

## UNIVERSITY MARKETING AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE UNIVERSITY OF ALCALA DE HENARES

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### Resumen:

Actualmente la aplicación del marketing en la educación superior y en las universidades de forma global es un hecho. Al mismo tiempo, hay un cambio de paradigma en la conceptualización de la Responsabilidad Social Corporativa hacia la generalización del término y ha emergido una nueva línea de investigación considerando la responsabilidad social en otras organizaciones más allá de las grandes empresas que es el análisis de la responsabilidad in las instituciones de la administración pública.

Uniendo ambos tópicos, el propósito de este caso de estudio es presentar la Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, una reputada universidad pública en España. El caso se centra en cómo la universidad seleccionada está practicando el marketing para sus estudiantes y para la sociedad en su conjunto y cómo está internacionalizándose y volviéndose más digital para satisfacer a sus principales agentes de interés.

### Abstract:

Today the marketisation of Higher Education and universities globally is a fact. At the same time, there has been a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of the Corporate Social Responsibility throughout the generalization of the term and it has emerged a new line of research considering social responsibility in other organizations beyond big enterprises that is the analysis of responsibility in public administration institutions.

Linking both topics, the purpose of this case study is to present the University of Alcalá de Henares, a reputed public university in Spain. The case focuses in how the selected university is practicing marketing for their students and for society as a hole and, how it is becoming more international and more digital to satisfy its principal stakeholders.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays the marketisation of higher education (HE) and universities globally is a fact. In general, HE institutions recognise that they need to market themselves because of the increasingly climate of competition they support (Gibbs, 2002). The nature of the marketing of HE and universities in an international context has been studied for instance by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) who found the potential benefits of applying marketing theories and concepts - that have been first effective in the business world - in the field of HE marketing. The authors focus the attention on marketing strategies in the rapidly developing HE international market.

Additionally, in recent years there has been a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) throughout the generalization of the term. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) defined CSR as the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life (WBCSD, 2002). However, CSR is not a concept exclusively for business. According to Doh and Guay (2006), CSR is an increasingly pervasive phenomenon on the economic and political landscape. That is true that some time ago, there was a belief that only private large companies undertake CSR but today there is a huge academic literature devoted to CSR in small and medium enterprises (Jenkins, 2006; Murillo and Lozano, 2006; Jamali et al., 2009). Equally, it has emerged a new line of research considering social responsibility in other organizations like public administration institutions (Hernández, 2007; Navarro et al., 2010).

Linking both fields of research, authors like Atakan and Eker (2007), Brown and Cloke (2009) or Vasilescu et al. (2010) have studied CSR in HE. In this context, the purpose of this case study is to identify the key features of the University of Alcalá de Henares, a reputed public university in Spain, which focuses on the marketing of HE internationally as a responsible institution. The case focuses in how the selected university is practicing marketing for their students and for society as a whole and, how it is becoming more international and more digital to satisfy its principal stakeholders.

## 2. Case development

### The origins and the UAH today:

The University of Alcalá de Henares (UAH) is a public university located in Alcalá de Henares, in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, with a campus also in the province of Guadalajara, in the Autonomous Community of Castilla la Mancha. The university was founded in 1.499 by Cardenal Cisneros as an innovative study centre. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, it became a great centre of excellence as the famous University of Salamanca. The UAH made possible the gold century in Spain. Some of the most important men of letters studied there, like Quevedo, Juan De la Cruz or Lope de Vega.

Late in 1998 Alcalá de Henares was declared a World Heritage site because of its architecture, culture and history. Currently the UAH is a modern institution recognized as a role model in Europe. In addition to the typical Humanistic studies, Alcalá offers a great variety of new degrees that are a decisive fact on its international projection. It has more than 27.000 students, 2.000 lecturers and researchers for more than 37 official degrees and, a great offer of post graduate programs.

The UAH is part of two of the most prestigious rankings of universities in the world, the QS World University Ranking (QS) and the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (WUR). Every year, the university embraces more than 5.500 international students, coming from different countries. This makes it the second Spanish public university in capacity to attract international students as the QS WUR says.

In Global Ranking of Spanish public Universities the UAH has the 1<sup>st</sup> position among the 48 Spanish public universities in global quality including teaching, researching and social implication in year 2010. It is also the 8<sup>th</sup> University in researching productivity and one of the first in Spain in PhD Thesis, creation of patents and spin-offs.

**Figure 1.** Some pictures of the University of Alcalá de Henares

Source: Fhttp://www.uah.es], accessed : 12/11/2014.

### CSR in the UAH:

We can understand the CSR like a set of voluntary practises that are realized by any organization, also universities. The very well known *triple bottom line* from Elkington (1994) promotes a responsible approach to management in organizations that should take into consideration environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, not only economic profit, but also social profit. According to these three classical dimensions of CSR, and other sub-dimensions remarkable in the case study, next paragraphs describe CSR at the University of Alcalá de Henares and how CSR is creating competitive advantages to succeed in the HE market.

### Environmental Issues

The UAH is the first university in sustainability as "Greenmetric" (ranking of universities done by the University of Indonesia, in which the University of Alcalá is number 12). First, the university is recognized worldwide for this item. The university has worried much about the environment and sustainability. When accessing the website you can find a section on the subject, the message transmitted from the beginning is "*committed to the environment and sustainability*". We can find in this section everything related to this subject, commitment, projects and activities developed by the university.

The main project is called *Ecocampus*. The project aims a more sustainable university fostering environmental analysis, the generation of sustainable behaviours and habits of the university community, including students, faculties and general staff. Through *Ecocampus* different activities are done explained as follows.

*Activities of Ecocampus*: Participation in issues of improving the environment. "*Move Cycling*" refers to sustainable mobility and is performed in the external campus. You can rent a bike for a semester and you can move around the campus to bring one home. It is important to remark that bikes have systems of safety. Also, it is important the management of waste. The university is committed to raise, to make appropriate use of these wastes. Hazardous wastes are: batteries, accumulator phones, cartridges and waste generated in laboratories. Another activity that develops UAH is "*green days*". We wish to emphasize the connection between environmental issues and all the disciplines taught at the university during these green days. These days help students to be aware of reality in the society in which we live and how we should react. On the website you can find the calendar and activities during these days. For instance, one day the activities are: guided tour of the botanical garden, conference on groundwater on campus and screening of the film "*Planet Earth*".

*Project and organizations:* The *TerraCycle Project* promotes the collection of writing material used. According to the collected material, the project is committed to donate it to specialized centres. These recycled materials can then be allocated in different places for several humanitarian causes.

In addition, the existing guide for good practice environment considers as important points: The environment problems on a global scale; Initiatives to improve the environment of the university; Knowing the natural and cultural heritage of the UAH. To finish this point we have to remark that the UAH also belongs to several organizations such as Healthy Universities, Colleges Fairtrade, and has a very active participation in the group "Environmental Quality and Sustainable Development" of the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE). In general we can say that the UAH is environmentally responsible and that is a good point for marketing the institution.

### **Social Issues**

The UAH, as university, has typical objectives to reach. Its activities consist of providing formation, research, scientific divulgation and publishing the investigation results transferring knowledge to society. But that is not all. The UAH is highly involved in CSR and proof of this, in January 2004, was created the Chair in CSR to foster responsibility in the institution. In general, the UAH as a public university is involved in a lot social aspects.

For instance, in relation to disabled students the UAH provides specialised assistance and supports them through the *Disabled Policies Integration and Coordination Unit* for their full inclusion in university life. These policies offer several services, such as an individualized and personal attention with the help of volunteer students, curriculum adaptations, labour counselling and insertion, among others. Other good example is the *Office for Solidarity and Co-operation* of the University born in 2008. Its main goal is to get the participation of the students, teachers and any worker of the UAH in projects and activities of solidarity and development cooperation.

Related to both initiatives commented, it was created the University *Volunteer Service and Cooperation Portal "VoluntariosUAH"* being the first university portal for the voluntarism development and management on Internet, which offers numerous volunteering opportunities in NGOs. "Intermón Oxfam" is one of them. Moreover, there is a University Support Group of this NGO, whose main objective is to promote its political campaigns in the university. That is a good point showing how the UAH is becoming digital at the same time that is becoming more responsible day by day, and more marketable as a good place to study. Other remarkable programs are "*Sahara Project*", analysing the causes and consequences of poverty in North Africa, the "*Solidarity Physiotherapy Project*" devoted to disadvantaged populations, or the "*Cooperation Program*" with Central America.

From a divulgative point of view, the UAH presents a Network of Social Media which allows us to access to updated information about all the activities that are being carried out in the UAH. Again TICs are helping the university to become responsible, this time with students, potential and effective students, as target.

Finally, it should be noted that the UAH offers to its students a great variety of sports on campus and in the city centre (archery, badminton, fencing, rugby, diving, horse riding and mountain climbing). Moreover, it has a complete programme of cultural activities like Film Club, Theatre, Dance, Fine Arts, a university choir orchestra and Tuna group, among other possibilities. It is a fact that all these activities count in the social performance of this university.

### **The internationalization of the UAH**

The internationalization of the UAH has turned for years into one of its signs of identity. As introduced before, the UAH today is placed as the second public Spanish university in capacity of attraction of foreign students according to the Ranking QS of 2013 and, according to the GRUP Survey of Shanghai's university, is the Spanish university that more foreigners receives in studies of degree.

This university receives every year more than 6.000 foreign students, proceeding from all parts of the world. In addition, it has signed agreements with numerous universities of great relevancy, particularly with Asia, Latin America and The United States. Likewise, it forms part of very prestigious institutions as Harvard's Royal Complutense College for instance. That is an indubitable sing of responsibility, taking into account that public universities are not obliged to be international and considering that the UAH offers a very international context at public prices.

This way, the university offers a great number of international programs and also of exchange programs. A good example of this interest, and supported by internet, is the international portal that the UAH offers for the students and teachers who want to come to the university from diverse parts of the world. In it, people who do not speak Spanish can find out about everything relative to the university in English, facilitating his/her adaptation in Spain.

In addition, the UAH it offers great quantity of scholarships for students and teachers in foreign universities, in the European continent and in the whole world, especially in The United States. That is a clear sign of responsibility in HE institutions. Moreover, it offers scholarships for students to go abroad for compulsory training credits in their degrees, proposing even medical insurances for stays of mobility. Consequently, and another good example of responsibility in the process of internationalization, is the number of bilingual courses that the university offers, destined to all those people who want to receive teaching in several languages, already for foreign students or Spanish students in the UAH.

The best example of this type of programs is the degree *Economy and international Business*. It is the degree that authors of this case study are following at the moment. The current academic year 2014-2015, and for the first promotion, the UAH offers this bilingual degree. In it, part of the first course teaching is offered in English and it will be gradually completely in English to the fourth course. This new bilingual degree does that it appreciates with enough facility the international character of the UAH. In this bilingual group there is a great diversity of cultures, it not only consist on teaching the academic lessons strictly in English. This degree is much more than expected. Students are learning economy in a real international context. They are also developing future professional networks and creating personal bows in many cases, for the rest of their life.

### **Disclosure and Transparency Issues**

Transparency is a fundamental practice in the activity of the public institutions. The UAH is ready to be more transparent, and to improve the quality of its services. In order to do this, the UAH is subjected to different assessments and institutional studies as well as national and international rankings, which allow the improvement of its negatives aspects. By the same way, trying to facilitate a better knowledge, the indicators obtained by the different means of communication provide information about the effectiveness of the policies that are developed at the university. All mentioned above, has been recognized in the “transparency reports from sites of public universities” prepared annually by the Commitment Foundation and Transparency, where the University of Alcalá is practically at the top of the ranking. Since the transparency and the access to information are very important in the running of the institutions, a Transparency Web has been necessary. We consider that fact as a very important effort, for marketing and for CSR.

Some parts of the Web are: Agenda, which includes the activities of the rector; Staff, as a description of the salaries and jobs; Acts and Regulations of the University; External and Internal Accreditation and Audits, Contracts and Agreements, Budgets, economic data and budget execution, Statistics and Rankings. There is also a satisfaction survey full of queries with the aim of increasing the quality of the Website. This project makes available for any stakeholder the information of the university government action, the economic and administrative management of the university and the results achieved in the performances of the teaching and research activities. The site also shows the university commitment with citizens and it is available for everyone who was interested in it.

Due to the efficiency and the clearness of the information offered by the Web, the UAH has been awarded with a prize for being the best good practice in university management from 2010-2013. In addition, trough the UNESCO Chair in Higher Education Management previously commented in the case, the UAH is considered object of benchmarking and a “*model for other organizations, and emphasize its engagement with culture and work*”. In our opinion, and recognized by other institutions, this innovation could be considered enough to conclude that the UAH is becoming digital, responsible and well positioned in the global market of HE.

### **3. Questions for discussion and judgements**

In this third section we have include three questions that, according to the authors’ opinion, will serve to stimulate the critical spirit of readers about CSR and Marketing in public universities. The purpose is to

encourage the readers to think about their own universities and to become social intrapreneurs, as much as they can, to transform their institutions to be more responsible.

**Question 1.** Would you know that public institutions, as is the case of the UAH, are starting to be aware of social responsibility? Why?

*Transparency International*, a Spanish NGO, defines corruption broadly as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It is clear that this can happen anywhere, and can be classified as grand or petty, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs. When corruption occurs in the public sector the government and its decentralized units (including the public universities) use public funds to make profit, rather to provide services based on the motivation to improve citizens' lives. Because of that, public institutions are called to disclosure what they do and how they use public money.

Focus in marketing, and taking into account that CSR goes beyond law, considering all voluntary actions in economic, social and environmental issues, any public university should disclosure their actions and should emphasize their responsible actions to get competitive advantages in the global market of HE.

**Question 2.** Is your university socially responsible?

The case presented here has showed a responsible university in Spain. We are proud about it but we know that other universities are also responsible and probably they have different projects, social innovations and activities to share with the university community. This question serves for reflexion. The reader must follow the points considered in this case in order to check to what extent the university where he or she is studying is developing something similar or probably something also important but different.

**Question 3.** Question for imaging, dreaming and acting: Are you a social-intrapreneur?

The concept of social-intrapreneur has recently emerged in business management referring internal social actions to equilibrate the main core business with purely social goals. Also in public universities social-intrapreneurs exist. They could be teachers, students or staff, does not matter. These social-intrapreneurs are characterized to have a potential role as catalysts for a social change in the institution. They could assume, individually or collectively the role of transforming the university in a mor

#### 4. Conclusions

To conclude, in our opinion the case offers a timely contribution to current debates concerning the universities potential in society and their active role during a time of economic restraint. We believe that our university, the UAH, and their actions showed here, should have considerable value for those who are interested in how the field of CSR is expanding at HE institutions, how it could be considered a source of competitive advantages and how new technologies of communication and digital tools are supporting the process in the field of public marketing.

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