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THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY: ETHIC FACTORS IN THE MARKETING STRATEGIES

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- 1. ABSTRACT:** The study of the indicators of the internationalization marketing strategies in the University is interesting to create informative campaigns to achieve more inscriptions. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, the election of a University is a main axis of analysis; most analysed in the US, and then, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The implementation of marketing policies has stimulated studies on the choice of centre, which affect both the higher and basic education. In our study we analyse, through an empiric Spanish analysis, the importance for the students of the ethic factor (in comparison with other variables) to choose a national or an international University.

SECRETARIA TÉCNICA

VII CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



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2. **KEYWORDS** Marketing strategies, University, Internationalization

3. **KNOWLEDGE AREA:** Mark the area in which the content of the proposal belongs:

- Art and Humanities
- Experimental and Health Sciences
- Social and Legal Sciences
- Engineering and Architecture
- More than one area X

4. **THEMATICAL AREA OF THE CONGRESS:** Mark the thematic area to which you wish to link the communication:

- Institutional evaluation and quality
- Cooperation in and for the knowledge
- Innovation in Higher Education
- Student's independent learning
- Internationalisation of the University

The Scientific Committee reserves the right to decide the final area of the proposals.

5. **PRESENTATION MODALITY:**

- Oral Communication
- Poster Presentation X
- Electronic Communication

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ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



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The Scientific Committee reserves the right to decide the final format of the proposals.

6. DEVELOPMENT

a) Objectives

The objectives of our study are to find the weight of the ethics, values and religion factors as indicators in the internationalization marketing strategies about the process of decision to choose a University. We have to consider that choice of a University is a key aspect in the public educational policies. Nevertheless, it has not been too much studied in Spain. The ethics impact has not been studied in deep, also.

Some approximations have been carried out from very specific variables. We consider the technological factor is one of the essential in a longitudinal way (Fondevila & Carreras, 2010). Other analyses' approaches are gender (Frotuny *et al*tri, 1991), black students (Harris, 1994), access and the first year in the University (it depends on success in the previous choice; it is explained by Corominas, 2001) or the academic performance in the transition from the second level of education to University (Fita *et al*tri, 2004).

Other research has tried to establish a taxonomy to analyze the process of selection of University (Roszkowski & Spreat, 2010), establishing 16 characteristics of the University and quality ratios. A general conclusion is the importance of its image for the University. Certainly, it is fundamental from the start. The process of decision has demonstrated that the institutional characteristics weigh more than the interpersonal or information resources used by the students (Pampaloni, 2010). Other authors have established other characteristics to choose University

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ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



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(Witthuhn, 1997). The nearness of the University, the appearance of the college and the campus and the quality of the facilities (West *et altri*, 1991), or the kind of studies (Roche *et altri*, 1987) are other items to take account (Mullet, 1985; Kellaris & Kellaris, 1988).

Moreover, we observe that some partial studies have focused on ethics. However, in most cases, these approaches are not in deep and, furthermore, ethics has not been a factor in the students' decision making. The few approaches come from some specific countries. In the case of the Venezuelan University, the study is an ethical reflection of structural character in order to rethink the relationship ethics-University. The method is phenomenological. It includes analysis of values, University and management (Mora, 2002), in a framework of discussion about ethics, teaching and research. The topic of ethical, scientific and social responsibility of a professor in Latin America has been studied from ethics, solidarity and tolerance. It has been co-related with the University professor's profile and the educational and cultural transformation, and also with social, technological and scientific changes (Soto, 2009).

In other research, the conclusion is that teaching style, including ethics in University, is not only a social demand, but also a demand from the need of curricula evolution and University's nature of knowledge, according to the guidelines of the Bologna Reform. Other items are values, abilities and skills in relation to the specific contents (Agejas *et altri*, 2007). This analysis changes in the context of European and Spanish Universities. Throughout the European Higher Education Area, there is a proposal about University functions related to teach ethical professional competences. The promoters have launched an ethical commitment of European process. It has been developed in three Spanish Universities: Universidad de Valencia, Universidad Complutense de Madrid and Universitat Jaume I (Castellón). They try to know and

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ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



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to analyze the professors' attitudes towards ethics curriculum and teaching. In the Universitat Abat Oliba CEU (UAO), in Barcelona, the Research Group about Digital Journalism and Broadband is analysing a cluster of election factors, including the digital and the communicative ones. The Internet and social networks are influencing the decision making of the students (Fondevila, Carreras & Del Olmo, 2012). There is also impact of the digital tools in the ways to research information about University (Fondevila, Del Olmo & Sierra, 2012).

The access to information is essential to understand the process of choosing University. The information of the students is a basic issue. The lack of information is related to the University failure in terms of low rate of success, frustration or the feeling of losing time. The analysis of mass media impact is a prospective scientific area that can contribute to generate pragmatic solutions for the involved entities. Nevertheless, the motivation of College election is not easy to classificate (Porto & Mosterio, 2000).

Certainly, a lack of information is a characteristic revealed by a lot of researches. Therefore, the choice is usually carried out in unsuitable conditions: lack of information, absence of services, educational orientation linked to offers of studies in the place of residence or limitations of the centres.

We detect that there is little research on institutional options of University election in Spain. The Research Group about Digital Journalism and Broadband is the main scientific producer of results. The Anglo-Saxon countries have a more longitudinal perspective. At the top in the amount of studies we find the United States. The next countries in a quantitative classification are the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The implementation of public policies that try to foster competition between institutions has stimulated studies about

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the choice of centre. These approaches affect the top education and even the basic educative levels. Decisions like financing the demand (thanks to grants or other funding), evaluation of results of Universities or provision of information to the families are studied.

We focus on the Spanish case because we consider that it is a case study in the European area and, specifically, in the Mediterranean area. The increasing competition in Spain and the publication of analysis in comparative levels (as the PISA documents) are generating an interest for the tools used in the choice of University.

In Spain we detect a dichotomical situation. The division between public and private Universities is very strong. Public Universities are formed as a sellers' market, because there is more demand than offer. Then, they have competitive advantage. On the other hand, private Universities belong to a buyers' market: the offer overcomes the demand. Nevertheless, public Universities are establishing policies of quality improvement of service. They are oriented to consumers. They try to improve marketing skills, communicative strategies, but this process is very hard.

It is clear that there is a gap of commercial tradition in the University management in Spain immediately after the over demand period. The strategic paths of marketing in University are not very developed. In spite of that, all Universities use promotion as an instrument to capture students.

One of the focuses in the achievement of new students is the presence in mass media. The relationship between ethics and mass communication is a possible focus of analysis. The amount of empirical investigations on the factors of choice of University and the impact of mass media

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in this process is minimal or non-existent. The identification of the process of decision includes mass media as a key factor. There is an implicit phase in the first step. Consumers can manage the possibility of choosing possible results. In this case, the axiom is that future University students are active at the moment of deciding which products to buy. It is important to identify how students choose between different alternatives, how they look for the information about these different alternatives, how mass media influences their decision and what sources they use. In the decisional items (Bowe, Gewirtz & Ball, 1994) mass media could have a high influence, like other factors such as the access to information, anticipation, familiar negotiation, calculation or the valuation (Veleda, 2002). Our mission is to detect ethics' influence in the framework of some involved variables.

Normally, future students receive information from mass media, visits to diverse acts (fairs, days and lounges of education), and direct or indirect references from friends or former students. In the jump from secondary to higher education it is essential to have equitable distribution of information. Criteria about decision-making depend on the economic, cultural and social resources of the families (Ball, 1993, Crozier, 1997), but there is a challenge to the detect influence of the sources of information.

The hypothesis of our investigation is that ethics, values and religion are not the main factors when the students look for the necessary information to analyze the different alternatives in the process of choosing a national or an international University, and this has an impact on the marketing strategies and the general internationalization processes of the University. Therefore, students so not have, in general, information adapted in the moment of making a decision on the choice of University.

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The possible sources of information are included in the Broadband Society (Fondevila Gascón, 2008, 2012): web pages, digital journals and social networks. Some data are illustrative: 59,1% of Spanish homes have access to the Internet (Ontsi, 2011), and 64,2% of Spanish population is considered to be an Internet user (the generations affected by our research lead this classification). There is a trend upwards in all the parameters, thanks to the increased accesses and the flow of available broadband. The use of social networks and digital media is also growing. The reasons are the easy navigability and the comfort of access to on-line contents. In 2010, the 8.2 % of 14 year old Internet users declared having some personal blog (Ontsi, 2010b). Assessing the percentage of Internet users who write in both their own and foreign blogs, the number reached 11.5 %. In addition, over one out of four Internet users (27.8 %) declared having read a blog. Users of social networks were between 45 % and 81 %, according to The Cocktail Analysis (2010). The number of social networks used by Internet users increased from 1.7 in 2008 to 2.3 in 2009; from all the users who took the poll, 64 % used Facebook (13 % in 2008) and 33 % used Tuenti (12 % in 2008). Tuenti was the social network with major power to generate engagement with the users. The statistical information reflects that the Internet is turning into one of the principal informative references (Ontsi, 2010a). The ethics and the values aspect could be analyzed in the future. In Spain, 47 % of individuals used Internet to find information about goods and services, 38 % to read newspapers or magazines and 29 % to look for information with an educational intent.

In sum, the lack of empirical studies that analyze the impact of the social networks and web pages on the ethics and the values at the moment of choosing of University indicates this investigation is innovative, a need and potentially longitudinal. In view of the increase of the



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amount of Internet users, the results will help the communication and the marketing strategists to adopt new policies.

b) Work description

To analyze empirically the process of choosing University, from the Research Group about Digital Journalism and Broadband of the Universitat Abat Oliba CEU (UAO) in Barcelona, we carry out a survey in the 2010-11 season, to a pupils' representative universe of the first year of the Degrees in Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations, Law, Management, Marketing and Business Management, Childhood Education, Primary Education and Psychology, all of them students of the UAO. About the ethics and religion influence as factors of decision to choose a national or an international University, we consider in a comparative methodology the following items: quality of teaching, studying ambience, easiness of access to University, variety of official offered titles, prestige of the University, international projection of the University, variety of specialized offered studies, humanistic/integral orientation and religious orientation of the formation. We analyze the possible impact of these variables in the election of a national or an international University.

The decision process to choose a national or an international University depends on the availability, the flexibility and the variety of the main offer. In addition, universities also can offer a program of extra-academic activities to back their product or academic program. These activities can be academic or non-academic in their nature, and are external or complementary to

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the main program of the degree selected by the student. In this sense, we consider values, included in a qualities of the education item, as a more representative value, and the religious orientation of the formation the less valued attribute for the sample. The two only factors that surpass the level of quite a lot of influence are the quality of the education and the easiness of access by public transport, the first factor in the group of knowledge of the University and the second pertaining to the Campus.

The first level of analysis is the sources of information used by the students of Secondary Education at the moment of establishing contact with the existing national or international Universities. The first established variable is the visits, gathered in seven sub variables: presentations of the University to the school, visits to the Lounge Studies, visits to other students' fairs, personal visit to the University, visits to the open days of the University, centers of information of the public Administration or others.

The second variable is how mass media is used to be informed. This variable acquires special relief with Internet as an informative source in the analyzed segment. This way, we bore the announcements in press, announcements in radio, announcements in television, announcements in other media, pages in other Universities, social networks (Facebook, Tuenti), other web pages, publications of the Universities, audio-visual material (video, TV) or other publications (as guides). In total, we establish ten sub variables.

Finally, we analyze the references, which could have an influence on the values, ethics and religion, with eight possible sources: family, friends of the family, friends from school and other friends, students from the University, former pupils of the University, information provided by the teacher (or tutor of the school) and telephonic information.

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Then, we analyze directly the ethics and religious orientation of the formation as the factor of decision in the knowledge of the University. We ask for the ethics and the religion factor related with the intention to go to the University, the kind of Secondary studies, the titular of the centre, gender, demarcation and existence of University centre in the familiar city. Finally, we ask for the importance of Christian values in the University.

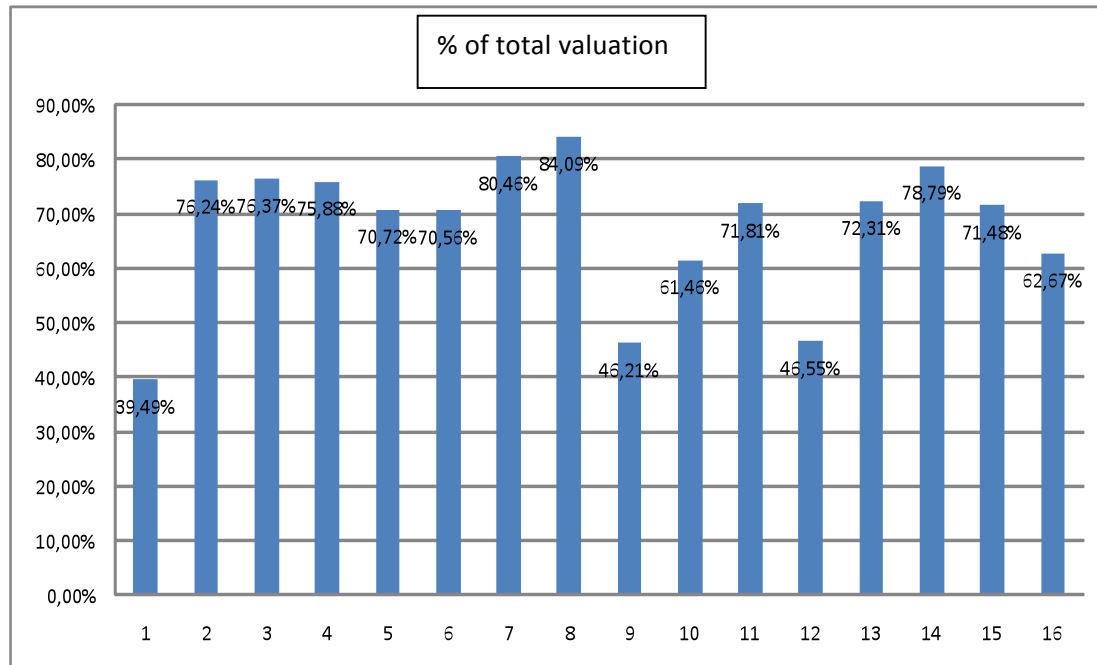
c) Results and conclusions

As seen in Figure 1, the impact of ethics and Christian values with other characteristics of the University (Figure 13) the students want to enrol in (in this case, the UAO, with a religious base), 61,46 % of students consider it an influent factor. In a decreasing order, the sample considers as most important the personalized attention of the student (84,09 %), the labour market orientation (80,46 %), the quality of the professors (78,79 %), the good installations and tools for the students (76,37 %), the high level of academic requirements (76,24 %), the international vocation (75,88 %), the career specialization (72,31 %), the prestige (71,81 %), the prestige professionals graduated in the University (71,48 %), the wide range of tittles (70,72 %), the wide range of postgraduate and masters offer (70,56 %), the English language use (62,67 %), the ethics and Christian values (61,46 %, the 13th position), the requirements in the access qualification (46,55 %), the proximity to the students' home (46,21 %) and the economical accessibility (39,40 %).

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If we analyze the factor of decision “Knowledge of the national or international University”, we can observe that religious orientation of formation (1.65, in a 1-5 Likert scale) has a scarce influence in the decision, coherent with the laic orientation of public centers and progressive decrease of religious beliefs between young people. However, humanistic and integral or holistic orientation of the formation shows a more representative score (2.85). If we add these two ethic and values items we achieve a 4.50: then, the values and the religion factors are at the top of this table.

Figure 1. The ethics and Christian values in comparison with other UAO characteristics



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Source: elaboration by the authors based on the survey at the UAO (2010-11)

1. Economical accessibility
2. High level of academic requirements
3. Good installations and tools for the students
4. International vocation
5. Wide range of titles
6. Wide range of postgraduate and masters offered
7. Labor market orientation
8. Personalized attention for the student
9. Proximity to the students' home
10. Ethics and Christian values
11. Prestige
12. Requirements in the access qualification
13. Career specialization
14. Quality of the professors
15. Prestige of the professionals graduated in the university
16. English language use

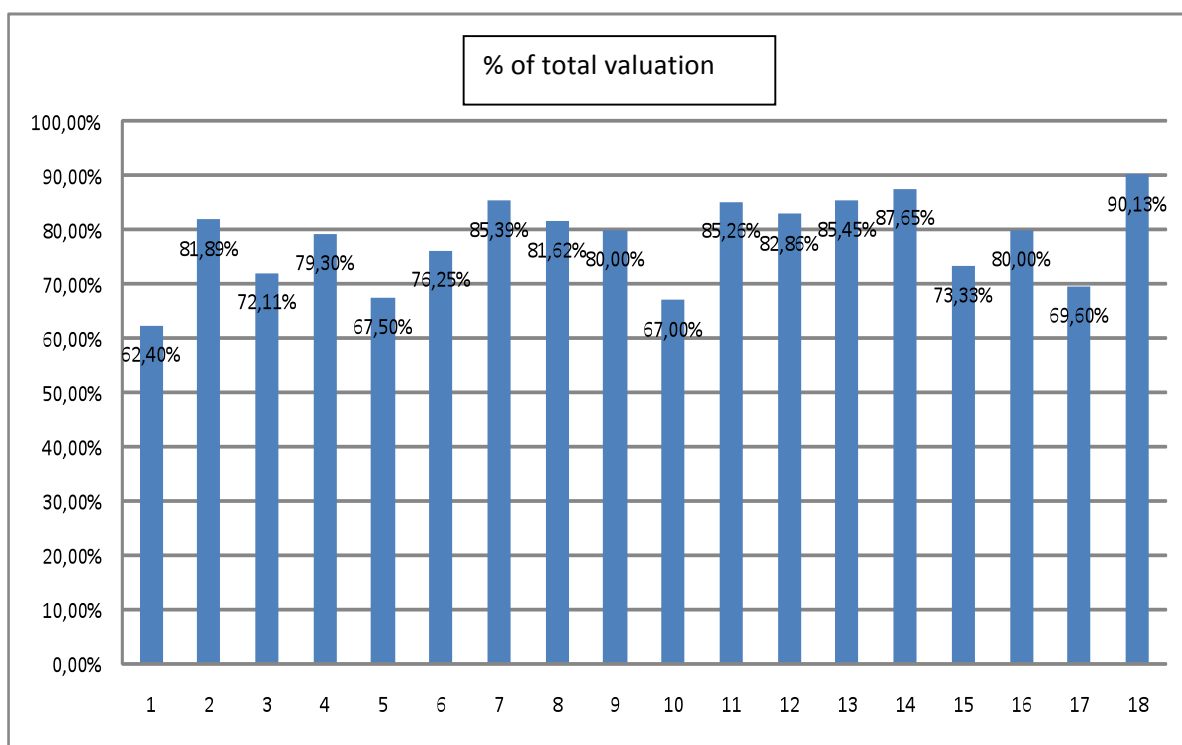
When it comes to the reasons to choose the Universitat Abat Oliba CEU, if we compare all the possible options (Figure 2), the ethics and Christian values is the 17th in a classification of 18 possibilities. The first one is the possibility to access the desired studies (90,13%), followed by the quality professors (87,65%), the specialization in some degrees (85,45%), the labour market orientation (85, 39%), the prestige (85,26%), the requirements in the access qualifications (82,86%), the high level of academic requirements (81,89%), the personalized treatment of the students (81,62%), the proximity to the home (80%), the English level of activities (80%), the international vocation and the agreements with other international Universities (79,30%), the wide range of masters and postgraduate offer (76,25%), the professionals with prestige formed in the University (73,33%), the good installations and tools for the students (72,11%), the

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recommendations (69,60%), the wide range of titles (67,50%), the ethics and Christian values (67,50%) and, the last one, the economical accessibility (62,40%). If we analyze the figures, there aren't any great differences, but the ethics and religious item is considered less important than the general average. We also analysed the gender, the territorial demarcation, the existence of a University near to the place of residence or the Secondary specialized studies.

Figure 2. Reasons to choose the Universitat Abat Oliba CEU (UAO)



Source: elaboration by the authors based on the survey at the UAO (2010-11)

1. Economical accessibility

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2. High level of academic requirements
3. Good installations and tools for the students
4. International vocation
5. Wide range of titles
6. Wide range of postgraduate and masters offered
7. Labor market orientation
8. Personalized attention for the student
9. Proximity to the students' home
10. Ethics and Christian values
11. Prestige
12. Requirements in the access qualification
13. Careers specialization
14. Quality of the professors
15. Prestige of the professionals graduated in the university
16. English level
17. Recommendations
18. Possibility to access the desired studies

Thanks to statistical data, graphs and charts, we can conclude that ethics, values and religion are a variable to take into account when the student selects a national or international University, but it has a moderated impact on the decision. However, as a decision factor, we observe that religious orientation of formation and humanistic and integral or holistic orientations of the formation, in the sum, overcome the other options.

About the meaning of the findings and their relation with past research, we observe that ethics and religion are still taken into account to choose a University. It would be exciting to make longitudinal studies to update this perception, crossing variables, universities and countries. An EU general project, or an intercontinental approach, could throw light upon this discussion from a global point of view.

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Certainly, the classic factors (economic, cultural and social resources of the families, defended by Ball, 1993, or Crozier, 1997) are the first in a classification about university election. Nevertheless, ethics and religion are not forgotten, despite the general negative perception in the Mediterranean countries about these factors. The quality of the education is the more representative value; the religious orientation of the studies is the less representative. Another desired factor, the easiness of access by public transportation, reflects pragmatism in university students as attendance cost and institution location showed in other researches (Luo, M. & Williams, J. E., 2011).

On one hand, the laic orientation of the public centers and the progressive decrease of the religious beliefs in young people explain a moderated position of ethic, values and religion in the factors to choose a university; but on the other hand, these values remain factors to take into consideration. When we analyze the religious orientation, there is a scarce influence in the decision to choose a specific national or international university. In this sense, ethics and religion don't have a great impact on the intention to go to a national or an international university.

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