Katarzyna Kowalska-Jarnot*

Selected methods
of studying a college's image

1. Introduction

The contemporary education market in Poland is shaped, among others, by two important phenomena. The first of them is demographic decline, resulting in fewer and fewer students. The other is Poland's EU membership, which has provided Polish high school graduates with a possibility to study at European colleges. As a result, most Polish colleges have more places available than candidates, and potential students can choose which college they want to study at. In such a situation, image and reputation are becoming increasingly significant, and next to price they appear to be the main factor influencing the decision. As shown in Dowling (2001) strong, positive image provides a number of tangible benefits to a college including appropriate positioning on buyers' perception map, forming strong bonds with students and employees and building a relationship with the environment based on trust and credibility. It significantly reduces the risk for the service buyer, since a recognizable image is a kind of a guarantee of the right choice of studies at a particular college. Consequently, colleges are taking action to create a desired image and on this basis shaping their strategies for functioning and development. It is a multifaceted process because image creation affects the quality of an entire company. There are close ties between intangible assets. Image or reputation do not exist in isolation from the institution with which they are associated. In fact, they constitute the last link in the process, which begins with the definition of the organizational values and philosophy, a properly formulated mission, the strategy derived from it, leadership activity and appropriate actions in the area of human capital. Therefore, they result from managing a college in a way that is consistent with its goals and identity and are eventually reflected in the recipients' perception. As Black (2005) says, identity can be defined as

* College of Economic and Computer Sciences, Cracow, e-mail: kkowalska@wsei.edu.pl.

a composition of various factors derived from management style, business, history, philosophy, strategy, employee behaviour, quality control and culture. In other words, the selection of the discriminants is not limited. The only criterion is their purposefulness and contribution to achieving the ultimate goals of the identity strategy, which are image, credibility and reputation. In this approach, the image is a projection of identity among its target groups or a mental representation of the organization in the minds of recipients (Altkorn 2004). Reputation, in turn, is a qualified form of image. It has the characteristics of a certain durability, higher than in the case of an image. The buyer will expect an organization with a particular reputation to act in a predictable manner, in accordance with a clearly established imperative. Therefore, the condition for having a positive reputation is reliability and the same unchanging standard of functioning. The effect of good reputation is the credibility of the organization among the recipients. One of the elements which distinguishes reputation from image is the time of creation. According to Zarębska (2006) reputation is thus "an assessment of the consistency in the communication of an organization's qualities in the long term." Due to this, the building blocks of a college's identity and its image consist of its key distinguishing features such as: educational offer, quality of the educational service, organizational culture, quality of communication, international cooperation, relations with employees, visual identity or individual sets of competences such as student service, lecturers' competences and others. Effective influence of a college on how it is perceived by its stakeholders requires systematic image research. Given the heterogeneous structure of image, this research should be comprehensive and involve the study of individual distinguishing features. The purpose of this paper is to propose selected research methods that may be applicable in this field.

2. Objectives and areas of image research

Image research achieves some of principal objectives of a college. These include, among others:
- identifying the current image,
- degree of mastery of the college's own competences in the assessment of various stakeholder groups,
- comparing the college's image with the images of other colleges,
- determining the dynamics of the college's own competitive position against the background of competitors' position,
- creation of premises for activities improving the company's operations.

Below selected methods and research techniques are proposed to achieve the declared objectives (Tab. 1)

Table 1

Selected research methods and techniques used to achieve the specific goals of college image research

Objective of the image research	Selected research methods and techniques
Identification of the current image of the college	Qualitative research (FGI, IDI) Projection methods Chinese portrait Collage method Brandsights core PCD technique (perceptual circle diagram) Survey research Knowledge and kindness research Trommsdorf model Fishbein model Semantic profiling method Model I–D–U (importance–delivery–uniqueness)
The degree of own competence in the assessment of various stakeholders	Qualitative research Servqual analysis Mystery shopping CIT – critical incident technique Importance–Performance Analysis (i.a. IPA) Job satisfaction surveying methods (i.a. JCI)
Comparing the college's image with the images of other colleges	Perception maps Semantic profiling method
Determining the dynamics of the college's own competitive position against the background of competitors' position	Service position matrix compared to the competition Close and differential positioning
Creation of premises for activities improving the company's operations	Evaluation surveys (including post-training)
Research on the effectiveness of the college's PR activities	Media monitoring (clipping) Online image research

Source: author's own research

3. Qualitative research

At the image diagnosing stage, it is common to use the methods that collect information on attitudes towards the college, knowledge about it, associations related to it, recognition of its trademark and awareness of its services. These

tests are carried out using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research, focus group interviews in particular, helps to capture those aspects of the image that relate to emotions and attitudes. The form of the interview supports the associations research, during which questions such as "What do you associate the name of the college with?" or "Is the name suitable?" are asked. A variation of it is the test known as the **Chinese portrait**. The respondents are asked to describe the college as a completely different entity (e.g. as an animal, plant, car, etc.). This method employs the psychological transfer technique. The **collage method** is based on a team creation of an artistic composition and arranging pictures cut out from newspapers into an image which is then glued onto a large sheet of paper. The obtained piece allows us to capture associations that tend to escape during too careful intellectual processing. Similarly, in the **brandsights core** survey the respondents choose the image (among many others) that best reflects the college. The PCD technique (perceptual circle diagram) allows one to identify the structure of the image. The survey begins with an open question: "What factors make up the company's image?" The respondents receive a drawing of a circle divided into 12 parts and are asked to write down in the individual fields various factors which they are able to identify. Then, they rank individual factors and evaluate them by writing down marks outside the circle (e.g. $++$, $+, 0, -, -$). This makes it possible to distinguish the identity characteristics which are the most visible to the respondents and the emotional assessment related to them (Budzyński 2002).

It should be emphasized that qualitative techniques also pose some risks. The mere fact of the question being asked and the manner in which the questions are formed, as well as the circumstances in which they are asked, are not indifferent to the current opinions of the respondents. Even small differences in the way questions are formulated result in significant differences. Two identical answers provided to the same question do not mean that the attitude / support for the organization is identical for both of the respondents. As shown in Wójcik (2013) one may be real, the other may be an expression of striving for conformity

4. Quantitative research

Relatively simple methods of studying the image of a college include assessing the level of knowledge and attitude (favourability / friendliness) towards it using a 5-point Likert scale (Tab. 2).

If a respondent answers the first question (knowledge of the college) and ticks one of the first two answers (a and b), it means the task the organization

is facing is to build greater awareness. On the other hand, respondents who are familiar with the company (answers c, d, e) can then be asked using the favourability scale about their attitude towards the university. Answers a and b on the favourability scale indicate a significant problem of the negative image of the college and suggest the need for further in-depth research that would provide detailed information on the image components assessed negatively (Kotler 2005).

Table 2

Sample scale of awareness and favourability towards a college

An example of the awareness scale	An example of the favourability scale

1. My knowledge of college X:
   a) I'm completely unfamiliar with
   b) I've only heard of
   c) I know a little about
   d) I'm in a sense familiar with
   e) I'm well familiar with
	1. My attitude towards college x is:
	   a) very unfavourable
	   b) rather unfavourable
	   c) indifferent
	   d) rather favourable
	   e) very favourable

Source: author's own research

The Trommsdorf model, in turn, is a technique for collecting opinions based on direct questions (Tab. 3). It allows to form an opinion about the examined college, it also makes it possible to assess to what extent this opinion is consistent with visions of an ideal college and to what extent it deviates from them (Altkorn 2003).

Table 3

Trommsdorf model (sample question)

College X has good reputation.								
fully agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	fully disagree
An ideal college is one with good reputation.								
fully agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	fully disagree

Source: author's own research

The Fishbein model is similar to the above. In this case, the measurement is based on a subjective assessment of the probability of revealing a given feature and its significance for the respondent. Respondents must answer a range of similarly formed questions. The sum of the partial assessments makes up the overall image of an organization in the opinion of the study group (Tab. 4.).

Table 4

Fishbein Model (sample question)

Please rate the probability of the following: When choosing a college, relaying on its reputation is for you:								
highly likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	highly unlikely
very important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not important at all

Source: author's own research based

In the area of organization image, diagnosing semantic profiling is a commonly used method. The questionnaire consists of a number of bipolar (usually seven-grade) scales marked with opposite terms (antonyms) that could describe an organization. The respondent marks a value on the numerical scale, which according to them reflects the intensity of a given feature. Wójcik (2013) underlines that in creating a semantic profile, it is possible to distinguish the following stages:
  – identifying, as a result of previous tests, (usually qualitative) the criteria / characteristics that a given target group is guided by when assessing the image of an organization;
  – opposing answers are created for selected (most frequently given) criteria, e.g. "renowned / not renowned" or "traditional / modern" college;
  – the researcher may attempt to reduce the number of evaluation criteria following the recommendation of the method creator C.E. Osgood, who named three basic criteria and their corresponding scales: rating (good-bad), intensity (strong-weak), activity (active-passive); however, as noted above, this is only applicable when necessary, which means it applies as long as it meets the objectives of the study and the specificity of the examined organization (Altkorn 2003);
  – the respondent is asked to evaluate the subject of the image, but the questionnaire is arranged in such a way that the negative grades are not found in one group and the positive ones in the other one;
  – the average values from the responses related to individual criteria are connected by a line that is intended to illustrate the overall image of the organization under study among the group of respondents;
  – at the end, the discrepancy between the groups of respondents is identified (in the case when they represented different target groups).

Basically, according to Mazurek-Łopacińska (2008) the number of degrees on the scale should not exceed 7 so as not to make it difficult for respondents to assess the intensity of a given feature. As J. Altkorn states, for this reason multistage scales are rather rarely used. The exceptions involve the case in which fragmentary images are used (fragmentary assessment of a given function) or one in which

assessed features have a large range and defining the degree of their intensity is not difficult (e.g. financial resources, market share).

The results obtained in the study allow to identify the gap between the level of assessment of a given feature expected by the organization and the rating issued by respondents. The further stage of image designing requires asking the following questions for each of the criteria:

– what contribution to overall image improvement would filling the gap to the indicated level provide?
– what strategy could be used to fill the gap?
– what would be the cost of filling the gap?
– how long would it take to fill the gap?

The profile can also be used to capture the differences between the following images: real – mirror – optimal and desirable. Such research conducted inside and outside a college allows you to "photograph" the image in various target groups, and then compare it with the desired image that the college is heading to. The distance between these images (gap width) can be reduced gradually by designating smaller sections to change, the so-called optimal images, which are possible to achieve within a given period of time. In the case of image strategy such a policy of "small jumps" is optimal. It facilitates more thorough control of the process and does not result in discomfort related to rapid changes among the recipients.

Another use of the profile is to compare the ratings of several competing organizations in terms of the same image attributes. It makes it possible to assess your position in relation to the competitors on each of the compared fields. Also in this case, the decisions related to levelling of the gap will be based on the composition of attributes in each of the compared organizations. If the college gets worse results than the competitors in the aspects which are not crucial in its case, and better ones in the aspects on which it builds its identity and image, then the research effect will not constitute a premise for change (Fig. 1).
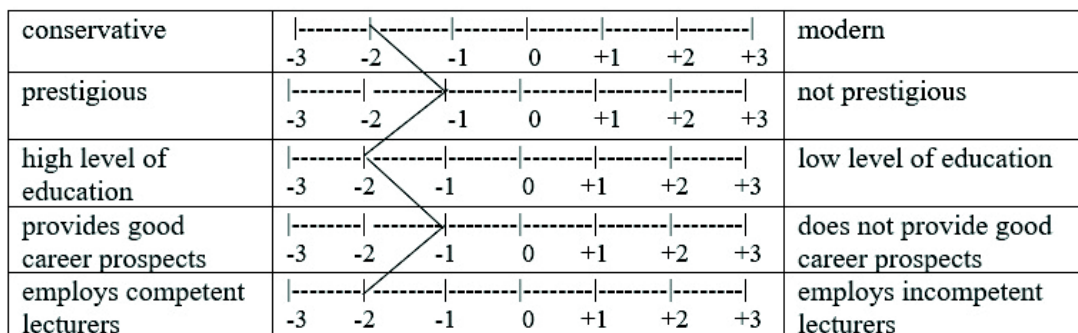

Figure 1. College image research. Semantic differentiation profile (fragment)

Source: author's own research based

5. Assessment of the individual components of a college's image

Image research can also take advantage of the I–D–U model (Importance–Delivery–Uniqueness) developed by J.R. Rossiter and L. Percy (1996). It involves assessing selected features of a college in terms of three main criteria. These include the criterion of importance of a given feature, the criterion of the degree of its implementation (delivery) and its uniqueness. In a way, it makes it possible to evaluate a given attribute in a three-dimensional manner. In the result table presented below, a college's extensive education program has been rated quite high on the importance scale and low on the uniqueness scale. Competent staff including acclaimed scientists, well-known figures and authorities was in turn highly rated in terms of both importance and uniqueness. This clearly indicates the distinctive value of this attribute. The performance marks estimate the degree to which a college fulfils the promise related to particular attributes, and they provide a vital indication for corrective action (Tab. 5).

Table 5

Example results obtained in the I–D–U study

Selected feature	Importance (I)	Delivery (D)	Uniqueness (U)
Extensive education program	6.4	6.1	3.8
Renown lecturers (acclaimed, authorities)	8.8	7.1	9.0

Source: author's own study based on research carried out for the author's doctoral dissertation, 2012

Creating perception maps is another method of testing the image and competitive position of a college in the awareness of stakeholders. A perception map is a two-dimensional coordinate system whose axes correspond to the adopted assessment measures. These measures constitute defined attributes (selected features) of the college, such as attractiveness of the offer, quality of education, prestige etc.

As shown in Daszkiewicz (2008) due to the approach used in creating maps, we distinguish:
- methods based on previously identified assessment dimensions, which include factor analysis, discriminant analysis and correspondence analysis methods;
- methods not based on pre-defined assessment criteria, i.e. scaling methods.

The methods mentioned above differ in the ways of constructing assessment dimensions. Using the first approach, respondents assess a college according to pre-defined measures, and the grades obtained are later aggregated into more general measures (for example the quality of the dean's office's work). On the other hand, the purpose of scaling methods is to determine the position of the image of a given company as compared to images of the competitors, especially close ones, in the stakeholder's minds (these methods allow the so-called summary techniques, where image is assessed without a list of previously defined factors and all attributes are assessed collectively).

Out of the mentioned methods of creating perception maps, the most commonly used one is factor analysis. When using the factor method, respondents usually use 2 or 3 aggregate measures. This analysis determines whether the image of a college in terms of the tested attributes is better or worse than the average image in a given group (it assesses the organization in comparison to the whole community).

A perception map makes it possible for various groups of stakeholders to assess the degree of competence (Fig. 2).
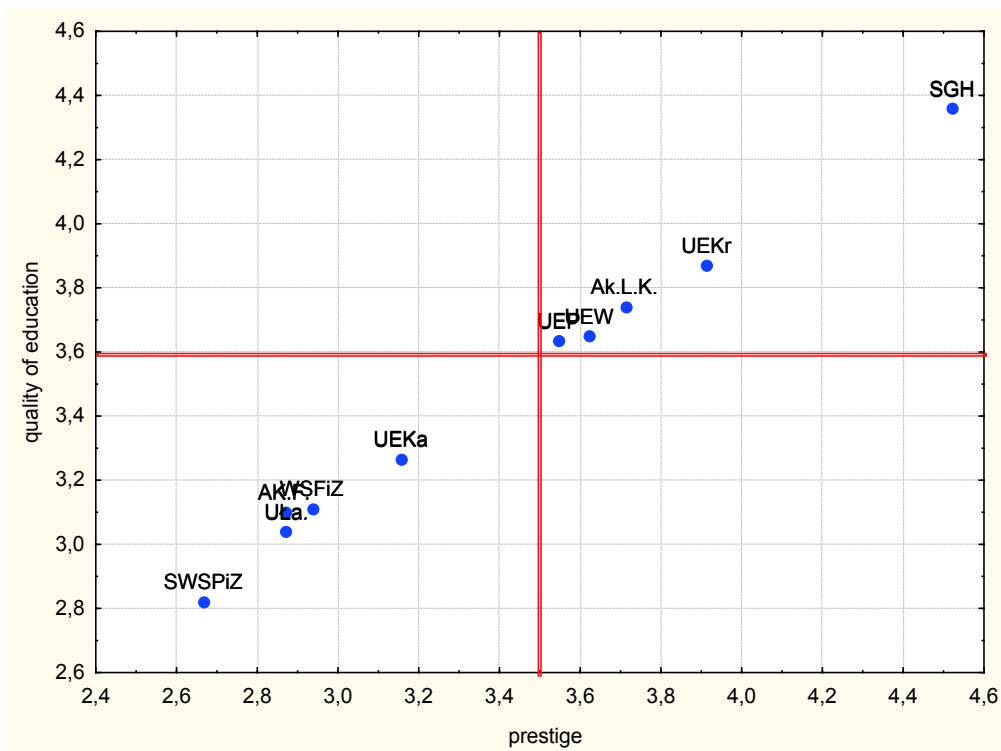

Figure 2. A two-dimensional perception map of 10 selected economic colleges in Poland – an assessment of two factors: prestige and quality of education

Source: own study based on research carried out for the author's doctoral dissertation, 2012

6. Education quality research

An important component taken into account when assessing the image of a college is the study of the quality of the educational service as assessed by students (Helgesen and Nesset 2007). The SERVQUAL analysis is among the methods which may be used in this case. The basis of this method assumes that the student (client) has specific expectations towards the service. They result from their previous experience, knowledge and information. When the service is consumed, these expectations are confronted with reality, i.e. with the perception of the actual reception of the service. As a result, a gap representing the difference between the degree to which the expectations were met, and the perception of the service is created. The gap width provides the information about the degree of customer dissatisfaction. High quality of customer satisfaction is thus a situation where no gaps are found. Therefore, it is necessary to strive to reach total quality (TQ). The authors of the method, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, developed a model of five gaps in service quality. According to the servqual method (2019) these are the following:
- Gap 1 – the discrepancy between what the management and the customers consider to be important in reaching product satisfaction,
- Gap 2 – the discrepancy between the product concept and its specific implementation in the project,
- Gap 3 – the discrepancy between a product design and its actual material form,
- Gap 4 – the discrepancy between a product and the advertising promises related to it,
- Gap 5 – the discrepancy between the customers' expectations and their perception of the product.

The size of all the gaps listed above has an impact on the quality of the service provided, but only in the last case is the actual customer reception of the service assessed. Servqual analysis is used to examine the last, fifth gap. The questionnaire consists of a list of features related to the quality of the service. The first column contains the rating scale of the desired level of features of an "ideal" service expected by customers. In the second column, the respondent assesses the implementation of these features in reality. As suggested by the authors of the methods, the features relevant to a given service are grouped according to several dimensions as follows:
- specificity – physical parameters, equipment and staff appearance,
- service reliability – ability to deliver the service carefully and accurately,
- willingness to cooperate – readiness to help recipients and provide them with punctual service,

- confidence – knowledge and kindness of employees and their ability to inspire trust,
- empathy – considerate, personalized service that the organization provides to the customers.

Due to its universal character and the possibility of using criteria typical to each industry, the SERVQUAL method has also found application in investigating of educational services quality. In the literature, it is possible to find publications on the effects of using the method, including cases of language schools (Nierzwicki and Rudzik 2003) and colleges (Targaszewska 2013). Below is an example of a fragment of the questionnaire used in the author's own research carried out at 18 colleges of economics in Poland in 2012 (Tab. 6) The questionnaire includes 22 statements related to each of the five dimensions of the educational service. The questionnaire consisted of two parts and the statements were repeated in each of them. In the first one, students rated their expectations on a scale of 1–7, in the other one – they rated the actual implementation of the statement.

Table 6

Examples of statements that may constitute criteria for assessing the educational services quality using the Servqual scale (a fragment of a sample questionnaire)

The criterion	I rate my expected degree of satisfaction as	I rate my current degree of satisfaction as
Lecturers' knowledge	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Accessible way of transferring knowledge	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
The usefulness of the transferred knowledge in future work	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Lecturers' sense of duty	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Kindness of lecturers towards students	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Individual approach to a student	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Share of practical classes	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Modern didactic methods (e.g. e-learning)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Availability of the dean's office	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Attractive college facilities (e.g. teaching rooms, library)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Appearance of college administrative staff	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Source: author's own research

According to Kieżel (2008) there are many critics of the Servqual analysis. They point out that individual event-statements in research may be understood in different ways by the subjects of the survey and that it is difficult to remain unambiguous. Therefore, the number of points on the measuring scale is not particularly important, as both the expectations and the perception are not precisely defined, and each client can interpret the content differently and quite freely. In addition, a creator of the survey to some extent implies their own perception of the services. Some researchers are of the opinion that in research on the quality of services it is enough to measure only the segment related to product perception, and it is superfluous to measure the expectations. Such an assumption gives basis to the Servpref scale. It is a scale that consists of 22 statements measuring only the perception of a product (Sagan 2019).

Another, albeit quite controversial, method of testing the quality of service is **Mystery Shopping**, which involves observing a provided service by unbiased, independent "agents". The observation is carried out in concealment (i.e. an employee of the organization does not know that they are the object of the observation). The agent uses the services as a regular customer, and then completes the survey assessing specific aspects of the service. As shown in Dziadkowiec (2006) despite the obvious ethical doubts related to the secret nature of the observations (often interpreted as a lack of trust towards employees), the literature emphasizes the benefits of this research method. The introduction of an independent agent is designed to eliminate the factors of "emotion and acting in the heat of the moment," which a customer may be vulnerable to. The agent is an external, impartial person who observes subsequent elements of the service in accordance with a previously prepared questionnaire. On the other hand, the employee does not know that they are being watched so they do not try to behave differently than usual. After the examination, the MS agent completes the survey. The criteria included in the survey should be adapted to the needs of the organization under study.

In the case of higher education, it is recommendable to carry out MS research at a recruitment point, where independent, impartial persons claiming to be potential clients check the approach of the recruiters (Kulig 2006). Considering the fact that recruitment departments more and more frequently function (should function) as efficient sales departments, it is possible to examine whether the approach to the client is appropriate and professional. The previously identified relevant quality factors for this service will constitute a research "guide" (Tab. 7).

One of the research techniques used within Mystery Shopping is the so-called secret contact, which is based on an analysis of the communication system (Pluta--Olearnik 2008). Researchers contact the recruitment department using the available communication channels (telephone, e-mail, website, instant messengers, conventional mail) and examine both the patency of communication channels (e.g.

connection speed) and the behaviour of the college employees (e.g. quickness or quality of response). The method has many advantages, although its opponents raise allegations which are mainly related to its secret nature.

Table 7

Criteria for the evaluation of first contact employees

Aspect assessed	Assessment criteria
First impression	number of first contact staff members required appearance of the employees waiting time for service ability to meet individual requirements
Customer service skills	ability to listen asking questions to identify customer needs showing understanding
Communicated knowledge about the product	knowledge about the products sold knowledge of the sales policy technical specifications knowledge ability to answer product related questions willingness to search for information
Interpersonal skills	confidence building ability to communicate in a clear way establishing and maintaining eye contact empathy
Product recommendation	tailoring the offered solutions to individual needs suitability of the proposed solutions ability to present product advantages
Sales strategy	enthusiasm in presenting offers ability to encourage purchase ability to effectively present various options general professionalism

Source: (Finn 2001)

Job Satisfaction Inventory. Satisfaction surveys have a wider application apart from research among customers. From the point of view of a college's identity and image, its employees appear to be an extremely important target group. In this case, these are the employees of administrative departments and lecturers. Certain foreign colleges consciously create an image of an excellent employer, remembering that an employee is the most immediate "brand ambassador". In Poland, the situation in this respect is quite complex. A large number of universities, low salaries of teaching staff and the demographic decline do not encourage

investing in staff, especially in the case of smaller and non-public institutions where the decrease of demand will mean a struggle for survival. Despite this, it is impossible to build a lasting competitive advantage on the market without the support of employees (Mruk 2004). In turn, efficient management of staff requires feedback on their satisfaction with their work. Acquiring the information in this case may take the form of an internal communication audit conducted in an informal or formal way using group and individual interviews (in particular with regard to professors). It is also possible to use a questionnaire. The JCI scale presented below can be used in education, for example for the purpose of examining administrative employees (Tab. 8). The JCI scale consists of 4 dimensions of job satisfaction defined by 14 Likert scale statements:

- information flow (items 1–4),
- diversity and sense of freedom (items 5–10),
- achieving and carrying out tasks (items 11–12),
- salary and a sense of security (items 13–14).

The satisfaction score results from summing up marks and calculating average scores in employee surveys for each dimension separately.

Table 8

A sample JCI questionnaire for colleges

1. I am satisfied with the information I receive from my supervisor about my tasks	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
2. I receive enough information about my tasks at work	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
3. I receive sufficient feedback about the quality of my work	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
4. The college offers sufficient self-assessment possibilities	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
5. I am happy with the variety of activities in my job	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
6. I am happy to have sufficient sense of freedom in what I do	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
7. I am happy with the possibilities of communicating with others	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
8. Variety of work is wide enough	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
9. I have a lot of freedom in what I do	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Table 8 cont.

10. My work gives me room for independence in thinking and acting	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
11. I have the possibility to carry out tasks from the beginning to end	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
12. My work provides me with a full possibility to bring the tasks that I start to the end	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
13. I am happy with the salary that I receive for my work	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
14. I have a sense of security at work	Fully agree Fully disagree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Source: (Sagan 2019)

Evaluation surveys. Typical methods of improving competences used in higher education include audits and evaluation surveys carried out after the end of a series of lectures, seminars or trainings. They contain sets of questions related to students' satisfaction with the quality of classes conducted by a particular lecturer. Thanks to the cyclical repetition of questions, research makes it possible to observe any changes in the work of teachers. Sample questions are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

A fragment of a sample evaluation survey examining classes as assessed by students

Questions	Fully disagree 1	Rather disagree 2	Difficult to say 3	Rather agree 4	Fully agree 5
The teacher has clearly specified the expected criteria for passing the subject					
Classes begin with defining a clear goal (what will be discussed, what is the intended effect)					
The schedule is consistent with the syllabus					
The content is presented in an interesting way					

Table 9 cont.

Questions	Fully disagree 1	Rather disagree 2	Difficult to say 3	Rather agree 4	Fully agree 5
Classes are held on time (start and end)					
The form of classes is attractive (the teacher uses case studies, references to history, current events, relevant examples, discussions)					
The teacher allows questions during lectures and provides answers to them					
Classes are conducted in an orderly manner – its individual parts are related and purposeful					
The teacher presents the content in a communicative way (clear, accessible)					

Source: author's own data

7. Examination of the effectiveness of a college's PR activities

Public relations involves "building good relationships with various groups that may have an impact on the functioning of the organization by obtaining favourable publications and other information in the media, creating a positive company image and responding in an appropriate way to unfavourable information and events related to the organization". Thus, it is about earning social acceptance for the college through conscious and long-term building of a positive image. The most important aspects of college PR activities include:
- media relations,
- relations with employees (internal PR),
- e-PR (image-building activities on the web),
- visual identity.

Research on the effectiveness of PR activities partly overlaps with the methods listed above (qualitative research, college recognition research, employee

satisfaction survey). However, it is worth supplementing them with research methods typical to this field. They include:

– website audit,
– audit of the college's image in social media,
– qualitative analysis of content in the Internet (publications, mentions, opinions about the college, range and interaction),
– audit of image materials,
– examination of the college logo's recognition,
– other.

In the Internet age, it has become necessary to take into account a positive online college image. The Internet is a place of unrestricted exchange of opinions, offering the possibility of commenting and rating, while discussion forums, opinion-forming portals, social media and many other online channels have become a place where people share everything, including their experiences with brands. This means that image crises can spread much faster and be more difficult to control.

8. Summary

Building a positive image and reputation is an important strategy for the permanent university distinction in the education market in Poland. Although difficult to manage and measure, they are an important opportunity to gain a competitive advantage because they are unique, difficult to imitate and increase the university's chances of attracting more students. Continuous and systematic monitoring of image activities is important for several reasons. First of all, without ongoing monitoring, the probability of achieving the goals is reduced. Secondly, a college operating on such a demanding market must handle rapidly occurring changes and monitor their impact on the implementation of tasks. It may happen that between the formulation of an objective and its achievement appear circumstances which interfere with the implementation process or even undermine its legitimacy. Thirdly, the control allows you to optimize costs and eliminate unnecessary expenses. Finally, it allows one to detect and eliminate errors that could accumulate resulting in serious problems. Certainly, the most important reason is the very nature of the image itself. It is a changeable, vulnerable to influence phenomenon, and without ongoing observation it quickly crosses the boundaries of the assumed framework. The process of image (reputation) control is based on obtaining information from key stakeholders. For this purpose, a wide range of tools is used, of which several are described above.

References

[1] Altkorn, J. (2004) Wizerunek firmy, Dąbrowa Górnicza: Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu.

[2] Black, S. (2005) Public relations, Warszawa: Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Grupa Wolters Kluwer.

[3] Budzyński, W. (2002) Zarządzanie wizerunkiem firmy, Warszawa: SGH.

[4] Dziadkowiec, J. (2006) Wybrane metody badania jakości usług, *Zeszyty Naukowe*, nr 717, Kraków: Akademia Ekonomiczna, pp. 23–35.

[5] Dowling, G.R. (2001), Creating corporate reputation, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[6] Finn, A. (2001) 'Mystery Shopper Benchmarking of Durable-goods Chains and Stores', *International Journal of Service Research*, No. 3.

[7] Helgesen, O. and Nesset, E. (2007), 'Images, Satisfaction and Antecedents: Drivers of Student Loyalty? A Case Study of Norwegian University College', *Corporate Reputation Review*, vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 38–59.

[8] Jedynak, P. (2010) 'The customer satisfaction survey process as the source of the organization's knowledge', in Jedynak, P. (ed.) Wiedza współczesnych organizacji. Wybrane problemy zarządzania, Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ.

[9] Kotler, P. (2005) Marketing, 14th edition, Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis.

[10] Kulig, A. (2006) 'Badania i analizy marketingowe w szkole wyższej', in Nowaczyk, G., Lisiecki, P. (eds) Marketingowe zarządzanie szkołą wyższą, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej.

[11] Mazurek-Łopacińska, K. (2008) Badania marketingowe: metody, nowe technologie, obszary aplikacji, Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne.

[12] Nierzwicki, W. and Rudzik, A. (2003), Pomiar jakości usług edukacyjnych metodą Servqual. *Edukacja Ustawiczna Dorosłych*, Nr 2, pp. 72–77.

[13] Sagan, A. (2019) Skale jako podstawowy instrument pomiaru w badaniach satysfakcji i lojalności, [Online], Available: http://media.statsoft.nazwa.pl/_old_dnn/downloads/skale.pdf [14 Nov. 2019].

[15] Servqual Method, [Online], Available: https://www.biostat.com.pl/metoda-servqual.php [15 Nov. 2019]

[16] Targaszewska, M. (2013), Metody pomiaru jakości kształcenia na uczelniach wyższych, *Zeszyty Naukowe UEK*, Nr 923, pp. 59–71.

[17] Wójcik, K. (2013), Public relations, Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer.

[18] Zarębska, A. (2006), 'Reputacja firmy – efekt zarządzania tożsamością organizacyjną'. *Przegląd Organizacji*, nr 4, pp. 19–22.