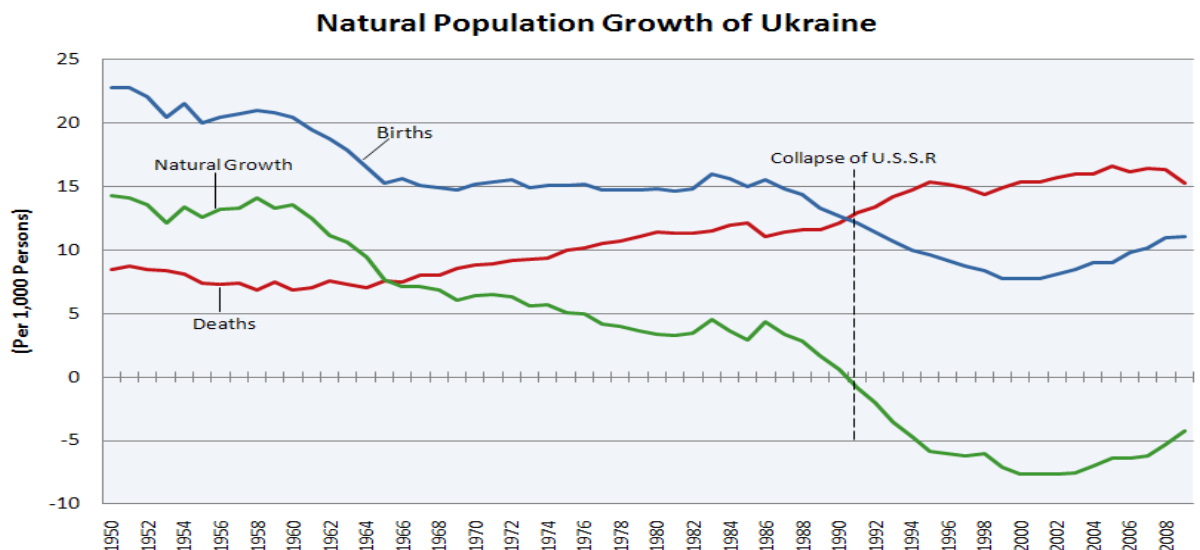


PROMOTING ALMA-MATER IN A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

In the conditions of Ukrainian's movement towards market economy, the majority of scientists firmly believe that all spheres of Ukrainian economy including educational face competitive environment, that leads to consumer oriented programs.

It goes without saying that educational sector is a certain type of a service. It is presented by universities, colleges, schools etc. Nowadays, the whole industry can be divided into two types: privately owned and state owned institutions. The significant characteristic is that both provide with a prepaid service. Ukrainian government sponsors only small number of students. The purpose of such service is to provide students with a high quality of education, deep knowledge of the subject and personal development. In other words, we can say that the purpose is to provide consumers with a specific service.

There is no need denying the fact that Ukrainian educational sphere is developing significantly, however there is one threat that might change our educational image. In 2011 Ukraine is expected a record low number of graduates in all the years of independence. To compare two last time periods: in 2010 there were 392 000 graduates, in 2011 we are looking for 192 000 of high school students.



The roots lie behind the 1993-19994 financial and demographic crisis in Ukraine.
[1.]

Speaking about students, they are happy with the situation as they will have less competition on their entering exams. Even those students, who were planning to enter institutions with a second level of accreditation, now consider studying in universities.

Small private universities are very concerned – they might be out of business by the end of the next year. The majority of students will enter state owned universities because they provide better education and have higher image as opposed to private universities. Meanwhile the universities staff might lose their jobs. The administration of universities could reduce the number of courses as well as the number of student groups. Students' tuition is not left behind. Experts say that the prices will increase up to 20% because of inflation and poor government funding.

As we have already decided that universities provide consumers with a prepaid service, we can conclude that there is an educational market. To be honest the main goal of the subject of this market is to attract as much consumers as possible. The total number of students make universities market share. But do they really attract students? Until this moment there was no need in such actions. Now, there is a high possibility to lose a certain percentage of this market for those who have low competitive advantages.

I am sure that it is time for universities and institutions to start using marketing approach in order to promote their service. Some state that today students and their parents are very price sensitive in terms of education. In my opinion the very first step that universities should take is clearly define their pricing strategy. Students would like to hear that the cost of education is going to be adequate and won't increase in the unilateral order administrative order. The key action here is to make the terms and condition of the contract easy understandable for students and create attractive interest rates for those who will have to take a loan to pay for education. However this might lead to price wars between competitors.

Universities should promote technical and social studies. These courses are considered to be unpopular compared to economic and management ones and will suffer the most. The mission should be in informing entrants that the labour market is full of unemployed managers and at the same time there is a high demand for

engineers and technicians.

There are numerous advertising channels that university can use. The cheapest ones are social networks, blogs, online articles and personal references. I would personally recommend to enrol students to visit schools where they have graduated and promote their university, give some advises and share own experience.

Institutions with a second a third level of accreditation should offer new subjects to students. They could copy some of the university's courses and create a competition.

Among other effective informational sources, I can point out posters and flyers those should be given to future students (our target audience) at any conference open days for entrants, parents and even mass mailing. It would be great if a university could appear on news and share their achievement.

If we take a look overseas, we would notice that western universities have their own corporate style and attributes. The name of the university could be transferred into a brand. As the result, institutions can earn money selling corporate symbols, clothes, icons, pens etc. That additional income can cover some of the expenses.

I am confident that this should be a top priority for all universities for the next year.

References:

1. Anon., N.D. *Natural population growth* Retrieved Nov. 18, 2010 from <http://ukrstat.gov.ua>