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A STUDY OF PERCEPTION GAP BETWEEN UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND GENERAL PUBLIC IN SOUTHERN FINLAND

– Comparative Analysis of Turku, Tampere and
Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences



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Since Finnish University of Applied Sciences (UAS) was introduced in the beginning of 90s, the role and position of UAS have been undergone a fierce discussion in the past 20-year education reform. As later supported by the research findings, the current social recognition of UAS in Finland is still relatively low than the traditional research-based university.

This research investigates how public relations (PR) in UAS executes different PR and media activities to build relationship with their target publics and thereby bettering UAS's brand image and recognition in Finland; and how the target publics actually perceive the brand of UAS. The main objective of this thesis is to explore the potential perception gap between UAS and its target public. The thesis is concluded by several recommendations for UAS's PR practitioners.

The theoretical framework was designed with respect to PR relationship building, media relations and branding in PR.

Data collection for this paper comprises both qualitative (interviewing four marketing and communication managers from Turku UAS, Tampere UAS and Haaga-Helia UAS) and quantitative (online survey targeting students from Finnish high school, tertiary education institutions, graduates and employees in Turku, Tampere and Helsinki region) methods. The interviewees were asked about their PR role, PR activities and their views on public perception towards UAS. The survey respondents were questioned as to their perception on UAS, decision-making factors while choosing either UAS or University, the habit of using media channels and views on information received about UAS.

The findings of the research reveal that UAS is facing a problem of low social recognition and the relative significant perception gap between the UAS and public. The messages UAS's PR usually delivered are related to degree application, diversity or specialized degree programs and job-oriented education. However, except the agreement on job-oriented nature, the public concerns more on UAS's limited teaching and learning resources, companies' network and opportunity for personal growth.

KEYWORDS:

Public Relations, media relations, Strategic Management, Communication, Branding

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. FOUNDATIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS	4
2.1. Background of PR	4
2.2. PR relationship building	8
2.2.1. Four-Model of PR	8
2.2.2. PR's relationship management	11
2.2.3. PR campaign and Behavioral communication model	13
2.3. PR's Media relation	14
2.3.1. Agenda-setting (AGS)	15
2.4. PR and Brand building	17
2.4.1. PR's Function in branding	17
2.4.2. Incorporation of PR into branding strategy	18
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	20
3.1. Introduction	20
3.2. Approaches and data collection methods	20
3.3. Research validity and limitations	23
4. FINDINGS	24
4.1. UAS view on PR role, PR activities and publics' perception	24
4.1.1. The PR role in UAS	24
4.1.2. UAS's PR activities	25
4.1.3. UAS's view on public perception	29
4.2. General public perception on UAS	30
4.2.1. Brand awareness (result from 130 target public / general students)	30
4.2.2. Brand acceptability (result from 124 target public / general students)	31
4.2.3. Brand preference (result from potential and University students)	32
4.2.4. Brand Loyalty to UAS (47 targeted students with study experience in UAS)	34
4.2.5. Other general comments (from all respondents)	36
5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION	37
5.1. The key messages delivered by the UAS	38
5.2. PR activities and Relationship building	39
5.3. Target public's perception on UAS	41
5.4. Recommendations	42

5.5. Suggestions for further researches	44
REFERENCES	45

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	Interview questions
Appendix 2.	Respondents' basic information: current occupation and age
Appendix 3.	Survey's questions
Appendix 4.	Figure of "Have you heard of UAS?", "Are you studying or have you studied in UAS" and "If no, have you considered studying in UAS"
Appendix 5.	Table of "How often did you read and hear about the information of UAS?"
Appendix 6.	Table of "How frequent do you use the given media channels"
Appendix 7a.	Table of "How useful are the following types of information to you when you are choosing between UAS and University" (by all respondents)
Appendix 7b.	Table of "Decision-making factors on choosing universities or UAS (All respondents)
Appendix 7c.	Perception on UAS in comparison with traditional university (All respondents)
Appendix 7d.	Table of the General image of UAS (All respondents)
Appendix 8a.	Table of "how useful are the following types of information to you when you are choosing between UAS and University"
Appendix 8b.	Table of what are the main decision-making factors affecting the respondents' choice between UAS and traditional university
Appendix 9.	Table, chart and comments extract of" How can UAS better their image?"

FIGURES

Figure 1. Overview of thesis	3
Figure 2: Flow of literature review	4
Figure 3. Symmetrical Behavioral Communication model	14
Figure 4: Overview of agenda-setting	15
Figure 5. General Impression of the received messages and information about UAS	32

TABLE

Table 1: Grunig's Four Models of PR	10
Table 2. Types of publics	11
Table 3. Relationship maintenance strategies for preferred outcomes	12
Table 4. Similarity of brand building stages and PR outcomes measurement	18
Table 5a. The most useful information of UAS and important decision-making factors	33
Table 5b. Perception of the potential student & university student group on UAS	34
Table 5c. General image of UAS (by potential & university student group)	34
Table 6a. Respondents' (with UAS experience) Perception on UAS comparing to traditional university	35
Table 6b. General image of UAS (Respondents with study experience in UAS)	36
Table 7. Potential perception gap between UAS and target public	41

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

UAS	University of Applied Sciences
PR	Public Relations
TUAS	Turku University of Applied Sciences
TAMK	Tampere University of Applied Sciences
HHUAS	Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences
AGS	Agenda-Setting

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the thesis

Since the beginning of my study in Turku UAS, two questions are always stirring in my mind: (1) why from my personal experience and observation are the public recognition and status of UAS relatively low than the traditional university? (2) How does the general public actually view this type of tertiary education institution? Although principally the binary tertiary education system in Finland considered that the recognition of bachelor and master degree in UAS is amount to the traditional research-based university, these questions came even more significant when more UAS turns into the form of Limited Company recently. With reference to the author's working experience in a public relations firm where he began to connect himself with PR industry, he realized there could be an interesting linkage and relationship between the PR role and its UAS's branding. Therefore, I am curious to explore what have the UAS PR done for the brand awareness sake in these past years, and how well is the brand of UAS matched with what the public perceive via UAS's PR activities.

In order to fulfil my academic requirement and personal long-existing curiosity in the brand awareness of UAS and further deepen the knowledge in PR, I hereby make my best attempt in doing an extensive academic research on how the PR practitioners in UAS launch PR activities in raising the university's brand awareness by doing a cross-case analysis between Turku UAS (TUAS), Tampere UAS (TAMK) and Haaga-Helia UAS (HHUAS). These three UAS are not only highly developed and have long historical experience since the beginning of Finnish tertiary education reform in the 90s, but also their incoming students are one of the highest among other Finnish UAS.

1.2. Research questions

The core research is the cross-case comparison of TUAS, TAMK and HHUAS over the potentiality or possibility of perception gap between UAS and general

public / target publics (potential students and current students in tertiary education will be focused) on the UAS's brand. In order to achieve this objective, three research questions are established as follows:

1. What information and messages have the three UAS delivered to the general public through PR activities?
2. What PR and media relations activities have the three UAS commonly used to reach and build the relationship with their target publics?
3. How do the target publics actually perceive the brand of Finnish UAS?

1.3. Thesis structure

This paper will be divided into mainly three parts:

Firstly before the specific results drawn from research on three particular UAS, a comprehensive fundamental knowledge of PR is presented via reviewing academic journals and books which ease the understanding of what roles, functions and strategies the PR embodies, especially in the context of branding. In this part, several PR, communication and media theories will be discussed, in addition to the understanding of branding in PR.

Following the literature review of all fields of PR-related foundation, the three specific Finnish UAS (TAUS, TAMK and HHUAS) will be examined. Throughout the comparative case analysis it unveils what PR activities have been done by their respective PR in order to raise its UAS brand awareness.

Finally, with reference to the first-hand, second-hand information and results, a pragmatic discussion about the three research questions will be uncovered. It discusses what the actual interaction and relationship have been built between the PR, media and target public (Potential students from high school, graduates and employees who may consider to further study in tertiary education institutions, plus the current UAS tertiary education students), and what the possible perception gaps between the target publics and UAS are. Constructive recommendation of future PR activities will also be highlighted

This whole exploration and discussion process is considerably valuable and important for whose job is related in public relations and particularly working in UAS. This paper acts as a check point for them to rethink whether their current PR functions and their ways of communication are effective enough to achieve what their organization needs. Besides, it performs as a valuable reference for Finnish education development, particularly UAS's social status development. Figure 1 below depicts an overview of interactive parties discussed throughout the whole thesis.

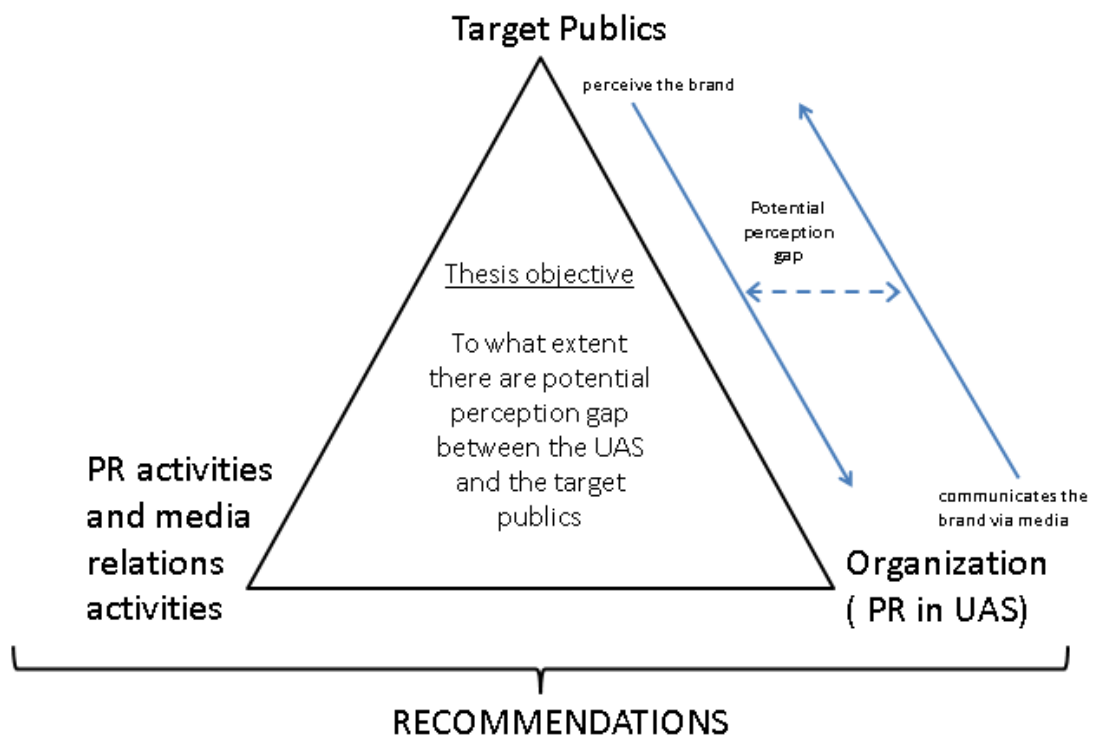


Figure 1. Overview of thesis

2. FOUNDATIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

In this chapter, I will lead you step by step to understand what the role of PR is by generalizing the literature review into four parts. Section 2.1 briefly discusses the definition and evolving role of PR during the past decades as a general PR background. Section 2.2 - 2.4 explain a more consolidated backcloth on PR with respect to PR relationship building (how PR practitioner establish a relationship with its target public), PR and media relation (how the PR influences its target public perception through media and PR activities) and branding in PR context (how PR execute different PR activities and use media to brand its organization). Figure 2 illustrates the overall flow of the literature review part.

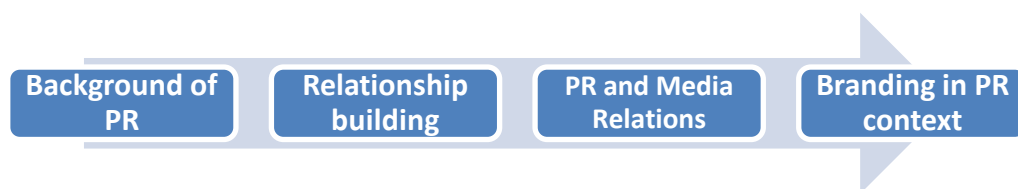


Figure 2: Flow of literature review

2.1. Background of PR

2.1.1. Public Relations

“If a boy meets a girl, he tells her how lovely she looks, how much he loves her, that’s sales promotion. If he impresses her how wonderful he is, that is advertising. But if the girl seeks him out because she has heard from others, that is public relations.”
(Derriman, 1964, p.13)

Though the concept of Public Relations (PR) is often viewed as crude (Young, 2011), its formal PR practice was already recognized since the early 20th century, especially in the area of governmental communication and political debate. PR arose at points of change where there was disagreement over policy and practice (L’Etang, 2011, p.31). The government at that time started to realize the positive meaning of organizational communication and deployed it to influence the key groups of citizen and public opinion more widely (L’Etang, 2011) in the favor of governmental benefits and reputation. Definition of PR is

so diverse that according to an American academic research by Rex Harlow, he identified 472 definitions of PR between 1900s and 1976 (from emerge of modern PR to his working day) (Fawkes, 2012, p.172; Butterick, 2011, p.6). Such variety of definition can be explained by the nature of PR which encompasses a wide range of fields and disciplines, especially when PR is viewed as a communication management (Grunig, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising to realize that a widely accepted definition of PR is still in discussion (Jo, 2003), even though they share and involve similar values and stakeholders. The following shows some examples of mainstream definition of PR:

Definition	Author	Reference
PR is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationship between organizations and their public. “	Public Relations Society of America	PRSA, 2011
“Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.	Chartered Institute of Public Relations	CIPR, n.d.
Public relations is the management of communication between an organization and its publics – the groups that affect the ability of an organization to its goals.	Grunig and Hunt	Grunig and Hunt, 2008, p.4
“Public relations is the management function that entails planning, research, publicity, promotion, and collaborative decision making to help any organization’s ability to listen to, appreciate and respond appropriately to those persons and groups whose mutually beneficial relationships the organization needs to foster as it strives to achieve its mission and vision.	Heath & Coombs	Heath and Coombs, 2009, p.18

All in all, PR is a communication discipline managing the relationship and the bridge between an organization and its public, so as to construct and improve the goodwill of their organization, and thereby anchoring the organizational goals achievement. Therefore, “Strategic PR” is sometimes used by scholars to

represent the key objectives of PR as enhancing corporate reputation through incorporating the organization's strategy development and strategic business planning with PR communication strategy (Khodarahmni, 2009). The word "Public" signifies a group of people drawn by specific interests having opinions about those interests or issues, while "Relations" relates to the relationship between its publics and organization (Burnett and Moriarty, 1998, p.347). In other words, PR serves as the ambassador and conscience of the enterprise (Haywood, 1998, p.23; Oliver, 2007, p.61). This applies especially when nowadays increasing amounts of organizations and business companies have the need to manage such relationships in order to survive from multitudes of economic and political changes.

3.1.2. Publics and public opinion

As stated previously where Public is a group of people sharing similar specific interests, opinion about those interest areas and issues, publics is normally divided into two main groups: Internal publics and external publics (Burnett and Moriarty, 1998, p.347; Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 1996, 141). Internal publics share the institutional identity such as employees, investors, suppliers, regular customers who normally communicate in the ordinary routine of the work within organizations. External publics means the group of people not directly or officially a part of the organization such as local community, neighbors, government officials, regulators, special-interest groups, media, and financial community.

Public opinion is the sum of individual opinions on an issue affecting those individuals. That means it is a collection of views held by persons interested in the subject (Wilcox et.al., 1998, p.209). The characteristics of public opinion are not only relying on its concept "collectivity of individual interest", but also very sensitive and reactive to any events they are interested (ibid). Therefore, events normally become a trigger of public opinion formation before opinion is changed to a consensus among the public through further discussion and increasing awareness (ibid, p.210). Opinion leader emerges as the filter of ideas and information, according to Washington post report in 2008. These opinion

leaders are the catalysts of public opinion formation thanks to their rich knowledge, high interest or role model playing (ibid, p.210)

3.1.3. Publics, Audience and Stakeholders

Publics, stakeholders, audience / target audience are very important for PR to understand their differences, although they share similar values. According to Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (1996) "Publics" acts as tied group of people, however loosely, by some common bond of interest or concern and who have consequence for an organization, while "Audience" acts a more passive role as information recipient" (p.140) . That means the difference between public and audience lies on attitude of PR practitioners towards the people. If the PR sees the people as an audience, it means they view them as a passive group by merely receiving information without focusing too much on their response. However, if they view them as interactive parties that will impact on or be impacted by the organizations, the term "Public" stands. For stakeholder and public, although they are both used sometimes synonymously, according to Grunig, he considered stakeholder as general categories of people who have something at risk when the organization makes decision (that means organizations actively identify their group of stakeholders that will be affected by any decision making), while "Public" is created by themselves and arise when they consider themselves as a group of people affecting to or being affected by the organizations (1992, p.21).

3.1.4. PR roles

The complexity of PR roles lies on its very deep-rooted versatility around all sectors, even before the emergence of the actual term PR. In the era of "Public-be-damned" in 20th century where PR were lack of interest in communicating with the general public other than finding benefits for themselves (Butterick, 2011, p.10), publicity was the primary role. In the "Public-be-informed" era, PR aligned themselves with the public interest by providing them more accurate information through media statements (Wilcox et al., 1998, p.33). PR later also needed to perform its social roles by serving the public interest, developing

mutual understanding between organizations and their publics, contributing to informed debate about issues in society, and facilitating dialogue between organizations and their publics (Grunig, 2008, p.53). The Four Model theory (discussed in part 2.2) generalized four different complementary PR practices that can be simultaneously viewed as the stages in PR changing roles (p.290).

Nowadays, PR role is even more complex and clinging to strategic management due to the growing interdependence of the world society (Wilcox et al., 1998, p.50-51). In World PR report 2013, the global PR industry continued to grow by approximately 8% in 2012 - the third consecutive year at the similar growth rate - with the independent firms continuing to outperform the large holding company-owned agencies (Holmes, 2013). In China, for example, their PR industries are growing significantly (33% annual growth rate of PR from 2006 to 2007) (Butterick, 2011, p. 13).The increasing demand for higher adaptability within the protean environment requires PR to perform organizational actions which may impact on relationships and reputation (E'tang, 2011, p.18), and facilitate them into minimum negative consequences.

The PR role is no longer for a mere pure publicity, information dissemination or persuasion. A more integrated approach of communication, especially in a suggested "PR mix"¹ by PRTV LTD, PR's involvement in corporate strategic planning ranges from developing corporate's credibility and raising visibility towards their product, social responsibilities, corporate image, publicity, media relations, sponsorship and corporate communications(Smith, 2000, p.363).

2.2. PR relationship building

Managing relationship between an organization and its external and internal stakeholders is one important cornerstone of everything PR practitioners do (Philips, 2006, p.212). In order to construct a long-term and meaningful relationship with its public, scholars have tried to illustrate different paradigms and perspectives in building effective relationship. For example, system theory

¹ Adapting from the award winning PR video *Actions Speak Louder Than Words* in PRTV (London) Ltd incited in Smith's Marketing communication (2000).

suggested the PR to view the interdependence of organizations with their environment (Lattimore, 2012, p.53), serve as a boundary spanner (Grunig, 2008, p.102; Lattimore, 2012, p.54; White and Mazur, 1996, p.25) and bridge the stakeholder relationship effectively. Another one called co-orientation theory emphasized consensus (when both parties agree and both parties knows each other agree) (Austin and Pinkleton, 2001, p.272), and highlighted the importance of researching stakeholders' knowledge and beliefs about the knowledge and beliefs of other parties in relations to themselves (L'Etang, 2011, p.57). While these two theories are relatively old and criticized heavily on its applicability (Austin and Pinkleton, 2001, p.272), they have shed light on the need of mutual understanding between organizations and its stakeholders in order to sustain a long-term relationship. According to Austin and Pinkleton (2001), trust, control mutuality, relational commitment and relational satisfaction are the key measurable outcomes of mutually beneficial relationship (p.273).

A better theoretical understanding on the value of PR in building organization-public relationship will be explicated by: (1) Grunig's Four-Model of PR, (2) relationship management (3) PR campaigns and behavioral communication model.

2.2.1. Four-Model of PR

Four Models of PR (see Table 1) is one of the very first grounded and conceptualized theories in PR history. Three research questions following the four models explained by Grunig in his Excellence study in 1984, "how, why and to what extent does the communication affect the achievement of organizational objectives (Grunig, 2006), provided a very useful and new lens for the future to apprehend the roles and functions of PR. The concepts of asymmetrical (imbalance, one-way) and symmetrical (balance and two-way) communications serve as the fundamentals of the Four Model.

Table 1: Grunig's Four Models of PR

PR Models	Explanation
Press agency	One-way communication model (e.g. publicity, using propaganda with distorted information) from the organization to its publics. (Wilcox et al., 1998, p.46)
Public information	One-way communication model explaining the information dissemination when truth of information is crucial (p.46).
Asymmetrical	Two-way but imbalanced communication where scientific persuasion took place (p.46). Formative social science research (e.g. surveys, interviews and focus group) is used to measure the public relationship. PR can design respective programs to gain the key publics' support (Lattimore et al., 2012, p.62). Persuasion is included in this category suggested by Grunig (1992).
Symmetrical	Two-way communication emphasizing mutual understanding resulting balanced effects. Formative research is demanded to evaluate how the public perceives the organization, what the organization has impacted the public (Wilcox et al., 1998, p.46), and finally adjusting the policy for reciprocal interest.

The message behind suggested that mutual understanding was the main principle objective of PR with respect to long-term relationship building and effective communication with the public rather than persuasion (Grunig, 1992, p.289). Although the four-model theory is claimed to be too idealistic and unpractical (Heath, Toth and Waymer, 2009; Heath, 2006; Tyma, 2008), especially Heath (2006) who argued it was unpractical for PR practitioner focusing too much on all-rounded understanding, but instead PR should identify what the public needs and persuades them to act in favor of the organization. Supported by Phau and Wan (2006), persuasion is intrinsic to the process cultivating and maintaining a positive organizational image (p.102). Despite the criticism, the basis of the four models varies with each other in terms of their purpose (asymmetrical or symmetrical) and direction of communication (one-way or two-way). Nowadays, some PR practitioners even combine elements of the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models (Rhee, 2004, p.19). "Mixed-motive" model is thus suggested by Grunig in his updated research in 2002.

2.2.2. PR's relationship management

Relationship management is a PR discipline in a way that it is a cornerstone of everything PR practitioners do in PR (Phillip, 2006, p.212). It comprised relationship identification, building and maintenance (Grunig, 1999, p.38). Supported by the Four Model theory, two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical relationships are highly emphasized and suggested to operate in each of relationship managing stages.

Relationship identification - Environmental scanning enables PR practitioners understanding what kinds of public and stakeholder exist externally and internally within the organization-public relationship. Publics are situational as they have different awareness, attitudes and behaviors to receive, process the information (Grunig, 2008; Grunig and Hunt, 2009; Lattimore, 2012; Austin and Pinkleton, 2001). Thus, relationship-building communication should be adapted accordingly. I summarized Grunig's idea (Butterick 2011, p.24) which the four types of public vary with the three levels of situational factors in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of publics

Types of Publics	Level of problem recognition	Level of constraint recognition	Level of involvement	Explanation
Non-public / Passive public	low	low	low	organizations have no impact on the group or the group has no impact on the organization
Latent public / potential-active public)	low	high	low	a group faces a common threat from the organization but they do not detect the issue
Aware public	high	low	low	the group just realize the issue but choose not to react or involve
Active public	high	high	high	recognize the problem, actively seek information and respond to the organizations' issues

Relationship building and maintenance - In the Excellence Study of Grunig (Grunig and Hon, 1999) during the 90s, he pointed out that the most productive relationship in long run are those benefits both parties in the relationship rather than only designing to benefit the organization(p.11), They hence relate to symmetrical and asymmetrical relationship respectively. Grunig (2011) recommended a list of symmetrical relationship maintenance strategies in order to achieve a list of successful outcomes (p.14-21). One note here is the exchange relationship and communal relationship resulted by asymmetrical and symmetrical communication respectively. See Table as follows.

Table 3. Relationship maintenance strategies for preferred outcomes

Maintenance Strategies	Communication Strategies		Outcomes
	Asymmetrical	Symmetrical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information accessibility between publics and organization Positivity in providing the public self-interest resource Openness of thoughts among parties Legitimate assurances Networking with same groups that their publics do Sharing tasks and problems between organization and publics Inegrative win-win solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuading Avoiding Accommodating Compromising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperating (reconcile public interests) Being unconditionally constructive in building best relationship Win-win situation searching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control mutuality (degree of control over each other) Trust Satisfaction Continuance and affective commitment Exchange Relationship (Asymmetrical : gives benefits to another because of an obligation to return) Communal relationship (both parties provide benefits because they are concerned for each other benefits, even when they get nothing in return)

Relationship quality measurement – In order to maintain the organization-public relationship, there were totally five dimensions the PR practitioners can evaluate the degree of interpersonal relationships, marketing relationship and other relationships. Ledingham (2006, p.147) wrote, trust (doing what it says it will do), openness (sharing the organization’s plan for the future with the public), involvement, investment and commitment (involving, investing and committing in the community welfare) are highly correlated with consumer satisfaction.

2.2.3. PR campaign and Behavioral communication model

The exposure of message, accuracy dissemination of the message through media, having public acceptance of the message and change in behavior and attitudes of public are the most common objectives of a communicator (Wilcox et al., 1998, p.162). Instead of merely counting on how many media coverage and clips there, PR needed to create public awareness on an issue the organization wants or even change their behavior towards the organization (Sledzik, 2006). One common PR activity is launching campaigns which are coordinated, purposeful, extended efforts designed to achieve a specific goal or any goals that move the organization forward (Newsom, Turk and Kuckeberg, 1996, p. 454). Six types of campaigns categorized by Jackson, cited in Newsom's book (1996) include the campaign of public awareness, public education, public information, behavioral reinforcement, attitude changing and behavior modification (p.444-457). Take an example of PR campaigns in raising public awareness, according to PRweek Power Book (Rice, 2013), the project from Red Bull's Stratos space-diving and the campaign of UK Royal Mail's gold-postboxes launched during Olympics 2012 have resulted in receiving extraordinary high volume of coverage mentions on different media and social media platforms. These two projects become a global phenomenon by drawing the world attention. Therefore, purposes of campaign not only address issues, solve problem, improve situation, but also help positioning and raising the awareness of the organization (Newsom, Turk and Kuckeberg, 1996, p. 455).

In order to have a more comprehensive and effective PR campaigns or activities, incorporating symmetrical behavioral communication model will help creating awareness and change or advocate certain behavior, suggested by PR reporters (see Figure 3).

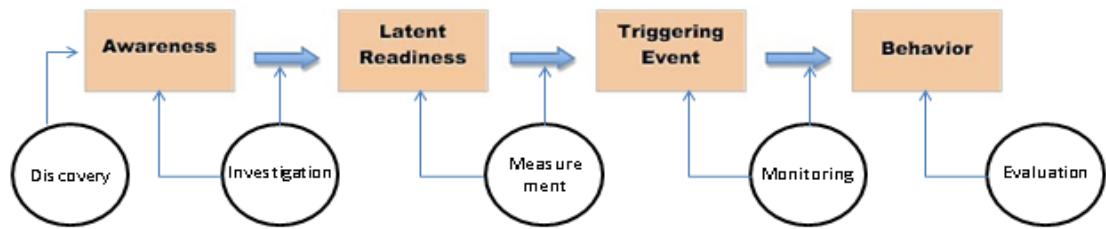


Figure 3. Symmetrical Behavioral Communication model (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 1996, p.192; Sledzik, 2010)

This model offers PR practitioners a way to think in terms of what behaviors they are trying to motivate in those target publics (Wilcox et.al, 1998). From the beginning of being aware to the issue, subconsciously developing the experience and information towards the issue, actualizing their subconscious by experiencing any trigger events to adopting certain way of behavior (1998, p.166), this process of evolvement should be incorporated with gauging the existing levels of awareness, investigating the responses of the public, measuring the potentiality of readiness of acting, monitoring the trigger events and evaluating the behavior (Newsom, Turk and Kuckeberg, 1996, p. 192).

With the existence of noise (any outside interference that confuses the intention of sender and receiver and thereby limits the amount of desired information being disseminated) (Butterrick, 2011, p.19), traditional linear communication (Sources → Encoder → Message → Decoder → Destination) suggested by Laswell or Schramm's circular communication model (Wilcox et al., 1998, p.165) were inadequate. Behavioral communication model contributed a considerably constructive view on how PR can communicate effectively with the publics by identifying which stage they want to involve and influence, and how they can strive for a balanced effect, reciprocal beneficial relationship with the publics.

2.3. PR's Media relation

From the relationship building with the identified target publics to illustrating different communication models, the role of media plays an indispensable part between the organization and its publics. This part explains the role of media and why PR practitioners use media as a medium to communicate with the

publics via agenda-setting theory. As Oliver (2007) stated “all organizations plan their relationship with the media as part of their overall PR strategies” (p.97). PR practitioners believe that the media, especially social media nowadays can directly/indirectly, intentionally/unintentionally impact on individual and collective opinions and/or behavior (L’Etang, 2011, p.124; Austin and Pinkleton, 2001, p.328; Solis, 2009).

2.3.1. Agenda-setting (AGS)

AGS is the capability of mass media influencing the public attention and focus by setting who and what the people think about the issue (Gul and Pelenk, 2004, p.805). It asserted that news media influences public perceptions about what is most important by covering certain events and issues more than others (Dunaway, Branton and Abrajano, 2010, p.360). Editors hence became the media gatekeepers filtering the sources of information by employing their news judgment criteria to pick what constituted the day’s news (Akpabio, 2005, p.174). A systematic way of definition proposed by Manheim and Albritton in 1984, AGS is a process of which media, public and political agendas interact with one another and with their mutual external environment (Harris, Kolovos and Lock, 2001). Figure 4 shows the overview of how the source of information goes through gatekeepers to influence the different types of agenda.

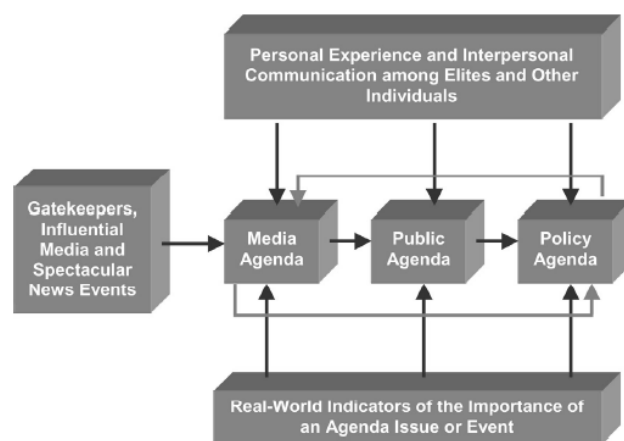


Figure 4: Overview of agenda-setting (Kolovos, Harris and Lock, 2001, p.1119)

AGS includes two-level explanation and perspective (Hong, 2007): (1) it transfers a salient issue from the media agenda to the public agenda. Anything the media considers as salient will result to what the public consider as important; (2) media not only transfer the issues salience but also the issues attributes (different parts constituting to the issues) (p.12). The main idea was that the influences of mass media on the public “what to think” and “what to think about it” via publishing media coverage (Akpabio, 2005; Hong, 2007; Dunaway, Branton and Abrajano, 2010; Kolovos, Harris and Lock, 2001). Thus, publishing and sending the press release to the media, launching press conference and organizing media tours are commonly used by PR to affect the media agenda. Concurrently, Zoch and Molleda (2006) emphasized that once the information was released, the media relations practitioners needed to understand how a public forms and evolves and how the media follow interest or issue trends so as to gain better control of such a dynamic agenda building process (p.293).

Akpabio (2005) further explained events occurring in reality and pressure groups or special interest groups were the two main sources of setting the media agenda (p.175). Yet, it reminded the PR practitioners any event-launching could be a double-sided sword: either raise the media attention (due to the news value) or might lose the media interest if they had already adapted to a stream of event postures. Consequently, it is PR’s responsibility to explore fresh news and features angles of each event or activity, frame the specific issues that attract media attention, launch media advocacy campaigns (Austin and Pinkleton, 2001, p.329-334) and manage the image of the organization, choice of words in any statements or publication and means of publicity (ibid, p.176). A positive relationship with the media is very vital. PR practitioners were advised to build the relationship symmetrically (understanding what the media needs and interests in, build a certain degree of control mutuality between the organization and media without controlling exclusively over another and let both satisfied with the relationship (Hon and Grunig, 2011, p.19).

2.4. PR and Brand building

The previous three sections showed how PR practitioners build the relationship with its stakeholders and publics through multitude ways of communication and how they use media to disseminate the information to affect the public agenda. This section discusses the relationship between PR and branding, how PR practitioners anchor the organizational branding strategies, since brand's perception and corporate image remains a growth area of PR productivity (Oliver, 2007, p.49).

2.4.1. PR's Function in branding

The importance of PR in branding has been increasingly researched in the past few years when PR has not only been understood as information transmitter or relationship builder but also a strategic partner within an organization, especially branding (Sandell, 2012; Xu, 2005; Oliver, 2007).

Brand is not merely a collection of names and symbols but a key element in company's relationship with consumers because brand represents consumers' perceptions and feelings about a product and its performance (Kotler, 2012, p.266). PR is at its strongest position when it can add broader values that tuned into public issues, concerns and interest through a series of PR strategic actions (Haywood, 1998, p.190). We shall not forget that the ultimate goal of PR is to build goodwill of the organization towards publics whose perception, attitudes and behaviors are highly concerned by PR.

Therefore, PR serves as the voice of a brand such as informing, persuading or reminding the publics about the brand essence to engage the publics in a dialogue and building relationship (Pelsmacker, Geuens and Bergh, 2010, p.72). They give a brand substance by telling its brand story and information that people will remember and relate to (Sandell, 2012, p.26). This helps establish corporate image, brand awareness and the corresponding communication with the public and stakeholders (Xu, 2005, p.25), as also supported by Kotler (2014),

who considers PR communicating the brand associations to the public and helps building and consolidating the brand equity (p.266). All these projections and communication of brand values should be managed well with respect to their quality and tone of the PR activities.

Besides, the author discovered the similarity of the five general stages of brand building suggested by Kotler (1994) (see Tuominen, 1999, p.68) and outcomes measurement of PR suggested by Hon and Grunig (2011) in terms of their awareness and message evolvement (see Table 4 which will be further utilized and applied to survey findings in Chapter 5 and discussion in Chapter 6.)

Table 4. Similarity of brand building stages and PR outcomes measurement

Brand building stages	The measurement of PR outcomes
Brand awareness	whether messages are received and paid attention
Brand acceptability	whether messages are understood and accepted
Brand Preference	whether messages are retained in its preferred shape and form
Brand Loyalty	whether messages resulted in opinion, attitude and/behavioral changes and retain the intended image of an organization

2.4.2. Incorporation of PR into branding strategy

In order to enhance the organization's competitive advantages, strengthen its existing or prior position and obtain a stable and long-term relationship with the consumers and customers, the incorporation of PR into branding strategy is demanded, especially when PR efforts offer low-cost exposure with enhanced credibility. In addition to the conclusion drawn by Xu (2005) who considered incorporating different stages of brand strategy planning into PR practices (p.33-38), Whiteley (2013) (the former cooperate communicate manager for Panasonic headquarters) stated that strategic PR was the core in positioning and advocating a corporate brand.

In the brand positioning planning stage, PR serves in brand image positioning rather than market positioning by doing market research (i.e. inquiring, observing and conducting questionnaire) to understand the cultural background,

purchasing characteristics of target publics and the publics' evaluation of enterprise's image. This was what Whiteley (2013) considered as PR situation analysis which helped the PR practitioners strategically crafting the key messages to build relationship and engage the publics in conversation.

In the stage of brand communication, the role of PR in communicating with the publics was building "public – enterprise – product" relationship while other marketing tools such as advertising to construct "public – product – enterprise" relationship. For instance according to Clow and Baack (2014), in order to communicate the positive brand associations to the public and raise the public's positive perception on the company's brand, PR practitioners in this stage usually work on cause-related marketing strategy along with marketing department (i.e. type of partnership agreement with non-profit organizations which allows companies to use their name and logo in certain marketing or advertising programs) (p.376). The relationship will thus ease the organization-public communication process and even reduce any negative public opinion which resulting more customers purchasing the products and services.

In brand management stage, one of the main functions of PR is creating harmonious environment for brand activation, brand exhibition and brand education (Olaito, 2010). The goal of creating this environment is not only for persuading customers to buy the product but to turn the brand purchasers into brand loyalist. Therefore, in brand management, PR practitioners are demanded for harmonizing the relationship and continuously enforcing a strong and constructive relationship between the company, brand, suppliers, dealers and other publics (i.e. Public opinion and media attitudes).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The author in this thesis attempted to investigate whether the brand perceptions of the student on UAS were coherent and concurred with how the PR practitioners in UAS perceived the target public's perception on them. The term "General/ Target public" used in the research questions referred to the sum of "Potential Students" and "On-going tertiary education students". The former related to students from Finnish high schools, graduates and groups that have considered to study in UAS; the latter were students currently pursuing their tertiary education in Finland. Two-folded aspects of investigation were raised to fulfill the purpose by understanding (1) what the brand perceptions of the target public in Finland on UAS are (2) what and how the PR activities were executed by the PR practitioners to raise the public brand awareness of UAS.

Thus, descriptive and explanatory answers to the research questions were expected to obtain. As suggested by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), this is a descripto-explanatory study not only trying to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations but also evaluating and synthesizing the ideas, in addition to giving recommendation (p.140).

3.2. Approaches and data collection methods

In order to test the relationship between the theories and empirical findings, a deductive approach was adopted. The author completed the literature review by summarizing the theories that explained the relationship, communication and favorable outcomes between the target public, media and UAS in terms of PR practices. The grounded theories from academic books, journals, business reports and e-resources relating to PR, strategic communication and branding were collected. A cross-case study was then performed to compare against the literature to ascertain the matching between the reality practice and theories.

Under the deductive approach, mixed method research was carefully applied for the three research questions through using firstly qualitative (face-to-face interviews) and then quantitative (online survey) data collection techniques. This multiple research method allowed researchers to better evaluate the extent to which the research findings could be trusted and inferences made from the researchers (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p.153).

A structured interview (i.e. same set of questions for all the interviewees) was set in order to collect quantifiable data for further analysis (p.320). The four interviews were performed for the first two research questions: *What information and messages have the three UAS delivered to the general public through PR activities? What PR activities and media have the three UAS commonly used to reach and build the relationship with their target publics?* Interviewees' name, job title and their current job place are shown in the following table.

Interviewee name	Job title	Name of UAS
Katri Salonen	Regional Development Manager	Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS)
Satu Haapala	Communication Manager	
Leena Stenman	Head of Communication Services	Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK)
Ari Nevalainen	Communications Manager	Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (HHUAS)

TUAS, TAMK and HHUAS were chosen not only because they are in three biggest and most developed cities in Finland and enjoy one of the most popular brands of UAS in Finland, but it also helped focus on specific regions to produce higher values while evaluating the position of the highly developed UAS. The interview questions (see Appendix 1) were divided into four parts: their view on PR role, the launched PR activities, public opinion and media relations.

An online survey that aimed at answering the third research question (*How do the target publics actually perceive the brand of Finnish UAS?*) was launched. As mentioned by Saunders et al. (2009), survey strategy with sampling can be used to suggest possible reasons for particular relationships between variables

and thereby generating the findings that are representative of the whole population (p.144). Purposive sampling technique which is part of non-probability sampling was selected since this technique enables the researchers to use their judgment to select cases that will best answer their research questions and meet the objectives via better understanding in-depth the specific small sample groups (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009 , p.237). Although this technique cannot be considered as statistically representative of the total population, it is very useful when the researchers need to reach a targeted sample quickly and would like to get the opinions of the target population (Trochim, 2006). It therefore demands the researchers to carefully select information-rich cases (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p.239).

The purposive sample of 130 subjects (aged between 16 and 40) was taken from the study population which consisted of all on-going tertiary education students (from UAS and traditional university) and potential students (second-third year students in high school, degree graduates and employees who might consider to further their tertiary education) in Turku, Tampere and Helsinki regions. After sending out the direct survey link to approximately 200 people from 2nd to 12th May 2014, 130 respondents actually responded. The active response rate was hence 65%. Out of 130 cases (see Appendix 2), 44% of high school respondents were reached by random calling the high schools' principal in the three regions, who helped distribute the survey to their second year students; The other 56% respondents (14% from University of Tampere, Turku and Helsinki, 20% from TUAS, TAMK and HHUAS, 8% of graduates and 14% of employees) were all reached by sending the direct survey links in social media platforms and email system. They were asked to scale their attitudes and perceptions within various levels, plus answer other close-ended and open-ended questions. Three sections were set in the survey (see Appendix 3) (1) Usage of channels receiving information (2) Decision-making factors on choosing University and UAS (3) public perceptions on UAS.

3.3. Research validity and limitations

Due to the author's Finnish language barrier which added the difficulty in searching Finnish articles, researches and stakeholders, the questionnaire I designed was merely in English which not all respondents (especially the high school students) could possibly comprehend the questions as accurate as the author intended to ask. Therefore, in order to minimize the consequence, the author on one hand designed the survey with more general and easier English phrases and words, distributed the survey to those who were pursuing or qualified with tertiary education degree, on the other requested the principal from high schools distributing the survey towards the students who were more capable in answering English-written survey.

Another limitation was the scope of PR knowledge I covered. Since PR is not merely a communication tool but a profession in communication and relationship building, it includes ranges of perspective and practice. In order to have a more focus within my thesis, PR relationship building, public opinion, PR activities, media relations and branding were included, especially adhering to marketing PR field. Crisis management, PR regulation, other functions of PR (such as Financial PR) and PR writing tactics, however, would not be discussed.

Due to the limited resources and time, the author could not analyze and compare all the collected qualitative and quantitative data, aspects such as media-PR relationship and effectiveness of PR activities were paid less attention. Moreover, my geographical (Turku, Tampere and Helsinki) and demographical emphases (only specific group of students and employees) led to the incomprehensiveness of interpreting the perception of the whole Finnish society on UAS when other regions and publics in Finland were possibly neglected. The purposive sampling technique which belongs to non-probability sampling was claimed to have relative low representation on the study population than using probability sampling due to the subjective participation of the survey designer (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Yet, with respect to Finnish population, according to Statistics Finland 2013 Helsinki, Tampere and

Turku regions occupied around 47% of whole Finnish population (Statistics Finland, 2013). The sample group collected still had a relatively high value in explaining the situation in south Finland, especially in the regions of Turku, Tampere and Helsinki.

4. FINDINGS

Chapter 4 illustrates the result of the primary data collection from the four interviews (see section 4.1) and online survey (see section 4.2):

4.1. UAS view on PR role, PR activities and publics' perception

The questions for four interviewees from TUAS, TAMK and HHUAS were synthesized into PR role, PR activities and UAS's view on public perceptions.

4.1.1. The PR role in UAS

The four managers agreed with the idea that PR is managing the relationship between UAS and their interest groups/ stakeholders /publics through internal and external communication. Although the PR communication is gaining importance within an organization, the role of PR has been actualized in different ways, considering the recent years of Finnish education policy amendment. Another similarity found in the four interviews was their conformity of the altering role of social media in PR practices. The heavy reliance on non-printed media, social media and other digital platforms has vastly digitalized their PR role. For example, "three years ago, our marketing budget was spent half-half on printed media and digital media. However, now we spent only 10% on printed while the rest on digital media." said Nevalainen from HHUAS.

In TUAS, Salonen clarified that communication and their so-called PR units were under the administration department. Each unit in the administration office including the marketing and communication unit, had a contact person who met altogether monthly to share information and produce different materials for the

application period mainly. They had a year plan for amount of media coverage, publication and other brochures/leaflet distribution.

In TAMK, Stenman commented that PR had been playing a more active role in helping the organization standing out from the competitors by using internal and external communication. She explained “PR is used to be related to image, reputation and achievement; more and more PR is seen as a tool for strategic work. For example one of our school’s strategic goals now is being international and this goal becomes our department goal too.” Via constantly reviewing the communication strategy annually and being physically proximate to the top management units, PR attained the internal information easier, helped the management visualize and communicate their strategies to their interest groups and better supported the management’s and other supporting departments’ communication tasks.

In HHUAS, the function of PR is under Marketing and Communication Department. Nevalainen emphasized that his department with the function of PR communication was very important to the organization. For having the most effective internal and external communication, all communication-related activities were centralized in this department rather than having different contact persons or PR communicators in different units. What he was asked to the role of PR, Nevalainen considered “PR is more related to media relation and taking care of different interest groups.”

4.1.2. UAS's PR activities

Media relations activities were foremost commonly executed by the three UAS. They wrote and distributed media releases to different mass media, news agency, communication agency and social media platforms, producing various brochures, leaflets as well as managing the online materials in school's main webpage so as to reach their target publics. Specific specialists were reached through publishing professional magazines. YouTube, Twitter and Facebook were the frequently used social media platforms, in addition to LinkedIn by TAMK and HHUAS.

Concerning the relationship with the mass media, cooperation with the media was one main PR activity. Haapala, Stenman and Nevalainen concurred that it was difficult to ask the media such as main regional and national print media in their favor of publishing editorials, especially when the media had the constant need of attractive and interesting news-angle of any events. Nevalainen added that there were limited journalists in Finland specialized in reporting or writing issues about education, thus it is even grimmer to get a right person within the media. In order to build and maintain the relationship with media, various activities were held by three UAS. In TUAS, media meeting was held once a year; In HHUAS, media dinners were organized; In TAMK, person-to-person contacting and meeting were organized couple of times per year. Yle (Finnish national radio station) was mentioned as a strong cooperation with TUAS and TAMK regionally, they continuously sent their students from Journalist degree program for internship. Haapala explained “such cooperation has led us more positive coverage and mentions”. Nevalainen from HHUAS on the other hand said “We cooperate strongly with Energy (an international radio station). We organized a concert every last Friday of each month. The people can attend the concert only if they have participated in any activities held in HHUAS campus”. He further added to his view on two-way communication “We train the staff or assistants in Energy radio station too under our cooperation. Although it is free of charge and no money exchanges, we gain the publicity, advertising time and activities from them. It is a win-win situation.”

Organizing events and participating in public fairs were popular in their PR practices to help raise the school’s visibility and image. Alongside the participation in Studia (an information day held in Helsinki annually for students searching tertiary education opportunities in Finland), involving students and teachers together into projects and events were stressed by three UAS. In TUAS, student-based activities such as Arts exhibition and concerts were actively organized throughout the year e.g. AMK Day; in TAMK while arranging open house exhibition and visiting tour to high school, they encouraged their students to take part in event organizing and let them write the press releases which Stenman considered the most effective way by saying “students are more

enthusiastic for what they are doing and more eager to show something exciting to the outsiders". In HHUAS, "Our school did not focus too much on producing communication materials in the application period but instead doing myriad PR activities (e.g. fundraising, alumni gala dinner) throughout the year because we believe this is the most effective way to raise the school's image and visibility." Nevalainen said.

The relationship building activities with business partners was underscored by the interviewees. For instance, Nevalainen from HHUAS exemplified his highlight of "We are always looking for partners" by explaining the staff training programs cooperation with McDonald and Ikea which brought a very positive impact on HHUAS's image." TUAS's the Open Academy year was an event arranged to target enterprises and decision making groups; In TAMK Stenman stated "We have specific website for work-life contacts and business partners". She then added "we also help and support all the communicating materials to different units in the school".

When the four interviewees were asked about what kind of communication style did they normally use (persuasive or cooperative) to disseminate their key messages in every PR activities, they all claimed cooperative communication was most concerned, especially when they shed the light on the cooperation between school and students and other tertiary education institutions. Stenman considered their communication style attempted to be more informative, up-to-date and accurate. "We are trying to give them enough tools and information to make decision." said Stenman from TAMK. Nevalainen from HHUAS believed that face-to-face contact and two-way communication with targets by organizing events and activities were the most effective communication way to build relationship with publics. He and Stenman mentioned that win-win situation was what they are striving for.

As to the public interest scanning stage, the three UAS revealed the importance of understanding the public interest by launching several monitoring and evaluative tools in order to build and maintain better relationship with publics (e.g. students and potential students). According to all the interviewees, annual

student survey was the most used way to realize which communication channels and what messages should be deployed. In TAMK, Stenman further articulated that survey was very crucial for them to understand students' interests in future studies, frequency of using multitudes of media channels and the perception towards TAMK. "We additionally bought 1-2 public surveys per year when some companies requested for any evaluation" said Stenman. In TUAS, Salonen and Haapala said respectively the school collected the students' opinion through reading "applicants' motivation letter" and quantity data from digital analytical tool; in HHUAS, Nevalainen reassured that "key message" (derived from the outcome of comprehensive public interest monitor) was the most important factor indicating the success of any PR or communication activities. He added that such understanding was archived by analyzing the past quantitative data (e.g. number of clicks in certain social media platforms or length of video clip being watched), doing instant street interviews performed by the marketing students, reviewing the qualitative feedback from Facebook page and cooperating with a communication agency to help raise the publicity. Feedbacks from the staff, communication teachers and journalist students who participated into writing customer magazine were of great importance as well.

Notwithstanding the usage of scanning tools, Haapala from TUAS and Stenman from TAMK described the difficulty in monitoring or evaluating the perception of publics. Stenman said "we do not have very systematic measures or yardsticks in evaluating PR activities and what the public think". According to Salonen and Haapala, the numbers of student application, reports on media coverage, press releases, press invitation and the reasons for negative mentioning were recorded as a kind of measurement. Haapala further added "my unit has a social media and media follow up which were made by the journalist students." Google analytics was used to follow the clicks and visiting number of school webpage. In HHUAS, Nevalainen mentioned they analyzed social media figure or data of the campaigns while doing an image study once in two years.

4.1.3. UAS's view on public perception

Adjacent to the result of PR role and PR activities in UAS, the final part of the interview was about how the UAS viewed the public perception on UAS. Generally, the image of UAS, according to the four interviewees, was labeled as ***practical with less science-related, work-life oriented, quicker path for career and ready-for-job***. These were the key messages they disseminated to their public. For example, Stenman considered the students chose to study in UAS because they mainly wanted to pursue their career faster. Stenman and Salonen concurrently reflected that the wide breadth of study degree programs had become a brand position of their UAS where more different working professionals could be trained. Salonen added "We have positive image by our unique position in southwest region of Finland." Nevalainen on the other hand thought that the brand image of HHUAS was more focused on business-related programs, "although we do not offer wide range of programs compared to other UAS, our degree programs like Journalism and Tourism, and even the modern interior design of the campuses are all business-related which is the image we are delivering to the publics...we are known for business-oriented private university." he said. Being international is currently what these three UAS working on, especially when Stenman and Nevalainen said they were targeting the foreigners who lived in Finland.

Concerning the general public perception on UAS, Haapala (TUAS), Nevalainen (HHUAS) and Stenman (TAMK) admitted that the image of "UAS" was still relative less recognized than the traditional university. Yet, Salonen (TUAS) argued "image of UAS has already undergone a great discussion before year 2000 in terms of the UAS's existence and meanings while after 2000, the role and image of UAS and traditional university have further consolidated and been much positive nowadays". Likewise, the four interviewees reasoned indifferently that the relatively young establishment of UAS compared to the traditional universities has led to such social perception on UAS. For instance, the roles of parents / older generations who connected more to or even graduated from traditional university have a fairly high influence on young generations'

perception. “Parents who graduated from traditional universities do not understand enough what is inside the UAS and so, the young people don’t have the fact but a bit attitude (bias) to UAS.” said Haapala. However, they still believed and stated that there was a trend of improving, particularly when the UAS in Finland had been undergone merging process in the past few years.

4.2. General public perception on UAS

In this part, the author reveals the online survey results by using the framework of branding and PR messages mentioned in section 2.4.1. Despite the total 130 respondents, the number of respondents varies in some questions due to the design of questions logic and numbers of partially completed survey. Those numbers of respondents are shown in each of the following part. The high school students (age of 16-20) and current students in tertiary education (20-25) occupied the majority of respondents which satisfied the need of the target research public. One-fourth of respondents as graduate and employee are part of the potential target publics of UAS (see Appendix 2).

4.2.1. Brand awareness (result from target public / general students)

Three questions were set for investigating the linkage between UAS’s brand awareness and PR activities (1) *have you heard of UAS?* (2) *how often did you read and hear about the information of UAS?* (3) *how frequently do you use the following media channels?*

The question of “*have you heard of UAS?*” 98% of 130 respondents have heard of UAS, which meant that majority of the public (aged between 16 and 35) were aware that UAS existed (see Appendix 4). When 127 respondents were asked “*how often did you read and hear about the information of UAS*” The frequency of receiving the information about UAS via multitudes of media channels clanged largely to newspaper (42%), Facebook (36%) and university’s leaflets/ brochures (35%), although they considered only “sometimes” as receiving frequency while “rarely” and “never” were selected mostly to other media channels such as radio and TV (see appendix 5). Yet, question about *how*

frequently they use the given media channels, the result showed that respondents used Facebook (73%), radio (27%) and TV (24%) more than 5 times a week while almost half of them never use twitter, LinkedIn and online discussion forum (see appendix 6). As a result, it depicted the differentiation between the frequencies of using media channels and receiving information about UAS in media channels. Therefore, the general target public was aware of UAS's name, but the ways the public receiving the other information were different from the way of receiving information about UAS.

4.2.2. Brand acceptability (result from 124 target public / general students)

Concerning the connection of PR and brand acceptability, a question (*what are the general impression of the information and messages you have received about UAS from media?*) was set to see whether the received messages were understood and accepted positively by the target public (See Figure 5).

Figure 5 showed the general impression of UAS as relatively neutral with a tendency in the agreement on positive, informative and persuasive messages while disagreement on manipulative. The respondents chose the agreement level 4 mostly to indicate they quite agreed with impression of positive (40%) and informative (40%). Besides, a significant amount of respondents tended to locate themselves in neutral-agree position in persuasiveness and neutral-disagree position in manipulation. Hence, this result showed that the information and message the UAS disseminated had been perceived at least relatively positive by the public, without considering the message as manipulative.

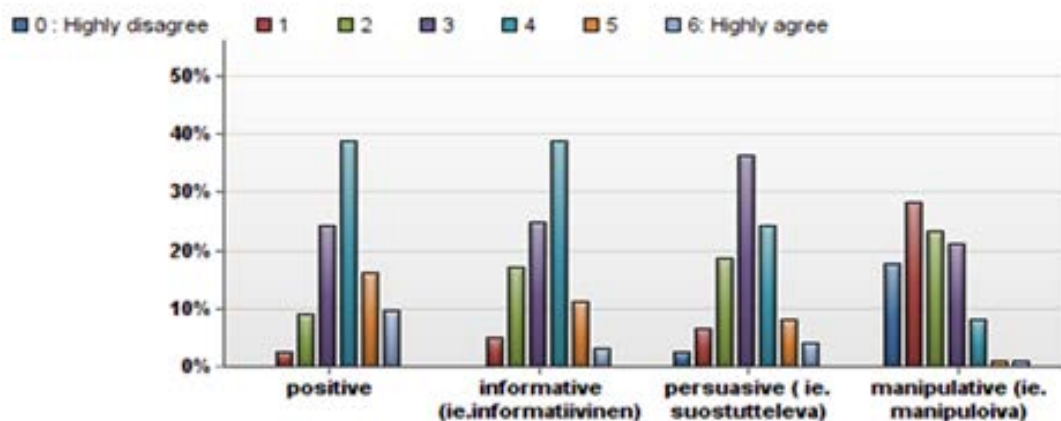


Figure 5. General Impression of the received messages and information about UAS

4.2.3. Brand preference (result from potential and University students)

In brand preference, four questions were set: (1) *what kind of information the target respondents find most useful* (2) *what are the main decision-making factors affecting the respondents' choice between UAS and traditional university* (3) *comparing to traditional university, what are the perceptions of the respondents on UAS* (4) *What are the general image of UAS towards the target respondents*. Question 1 based on 103 respondents, Question 2 to 4 was based on 95 respondents.

Rather than presenting the general public (see Appendix 7a-d), this part focuses on the decision-making factors and perception of the public who studied in traditional university and the potential student groups (i.e. High school students, current employees and graduates). The former was chosen for it told why did they choose university instead of UAS. The latter by nature had the possibility to choose between two alternatives.

Firstly, the result shown in Table 5a (summarized the Tables in Appendix 8a & b) set us a backcloth to understand the interlinking relationship between the usefulness of information about UAS and the public's decision-making factors. This illustrated whether the information UAS provided to the target public was needed and useful enough to help target public decide between UAS and University. The majority of the mentioned useful information could be categorized into degree programs content and institution's outcomes (achievement, companies network and student activities) while two main categories of decision-making factor are learning experience (level of academy, international learning environment) and institution's outcomes (institution's popularity, breadth of networks and student's job opportunities). Organizational restructuring and study location hereby became the independent factors affecting the decision making.

Table 5a. The most useful information of UAS and important decision-making factors

	Information of UAS		Decision-making factors between UAS & University
1st most useful	Advertisement of the general degree programs	1st most important	Opportunity of career development
	UAS's achievement		Level of international learning environment
	Degree program application		Level of academy
2nd most useful	Cooperation with companies	2nd most important	Network of companies
	Student activities		Popularity of the institution
	Changes in organizational structure		Study location

Secondly, the question about the perception on UAS, four aspects mentioned in Table 5b below (Recognition, learning experience, student's growth and institution's resources) were shown. It was on one hand clear to see that the majority of respondents remained relatively neutral to the all given statements while on the other UAS's social recognition tended to be more negative. Although the perception on diversity of learning experience and student's growth were relatively positive, the level of international learning environment and learning & teaching resources were perceived comparatively negative.

Concerning the general image of UAS (see Table 5c), potential student groups most significantly considered job-oriented education (totally 70% of respondents agreed) and international with diverse cultures (totally 89% of respondents agreed), followed by the image of professional training (totally 55%). However, the image of UAS's social recognition and resourcefulness stayed comparatively negative.

Table 5b. Perception of the potential student & university student group on UAS

		0: Totally disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6: Totally agree	Don't know	Total Responses
Recognition	is more preferred.	10.5%	10.5%	18.9%	32.6%	8.4%	2.1%	1.1%	15.8%	95
	is more recognized in Finland.	11.6%	16.8%	18.9%	25.3%	9.5%	6.3%	2.1%	9.5%	95
	is more recognized by companies.	9.5%	8.4%	16.8%	23.2%	11.6%	10.5%	2.1%	17.9%	95
Learning experience	is more innovative.	8.4%	6.3%	12.6%	28.4%	18.9%	11.6%	0.0%	13.7%	95
	can develop better students' entrepreneurial skills.	5.3%	4.2%	9.5%	23.2%	22.1%	20.0%	4.2%	11.6%	95
	helps internationalize more student learning	9.5%	6.3%	15.8%	27.4%	11.6%	9.5%	5.3%	14.7%	95
Student's growth	is more useful for personal growth	9.5%	5.3%	11.6%	30.5%	15.8%	7.4%	1.1%	18.9%	95
	can train more professional workers.	5.3%	3.2%	9.5%	29.5%	25.3%	11.6%	3.2%	12.6%	95
	enable students to have better job opportunities	8.4%	8.4%	15.8%	24.2%	11.6%	16.8%	5.3%	9.5%	95
Institution's resources	has better learning and teaching resources.	10.5%	8.4%	18.9%	21.1%	14.7%	4.2%	3.2%	18.9%	95
	has wider network with companies.	7.4%	4.2%	12.6%	24.2%	16.8%	5.3%	5.3%	24.2%	95
	has wider network of partner universities.	4.2%	12.6%	16.8%	24.2%	8.4%	3.2%	3.2%	27.4%	95

* The green-highlighted refers to the most chosen

* The yellow-highlighted refers to second most chosen

Table 5c. General image of UAS (by potential & university student group)

	0: Highly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6: Highly agree	Total Responses
highly recognized.	2.1%	13.7%	23.2%	29.5%	28.4%	3.2%	0.0%	95
practical and highly job-related.	1.1%	2.1%	6.3%	24.2%	33.7%	20.0%	12.6%	95
professional training.	1.1%	2.1%	7.4%	30.5%	40.0%	15.8%	3.2%	95
international with diverse cultures.	2.1%	3.2%	12.6%	33.7%	27.4%	17.9%	3.2%	95
diverse in learning programs and tools.	2.1%	2.1%	9.5%	40.0%	32.6%	10.5%	3.2%	95
resourceful.	4.2%	5.3%	9.5%	38.9%	30.5%	10.5%	1.1%	95

* The green-highlighted refers to the most chosen

* The yellow-highlighted refers to second most chosen

4.2.4. Brand Loyalty to UAS (47 targeted students with study experience in UAS)

The relationship between brand loyalty and PR activities was investigated via grouping all the respondents (47 in total) who have the study experience in UAS. This focused group played an important part in determining how their experience in UAS affected their perception on UAS and UAS's image. Two questions were set: (1) *comparing with the traditional university, what are their perceptions on UAS* (see table 6a below) (2) *what is the general image of UAS towards the focused respondents* (see table 6b).

From the question about respondent’s perception on UAS, the students who had study experience in UAS generally perceived UAS relatively negative. UAS’s social recognition, ability of anchoring students’ growth and education resources endowment particularly received the most significant negative perception. Conversely, the relative positive perceptions adhered to UAS’s ability in developing students’ entrepreneurship and innovative mindset and capability of giving students international learning opportunities and experience.

Concerning the image of UAS, responded by the students who have study experience in UAS, UAS’s image of job-oriented learning (70% respondents agreed) and international learning environment (around 90% of respondents agreed) were relatively outstanding than other images (i.e. professional training and diversity of learning programs & tools). Yet, the image of UAS’s social recognition and UAS’s resourcefulness stayed comparatively negative.

Table 6a. Respondents’ (with UAS experience) Perception on UAS comparing to traditional university

		0:Totally disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6: Totally agree	Don't know	Total Responses
Recognition	is more preferred.	8.5%	12.8%	17.0%	27.7%	14.9%	6.4%	8.5%	4.3%	47
	is more recognized in Finland.	10.6%	19.1%	40.4%	14.9%	4.3%	2.1%	4.3%	4.3%	47
	is more recognized by companies.	8.5%	10.6%	29.8%	19.1%	14.9%	8.5%	4.3%	4.3%	47
Learning experience	is more innovative.	4.3%	4.3%	21.3%	31.9%	31.9%	6.4%	0.0%	0.0%	47
	can develop better students' entrepreneurial skills.	2.1%	0.0%	14.9%	21.3%	28.4%	31.9%	4.3%	2.1%	47
	helps internationalize more student learning experience (e.g. language learnings, studying abroad)	6.4%	4.3%	6.4%	29.8%	25.5%	17.0%	10.6%	0.0%	47
Student's growth	is more useful for personal growth	4.3%	6.4%	10.6%	29.8%	25.5%	12.8%	4.3%	6.4%	47
	can train more professional workers.	2.1%	4.3%	12.8%	25.5%	31.9%	12.8%	6.4%	4.3%	47
	enable students to have better job opportunities	6.4%	6.4%	21.3%	19.1%	19.1%	19.1%	4.3%	4.3%	47
Institution's resources	has better learning and teaching resources.	19.1%	8.5%	29.8%	21.3%	8.5%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	47
	has wider network with companies.	8.5%	4.3%	19.1%	17.0%	19.1%	14.9%	4.3%	12.8%	47
	has wider network of partner universities.	8.5%	14.9%	23.4%	14.9%	6.4%	6.4%	4.3%	21.3%	47

* The green-highlighted refers to the most chosen
 * The yellow-highlighted refers to second most chosen

Table 6b. General image of UAS (Respondents with study experience in UAS)

	0: Highly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6: Highly agree	Total Responses
highly recognized.	2.1%	10.6%	34.0%	27.7%	19.1%	6.4%	0.0%	47
practical and highly job-related.	0.0%	0.0%	6.4%	23.4%	38.3%	23.4%	8.5%	47
professional training.	0.0%	4.3%	6.4%	34.0%	31.9%	21.3%	2.1%	47
international with diverse cultures.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.6%	51.1%	31.9%	6.4%	47
diverse in learning programs and tools.	2.1%	2.1%	12.8%	46.8%	29.8%	6.4%	0.0%	47
resourceful.	4.3%	2.1%	23.4%	38.3%	21.3%	10.6%	0.0%	47

* The green-highlighted refers to the most chosen

* The yellow-highlighted refers to second most chosen

4.2.5. Other general comments (from all respondents)

In the last open-ended question of the survey (*what do you think the UAS can do to better their image?*)(see Appendix 9) a vast number of respondents (27%) from high school considered they should be provided more information about UAS and degree programs. 19% of respondents from UAS commented UAS should have more partnership with companies and improve the teaching quality. Approximately one-fourth University students thought UAS should pay more attention and emphasize more on UAS students' satisfaction level. Graduates (36%) and employees (17%) considered mostly on launching more marketing campaigns. In addition to the marketing campaigns, the employee respondents shared the same proportion (17%) on suggesting more company partnerships and the improvement in teaching quality.

Therefore, on one hand the result underlined there was a significant need for UAS to launch and redesign more marketing and communication activities such as promotion and PR campaigns to earn the word-of-mouth; on the other UAS should focus on widening the network and partnerships with companies while without neglecting the concern of teaching quality and degree program's enrichment.

All in all, the following summarized the survey result in section 4.2.

1. The overall respondents were aware of the name of UAS, but the ways of receiving the general information were different from the way of receiving information about UAS.

2. The general information and messages delivered by UAS were agreed as positive and informative. Information of UAS's achievements, degree programs content and application were most useful and appreciated.
3. The decision-making factors of potential students and university students while choosing between UAS and University were career opportunity, level of international learning environment and level of academy.
4. The image of UAS's job-oriented and practical education was recognized. Yet, UAS has a significant problem of low recognition in Finland, particularly when UAS was less preferred than traditional university.
5. Publics with the study experience in UAS perceived UAS rather negative, in terms of the institution's overall resources (including school's networks) and UAS's ability of anchoring students' growth. The images of UAS to them were job-oriented education with international learning experience. However, they were still more positive on developing students' entrepreneurial and innovative skills and post-graduate job opportunities
6. Public with potentiality to study in UAS perceived UAS rather positive, especially to the idea of highly job-oriented and international with diverse learning cultures, but when UAS was compared with University, they were more negative on UAS's learning and teaching resources and opportunity of being internationalized.
7. More marketing and communication activities were suggested by the overall respondents, in addition to wider the network of companies, better teaching quality and degree programs' content.

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

After the disclosure of all the findings, this final chapter holistically discusses and connects the secondary literature and primary data and thereby presents the answers of the three research questions, along with a list of pragmatic recommendations for PR in UAS. This study aimed at researching the potential perception gap between UAS and the general public (focused on students and potential students in Turku, Tampere and Helsinki regions) with respect to

UAS's PR activities. Cohering with the sequence of research questions, structure of literature review and data collection, *the key messages delivered by UAS, and PR and media relations activities launched by UAS, the target publics' perception on UAS* and a list of recommendation are explicated as follows, serving as the whole thesis conclusion. Suggestion for further researches are mentioned in the end.

5.1. The key messages delivered by the UAS

The formation of key message to a large extent, if any, depends on what were the perceptions of the sender (i.e. the PR in UAS) on their target public. As the interviewees agreed that designing key message was the first and foremost being examined before launching any PR activities, the following part answers the first research question: *What information and messages have the three UAS delivered to the general public through PR activities?*

According to the interviewees, they considered the public perceived UAS as a job-oriented tertiary education institution which enabled the students to have a quicker path for career pursuit. Practical experiences, international-and-diverse and dynamic learning environment and professional training were the additional brand attributes the UAS wanted to construct. For example, they offered students opportunities to have exchange programs and do work placement abroad. Other than considering themselves as the preferential UAS in their specific regions, either providing a diverse range of degree programs (in TUAS and TAMK) or a specialized series of degree programs (in HHUAS) become one of their school's regional competitive advantage.

Hence, especially when there is no doubt that the mass media and the overwhelming role of social media influence greatly on the public agenda, all the interviewees attempted to use wider range of media and digital platforms to communicate the messages, disseminate the information (that they considered useful) and build up a good brand image of the organization to the target publics. Additionally, although they attributed the young establishment of UAS in Finland as the major reason of relative lower recognition than traditional universities,

especially under the more influence of parents, they believed there was a positive trend of public perception on UAS.

5.2. PR activities and Relationship building

This section will answer the second research question: *What PR activities have the three UAS commonly used to reach and build the relationship with their target publics?* The three main types of activities consisted Media activities, relationship identification activities and relationship building and maintaining activities while they all included one-way and two-way communication model suggested by Grunig (1992).

Media activities included writing and distributing an impressive amount of press or media releases to different media parties (used public agency and public information models in one-way communication), constantly organizing media meetings (Asymmetrical model in two-way communication) and monitoring media coverage and content. Within all these media activities, the UAS PR on one hand utilized media's influence to public agenda and opinion and on the other hope to build an exchange relationship (see Table 3 about the relationship with mutual benefits) with the media. For example, media meetings were held several times per year because UAS wanted to understand what were media's interests and needs. By providing them the information they were interested to, the media would have a higher opportunity to write a more positive coverage or editorials in favor of the UAS.

Relationship identification activities were launched. The PR in UAS utilized several public interests scanning tools such as student survey, image study, external purchased public survey and other statistic analytical means to understand what interests the public, and thereby increasing the opportunity of these publics reacting in their favors. As mentioned in the media activities previously, the PR likewise conjointly contacted the media regularly to see what kinds of news topic the media paid higher attention at that specific period of time and hence looking forward to the mention coverage from media. Therefore, the rationale behind this type of communication is "Relationship identification"

under two-way communication as Grunig suggested. Other “public information model” activities such as producing and distributing different leaflets, brochures and professional magazines about the UAS to their target publics were executed. This basically matched with what the publics thought (when the respondents quite agreed with the positive and informative nature of the message and information).


The third commonly launched PR activity was called relationship building and branding activities which included organizing concerts, arts exhibition and open-house exhibitions for the general public, participating large scale student or job fairs, arranging gathering activities/ training programs for the alumni or even having partnership with companies/ media stations (e.g. Yle, Energy). These activities on one hand helped raise the UAS visibility by providing more information accessibility, networking with the different interests groups; on the other advocated their emphasis on public interest and benefits through accommodation and cooperation.

Together with the one-way communication and two-way asymmetrical communication, symmetrical communications was also actualized by the interviewees in order to form an “Exchange relationship” (see Table 3) For example, Nevalainen from HHUAS and Stenman from TAMK considered they were striving for win-win situation for any communication between the target public and UAS. It was interesting to see that the role of students in UAS became a more important factor driving the symmetrical communication strategies when the UAS increasingly encouraged them to participate in projects, activities and campaigns. The rationale behind was not only a cost-wise decision but also a way to build trust and satisfaction between the students and UAS via cooperation and mutual understanding.

5.3. Target public’s perception on UAS

In this last section, the third research questions (*How do the target publics actually perceive the brand of Finnish UAS*) will be answered as follows with the aid of Table 7.

Table 7. Potential perception gap between UAS and target public

UAS	UAS consider themselves in public perception: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relative low recognition than University - Most popular UAS in their specific region - Diverse degree programs / Specialized degree programs range - Job-oriented / practical/ professional training - Dynamic learning experiences 	
		
	General and potential students perceive UAS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low recognition in general - Overall limited institution's teaching and learning resources (including networks partnership) - Relatively limited learning programs and tools - Job-oriented/practical/ professional training - neutral learning experiences for personal growth 	General students and potential students

In section 5.1, the author mentioned that from the perspective of the PR in UAS, they considered themselves as job-oriented and professional training institution with dynamic and diverse learning environment and ranges of degree programs offered. While from the perspective of the target publics, shown in section 4.2, the target publics' perception on UAS could be concluded that on one hand the image of UAS was rather successfully surrounded by the principle of job-orientation or ready-for-job which the majority of respondents were aware of. Yet on the other hand, the brand of UAS was highly affected by the target public's doubts about whether the UAS has enough networks with companies and universities, education resources, study programs and learning tools to develop students' capabilities. Another interesting note was that even though parents, according to the interviewees, had an increasing impact on students' perception on UAS, the survey result showed that family's opinion had a rather low influence on respondents. Instead, the major decision making factors leaned on their great concern about whether UAS was able to provide the students more career opportunities and even internationalize their learning experience while the UAS's low social recognition (especially by the companies) and resources endowment had curbed the publics' decision-making process.

5.4. Recommendations

Last but not least, integrating the general comments of the respondents, the following illustrates author's recommendation to improve the effectiveness of PR communication activities as a final conclusion for the thesis.

Firstly, referring to the findings in section 4.2, the ways of target publics receiving general information were different from the way of receiving information about UAS, in addition to the lack of information that interested and aided the publics' decision making. Hence, UAS should improve the information content and flow from the organization to publics by providing more information about UAS and its students' achievements, UAS's resources endowment (Quality and profession of the teaching and learning resources, networks with companies and universities) and outreaching the potentials students via more on-site visiting, information-sharing seminars and interactive activities. Moreover, re-clarify, re-identify and re-emphasize the media channels used by different groups of public, for example Facebook, TV and radio which were found the most popular used media by the general respondents.

Secondly, the network of companies and partnership of UAS was one significant concern by the target public found in the survey. UAS is then suggested to widen and strengthen the relationships with companies (especially the well-known / large-scale companies). For example, arrange meetings or gatherings with not only the target company but also the ones related to that company (i.e. the partnership network of the target company) for graduates recruitments and placements. Inviting and welcoming more influential and key visitors to the campus are highly appreciated.

Thirdly, the relationships with target groups of students should be focused and strengthened by concerning more on job career opportunities and students' learning experience which were the target publics' main decision making factors between UAS and traditional university. UAS can formalize and restructure the management of job opportunities information by launching job prospect survey, or establish some student-based clubs, chapters or assemblies aiding to

promote the cooperation and communication among students, faculty and administration through launching social-interest activities. This will diversify their learning experience and better understand their needs in career development.

Fourthly, building and maintaining the relationship with various media are demanded as the interviewees concurred the fact of PR-media relationship difficulty. Two-way communication means should be adopted (e.g. more face-to-face meeting with the mass media, social media's responsibilities.) Furthermore, identify and invite the key opinion leaders (internal or external opinion leaders that draws media and public attention) to participate in certain media events / press conference/ school's project activities.

Finally, due to the low social recognition of UAS in Finland as found in both interviews and survey, for the organization's visibility and brand recognition sake, the school can collaborate with organizations on cultural & community projects; participate in off-campus events (e.g. International Women's Day); aid and diversify any communication-related students' learning experience via producing student-run newspapers, television programs and radio channels, under the cooperation with general mass media and media production companies. Additionally, it is again suggested to identify and invite the key opinion leaders to participate in certain events / press conference. These image building activities or campaigns should be held throughout the year while not merely focusing on annual application period. All in all, these branding activities not only raise the brand visibility, better the image of UAS, increase UAS's social influence but also anchor all the students learning experience and achievements.

5.5. Suggestions for further researches

The aim of this thesis was studying the potential perception gap between UAS and target public towards the brand of UAS, especially in the southern region of Finland. It served as valuable reference and check point for the current UAS communications, marketing and customer relationship managers who were

seeking to build a positive relationship with their target publics and a promising brand recognition and image in certain regions.

However, due to the limited resources and time for the research, the geographical and demographical emphases led to the incomprehensiveness and the lack of generalization ability. Therefore, if there are any researchers who would like to further deepen their understanding in PR field and branding issues of Finnish UAS, the author hereby suggests the future researchers to (1) evaluate the effectiveness of PR activities launched by UAS PR (what are the publics' behavioral and organization-public relationship changes before and after certain PR activities), (2) investigate the opportunities and challenges of current position and status of PR influencing the internal communication in UAS and (3) assess the relationship between UAS's PR, mass media and social media party in affecting the public agenda.

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Interview Questions

A. Role of PR in UAS

1. What do you think about the changing of your PR role in recent years?
2. How the PR or communication department incorporated into your institution's strategic goal planning and corporate hierarchy?
3. How important is the PR department in the organization? How many resources /budget have been dedicated to the PR department annually? How about English-degree program?
4. How many PR publications have the PR department published annually? Why are those times selected?

B. PR activities

1. What PR activities and campaigns have been used and launched in the recent years?
2. How do you position the English-speaking degree program in your UAS?
3. In planning the PR programs for international program, under what circumstances or situations will you prefer to persuade or cooperate (to search for mutual understanding) with the target publics?
4. How do you differentiate the PR activities to different target groups of public?
5. How do you monitor the public interest? How useful are the monitoring tools?
6. What kind of information do you need to attain from the internal organization for the PR publication or activities?
7. While executing any PR activities, what the 4 main factors you take into consideration? Which one is the most important among the four?
8. How do you measure (i.e. any yardstick used) the effectiveness of PR activities?

9. Considering the PR activities evaluation, any before-after changes in behaviour and attitudes of the public towards UAS and English instructed degree programs?

C. PR views on the Publics (students)

1. What do you think how public perceive the brand of UAS and its English instructed degree programs?
2. Do you think the public's act towards UAS and English-instructed program passively or actively?
3. In your opinion, what are the key decision-making factors for the publics to select whether entering into UAS or traditional university? How can the PR influence those mentioned key decision-making factors, any examples?
4. Please explain, to what extent do the public knowledge, attitudes and perception towards UAS influence the PR working effectiveness?
5. What are the challenges the English instructed degree program facing currently comparing with other Finnish degree programs?

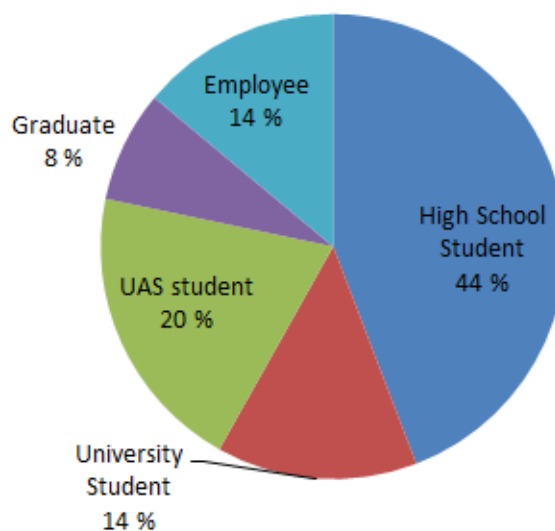
D. PR views on Media

1. How do you usually reach and spread the message to your target public. Any examples of printed and non-printed media you have been used?
2. How often do you contact with the media? Are there any media relationship built already strongly?
3. In practice, how helpful are the media aiding your PR activities? Do you think they are acting as effective as you want? Or are they delivering the message that you intend to?
4. What do you think the media's attitude towards UAS and English degree program in general?

-End-

Respondents' basic Information: current occupation and age

Current occupation



Age

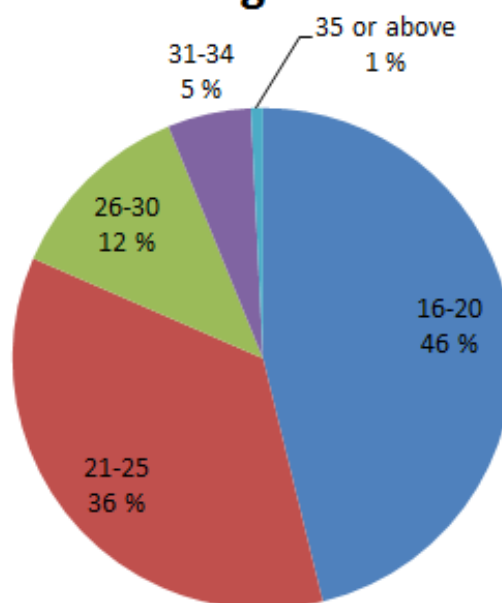



Table 13. Summary table of the perception gap between UAs and target publics

Survey Questions



Welcome to my survey

My name is Alan Ng, an undergraduate student in Turku University of Applied Sciences

I firstly hereby give you my highest appreciation for taking a few minutes to complete this survey which is one of the core part of my bachelor thesis research. Your feedback is very important to me and surely the Finnish education sectors to understand students' perception on Finnish University of Applied Sciences (UAS). In other words, your answers will provide a great impact and reflection on the current situation of UAS and their future development in Finland. Concerning the privacy, your answers will be absolutely anonymous and confidential that all the collected data is only used for researching and analyzing by me.

Survey structure:
Part I : Basic information
Part II : About University of Applied Sciences (UAS) / Ammattikorkeakoulu

So, let's begin now by clicking the arrow below!

**Reminder (1): UAS = University of Applied Sciences / Ammattikorkeakoulu

Survey begins

Part I : Basic information

How old are you?

15 or below 16-20 21-25 26-30 31-34 35 or above

What is your gender?

Male
 Female

What is your occupation currently?

- High school student
 Graduate
 University student
 Employee
 University of Applied Sciences student

Part II : About University of Applied Sciences (UAS) / Ammattikorkeakoulu

Have you heard of University of Applied Sciences / Ammattikorkeakoulu?

- Yes
 No

How frequently do you hear or read of University of Applied Sciences / Ammattikorkeakoulu in the following channels?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Quite often	Always
Newspapers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University's Brochures / Leaflets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Radio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Linkedin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online discussion forum (e.g. Suomi24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job fairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University's info day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibitions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Word-of-mouth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The information and messages you received about University of Applied Sciences (UAS) / Ammattikorkeakoulu from the media are generally... (0 is highly disagree; 6 is highly agree)

	0 : Highly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6: Highly agree
positive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
informative (ie.informatiivinen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
persuasive (ie. suostutteleva)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
manipulative (ie. manipuloiva)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How useful are the following types of information to you when you are searching for universities? (0 is not useful, 6 is very useful)

	0: Not useful	1	2	3	4	5	6: Very useful
Advertisement of degree program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
changes in organizational structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students' achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University's achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooperation with companies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Degree program application	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Are you studying or have you studied in University of Applied Sciences (UAS) / Ammattikorkeakoulu?

- Yes, the full name of the university is
- No

Have you considered to study in UAS?

- Yes
- No, because

Then, what do you actually think of University of Applied Sciences (UAS)?

Generally speaking, I consider UAS as... (0 is highly disagree, 6 is highly agree)

	0: Highly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6: Highly agree
highly recognized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
practical and highly job-related.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
professional training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
diverse in learning programs and tools.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
international with diverse cultures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
resourceful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Second last question, how often do you use the following media channels?

	Never	Less than once a month	1-3 times a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	4-5 times a week	More than 5 times a week
Newspapers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University's brochures and leaflets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Radio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Linkedin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online discussion forum (e.g. Suomi24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job Fair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibitions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The last question, how do you think can UAS do to have a more positive image to you?

That's the end of the survey.
Thank you very much for your precious time and contribution!

Figure of “Have you heard of UAS?”

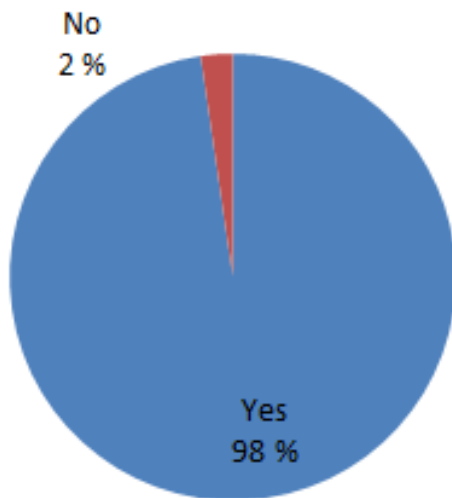


Figure of “Are you studying or have you studied in UAS?”

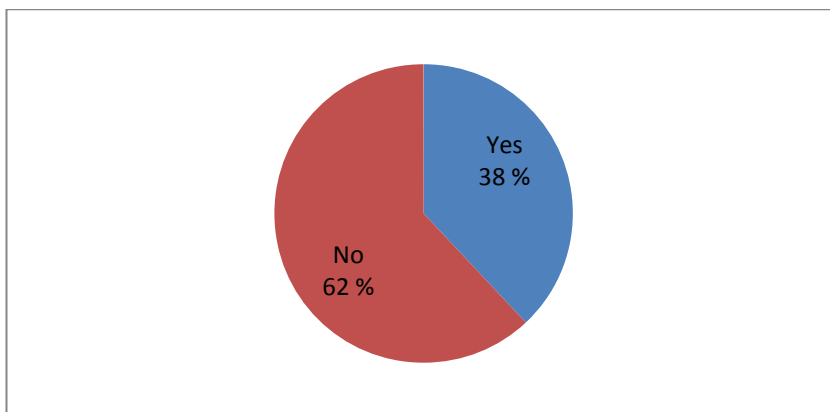


Figure of “If no, have you considered studying in UAS?”

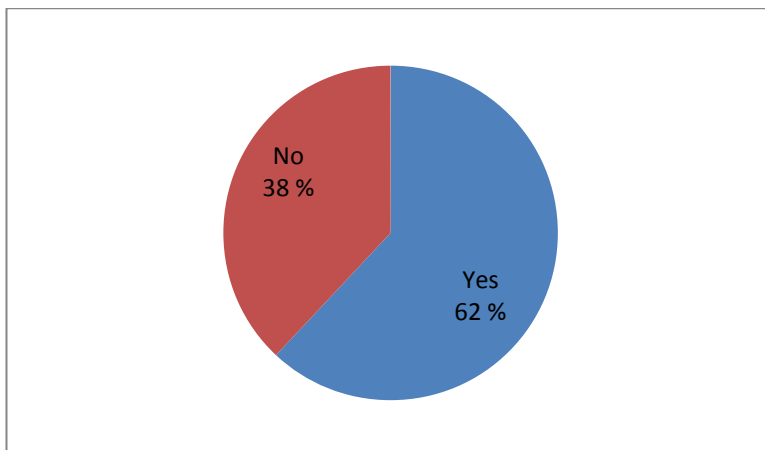


Table of “How often did you read and hear about the information of UAS?”

Question	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Quite often	Always	Total Responses
Newspapers	12.1%	38.7%	41.9%	7.3%	0.0%	127
Word-of-mouth	9.7%	10.5%	33.1%	36.3%	10.5%	127
Facebook	11.3%	21.8%	36.3%	26.6%	4.0%	127
TV	25.0%	39.5%	28.2%	7.3%	0.0%	127
General magazines	28.2%	47.6%	21.0%	3.2%	0.0%	127
University's Brochures / Leaflets	16.1%	24.2%	34.7%	20.2%	4.8%	127
Radio	27.4%	37.1%	21.8%	12.1%	1.6%	127
Exhibitions	25.2%	30.1%	28.5%	13.0%	3.3%	127
Online discussion forum (e.g. Suomi24)	52.0%	21.1%	19.5%	5.7%	1.6%	127
University's info day	21.3%	25.4%	32.0%	11.5%	9.8%	127
Twitter	68.9%	19.7%	9.8%	0.0%	1.6%	127
Job fairs	29.5%	27.0%	29.5%	9.8%	4.1%	127
Linkedin	65.6%	18.0%	11.5%	4.9%	0.0%	127
Other	74.2%	3.2%	9.7%	6.5%	3.2%	30

Table of “How frequent do you use the given media channels”

Channel	Never	Less than once a month	1-3 times a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	4-5 times a week	More than 5 times a week	Total Responses
Newspapers	4.8%	15.7%	13.3%	15.7%	19.3%	7.2%	24.1%	127
Magazines	7.2%	18.1%	26.5%	22.9%	15.7%	6.0%	3.6%	127
University/s brochures and leaflets	13.3%	47.0%	30.1%	7.2%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	127
Radio	13.3%	15.7%	14.5%	15.7%	3.6%	10.8%	26.5%	127
TV	9.6%	8.4%	10.8%	12.0%	22.9%	12.0%	24.1%	127
Facebook	1.2%	4.8%	0.0%	6.0%	6.0%	8.4%	73.5%	127
Twitter	51.8%	12.0%	12.0%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	9.6%	127
Linkedin	51.8%	9.6%	8.4%	10.8%	13.3%	4.8%	1.2%	127
Online discussion forum (e.g. Suomi24)	42.2%	27.7%	12.0%	6.0%	7.2%	3.6%	1.2%	127
Job Fair	20.5%	55.4%	15.7%	6.0%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	127
Exhibitions	19.3%	62.7%	10.8%	6.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	127

Table of “How useful are the following types of information to you when you are choosing between UAS and University” (by all respondents)

	0: Not useful	1	2	3	4	5	6: Very useful	Total Responses
Advertisement of degree program	1.6%	4.0%	12.9%	23.4%	29.8%	16.9%	11.3%	124
changes in organizational structure	3.3%	11.5%	17.2%	39.3%	23.0%	4.9%	0.8%	124
Cooperation with companies	4.8%	4.8%	6.5%	25.8%	21.8%	25.0%	11.3%	124
Degree program application	2.4%	1.6%	5.7%	21.1%	30.1%	23.6%	15.4%	124
Student activities	3.2%	4.0%	8.1%	28.2%	23.4%	26.6%	6.5%	124
Students' achievement	4.9%	4.1%	5.7%	35.2%	28.7%	12.3%	9.0%	124
University's achievement	3.2%	4.8%	9.7%	24.2%	31.5%	18.5%	8.1%	124
Other	34.8%	0.0%	0.0%	39.1%	17.4%	4.3%	4.3%	23

Table of “Decision-making factors on choosing universities or UAS (by all respondents)”

	0: Not important	1	2	3	4	5	6: Very important
Family's opinion	21.7%	23.3%	15.0%	16.7%	11.7%	5.8%	5.8%
Opportunity for career development	0.8%	1.7%	2.5%	7.5%	24.2%	25.8%	37.5%
Study location	0.8%	5.0%	3.3%	15.0%	31.7%	24.2%	20.0%
Popularity of the institution	5.8%	9.2%	11.7%	30.8%	23.3%	12.5%	6.7%
Level of international learning environment	1.7%	5.8%	8.3%	17.5%	20.0%	31.7%	15.0%
Number of students and staff	7.5%	9.2%	21.7%	34.2%	14.2%	9.2%	4.2%
Breadth of company network	4.2%	12.5%	10.0%	26.7%	24.2%	15.0%	7.5%
Breadth of partner university network	5.0%	8.3%	10.0%	25.8%	23.3%	17.5%	10.0%
Level of academy (ie. theoretical vs. practical)	0.8%	1.7%	4.2%	19.3%	26.9%	30.3%	16.8%

Table of Perception on UAS in comparison with traditional university (by all respondents)

Question	0:Totally disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6: Totally agree	Don't know
is more preferred.	8.3%	10.0%	17.5%	31.7%	10.8%	4.2%	4.2%	13.3%
is more innovative.	6.7%	5.8%	14.2%	30.0%	22.5%	10.0%	0.0%	10.8%
is more recognized in Finland.	10.8%	17.5%	24.2%	23.3%	8.3%	5.0%	2.5%	8.3%
is more recognized by companies.	8.3%	9.2%	18.3%	23.3%	14.2%	9.2%	2.5%	15.0%
is more useful for personal growth	7.5%	5.8%	11.7%	29.2%	20.0%	7.5%	2.5%	15.8%
can train more professional workers.	4.2%	3.3%	10.0%	30.0%	26.7%	10.8%	4.2%	10.8%
can develop better students' entrepreneurial skills.	4.2%	3.3%	10.0%	22.5%	23.3%	22.5%	4.2%	10.0%
enable students to have better job opportunities	6.7%	6.7%	19.2%	23.3%	15.0%	15.8%	4.2%	9.2%
helps internationalize more student learning experience (e.g. laanguage learnings, studying abraod)	8.3%	5.0%	14.2%	28.3%	15.0%	12.5%	5.8%	10.8%
has better learning and teaching resources.	12.5%	8.3%	23.3%	21.7%	12.5%	4.2%	3.3%	14.2%
has wider network with companies.	7.5%	3.3%	14.2%	23.3%	18.3%	7.5%	4.2%	21.7%
has wider network of partner universities.	5.8%	11.7%	19.2%	21.7%	9.2%	3.3%	3.3%	25.8%

Table of General image of UAS (by all respondents)

	0 : Highly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6: Highly agree
highly recognized.	2.5%	11.7%	25.8%	30.0%	25.8%	4.2%	0.0%
practical and highly job-related.	0.8%	1.7%	5.0%	25.8%	34.2%	22.5%	10.0%
professional training.	0.8%	2.5%	7.5%	32.5%	36.7%	16.7%	3.3%
diverse in learning programs and tools.	2.5%	1.7%	9.2%	42.5%	32.5%	10.0%	1.7%
international with diverse cultures.	1.7%	2.5%	10.0%	29.2%	35.0%	18.3%	3.3%
resourceful.	4.2%	4.2%	15.0%	39.2%	27.5%	9.2%	0.8%

Table of “How useful are the following types of information to you when you are choosing between UAS and University” (By all potential students and university students group)”

	0: Not useful	1	2	3	4	5	6: Very useful	Total Responses
Advertisement of degree program	4	5	13	27	27	16	11	103
changes in organizational structure	4	11	20	39	22	5	2	103
Student activities	4	4	9	33	24	23	6	103
Students' achievement	6	5	7	37	26	13	9	103
University's achievement	4	6	10	26	32	17	8	103
Cooperation with companies	7	7	7	30	22	23	7	103
Degree program application	4	3	8	25	29	20	14	103
Other (e.g. location)	8	0	0	8	4	1	1	22

* The green-highlighted refers to the most chosen

* The yellow-highlighted refers to second most chosen

Table of “what are the decision-making factors affecting the respondents’ choice between UAS and university (only potential students and university students group)”

	0: Not important	1	2	3	4	5	6: Very important	Total Responses
Family's opinion	20	20	12	18	14	5	5	95
Opportunity of career development	0	2	3	9	22	23	35	95
Study location	1	5	3	17	28	22	18	95
Popularity of the institution	7	10	13	26	23	9	6	95
Level of international learning environment	2	6	10	19	17	29	11	95
Number of students and staff	9	11	21	30	14	5	4	95
Breadth of company network	5	15	11	25	21	12	5	95
Breadth of partner university network	5	10	11	23	23	17	5	95
Level of academy (i.e. theoretical vs. practice)	1	2	5	20	24	26	16	95
Other	10	1	0	9	1	0	2	23

* The green-highlighted refers to the most chosen

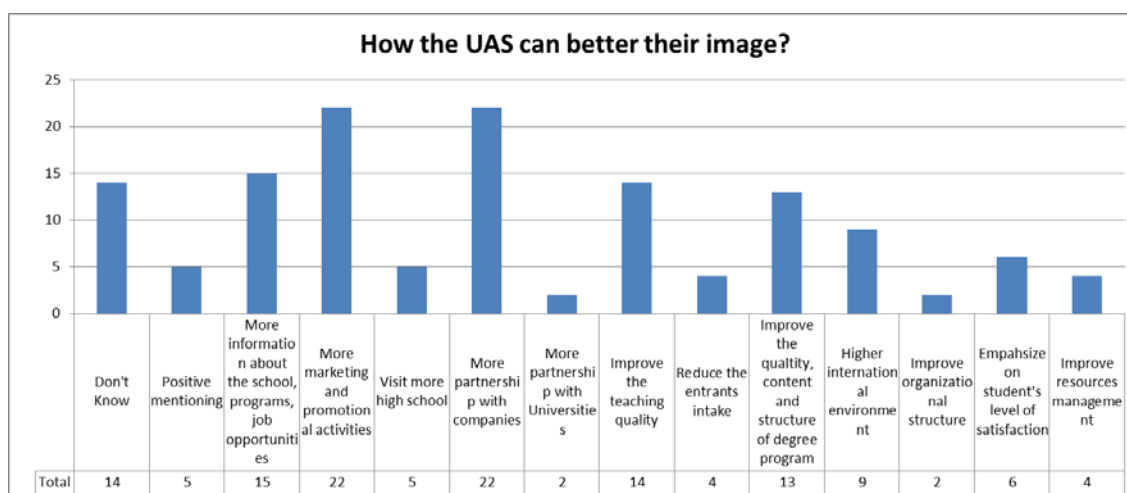
* The yellow-highlighted refers to second most chosen

Table, chart and comments extract of” how can UAS better their image?”

	High School	UAS	Uni	Graduate	Employee
Positive	8%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Provide more information	27%	2%	0%	0%	9%
More marketing	11%	14%	18%	36%	17%
Visit more high school (e.g IB program)	11%	2%	0%	0%	0%
More partnership with companies	11%	19%	18%	18%	17%
More partnership with Universities	0%	5%	0%	0%	4%
Improve the teaching quality	2%	19%	0%	9%	17%
Reduce the entrants intake	2%	2%	18%	0%	0%
Improve the quality, content and structure of degree program	4%	9%	12%	18%	13%
Higher international environment	4%	14%	0%	0%	4%
Improve organizational structure	0%	2%	0%	0%	4%
Empaksize on student's level of satisfaction	0%	2%	24%	0%	4%
Improve resources management	0%	2%	6%	9%	4%
Don't Know	20%	7%	0%	9%	4%

* The green-highlighted refers to the most chosen

* The yellow-highlighted refers to second most chosen



Extracts of comments example

1	Need to enhance the quality of education within some courses. Adding more advanced courses to subjects e.g. International economy, trade, finance and accounting and HRM, so that students have the chance to gain more in-depth knowledge for these fields. Continue creating valuable partner universities and companies.
2	Even more cooperation with companies to create actual job opportunities. - Lower intake number of new students (too many people with a bachelor's degree cause inflation to the education and the way it is appreciated)
3	Establishing partnerships with universities and companies would make UAS a more lucrative option in my mind.
4	Maybe provide more detailed explanations of what it means to attend a certain program/study there.
5	Provide more international studies and channel/advertise international programs more carefully and widely. Young people do not realize the possibilities of a study program which is in close connection with different cultures and language. One of the most essential details in English program in my opinion is the connections you are able to create throughout the world and learn together with different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs.
6	Way too many people graduate from UAS, There's just no job every UAS student, thus the amount of students taken in should be taken down. Or at least the entrance to UAS should be made harder to ensure the good quality of graduating students, and also to ensure that non-skilled won't be taking jobs with their connections and networks from the skilled ones.
7	The UASs could have more emphasis on students' ability to not only apply information but also to produce new knowledge and examine the existing information critically. Therefore there should be more theoretical learning. The number of admitted students should correlate with needs of the employment market: currently there is a surplus of graduates e.g. in the fields of tourism and media.
8	Less bureaucracy, more flexibility and relations with companies
9	By doing more collaboration with companies (more "real" projects) at least. At the moment TUAS has co-determination (yt-neuvottelu) going on, that doesn't give the best picture of the school. I hope the result of co-determination doesn't result in cutting in teaching staff, because that's something the school needs to hang on for sure.
10	I think they need to get more quality teachers and restructure the program courses that include theory and practice. Get more visibility through campaigns.
11	Bring something new where to attract peoples' eye and execute re-branding plan. e.g. would there be a new degree which stands out from other degrees in Finland. *The idea is to attract fresh smart people willing to immerse them self into a new labour industry. The strategy behind; is that by creating such a degree/program (based on the industry needs), the opportunity of rebranding

	UAS in such a scenario, could highly create positive image.
12	Broaden the availability of courses taught in English to distinguish Finland as a place that is open and ready to be a global learning and teaching environment as going to English speaking schools is becoming more and more popular for the youth. IB schools are become more and more popular and UAS and Finnish universities desperately should broaden the available courses taught in English instead of only having Masters courses taught in English. The English learning opportunity is broken at the moment in Finland. Upper Secondary school is available in English but after that the only options are 1-2 vocational courses taught in English or IB in English the latter being difficult to get into. Therefore between English upper secondary and English UAS or Masters there is nowhere for English speakers to go. This problem should be fixed and Finland and UAS have a chance to make Finland the destination for international students to come and learn in Europe.
13	If a lesser percentage of the graduates would not go unemployed right away after finishing studies. Over education is a problem in Finland and UAS is a major player in that game. It just does not work as well as they try to make it sound. A lot of it is a huge waste of resources.
14	It doesn't matter what a university achieves if its graduates are unemployed or working in low-paid sectors. Make connections, get funding, and show the society that the students are excellent. One word: opportunity. It would be nice if both local and international students are guaranteed a properly paid internship, as well as useful, tailor-made career guidance. International students should be able to speak enough working life Finnish when they graduate, because Finnish language is vital for foreigners to find work in Finland. Otherwise most internationals could only leave the country.
15	I think UAS needs time to be more recognized alongside traditional universities. Simply by training competent workers, the image of the school will improve. UAS' strength compared to traditional universities is its practical education, which is very important and can be used as an advantage.
16	To my knowledge based on experiences my acquaintances have had, computer science and information technology programs have woeful teachers who have no idea what they are teaching about. During lectures one cannot work in peace because the other students are behaving like they are in grade school. Also, not many UAS have partnerships with companies (for example in the construction field) so they have obsolete teaching and poorly designed teaching.
17	Most of the information comes from the students so as long as the students are satisfied with their education then the University gets good publicity. The University's job will be to keep a good connection from their students and learn from what they have to say. After all, education exists for the students.
18	They should do more visits in high schools and try to put their learning opportunities out there more.