

Promoting International Degree Programmes in Moscow and Saint Petersburg: An Action Plan for Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

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Bachelor's Thesis
Degree Programme in International
Sales and Marketing
2019



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Degree programme	
International Sales and Marketing	
Report/thesis title	Number of pages and appendix pages
Promoting International Degree Programmes in Moscow and Saint Petersburg: An Action Plan for Haaga-Helia UAS	35 + 1
<p>The thesis will focus on determining different tactics on how to attract international students to Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences from Russian cities Saint-Petersburg and Moscow. The thesis will review existing differences between Russian and Finnish Educational System, as well as explain the difference between a University of Applied Sciences and a traditional University. Also, it will cover a way how to communicate in the best way the value that Haaga-Helia UAS offers through tuition fees. The thesis will also collect and compare the ideas and solutions that will help Haaga-Helia UAS acquire more international students from Russia through participating in various exhibitions and benchmarking with other Universities.</p> <p>Two problems will be discussed in this Thesis:</p> <p>What are the major factors that influence the decision making of an international student when applying for Universities for higher education and who are the actual decision makers?</p> <p>The research will be based on qualitative (in-depth interviews) and I will also use my own observations, perceptions, motivation and behavior analysis to address the issue of this thesis.</p>	
Keywords	
Russian students in Finland, university promotion, decision making process	

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1 Introduction

Higher education institutions in majority of countries have been affected in recent years by globalization, technology, and competition. Changes concern the shape and method of operation as well as the reason for higher education. Nordic countries are known for great management of higher education. It is considered as a social good and that is why it is free of charge. (Ingemar Fägerlind, 2004)

In Finland, for example, less emphasis has been placed on keeping the system uniform as it has expanded. Instead, Finland has spread out and established advanced vocational training programs that can be found in new types of polytechnic institutions. Therefore, a higher percentage of Finnish youth are in tertiary education than in the other countries studied. (Ingemar Fägerlind, 2004)

Amongst future students from all over the world, Finland is one the most popular countries for higher education. International degree students coming to Finland mainly come from Russia and other Non-European countries. (Hudd, 2019) The thesis will focus on determining different tactics on how to attract international students to Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences from Russian cities Saint-Petersburg and Moscow.

The thesis will also review existing differences between Russian and Finnish Educational System, as well as explain the difference between a University of Applied Sciences and a traditional University. The thesis will also collect and compare the ideas and solutions that will help Haaga-Helia UAS acquire more international students from Russia through participating in various exhibitions and benchmarking with other Universities.

Moreover, one of the thesis objectives is to create an action plan for Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences to attract more non-European students. Also, one of the aims of this thesis is to develop marketing promotion tactics for further benchmarking of

the University to other Institutes. In order to reach the thesis aim, two other connected topics will be examined:

1. What are the major factors that influence the decision making of an international student when applying for Universities for higher education?
2. Who are the actual decision makers?

Eight in-depth interviews with Russian students from Haaga-Helia University have been conducted to determine the key influence factors on their decision to choose Haaga-Helia University as a place to get the higher education.

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter contains the introduction to the research area, such as the general overview of the existing higher education system in Finland and the objectives of this thesis. The second chapter introduces the theoretical framework that presents the chosen methodology with the research approach and methods in detail. Chapter three covers the results and methods used for the research as well as it shows the main discoveries gathered from the qualitative interviews. Chapter four talks about promotion strategies used by Haaga-Helia University to attract more international students. One year action plan is included in chapter five. The sixth chapter talks about limitations and potential weaknesses the thesis has. Also, in this chapter Haaga-Helia University's corporate reputation factors and promotion strategies are discussed. Lastly, chapter seven covers conclusion for the thesis and recommendations for future analysis of the research area.

2 Theoretical framework

A thorough research was conducted in order to create more understanding about the subject. This chapter will focus on theoretical related research about consumer decision making process, reference groups, types of reference groups and a company's reputation.

Quality research typically represents the process which includes six forms of study structure it applies to the understanding between the methods and questions, choice of subjects, results of evaluation, protection against systematic bias, non-systematic bias, and inferential error. (Boaz, 2003)

To sum it up, in this chapter there will be presented the chosen methodology with the research approach and methods in detail. The research will be based on qualitative (in depth interviews) approach. Moreover, I will use my own observations, perceptions, motivation and behaviour analysis to address the issue of this thesis.

2.1 Russian Education System

Russian education system has drastically changed with the introduction of Unified Russian State Exam, known as EGE. The exam was created in order to defeat corruption and grant all high school graduates with equal opportunities to get a quality education. The exam came in place in 2009, EGE is the only way to successfully graduate from high schools and is a mandatory requirement for admission into higher education institutions. Unfortunately, the results of Russian State Exam from 2014 confirmed that all the attempts made by its developers to build a new transparent, internationally recognized test failed. The test needed major improvements. Russian president, Vladimir Putin addressed the issue to the designers of the test stressing the importance of changes to the existing EGE system. (Denisova-Schmidt, 2014)

The system requires Russian high-school students to pass EGE in order to graduate from high school and get accepted at a University. This exam is similar to SAT exam in the

United States. With the results you can apply up to three Universities for up to five degree programmes. The higher the score is the higher the chance of studying for free. Both State and Commercial Universities in Russia have 10-15 tuition fee free places per a degree programme. The rest are tuition fee places.

The exam serves as both university entrance examinations and school finals. The EGE was designed to counter corruption in university admission and as a tool to promote student mobility. (Elena Denisova-Schmidt, 2014)

2.2 Finnish Education System

Finnish students are known for advanced reading skills and high literacy. The Finnish school system provides all students with equal educational opportunities regardless of the students' financial status, background or residence. (Hannele Niemi, 2016)

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is sponsored by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), whose mission is to grow global economic markets, while PISA is focused on measuring, classifying and ranking students and school systems from countries with diverse culture. (Prais, 2004)

The Finnish education system has received a lot of attention from across the world because it took the leading position in the first two PISA surveys. Finnish teenagers are number one in terms of skills in mathematics, scientific knowledge, reading and problem-solving. (Laukkanen, 2008)

The key success of Finnish education is the historically existed high status of teaching, resulting in the smartest and most ambitious students to go into schooling.

Nowadays more than 99 percent of students successfully complete compulsory basic education, and about 90 percent complete upper secondary school (Statistics Finland 2009). Two-thirds of these students enrol in universities or polytechnic schools. Moreover, over 50 percent of the Finnish adult population joins adult-education programs. Ninety-

eight percent of the costs of education at all educational institutes are covered by government, rather than private sector. (Statistics Finland, 2009)

Finland has two types of higher education institutions: Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences. Universities of applied sciences based on professionally oriented higher education and focus more on working life rather than academic studies. Universities focus on scientific research and academic studies, so the education is based on it. (Finland Higher Education System , 2014)

2.3 Decision Making Process

“Decision making is the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions.” (Decision Making, 2016)The classic five stage decision making model includes Problem recognition, Information search, Evaluation of alternatives, Purchase Decision and Post-purchase behaviour. (Solomon, 2010) Another definition that would be important to clarify is an influencer, who is an individual or a group that has the ability to affect one’s behaviour or opinions of others. (Dictionary, 2010) There are many influencers when it comes to the decision making process on what University to apply to after graduating from high school.

Socioeconomic status relates to a person's status in society based on wealth. This status is determined by occupation, education, wealth, and income (James E Rosenbaum, 2007). The parents show their child what their expectations are for him as a student. A person’s desire to attend higher education institution can be considered as a social capital even though it starts at home (Hossler, 1999). During childhood, an individual learns about the family structure and their expectations. Hence, family members directly affect students’ opinions and their behaviour. According to Hossler, Schmidt and Vesper (1999), parental support is the main factor that influences students' desire to attend college. Parents help students plan and pay for college. Thus, it is common for parents and

children to discuss their future education early, so that students have time to plan it both academically and financially.

Two primary matters are known to be important to parents. (Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey, 1997) Firstly, parents' beliefs and expectations create an idea of what children are supposed to do with their education and their future in general. Parents usually have a set of activities that they define as crucial, essential and acceptable for their children that will benefit them in both real life and academics. Secondly, most parents assume that their involvement in a child's life will have a positive influence on their academic outcomes. (Kathleen V. Hoover- Dempsey, 1997)

According to marketers Engel, Blackwell and Kollat there are five steps that explain the customer purchase decision process. (Wallace, 2016)



Figure 1. Five stage decision making model (Wallace, 2016)

A customer's problem that he needs to solve quickly is a trigger for all the purchases. During the first stage consumers try find a solution for their problem. On the second stage, a consumer tries to find out more information about the service or product that would solve his problem or fulfil the need. The second stage has the highest potential for failure, because if consumers cannot find a suitable product or they feel overwhelmed with the variety of choice they will not make any purchase decision. During the third stage, consumers evaluate all of the options they have to pick the best option available. Fourth stage begins when all of the solutions and options were taken into account and hence ready for purchase. This is not the last stage since customers can get dehort last minute, a perfect example of that would be online shopping carts that get abandoned at a very

high rate. Some of the reason for that might be bad poor online experience or too many steps to make an actual purchase. The last stage is called post-purchase behaviour. How satisfied a buyer is with this purchase depends precisely on how he feels about the buying experience. (Wallace, 2016)

2.4 Reference group

Individuals are most likely to be influenced by different people around them, such as family members, friends, colleagues, celebrities, and opinion leaders in various purchase and consumption situations. These sources of influences could be defined as “reference group” (Etzel, 1982).

The importance of reference groups and their influences have been researched by various analysts so far. In other words, a reference group is a group of people a person belongs to, desires to belong, or even not to belong. (Kuipers, 2010)

Another definition of reference group is people whose beliefs, attitudes and opinions are used as the basis for his or her judgement. (Reference group, 2019)

2.5 Types of reference groups

Reference groups can be divided into two categories: normative reference group and comparative reference group. (Grimsley, 2015) A normative reference group influences your norms, character, and values using direct communication. Examples of the normative reference groups consist of parents, relatives, teachers, classmates, friends and associates. (Grimsley, 2015) A comparative reference group is a group of individuals whom you compare yourself against and look up to. Examples are celebrities and entertainment stars, heroes or just people we respect. (Grimsley, 2015) Normative referents are usually considered as the most critical reference, since they dramatically affect an individual’s ability to socialise. (Subramanian, 1995) Also, normative referents can be considered as a strong influential group, since it greatly affects individual’s decisions in different cases, especially in decision making of purchasing unique products or services.

2.6 Corporate Reputation

Maintaining a good company's reputation is an essential part of a successful business. Nowadays it plays an even bigger role since consumers became tech-savvy's. In the long term run the reputation of a company is directly connected to its success. "*Roughly 25% of a company's market value directly comes from its reputation.*" (Why Your Company's Online Reputation Is Important, 2013) So, it means that a company can lose up to 25% of its value if a customer criticizes your product or service, even if what he is saying is not true.

For Universities just like for companies it is critically important to have a good reputation. Having a recognised image gives a university competitive advantage. Nowadays it is more important for a higher institution to be prestigious and have a high reputation than its actual quality. There are some factors that influence a school's reputation. (Pathfinder, 2014)

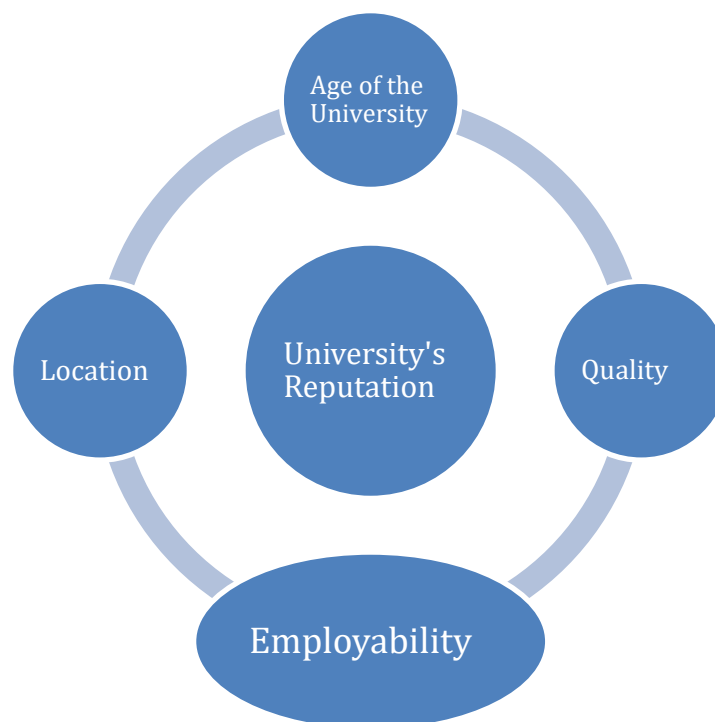


Figure 2. Factors affecting University's reputation (Pathfinder, 2014)

Some of the world's best universities are also the oldest ones. Ivy League Universities such as Yale or Princeton was found in 18th century. In addition to that. Universities in the capital areas usually offer better employment opportunities than smaller cities around.

Another factor affecting a University's reputation is quality and variety of courses. It plays a bigger role in reputation than University's student count. Some employers might be very selective so that they hire only graduates from certain universities'. That's why employability is another factor influencing University's reputation. (Pathfinder, 2014)

2.7 Mind Map

In order to understand what are the key factors that are taken into consideration when selecting a University, the main target groups should be researched. They can be divided in three groups: grant awarded students, exchange students and full-time students who pay tuition fees. The decision making process can help Haaga-Helia marketers find out more about their target groups, and hence modify the marketing strategy to better assist the targets.

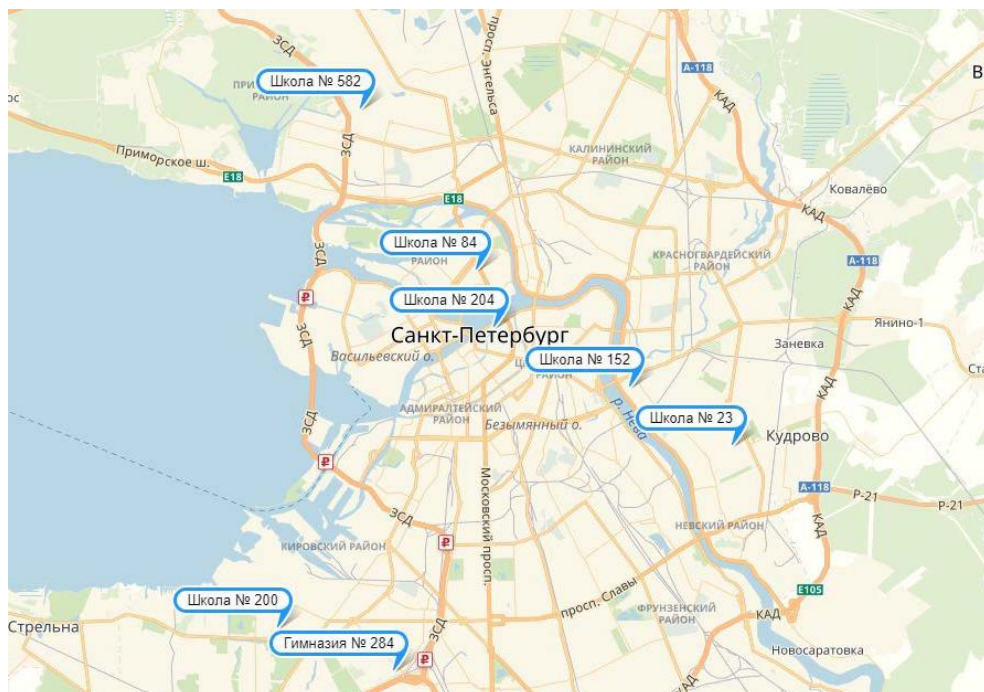


Figure 3. Finnish Schools marked on the map of St. Petersburg (Google Maps, 2019)

Moscow might be Russia's largest city by population, but St. Petersburg is a close second. There are almost 5,5 million people living in Saint-Petersburg (St Petersburg Population

2019, 2019) which is the same as in Finland itself. There are only seven schools that teach Finnish language in Saint-Petersburg. English language is also taught at these schools. They are presented at figure 3.

On the other hand, in Moscow there are no middle schools that teach kids Finnish language. According to information that was provided by Nordic School in Moscow, there used to be a special school for kids of Finnish embassy workers and Finnish residents until recent years, when the staff of that school was laid off.

The only type of school that offers Finnish language teaching in Moscow is a language learning centre - Nordic School (sometimes called Scandinavian School). Besides providing the language teaching, the school is known for helping Russian students find and prepare documents for a University abroad.

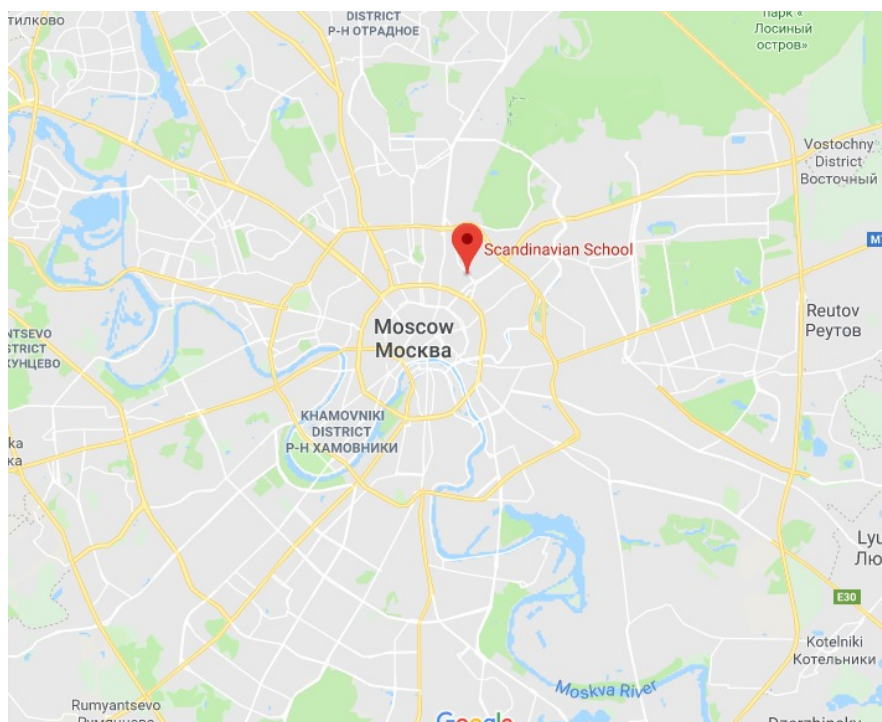


Figure 4. Nordic School on the map of Moscow (Google Maps, 2019)

2.8 Degree Programmes Offered by Haaga-Helia UAS

Haaga-Helia University offers 40 Bachelor's degree programmes out of which eight are conducted in English. (Bachelor's Degree Programmes in English, 2019)

BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED IN ENGLISH, FULL-TIME STUDIES

- DP for Multilingual Management Assistants, Pasila campus
- DP in Aviation Business, Porvoo campus
- DP in Business Information Technology, Pasila campus
- DP in Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management, Haaga campus
- DP in International Business, Pasila campus
- DP in International Sales and Marketing, Porvoo campus
- DP in Sports Coaching and Management, Vierumäki campus
- DP in Tourism and Event Management, Porvoo campus

Figure 5. Screenshot from Haaga-Helia website with all the degree programs conducted in English (<http://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/education/bachelors-degree-programmes-english>, 2019)

Depending on the study programme, the range of the degree is 210–240 credits, which takes about 3,5–4,5 years of full time studying. (BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES IN ENGLISH, 2019)

There are five campuses in three cities where Haaga-Helia UAS operates: Helsinki, Porvoo, Vierumäki. Three of the campuses are in Helsinki: Haaga, Malmi and Pasila. (CAMPUSES, 2019)

Porvoo Campus has approximately 1,100 students and is the first campus to change the teaching method. Inquiry learning requires students to work independently to solve problems. The lecturers are more like coaches than people who just give the right answer. Self-assessment is an important part of inquiry learning process that is required when studying in teams. (Ritalahti, 2015)

At the time of application period, a student can choose up to six degree programmes to apply to. They should be set in an order of preference. So a student can apply up to six different programmes within one university or he can apply to six different universities altogether. (studyinfo.fi, 2018) There is a number of applicants who pick the first option, thereby creating an inner competition within one university.

3 Results and Methods Used

The term empirical describes any information acquired through experience, observation, or experiment. (Wilson, 2009) The empirical approach confide on the actual data, metrics and results rather than theories and concepts. (Empirical Analysis, 2017) This chapter shows main discoveries gathered from the qualitative interviews of current Russian students at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and methods used to acquire these results. The impact of a new tuition fee policy will also be covered in this chapter.

There are two main methods that can be used while conducting a research, the quantitative method and qualitative research method. Qualitative method includes individual interviews, focus groups or individual's observations while qualitative method consists of statistical or numerical analysis of data collected through questionnaires, polls or surveys. (DeFranzo, 2011) Quantitative research method was used to conduct the research for this thesis because in-depth interviews focus not only on "what" people say but also "why" they think so.

3.1 Tuition Fee Policy

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences introduced academic fees for Non-EU and EEA students in January and August 2017. Haaga-Helia's Board of Directors decided on a meeting the scale of academic fees for students from outside the European Union. The fee will be €8.500-€9.500 per year depending on the degree programme. (Ahonen, 2016) President and CEO Teemu Kokko thinks that the change will benefit the export of education. *"Haaga-Helia has been active in education export, and academic fees are a good opportunity to promote it. The road is long and the introduction of fees will require much work, but it is important to start developing operations based on it,"* says Kokko. (Ahonen, 2016)

All Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences are beginning to charge tuition fees. The law came into force on 1 January 2016. (Ahonen, 2016)

3.2 Empirical Analysis of Qualitative Interview

As mentioned before, the research targets are students from Russia, they can be categorised as the students who are from Russian and currently enrolled at Haaga-Helia University. The interviewees have been divided into three different categories: exchange students, tuition fee paying students and students who enrolled at Haaga-Helia University before the tuition fee was introduction. In total eight students from Russia were interviewed. The interviews covered students of different age groups, from the age of 21 to 28.

In order to get broad results, the interview questions were put in 2 parts creating 12 questions altogether (Appendix 1). All the questions are open ended questions, taking approximately 10 minutes to answer.

In the questionnaire question 1 and question 2 ask about reasons and aspects taken into consideration when picking Haaga-Helia University and Finland as a place of studying. The third questions asks about the benefits Haaga-Helia University provide for students, which gives the understanding of their purposes and main objectives and motivation for studying at Haaga-Helia University. The fifth and sixth questions are linked to the main methods used to gather the relevant information about Haaga-Helia University. These questions demonstrate the key reference groups that affected the decision making of a student on what university to apply. The question 6 covers the most important factors that motivated a student to pick Haaga-Helia University. Whether or not they would recommend Haaga-Helia University can be found in question 7. By answering on this question, we can find out if a student is satisfied with living in Finland and studying at Haaga-Helia University. Last questions in the second part of the interview 8-12 cover the background information about the student, such as name, degree program and age.

All the interviews were conducted on the same day May 14, 2019. The aim of the interview of 7 Russian Haaga-Helia students is to fully understand the following aspects:

1. All factors taken into consideration when picking Finland and Haaga-Helia University as a place of study.
2. Various methods used to gather all relevant information about Haaga-Helia University
3. Advantages the students get from studying at Haaga-Helia University, and
4. Whether or not these students would recommend Haaga-Helia University to other potential applicants.

After analyzing all of the interviews, general conclusions were made.

3.3 The factors that interviewees took into consideration

The analysed results of the interview show that there are various reasons and factors taken into consideration that influenced students' took when choosing Haaga-Helia University and Finland as a study place.

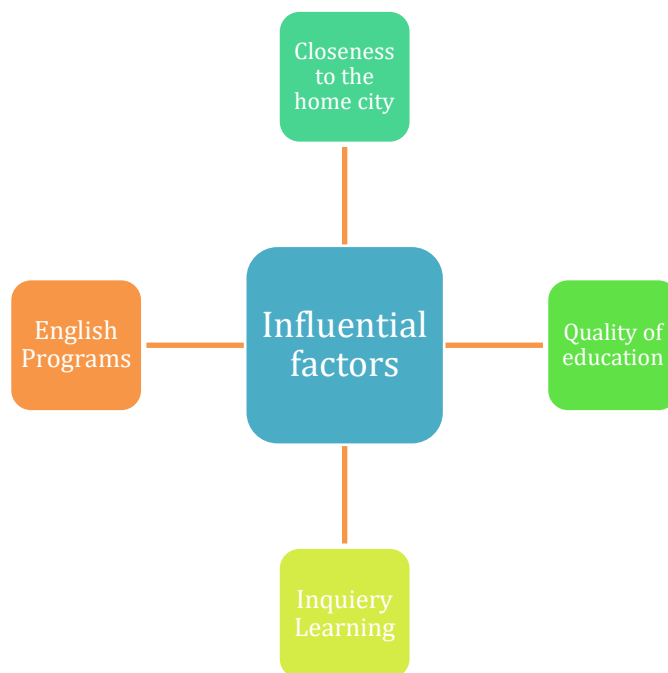


Figure 6. The influential factors for Russian students to pick Haaga-Helia University for studying

Five out of six interviewees stated that “closeness of Haaga-Helia University to Russia” is one of the most important factors while considering a study place. As Viktoriia Shevchenko said “*Originally I’m from Saint-Petersburg, Russia which has a border with Finland making it simple and fast for me and for my relatives to see each other as often as we can. One way trip takes up to 5-6 hours by car.*”

Anton Verevkin, who was an exchange student at Haaga-Helia University in 2016 also said that one of the main reasons he picked Haaga-Helia was closeness to his home city – Saint-Petersburg.

Ability to study on English language was another reason for Viktoriia Shevchenko to come study to Haaga-Helia University. *“I was eager to study in English and improve my language skills.”*

The other most important factor why Russian students decided to choose Haaga-Helia University was the level of education. Six out of eight respondents stated that Finland is famous for its one of the world’s best education system and tuition fee free education until recent years. *“I chose Finland because it used to have a free education and it is known to be one of the best ones in the world”* – said Rodion Antoshchenko, an International Business student of Haaga-Helia University.

A big variety of interesting degree programs on English language was another important factor for an exchange student from Russia, Anton Verevkin –*“There were some reasons why I chose Finland to go for exchange program. The program I chose (International Sales and Marketing) was as close to my interests as possible. That was very important aspect for me because I didn’t want to get internship just to spend time somewhere abroad.”*

Two out of eight interviewees expressed that the factor of previous study experience at their home country motivated them to change not only the university but the country as well. –*“I had bad experience in my home country’s university and was looking for something different. Haaga-Helia is using inquiry learning methods which I found interesting for me.”* – shared Daria Garbuzova, full-time International Sales and Marketing student at Haaga-Helia University.

There were also other factors why Russian students picked Haaga-Helia University besides the ones described previously. Among the answers provided, a positive recommendation of another student from Haaga-Helia University was mentioned. In addition, a practical experience as a study method was also one of the factors. *“The education which is very close to a real business and I can apply it in practice. Besides, connections with International students will help me in the future to establish global business communication.”* – stated Egor Shevchenko. *“I wanted a university which has interesting study programs and where studying doesn’t always require books.”* – added Anna Ageenkova

3.4 Methods used by the respondents to collect information about the University

According to the results of the interview, all of the respondents mentioned Haaga-Helia website www.haaga-helia.fi as the main source of getting information about the University.

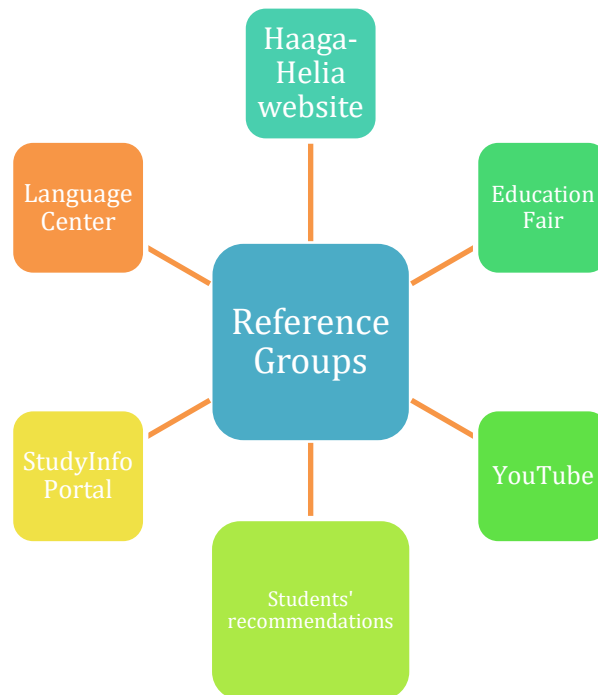


Figure 7. Types of reference groups the interviewees used to gather information about Haaga-Helia University

Among other digital platforms used in order to get relevant information about the University was www.studyinfo.fi and www.studyinfinland.fi. Students' were able to find information about Haaga-Helia University, study programs, application process and many other details such as transportation specifications and dormitory instructions. On top of these, various social media platforms such as VK (Russian analogue for Facebook) and YouTube were mentioned numerous times.

Five out of eight interviewees stated that before making the final decision on applying to Haaga-Helia University, they spoke to other students who studied at Haaga-Helia University.

Some of the language learning centers in Russia provide services to students who want to study abroad. Such Learning centers help with the application process to the University of your choice. Nordic School is one of the examples. The school is located in two biggest cities of Russia – Saint-Petersburg and Moscow. Besides providing the language

teaching, the school is known for helping Russian students find and prepare documents for a University abroad.

Several interviewees said that their friends' recommendations about Haaga-Helia University motivated them to start researching for more information about the University.

Two respondents claimed that they visited an Education Fair in High School to get an idea where to apply after the School graduation. For instance, Yana Ulanova mentioned that study exhibitions are very popular and beneficial for students from Moscow, due to the variety of Educational Institutions presented there.

3.5 The Benefits that Interviewees Received from Haaga-Helia University

By conducting the interviews with the Russian students asking them about benefits they got from studying at Haaga-Helia, four categories were created: career opportunities, social network creation, language improvement, real life project experience.

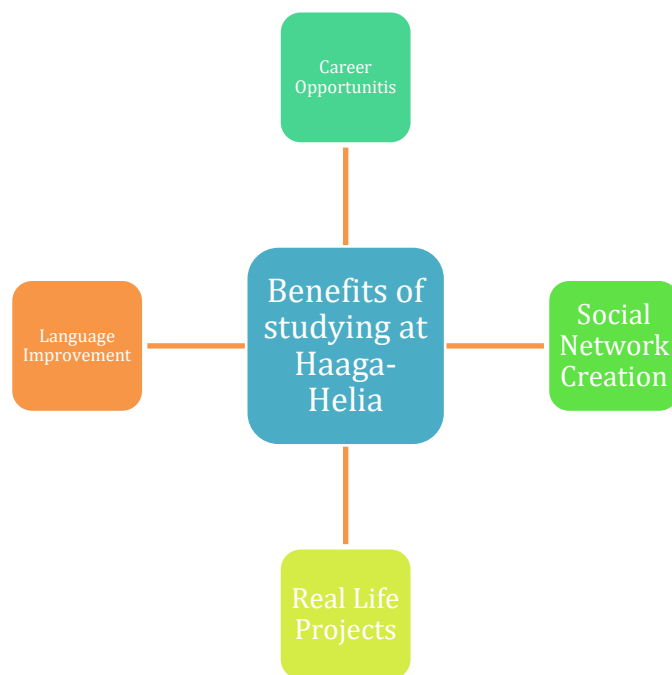


Figure 8. Benefits that the students received from studying at Haaga-Helia University

Six out of eight students mentioned the importance of getting a degree from Haaga-Helia University, creating bigger opportunities for them to find a favourable job. A former exchange student, Anton Verevkin shared that *“New valuable knowledge, practical skills, experience of studying in international multicultural environment”* made him pick Haaga-Helia University. *“Experience working with real companies from the very beginning helps to understand if you will like your future job or not. If not, you can change your degree program inside Haaga-Helia without wasting time on something you don’t like.”*- thinks Daria Garbuzova, an International Business student.

Four out of eight interviewees agreed that Haaga-Helia University has a unique way of teaching that might be both a benefit and a disadvantage. Daria Garbuzova would definitely recommend Haaga-Helia University *“for people who are getting bored easily with “normal” universities, who wants to challenge themselves.”* She also said that *“the tuition fee is a bit overpriced and there are not enough service and attention for foreign people. For example, my group was very small from the beginning and a lot of people already left, so from next semester we will be combined with Aviation Business students. That is not really what I am paying for and that’s really confusing.”* – explained Daria Garbuzova.

“I would recommend Haaga-Helia to those students who already have done some research and could compare Haaga-Helia with other universities to see benefits and downfalls of all studying places. I would not recommend Porvoo Campus to those students who are not willing to be into team-work projects if they are into the academic way of studying.” – added Viktoriia Shevchenko.

Yana Ulanova, a former student at Haaga-Helia University shared that *“It was important for her that Haaga-Helia uses inquiry learning method in its learning process.”* *“I believe that Haaga-Helia’s education helps students to be competitive in the business world and teaches how to study independently.”* – Yana continued.

Networking was another benefit mentioned by the interviewees. Haaga-Helia University gave Anna Ageenkova a *“possibility of developing into a young professional while creating an international network.”*

“Working in teams, getting practical experience, building my network” are the benefits Rodion Antoshchenko received from studying at Haaga-Helia University.

3.6 Students’ Approach on Recommending Haaga-Helia University

Based on the analysis of eight interviews with Russian students of Haaga-Helia University about whether they would recommend studying at Haaga-Helia University, six students answered positively, while two other students were a little bit concerned.

Egor Shevchenko shared some positive feedback saying that *“he is personally happy with his studies considering the fact how entertaining and interesting the studying is plus it gives him valuable knowledge and skills and as a result he will have a diploma which will help him in future. That’s why he would recommend it to other students.”* Being an international university, Haaga-Helia University creates a large social network for

graduates from all over the world. These factors were covered by five students when they were interviewed about recommending Haaga-Helia University to others.

However, there were a couple of students who showed some concern while answering this question. *“I would recommend it when it was free of charge, but now I am not sure, since in this price category there are quite many options. If you are looking for an old-school academic education, Haaga-Helia might not be the right place for these purposes”* – thinks Polina Novikova, an International Business student at Haaga-Helia University.

4 Promotion Tools Used by Haaga-Helia University

While studying at Haaga-Helia University and doing the research for this thesis, a few promotion strategies were found. Haaga-Helia University uses these promotion strategies to attract more international students and minimize the negative outcomes of the tuition fees that were introduced earlier in August 2017.

4.1 Language learning centres

One of the main and successful promotion strategies that Haaga-Helia University uses is a partnership with language learning centres. Apart from teaching people of all ages a foreign language, these centres provide services for students who want to study abroad. Services include but not limited to searching for a university abroad, application support, trip organization to the universities in Finland, language courses and visa application support.

More specifically, Nordic School in Russia provides the following services for students:

1. Information services

Nordic School provide information services for students who have not yet decided where to study abroad. For instance, many students are concerned about the level of education, diploma recognition, university ranking, community atmosphere, tuition fee and the visa policy for Finland.

2. University application services

The school offers helps with the application process as well. Starting from the beginning of the process–preparation of application. That includes such documents as study transcripts, school diploma, and translation of these documents, language certificate, motivation letters and personal statement.

3. Visa support

Nordic School offers help in visa applications providing such services as preparation of documents for visa applications and visa interview training

It is very important for Haaga-Helia University to continue cooperation with Nordic School, since it has already helped dozens of Russian students to get accepted at a Finnish University, Haaga-Helia in particular.

4.2 Education Fair

Another great marketing tool that Haaga-Helia University has is participation in Education Fairs. It is a wonderful chance to raise University's awareness as well as to find prospective applicants. In general, a University has to pay for a stand to participate in an Education Fair. In 2018 and 2019 Haaga-Helia was presented at the Education Fair in Moscow in Radisson Hotel Slavyanskaya.

On the other hand, there is a chance that those students who visit the Education Fairs are not likely to apply to Haaga-Helia University at the end, since some of the students are not sure about which university to apply to, so they are free to pick any country and any university. Hence, participating in Education Fairs for Haaga-Helia University bring the awareness to the university and its branding.

4.3 Haaga-Helia University's Social Media

Haaga-Helia University is present in various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, VK, Snapchat, Twitter and other. Facebook group has about 15,000 followers while Instagram page has about 5,500 followers. The target of the social media promotion of the university combines both the prospective applicants and current students showing the life of the community and important events on campus. In addition, Facebook group is also a way to communicate with current and future students. There students can ask various questions and receive prompt answers.

Instagram page of Haaga-Helia University is a great engagement tool creating a connection between a student and a University building higher chances for students to apply.

Another Social Media page that was found about Haaga-Helia University was on VK, a Russian analogue of Facebook. Russian students of Haaga-Helia University have created for other Russian students who are thinking of applying to Haaga-Helia University. The group has about 1,000 members.

4.4 Printed Marketing Materials

Haaga-Helia University is known for creative and memorable banners on the streets of Helsinki.



Figure 9. Haaga-Helia University's Promotion Banner at Rautatientori (Google images, 2017)

Each year around the time of application periods Haaga-Helia University comes up with an attention catching banner. On the figure 4 is the banner promoting application period for students in 2017.

In addition to banners, Haaga-Helia University has info booklets and accessories.

5 One year Action Plan for Haaga-Helia UAS

During the interviews with Russian students who study at Haaga-Helia University, some promotion ideas for the University were studied and compared. The best marketing practices that use Haaga-Helia include but not limited to cooperation with language learning centers, participation in exhibition fairs, use of social media promotion and printed marketing materials etc.

It is very important to analyze successful examples of effective marketing strategies for Haaga-Helia University in order to attract more Russian students and minimize the negative impact of recently presented tuition fees. On top of that, a good marketing promotion strategy will help Haaga-Helia built a better image and reputation in Russia.

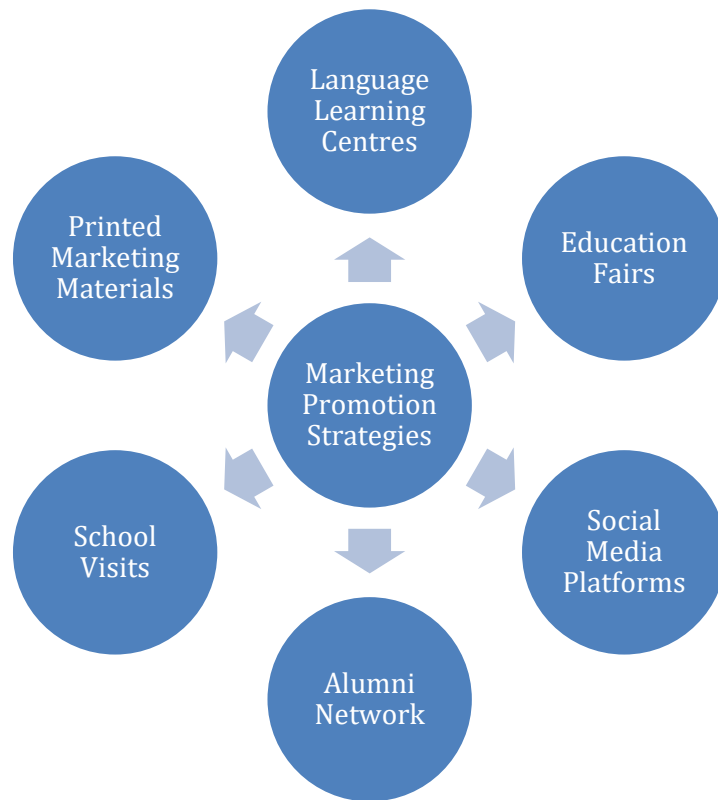


Figure 10. Marketing Promotion Strategies used by Haaga-Helia University

Haaga-Helia University should continue cooperating with Learning Language Centres in order to attract more Russian students. It is not profitable for a Language centre to promote only prestigious and high ranked universities since the application process and admission rate are low, therefore these centres are more likely to cooperate with smaller and less known Universities. From Haaga-Helia University's point of view it is useful to continue the cooperation with the language centres because they improve the university's reputation and they also promote it, which makes it mutually beneficial. The majority of Language school students are high school students who try to study abroad. Therefore, it makes more sense to promote Bachelor degree programs within Russian students.

Marketing Promotion for Haaga-Helia university												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cooperation with Language Learning Centres	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
School Visits					■							■
Education Fairs	■								■			
Haaga-Helia's Website	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Social Media	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Printed Marketing Materials		■	■						■	■		
Virtual Tour	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Success Stories				■							■	

Figure 11. One year Promotion Strategy for Haaga-Helia University

Year after year Haaga-Helia University participates in Education Fair in Russia. It is a great promotion opportunity for Haaga-Helia, because prospective students have a chance to talk face to face with the University's representatives, personal relationships and emotional bonds could be created, get the first-hand knowledge and get to know about application process. Based on the application process timeline the best months to participate in an Education Fair is in January and September.

Another good marketing practice would be high school visits in Russia by Haaga-Helia representatives. Giving the presentation of a University creates more awareness and there is a bigger chance to affect the decision making process of a student. It is better to use this promotion strategy in May and December before summer and winter holidays, this way a student will have more time to find out more relevant information about the University and apply for it.

Moreover, Haaga-Helia University's website should be designed in a way to attract new students. On the website students should be easily able to find the necessary up-to-date information. On top of that, different social media platforms should be used. There can be

covered such things as campus events, updates or even interviews with students or professors.

Another marketing strategy that can be used by Haaga-Helia University to promote its programs for Russian students is to tell them about people who has already graduated from the university and found a job of their dreams. It will show that each student graduated from Haaga-Helia University has a potential for a successful and interesting working life in the future.

In addition to that, it is important to continue using printed marketing materials. Unfortunately it is very hard to calculate the profitability of this method, but it is undoubtedly effective in building and promoting brand awareness.

On top of that, it is a good idea to set up on Open Day, when every student can come and get to know professors, campus or other important details. Another idea that will help Haaga-Helia University to attract more Russian students is to create a virtual tour of the campus. Let's take Porvoo Campus for example. The campus opened its doors in January 2011 and became the first campus in Haaga-Helia using inquiry learning. By providing virtual tour of Porvoo Campus and its facilities, students will be able to have an inside peek on the college life and in addition to that, it is a good opportunity to raise brand awareness and show innovation.

6 Discussion

This chapter talks about limitations and potential weaknesses the thesis has. Also, in this chapter Haaga-Helia University's corporate reputation factors and promotion strategies will be discussed.

6.1 Limitations

This thesis provides important information on applicants and factors taken into consideration when applying to Haaga-Helia University as well as key methods used when gathering information about Haaga-Helia University. However, there are some limitations applied to this thesis. Firstly, the in-depth interviews were conducted with only eight Russian students, which is a very small number compared to all Russian students studying at Haaga-Helia University. Moreover, factors that influence a company's reputation in addition to promotion strategies were applied towards Haaga-Helia University. Thus, other universities and higher education institutions might not be able to apply it to their case. Also, the quantitative survey was not conducted for this thesis, excluding any statistical information.

6.2 Haaga-Helia University's Corporate Reputation Factors

Chapter 2.6 explains the importance of a company's reputation and what consequences it has in the long term. It is also a representation of a company's past actions and future expectations that the stakeholders have. (Chun, 2005) A University with a good reputation easily attracts new students.

According to the five-stage decision-making model (Figure 1) and in-depth interviews with Russian students, a Haaga-Helia University's reputation model was created. It covers the factors that have influence on the University's reputation. The factors are divided into two categories: internal and external.

Internal factors include University's image, reputation, ranking, staff, culture, scholarship ability, program design, financial resources, used marketing strategies and tuition fees. On the other hand, external factors consist of education system used in Finland, cost of living

there, use of English language and so on. All these factors should be considered when creating a promotion strategy for improving Haaga-Helia University's reputation.

Haaga-Helia University's Reputation Factors

Internal Factors

- Image
- Reputation
- Ranking
- Staff
- Culture
- Scholarship
- Program Design
- Financial Resources
- Marketing Strategies
- Tuition Fees

External Factors

- Finnish Education System
- Country and City Image
- Cost of Living
- Studying Environment
- Living Environment
- Socioeconomic Level
- Social Welfare
- English Language Use
- Social Stability
- Government Policy

Figure 12. Factors affecting Haaga-Helia University's Reputation (Chun, 2005)

6.3 Marketing Promotion Strategy Model

The thesis covers the Marketing Promotion Strategy for Haaga-Helia University in detail in chapter 5. The aim of the promotion is to attract more Russian students to Haaga-Helia University.

Figure 10 covers the most important marketing tools currently used by the University, such as cooperation with Learning Language Centres, School visits, Social Media use, participation in Education Fairs, use of printed marketing materials.

It is extremely important to evaluate the promotion strategy that is used by Haaga-Helia University in order to attract more Russian students to the University and minimize the negative effect of recently introduced tuition fees. The Marketing model might be used by other Universities but with certain limitations. Each University should evaluate their own situation and therefore pick the right promotion method.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter will cover conclusions for the thesis as well as recommendations for further analysis.

7.1 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to discover the promotion strategies used by Haaga-Helia University to attract more Russian students from Saint-Petersburg and Moscow, minimize the negative effect of tuition fees introduction and create an action plan for Haaga-Helia University.

All the research questions were answered in this thesis using different research methods. Eight qualitative (in-depth) interviews were conducted with Russian students who study in Haaga-Helia covering different factors that affected their decision on applying to Haaga-Helia University. By doing further research, a number of various promoting strategies that uses the University were found (Figure 10).

In addition to that, two main questions of the thesis were answered: what are the major factors that influence the decision making of an international student when applying for Universities for higher education and who are the actual decision makers?

7.2 Recommendations

As it was stated before in chapter 6.1, there are three major limitations in this thesis. Thus, three major recommendations were created for any person who wants to research this subject better. First and foremost, a quantitative survey should be created gathering all the data about decision making process of Russian students who come to study to Haaga-Helia University. Secondly, there should be conducted more in-depth interviews with suitable respondents, who come from different cities of Russia, have different age and gender and who study in different degree programs as well as different campuses of Haaga-Helia University.

Moreover, since the promotion strategy is created specifically for Haaga-Helia University, a further research is needed to create better marketing strategies for the similar type of University as Haaga-Helia.

Lastly, as many other businesses use benchmarking, Haaga-Helia University should try the same practice. By assessing and comparing another University's promotion strategy that is more successful in terms of attracting international students, there is a big chance that these good practices will work the same way for Haaga-Helia University.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Qualitative Interview Guide with Students

Part 1

1. Why do you choose to study in Finland?
2. What factors you have taken into consideration when choosing Haaga-Helia University for studying?
3. What benefits you think the education in Haaga-Helia University would bring to you?
4. Where did you get relevant information about your program / Haaga-Helia University?
5. Do you know any other ways to get information about your program / Haaga-Helia University?
6. Among the options you mentioned before, what are the most important factors that motivate you to choose Haaga-Helia University for studying?
7. Would you recommend Haaga-Helia University to students who intent to study outside their home country?
8. Why would / would not you recommend Haaga-Helia University students who intend to study outside their home country?

Part 2

What is your name?

What is your nationality?

What degree program are you studying in?