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Summary

In the article problems of outer image of university as employer are presented. In the theoretical part the gap of knowledge in this scope is identified. It must be underlined that employer image is analysed relatively more seldom than product image or offeror image. It is presented rather in the case of enterprises not in the case of universities. The lack of publications and researches is especially visible in the relation to the perceiving of university in the role of employer by participants of outer labour market. That's why in the empirical part of this article prepared on the base of the results of field questionnaire research conducted among young potential employees the connotations with university as employer are identified. Applying the method of factor analysis allows to group these connotations. These groups may be treated as the segments of respondents. There are 6 such segments which are very different. Only 2 of them involve respondents declaring positive opinions about universities in the role of employer. The participants of the others segments have rather or completely bad opinions in this matter. It is especially visible in the case of the first segment. On this base the hypothesis H1 can be rejected but H2 shouldn't be rejected. Respondents perceive university rather in the negative light. It is very important advice for each university because its negative image in the role of employer influences on its general image.

Theoretical introduction

Each participant of the modern market operates in a specific system of relationships that connect him in more or less formalised way with other market participants. The specificity of these relationships affects, among others, the opinions on a given participant emerging in his environment. They are the basis of a particular way of perceiving that participant. On the one hand, it may vary depending on the market role taken into account by those who evaluate him. On the other hand, each of them may judge him differently, due to different perception potentials, in particular the level of sensitivity to certain stimuli. The outcome of those micro-images is the averaged, or market image of a given entity. We can speak here of both its image in relation to specific roles it plays, as well as the general image formed on their basis.

One of the roles that are fulfilled by every contemporary tenderer, including universities, is the role of the employer. Unlike other market roles in the case of an employer the internal and external image is of virtually equal importance. Each tenderer as the employer is in fact perceived in a certain way by the persons currently employed by him and by external participants in the labor market, that is, by potential employees. In the case of other market roles i, e.g. the role of a supplier of the specific values, relatively much more important is his external image, as the public are participants in the marketing environment of the tenderer. Well thought-out efforts to build the internal and external image of an attractive employer backed up by genuine care for employees contribute to shaping strong emotional relations between the employer and his employees, leading to the creation of a unique system of relationships as a key differentiator of a given entity.

Despite these clearly positive effects, it is worth noting that universities do not pay too much attention to the question of image, which definitely sets them apart from such tenderers as production and trade enterprises. Even if they take image-related actions, they are designed to influence the consumers of the educational offer. Practically, there are no efforts to shape the image of the university as an employer, whether in terms of the internal or the external labour market.

Universities also exhibit no activity associated with identifying how they are perceived by participants of both these markets, indicating a lack of marketing approach to employees[1] It should be emphasized that a diagnosis of the current situation in this field is a prerequisite for taking appropriate actions within a comprehensive image-management process. Its results allow to plan for such forms of activity, the use of which will enable the efficient building and consolidation of a positive image of the university as an employer. Of course, such diagnostic activities should be implemented in parallel with respect to the university and its surroundings.

It is worth noting that the shortage of practical image-related activities in the case of universities is accompanied by a shortage of academic papers dealing with this subject. This applies in equal measure to papers by Polish and foreign authors. True, it is possible to point out to isolated publications which refer to the image of the university as an employer, but an analysis of their content shows that they focus on brand-shaping rather than on the image[2]. The result of this deficiency is a clearly visible knowledge and research gap, which must be eliminated, especially in the context of increasing market difficulties of Polish universities not only in terms of competition for candidates for places, but also in terms of competition for the best employees.

Therefore, this article attempts to identify the associations which universities evoke as an employer among representatives of young potential employees who have yet to become active in the labour market. Considering the aforementioned fact that there are often considerable variations in perceptions of the same entity, which results, among others, from the individualized method of interpreting the same aspects of the fulfilment of a given role, an attempt was also made to carry out a segmentation of the respondents based on the psychographic criterion[3]. Thus, this paper aimed at achieving the following research goals:

1) determination of the associations of respondents with the university as an employer,

2) segmentation of the respondents because of the associations they had with the university as an employer,

3) indication of the direction of the image-related activities, which should be taken by the university, depending on the specifics of a particular segment.

The following two research hypotheses were verified in the process of attaining the aforesaid goals:

H1 — respondents primarily perceive the university as an employer in a positive light,

H2 — respondents primarily perceive the university as an employer in a negative light.

General characteristics of empirical research

In order to achieve the research goals and verify the hypotheses formulated we conducted a survey among 150 students undergraduate and graduate courses as potential employees[4]. The surveys were conducted directly, requiring personal contact of the researcher with the test subjects. They were carried out in the first half of 2016. All survey questionnaires were qualified statistical analysis. Factor analysis was also used.

Factor analysis was used to reduce the number of variables affecting the test category (i.e. associations of the respondents with the university as an employer), and to detect hidden internal interdependence relationships between these variables. The method of principal components was used to separate factors. The number of common factors was determined using the Kaiser criterion technique. The rotation of factors was performed using the normalized varimax method. Variables with the highest factor loadings in terms of given factors were identified (> 0.6)[5].

Respondents were presented with 18 statements reflecting associations with the university as a place of work. 10 of them had positive overtones, while the remaining were negative. They were separated on the basis of the results of a cognitive-critical analysis of the literature and the results of unstructured interviews. Each of these statements had to be evaluated by the respondents using a five-level Likert scale, where 5 meant "strongly agree", 4 — "agree", 3 — "neither agree not disagree, 2 — "disagree, and 1 — "strongly disagree. Using this scale in a necessary condition of utilising the factor analysis method.

Segmentation of respondents on the basis of their perception of the university as a potential employer

Application of the factor analysis method allowed to isolate factors reflecting associations with the university as a place of work, and thus the way it is perceived as a potential employer. On the basis of the Kaiser criterion six factors (principal components) were identified for the total sample that have eigenvalues greater than 1. They explain almost 65% of the total variability of the phenomenon studied (Table 1). The first one with the highest value of 3.548 explains almost 20% of the total variability of the system. It includes 4 associations with negative overtones indicating a strongly negative perception by representatives of young potential employees of universities as places of work (Table 2). In addition, within this factor the variable relating to associations with the possibility of making a career has a load factorial of a large negative value. This means that people who associated the university primarily with the lack of career prospects, low wages, insecurity and instability and low social prestige had no associations with the university as a place where it is possible to make a career. It confirms the fact that the first identified factor has clearly negative connotations. It can be concluded that one must reject research hypothesis H1, but one should not reject research hypothesis H2.

Table 1. **Hierarchy of factors in terms of their eigenvalues determined on the basis of the Kaiser criterion**

Main components (factors)	Main component's eigenvalue	% of the overall eigenvalues (variation)	Accumulated eigenvalue	Accumulated % of eigenvalues
Factor 1	3.548	19.710	3.548	19.710
Factor 2	2.073	11.517	5.621	31.226
Factor 3	1.659	9.216	7.280	40.442
Factor 4	1.637	9.094	8.917	49.536
Factor 5	1.426	7.923	10.343	57.459
Factor 6	1.346	7.479	11.689	64.938

Source: own study based on research results.

The second main component with the eigenvalue of 2.073 explains a much smaller part of the studied phenomenon. It is made up of 1 variable connected with associating the university as a place of work, where employees have relatively less free time than in the case of other employers. It is also worth noting that as part of this component the variable reflecting the contradictory association, that is, with a place where employees have relatively more free time, has a load factorial of a very large negative value. It follows that the persons studied perceiving the university as a place of work where employees have less free time did not have contradictory associations. It can be concluded that in terms of this factor the university is perceived as an employer relatively worse than other employers, though the variable creating the second factor is not so strongly negative as the variables forming the first main component.

The next four factors have eigenvalues below 2.00 and explain less than 10% of the total system variability (Table 1). Their importance in explaining the phenomenon studied is therefore relatively small. This does not mean, however, that they can be neglected in the analysis. After all, they have eigenvalues exceeding 1. The third factor involves two variables whose specificity makes it clear that is has no unequivocal overtone (Table 2). One of these variables reflects the association with

employment and occupational stabilization, the second, however, points to the university being associated with a workplace causing a sense of shame in its employees. The lack of interpretation un-ambiguity distinguishes this main component from the second, and even more so from the first factor. It should be noted, however, that it contains a negative element. Thus, it cannot be considered a factor with a positive undertone.

The fourth factor is characterised by a clearly positive overtone. Because it is created from a variable reflecting association with the university as a place of work with high social prestige. In addition, people perceiving the university in this way did not perceive it as an employer offering work that is only easy and pleasant. The variable associated with this association within the analyzed factor has a load factorial of high negative value.

The fifth factor also has a positive connotation, as it is similar to the fourth main component. It includes 2 variables, of which the variable with the higher loan factorial reflects associating the university with the possibility to impress other people, and the variable with the relatively much lower load factorial points to association of the university with a place of work where you can share your knowledge with others. Impressing others is the opposite of the negative emotions that arise along with the feeling of shame, which occurred in the case of the third factor. The possibility of sharing knowledge also applies to positive emotions stimulated by enriching the potential of others by providing them with resources of one's own intellectual potential.

The last of the factors identified during the study, just like the first main component, has clear negative connotations. It is made up of one variable reflecting the perception of the university primarily as a place where academics are forced to share their knowledge. Determination of the necessity, as opposed to determining the possibility, indicates a feeling of being compelled to do something that the employees would like to avoid, keeping their knowledge to themselves.

Table 2. **Results of the factor analysis of associations with the university as a place of work**

Variables	Factors					
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
No prospects for professional development	**0.876**	–0.052	0.141	0.023	0.023	–0.055
Low pay	**0.789**	0.115	0.095	–0.170	–0.055	0.290
No job security and professional stabilisation	**0.766**	0.134	0.190	0.221	0.081	0.118
Low social prestige	**0.704**	–0.029	0.240	–0.368	–0.125	–0.210
Possibility to make a career	–0.696	0.198	0.224	0.143	–0.171	0.101
Less free time compared with other places	–0.006	**0.873**	–0.020	0.122	–0.075	0.072
More free time compared with other places	0.113	–0.850	0.017	0.045	0.039	–0.138
Quick burnout in professional and private life	0.389	0.514	0.076	–0.326	–0.069	–0.202
Job security and professional stabilisation	0.003	–0.073	**0.853**	–0.032	0.065	–0.021
Shame because of the place of work	0.329	0.069	**0.844**	–0.084	–0.055	–0.059
Very easy and pleasant work	–0.073	0.051	0.077	–0.706	–0.005	0.053
High social prestige	–0.458	0.084	–0.034	**0.645**	0.138	0.056
Possibility to impress others	–0.116	–0.294	0.077	0.035	**0.776**	0.058
Possibility to share knowledge with others	–0.021	0.307	–0.104	0.209	**0.651**	–0.037
Possibility to "be forever young" thanks to constant contacts with young people	–0.257	0.143	–0.049	0.209	–0.499	–0.086
Necessity to share knowledge with others	0.050	–0.043	–0.025	–0.216	0.016	**0.788**
High salaries	0.039	0.164	–0.078	0.178	0.141	0.518
Very responsible and difficult work, but giving satisfaction	–0.135	0.034	0.079	0.436	–0.194	0.462

Source: own study based on research results.

Comparing the results of the factor analysis with the analysis of the average responses to each of the 18 associations it can be clearly seen that the associations groups identified in Table 3 as "A", "B" and "C" included almost exclusively associations with a positive undertone. with the exception of the association mentioning the need to share one's valuable knowledge. On this basis one may conclude that universities have a relatively good image as employers[6].

Note, however, that the average responses analysis method does not allow one to study the hidden relationships between categories, which is only possible by using the factor analysis method. Its results, as evident from the above, are not so optimistic. On the contrary, even if the first

main component explaining by far the largest part of the variability of the phenomenon studied included variables reflecting the clearly negative associations with the university as a place of work. On the other hand, the variable reflecting association with the possibility of sharing knowledge with other people which received the highest average grade was only found in the fifth factor. While the variable depicting the association with the possibility of making a career, which took second place in the hierarchy established on the basis of the average responses, has not been included in any of the six main components identified during factor analysis. What is more, in the first factor its load factorial had a large negative value.

Table 3. **Classification of associations**
with the university as a place of work

Associations evaluated	Average response	Position among all associations	Group of associations
Possibility to share knowledge with others	4.60	1	A (key)
Possibility to make a career	4.06	2	
Necessity to share knowledge with others	3.87	3	B (very important)
High social prestige	3.85	4	
Job security and professional stabilisation	3.64	5	
Very responsible and difficult work, but giving satisfaction	3.64	5	
Possibility to impress others	3.53	7	
High salaries	3.36	8	C (important)
Possibility to "be forever young" thanks to constant contacts with young people	3.26	9	
More free time compared with other places	3.15	10	
Very easy and pleasant work	2.96	11	D (of medium importance)
Less free time compared with other places	2.57	12	
No job security and professional stabilisation	2.38	13	
Low salaries	2.36	14	
Quick burnout in professional and private life	2.30	15	
Low social prestige	1.98	16	E (of little importance)
No prospects for professional development	1.74	17	
Shame because of the place of work	1.39	18	

Source: own study on the basis of Baruk, A. (2016). Postrzeganie uczelni jako pracodawcy przez młodych potencjalnych pracowników. *Marketing Instytucji Naukowych i Badawczych*, no. 3.

This confirms the need for using not only the traditional analysis methods, but also more advanced methods of statistical analysis. Their results allow one to verify the conclusions drawn on the basis of the classical methods. They reflect certain phenomena and hidden dependencies that cannot be examined by means of these classical methods.

It should be emphasized that the main component identified during factor analysis of the categories such as the associations of the respondents may be interpreted as segments of the subjects selected based on the psychographic criterion (Table 4). Associations, pointing to a certain way of perceiving the object or entity to which they relate at the same time reflect certain attitudes of the respondents in relation to it. Given the characteristics of the variables forming various factors, and thus forming the basis for determining the characteristics of individual segments, we can conclude that among the six of them, only two have a clearly positive nature. This is the fourth and fifth segment. In the case of the former, in the foreground we have a perception of the university as an employers, where work is synonymous with high social prestige, and thus associating it primarily with the ability to meet the needs of recognition (i.e., psychological needs). On the other hand, in the latter case we notice the possibility of meeting social needs (sharing knowledge with others allows one to build and strengthen interpersonal relationships), the need for recognition (being appreciated by others, who are impressed by us) and the needs of self-realization (knowledge sharing allows fulfilment by the transfer to others of what we have). Both of these segments contain people who would be relatively easier for the university to acquire as employees. Its image formed in their awareness is clearly positive.

It is certainly different in the case of the other four segments, but especially in the case of the first one. It includes people with only negative connotations associations regarding universities, reflecting their unequivocally bad image as an employer. What is more, they see the university as an employer who is not able to provide the opportunities to meet the needs of virtually any groups, ranging from the needs for material security, ending with the needs for self-realization. It can therefore be concluded that the transformation of the representatives of this segment from potential into actual employees seems almost impossible. In fact, this would require a total reconstruction of their perception of the university.

But we cannot conclude that there is no need to direct marketing efforts towards this type of groups of potential employees. On the contrary, such comprehensive efforts should be made to eliminate the negative image and build a positive perception of the university as an employer. But we cannot conclude that there is no need to direct marketing efforts towards this type of groups of potential employees. On the contrary, as they are concerned, the more you should take comprehensive measures to eliminate the negative image and build a positive perception of the university as an employer. Perhaps the representatives of that segment will never take a job at the university, but we must not forget that despite this, they may still propagate their negative opinions among others. Thus, they may contribute to the creation of the bad image of the university both as an employer and in other market roles, which should be a sufficient reason to effectively counteract the image domino effect.

Table 4. **Segments of respondents identified on the basis of their associations with the university as an employer**

Segments of respondents	Characteristics of identified segments
1 Potentially unsatisfied	• No prospects for professional development • Low salaries • No job security and professional stabilisation • Low social prestige
2 Potentially overworked	• Less free time compared with other places
3 Potentially feeling inferior	• Job security and professional stabilisation • Shame because of the place of work
4 Potentially feeling external appreciation	• High social prestige
5 Potentially achieving professional and social fulfilment	• Possibility to impress others • Possibility to share knowledge with others
6 Potentially feeling being forced to do things	• Necessity to share knowledge with others

Source: own study based on research results.

It can therefore be concluded that, in relation to the representatives of the segments containing persons who positively perceive the university as an employer it is necessary to undertake marketing activities aimed at strengthening such image, and in the case of the representatives of the segments containing persons who perceive the university negatively, or even extremely negatively as a place of work one should apply marketing stimuli aimed at a more or less radical change of the current image.

It is also worth noting that, compared to other segments, the second of the identified segments is neutral. It does not include people who have strongly positive associations with the university or those associating it as an employer in a decidedly negative way. Associations, which are a feature linking the representatives of this group concern a relatively less important aspect of work, i.e. the amount of free time. Of course, also in relation to them, the university should take appropriate marketing actions allowing building a coherent and strong image as an attractive employer. July like any other sub-image, it affects the overall image of the university.

Summary

To summarize the considerations set out here, it can be stated that the associations with the university as an employer in the case of the young potential employees surveyed were very diverse. These differences allowed the segmentation of the respondents into six segments of the external labour market. Some of them are characterized by the perception of the university in a decidedly positive way, others include people seeing the university as an employer primarily in terms of shortcomings, while other segments include respondents whose common feature is less radical opinions on the university. It should be noted, however, that the first of the identified segments corresponding to the first main components identified during the factor analysis included people with strongly negative associations with the university as an employer. This allows one to say that it is impossible to reject research hypothesis H2, while research hypothesis H1 should be rejected.

Regardless of the specifics of the associations with the university as an employer, and thus no matter how it is perceived, it should undertake comprehensive marketing activities aimed at forming a positive image by consolidating the existing image (provided it was positive in the case of the segment) or through its modification or complete change (if, for a given segment, it was partially or completely negative). These actions should fit into the overall long-term image policy, because the overall image of the university, like any other market participant, depends on how it is perceived in each of its market roles.

The necessity of adopting such an approach is determined by the fact that in the case of the university shaping the image of the employer is still underestimated. This applies both to actions taken in the internal labour market, as well as measures addressed to participants of the external labour market, especially to the representatives of young potential employees. A failure to see this need greatly reduces the market power of the university, which is important especially now in an era of rapidly growing competition both in the sphere of higher education, as well as in the sphere of research, i.e. in the two key areas of market activity of modern universities.

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[1] This approach may lead to dysfunctions in the relations with employees, resulting in, among others, a phenomenon known as presenteeism, i.e. physical presence of employees at work, accompanied by their mental absence (see: Gilbreath, B., Karimi, L. (2012). Supervisor behavior and employee presenteeism. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, vol. 7, iss. 1, pp. 114–131). Of course, this prevents their engagement in pro-development activities, be it personal or relating to the university, thus reducing its attractiveness as an employee. This, in turn, may result in the current employees creating unfavourable image messages, despite the fact that the literature of the subject emphasises that potential employees seek from them information about employers (see: Wilden, R., Gudergan, S. (2010). Employer branding: Strategic implications for staff recruitment, *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 26, no. 1–2, pp. 56–73), without relying entirely on the formal image messages created by them. This situation is made even worse for the schools as an employer because, as mentioned above, they still fail to engage in such actions.

[2] One of the few publications of Polish authors is the paper by Wojtaszczyk, K. (2008). Employer branding po polsku na przykładzie uczelni wyższych. *E-mentor*, *3* (25), http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul-/index/numer/25/id/547 (access: 12.12.2016). The title alone implies that the author Deal mostly with the brand and not the image. Moreover, the text also mentions school employees as the addressees of image activities (references to internal marketing), and not potential employees representing the external labour market.

[3] The psychographic criterion allows dividing the addressees, in this case potential employees, into segments which better reflect their diversity, since it takes into account their attitudes, etc., which is not possible in the event of using the universally applied demographic criterion (see: Chin-Feng Lin (2002). Segmenting customer brand preference: demographic or psychographic. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 11, iss. 4, pp. 249-268; Ciribeli, J.P., Miquelito, S. (2015). Market segmentation by psychographic criteria: an essay on the main psychographic theoretical approaches and its relationship with performance criteria. *Visión de Futuro*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 51–64, http://www.scielo.org.ar/pdf/vf/v19n1/Market%20segmentation%20by%20psychographic%20criteria%20an-%20essay%20on%20the%20main%20psychographic%20theoretical%20approaches%20and%20it.pdf (access: 12.12.2016)).

[4] A non-random sample selection was used.

[5] See: Abdi, H., Williams, L.J. (2010). Principal component analysis. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Computational Statistics*, vol. 2, iss. 4, pp. 433–459.

[6] The analysis of the average responses was presented in detail in: Baruk, A. (2016). Postrzeganie uczelni jako pracodawcy przez młodych potencjalnych pracowników. *Marketing Instytucji Naukowych i Badawczych*, no. 3.

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