

DECISION CRITERIA IN CHOOSING THE UNIVERSITY

Associate Professor Ph.D., Camelia VECHIU

”Constantin Brâncoveanu” University of Pitești, Romania
E-mail: c_vechiu@yahoo.com

Lecturer Ph.D., Gianina NEGRĂU

”Constantin Brâncoveanu” University of Pitești, Romania
E-mail: gianinanegrau@gmail.com

Abstract: *A university competes not only with universities accredited at national level, but also with universities offering educational services in different countries around the world, especially in the European Union. To attract candidates, universities need to understand how prospective students are analyzing, evaluating, selecting and deciding when they choose to pursue a university program. The ability to understand those who have chosen to go through a particular study program is a must for a contemporary university. But the choice of a university is influenced by a number of factors: study fees, family, group of friends, colleagues, professional requirements. The paper aims to identify the criteria students consider when choosing university and the sources from which they inform about the programs offered by the university.*

Keywords: *education, students.*

JEL Classification: *I26.*

1. The research method

For this analysis we used quantitative research, we applied a questionnaire that contains a series of questions with which we have tried to identify the criteria that led the students to attend a specific bachelor or a master degree program.

The hypotheses from which we started the research were:

- The main criteria taken into account are the study program and the proximity of the house.
- Information about the university's educational offer is found, first of all, from friends, family, co-workers.
- There are no differences in terms of criteria and sources of information between the first cycle - Bachelor and the second cycle -Master

2. Results

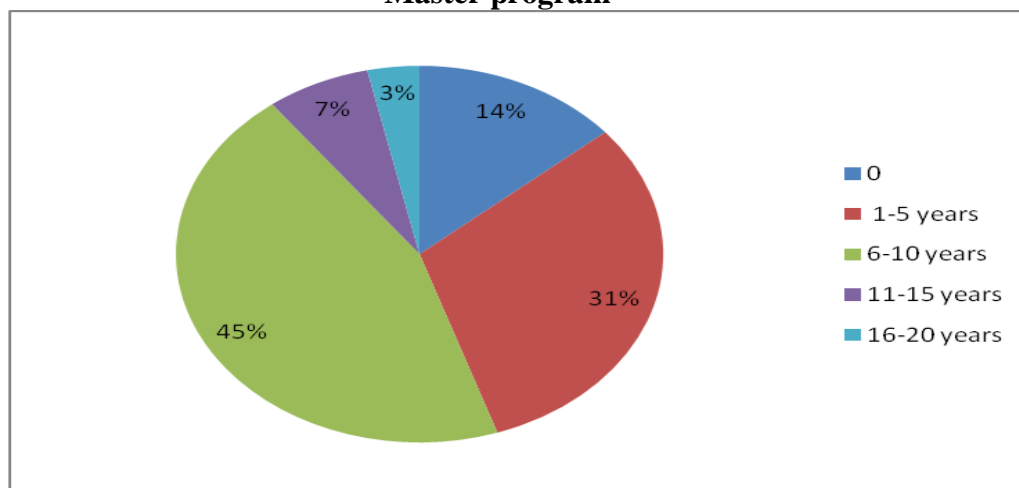
The first group of participants in our study were students pursuing master's degrees in study programs: Management and Strategies in Human Resources 27%, Public Service Management 59% and Regulatory Standards and Accounting Policies 14%. Most students take courses in the field in which they work. For example, of the students enrolled in the Public Service Management curriculum, only 5% do not work in public services, but they intend to pursue a career in public services in the future. Of the students enrolled in the Management and Strategies in Human Resources program, 25% work in the public domain and 75% in the private sector. 100% of those in the Regulatory Standards and Accounting Policies program work in private organizations in the economic field. Only 10% of the student body did not work at the time of applying the questionnaire, and of these, only 34% worked during their bachelor degree. Those who work carry out their activities in: economy 31%, education 15%, public administration 27%, social assistance 15%, defense and protection 12%.

With regard to the age of respondents, 28% are between 20-30 years, 21% are between 31-40 years old and 48% are between 41-50. So there are both conventional students and lifelong learners.

We wanted to find out the elapsed period between completing bachelor program and enrolling in master program. 14% of the respondents decided not to take a break

between the two levels of studies, and most, 45% decided to participate in master's studies more than 5 years after completing their bachelor program.

Figure no. 1. The period between the bachelor studies and the enrollment in the Master program

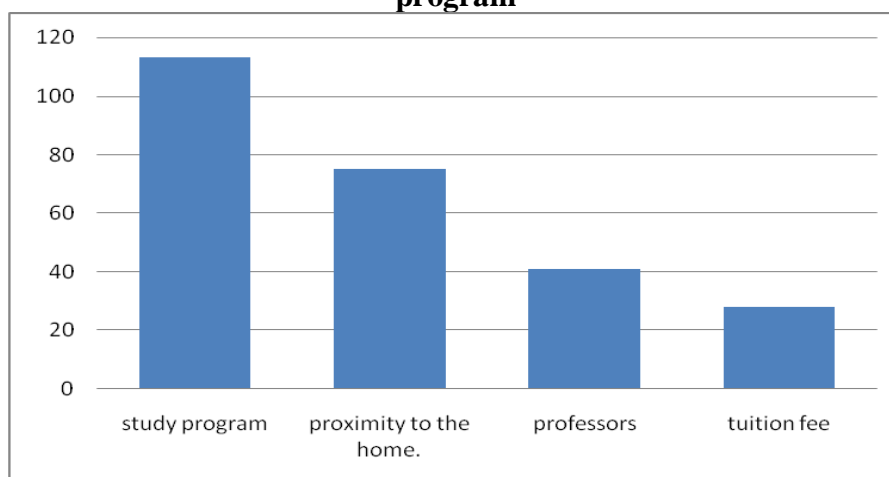


Hierarchizing the criteria taken into account when they decided to enroll in the master's studies, we notice that they are, in the order of importance given: the study program, the proximity to the house, the teachers and the tuition fee. Of those surveyed, 62% considered that the most important criteria is the study program. Finding the study program as the main selection criteria is not at all surprising, considering that there is a direct correlation between the field of activity and the chosen master's study program.

The choice of proximity to home as the second criteria is explained by the fact that 76% of respondents are over 30 years old, which implies the existence of responsibilities to the family.

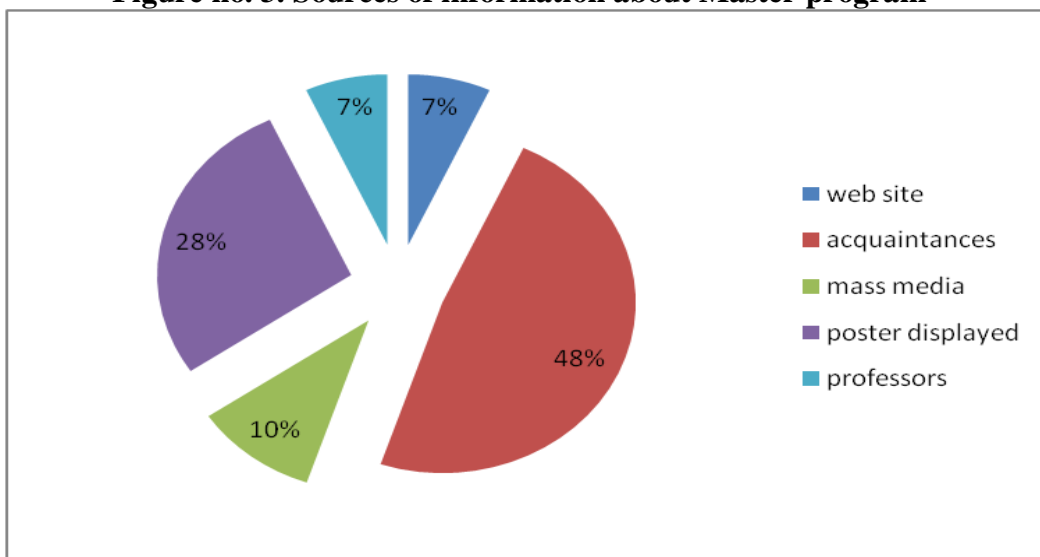
Regarding the sources of information on the educational offer of the university, about half of the study participants (48%) stated that the main source are acquaintances. Among the acquaintances are included family members, colleagues, friends, people who graduated from university.

Figure no. 2. Criteria taken into account when choosing a university – Master program



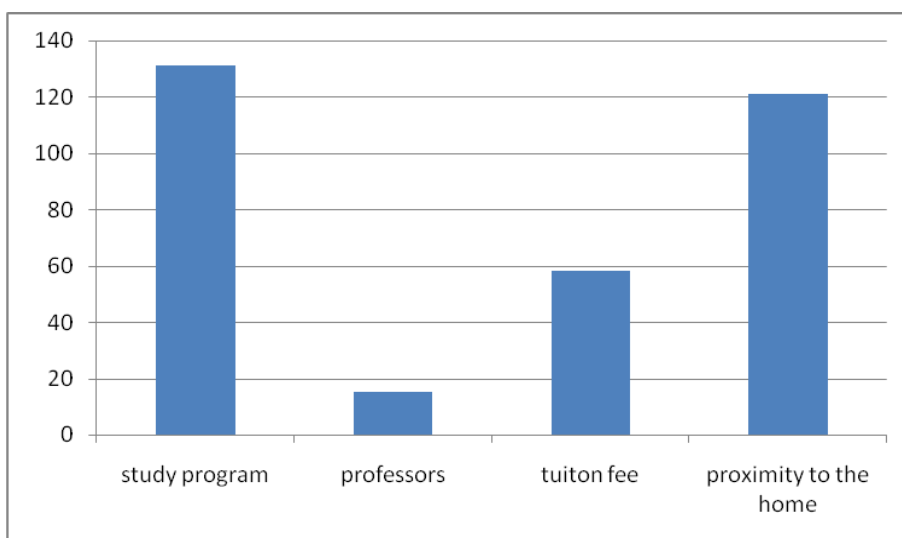
The second way of information is represented by the posters that include the university programs and the necessary conditions for registration. Respondents said the posters were seen either at work or on public transportation. The media, teachers and the website are the other sources of information for students.

Figure no. 3. Sources of information about Master program



The second group of participants consists of students enrolled in bachelor program: Management 23%, Accounting and Management Informatics 45% and Public Administration 32%. Of the respondent students, 25% do not work, and of these, 78% are under 21 years old. Those who work carry out their activities in: accounting 12%, education 4%, public administration 15%, sales 35%, medical 12%, agriculture 8%, defense and protection 11%, education 3%. With regard to the age of respondents, 22% are in 18-20 years, 21% are between 21-30 years, 44 % are between 31-40 years old, 14% are between 41-50 years and 3% over 50 years. And in this group there are students who can be classified as conventional students but also as lifelong learners.

Figure no. 4. Criteria taken into account when choosing a university – Bachelor program

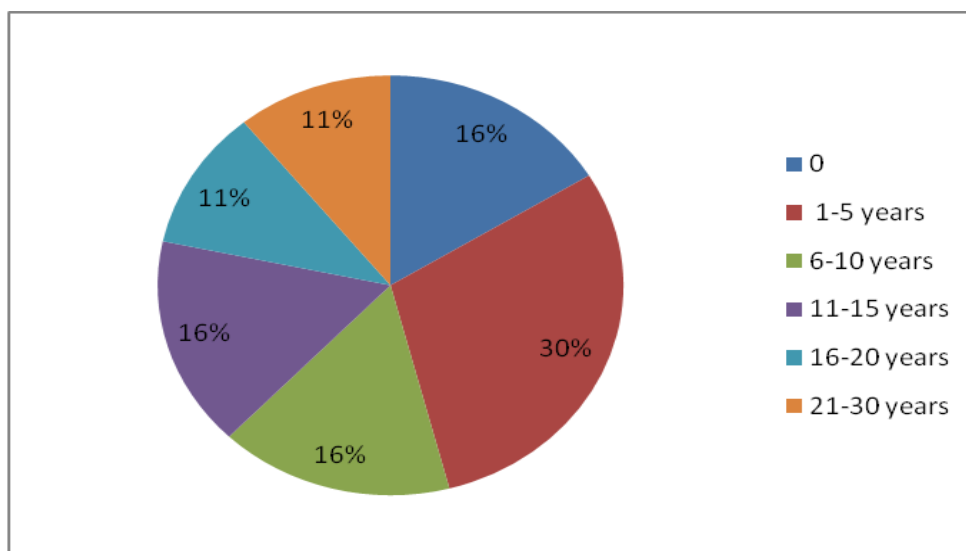


Similar to the students attending the master program, students from bachelor program, chose as their main criteria the study program, followed by the proximity of home.

The first hypothesis was confirmed.

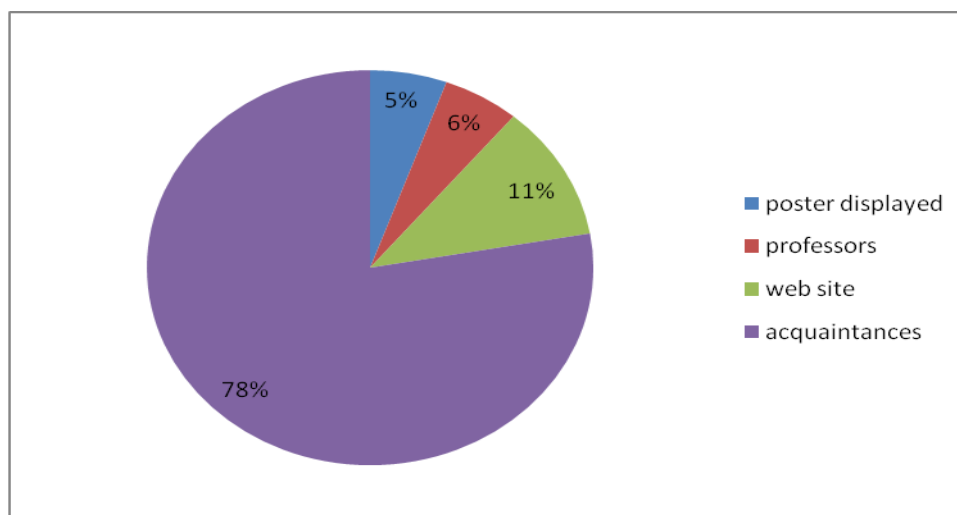
Unlike master's students, those who are enrolled in bachelor program have chosen the third criteria the value of the tuition fee and lastly the teachers. The difference in ranking of the criteria between the two levels of education may be due to the fact that those who follow the bachelor's program occupy jobs for which the required level of training is that of secondary education, less paid compared to positions requiring higher education. Therefore, for undergraduate students the fee level is more important compared to that of teachers. In addition, only 4% of undergraduate students chose to continue their studies in the first two years after graduating. Only those 4% had the opportunity to meet the university professors if they participated in the joint activities carried out by the university in partnership with the high school where they were students. So, for most candidates university professors are unknown. The same thing cannot be said about some of the master's students who had the opportunity to form an opinion on the quality of teachers when they attended university courses in one of the undergraduate programs.

Figure no. 5. The period between the baccalaureate and the enrollment in the Bachelor program



And, also for undergraduate students, acquaintances are the main source of information regarding the university. For three quarters of them, family, relatives, friends and colleagues are the main source of information, followed by websites, teachers and posters. The second hypothesis was confirmed.

Figure no. 6. Sources of information about Bachelor program



As for the third hypothesis, it is confirmed for the most part. For both groups analyzed, the first two criteria for choosing the study program are similar. Also, the main source of information for all students is the acquaintances. the differences between the two groups exist but are not major.

3. Conclusions

- The criteria taken into account when choosing the continuing of studies are rational, dictated by the evolution in the career or the desire to change the professional path.
- The study program and the proximity to the house represent the decisive criteria when making a choice regarding the continuation of studies, for the first cycle - Bachelor and the second cycle -Master
- Acquaintances advice and suggestions are the main source of information when deciding on the choice of university.
- The information following the application of the questionnaires, the accomplishment of this research can be used both to improve the way the educational offer reaches the future candidates, but also regarding the development of the learning process, the adaptation and application of different approaches of enhancing student learning.

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