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An in depth analysis of the pivotal social factors of higher educational marketing in Tehran IAUs

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CHRONICLE Abstract

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A meticulous analysis of the influential factors in Higher education marketing and the provision of a framework can be beneficial. The present study aimed at the identification and the analysis of the social factors influential in higher education marketing according to which a model was developed. The study was practical in terms of the aim and employed field research and a mixed method approach (i.e., both quantitative and qualitative analyses). The participants in the qualitative phase included the knowledgeable authorities and experts in marketing and those in the quantitative phase encompassed the marketing professors and beneficiaries of IAU, the deans of Tehran branches and their assistants. The instruments were a semi-structural interview and a questionnaire for the qualitative and quantitative data collection respectively. In order to analyze the obtained qualitative data, grounded theory was employed and axial and selective open coding formed the foundation of quantitative analysis. The findings revealed the most significant social factors as 1) personal factors, 2) organizational factors, 3) financial and expense factors, and 4) higher educational factors. As a result, the mechanisms of expanding marketing along with the dynamicity of the scientific context formed the instructional marketing strategies in different branches of Tehran IAU.

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Introduction

The competitive nature of marketing for universities and instructional institutes necessitates the obligation to aim for the satisfaction and the retention of the customers as the survival and endurance of these organizations lie on their customers. Therefore, the longer they retain their current customers, the more successful they will be. With regard to the expansion of information and communication in the society, it is getting more and more challenging to attract and keep the customers. Therefore, it goes without saying that the employment and innovation of appropriate strategies to attract and keep the customers in instructional settings can be beneficial and in turn guarantee their survival in the long run. The concept of marketing has been proposed in the economic and financial issues in teaching since 1980 and some scholars (e.g., Barrens, 1993; Gray, 1991; Marland, Rogers, & Gibs, 2008) have conducted influential studies in the field.

As higher education has been known as an industry, the universities are obliged to consider their customers' needs and expectations to achieve a better position and win the competition. In the current competitive context, especially universities, as the main source of the production and the spread of knowledge, are to adapt their instructional services to meet the implicit and explicit needs of the society. In order to do so, directing toward the customers' satisfaction whether individually or holistically is a must. One of the major concerns of the current organizations is to provide quality services to meet the expectations and desires of their domestic and international customers. This gets more complicated when these organizations are exposed to several customers with various needs. As a result, it is required to identify the marketing and its influential factors in the context of Iran and specifically speaking Tehran. In other words, the contextualized marketing factors form the main concern of this study. Presently, the higher education organizations have become more and more competitive and market-oriented owing to the decrease in the government's role in the budget

Provision required by those organizations. The number of higher education organizations including for-profit sectors, non-profit institutes, virtual institutes and etc. is rapidly increasing. Furthermore, the number of applicants for higher education is decreasing. The young population is exponentially decreasing and this is a threat for universities. As a result, many of the majors were cancelled in IAUs. In such conditions, universities must follow the marketing principles and rules as higher education marketing is one of the pivotal variables that plays the major role in the concealed competition among universities and even countries.

Haj Ali Akbari (2019) identified the influential factors on education marketing as personal factors, structural factors of the organization, service marketing, financial sources, educational products and service, social and cultural factors. Babae Kasmaee (2017) named two principle factors of higher education marketing as the production and offering of values to the university customers and the communication management with the customers. In the same line, Azizi Shamami (2017) categorized the geographical aspects, behavioral demands features, the cognitive and psychological population within the classification section; the attraction factors of the market and the keys to success within the selection of the target market; the highlighted role of customers' understanding, the competitive nature and the principle sources within the opportunity seeking strategies; and finally, the process, concrete evidence, the products of educational program, the personnel, advertisement, and pricing within the appropriate mixed marketing strategies. Yasini and ----- (2016) proposed an educational marketing model including the causal conditions, inner and outer system factors, contextual factors, general educational policy making factors and the privatization of the educational institutes, category-orientedness of the higher education marketing, individual and

And holistic strategies, governmental interventions, socio-cultural and economic factors and personal, organizational, and social consequences.

Lonla (2019) classified the influential factors in marketing strategies as the web site design, appropriate search engine, web analysis, social media, strategies, instant responding, social mishaps, and the amalgamation of current sectors. Radzivene and Banaitis (2019) referred to the role that the foundation of the international branch can play. Milian (2018) stated that the Canadian educational organizations could enhance the attraction of customers via emphasizing their relation with industry and the law makers. While referring to relationship marketing, Brown (2017) highlighted the relationship marketing which aims at the customers' preferences and interests. According to Marja Peier kenz (2017), the shortage of information about universities in the society should be overcome via appropriate guidance and direction one of which is the universities ranking. In this regard, Yang (2016) mentions the major difference that separates marketing in education and in business. Kalimoulin and Dorosekaia (2016) relate marketing to individuals' degree of persuasion from others, the personality of the graduates for instance their self-confidence, the residence of the registrants, the financial status of the registrants, media, the awareness of the educational institute ranking, professional and job-related experiences, the availability of the educational budget, the supplementary materials, technology, methodology, and syllabus design. Glava (2015) stated that the educational marketing includes the educational institute design and management which should be conducted in such a way so that it meets the groups' needs and expectations and employs them effectively for the valuing, connection, the distribution of educational products, motivating services and informing the society. The aim of the relationship marketing is the management of the relationship between the organization and its customers.

Research questions

- 1) How to identify the influential factors in higher educational marketing in IAU branches of Tehran?
- 2) Which social factors influence the higher educational marketing of IAU?
- 3) What is the ranking of the influential social factors in the higher educational marketing of IAU?
- 4) What is the appropriate model to conduct educational marketing in IAU branches of Tehran?

Materials and Methods

The present study was practical in terms of the aim. In order to collect the data, the field research was employed. Furthermore, a mixed method approach (both quantitative and qualitative) formed the basis of the study.

The qualitative stage

In the qualitative section, owing to the insufficient theoretical foundations in the field of educational marketing grounded theory was employed based on which a paradigmatic model was proposed. The population included all the knowledgeable authorities and experts in the educational marketing field among whom five marketing instructors and eight knowledgeable experts and four IAU deans and assistants were randomly selected. To provide an operational definition and select the experts objectively, they are defined as those with more than three years of teaching experience in higher educational marketing, with published articles in validated domestic or international journals, with supervising experience of marketing candidates' thesis, or participating in seminars and conferences. And in order to collect the data, a semi-structured interview was employed and the procedure lasted till the theoretical saturation was achieved. And finally, the grounded theory (axial and selective open coding) was adopted for the analyses of the obtained data.

The quantitative stage

The statistical population encompasses all the marketing professors (i.e., 192) in the north, south, east, west, and central branch of IAU. According to the Cochran formula applied for the sampling procedure, the number of

Participants is 128. Afterwards, the stepwise cluster sampling is used. The final sample was asked to fill out the questionnaire designed by the researcher on the basis of the theoretical and practical foundations in the field as well as the obtained results from the exploratory interviews.

Reliability and validity of the questionnaire

According to the criteria proposed by Creswell, a few measures were taken to test the validity of the questionnaire employed in the qualitative stage (Creswell and Miller, 2000). The first step was to examine the validity using four interview participants' responses. Afterwards, the colleagues' responses (i.e., two professors in higher education field and two in the marketing) were studied. And finally, a pilot interview was conducted to identify the weak points and the strengths. The required measures were taken to overcome the weak points. It is worth noting that in order to enhance the quality of the procedure and elicit the educational marketing factors, the interviews were conducted by the researcher.

The reliability was tested via Cohen's Kappa Coefficient which was equal to 0.95. Furthermore, the test-retest method was employed as well in which a few interview were randomly selected from the whole sample of interviews and each was coded twice with a pre-determined and short time interval. Afterwards, the codes were compared and contrasted.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire in the quantitative stage was examined as well. As the first step, the face validity of the questionnaire were analyzed and modified by three experts in the field. After that, the items were ranked by 10 experts using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very weak) to 5 (very strong). The obtained results were employed to eliminate the inappropriate items and determine the relative importance of each item. Then, the mean of each item was calculated and if the mean was equal or more than 1.5, they were included in the analysis. The next step was to evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire. Therefore, a few experts were asked to analyze the items in terms of appropriate grammar and vocabulary and the most suitable arrangement and ordering of the items based on which the required modifications were done. Afterwards, the content validity was confirmed via CVI and CVR. In other words, the questionnaire

enjoyed the face validity, content validity, and structural validity. To further analyze the questionnaire, the reliability was calculated via combined reliability method.

Table 1. The report of combined reliability coefficient

Variables	Combined Reliability Coefficient (CR>0.7)	Cronbach Alpha (Alpha>0.7)	Extracted Variance mean (Ave>0.5)
Personal factors	0.93	0.80	0.61
Organizational factors	0.85	0.78	0.83
Financial and expenses factors	0.90	0.80	0.66
Higher education factors	0.92	0.75	0.62

Data analyses

In order to answer the first research question and identify the influential factors in educational marketing, an interview was conducted. According to the results of the interview analyses and the participants' experience in the field, the most significant and influential social factors in educational marketing of IAU branches include 1) the personal factors which is related to each individual student and his/her conditions and situations, 2) organizational factors which is not under the university management control and is related to the environment within which the organization is located. The current circulars, rules, and regulations form one of the influential factors on different sections and the quality of the institute services, 3) financial and expenses factors for instance the living expenses, and 4) higher educational factors such as the employment of modern management methods, the use of modern methods of advertisement, reviewing the attracting and marketing methods, creating a competitive atmosphere among institutes, the modification of the management bylaws and guidelines of the institutes, provision of advantages and amenities to succeed in attracting domestic and international students, educating students according to the job market requirements and assigning industrial projects to institutes. (Table 2)

Table 2. Open coding results

Influential social factors in educational marketing	The items content	Items No.
Personal factors	Educational motivation, interest in the higher education, interest in the scientific and research settings, the students' attitude to the institute, the students' interest and interdependency, the students' satisfaction, the students' perspective, friends and the people around, the students' family and the influential people	1,2, 4,5, 6,7, 8,9, 10,12
Organizational factors	The graduates' success, the research rate, the invention rate, the fair rate, job opportunities based on the education in the educational institute, geographical situation, educational rules and regulations, the institute reputation, the university rank among others, the education fee, and the government's role in educational procedures	1,3, 5,6, 7,9, 10,11, 17
Financial and expenses factors	The prices, the educational expenses, the received scholarship, and the living expenses in that area	1,2, 3,5, 6,7, 9,10, 11,13, 14,16, 17
Higher education factors	The use of modern methods of management, the use of modern methods of advertisement, reviewing the attracting and marketing methods, creating a competitive atmosphere among institutes, the modification of the management bylaws and guidelines of the institutes, reviewing the supportive rules and regulations in the ministry of science and high cultural council, matching the bylaws of advantages and amenities to succeed in attracting domestic and international students, the survival of institutes on the condition of attracting students and surpassing other educational institutes, educating students according to the job market requirements and assigning industrial projects to institutes	1,2, 3,5, 6,7, 9,10, 11,12, 14,15, 17

Factors analysis of the social variables

A factors analysis was conducted to come up with a model of influential social factors in higher educational marketing. The prerequisites (i.e., the significant result of KMO and Bartlett's test) were checked and proved the appropriacy of the obtained data for factor analysis (Table 3). In order to scrutinize the influential social factors in educational marketing according to the review of literature, 20 items were taken into consideration. The exploratory factor analysis was conducted by SPSS and the result is illustrated in the following table.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's test

KMO measure of sampling adequacy	0.786
Bartlett's test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-square df sig.	10540.971 110 .000

Table 4. Total variance explained

Item	Total	Percentage of variance	Accumulated Variance	Total	Percentage of variance	Accumulated Variance
1	8.155	38.834	38.834	8.155	38.834	38.834
2	3.124	14.876	53.710	3.124	14.876	53.710
3	2.671	12.721	66.431	2.671	12.721	66.431
4	1.654	7.875	74.306	1.654	7.875	74.306
5	1.157	5.508	79.814			
6	.933	4.441	84.255			
7	.738	3.512	87.767			
8	.647	3.083	90.850			
9	.465	2.213	93.063			
10	.297	1.414	94.477			
11	.273	1.302	95.779			
12	.216	1.027	96.806			
13	.191	.908	97.714			
14	.174	.829	98.543			
15	.099	.472	99.015			
16	.078	.370	99.385			
17	.049	.235	99.620			
18	.037	.177	99.796			
19	.025	.118	99.914			
20	.005	.025	100.000			

Table 5. Research factors and their share

Number	Factor	Allocated share	Allocated share percentage	Percent from the whole
1	Organizational factors	8.155	38.834	52.3
2	Financial and expenses factors	3.124	14.876	20
3	Personal factors	2.671	12.721	17.1
4	Higher educational factors	1.654	7.875	10.6
				100

A more holistic model can be proposed on the basis of the aforementioned factors to provide a better description for the concept. This model is presented in Figure 1.

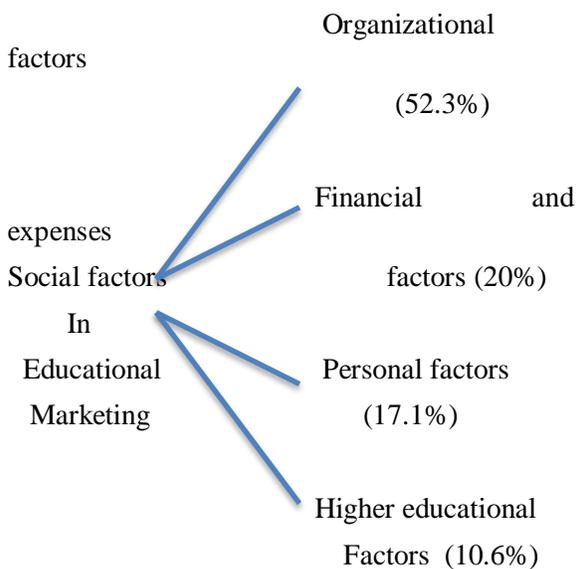


Figure 1. A model of social factors in higher educational marketing

In order to answer the second research question and illustrate the ranking of the influential social factors in educational marketing, a model was developed with the application of A.H.P method and its hierarchical tree. The first level includes the aim

And the final level encompasses the competitive

items and the levels in between refer to the decision making factors.

Based on the obtained results from the Expert Choice software, the weight of the social factors is equal to 0.483 and the rate of matrix incompatibility was .001 and thus acceptable. As it is below 1.0. The results of the relative comparison obtained from matrix analysis is shown in the following table.

Prioritizing the social factors in educational marketing

Table 6. The relative weight of each sub-criterion

Main criterion	Sub-Criterion	Main criterion weight	Sub-criterion Coefficient	final weight of sub-criterion
Social Factors	Organizational	0.483	0.492	0.238
	Financial		0.207	0.099
	Personal		0.200	0.097
	Higher educational		0.101	0.049

As a conclusion, the organizational factors had the highest impact whereas the higher educational factors revealed the lowest effect in higher educational marketing and the other two factors lie in between.

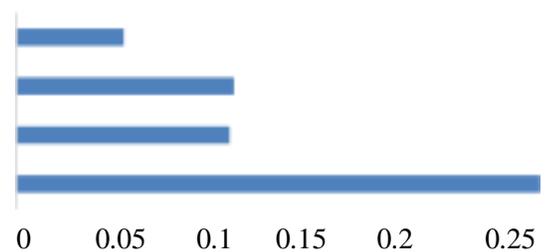


Figure 2. Comparison among social factors

The third research question deals with the development of an appropriate model for the social factors in higher educational marketing of IAU branches. In order to do so, the following grounded theory questions were developed.

1. What are the causal conditions in society for the enhancement of IAU higher educational marketing?

2. What are the interventional factors in IAU higher educational marketing within the society?

- 3. What is the major phenomenon in the enhancement of IAU higher educational marketing?
- 4. What are the contextual factors influential in the enhancement of IAU higher educational marketing?
- 5. What are the strategic conditions in society for IAU higher educational marketing?
- 6. What are the results and consequences of IAU higher educational marketing enhancement?

To provide a solid foundation on which the above mentioned questions could be answered, the literature and the interview with the experts in the field of higher educational marketing were meticulously scrutinized and a final model was presented in what follows.

- The causal conditions in higher educational marketing for IAU

Table 7. Causal conditions components and indicators

Category:	Indicators	Statistical Codes	
Causal Conditions  Holistic Dimensions: Social factors  Components: 1. Personal 2. Organizational	1. Educational motivation, the student's attitude toward the institute and higher education, the students' information about the institute, students' interests and interdependency, the perspective of the friends, the people around, family, and the other influential people	1	
		2	
		4	
		5	
		6	
		7	
		8	
		9	
		10	
		12	
		2. The graduates' success, the research rate, the inventions rate, the fair rate, job opportunities provided based on the education in the institute, the geographical situation, the educational rules and regulations, the institute reputation, the university ranking among other institutes, the educational fee and the government's role in educational procedures	

The intervening conditions in higher educational marketing for IAU

Table 8. Intervening conditions components and indicators

Category:	Indicators	Statistical Codes
Intervening conditions  Holistic Dimensions: Social factors  Components: Financial and expenses factors	1. Prices, educational fees, received scholarship, the living expenses in that area,	1
		2
		3
		5
		6
		7

- The phenomenon-oriented conditions in higher educational marketing for IAU

Table 9. Phenomenon-oriented components and indicators

Category:	Indicators	Statistical Codes
Phenomenon-oriented conditions  Holistic Dimensions: Social factors  Components: Higher educational factors	1. The employment of the modern management methods, the use of modern advertisement methods, reviewing the attraction and marketing methods, creating a competitive atmosphere among institutes, the modification of the management bylaws and guidelines of the institutes, reviewing the supportive rules and regulations in the ministry of science and high cultural council, matching the bylaws of advantages and amenities to succeed in attracting domestic and international students	1
		2
		3
		5
		6
		7

- Contextual conditions in higher educational marketing for Tehran IAUs

Table 10. Contextual conditions components and indicators

Category:	Indicators	Statistical Codes
Contextual Conditions	1. The employment of the modern management methods, the use of modern advertisement methods, reviewing the attraction and marketing methods, creating a competitive atmosphere among institutes, the modification of the management bylaws and guidelines of the institutes, reviewing the supportive rules and regulations in the ministry of science and high cultural council, matching the bylaws of advantages and amenities to succeed in attracting domestic and international students	1
↓ <u>Holistic Dimensions:</u> Social factors		3
		5
		6
		7
		9
↓ <u>Components:</u> Higher educational factors		10
		11
		17

- The results of higher educational marketing for IAUs

Table 12. Results components and indicators

Category:	Indicators	Statistical Codes
Results	1. Interest in continuing higher education, interests in scientific and research settings, students' satisfaction 2. Updating the university and expansion along with technology	
↓ <u>Holistic Dimensions:</u> Social factors		1, 2,
		3, 5
		6, 7
		9, 10
		11, 13
↓ <u>Components:</u> 1. Personal 2. enrichment of the substructures		14, 16
		17

A graphic model was developed according to the aforementioned findings (Figure 3).

- The strategic conditions in higher educational marketing for IAUs

Table 11. The strategic conditions components and indicators

Category:	Indicators	Statistical Codes
Strategic conditions	1. Preparation via the simple display of the project using modern technology, external feedback, remedial instruction 2. Providing opportunities in which students can work on real projects	
↓ <u>Holistic Dimensions:</u> Social factors		2, 3
		5, 6
		7, 9
		10, 11
		12, 14
↓ <u>Components:</u> 1. Employing the organizational methods and the principles of education 2. Enriching the substructures		15, 17

Validating the final model adapted from schtraus and Corbin questionnaire (2003)

To determine the internal validity of the proposed

Model, a questionnaire of model assessment was employed to gather the experts' opinions. With regard to the 5 point Likert scale of the questionnaire, the basis was considered to be 3 and as the obtained results reveal:

1. With regard to the matching component, the result of the t-test is significant at 0.01 level ($t=4.96$). Therefore, the obtained t with the mean of 4.17 and the sample mean of 3 was compared to the critical t value (i.e., 1.96) and it was revealed that this item enjoys a high validity according to the experts' opinion and was confirmed with a 99% of certainty.

2. Taking the component of comprehension capability into account, the result of the t-test is significant at 0.01 level. As a result, the obtained t (i.e., 5.22) with the mean value of 4.23 with the sample mean of 3 was compared to the critical t value (i.e., 1.96) and it was revealed that this item enjoys a high validity according to the experts' opinion and was confirmed with a 99% of certainty.

3. With regard to the component of generalizability, the result of the t-test is significant at 0.01 level. As a result, the obtained t (i.e.4.00) with the mean value of 4.13 with the sample mean of 3 was compared to the critical t value (i.e., 1.96) and it was revealed that this item enjoys a high validity according to the experts' opinion and was confirmed with a 99% of certainty.

4. Considering the control component, the result of the t-test is significant at 0.01 level. As a result, the obtained t (i.e. 5.03) with the mean value of 3.76 with the sample mean of 3 was compared to the critical t value (i.e., 1.96) and it was revealed that this item enjoys a high validity according to the experts' opinion and was confirmed with a 99% of certainty.

Table 13. Validating the questionnaire

Validating	Sample Mean=3			t	df	Sig.
	Comp	Mean Difference	Standard Deviation			
Type	Matching	1.17	0.909	4.96	19	0.000
	Comprehension Capability	1.23	0.857	5.23	19	0.000
Internal	Generalizability	1.13	0.784	4.00	19	0.000
	Control	0.76	0.546	5.03	19	0.000

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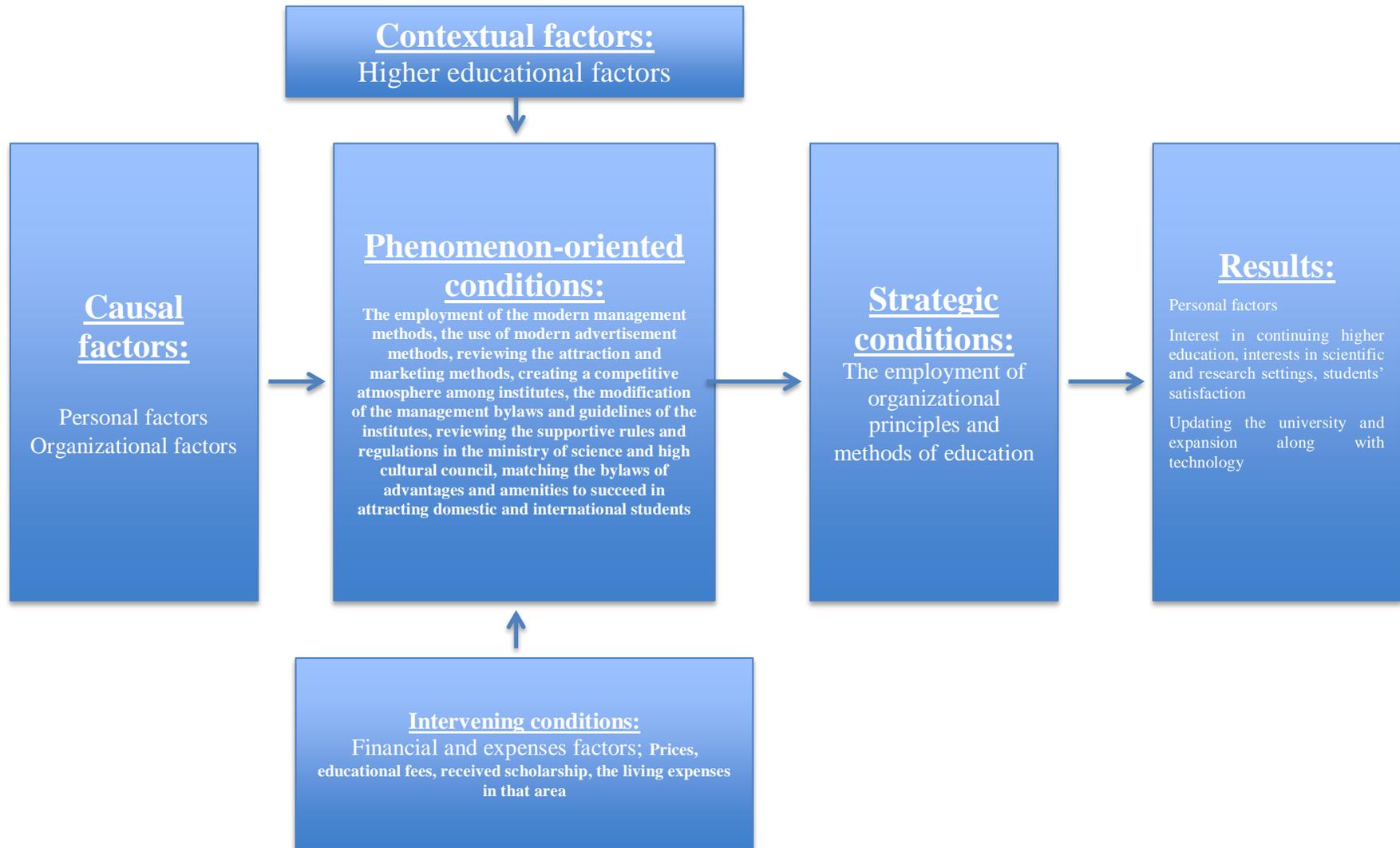


Figure 3. A graphic model of higher educational marketing

the attracting and marketing methods, creating a competitive atmosphere among institutes, the

Results and discussion

To provide a solid foundation for the analysis of influential social factors in higher educational marketing, a model was developed with the employment of quantitative and qualitative analyses. The results revealed the following components.

1) The social causal conditions influential in higher educational marketing encompass the following:

- Personal factors: Educational motivation, the students' attitude toward the institute and scientific education, the students' information about the institute, the students' interest and interdependency, the perspective of the friends and the people around, the students' family and other influential people
- Organizational factors: The graduates' success, the research rate, the invention rate, the fair rate, job opportunities provided based on the education in the educational institute, geographical situation, educational rules and regulations, the institute reputation, the university rank among others, the education fee, and the government's role in educational procedures

2) The intervening conditions within social factors can be narrowed down to the financial and expenses factors which in turn includes prices, educational fees, the received scholarship, the living expenses in that area

3) The phenomenon-oriented conditions include the higher educational factors which can be listed as the use of modern methods of management, the use of modern methods of advertisement, reviewing the attracting and marketing methods, creating a competitive atmosphere among institutes, the modification of the management bylaws and guidelines of the institutes, reviewing the supportive rules and regulations in the ministry of science and high cultural council, matching the bylaws of advantages and amenities to succeed in attracting domestic and international students

4) Contextual conditions highlight the higher educational factors. It refers to the use of modern methods of management, the use of modern methods of advertisement, reviewing

modification of the management bylaws and guidelines of the institutes, reviewing the supportive rules and regulations in the ministry of science and high cultural council, matching the bylaws of advantages and amenities to succeed in attracting domestic and international students.

5) Strategic conditions:

- The employment of the organizational principles and methods in education which can be summarized as preparation by the simple display of the project using the modern technology, the provision of prerequisites with manuals and graphs, lengthening the classes for various exercises, external feedback, remedial instruction
- Enriching the substructures which refers to equipping the workshops with state of the art devices and tools, and the opportunity to work on a real project

6) Results:

- Personal factors: interest in continuing higher education, interest in scientific and research settings, students' satisfaction
- Enrichment of the substructures: equipping the workshops with state of the art device and tools, the opportunity to work on real projects

It is worth noting that all these factors were examined and confirmed in the quantitative analysis as well.

Practical suggestions

This study aimed at providing a model for higher educational marketing the results of which can be used to propose some practical suggestions presented in what follows.

1. The Provision of concrete and tangible services since the impact of concrete evidence in the environment and society can result in a holistic picture or characteristic of the university. Therefore, it increases the customers' interaction and loyalty.
2. The enhancement of the educational services quality
3. The presentation of periodic advertisement programs in the society

4. The employment of famous and well-known faculty members with years of experience and high levels of education. This can be very influential on the applicants.
 5. The formation of marketing groups and specialized teams in institutes
 6. The sharing of the experience in higher educational marketing by managers
 7. Forming a committee by the higher education policy makers to follow and supervise the quality and content of the instructional materials in comparison with other domestic and international universities
 8. Enhancing the social fame by holding entrance camps and graduation ceremonies for the students and expanding social and cultural events in the university
- It goes without saying that conducting similar studies in the field and taking various contexts into account can be employed to examine the degree of generalizability of the findings of the present study.

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