

The Role of Digital Marketing in Public Higher Education Organizations in Attracting Younger Generations

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Digital transformation of marketing in the public institutions of higher education in Greece, has a key role in the context of the digital revolution. The study aimed at investigating the perceptions and views explicitly or implicitly, of the representatives of the administration of Greek public universities about the relationship between the application of digital marketing and the attraction of students. The study adopted a qualitative research method conducting in-depth interviews with rectors and vice-rectors of 10 representative Greek Universities. Results indicated that administrators believe that digital marketing has a great impact in attracting students, especially young people preparing to graduate from high school. The adoption of digital marketing by the Greek public university is of high priority due to the fact that it influences prospective students in terms of their university choice.

Keywords: public higher education organizations, higher education institutions, digital marketing

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

Digital marketing allows universities to target new students and more effectively measure their return on investment through the wide range of statistical analysis platforms available today (emarketer, 2017). With the ability to cross geographical boundaries, public higher education institutions with a strong digital presence can attract students of all levels, familiar with the digital world, who could not reach them if they relied solely on traditional marketing techniques. The study aims to investigate, record and analyze the way in which administration of Greek public higher education organizations understand the role of digital marketing in universities, in the context of the digital revolution and its role to attract more and better students.

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Article History:

Received 17 May 2021 | Accepted 30 June 2021 | Available Online 16 July 2021

Cite Reference:

Makrydakakis, N.S., 2021. The Role of Digital Marketing in Public Higher Education Organizations in Attracting Younger Generations. *Expert Journal of Marketing*, 9(1), pp.28-38.

2. Literature Review

In June 2020, the study of Castro Benavides et al. (2020) published a literature review from 1980 to 2019 to identify any references to the term "digital transformation" and "higher education institution" or "university" and present the dimensions and functions that most universities associate with the need to integrate digital technology. The findings were impressive for the field of marketing and for the need for further study like the present one. Specifically, they found that the staff of universities to a large extent correlates digital technologies with dimensions-functions such as education, infrastructure, etc. while the operation of marketing is the latest in terms of publications and efforts on the part of universities to develop their digital version (Figure 1).

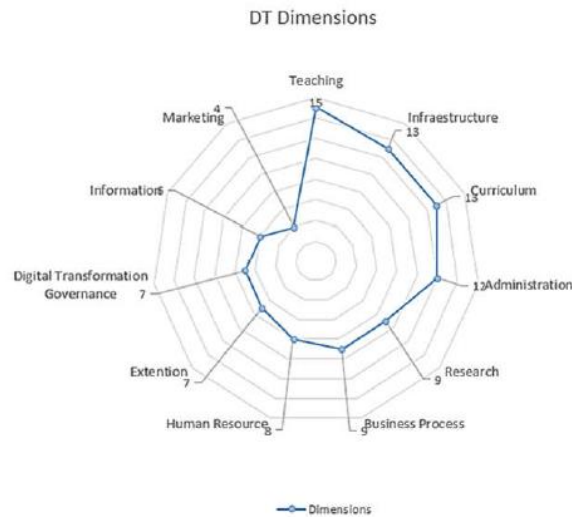


Figure 1. Functions of universities related to digital technologies
Source: Castro Benavides et al. (2020)

This is due to the lack of a culture of digital transformation, the lack of measurable results in attracting students and the lack of understanding of public university administration of the potentials of digital marketing. According to The World University Ranking (2020), digital student engagement is enhanced and in some cases it is necessary due to these new circumstances such as the spread of Covid-19, highlighting the need to shift the marketing budget from traditional media in digital, to increase the digital and virtual experience of prospective students and for continuous interaction on social media.

The change toward the digital transformation of higher education marketing is becoming increasingly necessary due to the rapid and steady pace of digital change which according to Price Waterhouse Coopers (2018) and Information Age (2017), is mainly due to four very powerful factors:

- percentage of technological changes
- increased "consumption" of data from mobile phones
- "consumption" of digital media
- big data

Generation Z, those born between 2005 and 2015, rarely use only one computer when searching for information about products and services. We live in a digital world where student expectations are rising exponentially and this is one of the driving forces behind the digital transformation of marketing (NNG, 2018). Audience expectations are driven mainly by popular platforms such as Google and Facebook, with today's online prospecting students expecting seamless transitions between digital channels and the web, accurate and timely information as well as rich online and offline experiences.

Hayes, Ruschman and Walker (2009) studying the impact of social media as a marketing tool for a university found that there is a positive relationship between those who follow its social media pages and the likelihood of applying to study at it. They consider social media to be an excellent two-way communication tool that ensures the university gathers valuable information through interaction with students and prospective students, enabling it to use it as a targeted promotion tool influencing university selection decisions.

Whitehead (2012) went one step further and emphasized that the internet and social media are vital tools for attracting students and McAlexander, Koenig, Schouten (2005) added that they affect the overall public image of the university. The participation of most potential students, in social media has been further enhanced by the widespread use of portable electronic devices, which make access to them even more

comfortable and enjoyable (Michaluk, 2008). Levitz (2012) research showed that only 5% of prospective high school students do not use social networks. The popularity of social media among undergraduate and graduate students is so strong that the latter find the information published in them more credible than in traditional media such as magazines and newspapers according to Henseler (2013).

One of the reasons that universities use social media is to attract new students according to Kelleher and Sweetser (2012) who argue that departments and those responsible for attracting students are highly dependent on social media because there communicate with younger audiences who are completely familiar with all media. Peruta and Shields (2018) add that other reasons that universities use Facebook and social media are to communicate with students and alumni, to promote university news, to promote academic work, to promote research, and the recruitment of academic staff. In 2017, the International Student Survey, found that 83% of university candidates use social media for university research, up 19% from the previous year. Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are the most popular platforms, while others such as LinkedIn, Pinterest and Snapchat are also used regularly.

In the context of digital marketing strategy, as reported by Carnegiedartlet (2020), most of the actions of any higher education organization are aim at turning internet users into visitors of its websites, so the effort to optimize websites is a crucial process because ranking in first positions of search machines means more visitors.

Content marketing is about unique stories (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018) and each organization has its own unique stories. This also applies to a university which, by creating unique and interesting content, turns site visitors into potential students and should be such that students feel the desire to become members of that particular academic community. A public university has hundreds of scientific achievements that can be used as student stories or activities that it can utilize them regardless of the subject.

The adoption of video marketing by universities has impressive, tangible and measurable results in the internet environment (Focus edu sol., 2018). Most prospective students while searching choices between universities want a more general overview of what they offer instead of specific information about degrees or programs. As they delve deeper into the research, they look for detailed information, such as the courses of specific programs or who the teachers are. Since there are many steps between the initial research and the final choice of a university, specific content video are useful for each phase.

According to Neil Patel (2017), the inbound marketing strategy consists of four stages that work in sequence, leading, in this case, the unknown internet user to visit the university website and eventually turn into a student. The first step is to attract visitors to the university websites. Attracting visitors is the first step of the methodology and in this initial stage, the leading role is played by providing the right content, in the right digital place, in the right audience and at the right time (Halligan and Shah, 2009) through search engine optimization and on social media (Meyer, 2017).

3. Research Methodology

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the research question was *«If the adoption of digital marketing by the public university can influence and attract prospective students according the perceptions of administration»*. For the examination of the research question, I chose the qualitative research methodology as the most appropriate. The choice of quality methodology was made due to the nature of the research, which suggests priority and emphasis on the study of the ways in which representatives of public universities perceive and interpret the role of digital marketing. With this methodology I seek to investigate the specificity of the phenomenon due to the public nature of universities. The phenomenon of the effect of digital marketing on attracting students, requires the explanation and understanding of *«how»* universities react, question which can be answered more effectively using quality methodology (Silverman, 2001).

At the same time, the qualitative method of interviews helps to explore a new issue such as the adoption of new digital marketing applications by the public university and the positive or negative attitudes towards it. I considered that the qualitative method with interviews is more appropriate for the interviewees to approach a topic without having preconceived notions about the important variables, gradually leading to the formulation of an approach for explaining and interpreting research data as opposed to the quantitative method where the variables used are conceptually predetermined, while the results are a priori predictable from the framework of the theory.

3.1. Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy followed in this study would affect both the quality of the data and the conclusions of the research. The necessity of an in-depth study of views and perceptions of rectors and vice-

rectors of public Greek higher education organizations and within their appropriate representatives led me to choose the strategy of «Criterion sampling». I chose this method because I wanted to select those cases that will be my sample according two criteria a) the position of the respondent within the university; and b) the representativeness of the university.

In particular, regarding the first criterion, in the appropriate sample I sought to belong exclusively to people who have a key role in the public Greek university and participate in administrative decisions such as rectors and vice-rectors. I focused my attention on these positions because they play a crucial role in the decision-making of universities in order to answer the issues that affect the adoption of innovations in the Greek public organization of higher education.

The second criterion concerning representativeness was based on the assumption that a heterogeneous but at the same time representative sample would be needed. The size of the universities was taken into account for the selection, based on the reasoning that there are large universities in number of students and number of departments and faculties while others are smaller, which should have its role in the final sample selection from both size categories.

3.2. Sample Size

As a researcher conducting a qualitative research I face the question regarding the sample size and how many units it should include in it. According to different researchers (Iosisfidis, 2008), qualitative research has no numerical limitations in terms of sample size which does not need to be quantitatively large. The large sample can sometimes work negatively when research seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of attitudes and perceptions.

It should be noted that the final sample size was not precisely determined from the beginning but emerged from the course of the interviews. The final number of participants in the research emerged when I found that from the incorporation of new data from the interviews there was no new data in the production of useful conclusions because information and concepts that had already been mentioned began to be repeated.

In particular, the interviewees have the position of rector or vice-rector and are therefore in the highest possible hierarchical position within public universities. This ensured that their views reflected the prevailing culture and philosophy at the university and through their answers the conclusions gained great role. The interviews were attended by 10 representatives of public universities, of which 3 are Rectors and 7 Vice-Rectors who replaced an equal number of Rectors.

The final selection included first the National Technical University of Athens, which is the most representative large public institution, located in the capital and has the reputation of the leading and most recognizable Greek institution. The second is the University of the Aegean which is a medium-sized acritic university, has the unique feature of operating in the largest number of different geographical locations and especially in 6 islands of the Aegean Sea. The third is the University of Western Macedonia which is one of the newest universities in Greece, founded in 2003. In 2019 the University of Western Macedonia merged with the Technological Institute of Western Macedonia and has facilities in 5 cities in the Region of Western Macedonia. The fourth is the Ionian University which is one of the smallest universities in the country. The fifth is the Hellenic Open University which is a unique case among public universities due to the fact that its mission is exclusively the provision of distance undergraduate and postgraduate education and training. The sixth is the University of Patras which is based in Patras, is the largest university in western Greece and one of the largest in the country while in 2013 it joined the University of Western Greece and in 2019 joined the Technological Educational Institute of Western Greece (TEI of Western Greece). The seventh is the University of West Attica, which is the third largest university in the country in number of enrolled undergraduate students and its establishment in 2018 came through the process of merging the TEI of Athens and the University of Piraeus Technological Sector, while in 2019 joined the National School of Public Health. The eighth is the Athens University of Economics and Business, which operates in Athens and dates back to 1903, with studies exclusively in economics and administration. The ninth is the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences based in Athens, it is one of the most famous universities in Greece and the tenth is the University of Crete with forty years of operation on the largest island of Greece.

3.3. Data Collection

The chosen technique is the semi-structured interview which as a research data production technique is extremely demanding and time consuming in terms of conducting but also in terms of data design and analysis. Nevertheless, this technique allows to explore in depth the perceptions and views of the participants and to understand their attitudes of rectors and vice-rectors. This technique was deemed as most appropriate

to answer the research question because it can more easily reveal the conceptions of public university representatives about a virgin research area by providing open access (Flick, 2009).

The design and conduct of the semi-structured quality interview was a complex and demanding task. Sometimes during some interviews I had to make decisions about the order of the questions at that time in order not to lose the thought of the respondent. Also, always having as the center of every action the effort to answer the research question, I adjusted the style and the wording of the questions.

The questions were designed to be open, flexible and understandable by the respondents while at the same time tried to be as relevant as possible to the experiences of the participants. Avoided questions that are too long, ambiguous or complex that may not be understood. The interviews took place on the dates 1, 2, 4, 8, 12 February, 17, 31 March and 2, 5, 6 April 2021.

3.4. Data Analysis

To translate qualitative individual interviews into text, the rules of notation was followed (Silvermann, 2000) and a series of conventions used with in order all forms of communication and interaction to be captured, such as the duration of silence, the pasting of utterances, the an indication of some form of emphasis through the volume and / or pitch of the voice, the accent shades within a word, the abrupt changes in the pitch of a voice, a part of pronunciation that is pronounced faster or slower than the rest of the pronunciation, etc. which could not otherwise be included in a transliteration of spoken word into text. In particular, I used the following symbols in order to record and code the responses:

- [] . Overlap of utterances or parts of them
- = → Connection of utterances, lack of perceived gap (silence) between the interlocutors
- (0.4) → Duration of silence in seconds within one utterance or between different utterances
- word → Indication of some form of emphasis through the volume and / or pitch of the voice
- WORD → Volume particularly high
- _: → Tones of accent within a word
- ↑↓ → Abrupt changes in pitch
- > word < → Part of pronunciation that is pronounced faster than the rest of the pronunciation
- <word> → Part of pronunciation that is spoken more slowly than the rest of the pronunciation

For the organization of the material, a coding process is used, separate the division of the material into individual sections based on a common system of codes. The aim was to derive the codes subject on which the thematic analysis is based can be formed, which is considered as the most appropriate method to analyze the qualitative data.

Thematic analysis is the most appropriate method in the attempt to detect and understand meanings – «themes» within a data set and thus provide cognitive access to semantics and experiences and to conduct the thematic analysis the steps suggested by Creswell (2007) are followed.

Along with the interpretation and analysis of the data, a mixed method used that consists of the literal and interpretive reading of the data. The first is to detect the expressed meaning of the data, emphasizing the literal nature of the form, while the second to detect perceptions or references that demonstrate how research subjects perceive the issue of the impact of digital marketing on the audience.

4. Results, Discussion and Interpretation of findings

From the answers of the rectors and vice rectors, codes were formed which condense meanings, perceptions and opinions about the place of digital marketing in the public university. The unification of the different codes derives the common finding as a thematic unit which shows that the university administrations now consider that digital marketing is a necessary tool for attracting new students (Table 1).

Based on the interviews, Rector 1 gives a dimension that reveals that he believes that digital marketing plays an important role in attracting students and focuses on the role this can play in the new prospective student's initial contact with the university's digital applications.

Rector 1: *«It is crucial to highlight the uniqueness of your identity and the comparative advantage you have over the competition. It can be crucial, because you know that the volume of information is very large, the first glance is crucial in whether it will attract the second or third glance or if it will attract interest in general, there I think we can, uh universities should be active in this direction because young people are attracted to it».*

Rector 1 without a deep knowledge of digital marketing, from what he says seems to understand the importance of at least the first stage of inbound marketing strategy which according to Neil Patel (2017) and the organization Hubspot consists of four stages, a) Attraction, b) Conversion, c) Closing, and d) Satisfaction, which operate in sequence leading, guiding the prospective student and internet user to visit the university website and eventually becoming a student. At the Attract stage it is crucial to initially attract visitors to the organization's digital media. At this early stage, providing the right content, in the right digital place, in the right audience and at the right time (Halligan and Shah, 2009) plays a key role through search engine optimization and social media (Meyer, 2017).

An interesting finding emerges from the views of Rector 2 who believes that those who know well what they want to study, as he typically says those who have a «passion» for a science are not affected by digital marketing, but there are many who do not know or do not decide on the university or subject of study that the university can attract through digital marketing.

Rector 2: «... *passion is a necessary element (for the choice of studies), for anyone who has it... ..to anyone who does not have it there can be directed purely by digital marketing*».

Vice Rector 3 is an ardent supporter of digital marketing, expressing the view that it is the alpha and omega for a university and that it has a great deal of importance in the process of attracting students. Also, although he believes that geographical criteria play an important role in choosing a university, he does not diminish the value of digital marketing in attracting students, but rather reinforces it, saying that it plays an important role among similar universities that compete to attract students from the same university. This attitude shows that it has the ability to understand aspects that are the core of the philosophy of educational marketing that suits the Greek public universities which, although operating in a closed - oligopolistic market (because there is no possibility of private universities) need digital marketing, among other things because they compete with each other.

The geographical criterion seems to be of great concern to regional university administrations and Vice Rector 2 showing that he understands the potential of digital marketing to attract young people. Rector 2 also believes that there are geographical criteria but digital marketing can add differentiation between "homogenized departments".

Vice Rector 3: «*I have the opinion that the internet before the coronavirus was 30-40% of the university, at the moment I believe it is 70-80%, even when the pandemic is over... eee...ee .. everything is done digitally most of all... the service, the attraction of the students... the...eee..... the relationships that develop even with the teachers will be mostly digital... ee..ee..ee... .aaa... aaa.... and part of the teaching will be digital in the sense of the material we post and all this even when we consider that this pandemic will pass our life will be digital...so..YES it is the alpha and omega, the digital marketing... ..despite the fact that the geographical criteria are at the top, <digital marketing> plays a role. why does it matter? because there are always competing universities that are geographically in the same position I would say more or less, so for the universities that are in Athens the competition between them will be done digitally with digital marketing, for the universities the regional ones respectively, so it plays a huge role because the market of regional universities is different I would say (shakes hands making quotation marks), the market of Athenian universities is different and therefore the value of digital marketing is of great importance again, seeing the stratified market plays a huge role ».*

Vice Rector 2: «*It would facilitate the existence of digital marketing, I consider it extremely important, it is obvious that the new generation is affected by it and it is a common... .ee... a common goal which (looks to the left) we are really interested in <anyway it is the audience of the next students>... ..in my university the main problem we have is the distance and the cost of living which is timeless... ..and the way of going,... nevertheless attracting students to us it's a little different*».

Rector 2: «*Of course (digital marketing can reverse disadvantages), what is being done now is being done for geographical reasons, that is, he is avoiding Crete because it is an island and it is a hassle to go and choose Patras, he has no other reason, the departments in terms of curriculum and quality of teaching. These academic departments must each develop their own strengths, which is... which is stronger, which is weaker... ».*

Rector 1 adds another dimension to the need for digital marketing, that of influencing young people and especially those secondary school graduates who belong to the so-called Generation Z (Gen Z), many of whom are or will become members of the academic community, are an audience that has grown up in the new digital environment and what makes this generation different from any previous one is the penetration of technology in their lives and the existence of digital technology as part of the world in which they grow up. The rector seems to understand that this generation cannot imagine their daily life outside the digital environment while its members like to 'consume' digital content through different channels, different devices (computers, mobile phones, tablets, digital clocks, etc.) and from different geographical places. Hence, they have the expectation that technology is central to their entire educational experience and expect universities to interact with them using digital marketing applications. Moreover, Vice Rector 4, after expressing the view that the role of digital marketing strategy is a catalyst for attracting students, adds that it is the only way in which the university can influence the current new generation of potential students.

Rector 1: *«... I think what you said is absolutely true (that digital marketing influences the choices of potential students). Obviously young people are attracted to something like this. Or there are very few young people who are admitted to our university who come to study something without having looked for it (with his hand he emphasizes what he says), most children, lack of support process from the school, look in the digital world of every university».*

Vice Rector 4: *«.. I think the role of digital marketing is catalytic and unique, that is, I do not think that it can be done in a different way to attract students... potential students who are only used to this way, if it is done strategically, so strategic marketing on the part of the universities, I think this is the right thing to do, so a marketing strategy should be centrally designed in the university in order to pass on to the student society because otherwise what I personally consider.... otherwise all these children who are just used to with the internet, they can not imagine that they are without internet, therefore, in relation to the university, if there are well-designed marketing strategies, then the information will arrive correctly and each university will be able to attract very good students and among similar universities...», «...students are effectively influenced by digital marketing, a digital strategy should be implemented by the university».*

Rector 3 adds that digital marketing is very important in attracting the new generation that uses and is influenced more by each of the smartphones and especially through this the university can attract quality students.

Rector 3: *«I think it is extremely helpful (digital marketing)..», «..we want (digital marketing) to help us enhance quality, we want to attract quality, we want to attract people who will choose the university in the first choices and so it makes it easier for us to raise the level».*

Researcher: *«So digital marketing is a tool to help you attract best students?»*

Rector 3: *«I do not know about the best, but because the current new generation lives with smartphones and wants easy solutions, we bet a lot on emotion and less on logic, we pass messages intelligibly».*

The only way for the university to get in touch with the younger generation is through digital marketing applications, which are even more necessary when the university wants to reach out to young and non-foreign students who may not have heard of the university, while it is extremely necessary in times like that of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Vice Rector 5: *«...and it is the only way to get in touch with younger people here we are talking about, whether it means a $\mu\alpha$ or it means an $aa..app..a..our$ effort to make the university known either we have to open up on platforms like Instagram let's say for example or Facebook, my daughter tells me that Facebook is outdated,... I'm left behind ", " if she wants to make known her curricula and here she comes even more, the new curricula that the state will logically give us the opportunity to develop such as the foreign languages or the international postgraduates in which we have started and enter...to make them known (the curricula) we need such techniques and digital marketing techniques can be applied."On the occasion of this period (of the covid 19 pandemic), the special period we are in, we changed the way of presenting the departments and curricula instead of being live, we did it remotely and for example we addressed 234 schools a while ago and we did presentation of undergraduate programs that have not been able to learn about the university in previous years».*

Vice Rector 6 also believes that there is no other way for the university to attract and influence the new generation other than the use of digital marketing while the university does not exist if it does not exist digitally. Vice Rector 7 has the same perception, adding that digital marketing tools affect not only the younger generation but also the older ones who want to be educated.

Vice Rector 6: *«This generation is in my opinion the best generation and they have skills that I envy so I would say that the only way to attract these children is the digital way there is no other way because universities do not make sense to there are if there are no students, because students are the heart of the system the only way to approach them is to take them further with their own measures and not with yours».*

Researcher: *«So the university has to use digital marketing if it wants to attract [youngsters?]».*

Vice Rector 6: *«[absolutely] he can do nothing else, that is, he has no other way to influence, that is, you can not influence in any other way, I remember in the past the municipalities called us, they called us to explain to the children, personal communication is extremely important but not for these children, this generation because the digital environment creates a distance, the difference with previous generations is that previous generations insisted on trying while these children if it does not click on them just abandon them...», «...That "I have found that the digital way of communication is very important», «The university does not exist if it does not exist digitally».*

Vice Rector 7: *«...as the market expands, to put it this way, where our students come from because now the channel is closed, it has to do with undergraduate, postgraduate but mainly it has to do with what we call lifelong learning, this is an important and promising activity where everyone, not only the high school student, can come to a university organization and receive a university certificate that he / she was trained in this usually very interesting subject. So, the diffusion of information cannot actually be done in any other way».*

Vice Rector 1 states that digital marketing is implemented by Anglo-Saxon universities and is not so suitable in Greece for attracting students from public higher education institutions and then accepts that attracting new students is done electronically and that all universities in Greece have accounts on all social media. There is an internal contradiction, which is attributed to superficial or limited knowledge of the subject of marketing, to entrenched beliefs that identify any new practice with an attempt at privatization. This prevents some university administrations from adapting in a timely manner and they are apparently unaware that digital marketing applications such as social media have a positive relationship between those who follow the university's social media pages and the possibility of choosing to study at this (Hayes, Ruschman and Walker, 2009) while it has already been proven (Whitehead, 2012) that the internet and social media are vital tools for attracting students.

Vice Rector 1: *«(looks at his hand and thinks about the question) .. (0.4) ε eee not in big, not so much in Greece, in..ee. per crown,> possibly <and exclusively. Now, no, the attraction of new students ..> is done electronically <, it is not a coincidence that there is no institution at least abroad, even in Greece which does not have an account on all social media and is either professional or simple social (shakes his hand looking for and confirming the categories of social media) Facebook, ... LinkedIn, ... Twitter (has his hand in his mouth, looks right, thinks, talks) and the rest ..eeee... if we are talking about attracting students .. i.e. only this mainly concerns the <Anglo-Saxon>».*

From the coding of the above answers, a thematic table map is addressed in Table 1) The following codes formed the theme «Digital marketing is considered to be of great importance for public higher education organizations to attract students and especially the younger generation».

Table 1. Codes and the addressed theme

Codes	Theme
<p>Attracting new students is done electronically</p> <p>All universities have accounts on all social media</p> <p>Young people are attracted to it (digital)</p> <p>Digital marketing plays a key role in initial attraction and initial interest</p> <p>Digital marketing attracts those who are not sure what to study</p> <p>Attracting students is done digitally</p> <p>Students are influenced by digital marketing</p> <p>It's the alpha and omega of digital marketing</p> <p>It plays a role in attracting students between similar Universities</p> <p>100% of new students are attracted and digitally influenced</p> <p>The role of digital marketing is catalytic and unique</p> <p>Digital marketing is very important in attracting the new generation and quality students</p> <p>There is no other way to attract students</p> <p>It is the only way now for the university to have contact with the younger generation</p> <p>Digital marketing applications are even more necessary when the university wants to address new students from abroad</p> <p>Digital marketing is necessary especially in times like the Covid pandemic19</p> <p>There is no other way for the university to attract and influence the new generation except through the use of digital marketing</p> <p>The university does not exist if it does not exist in a digital setting</p> <p>Digital marketing tools affect not only the younger generation but also the older ones who want to be educated</p>	<p>Digital marketing is considered to be of great importance for public higher education institutions to attract students and especially the younger generation</p>

5. Conclusion

The results clearly show that digital marketing is understood by all those involved in the administration of universities that today this tool can be used to attract students, especially young people preparing to graduate from high school and is the largest target group of the university public. Digital marketing has also been found to play a key role in influencing and attracting graduate students but is extending even to older people seeking training. It is also considered one of the most powerful tools that a public university can use to promote study programs and attract students, but also to compete on better terms with similar domestic universities by attracting better quality students.

5.1. Implications

Although public universities use some digital marketing applications such as social media marketing there is a strong need to implement digital marketing in a professional way. Administration has been convinced that they need digital marketing applications but they also do not have the appropriate tools to implement it.

In particular they use social media marketing with a focus on Facebook and a lower level of focus on LinkedIn from the available social networks, some dynamic and most limited to Youtube by Content Communities, limited to a few on Twitter by Microblogs and limited focus on Instagram by Mobile media, while they do not do search engine marketing to optimize their websites in the ranking of Google, Yahoo, Bing etc. They advertise on search engines and social media, but do not follow a strategy; the actions are done in a non-stop way, without duration, nor in the context of a coherent campaign.

Most Greek universities lack the digital marketing strategy and the general digital strategy under the umbrella of which all the above digital applications operate in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner. The vision of the management team and the skills of the staff are issues that must be addressed by the universities and a condition for all the departments and functions of the university to commit to function as a well-tuned machine for the successful design and mainly implementation of the digital transformation. In this context, it is deemed necessary to develop the functions of digital marketing in the Greek public university, in a more organized and structured way in order to be able to utilize its various benefits.

5.2. Future Research and Limitations

The field of research that future studies could focus on is the procedures and the way that should be followed by public universities to be able to adopt and implement a digital marketing strategy effectively, while overcoming institutional difficulties. The present study was limited to the research of the views and perceptions of the top management of the Greek public university organizations and specifically of the rectors and vice-rectors, but the implementation of each new administrative procedure requires the involvement of all staff which plays a key role in active participation and effectiveness of any new implementation of marketing.

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