

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

University of Applied Sciences

Master's Degree Program in International Business Management

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MARKETING HIGHER EDUCATION, CASE: KyUAS MBA

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# ABSTRACT

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Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences (KyUAS) has had an MBA program in English since 2007. Between January 1 2010 and December 31 2014 Higher Education Institutes in Finland have the right to collect tuition fees from MBA degrees from non EEA-students.

KyUAS is interested in marketing the MBA program for such students coming, for example, from St. Petersburg-area in Russia. This case-study thesis is focusing on essential marketing theories of Higher Education Marketing. The main competitor analysis of KyUAS MBA degree in Finland with analysis of their chosen marketing procedures; websites and brochures are included, as well as KyUAS SWOT-analysis. This thesis is mainly based on written material about higher education marketing as well as answers to open-ended questions sent to two experts of the subject.

KyUAS MBA is quite competitive in the market. However there are some possibilities to improve the marketing and image aspects of the degree program. Pricing is reasonable. However, there are competitors that offer similar degrees for free.

Future work is recommended to be done by conducting several interviews and/or questionnaires among the possible future students from non-EEA countries such as Russia to get a covering local opinion on studying MBA in Finland. Future work should also include studies on the effect of tuition fees in Finland in general, and in comparison to other Nordic countries with or without fees.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 *An overview*

Kyminlaakso University of Applied Sciences (later KyUAS) has had an MBA program available in English since 2007. Between January 1 2010-December 31 2014 Higher Education Institutes in Finland have the right to collect a fee for higher degrees, such as MBA degree from non EEA-students.

Non EEA-students come from outside the European Economic Area (the European Union plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) (EEAS, 2010). KyUAS is interested in marketing the MBA program for such students, for example, coming from St. Petersburg-area in Russia.

In this thesis characteristics of Higher Education marketing are explained. The main competing degrees and institutions in Finland are listed. Recommendations for KyUAS to reach its goal in attracting new aspiring non EEA-students for the MBA program are made.

This study is mainly based on material written about higher education marketing. It also studies other UAS MBA comparable degrees and institutions in Finland. The comparison with other programs and written material about marketing of higher education will result in a plan for KyUAS to market the degree for non EEA-students.

I started KyUAS MBA-studies in 2008 with my class, and have continued to study to this day. The MBA program is quite new for KyUAS as well as for other Universities of Applied Sciences. The pilot study on fees, since January 1 2010, is new to Finland.

KyUAS would like to have more international students studying the MBA degree. The institution wants to concentrate especially on non EEA-students. Russia, being an important business partner with Finland, is a neighboring

country being the nearest non EEA-country for Finland. Kouvola is located less than 300km from St. Petersburg-metropolis (Kouvola Innovation Oy, 2010).

## **1.2 Problem definition**

Both the MBA degree from Universities of Applied Sciences and the pilot study with degree fees for non EEA-students are new to Finland. There is a broad spectrum of subject matters that KyUAS needs to work with to attract the non-EEA students from the geographical area of Russia. It is essential to know what kind of competition there is in Finland for KyUAS MBA degree that costs €9 500? Also, it is essential to know, what do specialists of higher education marketing recommend to do in this situation?

## **1.3 Research objective**

The objective of the research was to gather the latest information that there is about marketing of higher education and discuss its connection and usability with the KyUAS MBA degree situation where the target is non EEA-students. Again, Russia is a great example.

The second objective of the research was to find out the other institutes within Finland and the degrees they offer that are the main competitors to the KyUAS MBA degree in Finland.

## **1.4 Theoretical framework**

Theory within this thesis is mainly about the planning of marketing of higher education. Material is theoretical but, in the sources used, it has often been written in a practical way with examples. There have been many cases where the marketing of higher-education uses real-life examples to deliver a strong message to the marketing target.

## **1.5 Research questions**

Research questions can thus be formulated as follows:

What kind of essential marketing theories there are involved in the marketing of Higher Education?

Who are the main competitors for KyUAS MBA degree in Finland?

In what ways should KyUAS adjust its MBA degree marketing to non-EEA-markets, such as Russia?

## **1.6 Carrying out the research**

The first step of the research was to go deep into recent theory books about the marketing of higher education, among which theories applicable to case KyUAS are chosen. The next step was comparing competing institutes with MBA or similar degrees. Then, a Russian point of view was acquired through open-ended questions sent to two specialists. Finally, this information gathered from previous steps was used to create recommendation for the future action for KyUAS in these particular areas of MBA degree marketing.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

An overview of the study is given in the first chapter. Research problem, research questions and methodology are defined.

In the second chapter, the researcher reviews literature related to the research subject. Literature supporting the subject is mainly about marketing of higher education. Internet sources about MBA degrees and higher education, in general and in Finland have been used.

In the third chapter the focus is on marketing of KyUAS MBA degree. The MBA degree in general is explained, as well as some other comparable de-

grees. SWOT-analysis of KyUAS MBA is included as well as key competitor analysis.

The fourth chapter is about conclusions, recommendations and future work proposition. This chapter includes propositions of improving certain areas of marketing the KyUAS MBA program. These areas include pricing, promotion, and student recruitment, to mention some.

The fifth chapter includes the list of references. The list includes books, internet-sites, and open-ended questions, to mention some.

## **2 HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETING**

The following definition of marketing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century was suggested by Kotler and Keller (2006, 3).

*“Marketing is everywhere. Formally or informally, people and organizations engage in a vast number of activities that could be called marketing. Good marketing has become an increasingly vital ingredient for business success. And marketing profoundly affects our day-to-day lives. It is embedded in everything we do—from the clothes we wear, to the Web sites we click on, to the ads we see.”* (Kotler & Keller 2006, 3)

Marketing is necessary in today's world full of competition between companies, products, and also universities including universities of applied sciences. Students choosing their educational institution make their decision alone or with their parents. The institute that is marketing itself in a proper manner is more likely to get their attention and at least be on the list of those considered (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 105-106).



## ***2.1 Literature on marketing higher education***

Higher Education marketing is a relatively new subject in thesis-works and literature. There is a good amount of material written about the marketing of higher education. There have been several books released about this subject. One good example is “Marketing Higher and Further Education” by Paul Gibbs and Michael Knapp which is used as a backbone of this thesis.

## ***2.2 Higher education and marketing***

Education is increasing rapidly in global business. Learning on the Internet, the use of e-mails and other relatively new technology has made distances short. The term “marketing” is often thought to be something negative in the world of education. It is usually connected with sales, PR and advertising. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 1.)

Marketing should be thought as a process of making positive contribution to social capital as well as economical capital. The physical location of the institution is playing smaller part nowadays. More important are becoming marketing practices such as focus, segmentation and customer satisfaction. If educational institutes want to survive and prosper they need to identify their strengths and convince students and other interest groups. (Ibid., 2)

As products, educational programs are very complex to be marketed. These products are usually of highly intangible matter. Educational institutions differing from other product markets may have lacked the profit motive of which their success is measured by. (Ibid., 3-4.)

Educational institutes’ roles in society have been challenged lately by corporate global needs and because of this, focus and diversity will become more important in the future. Marketing will help educational institutions in the future and efforts should be focused to the marketing of the product or program, to define the social role of an institution, which can often be very complex. In the future financial performance will become more important to these institutions;

they have to attract their investments to receive such things as tuition fees. (Ibid., 4)

The market approach for educational institutions should see the student as an informed consumer. Students are not the same grey mass they may have been in the past. Nowadays, the group is very heterogenic; there are full-time, part-time, mature, distance and online students, to mention some. When there are target groups with different wants and needs, the marketing should understand these differences to be effective. (Ibid.)

Creating, offering and exchanging services and products make marketing a social and managerial process. Through this process both individuals and institutes are able to obtain their goal. This process involves planning and execution of pricing, distribution and promotional-decisions by guidelines that make the concept usable. (Ibid., 5.)

Strong marketing is a necessity so that the institution's offerings can meet the demand effectively. By doing the marketing plan in a proper manner the institute gains knowledge of the current marketing situation. It also specifies the results expected, identifies the resources available for use and describes the actions that are needed to meet the goals. (Ibid., 5.)

It must be noted that students have many wants and needs. They want their institute and its educational program to be flexible and able to deliver. They want a number of options, they need different ways to study, e-study, learning material for distant learning, just-in-time programs, short courses, content that meets their needs and not the program's needs. They want to be sure that their credits are recognized that their studying helps them to get professional recognition. (Ibid., 6.)

The use of "University", as a term, is many times just to raise the status of the institute or program. Earlier, the terms "college" and "university" had a clear meaning. Now that there are partnerships, agents and other entities, the meanings of these terms have been blurred. This can raise a question how do

universities differ from education established by corporate environment. (Ibid., 8.)

Universities and colleges have to become more aggressive marketers in today's situation to survive in this broad global competition. In educational environment the goal is not to beat other institutes by attracting more income, the goal is to deliver quality education. (Ibid.) The institute has to decide, which programs it is going to sell to which group of consumers / learners? (Ibid., 15).

### **2.3 Marketing planning process**

Marketing planning process systematically studies marketing possibilities and available resources. It names marketing strategies as well as objectives and ultimately develops marketing programs and guidelines to implementation and control. Four stages of marketing planning process are called analysis, planning, implementation and control these stages are presented in Figure 1. (Megicks, Donnelly, Harrison 2009, 19.)



Figure 1. Stages of the marketing planning process (Megicks, Donnelly, Harrison 2009, 19.)

### 2.3.1 Analysis

The first stage is analyzing the macro and micro marketing environment, the field of operation, markets and competitors (Ibid). SWOT analysis is the most used method of defining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. After identifying various elements, weaknesses and threats are wanted to be converted into strengths and opportunities. Strengths and weaknesses are seen as internally focused in the organization. However these can be reflected externally. Opportunities and threats are seen as external. Opportunities and threats must be ranked in terms of how important / severe they are. Sometimes a factor named as strength can also be a weakness. (Megicks, Donnelly & Harrison 2009, 112-113.)

### 2.3.2 Planning

The second stage is called planning. It includes formulation of strategies and marketing plans (Megicks, Donnelly, Harrison 2009, 19). Marketing planning is a number of very logical steps that set marketing objectives and make plans to achieve them. (Ibid., 23.)

Planning must be driven by goals. The setting of these goals is quite important. If that is not done properly, everything that follows it will lack cohesion and focus. Objective setting is done to provide organization for the direction it needs to move towards, in the process. These objectives provide motivation and benchmark to which the performance can be measured. (Gilligan, Wilson 2009, 297.)

In the planning stage, three kinds of questions are often asked. These questions begin with asking the type of business the organization is in. What is the nature of it? The second question asks the direction of where the organization should be in business. The third asks what kind of actions the organization should take to get where the second question's answer states. (Ibid., 299.)

### **2.3.3 Implementation**

The third stage is implementation and it covers the actual execution of the plan. This also includes possible changes to previous stages in order to achieve the goal. (Megicks, Donnelly, Harrison 2009, 19.)

For many organizations, the implementation stage in the marketing planning process is the most difficult stage. It is hard to understand why it often receives so little attention. (Gilligan, Wilson 2009, 302.)

The strategy itself can be successful but, the ability to implement it makes it effective. Many times strategies are labeled unsuccessful. However it is the implementation that has made them fail. So if it is not known how to successfully implement a certain strategy, then the strategy should not be chosen. (Megicks, Donnelly & Harrison 2009, 167.)

### **2.3.4 Control**

The fourth stage, control, monitors planned targets and the tools that are used to measure whether or not the target has been achieved. (Megicks, Donnelly, Harrison 2009, 19.)

In control stage the metrics that are used in measuring the results are named. Results are measured from organizational performance and these metrics are also used in evaluating the environment. (Chernev 2009, 246.)

Performance is evaluated by defining the goals and the progress towards them. Environmental analysis is done by identifying the metrics for operational environment evaluation. Processes which are used to adjust the plan to accommodate changes are outlined. (Ibid.)

Control has four key elements which are: 1) setting of objectives, 2) setting of performance standards, 3) performance monitoring and evaluation and 4) re-

action (i.e. using corrective methods when needed). (Megicks, Donnelly & Harrison 2009, 180.)

Effective control systems are flexible and have some common characteristics. These characteristics support involvement which means that employees are encouraged to get involved in common things. Target setting should be done in a way that the targets are reachable and communicated in advance. Problems are recognized and studied, not just symptoms. Not only efficiency but also effectiveness is measured. Management by exception is used. This means that management takes action when something goes off the tolerance. However, not managing everything all the time when there is no need to do so. Effective control system also promotes action, not just detection of problems. (Ibid., 180-181.)

### **2.3.5 Marketing Mix 4 Ps**

4 P-model is based on the initial letters of four words: product, price, promotion and place. It is a simple tool used in planning and analyzing a marketing strategy. P, as in Product, includes decisions of what kind of features are included in the product. P, as in price, includes decisions dealing with the pricing of the product. P, as in promotion, is all about the promotion of the product and P, as in place, deals with the distribution channels that are used to “place” the product. (Chernev 2009, 29.)

It is important to focus on the logic of the 4 Ps instead of expanding to 5 Ps or even 7 Ps. Sometimes concepts like personnel, processes, productivity, people and positioning are also included but, positioning is not a part of marketing mix, it is part of an overall strategy of the company which is then implemented through some of marketing mix variables. People are also often viewed as an integral part of the organization, not a part of the marketing mix of an organization's offering. (Ibid.)

4 Ps has its limitations. It was meant to help in marketing consumer packaged goods so it really does not have the service element knitted in. Service element is really important in today's business environment. Also, brand is not seen as a separate factor but viewed together with product and promotion decisions. One danger of the 4 P-model is the use of promotion alone. Promotion as a term can include a lot of different things. For example, it includes incentives such as price or trade promotions that enhance the value of an offering and communication, such as advertising and PR, to inform customers about the offering. (Ibid.)

There are also additional marketing mixes that can include processes, physical evidence, people etc. These can be called the extended services mix or 7 Ps. (Megicks, Donnelly & Harrison 2009, 4.)

### **2.3.6 Segmentation**

Customers of Higher Education Institutions have different needs. Only some of these needs can be satisfied by just one institution. That is why customers must be segmented. This is done by dividing the market to smaller groups by their characteristics. This segmentation has different recommendations for different areas. In Europe and in the USA this fragmentation of the market can be true and segmentation highly usable. While in Russia, India and China the mass market of education is still existing and strong. Segmented markets such as in Europe and in the USA, have main characteristics that can be seen. This enables enhanced value and also makes possible leaving out those segments that do not fit the program- or the student values. These characteristics can lead to a better profit. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 39.)

Segmented markets can be created or identified using benefit segmentation. For example, this means that there are affordable or short duration courses available, courses related to jobs, or similar which make immediate recognition for use in market, possible. Other methods include demographic segmentation, where ethnic origin or socio-economic grouping are used, and lifestyle

segmentation where lifelong learners and students who are actually in need of on-going professional development. It is obvious that if an institution wants to be successful in segmentation marketing, it is imperative has to be completely familiar with the segments. Also the requirements of the segments must be understood and recognized, as well as the institution's own promotion and services must be targeted accordingly. Through accomplishing these actions in an appropriate way, value can be added to an institution, as well as improving its reputation over time. Eventually, these remove the question on whether or not this particular institution is able to deliver. (Ibid, 39-40.)

### **2.3.7 Positioning**

When the institution wants a position on a market full of competitors, it must serve its customers in the best way possible in that market. Also a market can be also helpful defining the efficiency needed from the product within it. It is not always necessary to take advantage over others. There are two well-known market philosophies: the first is competitive advantage and, the second is customer advantage. Basically, the difference between them is that, in competitive advantage, it is the market leader who pulls the strings. The nature of the market is defined by the leader and, by doing that it can flourish. Customer advantage allows customers to decide who has the right to flourish. (Ibid., 39-41.)

Institutions must be flexible and responsive to the demands of the markets. There are four different phases that can be named in the development of a market. These phases are: 1. Emerging, 2. High growth, 3. Mature, 4. Declining. It must be understood in which phase the market where the institute is operating is in at that moment. (Ibid., 43-44.)

When the portfolio is defined by the institution, the next step is to understand the drivers of the marketing process. There are two kinds of drivers, internal and external. Generally the marketing transaction is about matching the institution's needs to those needs of students and student prospects. The institution has to understand what these students and student prospects want; how



many students the institute needs for a named program now and how many in the future; and finally what kind of image the institution wants to create and give for the existing and future students. (Ibid., 45.)

Internal drivers are not that hard to find if the institution is honest. Sometimes the balance between financial and ethical values can be difficult. This balancing issue occurs when degrees are not free. Issues involve, for example, a case where the question is if the institute should take in a student who is probably not able to graduate from the institute but who is willing to start studying and pay the fee for the degree. Another similar question is when running a profitable program, if the price should be lowered or the profit rather used to make the program better for the students, or used for something else (Ibid., 46.)

External drivers can be within the institution's control, or beyond it. The importance lies here; it must be recognized which external drivers can be influenced and which cannot. Once these have been recognized, the institution should focus on those it can influence and start working. There are many PEST-models (political, economical, social and technological) to use in defining these drivers. Most are just checklists but use of these should still be considered because it is important to fit these to the right level with the purpose of the institution. (Ibid., 46.)

There are three things that affect each other in defining the existing position of the institution and deciding on holding the position or moving it along to achieve a better position. The main questions are what the position of the institution is, what kind of themes the position generates, and what the differentiation process would be like. (Ibid., 47-48.)

### 2.3.8 Differentiation

Differentiation in marketing means making the product or service different from others. In education markets, differentiation can be simple. The institute recognizes a demand no-one else is offering and delivers educational products to meet that particular demand. In marketing, it is possible to achieve differentiation through product, service and image. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 48.)

Each and every institution already has many images, including the one the manager of the institution wants it to have but, also the image that is actually perceived. People of four different groups from within the institution give rank: students, staff, employers and governors. Also, they should name other criteria they would use to describe the institution and give their answers on a 10-point scale. If one particular area is two points lower than others it should be investigated and that gap closed. Differentiation can be achieved in four ways, ultimately. These four are: product, image, service and attitude. (Ibid.)

**Product** can be services, programs, training courses or short or long-term education. All of these have something special that can be differentiated. The core function is what makes each product and its characteristics bring additional value. If every institution offered exactly cloned degree programs, no value would be added. Homogenous can be seen as a threat in education because regulations, inspections and governments over-prescribe and restrict creativity and innovation in curriculum design. However higher educational institutes should come up with desirable, valid, purposeful new programs and develop existing programs to have those same characteristics. (Ibid., 48-49.)

**Image** is the second differentiating aspect of the institution, the product and the outcome. Image of the institution can be tangible such as symbols, written communication and visual communication. Image can be also intangible such as the atmosphere and the presence of the institution. It is critical to give a good impression of both, tangible and intangible aspects to create an overall good image of the institution. The institution should be aware of different wants the applicants of the institution have. Some applicants might want mod-

ern logos to their papers and some might prefer more traditional recognition of their success. It is important to compare the institution's image with those of its competitors. The institution should decide and define the image it wants to give. (Ibid., 49.)

**Attitude** and **service** are the third and the fourth aspects. The service, that the institute provides, must match to the learner's expectations. Also, the program delivery and maintenance are important. This means that the delivery must be done in an appropriate way. A new challenge is how to keep the program fresh. Marketing is challenging more than ever because of today's global market place. New technologies with the new information from the Web push the barriers all the time. Something new has to be brought in to the program constantly while throwing something old out. (Ibid., 49-50.)

The name of the institution, business school etc., should be short and memorable. Also, it should be easy to pronounce, being culturally neutral and informative in a way that it tells something about the key benefits of the institution. (Ibid., 50.)

Symbols are important in making the brand image to stand out. Also, important are logos. They should be outputs of compression where all the good things about the institute are pressed into one compact form of logo or symbol. The target group should be analyzed carefully through the design of the logo, as some might find traditional crest and shield safer and more confident than a fresh, stylistic, minimalist symbol and vice versa. (Ibid., 50.)

Concepts are created to each institution. Universities like Oxford and Harvard have their own concept of elite education. New universities such as former polytechnics create their own. New, vital concept can come from the delivery of the programs, as well as from the buildings. (Ibid., 50-51.)

## **2.4 Program design**

Program design is a vital and maybe the most interesting part of education marketing. It can be also a bottomless pit of money-use if the use of resources has not been planned carefully beforehand. Rule of a thumb is that programs need to make money for the institution or benefit it in some other way. They must help in positioning the institution better in the market. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 53.)

Development and program monitoring are done with tools that produce information. That information can and should be used to benefit the institution, but that information is usable only when it is used with the institution's pre-defined mission in mind. In thinking about the long-term success of the institution, it is essential that resources can be easily shifted to another area of opportunity in case that former resource has already expended its effectiveness. For example, local partnerships can be arranged to fill gaps in some areas. However, when this need is no longer effective, resources can lose their profitability in that position so they must be transferred to something else, more valuable in the future to serve the institution's most lucrative markets and actions that support that. (Ibid., 53.)

Each and every educational institution has to make the decisions about what kind of programs the institution offers to its learners and what kind of services it offers to other interest groups. What the institution offers identifies the institution. It also positions the institution in the market in the eyes of its clients. Finally, these determine the way its target group responds to what the institution is offering. (Ibid., 54.)

Core offering must be determined by the institution. This is the most important offering, as the term says, and this can be different to different target groups. The institute should have clarity of its core offering and then deliver it. The core offering can be a promise about employment or higher education itself. Simply promoting that some degree leads to employment, is not enough. The process has to be developed in the institution before launching that particular

program so that when employment is promised, the process really has to lead to it. (Ibid.)

Tangible offering has three characteristics which are feature, quality and packaging. Tangible offerings can include CD-ROMs, lecture notes and individual tutorials. These should be bringing additional value to the product offering and, for this reason, it is very important to keep these fresh and update them constantly. Quality is one very important aspect of the institution. There are opportunities for the institution to exceed the student expectations. For example, teachers can go beyond the expectations by really helping the student in the change-process by being there. This is one of the things that Internet learning, without face-to-face conversations, cannot offer. The packaging of the program includes many things. One of these is the physical location of the institution and, the context the student has within the institution. (Ibid., 54-55.)

## ***2.5 Pricing educational programs***

Pricing is much more than just calculating the cost of delivery and basing the price on that, alone. To be able to set the price for an educational program accurately, many things must be taken in to a consideration. These include the relationship between institutional missions and pricing decisions, as well as, the way the learner views the price, and judges the value it delivers. The price should be high enough to maximize the revenue of tuition, but reasonable enough for an institution's mission. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 67.)

Price is a very important feature of the program. It differentiates between brands, institutions and programs. It also differentiates between values of the offerings available. It also gives possibility for the institution to function bringing income. Fixed-priced programs are often used by state-funded institutions. Then the operation is different and the institution should determine both the pricing and the whole mission within the programs offered to the public. Pricing in higher education marketing is never an isolated factor. It involves con-

stant monitoring of the public, of the customers to find sweet-spots where extra revenue can be made, and the spots where prices are reducing the income or changing the position of the institution away from the desired position. (Ibid., 67-68.)

The price reflects many things. First of all, it represents value. This value can be directly from the program itself or it is brought from studying at the institution. In net benefit, the margin gained comes from the margin between the cost of the institution tuition (corporate identity research, resources and time consumed) and the cost of enrolment. Cost of enrolment for the learner consists of savings, scholarships, opportunity costs (lost work opportunities) etc. The institution gains when it is able to undertake the core function it has. By doing that it builds its reputation. This way it will be able to keep scholars it already has, as well as nurture others. Learners will improve their job prospects and enjoy the reputation and development opportunities that the institution brings. (Ibid., 68-69.)



Figure 2. A model of perceived value in the price (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 69).

Figure 2 shows the model of equilibrium price. In equilibrium price both the learner's as well as the institution's needs and requirements are in balance creating the price. This price is seen fair and it consists of all the real costs added with a margin, which represents the added value or benefit of this specific transaction. (Ibid., 69.)

Pricing can be also done by reference to competition. Positioning price this way assumes that others have it right. Increasing or lowering price compared to competitors sends a message dealing with the quality of the program to

consumers. Once this has been made, the quality must match or exceed the expectations set by the price. Learners often finally choose the institution by the price if they are unsure and other characteristics have not helped them to make the final decision. This is what is most important in using premium pricing. (Ibid., 70.)

Premium pricing means that the brand's reputation provides the confidence the consumer needs to make the decision. Consumers will doubt too low of prices. They often begin to think that there might be something wrong in the institution and the program if the reputation of the institution is unknown for them. This might happen if the price is very low and when the institution has lower prices than those of its competitors'. This, in general, is shown in the table 1 below. (Ibid., 70.)

Table 1. Pricing messages (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 70).

		<b>Price</b>		
		<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Product quality</b>	<b>High</b>	Premium	High value	Superb value
	<b>Medium</b>	Overcharging	Medium value	Good value
	<b>Low</b>	Rip off	False economy	Economy

## **2.6 Promotions**

Promotion is the part of communication which is filled with company messages that are meant to help spread awareness of it. Promotion is also used to raise interest in the company and to stimulate the purchase of its products. Effective promotion catches people's attention. (Kotler 2003, 18-19.)

Promoting comes more difficult when the level of intangibility gets higher (Me-gicks, Donnelly & Harrison 2009, 204). Higher education and degrees are in-tangible.

Universities and colleges are advertising more than before on the Internet, in newspapers, etc. The notion of brand development is evident and in most cases promoting is done in a professional way. Institutions want to differenti-ate their offerings from those of others. When the student fees are increased, student expectations are increased as well. Student customers want good re-turns for their time, energy and money. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 74.)

### **2.6.1 Image and communication**

To be able to compete in the market of higher education, the institution should focus on the prospectus/brochure and the website. These two are the most important interfaces between the institution, the market and the possible future students. Advertising is a controlled method by the institution to let the public know what it wants to tell them. Advertising is also a way to deliver these messages just how the institution wants. In this, the institution can and should use both the informative, as well as the persuasive methods. Desired effects of advertising can take a lot of time; it can take up to three times of exposure just to get the planned effect and, to deliver the message compared to direct marketing. Direct marketing should be considered to be more effective. (Ibid., 75-77.)

It should be decided, what the institution wants to communicate, the tone how it uses to communicate and how the media works with those ideas. These ideas can be moral or emotional, but what is essential here, is that those things must be anchored to what the institution really is at that moment, not what it wants to be. (Ibid., 78.)

Visuals should be chosen in a way that captures audience. Colors should be chosen so that they reflect the organization's identity. One, the simplest ex-ample is to choose colors that are similar with the institution's logo. There is



no sense in using other colors if there is a possibility that the audience already knows colors connected to the institution from its logo or another connection. When designing brochures and such, reader interest should be kept in mind. Usually the first couple of pages will determine if the reader will continue reading further or not. Even the envelope should be designed in a proper way to create interest. Often people forget data, but can remember images. However, design should be done in a way that images and graphics do not overcome everything else. Some detailed information is always good to have, but the question is, whether or not the material captures enough attention so that further reading can take place. (Ibid., 79.)

### **2.6.2 Examples of advertising messages and slogans**

Straplines and slogans are used in more aggressive marketing when higher education institutes are competing for students. Today, education is often aligned and positioned to general concept of consumption. Many styles of advertising messages are used to differentiate each HEI from their competitors. Student fees raise students' expectations towards HEIs. Students have to choose their university or other HEI from a mass of HEIs. Slogans are used to attract the attention of prospect students and, at the same time, tell about the offering of the institution. Examples of slogans in use include: Queensland University of Technology: "A university for the real world." and North East Surrey College of Technology: "Why bother with a course that won't get you a job? We don't." (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 74.)

A pun is sometimes used in an advertising message: Anglia Polytechnic University: "APU a better choice of course." Advertising messages can, also, use self-interest: Sheffield Hallam University: "Put yourself first." Or can use action: Nottingham Trent University: "Don't dream, achieve." Aspiration-style can also be used, as in Trinity College Carmarthen's slogan: "More than a dream." (Ibid., 82-83.)

Advertising messages and slogans are used to gain attention and to position the higher education institution with competitors. There are several means of

raising the wanted effect. Puns are a kind of a word-play that APU uses. It creatively combines the saying “of course” meaning clearly and surely the choosing of APU is a better course and aim. Puns can be clever or even irritating, that is why they are often easy to remember.

Self-interest might appeal to students who are not sure about themselves, not sure which institute to choose or would just like to choose the best for themselves. Sheffield Hallam University uses this well, as it gives the advice to put first things first. In slogans “action” is one way to catch attention.

A slogan calling for action can appeal someone unsure if he/she is able to succeed, choosing the institute using action in its slogan can help. Achieve what you want, don't just dream. Nottingham Trent University is using this method.

### **2.6.3 Direct marketing**

Direct marketing means getting to customers on a one-by-one basis to help them to choose the institution's offering. Success depends on how well the target group receives the message. Media ranging from the Internet, to a letter can be used. Choosing a newspaper can be challenging because, often the target group reads several newspapers and possibly not the same newspapers. Internet is a good medium, but not everyone is using it. Although, many in the target market of higher education usually do use it. Direct mail and exhibitions are the most personal way to promote the institution. It is easy to waste the institution's money on direct mails, but correctly planned and carried out, it can be a very a cost-effective marketing vehicle. Companies such as American Express and Reader's Digest are using direct mail marketing effectively and make income by doing just that. However their methods are not correct for higher education marketing. Simple letters and pamphlets can be useful and effective if they are well produced and targeted towards people who already are interested in what the institution is offering. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 83.)

The experience in the UK has been, that well-written letters on the institution letterhead, personalized to the customer's needs with a signature from a senior academic, means more to the recipient than one from a bank manager. In planning of this type of letter, it should be prepared in a way that is sharp and punctual. If it looks like junk, it will be received as junk. It should appeal. It should be fully personalized. The narrative should be written so that it is interesting and involving. A direct mail piece should deal with problems and desires of the reader, offering solutions, as well. Here, role models, peers or even someone to relate to, are very useful. "You" should be used as many times as possible in a mail piece to ensure that the sender is talking to the recipient and not at them. (Ibid., 84.)

The best way to keep it interesting is to use short, punchy sentences. Paragraphs should not be longer than about ten lines and the voice should be kept active, not passive. Style should be warm and repetitive so that the reader knows what kind of good benefits responding to that mail can bring. The length of the letter is not so important, as long as it keeps the attention until the end. For example, an employment contract can be a lengthy document but it still keeps the reader's attention until the last line. It is essential to make letters that are crystal clear in telling what is offered. It helps the recipient to get an answer to the problem of what is being offered and how it could enrich the recipient's life. If the program includes regular attendance in class, it should be stated up-front. If there is long hours of self-instruction involved, it should be explained in a positive way. Expectations should always be fulfilled. Otherwise, the client will, not only be disappointed, but be angry, as well. (Ibid., 84-85.)

Targeting the mailing in a proper way is challenging. Existing customers of the program should be analyzed carefully. The analysis should include naming the person who is paying for the program, as well as, the one paying for the program. It is important to know the place where they come from. The characteristics of the program that appeal to these customers particularly should be named. An alternative to a general mailing list is to put the mail piece to journals, newspapers and magazines. Using journals could be a very effective

way to do international marketing. For a focused niche target market it can be very rewarding, as well. (Ibid., 85.)

Responding should be made very easy. E-mail addresses, telephone numbers, pre-paid envelopes and fax-back forms make it easy to answer quickly when the customer wants to. If there is the slightest want to reply, it should be easy and quick to execute. Of course, it should be made sure that there are people answering those phone calls, e-mails, etc. (Ibid.)

Image is everything. If quality cannot be afforded, it is usually better not to go on at all. Photocopied papers in a plastic folder with the institution's logo can do the job, but they do not feel very valuable to the receiver. It would be best to include some kind of small gift with the institution's logo for the receiver. Often, the receiver feels obligated to reply after receiving a gift. The logo in the gift will keep the sender in mind much longer than just those sheets of paper. (Ibid.)

Tips of making a brochure include using pictures and drawings to illustrate it. Those images should be made dynamic. The institution's philosophy and heritage should be included as well. Real people who are taking, or have taken the program, should be used here to tell their realistic experiences. Images should be kept credible. (Ibid., 86.)

#### **2.6.4 Exhibitions**

Exhibitions are a popular way to market services to the education sector. Exhibitions are, and have been for some time, a popular way to market institutions, particularly internationally. Whether it is number of names listed, meetings arranged or, signed participants on the specific promoted program, setting goals before-hand is important. It is very important to mail potential customers about the services being provided before the show. It is also important to take advantage of all pre-show advertising and publicity, not forgetting the exhibition website. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 87-89.)

At the exhibition the optimum amount of time should be spent with the guests. This might sound a bit bizarre, but the institution is paying for the site and time used, so the amount of time spent with each visitor should be just the right length. People should be attracted to pay attention to the booth. This can be done by using strong colors, graphics and sounds. It should be clearly shown what kind of benefits there are available for the visitors. (Ibid., 89.)

People wrong for the institution's purpose should be rejected and filtered out so that both the visitor not interested in the institution's offerings, as well as the institution's representative are not wasting their time. Explaining the pros easily and clearly will benefit both. If the goal is to make appointments, then those should be arranged. If the goal is to collect names and addresses, then that should be done, as well. After the exhibition, it is important to follow the leads fast, as well as be the first to contact those people who have given their contact information. By doing this before the other competitors, the institution is showing these prospective clients just how important they really are. (Ibid.)

### **2.6.5 Public relations**

The following definition of public relations was suggested by Kotler and Keller (2006, 593).

*“Not only must the company relate constructively to customers, suppliers, and dealers, it must also relate to a large number of interested publics. A public is any group that has an actual or potential interest in or impact on a company's ability to achieve its objectives. Public relations (PR) involves a variety of programs designed to promote or protect a company's image or its individual products”* (Kotler & Keller 2006, 593.)

Responsibility, as well as a good deal of effort is required from everyone in the organization to make a challenging task easier and to help people make the decision to entrust their higher education and employability to a particular institution. The higher education system's reputation has to be well maintained. Collective goodwill is all about positive views of the profession's reputation.

Reputation comes from expected behavior of the institution in several contexts. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 93-94.)

### **2.6.6 Internet, social media and search engines**

With Internet, it is possible to display information about the organization, its products and services 24/7. Geographical boundaries are almost lifted; where there is a possibility to use Internet there is a possibility to be seen. Customer research, market research and competitor research can be done on the Internet. Many kinds of surveys can be done on the Internet, as well. Information is easy to send to only those requesting it or to specifically named target groups. It is possible to improve operations by using the Internet. The Internet itself is an unbelievable, relatively new communication, buying and selling platform that will benefit its users progressively over time. (Kotler 2003, 91-92.)

Every organization needs a website today. The website has to show what the organization is about and reflect its quality. The primary design of the website should be done with the organization's message in mind, not trying to utilize the newest flashes and tricks. Customers do not find it appealing to use a slow loading website being with bogged-down too much of high-tech everything. Customers are seeking quality information, not some fancy show time. The initial screen has to be clear and easy to understand. It has to give easy passage to other pages and contain good information. Hopefully, it does not initiate jumping and flashing advertising. (Ibid., 94.)

The Internet has had a strong impact on marketing. Most recent forms of marketing on the Internet are in the form of social media and consumer-generated media. At first, Internet was used in business to business communication but then it became an important way for companies to communicate with their customers. This led to e-commerce and customer-made product reviews and discussions published on the Internet. This led to a new phenomenon of people being able to write their positive or negative feedback of products and

services on the Internet for all the Internet users to see in the blink of an eye. (Krishnamurthi & Gopinath 2010, 307.)

Social media is an increasingly important tool for companies and organizations. It is available 24/7/365 and therefore needs to be monitored constantly in case there would be some controversial material about the organization that it would be beneficial to be aware of. It is not a fantasy that one million viewers have watched certain mishandling of one company's employees in 48 hours. That was bad publicity that spread quickly. Social media can and should be used in marketing by companies and organizations. It is much more than just Facebook or Twitter; there are lots of third-party discussion groups, forums, podcasts, etc. on the Internet that can have a positive or negative impact on any company or organization. People tend to believe opinions from others who are like them. These new forms of social media can give a company or an organization an extra lift with its products or services. Recommendation of a product or service to other consumers, for example, happens really quickly on Social Media. (Ibid., 308-316.)

Search engines can be optimized to show results that are wanted. Keywords are typed into search engines by customers and results are shown on the screen. There are differences in which kinds of keywords are being used in creating the website for the organization. Keywords and phrases included to the website should be ones that people are using when they use search engines in searching information about the product or services the organization is offering. (Purple Internet Marketing Limited 2010)

## ***2.7 Student recruitment***

If there were no students, there would be no institutions. Enrollment management includes both recruiting new students and keeping the continuing students. Often, institutions have not used the data available to analyze why some students leave and, why some students end up staying. Reasons behind leaving or staying would be very important for the institution to under-

stand. Institutions should also develop a good student retention strategy. The image of the institution should be very clear to students so that they know what kind of institution they are applying for and how they will use their time that their money is buying. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 103.)

The first step in student recruiting, as well as the staff recruiting, is to plan what the institution wants to develop into in the future. This may sometimes include a painful move from complex corporate strategy, to a reality-based positioning for the moment. (Ibid.)

It would be essential for the institution to understand why the students have chosen that particular institution and not some other competing institution. It is essential for the institution to be able to name the things they provide that students really like. Also, the institutions should be aware of the things that should be improved. (Ibid., 103-104.)

The consumer of higher education needs to be defined. That is everything but a simple task. The student is the one who studies in the institution but, it might be someone else who selects the institution or pays for the program. Consumer can also be parents, family, or even society. Parents and family often constrain the choice of the institution and make the decision of accepting the costs. Society underwrites a lot of costs of education and can also be considered as the consumer. In higher education, as with other complex industries, communication through the market can be very slow and ambivalent. If it were defined that an individual student is the consumer, and if the student was able to select freely the specific education experiences wanted, programs would look different. The market for students is strongly segmented. This means that consumers are communicating how and what they want. There is a wide range of institutions and degrees available. (Ibid., 105-106.)

Consumers of higher education are more engaged in consuming than buying. Consuming is not a decision or a choice of a brand. It focuses more on intangible factors than tangible ones. Opposed to money, it is more about the investment of time, ability, and effort. Consuming also includes complex emo-



tional factors. **Decision behavior** in choosing a product is often bound with time, when **consuming behavior** might not be. **The decision experience** of a student often includes a lot of planning, visiting campuses, etc. and can take well over a year's in time. However, **consuming experience** is often much longer and more intensive. For the consumer, the investment is surely money, but, higher and further education is consummately experiential. The objective of the experience is intangible and hard to measure in its important dimensions, even though the consuming experience itself can be attached to certain observable, tangible objects and activities. The real consuming is about the engagement of cognitive and affective changes experienced. The durability factor suggests that the consuming experience does not end to graduation, it continues at some level throughout the consumer's life. (Ibid., 107.)

Involvement, when high, helps in decision making. When something is really important, one often puts a lot of thought, resources, and especially time into making the right decision. Institutions are often seeking these high-involvement decision-makers because, as they have used a lot of time and thought in deciding which institution and program to choose, they will likely stick to them and graduate. These people will make sacrifices, both economic and personal and, often carry the risk of possibly getting it wrong. (Ibid., 108.)

Another influence on deciding which institution to choose is experience. Experience helps to make quicker decisions. Also when quick decisions are made, the group of institutions to choose from is smaller. Institution should be in this "choice-set" when decided upon. Once the institution is within the set, which students are using, it must know which other institutions are also in. By knowing those, it will be able to position the institution's proposal correctly. (Ibid., 109.)

It is necessary to understand that, even though the institution does not always get chosen from the "choice-set", it is very important to remain one of the institutions within the set. So, marketing should be done with this "choice-set" in mind. Selection criteria are based on who is buying. There will be people buy-

ing the education for their own benefit and people buying courses for their employee's benefit. (Ibid.)

## **2.8 AIDA**

When customers are making a purchase decision, they go through various stages in the decision making process. According to AIDA-model, these stages are called awareness, interest, desire, and action. Organizations need to understand these different stages and recognize which customer or customer group is in which stage to be able to respond to them accordingly. (Megicks, Donnelly, Harrison 2009, 133.)

Basically, following AIDA step-by-step, means that first it is important to raise *awareness*. When the customer is aware of the product or service, he/she must be made *interested*. After that, emotional aspect of *desire* to actually use or purchase the products/service has to be raised. The final step is taking *action*. The customer must be convinced to take action in actually purchasing the product/service.

In case KyUAS, AIDA can be used in all marketing. On websites, social media, newspapers, brochures, etc. the KyUAS's use of green color makes it stand out from the mass of UASs in Finland. It raises attention/awareness about the existence of KyUAS and the MBA degree. Interest can be created by delivering information about the quality education that the institute has to offer in the form of an MBA degree. Desire comes from reasonable pricing, promises of high quality lectures, nice environment and reachable location. These factors completed in an effective manner can lead to an action. Action in this case, is to choose KyUAS MBA as one's master degree program.

## **3 MARKETING THE KYUAS MBA**

### **3.1 MBA degree**

The MBA is an abbreviation from Master of Business Administration. It is a postgraduate degree. It is given to students who have reached a certain level in business studies. The MBA degree is often thought to be one of the most valued degrees that exist. (Schweitzer 2010)

Students in MBA programs study both the theory and applications that are essential in business management. This kind of studying prepares students to work in the field of business with versatile tasks and situations. Many times, the motive to obtain the degree is driven by the desire to gain more salary or a better position at work. (Ibid.)

In today's business world, the MBA degree is almost absolutely necessary because, in many cases, an MBA degree is needed when applying for an executive or other senior management positions. There are companies that will not even consider applicants who do not have an MBA degree for certain positions. In many cases MBA programs focus on general management topics that give versatile business knowledge, no matter which field of business the student chooses afterwards. (Ibid.)

There are many different MBA degrees that exist. Also, there are almost as many different business schools that are offering MBA programs. Usually, the academic content of these programs does not vary so much. However, it is important to know that the value of the MBA degree gained is often directly related to the prestige of the business school which grants it. (Ibid.)

#### **3.1.1 MBA degree in Finland**

MBA degree in Finland is, as well as in many other countries, a postgraduate degree. It may be required when applying to certain positions. People who want to gain the degree are usually divided in two; some are willing to ad-

vance their career within their prevailing organization and some are searching for new directions and possibilities for their career, in general. There are both full-time and part-time programs available in Finland. Part-time degrees are studied on evenings and weekends and usually take 2-5 years to graduate. Full-time programs usually take 2 years to graduate, approximately. There are also eMBA programs for executives. These, often, are part-time programs. (Uranus 2010)

### **3.1.2 MBA comparable degrees in Finland**

In Finland, the higher education system includes universities and universities of applied sciences (later UAS). The admission requirements for these are either, a secondary general, or, a vocational diploma. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010b)

Universities in Finland offer lower and higher degrees as well as postgraduate degrees (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010c). Universities focus on research and confer Bachelor's, Master's, licentiate and doctoral degrees in general. UASs concentrate on labor market needs and offer more work-related education. UASs also offer Master's programs, to which pre-requisites are Bachelor's degree from UAS or equivalent and a minimum of three years' work experience on the field of business concerned. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010b)

MBA degree from University of applied sciences produces the same competency for public offices and other positions as a higher academic degree. There is a tuition fee for students who do not come from EU/ETA-countries and do not have a residency permit in Finland. There is a limited number of scholarships covering full or half of the tuition fee available for outstanding candidates. (KyUAS 2010b)

Executive MBA programs are extension study programs that usually require academic educational background as well as several years of work experience. In Finland, these programs are not under the surveillance of Ministry of

Education like ordinary university and UAS-degrees are. These programs are often accredited to assure their quality. It is often difficult to compare these because these programs are so different from each other. (Wikipedia 2010)

For example Aalto University in Helsinki promotes Executive MBA program for €41 500+VAT 23%. It is accredited by AACSB, AMBA and EQUIS. (AEE 2011a)

### **3.1.3 Bologna Accord**

The goal for Bologna process is to create a common area for Higher Education in Europe. This includes the making of European educational institutes more attractive than educational institutes of other areas. The process was planned to be ready in 2010. This includes six objectives which are: comparable, easily readable degrees, degree structure, credit system (the ECTS system), better mobility, European co-operation in comparable criteria/methodology developing as well as developing better and closer collaboration internationally. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010a)

In Finland, universities did not find the Bologna Declaration to be very positive in the beginning. Later, the situation has changed, making the European Higher Education Area possible. In 2005 Finnish universities adopted the two-cycle degree system. In Finland, it is a statutory duty for universities and UASs to give a Diploma Supplement for students who need it. ECTS system compatibility has been an issue earlier. Finnish higher education institutes are adopting the ECTS system by making reforms in Finland's educational system. At present, Bachelor-Master structure in Finland is adopting to Bologna Declaration standards. There are still differences between countries. For example, in Finland, the most common degree structures are still 3+2 years and 4+1 year. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010a)

### **3.1.4 Tuition fees are possible from 2010**

There can be tuition fees for students who come outside EU/ETA-countries and who do not have a residency permit in Finland beginning from 2010. Tuition fees are possible in 2010 within several schools offering Master's degree in International Business Management programs in English. These schools include Haaga-Helia UAS (Helsinki), JAMK UAS (Jyväskylä), Central Ostrobothnia UAS (Kokkola, Pietarsaari), KyUAS (Kouvola), Lahti UAS and Seinäjoki UAS. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010d)

In 2011, tuition fees are possible in several schools offering Master's degree in International Business Management programs in English. These schools include University of Oulu, University of Vaasa and Aalto University (Helsinki). Lappeenranta University of Technology possibly implements tuition fees to Master's Degree Program in Business and Administration in 2011. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010d)

## **3.2 *Emerging Markets in the Finnish System***

In Finland, as typical in other Nordic countries also, the state regulation has had a strong role in the higher education system. Non-market orientation has long traditions and seems on-going. However, slowly but steadily a new direction has been taken towards a more market-oriented system. This development has taken place because of the future reforms of higher education policy in the country. (Hölttä, Jansson & Kivistö 2011, 123.)

The Finnish system of higher education is a binary system. It is comprised of universities and UASs. There are 20 universities and 26 universities of applied sciences. Universities of applied sciences have an important role in developing regions, especially the economical life and small- and middle-sized organizations. UASs are providing education of high-quality. All universities of applied sciences offer Bachelor and Master-level UAS-degrees in selected fields. UAS-degrees are oriented more on vocational education, and therefore, one

of the requirements for UAS Master's programs is proper work experience of three years. (Ibid.)

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is the primary regulative agency for both universities and universities of applied sciences. In principle studying in higher education institutions in Finland, is free for all students. An exception to this was in 2008, when the right for universities and universities of applied sciences to offer degree education with a fee, was granted by the government. This was made possible for all degree levels in higher education institutions for students coming outside the European Economic Area (EEA). There is a condition to this education: that the financing must come from organizations, foreign governments, companies or foundations, etc. and not from the student. The possibility always exists to charge tuition fees for English taught Master's Degree Programs from non-EEA students. Universities and UASs determine these fees, themselves, as well as the student selection and enrolment. At the same time, it is required for HEIs to set up grant-programs to boost equity in these degree programs. (Ibid., 124.)

In the student sector in Finland, UAS-degrees are still mainly Bachelor-level degrees. Master-level was officially introduced in 2005, being experimental since 2002. The UAS Master-degree is planned to be the main track for continuing UAS-students. The MoE has set a goal of 3800 Master students in UASs in 2012. (Ibid., 125.)

### ***3.3 Effects of higher UAS-degree on career development and salary***

Tradenomiliitto TRAL ry assigned a thesis for a student of Haaga-Helia UAS in spring 2010 (Eriksson 2010, 2). The subject of the thesis was to research how higher UAS-degree affects career development and salary (Ibid., 3). The research was conducted using quantitative research method (Eriksson 2010, 27). 27% of all who have graduated with higher UAS-degree (Tradenomi Ylempi AMK, comparable to MBA) from fields of business and administration answered (Ibid., 28).

According to this inquiry graduating for higher UAS-degree in the field of business and administration, salary rose ca. €400 on average. Before graduating, the average salary was €3 325/month and after graduating it was €3 729/month. So, the rise on average was €400. Comparing median salaries, the rise was just a little short from €500. 25% of the people who answered had a salary of more than €4 250/month. (Ibid., 41)

Respondents reported that the factor they felt affected most for the rise of salary, was change in task (19.1%) while their own skills (12.7%) was second. Overall increase (10.2%), wage negotiation (7.6%), and graduating for higher UAS degree (5.7%). When posed the question to name only one, the respondents quoted that the most important factor was salary. 21.7% of the respondents stated that their salary had remained the same. (Ibid., 43)

After graduating, the count on those who were office workers dropped by 10% and, at the same time, the number of those working as managers or specialists increased (Ibid., 53).

Up to 80% from the respondents of the research felt that the higher UAS-degree has had a role in the change of positions and tasks. More than half of the respondents felt that the graduation has had an effect on promotion or the possibility of a promotion. They also felt that the degree has had positive effects on the valuation at work and on the labor market. 68% of the respondents felt that the higher UAS-degree from the field of business and administration is not well-known in working life. (Ibid., 47-48.)

### **3.4 KyUAS & MBA**

Kyminlaakso University of Applied Sciences (KyUAS) offers university level education in Kouvola, Kotka and Kuusankoski in the fields of Business and Administration, Technology and Transport, Social Sciences, Health and Physical Education, Culture, and Social and Natural Sciences. KyUAS has about



4500 students, 4000 of them being full-time students and 500 being part-time students. KyUAS has a staff of ~400, of which ~220 are lecturers. (KyUAS 2010c)

KyUAS has three faculties which are: International Business and Culture with 1500 students in Kouvola, Social and Health Care with 830 students in Kotka and Kuusankoski, Technology and transport with 2020 students in Kotka. (KyUAS 2010d)

International Business and Culture faculty divides to two departments; Business-department with 920 students and Media with 580 students. (KyUAS 2010e)

At KyUAS it is possible to study programs leading to Bachelor's degrees and Master's degrees. It is also possible to study in the open polytechnic, supplementary and post-graduate studies, specialization studies, virtual studies and languages. Only some degree programs are taught in English. At the moment, there are three degree programs taught in English: International Business (BBA), Design (Bachelor of Culture and Arts) and International Business Management (MBA). The two bachelor programs are full-time programs but, the Master's program is a part-time program. (KyUAS 2010f)

There is a master degree program in International Business Management available in KyUAS. The structure of the program is as follows: 60 credit units of professional studies and 30 credit units of thesis as development project, totaling 90 credits and approximately 2.5 years of study. This program, taught in English, expects 40 students within the fall 2011 semester. (KyUAS 2010a)

### ***3.5 KyUAS Environmental analysis***

Environmental issues can be related to political and legal factors, socio-cultural factors, economic factors and technological factors.

Political stability in Finland should not be seen as a threat. Such things as elections are not likely to affect education or MBA degrees in the country. Ammattikorkeakoululaki 26 b § (university of applied sciences law) legislates the right to collect fees from non-EEA students from higher degrees such as MBA degrees (Finlex 2009). This law about semester fees can change after the trial period. Now, between January 1 2010-December 31 2014, Higher Education Institutes in Finland have the right to collect a fee from higher degrees such as MBA degrees from non EEA-students.

Attitudes of student prospects in Russia play an important role. Finnish higher education has a good reputation in Russia and is seen as a high-quality option when choosing a country to study abroad (ICS 2010). There are differences between universities of applied sciences and science universities that not many Russians are aware of (ICS 2010). There might be some changes with the attitudes in the future in comparison of these two types of higher education institutes in Finland.

Now, that many higher education institutes in Finland are charging semester fees or other fees for MBA degrees, some non-EEA students may find it less interesting to come and study in Finland, in general, or study at KyUAS.

There are opinions from non-EEA students about the importance of cost-free studying in Finland. Some say that they will absolutely recommend Finland for their friends, as long as the education is free for all, here. (Helsingin Sanomat 2011)

### **3.6 KyUAS MBA SWOT analysis**

KyUAS SWOT-analysis is done by carefully studying KyUAS MBA and its characteristics as well as the environment where it operates. Answers to open-ended questions from two specialists have been used to strengthen the analysis. SWOT-analysis includes analysis on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

### 3.6.1 KyUAS MBA Strengths

Strengths of KyUAS MBA are location, European Diploma, part-time education and education in English.

As the main target group for KyUAS MBA, non-EEA students in the St. Petersburg area in Russia, location serves this well. Kouvola, where KyUAS MBA is situated, is located conveniently. It takes only 2 hours 20 minutes from St. Petersburg to Kouvola by Allegro-train (VR 2011).

Part-time education, especially for UAS MBA, can be seen as a strength. It can also be seen as a weakness from the busiest students' point of view. Those who are not working at the same time, and want to graduate as soon as possible, might want to choose a full-time MBA program.

As characteristics of the degree define previous work experience as a prerequisite, and often students are working at the same time, fulltime study is difficult to make happen. However, those wanting to hold an MBA degree in 1-1.5 years are probably not seeing the KyUAS as an option but are likely to seek full-time MBA programs.

English is the language in MBA-studies, worldwide. Most of the study books are written in English, as well as, websites. When the degree is International Business Management MBA degree, the choice of English as a language is quite natural as international trade is often done, more or less, in English. Students from abroad have their native languages, which in multicultural-group would be impossible to use, so there must be a common language to be used and, even for Russian students studying abroad, this would be English.

### 3.6.2 KyUAS MBA Weaknesses

A weakness of the KyUAS MBA in the St. Petersburg-area is the low level of presence of this degree. Not enough information/details are available about

the degree in the area. Another weakness, when thinking about Russian-markets, is the pre-requisite of 3+ years of work experience.

In Russia, students often graduate for a master's degree earlier than in Finland. So, this pre-requisite would slow down young students wanting to graduate sooner with the MBA degree. (IRS 2011)

KyUAS MBA degree, being a part-time degree, means a slower pace of graduating. Combining this with 3 years pre-requisite work experience: this can be too much for some students. Part-time studying often requires students to have a job, a home, etc. A full-time program would be simple to study in Kouvola in a shorter time with full concentration to it.

It could be understood that KyUAS MBA is not publicized enough. However, this is possible to be improved to make the degree better known. Marketing KyUAS MBA chapter goes into detail about this.

### **3.6.3 KyUAS MBA Opportunities**

There is a huge market for MBA degrees just behind the border in the St. Petersburg-area of Russia. There are millions of people living in the area and hundreds of thousands of students. Opportunities to market KyUAS MBA in the area are attractive.

It is possible for the KyUAS MBA to gain demand (in a scale needed for KyUAS) in the St. Petersburg and Vyborg areas and get managers to study it if the program is promoted in a proper way.

### **3.6.4 KyUAS MBA Threats**

One threat of KyUAS MBA deals with pricing issues. If the price is too high it can kill all the demand. If it is too low, it can raise questions about the quality of the education. Pricing is discussed further in its entitled chapter.

Another threat for KyUAS MBA is the competition. In Finland, there are many higher education institutes offering similar degrees and competing for students. Especially when thinking about Russian market, there are many local universities offering MBA comparable degrees. Also, countries such as Norway and Sweden can be seen as competition.



Figure 3. KyUAS SWOT

### **3.7 Key competitor analysis KyUAS MBA**

Competitors must be known, so that it's possible to plan marketing strategies in an effective way. Products, prices, promotion and channels must be compared constantly with those of the competitors. By doing this, this competitive advantage as well as disadvantage can be found. Knowing competitors well helps to launch accurate marketing campaigns against them. It also helps to prepare defenses against their actions. Things that are essential to know about competitors include knowing who they are, what their objectives are, their strategies, their strengths and weaknesses, and their reaction patterns. (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, Wong 1999, 506-507.)

Competition in general can be seen in four different levels. By **The first level**, seeing it is noticing activators that have similar offerings to the target market. As examples of the first level method, seeing competition would be chocolate snack bar brand “A” vs. chocolate snack bar brand “B”. **The second level** method sees activators that operate in the same category. What comes to products or services within this level, often notices indirect competitors. An example of the second level method of seeing competition would, not only be observing chocolate snack bar “A”, but other items in the wider category such as ice-creams and crisps. **The third level** notices all activators that supply the same product or deliver the same service. Examples of the third level method of seeing competition would be long-haul bus operator “A” against other long-haul bus operators, as well as against cars, airlines, railways, and so on. **The fourth level** method of seeing competition notices all activators in the market that are competing for the same money in customers’ accounts. A motorbike manufacturer “A” is not only competing against other motorcycle manufacturers but, also, against other major consumer durables such as boat manufacturers. (Gilligan & Wilson 2009, 260.)

Key competitors are those that have offerings to satisfy the same needs of the same target customers. Those must be identified in order to know about the competitive environment. (Chernev 2009, 73.)

This thesis is focusing on key competitors of the KyUAS MBA degree in Finland. Here, the second level method of seeing competition is used. There is also a science university as well as a university of technology offering MBA degrees that are seen as key competitors.

It is noted that any high-ranking university in Russia, especially in the St. Petersburg-area, can be seen as a direct competitor for KyUAS MBA. They are quite easy to access for the Russian students. (ICS 2010)

### **3.7.1 Aalto University Executive Education**

Aalto University Executive Education (AEE) has an MBA program and an eMBA program. Minimum requirements for the MBA program are BBA-level university degree and at least three years working experience that is relevant to MBA-studies. The GMAT-test is required. Fluent English is also required. There is a tuition fee of €28 000 + VAT 23%. This, when added with the €3000 and its VAT 23% fee for the books that are required, gives a grand total of €38 130. (AEE 2011b)

### **3.7.2 LUT School of Business**

Lappeenranta University of Technology School of Business has a program that can be compared to MBA which is a Master's Program in International Marketing Management (MIMM) which is free for the students. Focus of the program is on strategic marketing, international business and technology management. LUT promotes itself as one of the leading business schools in Finland. Lappeenranta is located near Russian border. LUT has an international alumni association for use by the students. (LUT 2011a)

A pre-requisite for LUT-program is at least 24 ECTS-units studies in marketing, technology management or international business. Final theses or traineeships are not included in this. The final theses grade must be more than 3, on a scale of 1-5, and the applicant must have high international competence. (LUT 2011b)

### **3.7.3 Haaga-Helia UAS**

Haaga-Helia UAS (Helsinki) has a master's degree program in international business. It is 90 ECTS credits and it takes a practical, flexible, personalized approach to studies and takes 2-3 years to complete. The annual student intake is 20 students. (Haaga-Helia UAS 2010b)

There will be a tuition fee of €3 750 per semester for students coming outside the EU or EEA and who do not have permanent residence in Finland. (Haaga-Helia UAS 2010a)

There will be a scholarship scheme introduced later, which will be introduced for non EU / EEA students who show good results during the first semester. (Haaga-Helia UAS 2010b)

### 3.7.4 Lahti UAS

MBA in International Business Management at Lahti UAS is a full-time degree program with duration of 1.5 years. There is an entrance exam, which is held in three cities in China (Chengdu, Tianjin, Wuhan), two cities in Vietnam (Hanoi, HCM City) and in Bangkok, Thailand. This exam will include an interview, a mathematic-logical test and case-based tasks. An entrance-exam is also held in Lahti, Finland. A BBA with at least three years of work-experience is required (with an exception possibility), as well as TOEFL or IELTS-test results. The cost of the program for exceptional non-EEA students is €12 000. This is quoted below. (Lahti UAS 2010a)

*“The Finnish Ministry of Educations requires a minimum of three years of work experience, after the Bachelor's Degree, from applicants inside the EU-countries in order to cover their tuition fee. Three years of work experience is recommended for an applicant from outside the EU-countries, but an exceptional applicant may be considered without three years of work experience and they will be responsible for their own tuition fees of 12,000 Euros. A limited number of scholarships are available according to the application pool each year.” (Lahti UAS 2010)*



### **3.7.5 Saimaa UAS**

Saimaa UAS in Lappeenranta has a Degree Program in International Business Management, the degree title being Master of Business Administration. (Saimaa UAS 2010a)

It is a part-time program. The duration is 2.5 years and 90 credit units, from which a thesis as a development project is 30 credit units. The focus is on international trade, particularly Russia-related. Some of the studies can be taken in St. Petersburg, in a co-operation university of Saimaa UAS. Saimaa UAS brings experts from St. Petersburg to give lectures in Finland. There are 15 starting places each year. Applicants must have a BBA, BSc, Bachelor of Hospitality Management or similar degree. In addition they must have more than three years of work experience after graduating with one of those degrees. (Saimaa UAS 2010b)

Saimaa UAS does not currently collect tuition fees for the 2011-2012 semesters, nor do they plan to in the foreseeable future. The Degree Program in International Business Management, the degree title being Master of Business Administration, is free of cost for all students. (Saimaa UAS 2010)

### **3.7.6 Abridgement of KyUAS MBA's and its key competitors' primary characteristics**

The KyUAS MBA's key competitors primarily offer MBA degrees. Also included is LUT with their MIMM-program. MBA programs of KyUAS, AEE, Haaga-Helia UAS and Saimaa UAS are part-time programs. Part-time programs are better for students who are working at the same time. Full-time programs often make graduation possible in shorter time. Duration of studies vary between 1.5 and 3 years. AEE does not tell the exact time but they promote their program as being flexible.

Prices vary between being completely free and costing as much as €38 130. The KyUAS MBA program costs €9 500 which is reasonably priced for this

group. The pre-requisite for all these programs is a bachelor-level education, often preferred to be of the field of business and administration (BBA). Pre-requisite work-experience is 3 years in all programs, except in LUT's MIMM program.

There can be additional pre-requisites that vary between institutes. Some of these mentioned include AEE that requires GMAT, written essays, résumés and two letters of recommendation. LUT requires acceptable points from one language test that can be: TOEFL, IELTS, CAE or CPE. Lahti UAS requires acceptable points from TOEFL or IELTS-tests. The main characteristics of the KyUAS MBA and its key competitors are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Key competitors' primary characteristics compared to those of KyUAS

	KyUAS	AEE	LUT	Haaga - Helia UAS	Lahti UAS	Saimaa UAS
Degree	MBA	MBA	MIMM	MBA	MBA	MBA
Part-time Full-time	PT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
Duration (years)	2.5	-	2	2-3	1.5	2.5
Price €	9 500	38 130	0	15 000-22 500	12 000	0
Pre-requisites/ education (level)	BBA	BBA	BBA	BBA	BBA	BBA
Pre-requisites/ work-experience (years)	3	3	-	3	3	3
Pre-requisites / other	-	GMAT, essays, resumes, 2 letters of rec.	TOEFL/IELTS CAE/CPE	-	TOEFL/IELTS	-

### **3.8 Competitors' brochures and websites**

To be able to compete in the market of higher education, the institution should focus on the prospectus, the brochure, as well as the website. These are the most important interfaces between the institution, the market, and the possible future students. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 75-77.)

When designing brochures, reader interest should be kept in mind. Usually, the first couple of pages will determine if the reader will continue reading further or not. Design should be done in a way that images and graphics do not overcome everything else. Detailed information is always good to have. The question is whether or not the material captures enough attention so that further reading can take place. (Ibid., 79.)

#### **3.8.1 Aalto University Executive Education**

Aalto University Executive Education' MBA brochure is very business-oriented in style. The cover consists of a woman and a man both in business suits, in not just one photo, but two. The title of the brochure is Aalto MBA Program, Learn to Lead. The title is written in white on orange background. The lower left corner says AEE Aalto University Executive Education. (AEE 2011c)

The second page introduces the program as globally renowned and describes the program being suitable for exceptional and motivated people. The program content is explained with descriptions of modules and core courses. The third page includes a picture of a smart-looking business woman, in addition to information about a range of elective courses. There are also pre-requisites, an application process, schedules and application documents listed. A fourth page informs the applicant about tuition fees, as well as gives more things to ponder about on the superiority of AEE in Finland. There are also contact information and information sessions listed. The page includes three different logos of associations where AEE is accredited, as well as the AEE-logo with contact information. (AEE 2011c)

All in all, the AEE-brochure boasts the superiority of the university. It can be read in text and seen in graphics. AEE is marketing itself as a premier-choice of higher business education in Finland. This marketing is founded and has proven. The brochure is brief, but well-constructed. It appears to be very convincing, and itself, puts AEE in the minds of prospect students. The university that states it is number one in Finland should be explored further, while always kept in mind.

The website, itself, is thorough. There are many things explained about the university, its programs and everything in between. The colors are the same as used in the brochure. Orange, black and white with hints of grey and blue create a color theme that is unique to those of competitors'. The front page offers a lot of useful information to those interested in education and AEE. Most of the information is in text-form and there are many links to subpages, also, where in-depth information can be obtained. The website includes a lot of information, but it is arranged in a tidy, clear way. One successful alumni is pictured on the front page in an interview. Links to video-clips are added, as well. There is also a world-map to show just how international AEE is. (AEE 2011d)

### **3.8.2 LUT School of Business**

Lappeenranta University of Technology Business School's brochure is stylish black with grey/silver text and a red bar below the name of the school. Below this a question: "What makes us unique?" Colors are chosen in a way that they reflect the organization's image. Colors are similar to those used in the LUT business school-website, in general. Red and black are also used in the LUT-logo. There are, however, other colors in LUT-logo, in addition. (LUT 2011c)

The next page of the brochure includes the organizational chart of LUT. Now, the LUT-logo is included. The amount of text is kept to a minimum. The cover page has only one phrase in addition to school's name, and the second page has only the chart and areas of specialization. One of the areas is expertise in

Russian business. LUT, is strongly, a technology university. Then the brochure explains more general information about LUT, as well as information about its programs. Only then, the mission of LUT is written. The mission includes focusing on Russian business, as well as combining technological know-how with business, where areas of research are listed. (LUT 2011c)

A photo of the dean of the Business school, nearly full page sized, is included. The clothing and the appearance of the dean are business-focused. Next, the brochure wants to tell of the history of LUT and the Viipuri Prize which is given every second year, established by the Society for Viipuri School of Economics. Images include three photos of business-like young people giving presentations or being in negotiations. This brochure promotes their dedication to being very business-focused. (LUT 2011c)

The coloring theme returns on page seven from white background, to being black background, as on pages one and two. The second to last page is black with names, years and black/white photos of honored Viipuri Prize Scholars. Finally, the last page is almost completely black except for the red bar and four lines of text about how to find more information about LUT School of Business. (LUT 2011c)

The LUT School of Business-brochure gives a stylistic image about the school explaining the history, its present state, prizes, staff, degrees and reputation of the school. There is enough information to raise attention and interest. The image is well-chosen and gives a stylistic and high-quality impression of the LUT School of Business. Usually, the first couple of pages determine if the reader will continue reading further, or not (Gibbs&Knapp 2002, 79). With this brochure, the interest probably remains, until encountering the last page. Images and graphics don't overcome everything else, and the attention is captured enough so that the reader seeks more information.

LUT-website is business and technology oriented. On the opening page, there is an announcement about the world-famous manager from Toyota giving a presentation at LUT. Faculties are listed clearly and, immediately, they give a

very sophisticated image. The color theme is followed from the brochures and remains the same through its images, links and the other website content. (LUT 2011d)

The LUT School of Business-webpage still keeps the same color theme as other pages. There is, however a different photo on the page. It has a woman in a business outfit in an appealing room with black leather furniture. Below, there are logos of institutions which LUT is a member of. There is a neat listing of brochures, news, contact info and other information. The website, as well as other pages of LUT, can be read also in Russian. (LUT 2011e)

### **3.8.3 Haaga-Helia UAS**

Haaga-Helia UAS has included several brochures on their website. However, none of them seem to be strictly about the MBA degree. There are brochures such as “Finland and Haaga-Helia”, “Haaga-Helia International Brochure” and “International Business” to name only a few. (Haaga-Helia 2010d)

The Haaga-Helia website is well structured. Color themes include green and blue on a white background. The initial page gives a very international image of the UAS. Language options include Finnish, Swedish, English, Russian and Chinese-languages. Colors are fresh and the “We want you”-animated pictures are flashing on the front page. The site is fresh-looking and interesting but, still very informative in character. (Haaga-Helia 2010c)

Haaga-Helia-website and its business pages within in it are lacking a business-oriented look. There are no pictures of people in business suits or other things one often thinks of when talking about business. There is a lot of text, but the use of AIDA is minimal. The website, being almost entirely covered in text and flashing boxes, might not raise interest or desire for a prospective business master’s degree student.

### 3.8.4 Lahti UAS

The Lahti UAS Master's Degree's leaflet is of one page and is blue and white. Its slogan is "Build international business opportunities – not in theory, but in practice". It asks about the desire to create or develop business opportunities in the emerging markets and asks to join the team. The leaflet has information about the cost of the degree for non-EEA students. There is contact information for additional material as well as the logo, name and the internet address of Lahti UAS. (Lahti UAS 2011b)

This leaflet is a compact, one-page flyer. Its colors are distinctive, perhaps reflecting the colors of the Finnish flag. The Information is limited but the purpose of the flyer is, most likely, just to capture attention and interest towards the Lahti UAS degree-program. The following guide is more informative and, perhaps, leads to desire and action following the AIDA-model to choose Lahti UAS as a place to study.

The student guide of Lahti University of Applied Sciences Faculty of Business Studies Master's in International Business Management is a plain black and white. It includes 11 pages, including the cover sheet. Not leaving much space for questions, it goes through the program in great detail. The image is plain and simple, maybe even boring. (Lahti UAS 2011c)

Another question is, does this kind of brochure work in raising attention, interest and desire towards Lahti UAS? It includes the objectives of the program, Lahti UAS unique approach to learning, five different phases of the program, information about modules and courses, as well as contact information. It is more an information package than a brochure.

The Lahti UAS-website is very simple and modest. The same colors are used as in the Lahti UAS-leaflet. Being modest, the website's main page is not convincing. It is messy and contains too much text compared to other contents. There are links to International Degree Programs, brochures, and so on. However, it may be distracting in understanding the meaning of a banner with

a pair of women's red high-heel shoes and a phrase from a student in Lahti UAS. There are no business-oriented images on the main-page. There is no business feeling or association to business world in the imagery. (Lahti UAS 2011d)

### **3.8.5 Saimaa UAS**

The Saimaa UAS-brochure for the Masters of Business Administration-program is a compact, four-page pack. The cover has combined photos of a Russian city possibly St. Petersburg on the background, with two young men in business suits on the front. The cover is very colorful, thanks to those photos. The Saimaa UAS-logo and name are printed in "the sky" of the cover. In lower right corner, there is a green box with the text: "Master's Degree Program in International Business Management. Special Focus on Russian Business. Lappeenranta, Finland". The next page includes a photo of a compass in a hand on the top of a globe. Page includes general information about the program, including the aim of the studies, focus of the studies, duration, extent, positions possibly available for graduates, and so on. (Saimaa UAS 2011c)

The next page has a lot of text that goes deeper in the structure of the studies and the framework of the curriculum. There is information about co-operation with Russian universities, requirements and the application process. The last page gives contact information to applicants that are interested. The color scheme of the last page is fresh, being lime in color. The bottom of the last page includes the Saimaa UAS-logo, its name and its website address. (Saimaa UAS 2011c)

The Saimaa UAS-brochure is compact, but still capturing, informative and fresh looking. Its visuals are chosen to well-capture the readers' attention and raise more interest towards the Saimaa UAS-degree program. The brochure underlines the focus of the Saimaa UAS into Russian business.



The Saimaa UAS-website uses a grey on grey image that is composed of its logo and the UAS-name. The brochure had fresh lime-color in it, but the website's color scheme is somewhat dull. There is, however, a photo of a fresh-looking young lady jumping. She is wearing a shirt and jeans with the Saimaa UAS-logo, which looks appealing. (Saimaa UAS 2011d)

The MBA-page has no images. There are links to application forms and instructions, structure of the program and other important things, but only in plain text format. The contact information is on the bottom of the page. This page is informative, but does not add up to creating a business-oriented image of the UAS. Without reading the text, it is impossible to understand that the degree the page is about is a master's degree in business administration. (Saimaa UAS 2011e)

### **3.8.7 Abridgement of key competitors' brochures and websites**

Here, it can be noted that websites and brochures analyzed all have their own image. The colors are different from each other and each institution has chosen its own visual image. The colors differ and are easily recognized and remembered. As an example, while KyUAS uses green as a dominant color, AEE is using orange and black on white.

The AEE-brochure and its website, together with LUT, have the image of being most professional and aim to market their degrees for motivated, high-classed professionals. Also, while UASs give a trusted image, the image is easier to approach for the "ordinary business student". Although the imaging has similarities for AEE and LUT, tuition fees and other aspects set these two apart. What these brochures and websites tell us, is that, UASs should focus more on being different from each other. These brochures and websites easily give the image that, in the Finnish MBA-market, the AEE is in the highest position. Also, the LUT is different from other activators, but UASs easily fall to one category together.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

### ***4.1 KyUAS MBA program design***

The program design of KyUAS MBA is an important factor in marketing it. There are both part-time and full-time MBA programs in Finland. However, one important feature of the KyUAS MBA program is that it is a part-time program. This helps people who work full-time, to take part in classes that are held on Thursday evenings and Fridays, frequenting about once a month. However, this part-time schedule forces the program to be about 2.5 years on total study-time. A full-time program would be shorter, such as in Lahti UAS, which is 1.5 years. The expert opinion from Russia is that, part-time MBA is better for KyUAS, as it allows combining the studies and work (ICS 2010).

### ***4.2 KyUAS MBA program pricing***

Pricing is a very important feature of a program. It is one significant factor that often differentiates institutions and programs. Price represents the value of a program. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 67-69.)

The KyUAS MBA program costs €9 500 for non-EEA students. Compared to many MBA programs in Finland, this price is reasonable. Lahti UAS MBA is €12 000 (Lahti UAS).

Haaga Helia UAS has a price of €3 750/semester for the MBA degree (Haaga-Helia UAS 2010a). So, the total cost of the degree is multiplied by the number of semesters (4 to 6) making the degree cost €15 000 to €22 500, depending on the duration of studies. The duration of studies within the MBA program at Haaga-Helia is estimated to be 2-3 years (Haaga-Helia UAS 2010b). MIMM program at LUT is also free (LUT 2011a). However, it is not directly comparable to MBA-programs.

Saimaa UAS has a free MBA program (Saimaa UAS 2010). The MBA degree, being free, is exceptional in this group which is what makes a tough competitor for KyUAS MBA when it comes to pricing. €9 500, compared to the others' prices, is reasonable. However, the potential exists to make the price a little higher, possibly €9 900 or so, if it was not for Saimaa UAS. However, pricings can change for each academic year or semester, as the situation is now.

Currently, the Russian expert opinion is that the price is reasonable. However, there might be the danger of applicants seeking similarly priced degrees outside of Finland. (ICS 2010)

These factors show that KyUAS pricing has been done properly by reference to competition. Furthermore, increasing or decreasing the price, when the price level is known, will send a message that deals with the quality-change of the program to consumers, such as the students. The quality of the program must match or exceed the expectations set by the price. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 70.) It must be noted though, that Saimia UAS provides their MBA program free of cost (Saimaa UAS 2010).

Experience from Sweden is that when tuition fees were introduced, a sharp decline of international applications was seen. Swedish universities are expecting a 75% decline in non-EEA applications for the fall of 2011. Non-EEA students are applying to countries with free education, such as Norway, which is seeing a rise of 45% in non-EEA applications. (Lundagard.net 2011)

There is a risk that the same can happen to Finnish educational institutions. Students may be seeking higher quality teaching but, in addition to that, they may be seeking it cost-free. One thing that has attracted students from abroad to study in Finland in the past was the free-of-cost education. That gave serious competitive advantage to Finnish Higher Education Institutions when they wanted foreign students to come and study.

### **4.3 KyUAS MBA promotions**

Promotion is the part of communication which is filled with company messages that are meant to help in spreading awareness about it. Promotion is also used in raising interest of the organization and to stimulate purchase of its products. Only effective promotion will get people's attention. (Kotler 2003, 18-19.)

The AIDA-model wants to raise attention first, then interest, desire, and finally, action (Megicks, Donnelly, Harrison 2009, 133.). This is a model that can be used in planning promotions.

#### **4.3.1 KyUAS MBA image, communication and slogan**

Promoting higher education is a challenging task because education is highly intangible and, with tuition fees, expectations are grown even higher for students. Today's most important channels of promoting degrees and institutions are Internet and a carefully designed brochure. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 74-77.)

The Internet can be used 24/7. Where there is a possibility to use the Internet, it can be said that geographic boundaries have been lifted. (Kotler 2003, 91-92.)

In international marketing KyUAS should give more effort in effective Internet-marketing. Its website could be planned to be more focused. For example, there could be a dedicated website for the MBA program. It would carry the theme of the KyUAS' main website with its colors and logo, and would be linked to it, but would be more business oriented. There could be alumni of the program introduced, as well as companies and godfathers of the program presented in a business world oriented way.

KyUAS creates image to international students mostly through the Internet. The KyUAS-website is clear and well thought-out. There is, however, some Finnish-words mixed with English in the English site, also. Intentional or not,

the line should be kept with using English, exclusively. The website is playing an important role in advertising the institution, in a controlled way, to student prospects.

The KyUAS slogan, clearly visible on the main page, is “Achievers of success”. The slogan is well-thought and creates high expectations for students. It would be good to include examples that are easily seen, such as alumni who have achieved success with KyUAS-degrees. These successful former students should be introduced side-by-side in the KyUAS-page. The visual image should be more business-oriented.

Colors on the main page are similar to those used in the KyUAS-logo. KyUAS uses green as their main color. In today’s world, green is usually connected to environmental issues and responsibility. Also, this reflects in the KyUAS MBA-curriculum which includes sustainability studies. The KyAMK-logo uses green color added with the institution name in black. In bigger font, there is the institution’s name in Finnish: “Kymenlaakson ammattikorkeakoulu” and in smaller font, below it is: “Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences”. For international marketing, consideration should be given to using a logo with the English institution name being more prominent. Also, the abbreviation “KyUAS” could also be used.

If this is already reflected there is no sense in utilizing other color-schemes if the audience already connects with the institution and its color. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 79.)

Promotions about KyUAS MBA will help to spread awareness of it. There is a demand in the St. Petersburg area, for MBA-education that is situated in Finland. Students there don’t have extensive knowledge about opportunities to achieve it in Finland, as of yet. When the information and promotions do reach them, the demand will be high if the conditions of getting the degree do not change greatly. The KyUAS MBA, itself, is not well-known in the St. Petersburg area. (ICS 2010)

Lately, the conditions have changed in Finland because of the introduction of tuition fees for non-EEA students.

### 4.3.2 KyUAS-website and brochure

KyUAS-website is clear, and fresh in colors. Green is one of the primary colors reflecting from the logo of KyUAS, as well as the mascot, a lizard called "Gekkonen". Language options on the start page include Finnish and English. (KyUAS 2010g)

It would be good to include additional language on the website, also. Some of the other UASs have, Russian as a language option, as an example. KyUAS wishes to have students from Russia so the Russian language-option could be also included in the website. On the other hand, the education is in English in the MBA program, so English can be sufficient language for the website, as well.

The brochure of the MBA program is easy to read. It has two pages, first page being in Finnish and the second in English. It is on white background with not many colors used. The basic information as well as structure of the studies is included. Contact information is included, also. The brochure has the logos of both KyUAS and MAMK as a collaborating UAS. The brochure is minimal. But, is it enough to capture interest? On the other hand, the website has plenty of additional information about the KyUAS MBA being available.

KyUAS should focus on being different and raising up from the sea of UASs in Finland. This can be achieved by focusing on making the website, as well as, the MBA-brochure more professional-looking and more business-focused. At the moment, those do not reflect business as much and as well as AEE or LUT do. Universities and universities of applied sciences are not exactly the same thing, but, still UASs should not feel that they are the lesser of what comes from MBA degrees. KyUAS could include people in business outfits in its marketing, as well as focus more on successful alumni and their use in marketing. Websites could be developed to be more business-like with people

in business clothes, stylized photos of nice school buildings and their history, teachers, lecturers and staff with merits.

For example, could the KyUAS MBA be renamed KyUAS Business School, MIKY School of Business (Mikkeli-Kymenlaakso), KyMi School of Business or similarly named school making it different from many other UASs? Then, in addition to brochures, the website could be separated, and be very business-styled with its own domain. For example, Aalto University has AEE: Aalto University Executive Education. KyUAS could have, as mentioned before, KyMi School of Business or KyUAS Business School.

The fresh green color looks corporate-responsible and nice, with Gekkonen-mascot delivering even more appeal to it. However, the KyUAS MBA-site or, KyMi Business School's MBA-site, should be more mature looking. The use of the color green, dark suits, old buildings, alumni and collaborating corporations, are used to create the image of a very business-orientated, master's degree education.

### **4.3.3 Exhibitions**

The KyUAS MBA should raise attention of its existence in St. Petersburg by participating in relative fairs and collaborating more with the local higher education institutions in the area as physical presence would, most likely be, the best choice of making the degree and the KyUAS itself better known there. (ICS 2010)

There are fairs for MBAs, foreign education and regular higher education in the St. Petersburg area. KyUAS MBA promotion should be focused on these. It should not be promoted in schools. Being present, KyUAS can raise interest in the target group of possible future students.

#### **4.3.4 Other channels**

A Russian specialist does not see promotions in newspapers as a good way to raise awareness of KyUAS in Russia. Some middle-management magazine could be a choice, but physical presence is still preferred. (ICS 2010)

Instead, a preferred way of promoting KyUAS MBA, in addition to website and brochure, would be through an agent who has specialized in marketing foreign education in Russia. Also, it should be remembered not to effectively market the KyUAS MBA to the students of KyUAS' partner universities in the area. (ICS 2010)

#### **4.4 KyUAS MBA student recruitment**

Enrolment management is about recruiting new students and keeping the existing students (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 103). A target group for the KyUAS MBA, are people who are interested in educating themselves further with the MBA degree. People may have the decision power themselves, or the decision may come from their superiors at work, or even parents at home. The consumer of higher education can be the student, but it can also be the parents, the workplace, or society, in general. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 105) Furthermore, it can be noted that the main interest for KyUAS MBA, and the purpose of this work, is to recruit more non-EEA students from Russia to study KyUAS MBA in Finland.

KyUAS should promise to give more visa-support for Russian students when they are coming to study at KyUAS (ICS 2010). However, the degree, currently being part-time, can create additional challenges on visa issues. Still, the KyUAS MBA, being part-time, is a good option, especially for those who have a job and want to combine working and studying (ICS 2010).

Higher Education students are more about consuming than buying education. More important than money, is the time, ability and effort, invested. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 107)



When students are recruited, KyUAS should remember that the price being reasonable is often a secondary consideration for students. More important is to be able to assure students and possible future students, that studying at KyUAS is worth the time and effort. The degree, itself, should be promoted nationally, as well as internationally. The value of the MBA degree is often directly related to the prestige of the business school which grants it (Schweitzer 2010).

An MBA degree from UAS produces the same competency for public offices and other positions as higher academic degrees (KyUAS 2010b). By giving the same formal competency as a higher academic degree, the UAS MBA degree, itself, is valued. It can be assumed that foreign students are not aware of this fact and it should be promoted.

Student recruitment is challenging as decision experience of a student often includes a lot of planning and visiting campuses. (Gibbs & Knapp 2002, 107.)

#### ***4.5 KyUAS MBA positioning / Russia***

Positioning of the KyUAS MBA, from a Russian point of view, is quite good for what comes from higher education institutions in Finland. However, there is a lot of competition in Russia, alone. Also, there is competition in other countries like Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. Norway has not introduced tuition fees, as of yet (Lundagard.net 2011).

Simple improvements in KyUAS MBA-marketing to Russian prospect students can be made. This can include using Russian language more in promotions, websites and brochures, while focusing more on students with required work-experience. The MBA-education in Finland, as well as Finland in general, should be marketed in a more efficient way.

## **4.6 Future work**

Essential future work would include a comprehensive questionnaire and interview study for Russian students in chosen universities within Russia, especially in the St. Petersburg-area. Questions asked would be connected to the higher-education theory written within this work, such as higher education marketing. Questions included would cover opinions about studying in Finland, in general, and also in situation of when tuition fees exist and should be paid.

Topics that should also be researched by questionnaires and interviews include KyUAS MBA marketing, how they feel about the webpages, brochures, social media and other KyUAS MBA marketing efforts. How do they feel about Finland, in general? Also, some deepening questions would be included, such as the difference between a university degree and a university of applied sciences degree. Especially, a Master's in the field of Business and Administration. Do these make any difference?

What kind of things do they consider when they are deciding about their next higher education institute? How much does the price have to do with that decision making process? What about the location, the reputation, website, alumni, etc.? These kinds of questions should be asked in future studies.

Future work should also include studies on the effect of tuition fees in universities and universities of applied sciences in Finland. What kind of effect have these fees had to the number and characteristics of non EEA-students applying for education in Finland. Further studies could include a comparison of these effects in Finland to those in some other countries, for example, Sweden and Denmark vs. Norway.

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