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## Advertising Romanian Master Programs. A Case Study

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### Abstract

Romanian higher education institutions have taken the internationalization process as an objective of strategic development, in order to improve the quality of study programs, both in education and research activities. A key factor in increasing the interest in internationalized curriculum is the actual situation on the labor market, in the context of Romania's accession to the European Union. Internationalization strategies must be defined at the level of MA study programs, taking into account several important elements: mobility, societal goals, the Romanian legal framework, the institutional organization, the specificity of the field of study, the profile of the MA student participating in internationalized programs. Beyond all these, each university must build a viable marketing strategy, which includes a series of indicators similar to those used by prestigious international universities. A good strategy for the promotion of internationalized curriculum creates a number of opportunities: the international recognition of diplomas; the achievement of internationally recognized standards; the facilitation of the international movement of labor force (and, implicitly, the recognition of diplomas); the compatibility and harmonization of curriculum and methodologies with those of partner universities; the attraction of foreign students; improving the image of the institution; professional and financial benefits; promoting attractive specializations at international / European / regional levels; reinforcing and developing partnerships with Romanian and foreign companies, in order to support the curriculum by means of the proposed research topics, with funding based on the results obtained; strengthening and extending the existing partnerships; increasing the selection base for the PhD level; promoting the European dimension of the Romanian higher education by developing the curriculum; promoting the mobility of students and teachers, by recognizing the traineeships offered by other higher education institutions and by respecting the statutory rights of these people; jobs at international companies, at home and abroad, and lastly, the achievement of academic prestige.

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we aim to analyze how the Romanian universities are promoting their MA programs abroad, in order to provide internationalized curriculum. This is a case study developed within the POSDRU project "Quality Assurance in Internationalized MA Studies: Developing the National Framework for the Compatibility with the European Higher Education Area" (ASIGMA), contract POSDRU/86/1.2/S/59367. We have taken into consideration several marketing strategies on various aspects of internationalization, made both at the institutional level and at the level of the MA programs. We have analyzed several MAs in eight Romanian universities: the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca (coordinating partner), "Transilvania" University of Braşov, "Lower Danube" University of Galaţi, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, "Politehnica" University of Timişoara; "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi, West University of Timişoara, "Ovidius" University of Constanţa. This project also involves the participation of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). [1] Each of these eight universities is participating in the project with three master degree programs (except West University of Timişoara with four MA programs), each of them sharing the rationale for internationalization. The venture consists in the application of strategies concerning the internationalization of teaching content, a foreign language teaching, attracting students and teachers from abroad and ensuing internships abroad or in international companies. Their master's programs aim to promote and cover various aspects of internationalization, analyzed in various percentages, as in the arguments presented by scholars like Jane Knight [2] and van der Wende [3]. In this case study we have analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats arising from the application of strategies to promote the study programs, taking into account the institutional reports [4] and those completed after the exchanges and visits conducted in this project, the web pages of both universities and masters programs taken into consideration.

### 1.1. Strengths

The underlying observation is that, under a global aspect, all the institutions examined in this case study have a strategic development plan, where the internationalization component is clearly assumed, leading to a greater concern on behalf of the higher education institutions, for the purpose of improving teaching activities and the educational infrastructure. All the universities analyzed in this paper are using classical promotion systems to reach to future students, by means of brochures, leaflets, posters, or by organizing events like "The Days of the University" and by participating in national and international educational fairs. In addition, universities seek other ways to promote their image, often related to their local socio-economic environment.

It involves various forms of promotion, at a territorial level, in order to underline their connectivity. For example, at "Transilvania" University of Brasov, internationalization is not a trivial matter. Consequently, the university direction focused on increasing the visibility of their Language program for Intercultural Communication Studies (SLCI) by hiring an expert on communication, whose role is to increase the visibility and to facilitate the promotion of their program. At the "Ovidius" University of Constanta, a system for promoting cross-border activities and programs was implemented, involving activities such as the organization of a tour, like a Caravan, attended by the University press office and by senior students who can share their experience to future students.

The "Politehnica" University of Timisoara seeks to disseminate the information about the internationalized programs during official visits to higher education institutions from abroad, which has had a positive impact, by attracting a larger number of foreign students. A more specific and labour oriented direction is to be found in the

case of highly specialized programs like “Automotive Embedded Software”, which is an internationalized master’s program organized in collaboration with a multinational company (Continental Automotive). The theoretical framework is linked with the economic perspective on labour which implies that is mandatory for higher education to provide exit opportunities to graduates. In order to do so, the department offers the possibility for the enrolled students to reduce their working time at 6 h per day if they work for Continental Automotive, which contributes to the attractiveness of the program. The "Lower Danube" University of Galati promotes its programs within local companies. In order to increase the economic autonomy of the program “Advanced Shipbuilding Technologies” (in English) the industrial partner was consulted during the early stages of drafting the syllabus.

Regarding "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, the Department of International Relations and Media is in charge of promoting international programs and actions, seeking international partners, providing assistance for the websites and promotional leaflets of internationalized programs, in Romanian and foreign languages. The Academy of Economic Studies from Bucharest promotes its programs by using materials written in English, by contacting Romanian cultural institutes and embassies abroad, by contacting the diplomatic representatives of various countries in Bucharest and higher education institutions worldwide. The largest economic higher education institution promotes its programs in specialized magazines and newspapers, for example, "Financial Newspaper" or by making public appearances in TV shows, in economics. [4]

### *1.2. Weaknesses*

In Romania, the system of promoting university programs using the alumni institutions is less used. The cornerstone consists in internal recruitment, which creates disadvantages for the international character of studies. The absence of a marketing strategy that can promote university competitiveness and attract foreign students is reflected in the small number of incoming students at all the master programs analyzed. In order to adapt to the great competition from all over the world, a starting point would be the obligation to promote the internationalized master program in the foreign language used during the didactic activities. For the internationalized masters that are not part of the Humanities, it was noted that introducing foreign language courses throughout the master program can be useful.

As for the double diploma programs, it is mandatory to inform the potential students regarding the possibility to receive a double degree, being able to enrol in foreign university programs due to the fact that the syllabus is harmonized. [4]

### *1.3. Opportunities*

The benefits of approaching the internationalized Master’s programs in an entrepreneurial way are reflected in a multitude of aspects. In terms of curriculum development, it generates a fundamental benchmark, like achieving internationally recognized standards, by creating compatibility between the objectives of the programs, harmonizing the curriculum according to the international standards and adopting methodologies from partner universities. By establishing these goals, the promotion of attractive international or regional specializations is achieved. [5]

The professional and financial benefits are expressed by the advantage of facilitating the international movement of workers (putting to use the implicit recognition of diplomas), in order to increase the international visibility, academic prestige ensuing the encouragement of joint degrees programs. Universities are faced by the predicament to promote the quality of their programs to increase their attractiveness for foreign students, or by means to build long lasting partnerships with foreign companies that reflect in the carrier of students. The underlying observation is that this process is also increasing the selection of the research networks of specialists that can be also proliferating and intensifying the base for research programs, offering quality education and

subsequent employment opportunities in international companies at home and abroad. As such, the strengths of the internationalization policy are linking the needs for skills and demand for competent work-force, as well reset the boundaries of research and higher education. [6]

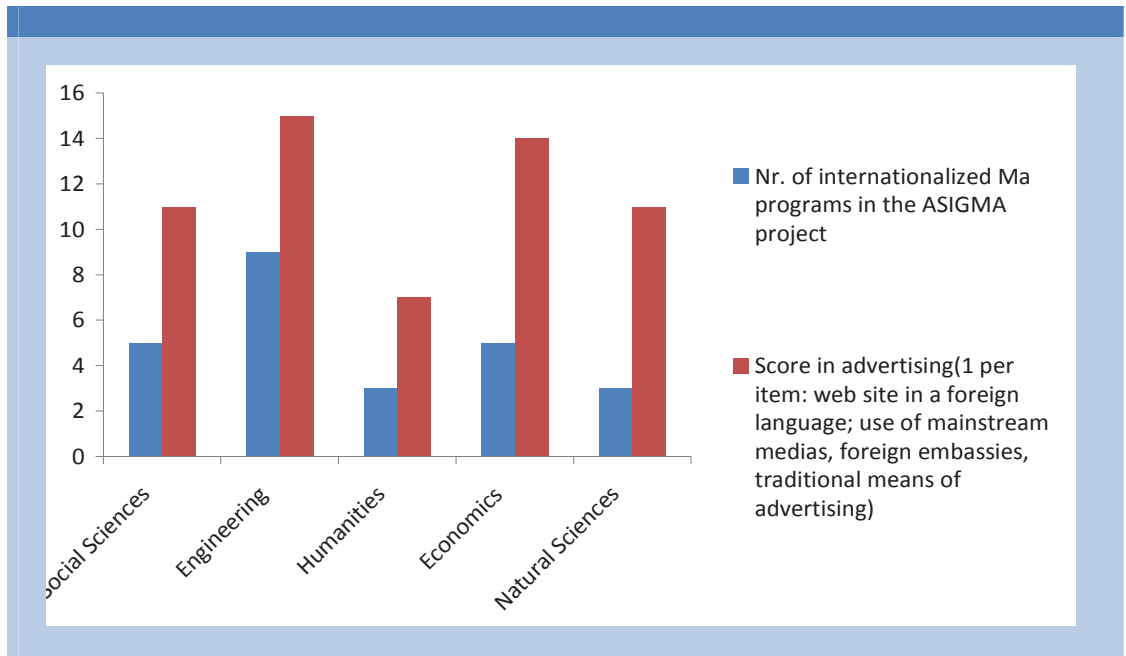
#### 1.4. Threats

Consequently, the stakeholders must envision the increasing global competition for highly qualified human resources, taking into account the competition on the educational market, the long-term effects of the global financial crisis on the Romanian education system, and the mandatory need to adapt to international standards. Against such a background, the fundraising research provided by internationalization and by the income generated by foreign students can be used to promote more effective other fields of studies such as Social Sciences and Humanities for international studies, taking into account that for this university year the Romanian Ministry of Education reported that among the departments attracting most foreign funding, the majority are within the Natural Sciences, Medicine ranking first. Internally, the threats to their effective development derive from the constant political and legislative changes on higher education, a lower interest in research, or the fact that Technical Sciences and the Humanities suffer from a constant underfunding, requiring a fixed number of graduate specializations niche which contributes to their disappearance. Master's programs offering performance have become a reference for students and parents in choosing tertiary education and allocating educational funds, given the fact that in Romania there are not protectionist policies for study loans, repayable after graduation / employment. The content of curriculum, the lack of ability in recognizing the threats from the labour market, the absence of harmonization of the curriculum are not the only challenges. Universities need to establish core competencies on the basis of mission and vision, identifying the crucial difficulties arising from the differences in the evaluation of the foreign teachers, considering the foreign universities competition that attracts Romanian students.

#### Conclusion

When examining these 25 master's programs according to disciplines, some clear categories emerge (table 1). Among the human and social sciences we find several departments of social studies, but also seven departments within the various disciplines of cultural studies (e.g. European studies, Communication), among them also two departments of international or regional studies. The rest is a mixture ranging from engineering to highly specialized centres within hard sciences, technology and cross-disciplinary studies. The high level of specialization among some of these units probably makes them internationally attractive, like "*Traitement du signal*", "*Artificial Intelligence and Distributed Computing*". Another fact underpinning this international orientation is that the large majority of institutes have some funding from abroad. The programs in the field of humanities and the francophone programs receive help from institutions abroad or other institutions than the universities, and as we can see in the table, due to the financial support from embassies. We should, however, be aware that most of these programs operate in quite another way than the average programme of higher education. Our main finding in this article is that the internationalization of programs takes many paths dependent on scientific field, organizational features and the arena for international activity, involving the institution in a manner which assures the visibility of the program. We have utilized only indicators referring to the visibility of the master's programs, though often considered as important for measuring input and output of the institutional strategy for internationalisation, by which we find considerable variations when we filter data through the official website, the use of mainstream social medias in order to reach students and their presence on social portals dedicated to students.

Tab.1. Advertising strategies according to the field of study



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  - [http://chem.ubbcluj.ro/romana/ANEX/inginerie/courses/master\\_APEngineering\\_BBU\\_2012\\_ro.html](http://chem.ubbcluj.ro/romana/ANEX/inginerie/courses/master_APEngineering_BBU_2012_ro.html)
  - [http://econ.ubbcluj.ro/n2.php?id\\_c=84&id\\_m=3](http://econ.ubbcluj.ro/n2.php?id_c=84&id_m=3)
  - <http://www.uvt.ro/en/academic/faculties/letters/>

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<http://catedrarei.ase.ro/mpi/>  
<http://www.feaa.uvt.ro/en/academic-programmes/master-programmes/management/entrepreneurial-management.html>  
<http://www.feaa.uaic.ro/ro/main/page/331>  
<http://www.feaa.uaic.ro/ro/main/page/360>  
<http://www.math.uvt.ro/old/international/aidc.html>  
<http://www.uvt.ro/en/academic/faculties/physics/>  
<http://psihologietm.ro/programe.php?p=master#q11>  
<http://www.drept-ovidius.ro/>  
[http://litere.univ-ovidius.ro/programe\\_de\\_studiu\\_en.htm](http://litere.univ-ovidius.ro/programe_de_studiu_en.htm)

[8] <http://lett.ubbcluj.ro:3636/>