

**MARKETING ASPEKTI MODERNE KOMUNIKACIJE U VISOKOM
OBRAZOVANJU - STVARANJE VRIJEDNOSTI STUDENATA**

**THE MARKETING ASPECTS OF MODERN COMMUNICATION IN
HIGHER EDUCATION - CREATING VALUE FOR STUDENTS**

Stručni članak

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Sažetak

Suvremena komunikacija nudi beskrajne kreativne mogućnosti diferencijacije tvrtke među konkurentima na tržištu. Izazov, moć i potencijal novih tehnologija leži u činjenici da moderni oblici komunikacije omogućuju interaktivnu razmjenu informacija koju bi tržišno orijentirana tvrtka trebala koristiti kao bazu pri stvaranju ne samo proizvoda ili usluge, nego i vrijednosti za svoje potrošače. U obrazovne svrhe, suvremena komunikacija je beskrajan izvor kreativnih rješenja kako poboljšati poslovanje i motivirati učenika da uspješno troši obrazovne sadržaje. Svrha ovog rada bila je istražiti marketinške aspekte suvremene komunikacije, kako bi se utvrdilo što je vrijednost za studente. Adekvatni marketinški alati omogućuju ustanovi da otkrije i razumije karakteristike studenata, tako da doprinose zadovoljavanju potreba i želja učenika. Istraživanje je provedeno putem on-line ankete među studentima „Veleučilišta Baltazar Zaprešić“ o stupnju zadovoljstva studenata studijem općenito i u smislu komunikacijskih alata. Utvrdili smo da je Veleučilište tržišno orijentirano, koristi suvremene alate komunikacije kako bi detektiralo i stvorilo vrijednost po mjeri za svakog učenika. S obzirom na to da je visoko obrazovanje specifično područje poslovanja koje snažno utječe na društvo u cjelini, pozitivan i proaktivan pristup modernim komunikacijskim alatima može poslužiti kao model komunikacije kako privatnim tako i javnim visokoškolskim ustanovama u Hrvatskoj kako bi im

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se pomoglo da učinkovitije odrede potrebama, željama i očekivanjima potrošača / učenika i dostavi im vrijednost.

Ključne riječi: marketing, suvremeni komunikacijski alati, diferencijacija poduzeća, visoko obrazovanje, zadovoljenje potreba i želja učenika, vrijednost po mjeri, model komunikacije.

Abstract

Modern communication offers endless creative possibilities of company's differentiation among its competitors in the market. The challenge, power and potential of new technologies lie in the fact that modern forms of communication allow interactive exchange of information a market-oriented company should use as a base when creating not just product or service, but value for its consumers. For educational purposes, modern communication is an endless source of creative solutions how to improve business and motivate a student to consume educational content successfully. The purpose of this paper was to research the marketing aspects of modern communication, to help determine what is value to students. Adequate marketing tools enable the institution to detect and understand students' characteristics, so they contribute to satisfying students' needs and desires. The research was conducted through an online survey among students of the University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprëšić regarding students' level of satisfaction with studying in general and in terms of communication tools. We determined that the University is market-oriented, uses modern tools of communication in order to detect and create value tailor-made for each student. Given that higher education is a specific field of business that strongly affects the society in general, a positive and proactive approach to modern communication tools could serve as a model of communication to both private and public higher education institutions in Croatia to help them determine more efficiently the needs, desires and expectations of consumers/students and to deliver them value.

Key words: marketing, modern communication tools, company's differentiation, higher education, satisfying students' needs and desires, value tailor-made, model of communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern communication offers endless creative possibilities of company's differentiation among its competitors in the market. Today's reality is the consumption of Internet integrated into every part of human life, both personal and professional. The challenge, power and potential of new technologies lie in the fact that modern forms of communication allow interactive exchange of information a market-oriented company should use as a base when creating not just product or service, but value for its consumers. (Lacković, 2013, 68-70)

The purpose of this paper was to research the marketing aspects of modern communication in higher education investigating University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprrešić. Since modern communication affects the quality of studying, the aim was to determine the level of students' satisfaction with communication tools University uses.

The University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprrešić has 4 undergraduate professional studies of Business and Management: Business Economics and Finance, Cultural Management, Office Management and Information Technologies and 4 specialist professional graduate studies: Project Management, Communications Management, Financial Management and Public Sector Management.[1]

“The University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprrešić is focused on identifying current and future expected in-demand jobs, and accordingly, all study programmes and fields of study are designed to best suit these needs. This was how we set up the study of Project Management, Communications Management and Cultural Management, which have significantly revitalized and expanded the field of tertiary education in Croatia. Furthermore, the key characteristic of the University is a dynamic adjustment of programmes and contents to the actual market needs. Therefore, it is quite common that new courses are set up, while some others are cancelled, or those didactic methods, techniques and tools are modified, or even that completely new fields of studies and study programmes are set up. Baltazar in numbers: in 15 years, chosen by over 7000 students, has 130 employees, 20 partner countries and ISO 9001 Certificate. The project “Baltazar – University in the palm of your hand” introduced iPad in the curriculum; henceforth Baltazar became the official Apple technology “lighthouse school” in education.

Usage of iPad as well as Moodle distance education system, which is used worldwide, makes Baltazar the first tertiary education institution in the region which will set an example as a lighthouse of good practices in education.“[2]

Since Internet is a global network that enables communication, collaboration and interaction between people all over the world, it affects people’s lives both privately and professionally.[3]

Internet can be also used as Intranet (internal private network that connects people within the company) and University established it through Google-suite tools starting with January 23rd 2017 (University’s internal data), and it is expected to contribute significantly to the quality of interrelations and cooperation and effectiveness of business processes. (Lacković, 2013, 39) The affect of this communication tool is something that should be researched and measured in the future.

We analysed University’s web site to detect modern communication tools University uses and they are: web site, e-mail, Moodle distance education system called Baltazar, social networks: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and You Tube channel.[4]

Every year, University evaluates its work and the level of students’ satisfaction through a survey (questionnaire) that University uses as a base for decision-making in terms of better satisfying students’ needs and desires (University’s self-evaluation internal data).

They have an association The Alumni club Baltazar for Baltazar former students who have earned their degrees in one of the undergraduate and/or graduate studies to maintain long-term connections with their students.

“The aim of this club is to connect and create a network of our former students, and to establish a strong correlation between alumni, the U.A.S. Baltazar Zaprešić, teachers and current students, as well as to build good relationships between the University and the surrounding community. ...To collaborate with all alumni, monitor your business and professional development, and help you improve your competences and career prospects with seminars, professional workshops, conferences and other forms of training that we organize. Furthermore, all our graduate students are invited to engage in the University’s activities and projects and develop cooperation

between the University and the companies and institutions of their employment.“[5]

Adequate marketing and modern communication tools enable the institution to detect and understand students' characteristics, so they contribute to satisfying students' needs and desires. High quality communication is a base for creating long-term relationships with students, which is very important standard of today's marketing.

2. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

Research hypotheses

- H1: Students of U.A.S. Baltazar prefer online system supporting their studying.
- H2: Baltazar distance education system does not increase students' obligations.
- H3: Students perceive communication between students and professors at the University (accessibility, consultations, communication via e-mail) as highly satisfying.
- H4: Students do not prefer formal and informative, course-related content on the University's social networks channels.
- H5: Students perceive Alumni Club Baltazar as an important way of developing their career after graduation.
- H6: Students of the University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić are satisfied with communication in general.

Research methodology

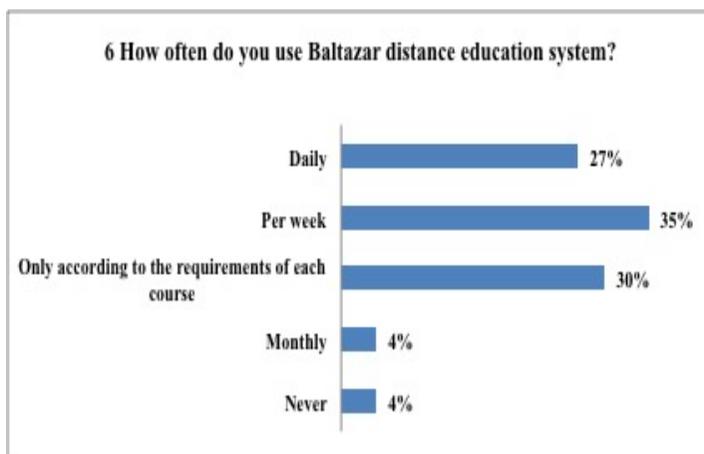
The research was conducted through an online survey among students of the University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić. The survey questionnaire of 18 questions regarding students' level of satisfaction with studying in general and in terms of communication tools. In total, 176 students completed the survey (full-time students and part-time students) and the sample of the survey was appropriate to give us an indication of communication level at the University and as a base for further studies. The research analysis was descriptive.

3. FINDINGS

Gender structure of the respondents showed us that 69% were women and 31% men. The age of the respondents - students varied from under 24 to over 55 years, but most of our respondents are young people (85%) among which 49% are under 24 and 36% are students between 25 and 34 years old. Only 12% of the students are age between 35-44, 2% of them are age between 45-54 and 1% over 55. Student status consists of 53% full-time students and 47% part-time students. Employed students make 63% and 37% of students are unemployed.

None of the students reported that Baltazar distance education system (later on: Baltazar D.E.S.) makes their studying more difficult, 9% of respondents reported that they do not find it useful and 91% of them reported that it makes their studying easier.

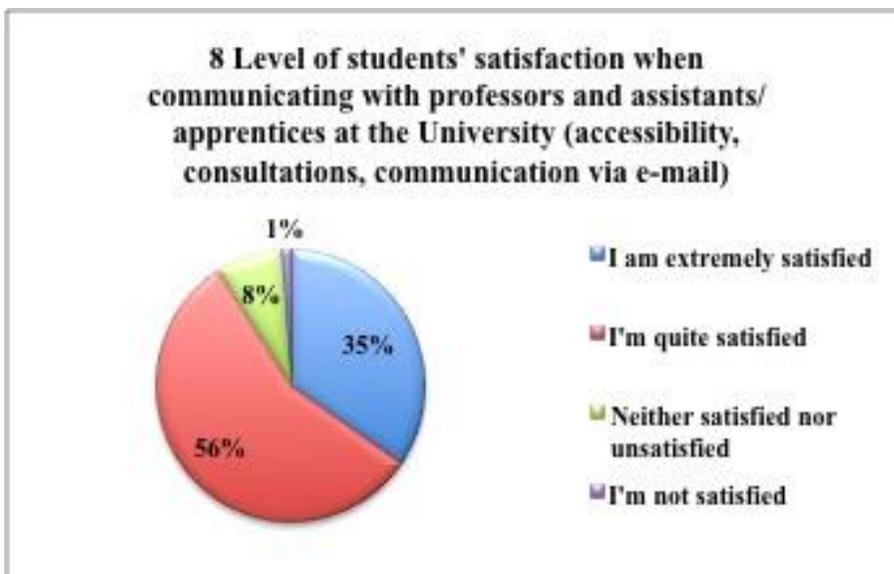
Most of the students use Baltazar D.E.S. very often: weekly (35%), 27% use it daily. If we add 30% of students that use it only according to the requirements of each course, we can say that Baltazar D.E.S. is a strong support to studying process.



Graff 1. How often students use Baltazar distance education system (Source: created by the authors)

Since 76% of respondents would use Baltazar D.E.S. to access educational materials after graduation (as a way of continuous learning and training), such platform has a powerful potential for University in adding value to students and creating successful long-term relationships.

Students are extremely satisfied (35%) and quite satisfied (56%) in communication with professors and assistants/apprentices at the University (accessibility, consultations, communication via e-mail), which in total makes 91%. Since most of the students' communication is with their professors and they are highly satisfied with the quality of it, we expect this to have crucial, strong influence to the perception of students' satisfaction with communication in total.

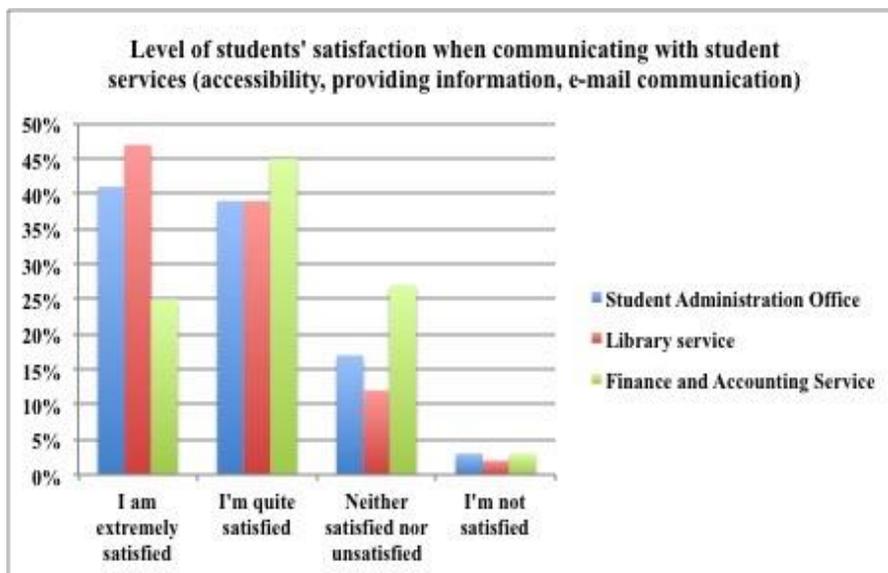


Graff 2. Level of students' satisfaction when communicating with professors/assistants/apprentices (Source: created by the authors)

Students evaluated their level of satisfaction when communicating with other student services such as Student Administration Office, Finance and Accounting service and Library in terms of their accessibility, providing information and e-mail communication.

Results showed that, again, students are extremely satisfied when communicating with Student Administration Office (41%) and quite satisfied when communicating with Student Administration Office (39%), which is 80% in total. When communicating with Finance and Accounting service, students are extremely satisfied (25%) and quite satisfied (45%), which is 70% in total. When communicating with Library service, students are extremely satisfied (47%) and quite satisfied (39%), which is 86% in total. These results suggest that Student Services have efficient communication

with students, which is very important part of answering to students' needs and desires.



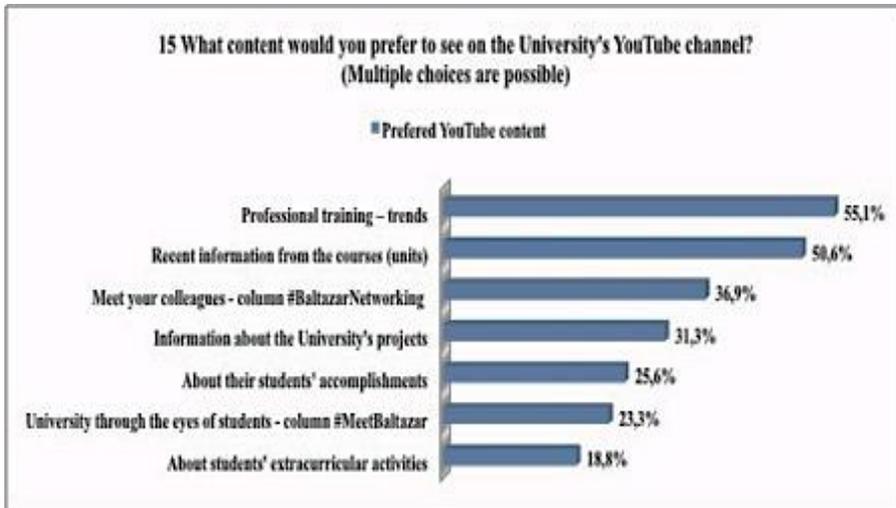
Graff 3. Level of students' satisfaction when communicating with Student Administration Office, Finance and Accounting service and Library (Source: created by the authors)

“University's Facebook page is a good source of information for students“ is a claim that 29,5% of the students fully agree and 62,5% partially agree. That confirms that social networks are a good way to keep students informed interactively and efficiently.

Instagram page is University's rather new channel of communication [6] (active since January 2016), only 23% of the respondents fully agree with the claim that “University's Instagram profile assists to creating more personal, closer communication with students“, and 56% of them partially agree, (in total 79%).

This result suggests us Instagram (as a way to communicate with students) did not yet develop its potential of creating an interactive and more personal platform to help develop Baltazar brand loyalty and stronger relations among students themselves.

An interesting finding was about content students preferred on University's YouTube channel. Multiple choices were provided for this question, which explains the ratios of the presented results.

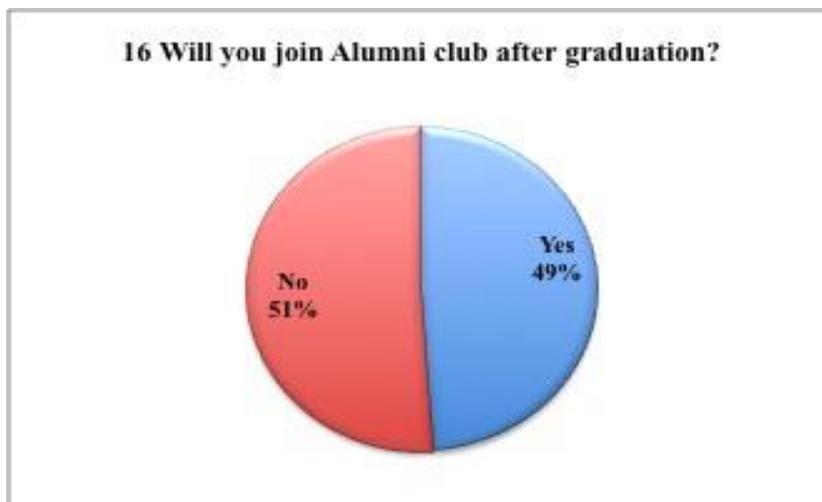


Graff 4. Content students prefer to see on the University's YouTube channel
(Source: created by the authors)

Answers/choices provided about students' extracurricular activities (18,8%), University through the eyes of students - column #MeetBaltazar (23,3%) and students' accomplishments (25,6%) were the least chosen ones. That suggests that, for the purposes of the University, students do not prefer informal non-course-related YouTube content. We find that quite interesting.

Results are followed by the information about the University's projects (31,3%), Meet your colleagues column #BaltazarNetworking (36,9%), recent, newest information from the courses (units) (50,6%) and professional training – trends (55,1%). Results strongly suggest that students prefer formal and informative, course-related content on the University's social networks channels.

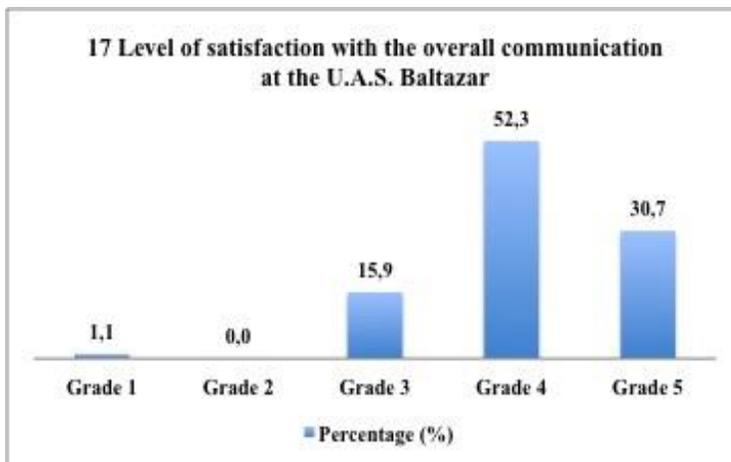
Only 49% of students will join Alumni Club after graduation, which is very important indicator for the University to intensify promotion of The Alumni Club Baltazar, especially in terms of increasing awareness of Alumni Club's value - benefits for students. Since networking and creating long-term relationships with their students creates very important part of U.A.S. marketing strategy, these results are something that should be researched further.



Graff 5. Alumni club (Source: created by the authors)

Students were also asked to express their level of satisfaction with the overall communication at the U.A.S. Baltazar (within the range of grades from 1 - the lowest to 5 – the highest). Results showed that 30,7% students evaluated overall communication with the highest grade 5, following by grade 4 – 52,3%, (in total 83%).

These findings confirm the importance of interactive, effective modern communication and continuous market research that help in decision-making what communication tools will be used. Grade 3 was given by 15,9% of students, which shows enough space to perform better communication in the future.



Graff 6. Level of satisfaction with the overall communication at the U.A.S. Baltazar (Source: created by the authors)

The last question was about students' level of satisfaction with the overall experience of studying at the U.A.S. Baltazar (within the range of grades from 1 - the lowest to 5 – the highest).



Graff 7. Level of satisfaction with the overall experience of studying at the U.A.S. Baltazar (Source: created by the authors)

Results showed that 35,2% students evaluated overall experience of studying at the U.A.S. Baltazar with the highest grade 5, following by grade 4 – 44,3%, (in total 79,5%). Grade 3 was given by 15,3% of students, grade 2 was given by 4,5% students and grade 1 by 0,6%. Again, results are

indication for further research to determine in more detail what are the reasons of students' dissatisfaction.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This research examined the marketing aspects of modern communication in higher education through University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić. Since modern communication affects the quality of studying, the aim was to determine the level of students' satisfaction with communication tools University uses. The results from the empirical study of the 176 respondents found support for hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 6.

H1: Students of U.A.S. Baltazar prefer online system supporting their studying. Supported. Since results showed that 63% of students are employed, it is no wonder that most of the students use Baltazar D.E.S. very often: weekly (35%), 27% use it daily. If we add 30% of students that use it only according to the requirements of each course, we can say that Baltazar D.E.S. is a strong support to studying process.

H2: Baltazar distance education system does not increase students' obligations. Supported. None of the students reported that Baltazar D.E.S. makes their studying more difficult, 9% of respondents reported that they do not find useful and 91% of them reported that it makes their studying easier.

H3: Students perceive communication between students and professors at the University (accessibility, consultations, communication via e-mail) as highly satisfying. Supported. Students are extremely satisfied (35%) and quite satisfied (56%) in communication with professors and assistants/apprentices at the University (accessibility, consultations, communication via e-mail), which in total makes 91%.

H4: Students do not prefer formal and informative, course-related content on the University's social networks channels. Not supported. University's Facebook page is considered as a good source of information for 92% students. Only 23% of the respondents fully agree with the claim that "University's Instagram profile assists to creating more personal, closer communication with students", and 56% of them partially agree, (in total 79%) – suggesting us that Instagram did not yet develop its potential of creating an interactive and more personal platform to help develop Baltazar brand loyalty and stronger relations among students themselves. An

interesting finding was about content students preferred on University's YouTube channel. Most preferred content was information about the University's projects (31,3%), Meet your colleagues column #BaltazarNetworking (36,9%), recent, newest information from the courses (units) (50,6%) and professional training – trends (55,1%). Results strongly suggest that students prefer formal and informative, course-related content on the University's social networks channels.

H5: Students perceive Alumni Club Baltazar as an important way of developing their career after graduation. Not supported. Only 49% of students will join Alumni Club after graduation, which is very important indicator for the University in terms of lack of students' awareness of Alumni Club's value - benefits for their students.

H6: Students of the University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić are satisfied with communication in general. Supported. Results showed that 30,7% students evaluated overall communication with the highest grade 5, following by grade 4 – 52,3%, (in total 83%). These findings confirm the importance of interactive, effective modern communication and continuous market research that help this market-oriented University satisfy students' needs and desires.

5. CONCLUSION

Adequate marketing and modern communication tools enable the institution to detect and understand students' characteristics, so they contribute to satisfying students' needs and desires. High quality communication is a base for creating long-term relationships with students, which is very important standard of today's marketing.

We determined that the University is market-oriented, uses modern tools of communication in order to detect and create value tailor-made for each student. Baltazar D.E.S. is one of them, making students' studying easier (91%); students use it very often: weekly (35%), and daily (27%). If we add 30% of students that use it only according to the requirements of each course, we can say that Baltazar D.E.S. is a strong support to studying process and has a strong potential for maintaining successful long-term relationships (76% of respondents would use Baltazar D.E.S. to access educational materials after graduation). Students prefer formal and

informative, course-related content on the University's social networks channels.

Only 49% of students will join Alumni Club after graduation, which is very important indicator for the University in terms of lack of students' awareness of Alumni Club's value - benefits for their students.

Students are extremely satisfied (35%) and quite satisfied (56%) in communication with professors and assistants/apprentices at the University (accessibility, consultations, communication via e-mail), in total 91%.

Even though modern communication tools are only a part of the entire value that University provides to students, these results (30,7% students evaluated overall communication with the highest grade 5, following by grade 4 – 52,3%, in total 83%) can be used as indicators for CRM strategy in the future. Management should seek to enhance students' overall experience through some specific projects (Alumni, Baltazar D.E.S. for the alumni, #BaltazarNetworking) that would enhance students' interaction and help maintain long-term relationships. Given that higher education is a specific field of business that strongly affects the society in general, a positive and proactive approach to modern communication tools could serve as a model of communication to both private and public higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia to help them determine more efficiently needs, desires and expectations of consumers/students and finally, to deliver them value.

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