

Market Research to Develop the Promotional Activities of Savonia UAS in the Russian Market

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The primary purpose of this thesis was to conduct marketing research among Russian students at Savonia University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as Savonia UAS) and, by analysis of the research findings, to postulate ways to develop the future promotional activities of Savonia UAS in the Russian market.</p> <p>It was hoped that the research would help to identify the main criteria by which Russian students select Savonia UAS in Finland, which channels were used to obtain the information about the university in the country of origin, as well as the students' satisfaction with the academic disciplines, services and facilities provided at the university. Interest in this subject arose before the recruiting process for the new academic year.</p> <p>The fundamental tool applied during the study was a quantitative research method. An online questionnaire for Russian students from Savonia UAS was implemented to obtain their views and experiences concerning the given issues.</p> <p>A secondary theoretical part of the thesis refers to two main topics of study: marketing research and Finnish higher education that were specially selected to gain insight into the matter. The first subject describes the implementation of marketing research step by step, different research approaches to choose from, contact methods available to obtain the data needed, requirements for a sampling plan composition and the research instruments to use while the second one provides a general overview of the Finnish higher education system and current market situation.</p> <p>It was anticipated that the results of the research would suggest ways to enhance marketing communication with potential Russian students and to improve the quality of specific services on offer by the university and this proved to be correct.</p>			
<p>Keywords Marketing research, Finnish higher education</p>			

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The topic of my thesis is “Market Research to develop the promotional activities of Savonia UAS in the Russian market”. It concentrates mainly on the development of marketing strategies directed towards for potential Russian students during a recruiting period.

Nowadays, marketing plays an important and even indispensable role in every type of organisations and educational institutions are not an exception. Among thousands of excellent multidisciplinary universities with hundreds of years of experience around the world, there is a high level of competition. Focusing on the current market situation in Finland, there are plenty of world leading educational institutions to compete with. That is why it is essential to select precise and effective marketing strategies for every specific region of interest to attract a greater number of students to apply during the admission process. Due to its geographic proximity, students from Russia are one of the main target groups at which the university’s marketing communications should be aimed. Thus, in this thesis work Russia was designated as a region of interest.

The structure of the project consisted of two parts: practical and theoretical. The main idea of the practical part was to gather essential information from Savonia Russian students utilising an online survey. The principal goals of the survey were to find out the main reasons:

1. Why Russian students selected degree programmes at Savonia UAS;
2. Where the university’s information was gained in the country of origin;
3. Which services and facilities provided at university could be improved later on, and
4. Whether or not they would recommend the university to potential future students and why.

The theoretical part supplies the study with the necessary general background of the implementation of marketing research, the principles of Finnish higher education system with its representatives and achievements in world rankings. Savonia UAS was also fully investigated as an international institution for higher education studies.

The conclusions were drawn directly based on the survey results. After collecting the required data and analysing it statistically, possible marketing strategies for Savonia UAS with regard to Russian students are suggested and could be implemented relatively quickly.

1.2 Borders

The survey was created exclusively for Russian students previously or currently studying in a degree programme at Savonia UAS. To get actual and up-to-date information, the earliest year of entry to the university of the respondents taking part in the research was set at 2010. No limitations were set concerning the field of study programmes or language of instruction, as it was valuable to invite for participation and take into account the widest possible range of views and experiences of Russian students.

1.3 Methods

The research was started with a collection of scientific literature referring to two main topics of study: marketing research and Finnish higher education that were specially selected to gain insight into the matter.

The survey was done in the form of an online questionnaire. It was important to make the electronic questionnaire as compact and easy to use as possible. It consisted of 11 main questions and 4 specifying sub-questions. The sub-questions were needed to clarify the chosen option in the previous question. Answering three of the sub-questions was optional as well as answering the last question, which was provided to allow a respondent to add any extra information.

Predominantly, an open-ended type of question was used rather than a closed-end type. Some of the questions combined both a closed and an opened question structure by providing respondents with some predefined choices and also space for another answer in the field called "Other". One question was a scaled question in the form of a grid. Questions numbers 1 and 7 had domains of evaluation and satisfaction respectively.

Compared to the total number of Russian students studying at Savonia UAS, the minimum sample size targeted was 20. It was enough to obtain sufficient information and to get the vision of the direction for future development actions of the university in the Russian market. It was more important to get that vision quickly due to upcoming changes relating to tuition fees for non-EU citizens rather than to get absolute results. Therefore, the survey was conducted only during a period of one month.

A quantitative research technique was utilised to analyse the findings of the research statistically.

2 MARKETING RESEARCH

2.1 Marketing Research Process

Despite the fact that companies usually possess marketing intelligence information concerning a typical client, main competitors and an overall market situation, in specific cases and in a decision-making process marketers frequently are in need of officially proven data on which to base their decision-making process. Thus, marketing research is seen as an auxiliary tool to find out the answers to the questions raised.

“Marketing research is the systematic design, collection, analysis, and reporting of data relevant to a specific marketing situation facing an organization” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 128). There is a great diversity of cases where marketing research is utilised by companies. The research provides a marketer with consumer intentions and motivations, views and experiences, as well as with the level of satisfaction. In addition, it assists in the evaluation of quality and effectiveness of activities of the organisation.

A marketing research process consists of the following steps: problem definition and research goals, elaboration of the research plan, implementation, comprehension and summarising the results. The first step is probably the most critical due to the fact that it directs the whole research chain to the desired intent. It is important to identify and define as precisely as possible the main problem that the research is intended to elucidate in order to avoid wasting time and money.

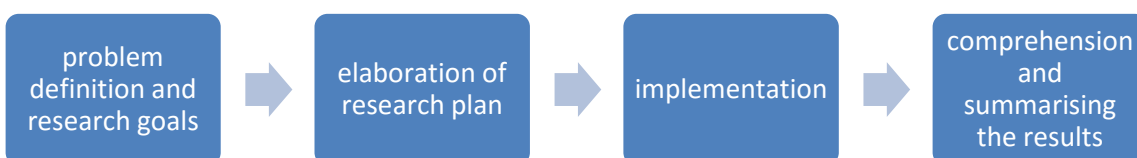


Figure 1. The marketing research process (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 129)

When the problem is defined clearly, the next step is to set the research objectives. There are three different types of research used in a marketing research project depending on the objectives. Exploratory research is aimed at collecting preliminary information with the help of which it will be possible to determine the problem and make certain assumptions later on. The objective of descriptive research is to give an account in words of either demographics and customers' attitudes or other aspects related to market opportunities and challenges for a product or service. The third type is casual research which is usually applied to verify the theories about cause-and-effect relationships.

Once research problems and objectives are set, a project researcher must define the exact details of the data required and then prepare a plan for collecting it productively. The research plan may include secondary data or primary data, or even both. Secondary data can be collected more quickly as it already exists in various sources, for instance, in databases or in web pages. It is seldom possible to collect all the data needed from secondary sources. It should be noted that a marketer also needs to check the data to determine whether it is relevant, precise, up-to-date and accurate. However, generally secondary data offers a good way to begin. Primary data can be collected through a number of “research approaches, contact methods, the sampling plan, and research instruments” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 131).

2.2 Research Approaches

Several types of research approaches in the form of observations, surveys and experiments are used to collect primary data and to better understand customers’ needs. All the types are briefly explored below.

2.2.1 Observational Research

The observation research is based on observing groups of people, their actions and situations appropriate to the matter. Generally, marketers intend to explore consumer behaviour to gain insights into their attitudes and behaviour. In such cases, simple questions are asked. In addition, researchers are looking for customer’s feedback in social networks, blogs, product websites, etc.

2.2.2 Ethnographic Research

A great number of companies now utilise ethnographic research. It is a recent approach to research where professional observers are placed in consumer’s natural environment to interact with clients and follow the same actions. While traditional research solutions verify strategy hypotheses and gain answers for a specific product or service, an observational approach helps to originate fresh and new understanding of consumers and the market situation. Through this method, it is possible to gain insights into unspoken feelings and needs of customers. However, aspects related to motivation, personal behaviour or attitude are impossible to observe.

2.2.3 Survey Research

Survey research is the most common way to gather primary data while also supposed to be the best way to gather expository answers. Customers are often asked directly, in order for the company to

obtain information concerning their preferences, knowledge of product or service, buying behaviour or experience. Flexibility is the main benefit of this type of research, as it offers the opportunity to find out a wide range of information in many varied situations. Surveys are usually implemented by phone, mail, personal contact or online.

Turning to the negative limitations of survey research, it should be noted that sometimes respondents cannot give clear answers because they might have forgotten some details or they are unable to explain their motivations. Some questions might be too private, so respondents may not be willing to respond. In addition, some respondents can give answers randomly while others may not have time to take part in the survey.

2.2.4 Experimental Research

Experimental research is the best option to obtain casual data. During an experiment, matched groups of subjects are selected to involve them in different treatments. Unrelated factors of the test are controlled. The goal of the research is to explore cause-and-effect relationships based on a number of different responses.

2.3 Contact Methods

Required data can be obtained by mail questionnaire, telephone interview, personal interview or online. Strengths and possible weaknesses of different contact methods are provided in Figure 2 below.

	Mail	Telephone	Personal	Online
Flexibility	Poor	Good	Excellent	Good
Quantity of data that can be collected	Good	Fair	Excellent	Good
Control of interviewer effects	Excellent	Fair	Poor	Fair
Control of sample	Fair	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Speed of data collection	Poor	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Response rate	Poor	Poor	Good	Good
Cost	Good	Fair	Poor	Excellent

Figure 2. Strengths and Weakness of Contact Methods
(Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 133)

As it can be seen from the table, personal interviewing offers the greatest level of flexibility as the interviewers are able to explain confusing questions or any other issues regarding the interview. Due to these facts, personal interviewing also has the ability to achieve a greater volume of specific information. The least flexibility is inherent in mail questionnaires because all participants have to answer the same questions in an established order.

However, in mail questionnaires, the fact that no interviewer is present eliminates any interviewer effect on participant responses while personal interviewing shows the worst result for the same parameter. Sometimes participants might not be honest or open in expressing their real opinions and views to the interviewer.

Contacting a person by telephone or through the Internet are the quickest options to collect answers for required questions. In addition, these methods offer better control over targeting a sample to invite to participate in a research project.

The largest number of responses are usually gathered by personal interviewing or by online resources while the returned number of completed questionnaire by mail or the number of people willing to respond by phone is, in fact, quite low.

Obviously, the most cost-efficient method is an online option implemented through the Internet. Individual personal interviews are the most expensive and they can cost three to four times more than, for instance, a contact by telephone.

2.3.1 Online Marketing Research

Researchers collect information through the Internet to an increasing extent due to the fact that the Internet has become an integral part of the daily life of almost all people in the developed world at the present time.

Online research can be conducted in different forms. It can be an Internet survey with questionnaire placed on a website, online panels with constant feedback, live discussions, online experiments with product features, price strategies, website content and design in the online store, in mobile applications, etc. The Internet is considered to be the most effective tool for quantitative research (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, pp. 128-137). Quantitative research is a data processing technique which analyses a large number of observations statistically (Erl, Khattak, & Buhler, 2016, p. 183).

An Internet survey demonstrates a wide range of advantages over traditional contact methods. Speed and low costs are the major benefits. Obviously, the distribution of a questionnaire on the

Internet is many times faster and it contributes to a much greater number of respondents whose opinions will be taken into account. Usually, a link to a questionnaire is broadcast via email to the targeted sample or posted on a company's website.

In fact, online surveys are more attractive and comprehensive, easier to complete and less intrusive than traditional survey methods. The Internet is a superlative way to reach people with tight schedules as they can complete the survey at any time at their own convenience.

One of the main disadvantages of Internet-based research is that the marketer is unable to see the participants and to be sure that they belong to the target group that the project aims to survey.

2.4 Sampling Plan

As a rule, based on a study of a small sample of the target population, conclusions regarding large groups of consumers can be reached. "A sample is a segment of the population selected for marketing research to represent the population as a whole" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 137).

The sample plan requires three fundamental choices to be made:

- who should be studied
- how many participants should be studied
- how the participants should be selected.

The first question is the most difficult, as sometimes the answer is not obvious. The study can be related to several target groups simultaneously. The second question requires a mathematical calculation about the best number of participants in order to get reliable results. A large number of respondents provides more accurate results, however, sometimes there is no need to ask all consumers to obtain trustworthy results. The last question concerns the sampling procedure. There are two kinds of samples: probability samples and non-probability samples (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, pp. 137-139). The first kind of sampling method includes a probability that any member of the whole population has a chance to be selected in the sample for a study. This method requires a broad and thorough knowledge of the total population both its size and composition. The second method refers to an informal way of selection process where the information about the population is limited and, therefore, the probability of selecting a particular respondent as a sample is unknown (Rea & Parker, 2014).

2.5 Research Instruments

To gather primary data, researchers must choose between two main research instruments: questionnaires and mechanical devices.

The questionnaire is currently the most widely used instrument used, whether by phone or email, during a personal interview or online. It is distinguished by its flexibility as questions can be formed in different ways. The most common types of questions are open-end and closed-end. The first type is well-suited in exploratory research, where the research is aimed at finding out a wide range of people's views and opinions. The open-ended question provides an opportunity to give and explain the answer in own respondent's words. The second type is much easier to interpret as it already suggests a range of potential answers. Closed-end questions can be represented by either multiple-choice questions or scale questions.

All questions in a questionnaire form should be arranged in a logical order. They must be simple, direct, unambiguous and impartial. It is better to place difficult questions close to the bottom while the first questions should seek to be interesting.

Mechanical devices are created to observe consumer behaviour. For instance, checkout scanners are used in retailing to register purchases in shops while media companies may install measurement equipment in television sets or satellite systems to record the TV channels watched. Another option is the application of neuromarketing to measure brain reactions in order to explore customer's feelings (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, pp. 139-140) towards marketing concepts: package design, a product's smell, taste or effect, as well as reaction to advertisements. Neuromarketing studies two questions: what attracts customers and the reasons why customers wish to come back again (Nazemoff, 2014).

3 FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 General Overview

An equal access to high-quality education and training for all citizens is the basis of Finnish education. Precisely the same opportunity to be educated must be given to all people irrespective of their age, wealth, ethnic origin or their home location. Moreover, every kind of Finnish education from primary to the third level is free of charge (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Board of Education, CIMO, 2012, p. 6).

Higher education in Finland is provided within a dual structure. That means that higher education is provided by universities and also by polytechnics, which also known as universities of applied sciences. Both kinds of institutions have their own structure. The difference is that universities put an emphasis on scientific research and instruction while polytechnics apply practice-based learning. The entry to these fields is limited because the number of applicants is much greater than study places available there. That is why student selection criteria are used. However, the admission requirements are dissimilar. Generally, a matriculation examination is a part of the admission process in both cases (Finnish National Board of Education). It offers general eligibility for higher education (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Board of Education, CIMO, 2012, p. 22).

At universities, students have an opportunity to study Bachelor's, Master's and scientific or artistic postgraduate degrees, which are known as Licentiate and Doctoral degrees (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Board of Education, CIMO, 2012, p. 23). The objective of Arts and Science universities is to contribute to the development of research methods, scientific and artistic education, as well as to serve humanity (Centre for International Mobility CIMO (Study in Finland), 2016). Frequently after completion of the Bachelor's degree, students aim at acquiring a Master's degree. Overall, it takes about six years to achieve Master's level.

Students of polytechnics are able to demonstrate practical professional skills gained during their studies. This is because degree programmes include essential professional studies, elective courses and a final project, usually based on work experience. Practical on-the-job learning is a core element of every educational institution of higher education. The duration of a Bachelor's programme at a university of applied sciences varies from 3.5 to 4 years of full-time studies, depending on the required number of ECTS points. Usually, the required amount is between 210 and 240 points. Master's studies are available only with a minimum of three years of work experience in the related field. The extent of a Master's programme at a polytechnic is between 1.5 and 2 years and it is equal to a university Master's degree (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Board of Education, CIMO, 2012, pp. 23-24).

Every educational institution around Finland aims at unlocking and maximising the potential of every student. Hence, professional guidance and student consulting services are essential parts during studies. Their purpose is to provide assistance, necessary information and guidance to students in order to help them to manage the study process as successfully as possible, as well as to be able to make accurate and appropriate decisions in their career path. All educational personnel are responsible for proper guidance and consultation. It is important to adopt an individual approach to every student, taking into consideration his/her own capabilities. In addition, learners have the right to ask for remedial teaching and for support of their individual special needs.

Finland is a country with two official languages - Finnish and Swedish. Therefore, higher education is also available in both languages, and both have their own institutions within the country. In addition, some of the educational institutions provide all or at least some of their lectures in a foreign language, most commonly in English (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Board of Education, CIMO, 2012, pp. 7-8).

A high level of training is seen as one of the most important attributes evident in Finnish education system. Teachers are identified as the key link to high-quality education and, therefore, they are certified and highly valued specialists. In order to give lectures at universities, they must hold a Doctoral or postgraduate degree while teachers at universities of applied sciences are required to have a Master's or postgraduate Licentiate's degree, depending on the position. Pedagogical studies must be completed too. Rectors are generally chosen from among the university personnel. University rectors are required to hold either a doctorate or professorship while in polytechnics they have to have completed a postgraduate Licentiate's degree or Doctoral studies, as well as to have experience in the field of administration. In addition to these degree certificates mentioned above, teaching staff participate in in-service training annually, as stated in their job contract. In fact, it appears to be an advantage and so Finnish teachers take part in such advanced professional seminars actively. Education providers are also able to apply for state funding in order to develop the professional competence of personnel (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Board of Education, CIMO, 2012, pp. 24-26).

Education organisations have direct responsibility for the teaching system as well as the quality and effectiveness of the courses they provide. They are autonomous in making decisions concerning class size and how to group learners, as no government regulations have been established yet. The lecturers also possess pedagogical autonomy and they are able to choose the methods of teaching to be applied, the study materials to be used during courses, assessment criteria, etc. Universities and polytechnics are extremely happy to have such a significant autonomy. All their operations are based on this freedom of teaching instructions and every kind of research. They take advantage of

it to design the content of degree programmes, determine admission requirement and deal with administration operations by themselves. The Higher Education Evaluation Council supports education providers with the required assessment of operations and of outcomes (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Board of Education, CIMO, 2012, pp. 12-14).

That is why it is no wonder that Finland is well-known and appreciated for its high level of academics and academic standards. Every year this fact is proven by many surveys in which the country is among the best destinations for international students. For instance, in a recent survey called Student Satisfaction Awards 2015, where a total of 17000 international students shared their experiences in Europe, Finland has placed second among the best countries in Europe in which to study, with a score of 8.95 out of 10. It was followed by Nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark that gained 8.90 and 8.89 score respectively. In this 2015 survey, Ireland was selected as the best-performing country surpassing the top three countries in the previous year: Finland, Sweden and Denmark (Raileanu, StudyPortals, 2015).

According to international students' views and experiences in the same survey in 2014, the principle reasons for choosing Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences are academic standards and high-level education, great social life, excellent services and student support provided during studies, as well as a safe study and living environment. However, there is still room for further developments. Negative comments mentioned the high cost of living, the location of institutions, the climate, and the lack of travel options (Raileanu, StudyPortals, 2014). The results of the survey are shown below in Figure 3 and Figure 4.



Figure 3. Reasons to recommend Finland as study place
 (Raileanu, StudyPortals, 2014)

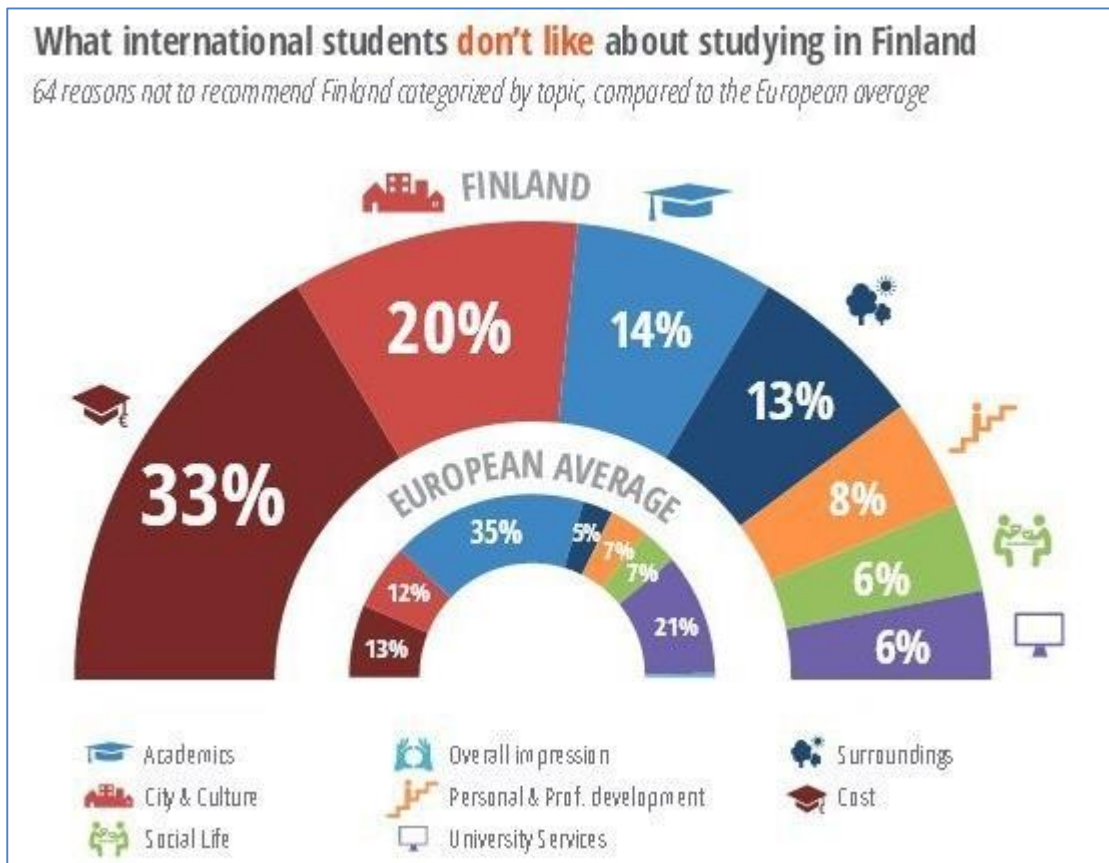


Figure 4. Reasons not to recommend Finland as study place (Raileanu, StudyPortals, 2014)

3.2 Market Situation

Nowadays more than 450 international degree programmes are offered by Finnish institutions. Within these programmes, all course materials, lectures, books and examinations are provided entirely in English (Centre for International Mobility CIMO (Study in Finland), 2015).

The top five countries of origin of international degree students in Finnish institutions for 2014 were the following: Russia, China, Vietnam, Nepal and Estonia. Russia was the absolute leader with 3,044 students admitted to international degree programmes. The second largest number of students seeking a higher education in Finland was 1,963 and they were citizens of China. With 1,619 students, Vietnam took the third place. The number of students from Nepal was 1,149 while there were only 858 students from Estonia (Centre for International Mobility CIMO, 2015). The dark blue arrows in Figure 5 show the source of foreign students in Finnish higher education institutions.

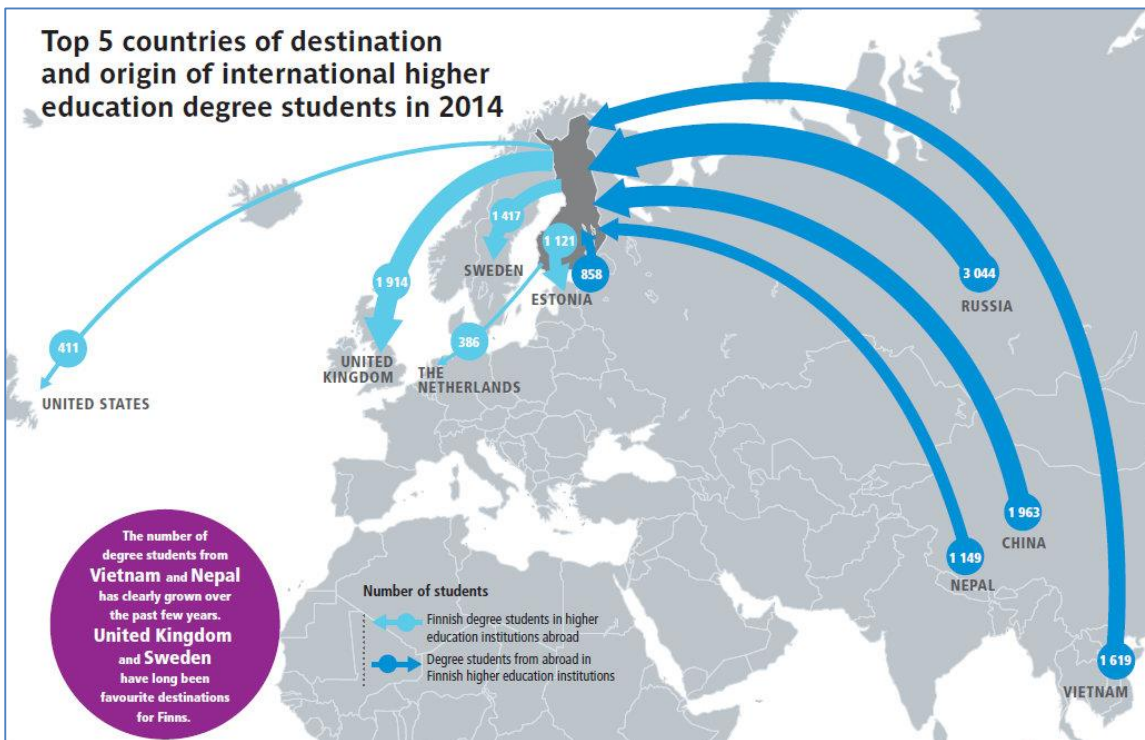


Figure 5. Top 5 countries of origin of international degree students in Finnish higher education institutions

(Centre for International Mobility CIMO, 2015)

Currently, Finnish higher education is provided by 14 universities and 25 polytechnics. Table 1 and Table 2 listing all institutions can be found below.

Table 1. Universities in Finland

(Centre for International Mobility CIMO (Study in Finland), 2016)

No	Name of institution
1.	Aalto University
2.	Åbo Akademi University
3.	Hanken School of Economics
4.	Lappeenranta University of Technology
5.	Tampere University of Technology
6.	University of Eastern Finland
7.	University of Helsinki
8.	University of Jyväskylä
9.	University of Lapland
10.	University of Oulu
11.	University of Tampere

12.	University of the Arts Helsinki
13.	University of Turku
14.	University of Vaasa

Table 2. Polytechnics (UAS) in Finland
(Centre for International Mobility CIMO (Study in Finland), 2016)

Nº	Name of institution
1.	Åland University of Applied Sciences
2.	Arcada University of Applied Sciences
3.	Centria University of Applied Sciences
4.	Diaconia University of Applied Sciences
5.	Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences
6.	HAMK University of Applied Sciences
7.	Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
8.	HUMAK University of Applied Sciences
9.	JAMK University of Applied Sciences
10.	Kajaani University of Applied Sciences
11.	Karelia University of Applied Sciences
12.	Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences
13.	Lahti University of Applied Sciences
14.	Lapland University of Applied Sciences
15.	Laurea University of Applied Sciences
16.	Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences
17.	Novia University of Applied Sciences
18.	Oulu University of Applied Sciences
19.	Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
20.	Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
21.	Savonia University of Applied Sciences
22.	Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences
23.	Tampere University of Applied Sciences
24.	Turku University of Applied Sciences
25.	Vaasa University of Applied Sciences

Out of the 39 Finnish institutions listed above, every one offers international degree programmes conducted in English. However, only three out of 14 universities provide Bachelor's level studies in English. That is why a total of 27 institutions are investigated below as Savonia UAS' possible competitors.

3.2.1 Aalto University

Aalto University is a new international university in Finland, but with several centuries of experience. It was created in 2010 by the merger of three universities, the Helsinki School of Economics founded in 1911, the Helsinki University of Technology founded in 1849 and the University of Art and Design Helsinki founded in 1871. It offers programmes in English that lead to Bachelor's, Master's and postgraduate degrees. There are six schools and three main fields of study: Business and Economics, Technology and Engineering and Art and Design (Aalto University, 2016). The total number of students is over 16,000, 17% of which comprises international students (Times Higher Education, 2015). The main campuses of the university are located in Helsinki region.

At the moment, there is one international Bachelor's degree programme available in the field of Business and Economics which is located in Mikkeli Campus. Further degree studies in English in the same field offered through 11 Master's programmes and one Doctoral programme. There 31 Master's and four Doctoral programmes that catered for the International Technology and Engineering sphere while there are 22 Master's level choices and one Doctoral level choice in the field of Art and Design available to international students (Aalto University, 2016).

3.2.2 Tampere University of Technology

The Tampere University of Technology (subsequently referred to as TUT) is well-known as a scientific community in technology and architecture areas, with over 10,000 students and 2,000 staff members. The university was founded in 1965 as a subsidiary of Helsinki University of Technology. However, in 2010, it started independent operations with a campus located in Tampere. Internationality is a fundamental part of the university's activities and research cooperation.

TUT offers Bachelor's, Master's and postgraduate studies conducted in English for international students. Currently, there is only one programme in Science and Engineering offered at Bachelor's degree level while the choice range for Master's degree is much wider and includes eight study options. Postgraduate degrees are offered in the following fields: Licentiate of Science (Technology/Architecture), Doctor of Science (Technology/ Architecture) and Doctor of Philosophy. One should note that some of the programmes include different core subjects to choose from (Tampere University of Technology , 2015-2016).

3.2.3 University of the Arts Helsinki

The University of the Arts is a new university resulting from the amalgamation of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, Sibelius Academy, and Theatre Academy Helsinki in 2013. In the following year, the university had nearly 2,000 students, of which more than 200 students are from countries other than Finland. International activities are offered at all levels of the university, so some of the study programmes are available in English as well. The main halls and auditoriums are located in the Helsinki region.

There is a variety of choices for international students to complete a Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degree in the fields of music, dance, fine arts or theatre (University of the Arts Helsinki, 2015-2016).

3.2.4 Åland University of Applied Sciences

Åland University of Applied Sciences is a small university launched in 1997 and located in the town of Mariehamn in the Åland Islands. The average number of students is 600. Seven degree programmes relating to business administration, navigation, hospitality management, engineering and health are taught only in Swedish. However, from the beginning of the next academic year, the university will also introduce a new degree programme in Electro-Technical Engineering for international students (Åland University of Applied Sciences, 2016).

3.2.5 Arcada University of Applied Sciences

Arcada University of Applied Sciences is an international university with a campus in Helsinki, Finland. The university was founded in 1996. More than 2,700 students are currently studying there both in Swedish and English languages.

There are six international programmes available, of which one-half leads to Bachelor's degrees while the second half leads to Master's degrees. Bachelor's degrees can be completed in the field of International Business, Material Processing Technology and Nursing while Master level studies can be completed in Global Health Care, International Business Management and Media Management (Arcada, 2015-2016).

3.2.6 Centria University of Applied Sciences

Centria University of Applied Sciences is a young multicultural higher education institution established in 1992 (Study Advisory, 2015). It is located in Western Finland with campuses in

Kokkola, Ylivieska and Pietarsaari. The total number of students is almost 3,000, of which 500 are international students from around 40 different countries.

Centria offers 15 degree programmes, of which seven are entirely conducted in English. There are six Bachelor's programmes in Environmental Chemistry and Technology, Information Technology, Industrial Management, Business Management, Nursing and International Business and one Master level programme in International Business Management (Centria University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.7 Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, also known as Diak, has seven campuses situated in different regions around Finland: Oulu, Pori, Pieksämäki, Kauniainen, Järvenpää, Helsinki, and Turku. The university started its operations in 2000 on a permanent basis. It is a small university, having about 3,000 students. The foremost goal of Diak is to educate competent professionals in the sector of church and society.

For international students, there are two options, one being a Bachelor's degree in Social Services and the other a Master's degree in Global Health Care (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.8 Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences is one of the largest polytechnics in Finland that prepares professionals in the business and service sectors. Since it was founded in 2007, Haaga-Helia has six educational premises, of which four are located in the Helsinki district area while the others are in Porvoo and Vierumäki. Annually it has approximately 10,500 students studying in both Finnish and English programmes.

The university has 40 programmes for Bachelor's degree, eight of which are taught in English. One of the programmes is run as a part-time evening course. Out of 10 Master's programmes run in the university, half are delivered in English (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, 2016).

3.2.9 Häme University of Applied Sciences

Häme University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as HAMK) is a higher education institution. Teaching began there in 1992. The university's campuses are located in cities such as Evo, Forssa, Hämeenlinna, Lepaa, Mustiala, Riihimäki and Valkeakoski. The total number of students is more than 7,200. HAMK has almost 100 partners around the world, so internationality is very much a part of the university structure.

A total of 20% of degree programmes is conducted entirely in English. The university offers to complete three Bachelor's degree programmes in the sphere of Engineering as well as one programme in the Business field. In addition, Master level studies are available in English in Social and Health Sciences as well as in the Business sector (Häme University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.10 Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences is the largest polytechnics in Finland and began operations in 2008. The university provides education in four fields: culture, business and administration, health care and social services, and technology and transport. It is also possible to undertake studies in English in any of these major subjects. The institution has 12 units around Helsinki, as well as one in Espoo and two in Vantaa. The number of students enrolled in 2014 in Metropolia was over 16,000, including 900 foreign degree students.

At the present time, out of 67 degree programmes available, 10 Bachelor level studies and five Master level studies from all the university's fields are provided for international students. Moreover, there is a chance to take part-time studies in Information Technology where the usual number of study places available is doubled and reaches 60 students (Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, 2015).

3.2.11 HUMAK University of Applied Sciences

HUMAK University of Applied Sciences specialises in humanities and pedagogy as well as in the cultural management field. Teaching is concentrated on its four premises located in Helsinki Metropolitan Area, Jyväskylä, Kuopio and Turku.

The university offers only two degree programmes in English: Degree Programme in Youth Work and Social Equality and European Master's degree programme in Sign Language Interpreting. It should be noted that the Bachelor's range of programmes for foreigners will be expanded soon (Humak).

3.2.12 JAMK University of Applied Sciences

JAMK University of Applied Sciences is an international higher education institution that specialises in eight various areas. It is a young university that has experience in teaching over 20 years. The institution operates a number of units in Jyväskylä and one unit in Saarijärvi. Annually, the university serves almost 350 foreign degree students while the overall number of students is over 8,500.

JAMK offers 30 degree programmes of which three Bachelor and two Master programmes are taught in English. Bachelor studies are offered in the fields of business, logistics and health care. Master programmes available are called Cyber Security and Entrepreneurship and Business Competence (JAMK University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.13 Kajaani University of Applied Sciences

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as KAMK) is international universities in Finland with an average number of 2,000 students. The history of the polytechnic began in 1996. The main focus areas of KAMK are activity tourism, information systems, business and innovations, mechanical and mining engineering, and health sciences. The single campus area is located in the city of Kajaani.

Among the degrees offered in English, there is the opportunity to study either International Business or Sports Management leading to Bachelor degree (Kajaani University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.14 Karelia University of Applied Sciences

Karelia University of Applied Sciences is thought to be one of the best universities of applied sciences in Finland. Its operations began in 1992. The studies are offered in seven various fields of education with the option to choose between 18 degree programmes available for nearly 4,000 students. Karelia UAS operates in four cities in North Karelia.

Although, for a Bachelor's certificate the university offers just one programme in International Business, it is possible to take some additional courses from Finnish programmes that are also delivered in English. However, the Master's degree programmes provide instructions only in Finnish (Karelia University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.15 Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences

Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences was established in 1996. The fields of study include culture, social services and health care, business and administration and technology and transport. Two main education centres are located in Kotka and Kouvola.

At the moment, two Bachelor's programmes in International Business and Game Design and three Master's programmes in Design, Health Promotion and International Business Management are delivered fully in English (Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, 2013-2016).

3.2.16 Lahti University of Applied Sciences

Lahti University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as LAMK) is an international multidisciplinary higher educational institution that was founded in 1991. The university has expertise in areas such as culture, business, social and health care, tourism and technology. From around 5,300 students studying at the university, almost 400 are international degree students. The main university's education facilities are located in Lahti.

In LAMK there five degree options for foreigners, of which three are Bachelor level studies and two Master level studies. Bachelor's studies lead to a degree in Business Information Technology, International Business or Nursing while Master's studies lead to a degree in International Business Development and Urban Sustainability (Lahti University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.17 Lapland University of Applied Sciences

Lapland University of Applied Sciences began two years ago when the operations of Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences and Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences were combined (StudyPortals, 2007–2016). That is why the university has seven premises with locations in Kemi, Rovaniemi and Tornio. It is an international multidisciplinary university with expertise in social, health and sports services, business and culture, tourism, natural resources and industry sectors.

In 2016, Lapland UAS offers four international degree programmes conducted in English and leading to Bachelor's degree in Business Information Technology, International Business, Nursing and Tourism. In addition, one Master's programme in International Business Management is carried out in English as well (Lapland University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.18 Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Laurea University of Applied Sciences is the fourth biggest polytechnic in Finland with almost 7,800 students. It was established in 1992 (University of the Arctic , 2016). The university operates on seven campuses in the Helsinki region. The campuses are located in Hyvinkää, Kerava, Otaniemi (Espoo), Tikkurila (Vantaa), Porvoo, Lohja and Leppävaara (Espoo). The Campuses at Otaniemi and Leppävaara provide full-time degree programmes in English while several others offer some studies in English as well.

Among the options to study at Laurea UAS, there is a wide spectrum of six Bachelor's degree programmes implemented through English. It is possible to study Business Management, Business Information Technology, Nursing, Social Services, Restaurant Entrepreneurship as well as Security Management. International Master level studies are carried out in Global Development and

Management in Health Care and in Service Innovation and Design (Laurea University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.19 Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences

Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as MAMK) is a contemporary higher education institution providing since 1992 a variety of different fields in which to study. The range of programmes covers the following fields of study: humanities and education, natural sciences, resources and environment, social, health and sports services, technology, communication and transport, business and administration, as well as tourism, catering and domestic services. The university serves approximately 4,500 students with two campuses in Eastern Finland in Mikkeli and Savonlinna.

Out of 18 degree programmes at MAMK, only three are available in English at Bachelor's level. There is a choice to study Business Management, Environmental Engineering or Information Technology (Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.20 Novia University of Applied Sciences

Novia University of Applied Sciences was launched as a result of the merger of Sydväst Polytechnic and the Swedish Polytechnic in 2008. Today, this university of applied sciences is the biggest among Swedish-speaking polytechnics providing education for approximately 4,000 students in five campuses located in Vaasa, Turku, Raseborg and Jakobstad. The university is aiming at development proficiency in its focus areas: sustainability and energy technology, natural resources, health and social care, ship simulation and art in an international environment.

Some degree programmes are carried out entirely in English. In 2016, it provides three full-time Bachelor's level studies in Maritime Management, Nursing and Sustainable Coastal Management and one part-time Bachelor's studies in Maritime Technology. In addition, there are also two Master's studies in Leadership and Service Design and Natural Resource Management available for foreigner students (Novia University of Applied Sciences, 2015).

3.2.21 Oulu University of Applied Sciences

Oulu University of Applied Sciences is a polytechnic that combines several academic disciplines in the fields of culture, natural resources, business and information, social and health sciences, and engineering. It was founded in 1996. Education is provided for about 8,500 students, 7% of which are from abroad. The majority of campuses are located within the city of Oulu.

Oulu UAS offers three international programmes leading to a Bachelor's degree in Business Information Technology, International Business and Information Technology (Oulu University of Applied Sciences, 2015-2016).

3.2.22 Saimaa University of Applied Sciences

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences is an international university providing a range of programmes with a focus on five fields: health and social services, business administration, tourism and hospitality, technology and fine arts. Two educational units are located in Southeast Finland in Lappeenranta and Imatra, where education is provided for almost 3,000 students. About 7% of them are international degree students.

Among 20 degree programmes run at the university, there are four degree programmes conducted in English. After completing one of these programmes successfully, a student can attain Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Hospitality Management or Master of Business Administration (Saimaa University of Applied, 2016).

3.2.23 Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as SAMK) is one of the Finnish international polytechnics that operates on the west coast of Finland. The operations of SAMK began in 1996 and by this date, it has already established five campuses situated in Pori, Rauma, Huittinen and Kankaanpää. Programmes are provided in the faculties of Health and Welfare, Service Business, Logistics and Maritime Technology and Information Technology. The total number of students is over 6,000.

International students can choose between four degree programmes, where two programmes lead to Bachelor's degree and the other two lead to a Master's degree. Bachelor's studies are offered in the field of International Business and Physiotherapy while all Master's studies are in the field of information technology in either business or engineering spheres (Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, 2015-2016).

3.2.24 Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences

Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, established in 1992, is one of the higher institutions in West Finland. It consists of four faculties: Business and Culture, Food and Agriculture, Health and Social Care, and Technology. At the present date, Seinäjoki UAS offers 19 Bachelor and seven Master

programmes for about 5,000 students. The main operations of the polytechnic are generally based on three campuses in Seinäjoki and Ilmajoki.

There is an opportunity to study three degree programmes entirely in English, two Bachelor degrees in International Business and Nursing, and one Master degree in International Business Management (Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.25 Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Tampere University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as TAMK) is the second biggest university of applied sciences in Finland, providing a wide diversity of educational programmes focusing mainly on health and wellbeing, business and industry. Initially, the university was founded in 1912 as the first technical college in Finland. However, in 2010, it was merged with Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences (PIRAMK), which had a high reputation for great expertise in social and health care studies. Currently, the polytechnic includes seven fields of study and serves nearly 10,000 students. The main university's premises are situated in Tampere.

Out of 17 bachelor degrees and 15 master degrees offered in TAMK, there are six options available to foreign students seeking instruction in English. Three Bachelor programmes in Media and Arts, Energy and Environmental Engineering, International Business, as well as three Master level studies in Information Technology, International Business Management and Screenwriting are being launched at the present time (Tampere University of Applied Sciences).

3.2.26 Turku University of Applied Sciences

Turku University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as TUAS) is a higher education institution in Finland with approximately 9,300 students. The first operations were started in 1992. It conducts studies in education units in Turku, Salo and Loimaa and includes four faculties: health care, technology and environment, business administration and arts.

A Bachelor degree is available for international students at TUAS in both International Business and Information and Communication Technology, as well as in Nursing. In addition, Master level programmes delivered in English are offered in International Business Management, Marine Technology and two programmes of Leadership and Service Design in the sphere of Business Administration and Culture and Arts (Turku University of Applied Sciences, 2015-2016).

3.2.27 Vaasa University of Applied Sciences

Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (subsequently referred to as VAMK) is an innovative international polytechnic. Originally based on five institutions, VAMK began its operations in 1996. Today there are three faculties and two university campuses in Vaasa. The institution has an emphasis on high technology, international business, and social and health care. The number of enrolled students at the present time is about 3,300.

The university provides 12 degree programmes of which two are taught in English. These programmes, both in International Business and Information Technology lead to Bachelor of Business Administration and Bachelor of Engineering (VAMK University of Applied Science)

3.3 Finnish Institutions in World University Rankings

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings exists since 2004 and seeks to determine the world best universities, taking into consideration 13 key performance indicators related to teaching, international outlook, industry income, research and citations. According to the most recent research of 800 institutions surveyed, Finland was able to confirm again its high level of education. Eight Finnish universities were placed in the Global Top 500 list. The highest score was achieved by the University of Helsinki in 76th position. Aalto University attained the second best score being listed among the top 300 best global universities. The University of Turku, University of Eastern Finland, University of Jyväskylä, University of Oulu, University of Tampere and Tampere University of Technology can all be found in the world's Top 500 list in that order respectively. The Lappeenranta University of Technology was also ranked in the list between 501 and 600. The results of the research are presented in Figure 6 (Times Higher Education, 2015).

Rank	Title
=76	University of Helsinki Finland
251-300	Aalto University Finland
301-350	University of Turku Finland
351-400	University of Eastern Finland Finland
351-400	University of Jyväskylä Finland
351-400	University of Oulu Finland
401-500	University of Tampere Finland
401-500	Tampere University of Technology Finland
501-600	Lappeenranta University of Technology Finland

Figure 6. Finnish institutions in World University Rankings 2015-2016
(Times Higher Education, 2015)

In addition, based on the “International outlook” indicator results of all 800 universities included in the survey, a separate list comprising the Top 200 of the world’s most international universities 2016 was compiled, in which the University of Turku took 198th place (Times Higher Education, 2016).

During another recent study called Student Satisfaction Awards 2015 (previously mentioned in this Chapter), 356 European students were interviewed concerning their experience in Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences. Based on the findings, the Excellent International Student Satisfaction Award 2015 went to the four universities: the University of Helsinki, the University of Jyväskylä, the University of Oulu and the Tampere University of Technology. However, recognition is only given to the first three winners with the highest score. A podium of winning trio is shown below in Figure 5.

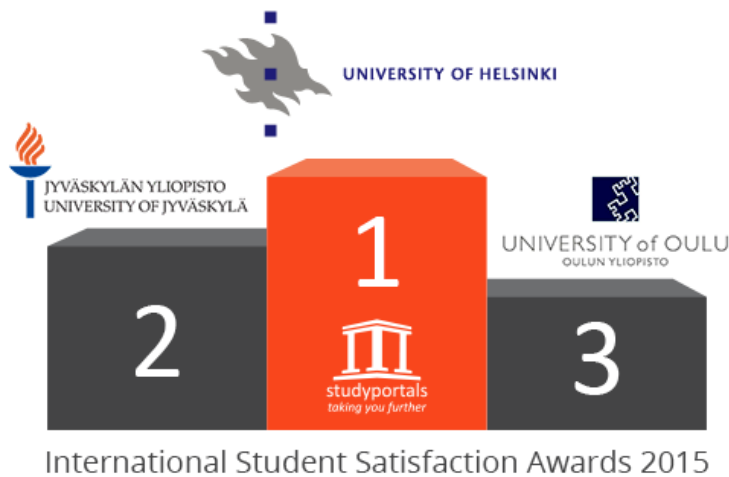


Figure 7. Winners of International Student Satisfaction Awards 2015 in Finland (Raileanu, StudyPortals, 2015)

Another five universities: Aalto University, Åbo Akademi University, the University of Eastern Finland, the University of Tampere and the University of Turku were awarded the Very Good International Student Satisfaction Award 2015 (Raileanu, StudyPortals, 2015).

3.4 Tuition Fees in 2017

The Finnish government recently made changes in the University Act and the Polytechnics Acts. The new legislation introduces the charging of annual tuition fees in universities and universities of applied sciences with effect from the 1st of January 2016. The amendments concern only non-members of the EU admitted to a bachelor or master degree programme delivered in a language other than Finnish or Swedish. The minimum annual study payment must be not less than 1,500 €. The final decision concerning the amount of the fee is made by each higher education institution in accordance with its own strategy. It is possible that tuition fees might differ among several study programmes within one institution. The right to select the way of collecting the payments is also given to the institutions.

The new regulation is seen as a contributor to institutions' education activities and developments for export as well as an additional financial support. It is thought that it will enhance the quality of services and competitiveness on offer. Later on, different initiatives by government are planned in order to encourage students from paid programmes to stay in Finland. The charging of tuition fees is not going to influence the amount of basic funds allocated to the institutions by the government. In addition, one should note that the institutions plan to launch scholarship options to help students with the payments of these new fees (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015).

4 SAVONIA UAS AND ITS INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMMES

4.1 Background information on Savonia UAS

Savonia University of Applied Sciences is one of the largest higher educational institutions in Finland offering a versatile range of studying programmes taught in both the Finnish and English languages. A strong team of almost 600 professional educators creates a pleasant environment for successful studies for approximately 6,000 students from over 20 countries every year. The organisation has three campuses located in Eastern Finland: Kuopio, Iisalmi and Varkaus. In all campuses, Savonia UAS always aims at serving a vibrant student work life.

The university education system is primarily based on the concept called Open Innovation Space (OIS) which combines learning, development, research and teaching processes at the same time. Directly relating to working life, OIS projects every year encourage students to put their theoretical ideas into practice. By the use of this technique, students are able to gain modern know-how in their chosen field.

The most crucial factors at university leading to success are co-operation, networking and internationalisation. The university cooperates with higher education partners in more than 30 countries. Teachers and staff members at university participate in expert exchange programmes to explore different methods of teaching and its management, R&D activities, professional guidance and consulting services from international partners. Moreover, Savonia UAS is an active participant in the following programmes: LLP-ERASMUS, FIRST, TEMPUS, NORDPLUS and NORTH-SOUTH.

The university also provides a wide spectrum of study options such as full-time studies, part-time studies or open university studies in order to satisfy different student preferences. Students can study for a full Bachelor's or Master's degree at Savonia UAS or study in exchange programmes. Students have opportunities for exchange programmes in Nordic and EU-countries, as well as in Russia, Asia, the USA and Africa. Open studies are organised by Open UAS and offer several short courses or modules mainly in Finnish, but some of the courses are available in English. However, it should be noted, that Open UAS generally does not offer eligibility to a visa or residence permit for foreigner students.

4.2 International Degree Programmes

In 2016, there are 31 available Bachelor's degree and four Master's degree programmes in the fields of Culture, Business Administration, Natural Resources, Tourism and Hospitality, Social Services and Health Care, and Engineering. Out of these programmes, the number of international

programmes provided entirely in English and approved for 2016 is still narrow. Only two international Bachelor's degree programmes are available in the fields of Mechanical Engineering and Business Administration. International Master's programmes do not start every year and there will be no Master's programme available in English starting during the next academic year.

“Mechanical Engineering in Savonia University of Applied Sciences was the first European Union accredited engineering programme in Finland in 2014” (Savonia University of Applied Sciences, 2016). The same status belongs only to two other programmes in Finland: Degree Programmes in Logistics and Engineering as well as in Mechanical Engineering, both at JAMK University of Applied Sciences (FINEEC). The status guarantees European quality standards are met by the programmes. The Mechanical Engineering programme combines the fields of both mechanical engineering with a focus on technology, product design and development, manufacturing, and industrial management with a focus on project management, sales, marketing, international business, supply chain and quality management. Graduates will have a strong grounding of professional competence and skills to be able to manage high technology projects in an international environment. Generally, they will be able to achieve positions such as Project Engineer, Sales Manager, Marketing Manager, Quality Engineer, Purchasing Manager, Warehouse Manager, Production Manager, Installation Supervisor, Service Engineer, Design Engineer. In addition, it is also possible to complete a double degree in a partner university in the Netherlands.

The Business Administration programme prepares students to become experts in international trade. It encourages an open mind to develop modern ways of doing business as well as providing expertise in the field and a future career path. Courses are mainly focused on import-export challenges, international sales, customer service and relationship management, logistics and other international activities in the business sector. However, the main emphasis is on internationalisation of SMEs and case studies of international trade. One of the greatest benefits of this programme is an opportunity to study English, Finnish, Swedish, Russian, Italian, French or Spanish languages. After the completion of the programme, graduates should be competent enough to become an entrepreneur and run their own business or work as an Export or Import Manager, Sales Representative, Marketing Planner, Investment Advisor, Store Manager, Human Resource Management (HRM) Specialist (Savonia University of Applied Sciences, 2016).

5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

5.1 Background

The descriptive research type was chosen in order to better identify market potential for products offered by the university and the attitudes of its customers. The marketing research was started with a collection of secondary data to obtain a general overview of the current Finnish higher education market and its opportunities. The information concerning potential competitors and their international degree programmes was gathered and is presented here in Chapter 2. The primary data was collected by utilising a survey research approach, in which Russian students of Savonia UAS, being a sample for this research, were asked to complete a questionnaire in order to obtain expository answers. The questions were mono-semantic and easy to understand in order to gather accurate results.

An online questionnaire was prepared in Google Forms and a link was sent over the Internet to possible respondents. The probability sampling method was used because of the broad knowledge of the total population. The link was available from the middle of January to the middle of February of this year. The answers were confidential and anonymous. The minimum sample size targeted was 20 while 28 responses were successfully gained.

5.2 Research Results

The first question in the questionnaire was a scaled question in the form of a grid. It was aiming to analyse the 14 most common reasons that might influence the choice of a university. It had a domain of evaluation providing respondents with three possible answers, ranging from “Not Important”, “Somewhat important” to “Important”.

The first reason examined was the good reputation of a university. The pie chart below illustrates that the numbers of respondents who consider a good reputation “Important” or “Somewhat Important” reasons are similar. Only one respondent, corresponding to 4% of the total sample, claimed that the good reputation of a university does not affect the decision-making process.

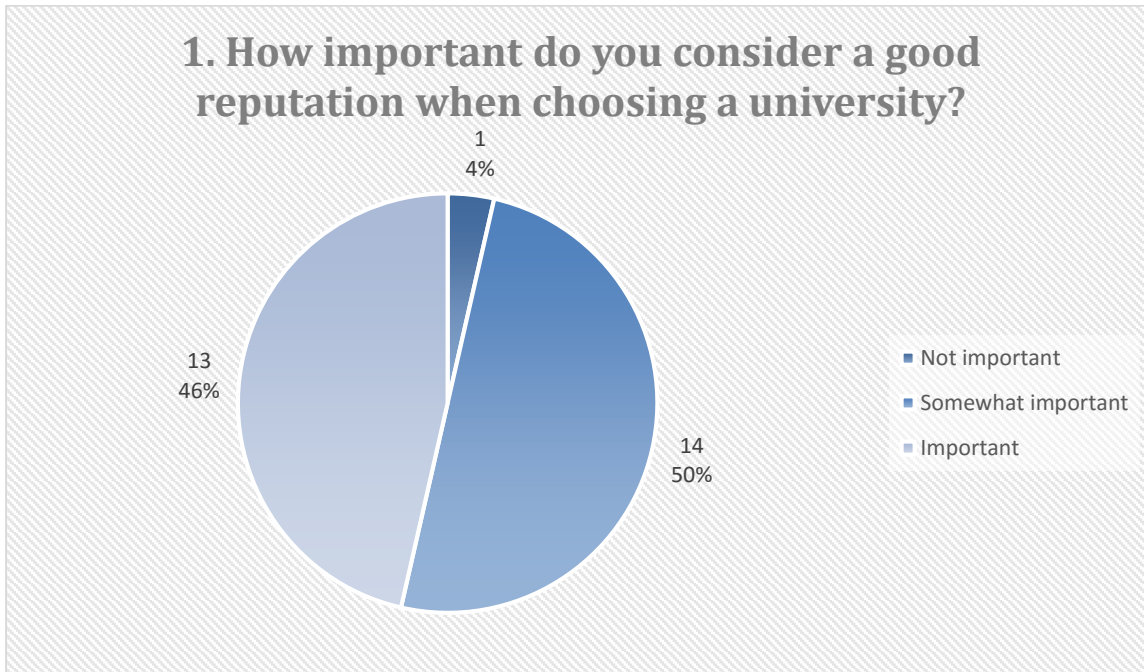


Figure 8. Responses to Question №1. Importance of good reputation when choosing a university

According to the results, a choice of academic programmes at university is strongly influential, since 75% of students chose the option “Important”. The “Somewhat Important” option was chosen by 21% of respondents while the remaining 4%, (one respondent), does not agree that it is important.

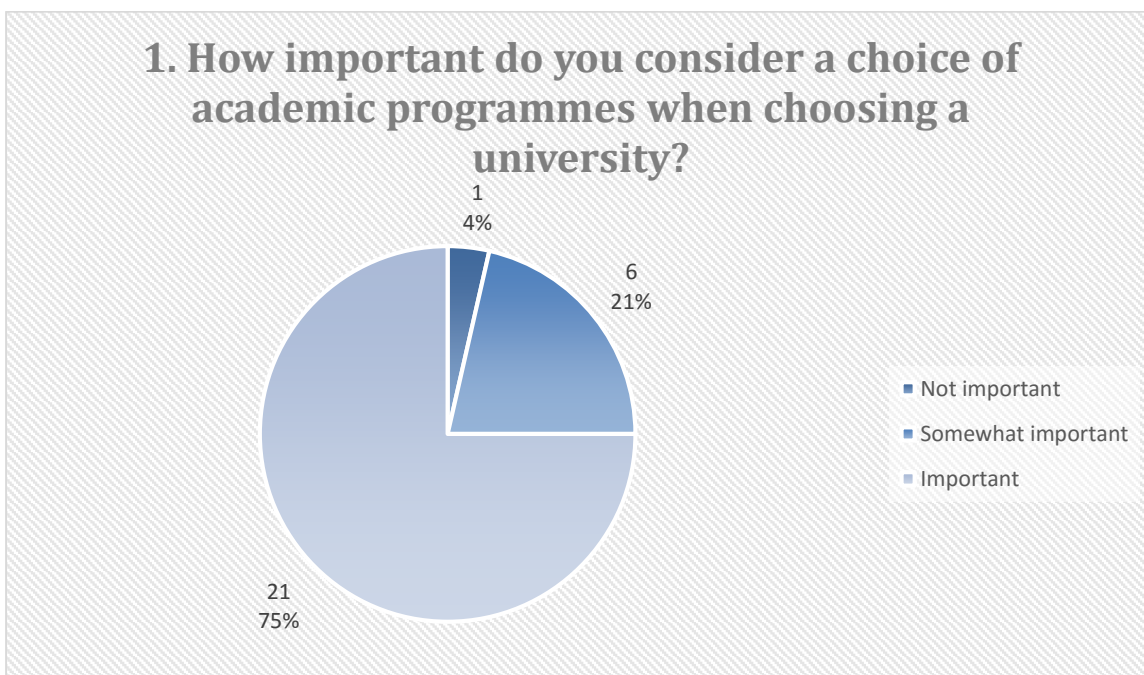


Figure 9. Responses to Question №1. Importance of a choice of academic programmes when choosing a university

As can be seen from the Figure 8, slightly more than half the respondents said that tuition fees have a major impact on the decision regarding which university to choose. Just over one-third of students

partly agree that tuition fees have an effect on the decision. Only 11% consider that tuition fees are not important in the decision.

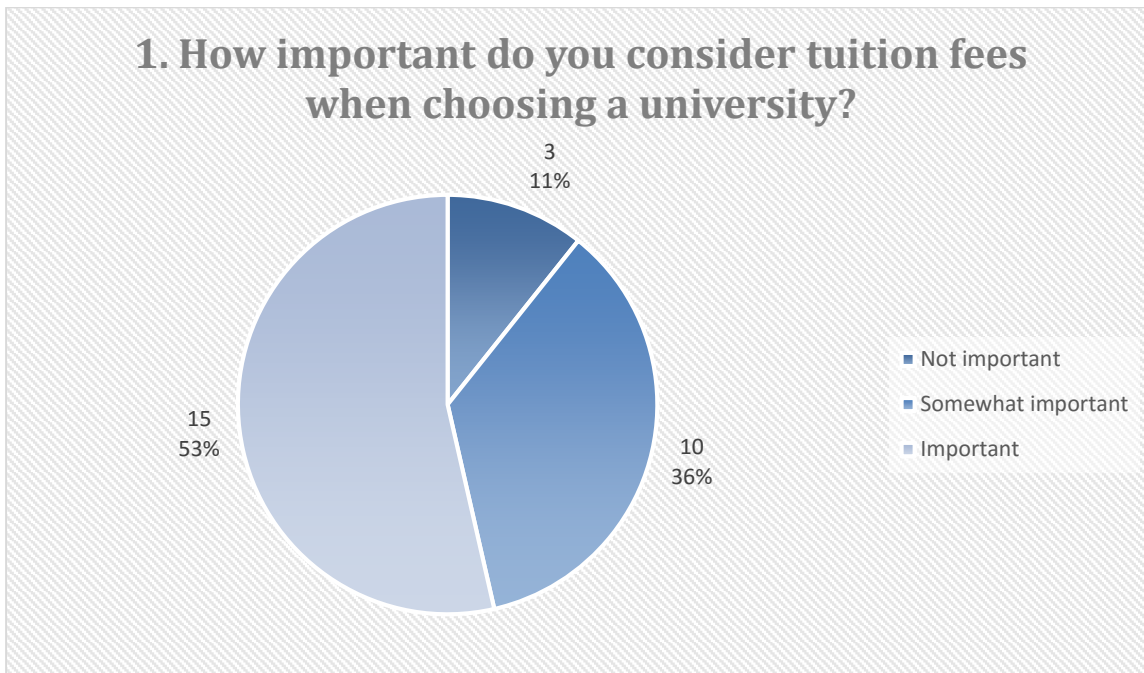


Figure 10. Responses to Question №1. Importance of tuition fees when choosing a university

The chart below indicates that entry requirements are one of the most influential parameters. Entry requirements are considered “Important” by more than one-third of respondents while all the remainder consider them to be “Somewhat Important”. No respondent considered them “Not Important”.

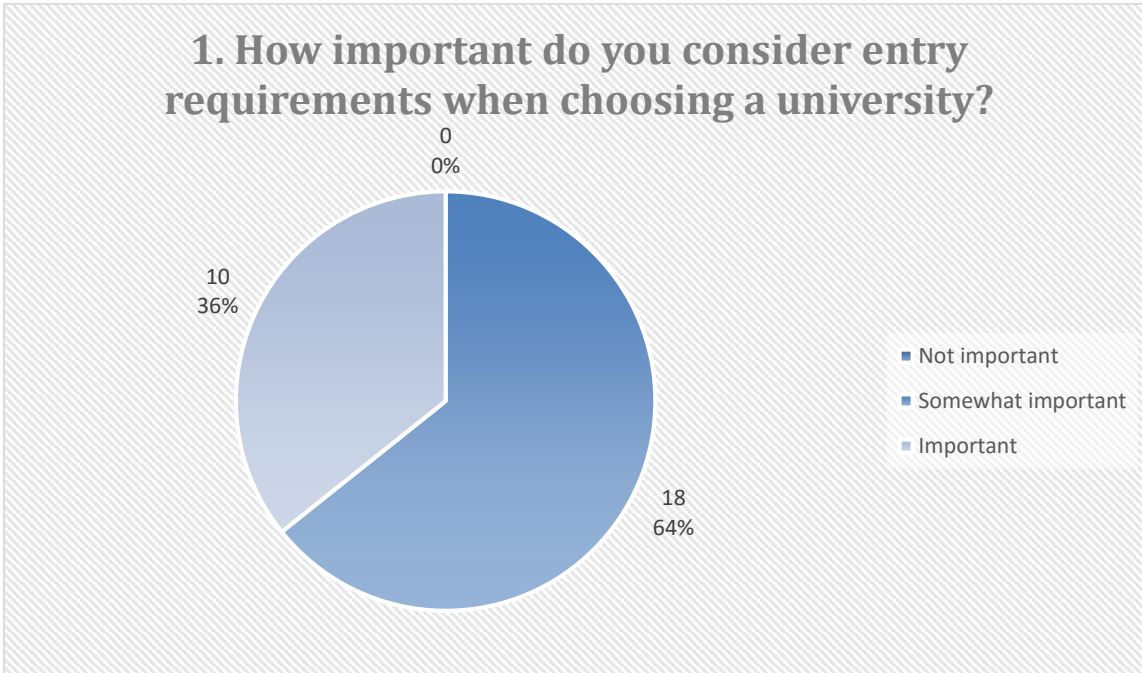


Figure 11. Responses to Question №1. Importance of entry requirements when choosing a university

The size of university appears not to be one of the more critical influences since only 7% chose the option “Important”. The majority of students believe that it should be taken into account but will not have an important value. Well over one-third of respondents disregard this aspect.

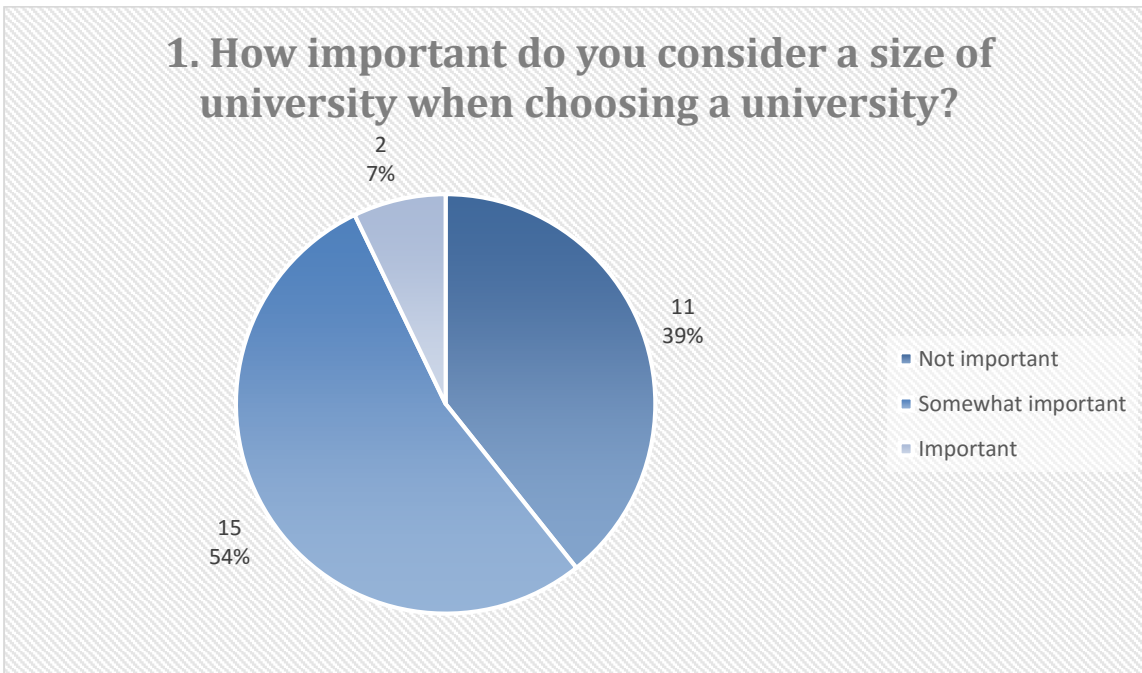


Figure 12. Responses to Question №1. Importance of size of university

The next pie chart indicates that almost three-quarters of respondents consider the size of city or town where a university is located has some importance when choosing a university. Only 11% consider it “Important” while 18% consider it to be “Not Important”.

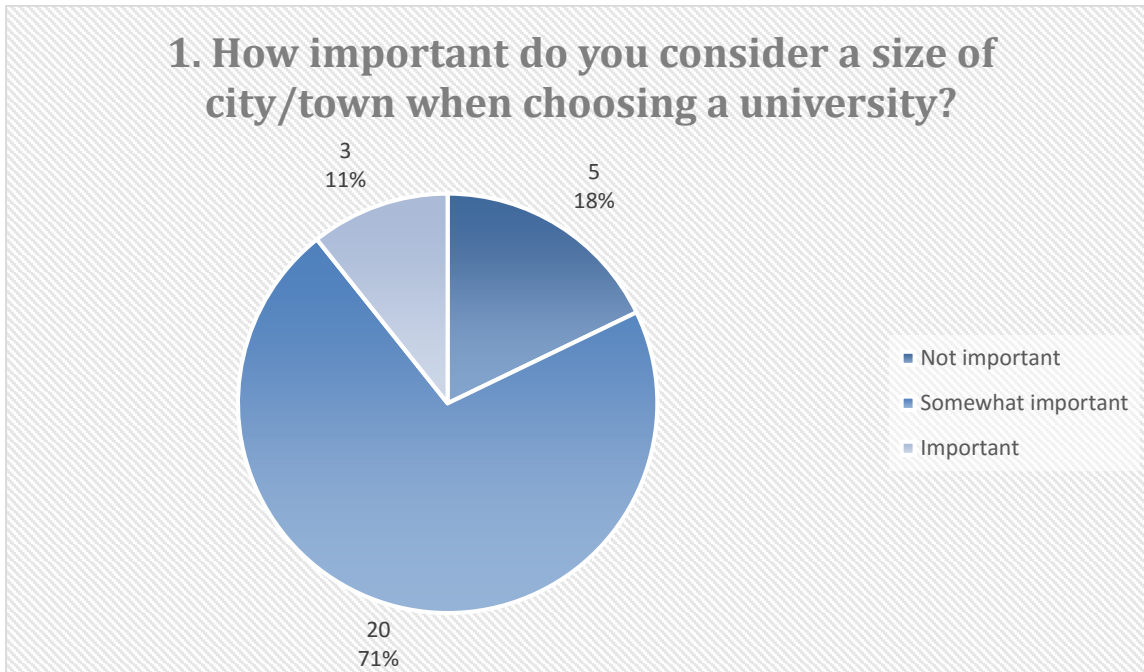


Figure 13. Responses to Question №1. Importance of size of city/town when choosing a university

According to the opinions expressed, one-half of respondents consider that distance from home location has some weight. Around 36% claim not to care about this while 14% of students consider that distance from home is an important factor in comparing universities to apply for.

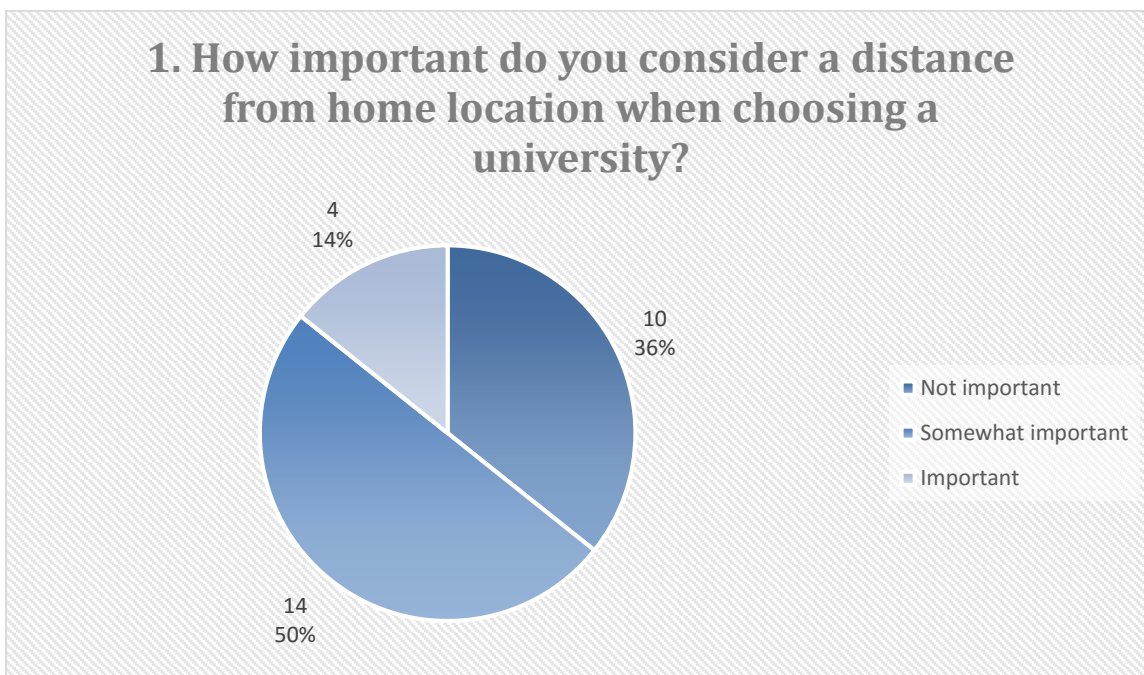


Figure 14. Responses to Question №1. Importance of distance from home location when choosing a university

It may be concluded from the pie chart below that career opportunities are one of the significant reasons to choose a university. The vast majority of respondents agree that this aspect definitely is important while 14% of respondents consider that career opportunities have some effect. The remaining respondents claim that it is unimportant.

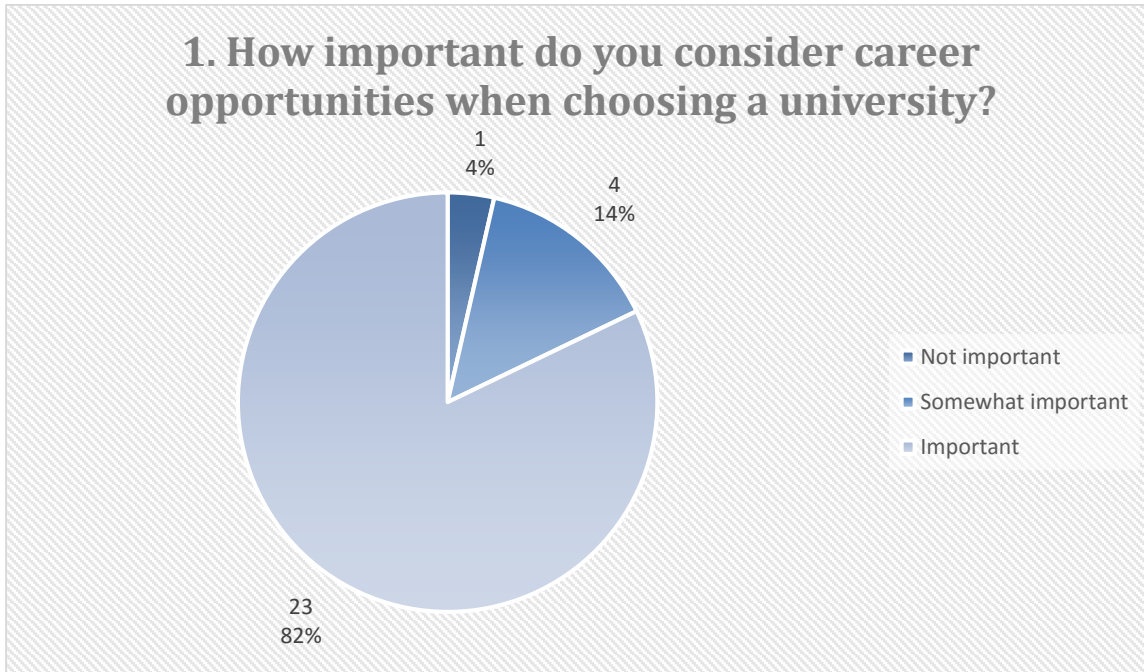


Figure 15. Responses to Question №1. Importance of career opportunities when choosing a university

Information supplied by the university is considered to be supportive in some way of the making of a decision according to the largest number of respondents. A total of 36% of the sample claim that it is truly useful and valuable while only 4% consider that this information is "Not Important".

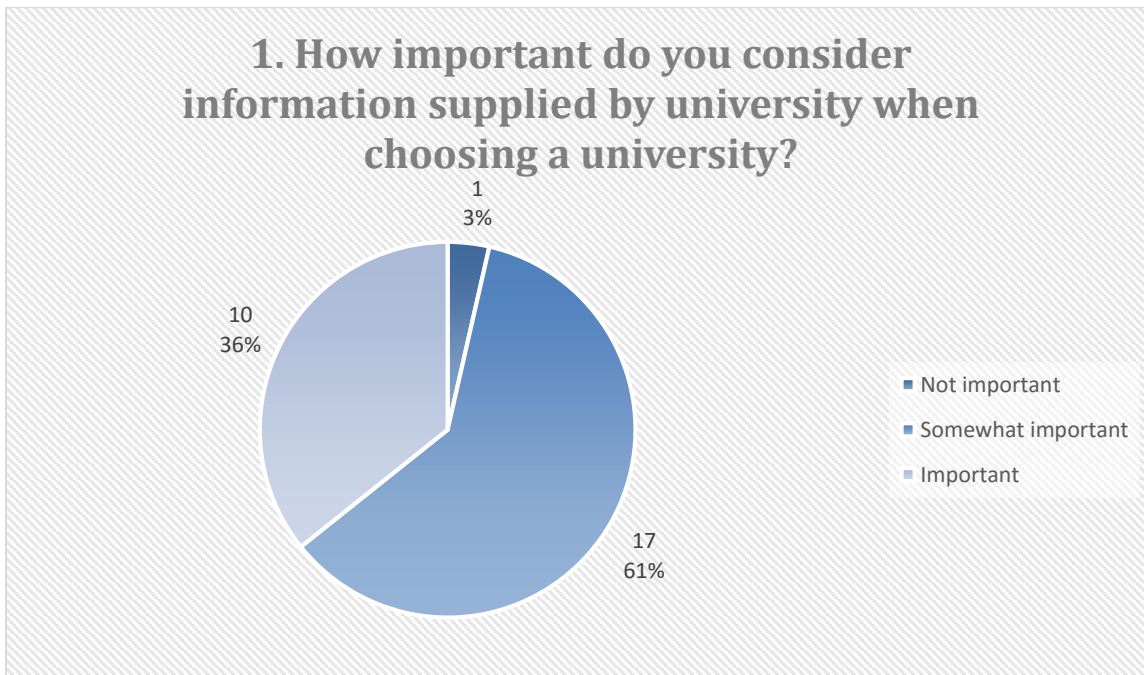


Figure 16. Responses to Question №1. Importance of the information supplied by a university

For 18% of students, campus facilities provided at a university do not play any role when choosing a university. However, little more than half of the participants tend to assume that campus facilities could have an influence on the choice of university. Close to one-third of respondents gave a preference to the option “Important”.

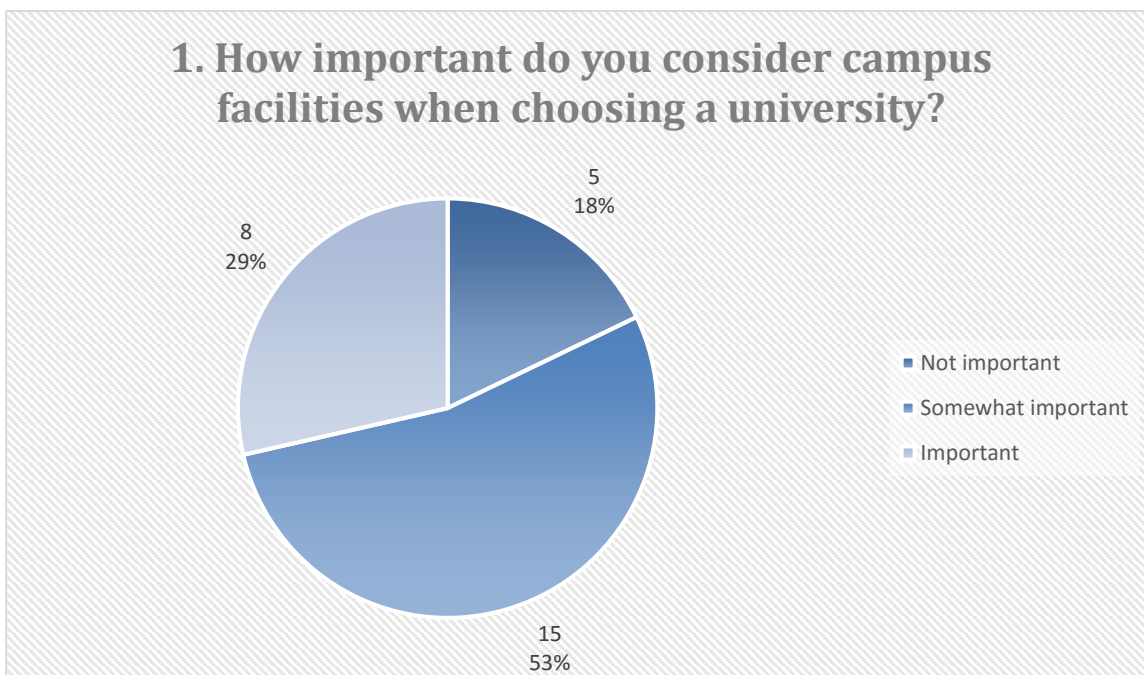


Figure 17. Responses to Question №1. Importance of campus facilities when choosing a university

Campus medical services are not considered an important reason by 36% of students. The option “Somewhat important” was chosen by almost half of the students indicating that these services would come in useful. Around 18% of respondents trust that medical services are essential at the university.

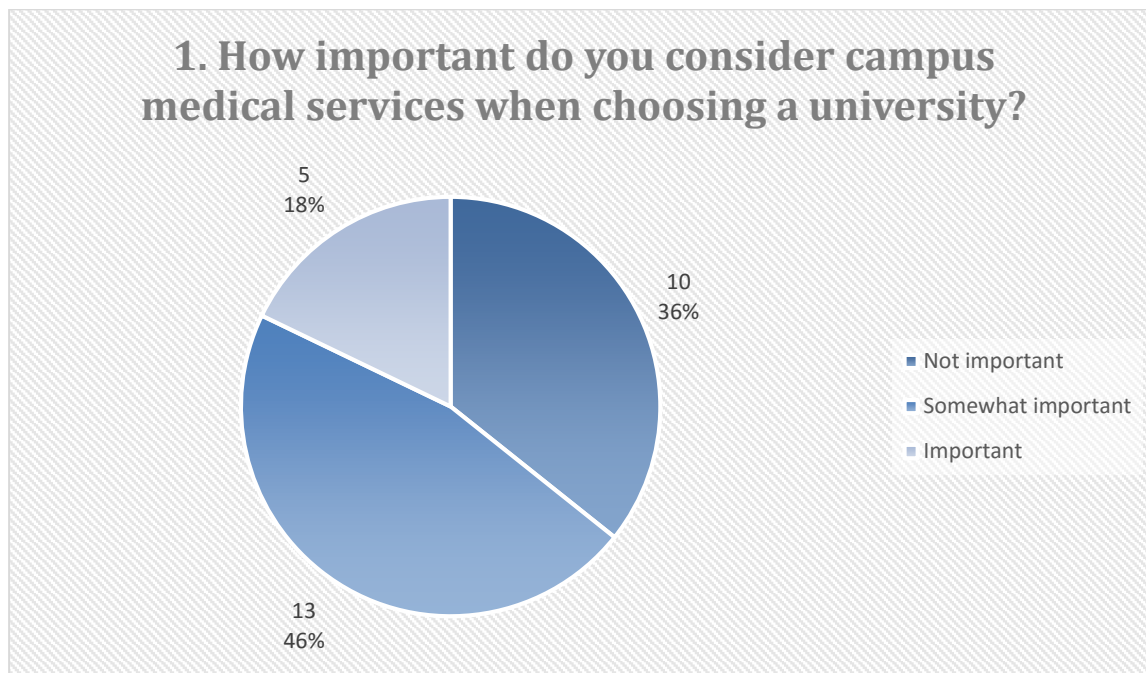


Figure 18. Responses to Question №1. Importance of campus medical services when choosing a university

Approximately the same percentage of respondents share opposing opinions concerning a vibrant student life. The responses referring to the option “Not important” are a little less than the responses referring to the option “Important” while more than half of students take note of this aspect while choosing a university.

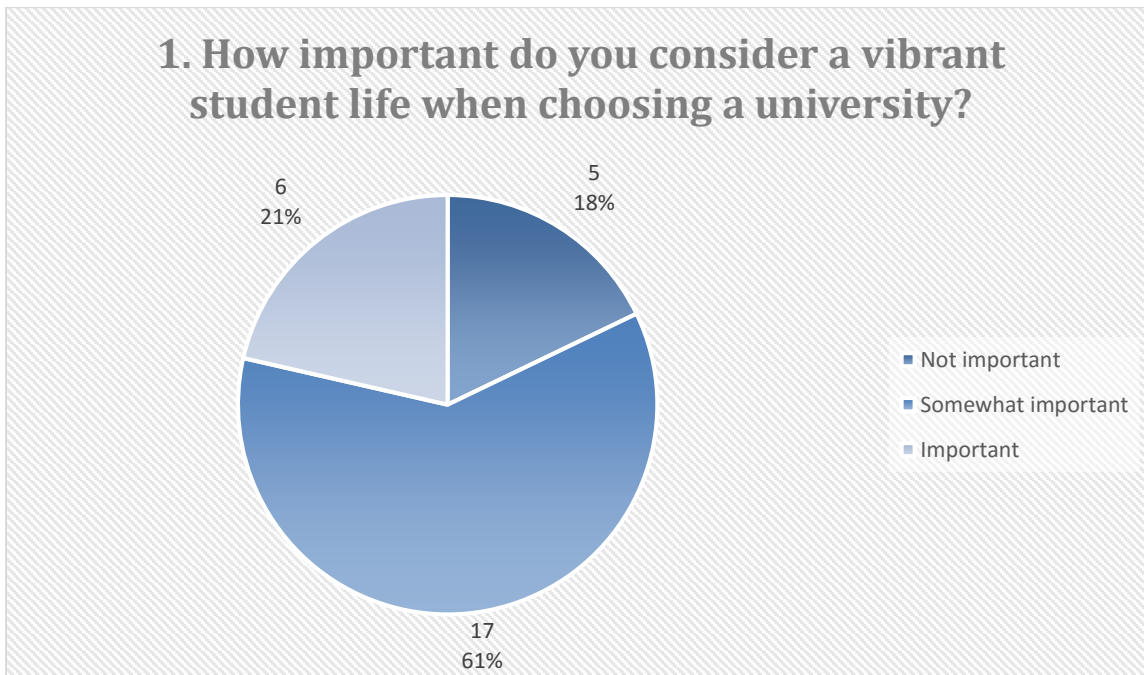


Figure 19. Responses to Question №1. Importance of a vibrant student life when choosing a university

The chart below shows that for 25% of respondents food services at the university are not important at all while for 29% the services are significant. The largest number of responses state that food services might have some influence.

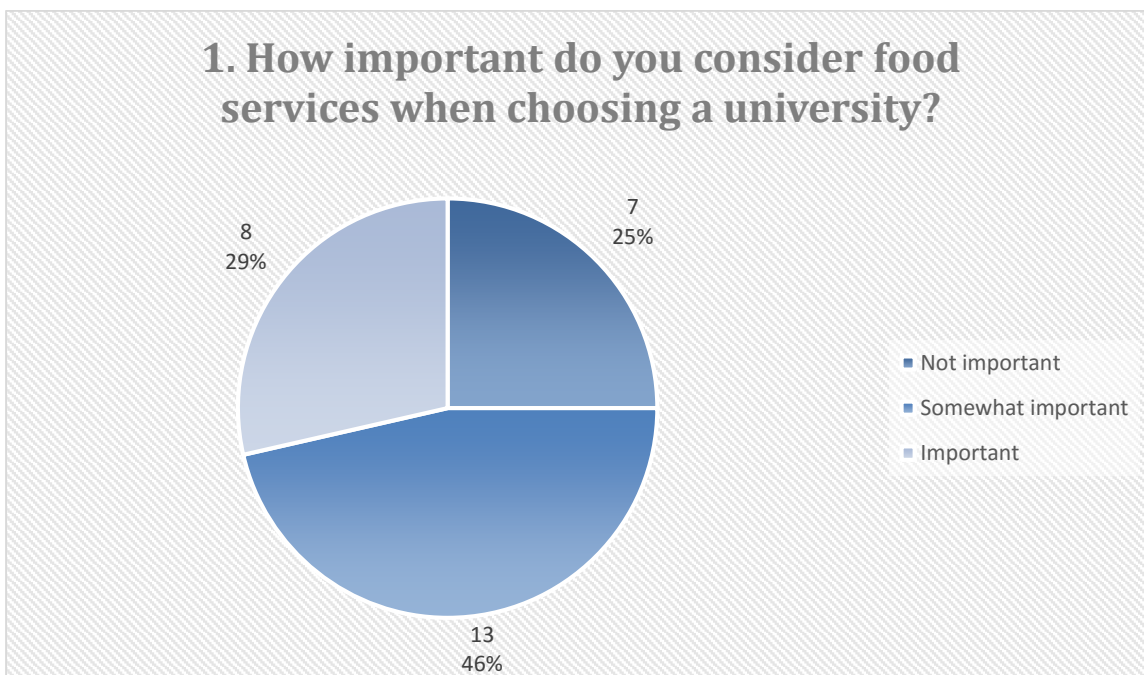


Figure 20. Responses to Question №1. Importance of food services when choosing a university

The presence of family members or friends at the university will not stimulate to choose the same university for one-half of participants. Around one-third of students probably would take into consideration the fact of their presence at the university. Only for 14% of respondents is this factor considered important, as they would like to study in the same university with friends or family members.

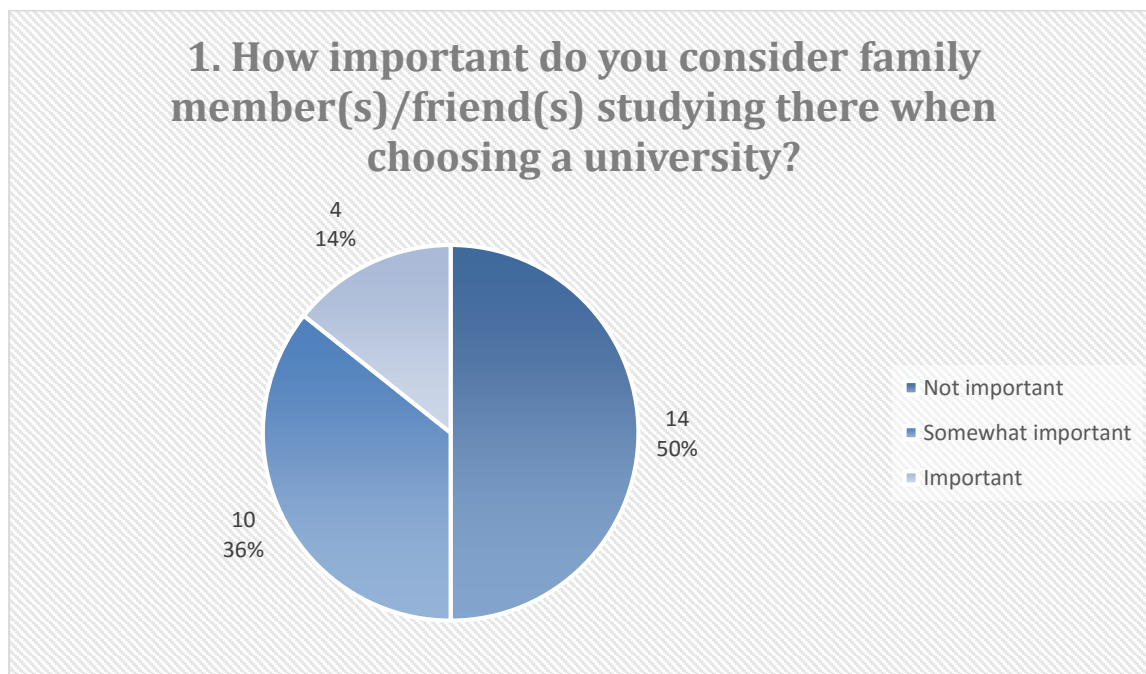


Figure 21. Responses to the Question №1. Importance of family member(s)/friend(s) studying there when choosing a university

The second question was an open-ended question. It asked to highlight the most important reason for choosing a university by selecting one of the reasons specified in the previous question or by proposing another option. The question received 32 different responses as some of the participants mentioned more than one significant reason.

These results demonstrate that career opportunities and choice of academic programmes are considered to be the most relevant reasons, since 25% and 22% respectively of respondents selected these options. A good reputation is in third place with 13%. Tuition fees, entry requirements, vibrant student life and quality of education were each selected by approximately 6% of respondents, while the remaining factors - information supplied by university, family members /friends studying there, food services, distance from home location, flexible studies - were each selected as most important by only one respondent.

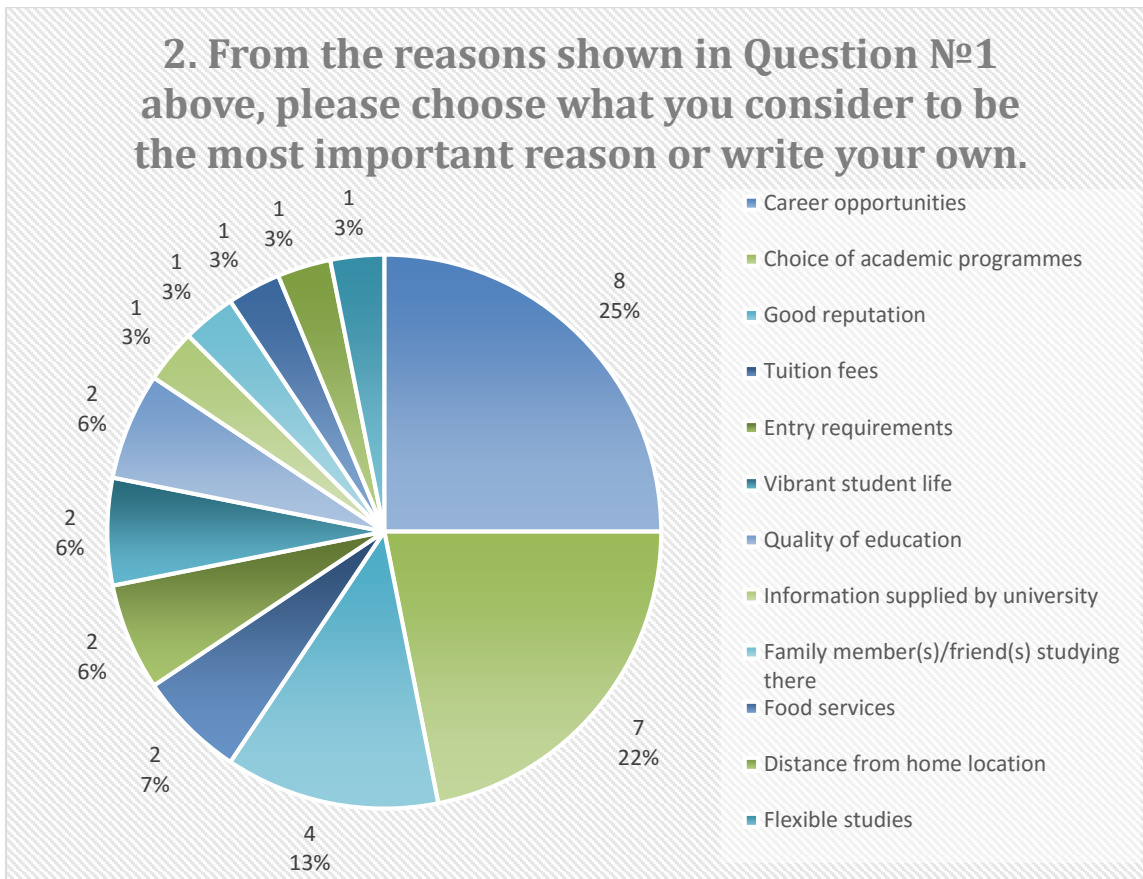


Figure 22. Responses to Question №2. The most important reason when choosing a university

The third question in the questionnaire combined both a closed-end and an open-ended question structure by providing participants of the survey with four predefined choices and also space for another answer in the field called “Other”.

According to the results below, the most popular promotional tool for a university is a website, since just over 30% of students selected that. “Visit by a university representative to my home city/town” came next, selected by 25% of respondents, followed at 18% by “University Open Day”. A variety of different choices were written into the field “Other”. Two respondents mentioned trip of their own to university while education agency, references, friend’s advice and the same location, each by a single respondent while “University brochure’ was also selected only once.

3. Which of the following promotional aspects influenced you most when you considered choosing a university?

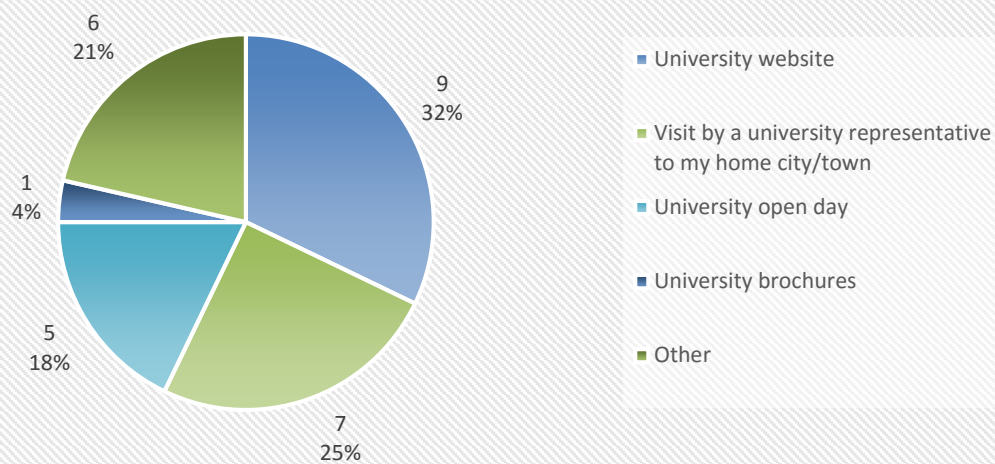


Figure 23. Responses to Question №3. Promotional aspects that influenced most when choosing a university

Question №4 was aimed at finding out the information sources of Savonia UAS used by Russian students in their country of origin. The question provides respondents with six options to select from, as well as the field "Other". It was possible to choose more than one option and, therefore, 38 answers were collected.

The Educational Centre "Initiative" was the source of information about Savonia UAS for the largest number of respondents (42%). Equal second, each with less than half this level (18%), were the UAS website, Russian students from Savonia UAS and friends. Only one respondent cited a different source, the fact of having lived in the same city and so knew the university well.

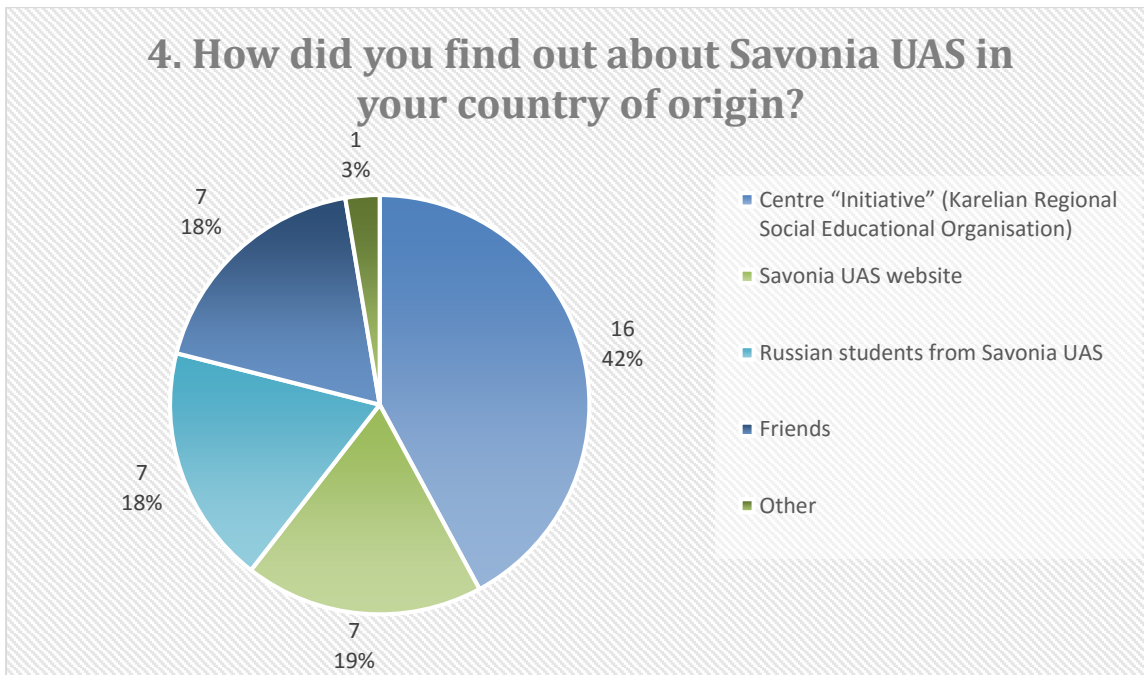


Figure 24. Responses to Question №4. Information channels used to get information about Savonia UAS in country of origin

The next question was focused on the main reasons why students chose Savonia UAS over other universities. Nine possible variants were presented along with the field "Other". In this question, a respondent had also the opportunity to specify more than one reason. Overall, 81 responses were gathered.

The results from the chart below confirm that the main reason why most of the students chose degree programmes at Savonia UAS is free international education. This reason was chosen by one-quarter of the total sample. Almost 20% mentioned the reason that the university offered entry exams in their home city. The option "Opportunities for study abroad and international work" ranked third, selected by 15% while reasons such as "Friends studying or going there" and "Good location" were both mentioned by nearly the same number with just over 10%. The range of study programmes at university was selected seven times (9%) while the possibility of learning the Finnish language was specified three times (4%). Only 2% paid attention to the reason concerning the size of the city where university campus is located. Other comments mentioned were positive feedback from Savonia students, by accident and willingness to stay in the same city were identified as well.

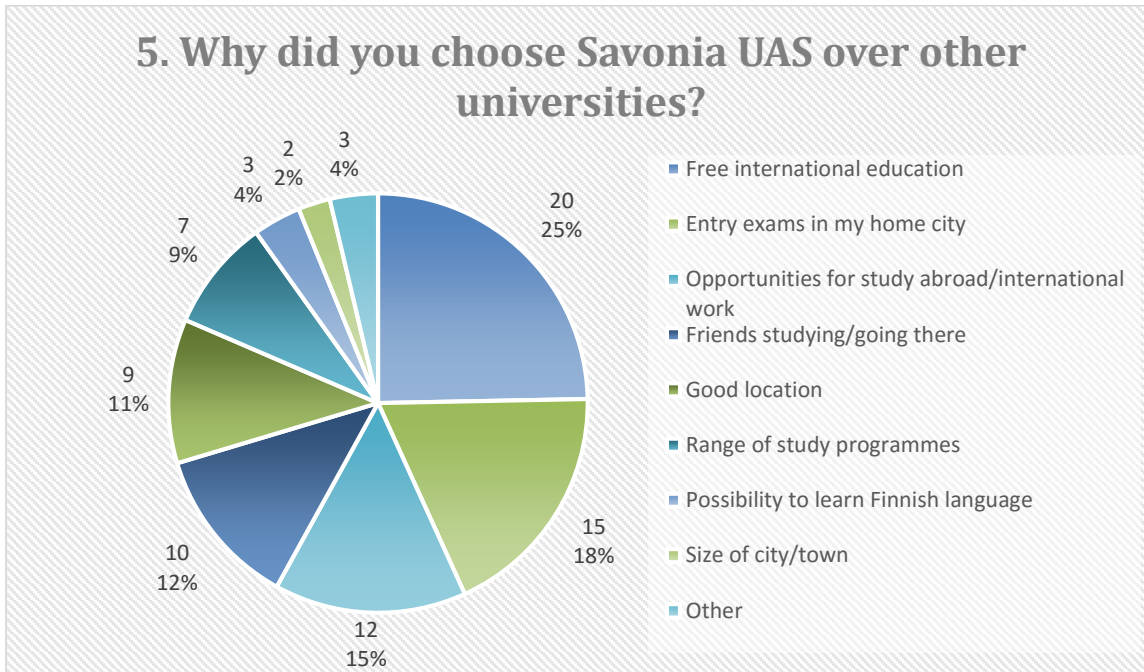


Figure 25. Responses to Question №5. The reasons why Savonia UAS was chosen over other universities

Question №6 was a close-end question asking the respondents whether Savonia UAS was their first choice or not. If the answer was negative, then the field in sub-question 6A was provided for them to specify the university of their first choice.

Almost 90% of students admitted that Savonia UAS was their first choice. While the first preference of the remaining respondents was given to Tampere UAS, JAMK and Aalto University.

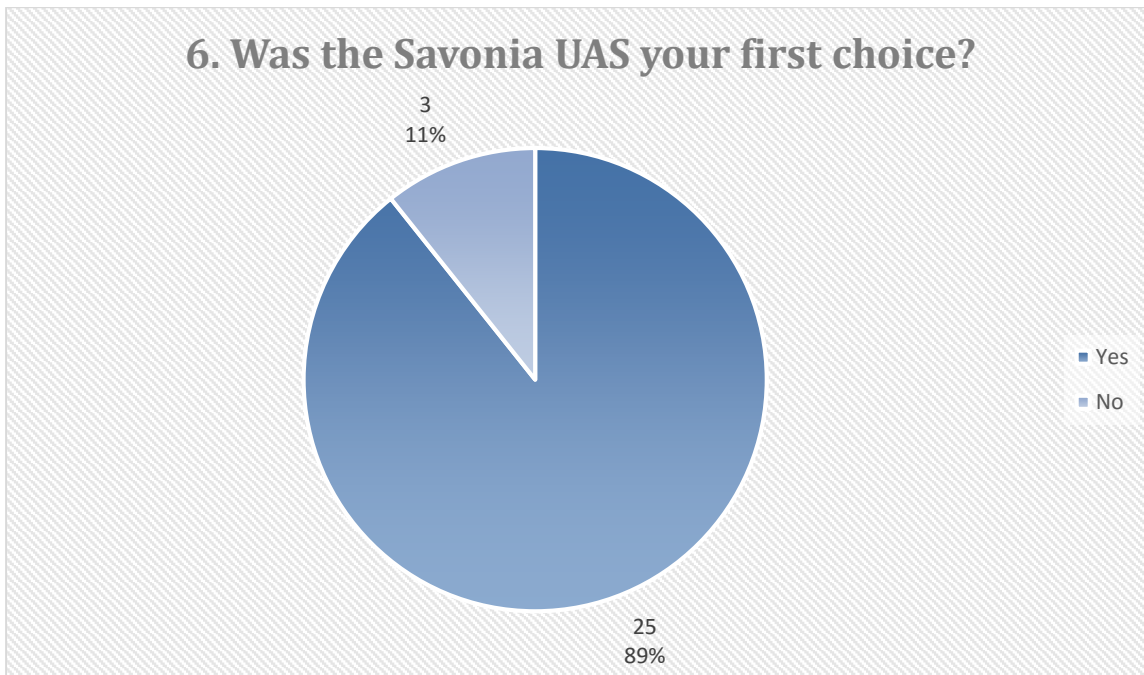


Figure 26. Responses to Question №5. The number of students who selected Savonia UAS as their first choice

A close-end question form with a domain of satisfaction was used in the Question 7. Among five alternatives a respondent had to choose the most appropriate one describing the level of satisfaction with the university. An open-ended sub-question 7A was also a required question which aimed to elucidate the answer to the previous question.

The figure below presents data showing that only one respondent (4%) is extremely happy with the university. Slightly less than 40% of students are quite satisfied with the chosen university while approximately the same number of respondent claimed that they are moderately happy. However, four students are slightly happy with their choice and this is twice double the number of respondents who are not at all not satisfied.

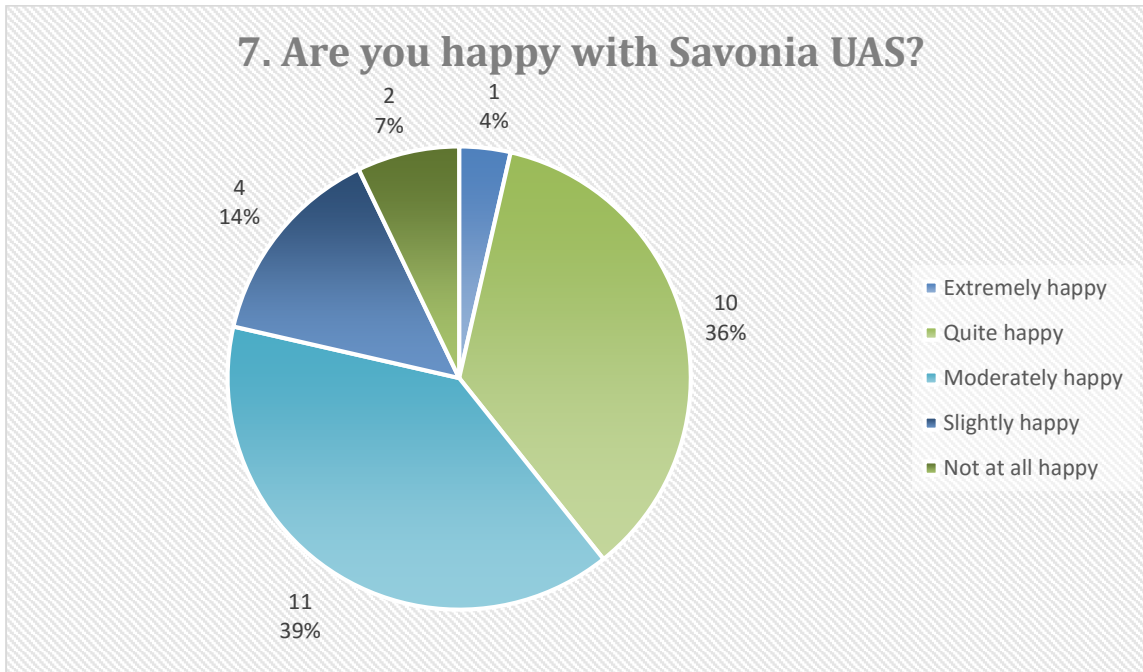


Figure 27. Responses to Question №7. The level of satisfaction with Savonia UAS

All explanations of satisfaction level at university can be categorised into two groups: positive and negative. After a careful analysis of the wide number of opinions, Table 3 was made to present the findings visually. A column “Positive” in the table below demonstrates the expressed aspects of why students are happy with the university while a column “Negative” presents the reasons expressed for low satisfaction level. The most frequent positive answers concern free education, flexible studies, pleasant atmosphere at the university, interesting Industrial Management programme, opportunity to meet new foreign people and met expectations. However, the reasons given for students’ unhappiness included lack of deep specialised courses with practical tasks, no work opportunities and help with practical training, lack of student activities and limited study opportunities.

Table 3. Students’ reasons for their level of satisfaction with the university

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free international education • Flexible studies • Industrial Management programme • Possibility to meet new people from different countries • Pleasant and cozy atmosphere • Friendly teachers who are always ready to help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of practical tasks • Lack of real-life projects and fairs • Not high-quality of teaching • Needing improvement of study programmes and study materials • Not enough specialization courses with in-depth study of a subject • No help with internships

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good education system • Modern and professional services at the university • Practice of foreign language • Success in studies • Meeting expectations • Food services • Good experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No career opportunities • Not good location • Unsatisfactory with teachers' performance and competence, as well as their level of English • Lack of activities for students • Limited study opportunities • No cooperation with companies • Technical problems with projection on whiteboard • Too many reports • Lectures not interesting enough
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The aspects that students enjoyed most while studying at Savonia UAS were revealed with the help of Question 8. It was an open-ended question, providing participants of the questionnaire with an empty field to give short and clear statements.

Almost one-half of respondents claimed to be grateful for very friendly, polite and helpful staff and for the good personal relations with them. About one-third of responses mentioned aspects related to the international environment and interaction with different cultures. Some of the students also mentioned that they enjoy their degree programme, interesting projects, friendly atmosphere with lots of Russian students studying with them, as well as food service. The other positive aspects concern free education, opportunity to study languages, facilities provided at the university, good library service, teaching methods, thesis work, flexible studies, interesting lessons, excursions to factories and student life.

In the next question, the respondents were asked to specify the possible facilities, services and study aspects that could be improved for the benefit of the university in the future. According to students' views and experience, they mainly suggest developing teaching methods and improving study materials, providing them with real-life projects based on company cases, helping with internships and employment after graduation and expanding the range of student activities. In addition, the respondents said that it would be better to organise more project fairs, factory visits and exhibitions, to cooperate with a larger number of universities abroad and invite more international students for studies as well as to deepen the study programmes. Students also proposed to expand the range of degree programmes and courses available in English, provide more Finnish language courses at university, to provide support to a greater extent with thesis work, create better facilities for studies in campuses, improve food services and better familiarise students with the university during the first

weeks. The respondents also mentioned that the website of the university should be developed and it would be a good idea to encourage foreign students with scholarships.

The next question asked respondents whether they would recommend Savonia UAS to potential future students or not. A close-end type of questions was used with only two options “Yes” and “No”. In addition, two sub-questions, Question 10A and Question 10B, were created to identify the reason for the positive and negative answers respectively. Seven potential alternatives were suggested to students to choose in the sub-question 10A along with the field “Other” for another variant. Overall, 20 positive and nine negative reasons were collected.

The results showed that about 70% of students would recommend the university because of flexible study options, essential study programmes, high-quality education, professional service and guidance and vibrant students life. In addition, students also mention that one of the benefits of Savonia UAS was the absence of a language test requirement. However, at the present time the university requires an English language certificate or “a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree completed in English in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia or New Zealand as well as a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree completed in English in an EU/EEA” (Savonia University of Applied Sciences, 2016).

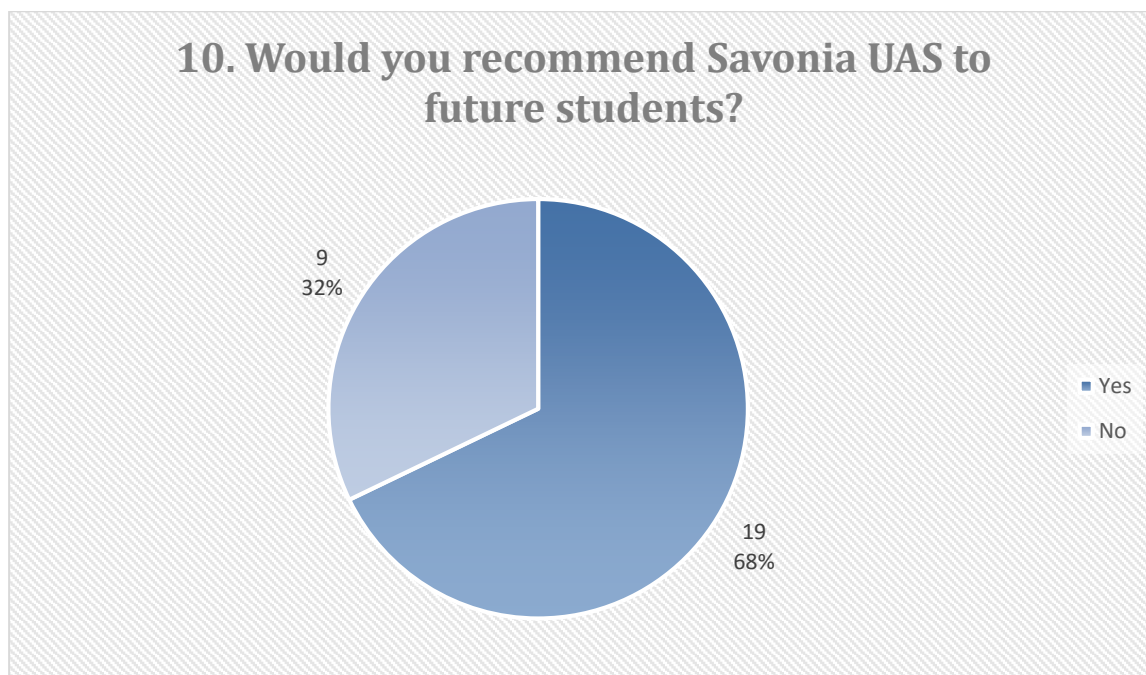


Figure 28. Responses to Question №10. Percentage of students who would recommend Savonia UAS to future students

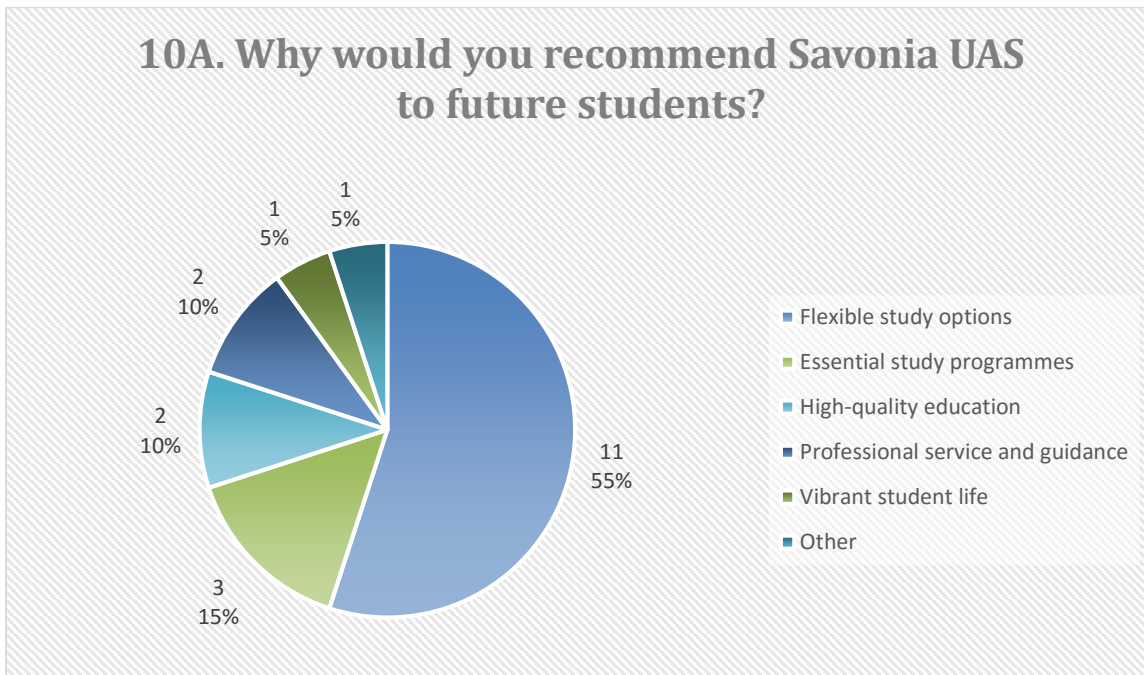


Figure 29. Responses to Question №10A. The reasons to recommend Savonia UAS

The remainder of the respondents would not recommend the university for the following claimed reasons: poor study quality, teaching performance and study facilities, not enough profession-related courses along with practical tasks and projects as well as a limited number of opportunities in the city where the university campus is located.

The last question in the questionnaire was an open-ended question allowing a respondent to add any kind of extra information or feedback. One of the most interesting comments received, offered by one respondent, referred to their satisfaction with student life and study process. The respondent was generally satisfied but commented that when applying they expected much more.

6 CONCLUSION

The study of the principles of the Finnish higher education system identified the benefits of choosing Finnish institutions as study locations. The current Finnish education market with its providers was analysed to get an overall picture of the whole range of currently available degree programmes for international students and to find out the number of similar programmes offered by other competing Finnish institutions. The best Finnish institutions according to recent research were identified. In addition, the new legislation concerning the charging of annual tuition fees in universities and universities of applied sciences was considered.

The marketing research determined the main reasons why Russian students selected Savonia UAS over other educational institutions, the main information channels about the university in the country of origin, as well as the students' satisfaction with academic disciplines, services and facilities provided at the university. Moreover, the proportion of students who would recommend Savonia UAS to potential future students, the most influential criteria and promotional aspects when choosing a university were identified as well.

According to the survey findings, most of the Russian students chose Savonia UAS as a destination for their studies because of the free international education, entry exams in their home city and the opportunity to study abroad or to have international work possibilities. One should note that most of the respondents were from the Karelia region, from the city of Petrozavodsk, where they successfully sat and passed entry exams to the university. The survey also showed that the most critical aspects when choosing a university are career opportunities and academic programmes.

The vast majority of students found the information about study programmes at Savonia UAS through the educational centre "Initiative". Centre "Initiative" is a Karelian Regional Social Educational Organisation located in the city of Petrozavodsk. The company specialises mainly in providing information regarding education possibilities abroad, different language courses and preparation for the entry examinations, as well as helping to organise the required documents to apply for the programme of interest (Centre "Initiative", 2012-2016). Moreover, students declared that the best vehicles to promote a university would be a website and a visit by a university representative to their home city.

Generally, the largest number of Russian students is quite or moderately satisfied with the university and, as a result, approximately 70% of them would recommend the university. This can be explained by a number of positive aspects, such as free international education, flexible studies, interesting Industrial Management programme, pleasant and cosy atmosphere in campuses and practice of a foreign language. Students are mostly grateful for extremely friendly and polite staff who are always ready to help, for the international environment with group work and interesting projects and for their

degree programmes. However, there is also room for further improvements. According to a wide number of shared views, it would be a good idea to develop teaching methods and study materials, to provide students with real-life projects and challenging practical tasks, to support in arranging internship places and to organise more student activities.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, Savonia University of Applied Sciences is already doing a lot of things right. However, there is always room for improvement and the following recommendations suggest ways to make successful promotional actions and activities even more successful in the future, especially with the significant challenge for 2017 of third level education in Finland no longer being free to non-EU citizens. Since a high proportion of international students in Finland are from Russia and are therefore non-EU citizens, it is expected that this new ruling will result in a significant reduction in the total number of Russian students studying in Finland in the coming years. Therefore, the need for a university to be ever more aggressively competitive in that market is evident in order to stem a serious decline in student numbers in the short-term.

Thus, the importance of these findings and recommendations is further emphasised by this important forthcoming development in the educational situation in Finland.

1. Increase recognition

First of all, to achieve better recognition of Savonia UAS in Russia, it is recommended to seek cooperation agreements with the most popular educational agencies and consultancies which offer and promote their application services for prospective students. It is the easiest way for Russian students to get information about education possibilities abroad. As most Russian students from Petrozavodsk got the information about the university through one such educational organisation called "Initiative", it is strongly recommended to provide the agency with up-to-date information about the university sharing the latest achievements, developments, promotional materials and photos of student life.

Secondly, as the largest number of students chose a website as the most influential promotional tool when considering choosing their choice of a university, it is important to keep the website fresh by constantly updating its content. The range of international programmes, their outlines, admission criteria should be easy to find on the website and clear to understand. One more option that could be suggested is to add a version of the website in the Russian language, at least, to make a brief description of international programmes available.

Since the second largest number of students stated that meeting a university representative in their home city is influential, therefore, our next recommendation is to organise a trip once a year before the application process in the most popular home cities of students, for example, in Petrozavodsk. These meetings could be arranged with the help of education agencies or as a part of educational fairs that are organised every year to help future students to choose a university. University representation should be focused on the delivery of information concerning the range of international

academic programmes, student life at campuses, housing and other unique services and facilities provided at the university. It would be also an advantage to invite some Russian students from the university for the trip who are willing to share their own experiences and are willing to help with translation. The presentation needs to be professional, modern, lively and attractive. Eye-catching photos and upbeat and punchy video material about student life should form an important part of the presentation content.

2. Create more appealing offerings to attract more students

A large number of students are influenced by free international education. However, according to new legislation, the minimum annual study fees for non-EU citizens must be not less than 1,500 € from the beginning of 2017. That is why it is important to select a competitive pricing strategy in order to retain and grow the number of Russian applicants during each recruiting period.

In addition, the opportunity to pass an entrance exam in the home city of applicants seems to be a plus for them. It provides the opportunity for a larger number of potential students to sit the entrance exam and try to qualify for a study place in the university.

Career opportunities and academic programmes are seen to be the most essential aspects when choosing a university. That means that universities need to place great emphasis on the future demanded spheres of society to educate experts to meet these requirements. In addition, it is necessary to expand cooperation with companies which are constantly looking for young and creative interns in order to support students with their practical training and, thereby, to provide them with future career opportunities. Academic programmes should involve specialised in-depth studies of a subject with a number of challenging practical tasks and modern teaching methods to provide students with practical experience that may prove to be a critical factor when searching for a work placement.

3. Highlight programme flexibility and 'stand-out' programmes to differentiate

Flexible studies are really appreciated by many students. This is probably because some students combine studies with part-time work. The ability to arrange personalised timetables for courses or the provision of a number of international part-time programmes can help to meet this need and increase the attractiveness of the offering.

Satisfaction with degree programmes at the university was mentioned several times. It should be noted that today, there are more than 25 Business Administration programmes offered by other Finnish institutions, similar to the one available at Savonia UAS, but only four programmes similar to

their Mechanical Engineering programme. Therefore, the Mechanical Engineering programme is relatively unique and should be kept and evolved over time. Improvements and appropriate unique features should be identified for this Business Administration programme in order to make it stand out and achieve a greater level of competitiveness. In addition, it would also seem to be a good idea to expand the range of programmes available in English.

4. Other developments to consider

More innovative teaching methods and study materials are suggested by many students as a means to improvement. It is recommended to undertake further in-depth research concerning this particular issue in order to identify the specific problems causing students' dissatisfaction.

Overall, most of the students would really like to have more opportunities for real-life projects and more challenging practical tasks. They recognize that it is very important to possess not only theoretical knowledge but also to have practical experience in their chosen field as they start out in their career. Therefore, an increase in the number and depth of practical assignments, case studies and other practical experiences is being increasingly sought by students and such provision will certainly improve the attractiveness of the university's programmes.

The university also should try to provide more assistance with arranging of professional internships for students. Ideally, the appointment of a full-time professional Careers Advisor who can assist with internship contacts and provide practical career advice would be a big step forward and provide another opportunity to differentiate and provide a competitive advantage.

Finally, some of the ways recommended to diversify students' activities are extensions of activities already taking place: visits to production factories, museums or exhibitions in Finland and/or abroad, organising more international events to introduce different cultures or celebrate national holidays, providing students with more sport activities on campus and with intellectual games in a common room. Many of these can be organised by, and with, the cooperation of the Student Union which should be happy to welcome the initiative and their active participation in providing additional practical opportunities for the student body as a whole.

There is no time to be wasted as the new market conditions will apply to the student intake for the 2017 academic year!

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APPENDIX 1

Online Questionnaire

1. How important do you consider each of the following reasons when choosing a university? *

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important
Good reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choice of academic programmes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tuition fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entry requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Size of university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Size of city/town	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distance from home location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information supplied by university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus medical services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vibrant student life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family member(s)/friend(s) studying there	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. From the reasons shown in Question Nº1 above, please choose what you consider to be the most important reason or write your own. *

3. Which of the following promotional aspects influenced you most when you considered choosing a university? *

- Visit by a university representative to my home city/town
- University open day
- University website
- University brochures
- Other:

4. How did you find out about Savonia UAS in your country of origin? *

- Savonia UAS website
- Centre "Initiative" (Karelian Regional Social Educational Organisation)
- Language School "Orakul"
- Russian students from Savonia UAS
- Friends
- Relatives
- Other:

5. Why did you choose Savonia UAS over other universities? *

- Free international education
- Range of study programmes
- Good location
- Entry exams in my home city
- Opportunities for study abroad/international work
- Size of university
- Size of city/town
- Possibility to learn Finnish language
- Friends studying/going there
- Other:

6. Was the Savonia UAS your first choice? *

If you answer "Yes", please go to Question №7.

- Yes
- No

6a. If "No", which university was your first choice?

7. Are you happy with Savonia UAS? *

- Extremely happy
- Quite happy
- Moderately happy
- Slightly happy
- Not at all happy

7a. Why do you say that? *

APPENDIX 1

8. What have you enjoyed most about studying at Savonia UAS? *

Please give short and clear statements

9. What do you think could be improved in university? *

10. Would you recommend Savonia UAS to future students? *

If you answer "No", please go to Question N°10b.

- Yes
- No

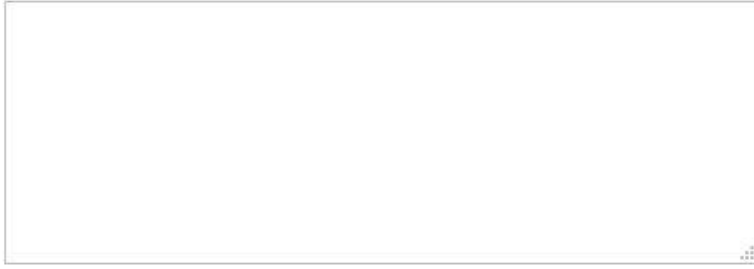
10a. Why would you recommend Savonia UAS to future students?

After this question, please go to Question N°11.

- High-quality education
- Essential study programmes
- Depth of study programmes
- Flexible study options
- Great career prospects
- Professional service and guidance
- Vibrant student life
- Other:

10b. Why would you not recommend Savonia UAS to future students?

11. Is there anything else you want to add?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a user to write their response to the question above. In the bottom right corner of the box, there is a small, faint icon consisting of three dots arranged in a triangle.