.82</b>	.09	.18
The brand of the private faculty creates a clear image in your mind, which makes it different from the competition.	.27	<b>.68</b>	.15	.13
The brand of the private faculty is motivational and easy to remember.	.15	<b>.77</b>	.18	.10
The brand of the private faculty is easy to understand.	.18	<b>.67</b>	.22	.32
The brand of the private faculty enables growth.	.42	<b>.72</b>	.16	.12
The brand of the private faculty has a good position for a long-term success.	.48	<b>.61</b>	.19	.17
The brand of the private faculty is capable of dealing with the competition.	.45	.54	.36	.20
The slogan of the private faculty is convincing.	.12	.51	.44	.27
For the brand of the private faculty it is important that professors have good contact with students.	.23	.47	.52	-.09
The teaching staff is demanding.	.39	.11	.004	.53
At the private faculty students are respected.	.31	.07	<b>.74</b>	.11
The brand of the private faculty is characterized by a good atmosphere.	.31	.12	<b>.73</b>	.19
The brand of the private faculty offers satisfactory knowledge and skills necessary for future work.	.59	.38	.44	.12
Satisfaction in learning is the strength of the private faculty brand.	.56	.47	.32	.19
The brand of the private faculty offers good prospects for a career.	<b>.68</b>	.36	.35	.22
The brand of the private faculty offers the opportunity to engage in students' organizations.	<b>.71</b>	.19	.10	.22
The brand of the private faculty has an affordable tuition fee.	<b>.67</b>	.26	.04	.28
The brand of the private faculty encourages ambition and interests.	<b>.82</b>	.23	.21	.18
The brand of the private faculty encourages creativity.	<b>.78</b>	.20	.27	.23
The brand of the private faculty has good study programs.	<b>.60</b>	.24	.26	.24
The brand of the private faculty stimulates scientific research.	<b>.65</b>	.44	.16	.19
The brand of the private faculty has good promotion (marketing, communication).	.34	.13	.19	<b>.62</b>
The brand of the private faculty has a good location.	.22	.17	.05	.59
Rate from 1 to 5 the website of the private faculty.	-.10	.42	.53	<b>.64</b>
Rate from 1 to 5 the Facebook page of the private faculty.	.20	.32	.28	<b>.70</b>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

All the variables contained in Factor 1 relate to the high expectations of the students of this faculty, regarding their interests, creativity, modernity, as well as the possibilities of achieving a successful career. Therefore, this factor can be designated as a motivational factor. Along with the criteria stated above, students' motivation for choosing this faculty is also closely related to the following condition: an affordable tuition fee.

The analysis of the variables contained in the second selected factor shows that students' satisfaction can also be measured by their perception of the faculty itself, regarding its diversity and uniqueness compared to other faculties. All of the variables covered by this factor relate to the mentioned aspects, so this factor can be defined as the uniqueness of the brand.

The following factor is named "interpersonal relations" and it indicates (without any doubt) the necessity of good communication and mutual respect within a higher-education institution.

The last selected factor measures students' satisfaction, but this time it is done by rating the marketing activities that this faculty conducts, with a special emphasis on social networks.

The hypotheses of this research were proven by the factor analysis when the number of the factors that can explain the studied phenomenon was determined. The H1 hypothesis was proved through the first and the third factors: motivation and interpersonal relations are significant for a brand's perception. The H2 hypothesis was also proven through the second and the fourth factors, which is indicative of the importance of a brand's uniqueness and its recognition through marketing and social networks.

The type of the problem involved in the research conducted in this paper usually involves developing a test battery for the assessment of the group characteristics. Based on the loading of the variable, one or two variables can be extracted from each factor in order to develop a test battery.

In order to form a test battery that examines students' satisfaction of the selected faculty, one single variable with the highest loading within each defined factor was selected. These variables are: The brand of the private faculty encourages ambition and interests; The brand of the private faculty identifies the brand's unique value; At the private faculty, students are respected and Rate from 1 to 5 the Facebook page of the private faculty.

## **Conclusion**

A strong brand is essentially a sign of trust usually valued by consumers and signifies a high product quality, leads to consumers' loyalty and increases their confidence that the brand will deliver what was promised (Lock, 2016). A brand image can influence the transmission of the positive or negative attributes related to the quality of products/services or their added value, which means that a brand and the image it creates for

future students can in many ways affect their decision about their education, as well as the institution they will choose. Higher education institutions determine the direction of future students' education and, therefore, their entire life course. In this research, the influence of the 26 variables related to the quality of the selected brand of the private faculty was subjected to an analysis. In this process, the students' satisfaction with the brand itself was considered. The factor analysis separated the four factors that comprise a total of 19 variables that can explain the examined phenomenon.

Branding is considered to be possible to measure through a number of the criteria related to the quality of a university (Jevons, 2006), suggesting that universities require strong brands in order to enhance the awareness of future students of their existence and the study programs they offer, which differentiates them from the competition and acquires a certain market share. The research has shown that motivation is one of the key factors in the decision-making process; the brand of a faculty should motivate students to choose that particular higher education institution. This means that a faculty should provide good career prospects because numerous research studies (Agrey & Lampadan, 2014) have shown that good job prospects are at the top of the selection factors. It can be done through the study programs that lead to good employment possibilities after graduation. Motivation for choosing a faculty depends on the affordable tuition fees, which is especially important to parents (Domino et al., 2006) since they are those who pay for it; the financial package (scholarships, discounts, etc.) offered to students is one of the most important elements when building a brand. In order for a brand to be successful and motivate future students, there should be good study programs, which means it is necessary that the information about the institution and the programs should be available (Mohar et al., 2008).

The uniqueness of a brand is highlighted as one of the factors important for the brand quality of higher education institutions. A brand should be original and distinct from the brands of other faculties; its unique value should be identified. A brand should also create a clear image in students' minds that the faculty is different from competitors. A brand image, a brand identity and a brand name put together should create the value of the brand (Williams & Omar, 2014). In order to achieve this, it is necessary to continuously manage the brand, which will lead to the brand identity together with its uniqueness and special value for future students.

Another factor that is important for the brand of a higher education institution is that related to interpersonal relations: the brand indicates that students are respected and that there is a positive atmosphere in the institution. The brand image that indicates a good mood and a satisfying environment is very important in the branding process.

Good promotion, i.e. marketing and social networks (the website and the Facebook page), is marked as the fourth factor. Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of social media when choosing a faculty because students consistently use some kind of social media in communication with their peers and professors

(Lock, 2016). Social media are viewed as a tool that is mostly used among students to share their attitudes, experiences and feedback on their decisions related to education.

As has been shown, the problem analyzed in this paper is usually suitable for developing a test battery that provides clear data about the variables that are more highlighted and the most important. However, it is important to notice that there is one restriction regarding the formation of the mentioned test. The validity of this test includes the implementation of a confirmatory factor analysis on similar but different sample groups.

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# Odrednice pozicioniranja brenda u visokom obrazovanju – što najviše utječe na zadovoljstvo studenata?

## Sažetak

*Brendovi su postali važan čimbenik za opstanak organizacija u modernome društvu. Prisutni su u svim domenama života: ekonomskoj, društvenoj, obrazovnoj, kulturnoj, sportskoj, itd. Jaki brendovi rezultat su pažljivog i kreativnog planiranja. Pozicioniranje brenda od strateške je važnosti za kompaniju, jer ono predstavlja način na koji se na potrošača ostavlja dubok dojam pa on povezuje brend s nečim određenim i poželjnim, a upravo to jedan brend čini drugačijim od ostalih. Brendovi imaju financijsku vrijednost jer stvaraju sliku o samoj vrijednosti u mislima i srcima potrošača. Brend može uvjeriti potrošača da mu je potreban, koristan i da je ekskluzivan i bolji od ostalih, a također gradi i emocionalnu privrženost. Postoje brojni čimbenici koji utječu na poziciju brenda u mislima potrošača. Studenti se također ubrajaju u potrošače. Cilj je ovoga rada s pomoću bitnih parametara ispitati u kojoj su mjeri studenti zadovoljni odabranim fakultetima. U tom smo procesu primijenili faktorsku analizu i, umjesto usmjeravanja pažnje na velik broj prije utvrđenih čimbenika, zahvaljujući njihovoj smanjenom broju, stvorit ćemo uvjete koji će nam omogućiti izradu strategije za optimiziranje odabranih čimbenika. S pomoću te metode moći ćemo odrediti čimbenike koji objašnjavaju ispitivani fenomen, tj. čimbenike koji mogu objasniti najveći dio njegove ukupne varijabilnosti.*

**Ključne riječi:** *identitet brenda; marketinška komunikacija; osobnost brenda; sveučilište kao brend; visoko obrazovanje.*

## Uvod

Marketinške strategije i taktike koje se koriste u izgradnji vrijednosti brenda znatno su se promijenile pod utjecajem društvenog i ekonomskog napretka. U modernim marketinškim uvjetima organizacije primjenjuju integrirani marketing, koji podrazumijeva kombinaciju i usklađenost cijelog niza marketinških aktivnosti kako bi se ostvarila što veća individualna i zajednička dobit. Cilj je takvoga marketinga

izgraditi konkurentsku prednost brenda, što mu omogućava prepoznatljivost, a konkurenciji otežava kopiranje. Brend se ubraja u najvredniju nematerijalnu imovinu. Zahtijeva pažljivo planiranje, dugoročnu obvezu i kreativno osmišljen i proveden marketing. U modernim uvjetima marketinga brend menadžment ima stratešku važnost značaj. Brendiranje je strateški važno jer ono predstavlja proces stvaranja slike koju potrošač povezuje s određenim brendom. Tako potrošač povezuje brend s nečim određenim i poželjnim, a upravo to čini brend drugačijim od ostalih. Ustanove visokog obrazovanja imaju vrlo velik utjecaj na razvoj budućih generacija putem obrazovanja i edukacije, što je također važno i za njihove buduće poslovne profile. Na pozicioniranje brenda u mislima potrošača (uključujući i studente) utječu brojni čimbenici. Odluke studenata da svoju obrazovnu i profesionalnu karijeru započnu u određenoj ustanovi visokoga obrazovanja ovise upravo o tim čimbenicima.

### ***Cilj istraživanja***

Istraživanje je usmjereno na analizu i razumijevanje čimbenika koji utječu na brendiranje sveučilišta. Cilj je rada analizirati razinu zadovoljstva studenata prema parametrima važnima za izbor određene ustanove visokog obrazovanja. Što se tiče strateške važnosti brenda, važnost prepoznavanja većine vrijednih čimbenika o kojima brend ovisi potvrđena je u mnogobrojnim znanstvenim radovima koji se bave tom temom (Agrey i Lampadan, 2014; Dennis i sur., 2016; Mourad i sur., 2011; Rutter i sur., 2016; Voss i sur., 2007). To se posebno odnosi na sektor visokoga obrazovanja, koji postaje sve kompetitivniji. Istraživanje je provedeno na uzorku od 213 ispitanika koji su odgovorili na 26 pitanja, birajući odgovore na skali od 1 do 5 (1 – najmanje zadovoljan, 5 – najviše zadovoljan). Izrađen je poseban upitnik na temelju već provedenih istraživanja u tom području (Agrey i Lampadan, 2014; Bennett i Choudhury, 2007; Dennis i sur., 2016; Joseph i sur., 2012; Mohar i sur., 2008). Posebnost ovog upitnika u odnosu na mnoge druge jest univerzalnost pitanja i veći broj uključenih varijabli. S pomoću faktorske analize označili smo određenu skupinu čimbenika koji se ističu kao najvažniji u poimanju brenda, a to su: motivacija studenata, međuljudski odnosi, posebnost brenda i njegova prepoznatljivost u marketingu i društvenim medijima. Primijenili smo faktorsku analizu pa smo tako, umjesto fokusiranja na velik broj prvotno određenih parametara, smanjili njihov broj, što je stvorilo uvjete za strategiju optimizacije čimbenika. Cilj je istraživanja izdvojiti one čimbenike koji mogu objasniti ispitani fenomen, tj. zadovoljstvo studenata, ili, drugim riječima, čimbenike koji mogu objasniti najveći dio cjelokupne varijabilnosti fenomena.

### ***Definiranje hipoteza istraživanja***

U ovome smo istraživanju krenuli od jedne općenite hipoteze:

H0. Velik broj čimbenika utječe na način na koji studenti percipiraju kvalitetu brenda i svoje zadovoljstvo sveučilištem kao brendom.

Pomoćne hipoteze bile su sljedeće:

H1. Motivacija studenata i njihovi međusobni odnosi važni su čimbenici u percipiranju brenda.

H2. U percipiranju brenda jako su važni čimbenici njegova jedinstvenost i prepoznatljivost u marketingu i na društvenim mrežama.

### **Interpretacija brenda**

Marketinško okruženje 21. stoljeća zasigurno će biti bogato znanjem i vrlo turbulentno (Achrol, 1997). Marketinške aktivnosti, osmišljene kako bi se izgradili jaki brendovi koji će očuvati veliku potražnju i i osigurati lojalnost kupaca, postaju sve važnije. Orijehtacija brenda predstavlja strateški fokus organizacije (Urde i sur., 2011) i stoga postaje jednim od najvažnijih elemenata prepoznatljivosti organizacije u poslovnom okruženju. Brend se može definirati na razne načine i s različitim svrhama. Međutim, bez obzira na način na koji se koristi ili mjeri, vrijednost brenda mora se u konačnici reklamirati, ovisno o riječima i postupcima potrošača (Hoeffler i Keller, 2003). Gabbot i Jevons (2009, str. 121) su naglasili činjenicu da nikada neće postojati jedinstvena definicija riječi *brand*, nego samo „niz novih konteksta ili prizmi putem kojih će se taj fenomen promatrati”. Njihov je zaključak da, u okruženju koje je puno različitih konteksta, može postojati i velik broj različitih definicija i percepcija, kao i različitih pristupa definiciji riječi *brand*.

Uspješan brand je proizvod, usluga, osoba ili mjesto koje se može prepoznati kao element putem kojeg kupci ili korisnici dobivaju važnu i jedinstvenu dodatnu vrijednost koja uglavnom odgovara njihovim potrebama. Štoviše, njegov uspjeh vodi očuvanju tih dodatnih vrijednosti, u usporedbi s konkurencijom (D'Allesandro, 2001). Leone i suradnici (2006, str. 3) definiraju sliku brenda kao „percepcije organizacije koje se reflektiraju u asocijacijama u sjećanju potrošača”. Na osnovnoj razini brendovi predstavljaju znakove ili simbole. Svrha marketinga jest prepoznati i razlikovati jedan proizvod od drugoga ili jednu organizaciju od druge (Ballantyne i Aitken, 2007). Prema De Chernatonyju i McDonaldu brand predstavlja obećanje i znak je trajne odanosti potrošača, koji su nastali zahvaljujući nizu proizvoda i usluga (De Chernatony i McDonald, 1998). Fichter i Jonas (2008) navode da je brand u stvari stereotip koji se povezuje s brendom. Brand nije samo ime; on je izazov da se razvije čitav niz pozitivnih asocijacija vezanih uz brand – tako se gradi slika brenda. Najuspješniji brendovi izgradili su svoje vrijednosti privlačenjem i zadržavanjem kupaca, što je rezultat učinkovite kombinacije proizvoda, prepoznatljivog identiteta i dodatne vrijednosti u predodžbama kupaca (Walley i sur., 2007). Gabbot i Jevons (2009, str. 119) navode da termin *brand* znači „visoko kontekstualiziranu cjelinu koja se sastoji od različitih suvremenih pristupa i shvaćanja, a samim tim i beskrajnu teoriju o razvojnom procesu”. Svijest o brendu ujedno je i moć brenda, njegovo mjesto u mislima potrošača (Ross, 2006). Jednom riječju, brendovi su potvrda kvalitete (Jobber, 2004).

Dizajn i brendiranje još su i važniji za razlikovanje proizvoda. Relevantnost, jednostavnost i humanost – ne tehnologija – dovest će do razlikovanja brendova u budućnosti (Kotler i Pfoertsch, 2007). Kako bi se izradile uspješne strategije brendiranja i sami brendovi, potrošači moraju primijetiti bitne razlike između raznih brendova proizvoda ili usluga (Morgan i sur., 2007). Dominantna paradigma organizacije određuje razumijevanje brenda, proces i sadržaj strategije brenda, kao i njihov mogući utjecaj na konkurentsku prednost (Louro i Cunha, 2001). Zadovoljavanje potreba potrošača važna je stavka, ali samo u okviru brenda, s manjom orijentacijom na marketinški pristup (Urde i sur., 2011).

Organizacije su voljne uložiti trud u izgradnju čvrste emocionalne veze između potrošača i brenda, jer takva veza vodi većoj razini odanosti potrošača i boljim financijskim rezultatima (Malär i sur., 2011). Brendovi, u konačnici, ostaju u pamćenju potrošača (De Chernatony, 2010). Stoga bi ime brenda trebalo biti drugačije od imena konkurentskih brendova, kako bi ga potrošači lakše mogli zapamtiti, prepoznati i izgovoriti. Ime bi trebalo opstati dugo razdoblje, ali bi također trebalo biti i zakonski registrirano. Učinkovito odabrano ime trebalo bi biti prvo što potrošaču padne na pamet kada razmišlja o određenoj potrebi koju želi zadovoljiti. U središtu svih marketinških aktivnosti jest potrošač ili pojam zadovoljstva potrošača, jer je zadovoljstvo glavni preduvjet za odanost brendu. Općenito govoreći, zadovoljstvo se temelji na usporedbi između korisnikovih očekivanja od određene usluge i stvarnih iskustava nastalih upotrebom te usluge (Grönroos, 1984). Bilo kakva slabost u daljnjem razvijanju brenda ili u dugoročnom povjerenju u brend, zasigurno bi imala suprotan učinak na uspjeh organizacije (Alam i Yasin, 2010).

Brend se sastoji od „racionalnih” i „emocionalnih” elemenata. Dok se smatra da su funkcionalne prednosti najvažnije za korporacijske brendove, emocionalni ili osobni elementi mogu biti upravo temelj različitosti (Aaker, 2004). Racionalna kvaliteta brenda sastoji se od triju dimenzija: kvalitete proizvoda, kvalitete usluge i kvalitete distribucije, a emocionalne dimenzije brenda obuhvaćaju sljedeće: dosljedan stil reklamiranja, imidž brenda, imidž države iz koje brend potječe i identitet prodavača. Sve te dimenzije pozitivno utječu na zadovoljstvo potrošača i njihovu odanost brendu (Elsäßer i Wirtz, 2017). Brendovi često predstavljaju najvažniju imovinu kompanije (Keller i Lehmann, 2006). Vrijednost brenda najveća je vrijednost koju organizacija može iskoristiti od proizvoda s posebnim imenom, u usporedbi s običnim proizvodom iste vrste. Kompanije mogu od svojih proizvoda napraviti vrijedne brendove tako što će ih učiniti nezaboravnim, prepoznatljivim i pouzdanim proizvodima vrhunske kvalitete (Page i Herr, 2002). Uspješan brend nudi potrošačima održivu konkurentsku prednost i uvijek ima bolju isplativost i marketinšku učinkovitost (De Chernatony i McDonald, 2005). U pregledu suvremene literature jasno je da su začetnici provedbe marketinških aktivnosti u neprofitnim organizacijama Kotler i Levy (1969). Oni su nedvojbeno položili temelj za daljna teorijska i praktična istraživanja u tome području.

## Pregled literature

### Pojam brendiranja u visokom obrazovanju

Sveučilište (fakultet) kao brend ima za cilj stvoriti određene asocijacije i željenu sliku u glavi potrošača. Brendiranje visokog obrazovanja sada se smatra ključnim čimbenikom uspjeha (Rutter i sur., 2016). Dobri su brendovi ključni resursi za stvaranje konkurentne prednosti (Aaker, 1996) svih organizacija, uključujući i ustanove visokog obrazovanja. Visoko obrazovanje je kompleksan sustav, s 11 različitih vrsta iskustava, uključujući povratne informacije studenata, diplome, izradu kurikula, komunikaciju s osobljem, ocjenjivanje, ponašanje na nastavi, zajedničko učenje, individualno učenje, nastavne metode i nastavni plan i program kolegija (Koris i sur., 2015).

U sve konkurentnijem sektoru visokog obrazovanja sveučilišta se suočavaju s ozbiljnim izazovima kada se radi o privlačenju novih studenata (Joseph i sur., 2012). Mnoga sveučilišta nude iste studijske programe. To znači da važnost tih programa u razlikovanju jednog sveučilišta od drugoga nije više tako velika, na pretrpanom tržištu u kojemu svako sveučilište želi privući nove studente (Rutter i sur., 2017). Mnogi su istraživači, poput Dennisa i suradnika (2016), ispitivali utjecaj brenda visokog sveučilišta, značenje brenda i imidž brenda na njegovu vrijednost, a pokazalo se da je ona rezultat velike privrženosti, predanosti, povjerenja i ukupnog zadovoljstva studenata i diplomiranih studenata. Isto kao što su i potrošači zbunjeni pretrpanim tržištem (Walsh i Mitchell, 2010), tako i budući studenti mogu biti jako zbunjeni u procesu donošenja odluke o sveučilištu na koje se žele upisati. Studenti sve više percipiraju svoje iskustvo visokog obrazovanja kao komercijalnu transakciju s očekivanim povratom financijskih ulaganja u budućnosti (Palfreyman, 2012). Jabbar i suradnici (2017) tvrde da postoje dokazi da neki studenti ulaze u sustav visokoga obrazovanja kako bi došli do diplome; tj. kako bi kupili proizvod, očekujući dobru diplomu u zamjenu za školarinu koju plaćaju sveučilištu, kako bi si jednoga dana osigurali radno mjesto na tržištu rada.

Istraživanje o poslovnim školama i njihovim brendovima pokazalo je da je osobnost brenda jednako važna kao i usluge koje se od njih očekuju i kao njihovi obrazovni atributi (Alwi i Kitchen, 2014). Sveučilišni brend rezultat je percepcije njegove kvalitete. On odražava kvalitetu sljedećih područja: studijskih programa, nastavnog osoblja, količine istraživanja, infrastrukture, organizacije i razine međunarodne suradnje (Mourad i sur., 2011). Sveučilišni brend odražava sposobnost ustanove da se razlikuje od ostalih, sposobnost da pruži određenu vrstu, razinu i kvalitetu visokog obrazovanja kako bi odgovarala potrebama studenata. Fakultetski brend ima fizičku i emocionalnu dobit za korisnike (potrošače), socijalno okruženje, okruženje za učenje, misiju i viziju, strukturu studentskih organizacija, kvalitetu objekata, sigurnost, simbole (ime, logo, boju) koji opisuju brend (Bennett i Choudhury, 2007). Prema Chapleu (2015), čimbenici koji utječu na stvaranje jakog brenda su vidljivi, „racionalni” elementi, kao što su stručno osoblje, obrazovni programi, fizička infrastruktura i lokacija, ali i „emocionalni” elementi koji stvaraju dodanu vrijednost unutar organizacije i koji

daju brendu konkurentsku prednost, kao što su atmosfera na instituciji i zadovoljstvo studiranjem. U sektoru visokog obrazovanja često se događa da brendiranje privatnih ustanova visokog obrazovanja omogućava ključnim dionicima puno lakši način da budu prepoznatljivi i da se razlikuju od ostalih konkurentskih ustanova (Waerass i Solbakk, 2009). Henri i suradnici (2017) su se u svojem članku složili s pedagoškom literaturom predloživši da studentima treba pružiti mogućnosti da djeluju neovisno i da razvijaju pouzdanje, jer je to ključno za obrazovanje diplomiranih studenata koji su neovisni i koji će biti uspješni na radnome mjestu.

Pozitivan odnos s vršnjacima i s osobljem jako je važan za studente, a on uključuje stvaranje pedagoških veza koje se temelje na povjerenju između studenata i osoblja, kako bi studenti stekli samopouzdanje u tehnike i alate koji su karakteristični za praksu sveučilišta (Tett i sur., 2017). Istraživanje koje su proveli Brown i Mazzarol (2009) potvrdilo je utjecaj kvalitete usluga na zadovoljstvo putem percipirane vrijednosti. Kvaliteta usluge ima iznimno važnu ulogu u donošenju odluka o kupovini i kao takva utječe na zadovoljstvo (Caruana i sur., 2000). Jedan od glavnih problema visokog obrazovanja jest važnost i primjenjivost usvojenoga znanja i vještina u praksi. S tim u vezi David i suradnici (2011) navode da postoji raskorak između nastave i stvarnih potreba kompanija. Imajući na umu činjenicu da studenti dijele svoje vrijeme na dva dijela, ono namijenjeno učenju i ono koje ulažu u ostale aktivnosti (Mason i sur., 2003), može se sa sigurnošću reći da nevoljkost studenata da „žrtvuju” svoje vrijeme namijenjeno drugim aktivnostima kako bi ga posvetili obrazovanju teško može dovesti do poboljšanja kvalitete te usluge. Brojni istraživači, uključujući Arambewela i Halla (2006), proveli su istraživanja o kvaliteti obrazovnih usluga. Također su uložili velik napor kako bi izradili odgovarajući instrument za mjerenje tog konstrukta. Dobiveni rezultati upućuju na postojanje razlika u stavovima kod studenata, ovisno o zemlji porijekla i o kulturi iz koje ispitanici dolaze. Arnet i suradnici (2003) prikazuju model uspješne marketinške veze koja se može primijeniti u neprofitnom sektoru. Oni ističu potrebu stvaranja dobrih odnosa sa studentima dok još studiraju, kako bi mogli širiti dobra iskustva o sveučilištu nakon diplomiranja. Autori tog modela naglašavaju postojanje četiriju čimbenika koji potiču razvoj odnosa sa studentima: sudjelovanje, recipročnost, prestiž i zadovoljstvo.

Athiyaman (1997) je bio među prvima koji su ispitivali kvalitetu usluge i zadovoljstvo studenata, kao i njihov utjecaj na buduće ponašanje studenata (između ostaloga i u smislu širenja pozitivne interpersonalne komunikacije). Zaključio je da je percipirana kvaliteta prediktor zadovoljstva, a da je zadovoljstvo prediktor odanosti. Kako navode Bleiklie i Kogan (2007), rukovoditelji institucija visokog obrazovanja (rektor, predsjednik, dekan itd.) koji su se nekada ponašali kao „prvi među jednakima”, sada više nalikuju izvršnim direktorima koji upravljaju korporacijom. Njima je dopuštena veća autonomija u radu i postoji manji utjecaj vlasti u smislu pravilnika i zakona koji reguliraju svakodnevne aktivnosti tih institucija. Veći se naglasak sada stavlja na menadžment usmjeren na postizanje ciljeva i najboljih mogućih rezultata.



Kako se povjerenje gradi s vremenom, korisnici su na početku imali neka uvjerenja o organizaciji i iskustva kupovine usluga koja vode većim očekivanjima od njihove buduće suradnje (Vázquez-Casielles i sur., 2010). Uzimajući u obzir proces stvaranja povjerenja, može se zaključiti da se uvjerenja korisnika sastoje od dviju dimenzija: vjerodostojnosti i dobronamjernosti (Vázquez-Casielles i sur., 2010). Na temelju provedenih istraživanja (Voss i sur., 2007) može se doći do zaključka da ponašanje profesora i njihovi stavovi mogu kod studenata biti prva odrednica kvalitete usluga ustanove visokog obrazovanja. U visokom obrazovanju je ono što studenti očekuju od svojih profesora povezano s njihovim nastavnim umijećima i metodama, komunikacijskim vještinama, pristupačnošću, entuzijazmom, stručnošću, smislom za humor i srdačnošću (Voss i sur., 2007).

Istraživanja novih medija bavila su se analizom osobnosti brenda koja se komunicira putem pisanih *online* tekstova (Rutter i sur., 2015). Lokacija ustanove visokog obrazovanja također ima utjecaj na osobnost brenda te ustanove (Dholakia i Acciaro, 2014). Lokacija ustanove blizu budućeg mjesta stanovanja studenta također je bitna (Briggs, 2006; Vrontis i sur., 2007). Komunikacija ima važnu ulogu u uspostavljanju i mijenjanju percipiranog imidža brenda sveučilišta. Ne iznenađuje, stoga, da su percipirana kvaliteta (koja se ponajprije manifestira u ponuđenim kolegijima) i reputacija ustanove neki od čimbenika koji najviše utječu na izbor željenog sveučilišta među studentima (Wilkins i Huisman, 2011). Kako bi identitet brenda opstao u sferi visokog obrazovanja koje se stalno mijenja, on mora biti dinamičan i fleksibilan kako bi zadovoljio potrebe potrošača (Da Silveira i sur., 2013). Melewar i Jenkins (2002) prepoznali su četiri potkonstrukta korporacijskog identiteta (komunikacija i vizualni identitet, ponašanje, korporacijska kultura i uvjeti na tržištu) koje su primijenili na ustanove visokog obrazovanja, a koje, ako se njima učinkovito upravlja, mogu postati izvor konkurentске prednosti. Što je veća kvaliteta odnosa prema brendu, tj. stav potrošača prema brendu kao kvalitetnom partneru u vremenski dugoj vezi (Algesheimer i sur., 2005), to će jača biti potrošačeva privrženost tome brendu.

Povjerenje može pomoći u učinkovitom upravljanju odnosom ili vezom, što može imati pozitivan utjecaj na zadovoljstvo (Andaleeb, 1996). Jaka osobnost brenda, koja se prenosi putem različitih medija, može povećati vrijednost brenda i organizacijsku učinkovitost (Rutter i sur., 2017). Povjerenje u brend može se narušiti ako postoje sumnje u njegovu autentičnost (Eggers i sur., 2013). Kako navode Jalilvand i Samiei (2012), usmena predaja smatra se ključnom komponentom koja utječe na studentov izbor privatne ustanove visokog obrazovanja. Joseph i suradnici (2012) primijenili su tu ideju na ustanove visokog obrazovanja navodeći da negativna usmena predaja smanjuje njihovu tržišnu vrijednost.

## Metodologija

U istraživanju tržišta primjena faktorske analize od velike je važnosti. Primjena takve tehnike multivarijatne analize može donositeljima odluka dati korisne informacije

s aspekta uzimanja u obzir nekoliko faktora, umjesto velikog broja definiranih parametara koji su odgovorni za pozicioniranje brenda na tržištu. Kako je cilj ovoga rada istraživanje koje zapravo pokazuje zadovoljstvo studenata na privatnim fakultetima, prema svim relevantnim parametrima, primjena faktorske analize trebala bi za to pružiti dobru osnovu. Stoga fokus neće biti na velikom broju prvobitno definiranih parametara. Procesom njihove eliminacije stvorit će se uvjeti koji će nam omogućiti izradu strategije za optimizaciju odabranih faktora.

Kao tehnika međuovisnosti, faktorska analiza pronalazi model odnosa između proučavanih varijabli, što je s istraživačkog aspekta značajno. Uglavnom se odnosi na dizajniranje upitnika u kojem je najveći problem odabir pitanja, pogotovo u istraživanjima koja uključuju ispitanike. U tom smislu jedan je od glavnih razloga u korist faktorske analize u ovom slučaju pronalaženje skupina u kojima ispitanici imaju slične tvrdnje, jer one izražavaju iste osnovne ideje koje želimo utvrditi. S druge strane, sve varijable u istraživanju koje uključuje ispitanike mogu se smatrati neovisnima, a glavna ideja sadržana je u pronalaženju modela njihova odnosa, što je razlog zašto višestruka regresijska analiza ne bi ovdje bila pogodna metoda.

U istraživanju se koristila faktorska analiza, a nakon toga su dobiveni podaci objašnjeni s pomoću SPSS statističkog programa. Uz tu tehniku prikazani su osnovni indikatori deskriptivne statistike, kao i glavni zaključci korelacijske analize provedene za sve parove promatranih varijabli.

## Istraživanje i rasprava

Kako je naznačeno, glavni pokazatelji deskriptivne statistike prikazani su u prvome dijelu. Tablica 1 prikazuje prosječan rezultat izračunat prema ponuđenim tvrdnjama (odgovori su poredani na skali od 1 do 5, gdje je 1 najviša, a 5 najniža vrijednost), zajedno s njihovim prosječnim devijacijama. Za tvrdnje uključene u ovo istraživanje prosječni izračunati pokazatelj je iznad 4 u više od 96% pitanja. Takva visoka prosječna ocjena odražava zadovoljstvo ispitanih studenata u svim kategorijama, što pokazuje značajan stupanj njihove potvrde, prema zadanim standardima fakulteta.

Dalje u istraživanju provedena je korelacijska analiza na svim parovima promatranih varijabli te je u svim slučajevima utvrđena statistički značajna korelacijska zavisnost ( $p < 0,05$ ) pozitivnog smjera. Osim potvrde izravne veze među svim parovima kategorija koje su ispitanici ocijenili, ta metoda omogućila je prvu razinu faktorske analize s aspekta grupiranja spomenutih varijabli u određene faktore (skupine).

Rezultat toga je da je proveden odgovarajući test koji je potvrdio da su podaci pogodni za faktorsku analizu. Vrlo visoka vrijednost KMO pokazatelja bila je blizu vrijednosti 1, kao i  $p$  vrijednost dobivena Bartlettovim testom sferičnosti koja je statistički značajna ( $p < 0,05$ ) i ukazuje na adekvatno uzorkovanje.

Izračunate zajedničke vrijednosti za sve varijable pokazuju koje se od njih trebaju zadržati u modelu, tj. koje će varijable biti uključene u pojedinačne faktore. Nakon rotacije, kako bi se osiguralo da su sve odabrane varijable uključene najviše u jedan

faktor, u Tablici 2 prikazani su faktori koji objašnjavaju najveći dio varijabilnosti proučavanog fenomena. Rezultati pokazuju da se visok stupanj ukupne varijabilnosti, tj. 64,14%, može objasniti s pomoću ukupno četiriju faktora. Potrebno je spomenuti da postoji vrlo velika razlika između prve i druge svojstvene vrijednosti.

Tablica 1

*Deskriptivna statistika za parametre fakultetske klime*

	Srednja vrijednost	Standardna devijacija	Analiza N
Brend je jedinstven (originalan) i razlikuje se od brendova drugih fakulteta.	4,44	,78	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta prepoznaje jedinstvenu vrijednost brenda.	4,37	,81	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta stvara jasnu sliku u mislima kupaca, što ga razlikuje od konkurencije.	4,36	,87	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta motivira studente i lako ga je zapamtiti.	4,59	,80	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta je lako shvatiti.	4,44	,86	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta omogućava rast.	4,31	,92	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima dobre izgleda za dugoročni uspjeh.	4,31	,89	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta može se nositi s konkurencijom.	4,45	,82	213
Slogan privatnog fakulteta je uvjerljiv.	4,37	,94	213
Za brend privatnog fakulteta važno je da profesori imaju dobar odnos sa studentima.	4,73	,66	213
Nastavnici su zahtjevni.	3,57	1,05	213
Na privatnom fakultetu studenta se poštuje.	4,65	,70	213
Za brend privatnog fakulteta karakteristična je dobra atmosfera.	4,72	,64	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta pruža zadovoljavajuće znanje i vještine potrebne za buduću karijeru.	4,27	,92	213
Zadovoljstvo učenjem jača je strana brenda privatnog fakulteta.	4,31	,95	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta pruža dobre izgleda za karijeru.	4,24	,93	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta pruža mogućnost uključivanja studenata u razne studentske organizacije.	4,55	,78	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima pristupačnu cijenu školarine.	4,04	1,12	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta potiče ambicije i interese.	4,39	,82	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta potiče kreativnost.	4,40	,84	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima dobre studijske programe.	4,55	,72	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta potiče znanstvena istraživanja.	4,27	,99	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima dobru promidžbu (marketing, komunikaciju).	4,50	,94	213
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima dobru lokaciju.	4,15	1,11	213
Ocijenite ocjenom od 1 do 5 mrežnu stranicu privatnog fakulteta.	4,58	,79	213
Ocijenite ocjenom od 1 do 5 Facebook stranicu privatnog fakulteta.	4,34	,99	213

Tablica 2

U zadanoj fazi, kako bi se definirali zasebni čimbenici koji mogu objasniti proučavani fenomen, ili čimbenici koji mogu objasniti najveći dio njegove ukupne varijabilnosti, primijenjeno je uobičajeno pravilo koje zahtijeva da se zadrže varijable čije je opterećenje unutar faktora veće od 0,6. Tablica 3 pokazuje konačno rotirano rješenje s odabranim varijablama za svaki od četiri određena faktora.

Tablica 3

Matrica rotiranih komponenti: rotirano varimaks rješenje (varimaks metoda)

	Komponenta			
	1	2	3	4
Brend je jedinstven (originalan) i razlikuje se od brendova drugih fakulteta.	,28	<b>,73</b>	-,03	,24
Brend privatnog fakulteta prepoznaje jedinstvenu vrijednost brenda.	,26	<b>,82</b>	,09	,18
Brend privatnog fakulteta stvara jasnu sliku u mislima kupaca, što ga razlikuje od konkurencije.	,27	<b>,68</b>	,15	,13
Brend privatnog fakulteta motivira studente i lako ga je zapamtiti.	,15	<b>,77</b>	,18	,10
Brend privatnog fakulteta je lako shvatiti.	,18	<b>,67</b>	,22	,32
Brend privatnog fakulteta omogućava rast.	,42	<b>,72</b>	,16	,12
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima dobre izgleda za dugoročni uspjeh.	,48	<b>,61</b>	,19	,17
Brend privatnog fakulteta može se nositi s konkurencijom.	,45	,54	,36	,20
Slogan privatnog fakulteta je uvjerljiv.	,12	,51	,44	,27
Za brend privatnog fakulteta važno je da profesori imaju dobar odnos sa studentima.	,23	,47	,52	-,09
Nastavnici su zahtjevni.	,39	,11	,004	,53
Na privatnom fakultetu studenta se poštuje.	,31	,07	<b>,74</b>	,11
Za brend privatnog fakulteta karakteristična je dobra atmosfera.	,31	,12	<b>,73</b>	,19
Brend privatnog fakulteta pruža zadovoljavajuće znanje i vještine potrebne za buduću karijeru.	,59	,38	,44	,12
Zadovoljstvo učenjem jača je strana brenda privatnog fakulteta.	,56	,47	,32	,19
Brend privatnog fakulteta pruža dobre izgleda za karijeru.	<b>,68</b>	,36	,35	,22
Brend privatnog fakulteta pruža mogućnost uključivanja studenata u razne studentske organizacije.	<b>,71</b>	,19	,10	,22
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima pristupačnu cijenu školarine.	<b>,67</b>	,26	,04	,28
Brend privatnog fakulteta potiče ambicije i interese.	<b>,82</b>	,23	,21	,18
Brend privatnog fakulteta potiče kreativnost.	<b>,78</b>	,20	,27	,23
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima dobre studijske programe.	<b>,60</b>	,24	,26	,24
Brend privatnog fakulteta potiče znanstvena istraživanja.	<b>,65</b>	,44	,16	,19
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima dobru promidžbu (marketing, komunikaciju).	,34	,13	,19	<b>,62</b>
Brend privatnog fakulteta ima dobru lokaciju.	,22	,17	,05	,59
Ocijenite ocjenom od 1 do 5 mrežnu stranicu privatnog fakulteta.	-,10	,42	,53	<b>,64</b>
Ocijenite ocjenom od 1 do 5 Facebook stranicu privatnog fakulteta.	,20	,32	,28	<b>,70</b>

Metoda ekstrakcije: analiza glavnih komponenti.

Metoda rotacije: varimaks rotacija s Kaiserovom normalizacijom.

a. Rotacija tijekom 7 ponavljanja.

Sve varijable sadržane u Faktoru 1 odnose se na visoka očekivanja koja studenti imaju od fakulteta, a tiču se njihovih interesa, kreativnosti, suvremenosti i mogućnosti

ostvarivanja uspješne karijere. Stoga se taj faktor može nazvati i motivacijskim faktorom. Zajedno s navedenim kriterijima motivacija studenata za izbor ovoga fakulteta tijesno je povezana sa sljedećim uvjetom: pristupačnom cijenom školarine.

Analiza varijabli sadržanih u drugom odabranom faktoru pokazuje da se zadovoljstvo studenata može također mjeriti i načinom na koji doživljavaju fakultet, s obzirom na njegovu raznolikost i posebnost u usporedbi s drugim fakultetima. Sve varijable u tome faktoru odnose se na spomenute aspekte, pa se taj faktor može definirati kao jedinstvenost brenda.

Sljedeći faktor nazvan je „međuljudski odnosi” i on označava (nesumnjivo) potrebu za dobrom komunikacijom i međusobnim poštovanjem u ustanovi visokog obrazovanja.

Posljednji odabrani faktor mjeri zadovoljstvo studenata, no ovaj se put mjeri rangiranjem marketinških aktivnosti koje fakultet provodi, s posebnim naglaskom na društvenim mrežama.

Hipoteze istraživanja potvrđene su faktorskom analizom kada je određen broj faktora koji mogu objasniti proučavane fenomene. Hipoteza H1 potvrđena je s pomoću prvog i trećeg faktora: motivacija i međuljudski odnosi značajni su za način na koji se brend doživljava. Hipoteza H2 također je potvrđena s pomoću drugoga i četvrtog faktora, koji pokazuju važnost jedinstvenosti brenda i njegove prepoznatljivosti u marketingu i na društvenim mrežama.

Problem na koji smo naišli u istraživanju opisanom u ovom radu obično zahtijeva izradu baterije testova za procjenu skupine karakteristika. Na temelju opterećenja varijabli iz svakoga faktora može se izvući jedna ili dvije varijable kako bi se izradila baterija testova.

Za izradu baterije testova koji ispituju zadovoljstvo studenata odabranim fakultetom, odabrana je jedna varijabla s najvećim opterećenjem unutar svakog definiranog faktora. Te odabrane varijable bile su: Brend privatnog fakulteta potiče ambicije i interese; Brend privatnog fakulteta prepoznaje jedinstvenu vrijednost brenda; Na privatnom fakultetu studente se poštuje i Ocijenite ocjenom od 1 do 5 Facebook stranicu privatnog fakulteta.

## **Zaključak**

Jak brend zapravo je znak povjerenja koje određuju potrošači te označava visoku kvalitetu proizvoda, vodi odanosti potrošača i daje uporište njihovu uvjerenju da će brend dorasti očekivanjima (Lock, 2016). Imidž brenda može utjecati na prenošenje pozitivnih ili negativnih atributa povezanih s kvalitetom proizvoda/usluga ili njihove dodane vrijednosti, što znači da brend i imidž koji on gradi kod budućih studenata može na mnoge načine utjecati na njihovu odluku o vlastitom obrazovanju i na njihov izbor ustanove na kojoj će studirati. Ustanove visokog obrazovanja određuju smjer obrazovanja budućih studenata, a time i njihov život. U ovome je istraživanju ispitan utjecaj 26 različitih varijabli povezanih s kvalitetom odabranog brenda privatnog sveučilišta. U tom je procesu analizirano zadovoljstvo studenata samim brendom.

Faktorskom analizom izdvojena su četiri faktora koja sadrže ukupno 19 varijabli koje mogu objasniti ispitivani fenomen.

Smatra se da se brendiranje može izmjeriti s pomoću brojnih kriterija povezanih s kvalitetom sveučilišta (Jevons, 2006), što upućuje na činjenicu da sveučilišta trebaju postati jaki brendovi kako bi dala do znanja budućim studentima da postoje i upoznala ih s programima koje nude, a koji se razlikuju od konkurencije te kako bi zadobila određeni udio na tržištu. Istraživanja su pokazala da je motivacija jedan od ključnih faktora u procesu donošenja odluka; brend fakulteta trebao bi motivirati studente da odaberu baš određenu ustanovu visokog obrazovanja. To znači da bi fakultet trebao omogućiti dobre izgledе za buduću karijeru studentima jer su brojna istraživanja (Agrey i Lampadan, 2014) pokazala da su upravo oni na vrhu popisa kriterija za odabir fakulteta. To se može izvesti putem studijskih programa koji vode dobrim mogućnostima zapošljavanja nakon što studenti diplomiraju. Motivacija za biranje fakulteta ovisi i o pristupačnoj cijeni školarine, što je posebno važno roditeljima (Domino i sur., 2006) jer je oni plaćaju; financijski paket (školarina, popusti, itd.) koji se nudi studentima jedan je od najvažnijih elemenata pri stvaranju brenda. Kako bi brend bio uspješan i motivirao buduće studente, trebaju postojati dobri studijski programi, što znači da je neophodno da su informacije o instituciji i studijskim programima svima dostupne (Mohar i sur., 2008).

Jedinstvenost brenda naglašava se kao jedan od čimbenika koji su bitni za kvalitetu brenda ustanove visokog obrazovanja. Brend bi trebao biti originalan i razlikovati se od brendova ostalih fakulteta; njegova jedinstvena vrijednost trebala bi biti prepoznatljiva. Brend bi također u mislima studenata trebao stvoriti jasnu sliku o tome da je taj fakultet drugačiji od konkurentskih. Imidž brenda, njegov identitet i ime zajedno bi trebali stvoriti vrijednost brenda (Williams i Omar, 2014). Kako bi se to postiglo, potrebno je konstantno upravljati brendom, što će, zajedno s njegovom posebnošću i posebnom vrijednošću, dovesti do identiteta brenda kod budućih studenata.

Drugi faktor koji je važan za brend ustanove visokog obrazovanja povezan je s međuljudskim odnosima: brend upućuje na činjenicu da se studente poštuje i da u ustanovi vlada pozitivna atmosfera. Imidž brenda koji označava dobro raspoloženje i ugodno okruženje jako je važan u procesu brendiranja.

Dobra promidžba, tj. marketing i društvene mreže (mrežna stranica i Facebook stranica), navodi se kao četvrti faktor. Brojna su istraživanja istaknula važnost društvenih medija kada se bira fakultet, jer se studenti neprestano koriste nekom vrstom društvenih medija za komunikaciju s kolegama i profesorima (Lock, 2016). Društveni mediji smatraju se alatima kojima se uglavnom koriste studenti kako bi s drugima podijelili svoje stavove, iskustva i povratne informacije o svojim odlukama vezanim uz obrazovanje.

Pokazalo se da je problem analiziran u ovom radu obično pogodan za izradu baterije testova koji daju jasne rezultate o varijablama koje su naglašene i najvažnije. Međutim, u vezi s izradom spomenutih testova važno je primijetiti da postoji ograničenje. Njihova valjanost uključuje provedbu konfirmatorne faktorske analize na sličnim, ali različitim skupinama ispitanika.