

SWOT analysis for E - Guide creating in the international students' exchange program

Analiza SWOT w kształtowaniu elektronicznego przewodnika w programie międzynarodowej wymiany studenckiej

Merve Duymuş¹, Renata Stasiak-Betlejewska²

¹Erasmus+ student, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey, e-mail: merve.duymus12@hacettepe.edu.tr

²Ing. PhD., supervisor of Students Scientific Club *Erasmus+ Manager*, Czestochowa University of Technology, Faculty of Management, Al. Armii Krajowej 19B, 42-200 Czestochowa POLAND, e-mail: renatastasiak@wp.pl

Abstract: One of the fundamental aspects of the organization management is determination of appropriate strategy for the adoption of development directions and organization areas that needs improvement in the context of existing opportunities and threats based on the organization strengths. The aim of the paper is analysis of the strengths and weakness of E-Guides of European universities in the context of its applying in Erasmus+ programme. Paper is a result of scientific international cooperation of Polish Erasmus coordinator with Turkish Erasmus student.

Streszczenie: Jednym z podstawowych aspektów zarządzania organizacją jest określenie właściwej strategii działania dla określenia kierunków rozwoju oraz określenia tych obszarów w organizacji, które wymagają doskonalenia zarówno w kontekście istniejących okazji i zagrożeń w otoczeniu, jak i słabych stron organizacji. Celem artykułu jest analiza mocnych i słabych stron przewodników elektronicznych europejskich uniwersytetów w kontekście ich wykorzystania w programie Erasmus+. Artykuł jest rezultatem międzynarodowej współpracy naukowej polskiego koordynatora programu Erasmus+ ze studentką przebywającą na stażu w ramach programu Erasmus+.

Key words: university, Erasmus+ programme, E-Guide, SWOT

Słowa kluczowe: uniwersytet, program Erasmus+, E-Guide, SWOT

1. Introduction

Internationalisation is one of the most important challenges facing the higher education. Internationalisation of universities is defined not only as a taking up studies by foreign students in Poland, but also as a long-term and short-term employment of academic staff from abroad or the participation of Polish scientists in international educational programs and research. Internationalisation is also the acquisition and exchange of knowledge and experience.

Universities are key players in the process of raising the level of internationalization of higher education. The objectives of the internationalization of the university are realized by universities engaging to participate in the international academic exchange programmes such as: Erasmus+, CEEPUS, Fulbright or others.

Erasmus + is a European Union program for education, training, youth and sport for 2014-2020. Its total budget amounts to 14.7 billion Euro. Erasmus + is based on the achievements of European educational programs, which functioned for 25 years. It is the result of a combination of the following European initiatives undertaken by the European Commission in 2007-2013: the "Learning for Life" program "Youth in Action" program, Erasmus

Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and cooperation programs with industrialized countries in higher education.

In order to attract students from overseas universities should create an attractive offer programming in languages occurring in cooperation with foreign partners and to provide adequate information on the conditions offered educational exchange programs. One of the main condition of the efficient international academic exchange programmes is appropriate information providing in the process of applying within international program what is supported among others by electronic information presented in E-Guides included in the universities websites.

The aim of the paper is analysis of European universities E-Guides providing information on Erasmus+ programme exchange in the analysed universities. Research results allows creating the excellent model of E-Guide for foreign students applying within international exchange programs.

2. Experimental

SWOT analysis is one of the most popular methods of strategic analysis, whose main task is to identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and the opportunities and threats in the organization environment that determines its strategic

position in the market. Therefore, SWOT analysis is considered to be a method for comprehensive strategic analysis method. The main advantage of this analysis is to identify the complete characterization of the organization taking into account its strengths and weak characteristics. Extremely important is the confrontation of the organization characteristics with potential opportunities and threats [1].

For many organizations with different business profile SWOT analysis is a way to organize facts, data for the understanding and perception of the resulting consequences. It can be successfully used in the enterprises, as well as in other organizations, e.g. political parties, public institutions, sports clubs. The name of the SWOT analysis is an acronym derived from English words: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, that are a content of the analysis. The abbreviation is translated as follows [1,2]:

- S (Eng. Strengths) means the strengths or advantages,
- W (Eng. Weaknesses) means the weaknesses or defects,
- O (Eng. Opportunities) means the chances or occasions in the environment,
- T (Eng. Threats) is a threat in the environment.

SWOT method is derived from the concept of force field analysis K. Lewin, developed in the 50s [2].

SWOT analysis presented in the paper was aimed at identification and analysis of strengths and weaknesses of electronic guide (E-Guide) offered by selected European universities that constitute source of information for incoming foreign students participating in the international student's exchange programmes such as Erasmus+ programme. Research analysis include 104 selected universities participating in Erasmus+ programme from 26 countries and 4 selected universities from Turkey that is candidate for European country (Middle East Technical University, Bilkent University, Yeditepe University, Boğaziçi University).

3. Results and discussion

Analysis of E-Guides included in websites of European universities pointed two forms of E-Guide: PDF form and website form.

Table 1 presents strengths and weakness of PDF form of E-Guide of European universities in the context of opportunities and threats.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of E-Guide in PDF form

	BENEFICIAL STRENGTHS	HARMFUL WEAKNESSES
INTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can find everything in one document - Easy, well-ordered content - Sufficient content in one document - Link for necessary content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It can be mistaken by with the old version, if pdf is not updated University has to change the content with new updates - In some websites in order to get an e-guide you have to reach to the coordinator
	OPPORTUNITIES	THREADS
EXTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy access from every device - No need for a device at some point you can print it an make an handbook - One guide for everything 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It can be found from wrong website's pdf guide - Other people's guide contents can be mistaken with main university's guide

When we look at the analysed Table, one document is more than enough sometimes but easily access to everything in a moment is one of the best opportunities that PDF style E-Guides has. The most noticeable thing in PDF style E-Guides is the context at the first page. That page is so well-ordered and it allows students to find those things in given pages. Students don't have to search for everything, they can easily understand sub contents.

Website based E-Guides always require a stable internet connection and sometimes it's hard to get some information even we're living in the world that always has internet for work. Pdf style guides can easily store on computers or as printed form. This makes a huge difference for accessibility of document. But on the other hand for some universities a proper and official guide can only be received from the coordinator of faculty or international student's office. If you need a proper guide then you have to contact with the coordinator and that means it's a waste of time and energy for both sides. Mails can be go junk files and at sometimes if both person are too busy those mails can be fail to notice.

Universities need to update their content every time when they make a change or some new courses and stuff for student's needs. Even when students search for official guide on internet they can be misled to other pages in internet (and we know that there are lots of pages about international students and not all

of them has the proper information) and they can find wrong information guide for them and it leads a huge misunderstanding and cause some important consequences. But still pdf style guides gives all the information that student need because the team that prepares e-guide for them is always look for everything that students need in their universities. Let's see two example of pdf style e-guides from two universities (University of Edinburgh's and University of Sheffield's).

When we look at the University of Edinburgh's and University of Sheffield's first pages of handbook or E-Guide we can see main contents at from an order, they give you the things that you have to do before you arrive, when you arrive and important things while you're in that university. Before you arrive as we can see includes accommodation, academic courses, travel plan, visas and paper works. Sometimes you can miss a point while you're preparing your documents and this gives you to the chance of making lists. After you arrive they give you the information about your academic matters, registration process and financial situations.

The difference between these two universities is University of Edinburgh makes its main contents as important things. And under these contents you can only find information about main content that writes. It looks more helpful for students because in main contents you can divide what you look for. Health and safety,

financial matters, academic matters those are most important stuff to look for. On the other hand University of Sheffield divides its topic before you arrive, when you arrive and whilst you are here. Before you arrive content is similar with University of Edinburg but when you arrive content have registration, health services and registration process as sub-content. Whilst you are here content has grading system, results of exams, basically academic matters.

Those two analyzed universities both have useful links content (that give us quick access to other sites in university webpage.)

In the last section is usually important things such as frequently asked questions, documents that students need most, checklist and important dates that shouldn't be forgotten.

Table 2 presents results of SWOT analysis of website form of E-Guide offered by European universities. As it can be seen from the analyses table, website style e-guides as we can refer it like internet based e-guides have some advantages and disadvantages.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of E-Guide in website form

	BENEFICIAL STRENGTHS	HARMFUL WEAKNESSES
INTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy to reach from different devices - Quick accessibility in Erasmus pages - Well-ordered websites - Everyone can make a quick search in google or other sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problems in the server makes website hard to reach - Have to change site for every topic - No order in some of the sites - Insufficient content in website
	OPPORTUNITIES	THREADS
EXTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People try to find everything online - Within the university page - Only one content changes with updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cannot reach without internet connection - It can be misguided with different pages

The most important thing is anyone can easily find the guide in the university website or Erasmus related website of university. International students only have to check the pages about Erasmus section or international students section. It may be difficult to find in different country's website, especially if it's in different language other than your native language, but universities' usually have a language support for whole their website. If not for whole website, the international students' page usually prepared in English format.

One of the most important thing in international students' page is the well-ordered content. No one wants to go from accommodation to cultural life, related stuff has to be together. Also in one main content if the website direct you to another one, this is just confusing for students. All new tabs and new pages makes the main concerned thing fly away and find some misguided information. But the main things that requires more search is usually accommodation and transportation. If university have some content about these you can make a quick search in other websites like how to get from one place to another. Students usually look for transportation from bus stations or airports to university at their first day.

Usually every website has some contents and in their content it starts with major subject and major subject is followed by lots of sub contents. As an example we can see Technical University of Denmark has 8 major subject and under these contents we can see some sub contents that makes students to find what they need easily. Not only academic life or courses but also students find some important things that they need like accommodation, transportation, lifestyle generally all about how to live in different country within those needs. They even give you basic culture tricks and general numbers and addresses. This is very easy to access everything in one website. In one website you can see all the content that you need however sometimes it can be very hard to reach other stuff if the website is not that well-ordered. Easy access

means that you can find it in universities' page with a simple search. Also lots of universities make international students content as important as their academic content. Moreover if you want to look more on Google you can easily reach other websites that includes university information like university ranking results. When we look at the disadvantages of website based e-guides, it's clear that at some point if we face some problems on internet connection or server problems it'll be hard to reach that guide at that moment. On the other hand universities can face that problem too. Nowadays internet hacking is popular and it's a problem for universities to keep their page still. In some websites e-guides are mostly about how to apply and documents. The insufficient contents makes students have problems in their mind. If we look at some insufficient content examples at some websites even accommodation has few information about it. The other difficulty that encountered is if the website is in country's native language and you can't find the content that you looking for in English version. Some universities' website has two different version depends on the language. Especially in native language the website has lots of contents but in English version has less content and less information. Therefore students have to reach the coordinator or international office in order to get the exact information. But this is a waste of time and effort, if you can't reach at that moment and have to wait for a long time to find actual content it will be a problem. Students usually ask separate questions depends on the answer of the coordinator and it will take the time of the coordinator too.

3. Model of E-Guide – conclusion

Model of E-guide that is a result of research analysis includes three practical parts called: "Before you go", "When you arrive" and "Returning home". Part "Before you go" includes everything that students have to do before they arrive to the university and

city. The most important thing for students is paperwork that has to be done before arrival. It includes which paperwork and documents have to be signed by Home University and Host University. Important documents are students' passports, visas, insurances, medical reports. After documentation students have to choose their courses. Academic courses also signed by home university needs to be done. After that accommodation is usually many students mostly concerned topic. Many universities offer accommodation in student dormitories or residences, on or off campus. In some countries universities can have more than one dormitory or more staying places so it can change by preferences depends on the quality and the cost. Costs are highly vary from different qualities and places, also the country affects those prices too. It is also possible for students to live outside of the university accommodation choices. Students can choose to stay in city apartments with housemates or home stays with local families. Planning the arrival. This is the last part that student has to done before arrival. They can choose transportation with planes, trains and buses. At some level students have to use more than one transportation depends on the distance. The important thing about planning the travel is when you arrive the city or country you have to have a proper map that includes bus and train stations, host universities address and residence place. Students usually use planes to go another country and choose buses to go different cities in the country.

Part "When you arrive" helps students to look for accommodation to university at first. Some universities usually put a map for their residence places and faculties. The important thing is registration to the university. Students have to make registration for health care services, libraries and dormitories. Also this registration process includes course registrations and tuition fees too. This part contains information with lots of sub contents. While students in the university they need a lot of information and this part usually contains every question they have about university, city, country etc. Academic issues is the top thing that students need to look for. The academic requirements, credits, study plans and exam schedule is here to look for. Orientation programs and language classes here to make a plan. Also student clubs and societies, especially ESN, Erasmus Student Network, is important for student in the first few weeks. Health, Safety and Welfare, students usually prefer in the campus area healthcare services but there are also other

places outside the campus. Inside the city hospitals and their number are very helpful for students in case of any emergency situation that can happen. Students have health insurance before they arrive but in emergency situations they need someone to contact to. Some universities also have some immunization and medication centers. Cultural adjustment, living in the city or even country basically adjusting to the life in new city is another sub content for students. Coming to study in a different country especially without the native language of the country is a huge step for students. They have different traditions, lifestyles and more of it everything will be different from their home country. Spending time with someone who is local can help students to adjust the country but at first it will be too hard to understand the local life. In this section universities usually gives information about weather, country style, clothing, what to bring for easy living, exploring maps and different places to visit in the country and more specifically in the city. Places of interest makes students want to come those universities and spend their life in there fulfilled.

Part "Returning home" is another big deal of students' life. When students know what arrangements need to be done for returning trip it will be easy to prepare all documents. Students have to take the transcript of results, some Erasmus requirements, if home university wants other documents rather than usual those ones. They have to contact with their coordinator before the end of the semester and keep in touch with them.

Literature

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