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Positioning Strategies of Universities: An Investigation on Universities in Istanbul

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify positioning strategies in which universities want to be distinctive in the mind of prospective students. For this purpose, the research was designed in the case study pattern by using qualitative methodology. The population of the research includes the universities in Istanbul. Purposive sampling was used and the universities that had put their promotional videos on their web pages, were investigated. The research data were obtained by typing the written and verbal statements in the promotional videos. The data were analyzed by using content analysis. In conclusion, eight positioning strategies pursued by the universities were defined. Furthermore, the research indicated that there were some differences in positioning strategies between public and foundation universities. Finally, the positioning map was generated for the universities which were included in the research. Public and private universities wishing to create a different image from their competitors are recommended to benefit from the positioning map.

Keywords

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Introduction

Universities once thought far of competition. It did not occur to them that one day they will have to compete fiercely for getting the scarce resources which they used to access effortlessly. As competition among universities has increased, so has the application of marketing in the field of higher education (Harrison, 2009). Marketing activities carried out by universities target prospective students, staff, shareholders, and other stakeholders of the university (Carvalho & de Oliveira Mota, 2010; Chapleo, 2005; Ivy, 2001). Universities create a distinct image for gaining a competitive advantage and better access to financial sources other than the state, in an increasingly competitive environment (Mount & Belanger, 2004). Distinctive images may increase number of students who are willing to enroll the university, the number of donors and the amount donation, and the number of the companies that are willing to cooperate with the university for research and development projects (Ivy, 2001). However, prospective students and staff are prior targets of the universities because of the fact that university awareness depends on the quality of its research and education (Chapleo, 2005; Carvalho & de Oliveira Mota, 2010; Günay, 2006). Furthermore, universities deserve financial support from state, research funding, and private donations as a result of their generating, teaching, and

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disseminating activities of information made by the students and staff in the university. In this context, it can be said that the objectives of the marketing activities of a university are firstly to attract qualified students and academics to the university, and secondly, to receive more financial support from the state, research funding, and private donations (Beneke, 2010).

Positioning is one of the most important marketing activities for universities (Erdal, 2001). Moreover, positioning is widely accepted as the essence of branding activities (Ries & Trout, 1981). The way to build a powerful brand is to distinguish it from its competitors. The best way to do that is to position the brand distinctively via its personality and identity (Kapferer, 2008). In this context, the purpose of this paper is to identify whether or not universities apply positioning strategies which differ from their competitors, and if they do, to conceptualize those positioning strategies. Furthermore, determining the positioning maps of universities in Istanbul and whether there are differences between the positioning strategies of the foundation and public universities, are also discussed in this paper. The paper provides two important contributions to the theory and practice. The first, is to identify and conceptualize the positioning strategies which can be engaged by the universities. The second is the creation of the positioning map which enables universities to review their existing strategy and if necessary, to generate a new positioning strategy.

Literature Review

Positioning is a process of affecting consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and consumption habits in accordance with competitive conditions and company facilities in the target market (Doğanlı, 2006). The aim of positioning is to identify, and take possession of, a strong purchasing rationale that gives us a real or perceived advantage and to keep it. Positioning is the act of designing to get a distinct image according to competitors in the customer's mind, based on its distinctive characteristics (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Positioning results from an analytical process based on the four following questions: a brand / product for whom, what benefit, what reason, and against whom (Kapferer, 2008).

The positioning is often the crucial strategic decision which is the source of the competitive advantage for a firm or a brand because the position can be central to customers' perception and decisions (Blankson & Kalafatis, 2007). The communication strategy of a firm is based on its positioning strategy. Some organizations try to create an image for themselves as everything to everyone through their positioning strategy. This might lead to a confused perception in consumers' minds. Additionally, perceived uniqueness (a particular position associated with only one brand), strength (a strong and clear association with the position), and prevalence (whereby the targeted customers are aware of the brand's position) are required for effective positioning (Harrison, 2009). Companies should develop a position before making decision about marketing communication activities because of the fact that the positioning will affect all components of the marketing communication. The positioning is the source of coherence for marketing activities to be carried out. A clear position ensures that all components of the marketing communication support each other (Aaker & Shansby, 1982).

The management and the marketing of the services are discussed differently from physical goods in the literature (Öztürk, 2006). Ellis and Mosher (1993) argued that the unique characteristics of the services (intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, perishability, and non-standardization) should be taken into the consideration in the process of developing positioning strategy. Furthermore, Jo Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert, and Zeithaml (1997) asserted that there was no need to develop different positioning strategies for brands of physical goods or services because of several overlaps between the physical goods and the services alongside the natural differences. However, Blankson and Kalafatis (2007) pointed out that positioning the service brands is more difficult and challenging than the physical goods brands because of features of the services such as intangibility, heterogeneity and non-standardization. Service brands may apply the same position strategy with the goods brands by making the necessary changes according to characteristics of the services.

The positioning of service brands is more important than the positioning of goods brands. Furthermore, the importance of the positioning might differ between the various service sectors. Srikatanyoo and Gnoth (2002) classified services into two groups according to consumer involving level: high involvement and low involvement services. They noted that positioning was more important for the high involvement services and higher education was one of them. A university might clearly convey to prospective students what it is and what it stands for thanks to positioning (Lowry & Owens, 2001). Thereby perceived risk of stakeholders, especially prospective students, of a university to be minimized (Beneke, 2010). Therefore, effective positioning is seen as crucial for branding of today's universities (Judson, Gorchels, & Aurand, 2006).

Harrison (2009) adapted the six approaches to positioning strategies identified by Aaker and Shansby (1982) for universities, and gave examples for each of them. These approaches are by attribute, use, user, product category, price/quality, and competitive positioning (Aaker & Shansby, 1982). The examples of these positioning approaches given by Harrison (2009) are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Positioning Strategies Applied by Universities

Positioning Strategies	**Universities**
Positioning by Attribute	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Brown University
Positioning by Use	Cornell University
Positioned by User	Florida's St. Leo College
Positioning by Product Category	The University of Phoenix
Positioning by Price/Quality	The University of Michigan
Competitive Positioning	Indiana Wesleyan University

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute positioned itself on technological creativity which is its core value, and Brown University positioned itself as one of the relaxed, open-minded Ivy League Colleges. Those two universities were the examples of positioning by attributes. Cornell University was an example of the positioning by use because it positioned itself as the university of choice for majors in hotel administration. Florida's St. Leo College was given as an example of positioning by user because it positioned itself as the weekend college. Its target market was working, adult students who have not finished college. The positioning of the University of Phoenix as a member of the University Community was an example of positioning by product category. The University of Michigan called, "The Harvard of the Midwest" positioned itself as a public university by high price and quality. Marion College in Marion, Indiana changed its name to Indiana Wesleyan University to be associated with other elite Wesleyan Universities, such as those in Connecticut, Illinois, and Ohio. So, Indiana Wesleyan University is an example of competitive positioning (Harrison, 2009).

In a paper by Lowry and Owens (2001) it was noted that Northwest Missouri State University positioned itself on the theme of "electronic campus" and stressed computer technology, global involvement, and innovation. Judson et al. (2006) stated in their paper that Chicago University positioned itself on campus life quality for students such as dormitory facilities, campus facilities, entertainment facilities, and Southern Illinois University positioned itself on the scholarships granted to students.

Universities position themselves in various areas to have a distinct image from their competitors. Baker, Creedy, and Johnson (1996) stated that a university may position itself against its competitors on quality, job opportunities after graduation, and recognition in a major. Kemp, Madden, and Simpson (1998) noted that price and geographic location are the areas that a university may position itself in addition to previous areas. Furthermore, universities may position themselves on learning environment, career commitments, and cultural integration according to Megan, Rachel, and Musa (2011), and social life environment available for the students according to Kemp et al. (1998). Harsha and Shah (2011) argued that universities which have prestige and value in the eyes of the public based on its rooted history, must position themselves on this area, and other universities must position themselves on the majors at which they are leaders. Harsha and Shah (2011) asserted that this is an effective way of creating brand value for the universities. Waeraas and Solbakk (2009) emphasized on education as the core product of a university, and maintained the necessity of the focusing on a major before developing a positioning strategy for a university. Altınsoy (2011) holds the view that universities must take into consideration the regional dynamics and get specialized on the majors with which they have advantageous in.This is in terms of added value and competitiveness according to their competitors. In this section of the paper, the knowledge and suggestions in terms of the positioning of a university in the literature were discussed. In the next parts of the paper, we focus on the research to identify positioning strategies engaged by universities.

Method

The research was designed in the case study pattern by using qualitative methodology. The population of the research included foundation and public universities in Istanbul. Purposive sampling was used in the sampling process. Two criteria were identified to be included in the sample. One of them is the year of establishment. Thirteen universities founded after 2007 were not included in the sample because of the fact that their promotional videos were short, and had no attributes which must be in promotional videos. The second is whether or not the promotional videos were available on the web pages of the universities while the research was carried out. There were 29 universities founded before 2007 in Istanbul when the research was being conducted (01.05.2012-30.12.2012). The promotional videos of 12 universities were not available on their websites. So, 17 universities were included the sample. Three of those universities were public universities and 14 of them were foundation universities. The public universities are Bogaziçi University, Istanbul Technical University, and Istanbul University. The foundation universities are Arel University, Aydin University, Bahce Sehir University, Beykent University, Fatih University, Halic University, Istanbul Kultur University, Istanbul Ticaret University, Kadir Has University, Koc University, Okan University, Özyegin University, Sabanci University, and Yeditepe University.

The data were analyzed by using content analysis. The purpose of content analysis is to get concepts and relations explaining the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Content analysis is used to classify, summarize, measure specific variables or concepts in written or verbal statements, and to categorize all these to obtain a particular meaning in terms of specific problems and goals (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001). Content analysis is carried out in four stages. Those are; coding of the data, identifying the themes, regulating the codes and themes, and identifying and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

Promotional brochures, booklets, and movies prepared by the universities consist of summary information about the position which the university wants to have in the minds of its stakeholders, in other words, its positioning. However, this study focused on promotional videos of the universities. Firstly, written and verbal statements in the promotional videos of the universities were typed as a written text. Secondly, every situation in the sentences of the text were coded, taking into consideration both promotional videos, and written text. These codes were presented to two academics, one of them studied marketing, and the other did not, to ensure the objectivity of codes (observing the same results in the same document from different people). Some changes were made in accordance to the recommendations on the codes (Yüksel, Yılmaz, Yüksel, & Kayacan, 2011). The

changes for each code were done when the researchers and experts reached consensus on it. Thirdly, the codes were categorized according to the relationship between one another. Then, the themes were identified in accordance with the codes groups and literature (Baker et al., 1996; Kemp et al., 1998; Lowry & Owens, 2001; Judson et al., 2006; Duarte, Alves, & Raposo, 2010; Megan et al., 2011; Harsha & Shah, 2011). The views of four academics, two of them studied marketing and others did not, were taken into consideration in the process of creating the themes through codes, to ensure the objectivity and the validity by making sure that each code was in the right theme. All these created themes were conceptualized as positioning strategies in which universities engaged.

Results

Eight different positioning strategies were identified in which universities strived to be distinct from each other through their promotional videos. These strategies are internationalization, training systems, academic achievement, social and sporting facilities, job opportunities, physical facilities, scholarship and dormitory facilities, and rooted history.

The internationalization strategy accounts for international accreditation. For instance, students and staff may participate in an international exchange program. International scientific, social, and cultural activities are organized on campus. The following are examples of statements which internationalization accounts for:

"Our university has provided exchange opportunities for more than 1,500 students through Erasmus, a student exchange program between universities in various European countries. The university also provides training and a joint degree via 12 international joint degree programs of the partner universities in the United States."

"The student exchange program that enables students to spend a part of their training abroad is an important part of the active international climate on campus. Our university has the capacity to send 900 students, mostly to North America, and to 31 other countries in the world in every year."

"An international university with 785 foreign students from 78 different countries and 12,250 students in total…"

"877 international students from 64 countries…"

"Cooperation with 186 universities from 34 different countries…"

"The university provides opportunity of training abroad for any students who are willing."

The training systems strategy means how well students are being taught critical, inquisitive, social, teamwork skills, and achievement-oriented expertise. Some example statements constituting the training strategy in the promotional videos are as follows:

"Our academic tradition is based on a critical perspective. This perspective encourages students doing research, taking initiative, and having team-work skills as some of the most important parts of the tradition of our university."

"Our university aims to train students not only to be success-oriented, but also to be sensitive to social events and to be interested in transforming art and culture into a lifestyle."

"We want to learn while teaching. We see education as a dialogue between generations. We wish that students will remember the years they were a student as the best years of his life when he thinks after times, and generate efficiently."

"Practical education aimed at research and development towards theory…"

The academic achievement strategy is related to a number of scientific projects, publications, and patents which are made by the faculty and lecturers of the university, and other scientific activities in the university. The following statements are examples from written text from which the codes are generated from:

"The university has 22 patents. The resources provided for the researchers broaden horizons."

"The students of our university develop worldwide and countrywide projects (TUBITAK solar car, TUBITAK hydrogen car, and Shall Eco Marathon). The students of the department of Mechanical Engineering in the university won the contest organized by ASMIL in the European Union."

"Academics in the university have their doctorate degrees from leading universities in the world."

"Our university has qualified academics and the education style in our university is internationally accredited. This is very reflective on the brilliant careers of the graduates of our university."

"14 permanent members and four honorary members of the Science Academy of Turkey are from our university."

The social and sporting facilities strategy is associated with social, cultural, and sportive activities which are held on campus, and the numbers of the student clubs, and places for social activities. The following are examples of statements which social and sporting facilities generated:

"The university is playing host to the sports festival which is the largest student organization in Turkey. This activity, in which 1,200 students (600 foreigners from 25 different countries, and 600 Turkish citizens) participate, has become a tradition in our university."

"The university enables the students to follow qualified art activities playing host to a wide variety of arts and cultural activities."

"The university has supported more than 100 student clubs, which have various content and purpose, associated with art, sport, entertainment, thought, etc. to make students have not only technical information, but also the intellectual point of view which supports critical thinking in accordance with having qualified graduates in the union of culture and art, and the department physical education."

"Women's Basketball Team of union of sports club of the university, which has seen many important successes, competes in the Women's Basketball First League in Turkey."

"The university has an active campus environment where many scientific, arts, and cultural activities are held every year."

The job opportunities strategy is related to job placement rates of graduates, positions staffed by graduates, application classes in the university, entrepreneurship and career courses, and relations between the university and the private sector. Some example statements constituting the training strategy in the promotional videos are as follows:

"Graduates from this university have brilliant careers…"

"Graduates from this university work in a wide variety of sectors, and they make a difference in their organizations."

"I have had the global perspective in my school years at university, and as a man who constantly works overseas, I think, this point of view helps me to get in touch with people from different cultures."

"The university has different application classes. These are virtual stock exchange laboratories, practice cuisine (gastronomy), practice law and practice pharmacy."

"Our university provides us with quality education as well as detailed information about business life thanks to the lecturers from the private sector, and its cooperation with the private sector."

The physical facilities strategy is associated with accessibility of the campus and facilities in the campus. The following are examples of statements which physical facilities strategy accounts for:

"The first thing I saw was the magnificence of the campus. I was very excited when I got into the campus, and at that moment I realized that I was in the right university."

"The central campus of the university has historical value with its garden, structures, manor houses, the Beyazit Tower, the Monument of Ataturk and Youth, and the main gateway."

"You are in a metropolitan city, but it is as if you were not in a city."

"It is very easy to reach the campus from anywhere in the city. Though we do not want to leave the campus, but when we do, all the amenities of the city are easily accessible."

"It takes five minutes from the Pier of Besiktas, and 15 minutes from the Kabatas Tramway Station to reach the university campus on foot."

The scholarship and dormitory facilities strategy stands for the capacity and comfort of the dormitories which the university has, and scholarship opportunities of the university. Some example statements constituting the scholarship and dormitory facilities in promotional videos are as follows:

"The university provides all kinds of financial support to students in need with various names such as the scholarship for success, books, and food. Today, one of every two students benefits from these scholarships."

"The scholarship continues even if the student did not pass the exams."

"Two out of every three students are granted the scholarship."

"It is unknown who has the scholarship and who does not in the university."

"The dormitories, which are well equipped technologically, are designed to satisfy all the needs of students. The dormitories, two for females and two for males, have the capacity to host 1000 students"

"The university has the capacity to host 560 students in total at its 25 students' villas, which has the capacity for 300 students and has a communal pool, and 70 students' houses in Yeni Bosna."

The rooted history strategy is associated with how old, well-known, and big the university is, and the numbers of students, graduated students, faculty, departments, and campuses of the university. Some example statements constituting rooted history strategy in promotional videos are as follows:

"A rooted training tradition of 150 years…"

"A rooted institution in which its name is mentioned along with the modernization of Turkey, and its history has developed parallel with Turkish modernization history."

"The university has brightened up Turkey and the world with science and knowledge since the 15th century."

"It was founded by the Health and Treatment Foundation of Turkey in 1996."

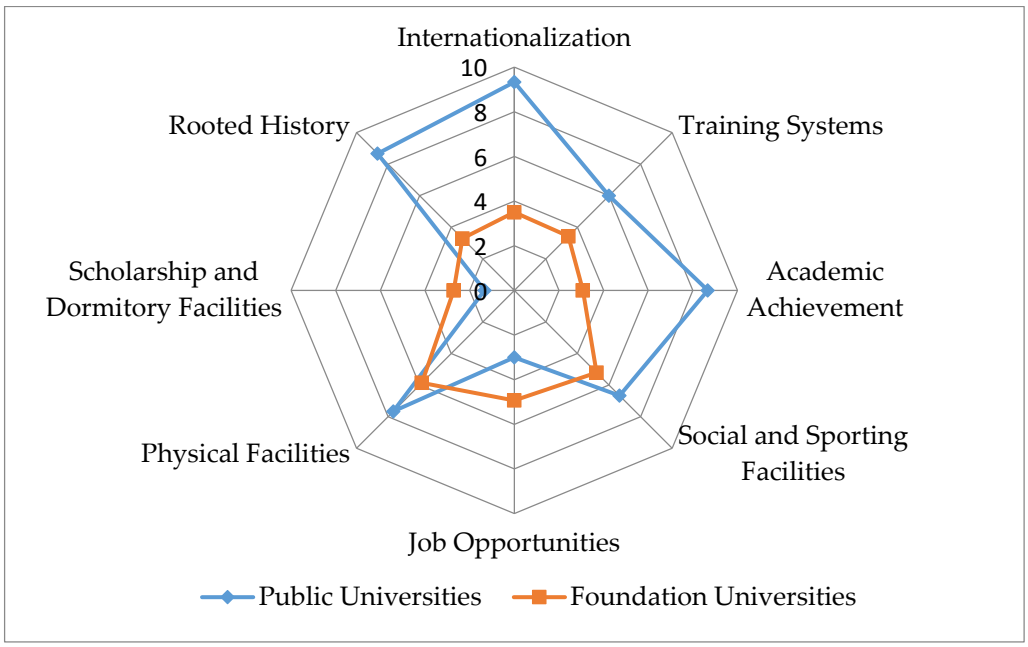
"It was founded as a foundation university by the Foundation of Education and Social Services of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce."

"The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Ozyegin University, Husnu Ozyegin, has a dream."

Table 2. Frequencies of the Codes According to Positioning Strategies

Strategies	Public Universities		Foundation Universities		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Internationalization	28	18,2	49	10,9	77	12,8
Training Systems	18	11,7	48	10,7	66	11,0
Academic Achievement	26	16,9	43	9,6	69	11,5
Social and Sporting Facilities	20	13,0	73	16,3	93	15,4
Job Opportunities	9	5,8	69	15,4	78	13,0
Physical Facilities	23	14,9	82	18,3	105	17,4
Scholarship and Dormitory Facilities	4	2,6	38	8,5	42	7,0
Rooted History	26	16,9	46	10,3	72	12,0

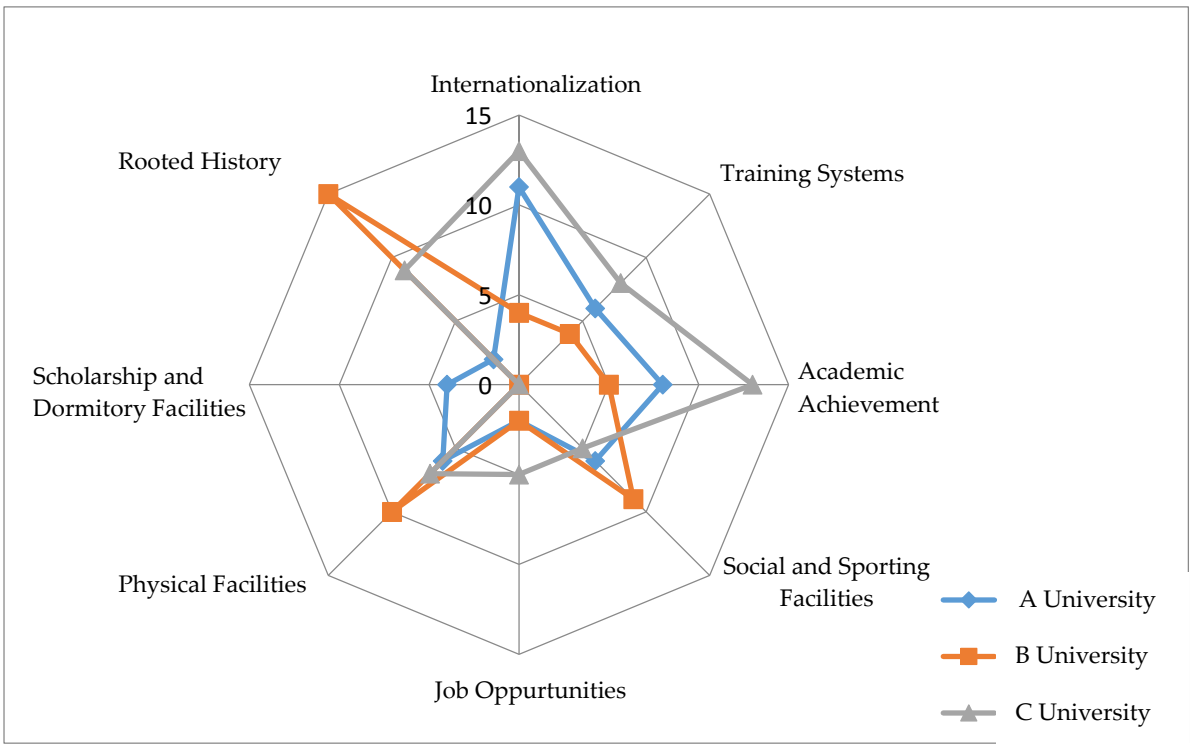
The findings of this research indicate that the physical facilities strategy is the most accentuated attribute in the promotional movies. Findings also show that both public and foundation universities emphasize the location, accessibility, attractiveness, and technological equipment of their campuses, and facilities on the campuses such as restaurants, cafes, health centers, and sports complexes. These features of the universities are the most accentuated ones not only in the promotional movies, but also in the print advertisements of the universities in Turkey (Atabek & Atabek, 2015). The second most accentuated strategy in promotional movies is the social and sporting facilities. This strategy accounts for student clubs, sporting events, social events, cultural events, and social centers on the campuses of the universities. On the other hand, the scholarship and dormitory facilities strategy is the less accentuated one. Furthermore, the public universities hardly accentuate the scope of this strategy.



Graphic 1. Comparing the Positioning Strategies of Public and Foundation Universities

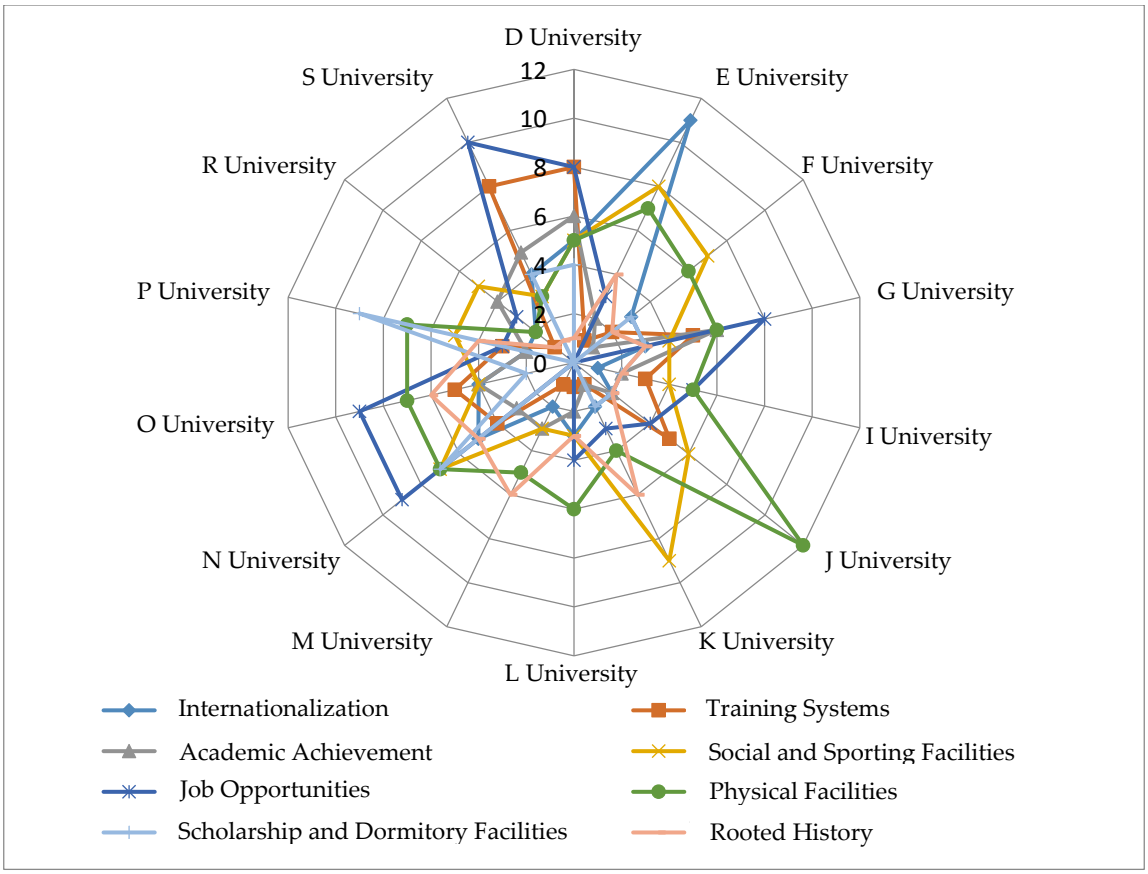
The Graphic above illustrates the differences between public and foundation universities' strategies based on the means of codes for each strategy. Findings indicate that public universities mostly engaged in the internationalization strategy, academic achievement strategy, and rooted history strategy. A possible explanation for this might be that all three public universities included in the research are leading universities in academic achievement and all three universities were founded in the Ottoman Empire era in Turkey. Furthermore, the academic achievement and rooted history are

particularly advantageous to these three public universities getting both internationally accredited and bilateral student/staff exchange agreements with universities in various countries compared to foundation universities. This might be an explanation for why state universities accentuate internationalization more than foundation universities. The physical facilities strategy and social and sporting facilities strategy were engaged in equally by both public and foundation universities. However, the scholarship and dormitory facilities strategy and job opportunities strategy are applied by foundation universities more than public universities. The result may be explained by the fact that students at foundation universities pay high tuition fees whereas students at public universities pay no tuition fees in Turkey. Also, foundation universities announce lots of scholarships to students under different names in their promotional movies in order to change this negative situation to its advantage.



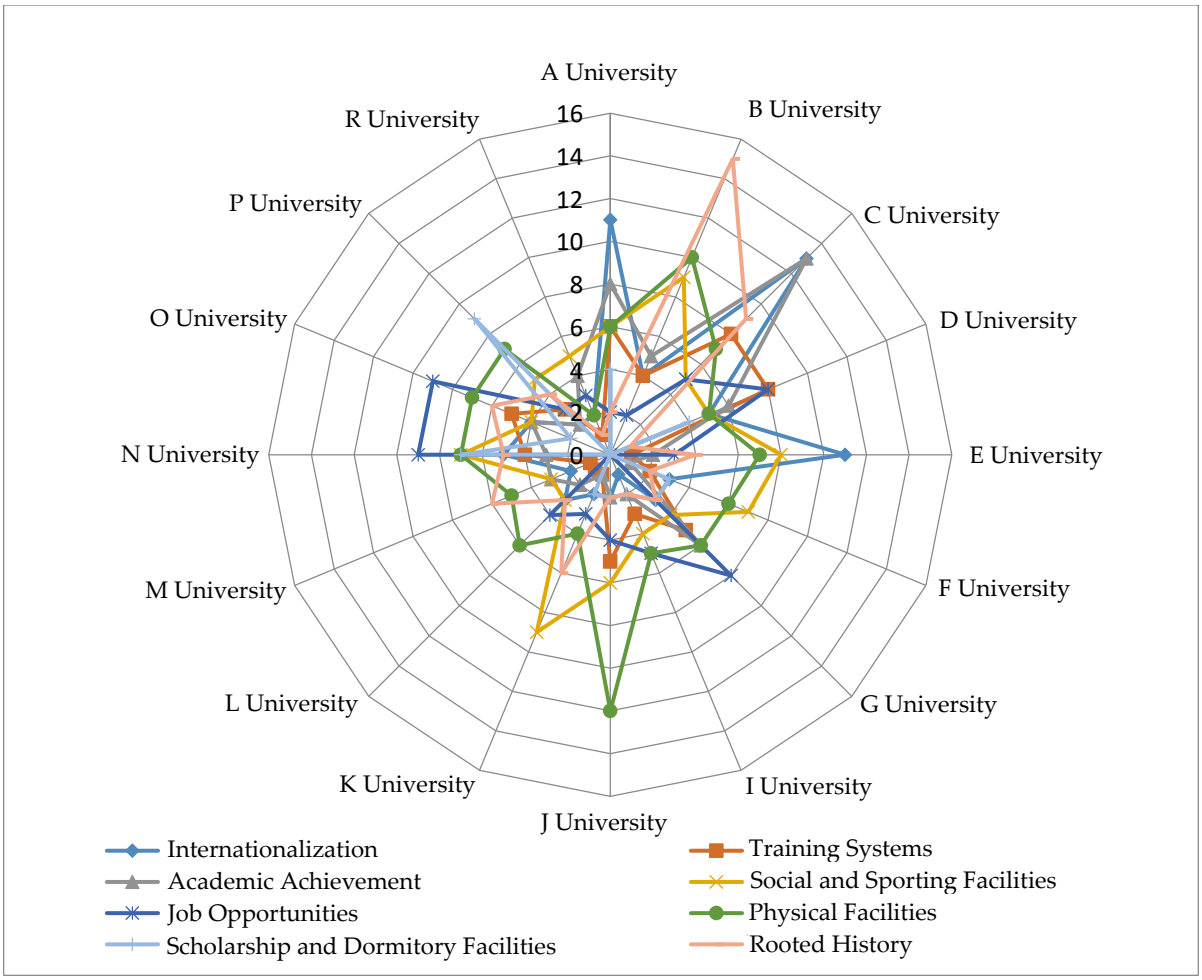
Graphic 2. Comparison of the Positioning Strategies of the Public Universities

Graphic 2 compares the strategies of the public universities included the research. Internationalization was the most accentuated attribute in the promotional movie of A University. Furthermore, academic achievement, physical facilities, social and sporting facilities and training systems were quite highlighted on the promotional movie of the university. The rooted history of B University was mostly accentuated in its promotional video whereas physical facilities and social and sporting facilities are pretty emphasized. Internationalization, academic achievement and rooted history were the most accentuated strategies in the promotional movie of the C University. As can be seen from the graphic above, rooted history and job opportunities were the less accentuated attributes in promotional videos of the public universities. Consequently, from the graph above, we can say that A University positioned itself on internationalization and academic achievement, B University positioned itself on rooted history, physical facilities and social and sporting facilities, C University positioned itself on internationalization and academic achievement.



Graphic 3. Comparison of the Positioning Strategies of the Foundation Universities

Graphic 3 compares the strategies of the foundation universities included the research. It can be seen from the graphic that some foundation universities focused on a few positions more than others, whereas some of them emphasized all attributions equally in their promotional movies. The promotional movie of D University highlighted the training system and job opportunities, although it includes lots of attributes. The promotional movie of E University emphasized mostly internationalization whereas social and sporting facilities and physical facilities came in next place. The physical facilities strategy was more accentuated in the promotional video of J University whereas social and sporting facilities was more emphasized in the promotional video of K University. The job opportunities strategy was more accentuated in the promotional movies of the G, N, O, and S universities. The promotional movies of R and M universities emphasized all attributions equally. Physical facilities and social and sporting facilities were more accentuated by almost all universities. Academic achievement which was generally more accentuated by the public universities was less emphasized in the promotional videos of the foundation universities.



Graphic 4. The Positioning Map of Universities in Istanbul

Graphic 4 illustrates the positioning strategies of the universities involved in the research application. The findings show us that 15 universities are engaged in one or more positions whereas two universities accentuated all positions equally. Internationalization was accentuated by A, C, and E universities; academic achievements was accentuated by A and C universities; job opportunities was accentuated by D, G, N, O, and S universities; scholarship and dormitory facilities was accentuated by P and O universities; training systems was accentuated by C, D, and S universities; social and sporting facilities was accentuated B, E, F, K, and N universities; physical facilities was accentuated by B, E, J, N, O, and P universities; rooted history was accentuated by B and C universities more than other strategies.

Conclusion

Eight different positioning strategies which universities might engage in to make themselves distinct from each other were identified through their promotional videos. These strategies are internationalization, training systems, academic achievement, social and sporting facilities, job opportunities, physical facilities, scholarship and dormitory facilities and rooted history. These positioning strategies which have been generated by categorizing the codes into the themes are similar to ones which were pointed out in prior studies in the literature. For example, universities may position themselves on service quality according to Lowry and Owens (2001); scholarship opportunities or campus life quality which stands for dormitory facilities, campus facilities, and entertainment facilities according to Judson et al. (2006) and Duarte et al. (2010); quality of institution, job opportunities after graduation, and recognition in a major according to Baker et al. (1996); apart from the note above, price and geographic location according to Kemp et al. (1998); learning environment, career commitments and cultural integration according to Megan et al. (2011); rooted history and prestige or the majors at which they are leaders in according to Harsha and Shah (2011). Furthermore, factors which affect choices of the prospective students, who are the most prior target of the marketing activities of the university, must be taken into consideration. The rewards taken by the university, the opportunity to easily find a good job after graduation, career opportunities and reputation of the university, are the factors which affect choice of prospective students (Chapleo, 2005; Niculescu, 2006; Carvalho & de Oliveira Mota, 2010). Additionally, facilities, buildings, natural environment, accessibility, and attractiveness of the campuses of the university affect choices of prospective students (Erdal, 2001). All these factors that affect the choices of prospective students are also similar to the strategies identified in this research.

The results indicate that the physical facilities and social and sporting facilities were the most accentuated strategies in the promotional movies of the universities. This result is comparable to results of the research made by Atabek and Atabek (2015) to investigate printed advertisements of the universities. According to the results on paper by Atabek and Atabek (2015), the campus facilities and the infrastructure are visually the most accentuated feature in the printed advertisement of the university. In addition, it was determined that positioning strategies identified in this research overlap with main slogans identified by Atabek and Atabek (2015) in advertisements of the universities in terms of internationalization, job opportunities, academic achievements, and scholarship and dormitory facilities, but there are differences in the order of the accentuation of these attributes of positioning.

The positioning map of the 17 universities in Istanbul was generated. The positioning map indicates that 15 universities in the sample engaged in positioning strategies and two of them did not have a clear strategy. Findings highlight that the internationalization strategy is applied by three universities; the academic achievement strategy is applied by two universities; the job opportunities after graduation strategy is applied by five universities; the scholarship and dormitory facilities strategy is applied by two universities; the training system strategy is applied by three universities; the social and sporting facilities strategy is applied by five universities; the physical facilities strategy is applied by six universities, and the rooted history strategy is applied by two universities. A positioning strategy helps a university to convey to its stakeholders, especially prospective students, what it is and what it stands for (Lowry & Owens, 2001), and thereby it reduces perceived risk of its prospective students (Beneke, 2010). Applying a particular positioning strategy in an increasing competitive environment among the universities makes it easier to create a distinct image in the minds of its prospective students, staff, shareholders, and other stakeholders. A distinct image of a university affects the willingness of the qualified students and staff to choose the university, and it allows the university to get better access to financial resources (Ivy, 2001; Mount & Belanger, 2004; Chapleo, 2005; Carvalho & de Oliveira Mota, 2010). For this reason, universities that have not applied a positioning strategy are strongly recommended to develop one which makes it distinctive. Furthermore, it was also found that positioning strategies engaged by several universities did not

make them distinct from other universities. For example, six universities engaged in the physical facilities strategy and five universities engaged in the social and sporting facilities strategy. However, the aim of the positioning strategy is to be distinct from the competitor. Therefore, it can be suggested to universities that did not have a distinctive positioning strategy to review or to generate their strategy by using the positioning map in the paper. The universities must identify their strengths and weaknesses compared to their competitors and base on their positioning strategies on their strengths (Bauerly & Tripp, 1997). Taken together, these results suggest that universities must identify a position which is associated with its strength against its competitors, which is important for target students, academics, and financial resources, and they must develop their positioning strategy based on this position.

Findings indicate that public universities included in the research did not apply the scholarship and dormitory facilities strategy and the job opportunities strategy. Furthermore, the public universities engaged in the internationalization strategy, academic achievement strategy, and rooted history strategy more than the foundation universities. Besides, both the public universities and the foundation universities generally accentuated the physical facilities and social and sporting facilities in their promotional videos. However, the scholarship and dormitory facilities strategy and job opportunities strategy are applied by foundation universities more than public universities. These results contrast with the results of the Entrepreneurial and Innovative University Index prepared by the Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology (BSTB, 2015). The entrepreneurship and innovativeness of the universities was measured by a five-dimensional scale which consists of 23 indicators in the research of the ministry. These five dimensions are scientific and technological research competence, intellectual property pool, cooperation and interaction, entrepreneurship and innovation culture, and economic contribution and commercialization. The indicators in the first three of these dimensions are directly associated with the academic achievement whereas indicators in the other two dimensions are indirectly associated with it. There were one public and two foundation universities in Istanbul, and they were included this research from 1-5 in the list of the ministry. Also, there were one public and two foundation universities in Istanbul, and they were included this research from 6-10 in the list of the ministry. Nevertheless, contrary to expectations based on results of the research of the ministry, physical facilities, job opportunities and social and sporting facilities are more accentuated than the academic achievements in the promotional movies of the foundation universities.

A, B, and C Universities are public universities, and others are foundation universities in the research. A University engaged in internationalization; B University engaged in rooted history, and C University engaged in internationalization and academic achievements. An important practical implication that can be based on this result is that the public universities strived to be distinct from competitors in Istanbul, are suggested to position themselves on job opportunities or scholarship and dormitory facilities. Internationalization was engaged in by one; job opportunities was engaged in by five; scholarship and dormitory facilities was engaged in by two; training systems was engaged in by two; social and sporting facilities was engaged in by five, and physical facilities was engaged in by five of the foundation universities. This result indicates that positioning strategies of some foundation universities did not make them distinct from other foundation universities. It can be suggested to these foundation universities that did not have a distinctive positioning strategy, to review or to generate their strategy by using the positioning map in the paper. None of the foundation universities positioned themselves on rooted history. It can be also suggested to a foundation university to engage in rooted history to be distinct from the competitors.

The generalizability of these results is subject to two limitations. Firstly, the data were only generated from promotional videos. Secondly, visual presentation was mostly preferred rather than verbal or written expression in some promotional movies. It is recommended for researchers to use various resources to generate the research data for further research on this subject. Furthermore, including the point of view of the university administrators may provide different contributions to the subject. Besides, measuring the effect of the positioning strategies which universities engaged in on the attitude of its shareholders might be an important research subject. So researchers doing research on this subject, are recommended to take this information into consideration.

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