ISSN 2029-7564 (online)
SOCIALINĖS TECHNOLOGIJOS
SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES
2012, 2(2), p. 456–472

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION TO POTENTIAL STUDENTS USING WEB 2.0 ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

Choosing what to study for school graduates is a compound and multi-stage process (Chapman, 1981; Hossler et al., 1999; Brennan, 2001; Shankle, 2009). In the information retrieval stage, future students have to gather and assimilate actual information, form a list of possible higher education institutions. Nowadays modern internet technologies enable universities to create conditions for attractive and interactive information retrieval. User-friendliness and accessibility of Web 2.0-based environments attract more young people to search for information in the web. Western universities have noticed a great potential of Web 2.0 in information dissemination back in 2007. Meanwhile, Lithuanian universities began using Web 2.0 to assemble virtual communities only in 2010 (Valinevičienė, 2010).

***Purpose**—to disclose possibilities to present universities to school graduates in Web 2.0 environments.*

***Design/methodology/approach**—strategies of a case study by using methods of scientific literature analysis, observation and quantitative content analysis.*

***Findings**—referring to the information retrieval types and particularity of information*

ISSN 2029-7564 (online)
https://www.mruni.eu/lt/mokslo_darbai/st/apie_leidini/
https://www.mruni.eu/en/mokslo_darbai/st/apie_leidini/index.php

retrieval by school graduates disclosed in the analysis of scientific literature, it has been identified that 76 per cent of Lithuanian universities apply at least one website created on the basis of Web 2.0 technology for their official presentation. The variety of Web 2.0 being used distributes only from 1 to 6 different tools, while in scientific literature more possibilities to apply Web 2.0 environments can be found.

Research limitations/implications—*the empiric part of the case study has been contextualized for Lithuania; however, the theoretic construct of possibilities to present universities in Web 2.0 environments can be used for the analysis presentation of foreign universities in Web 2.0 environments.*

Practical implications—*the work can become the recommendation to develop possibilities for Lithuanian universities to be presented in Web 2.0 environments.*

Originality/Value—*possibilities to apply Web 2.0 environments at schools and universities have been analysed in different aspects of the application (administration of students' or pupils' activity, communication, collaboration, learning); there are the studies of Web 2.0 environments aimed to manage career of specialists. Meanwhile in the aspect of study choice process the possibilities of presenting universities in Web 2.0 environments have not been analysed.*

Keywords: *stages of study choice, information retrieval, school graduates, Web 2.0 environments, dissemination of universities*

Research type**:** *case study.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, universities, colleges and other institutions of higher education face national and international competition. Thus positioning and branding, traditionally applied in business, have become vital to universities as well. An increasing amount of literature on marketing of higher education (Chapleo, 2004; Jevons, 2006; Balmer and Liao, 2007; Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007; Vrontis et al., 2007; Waeraas and Solbakk, 2009; Wilkins and Epps, 2010; Priporas and Kamenidou, 2011) shows the importance and relevance of this topic. According to Chapleo et al. (2011), clear differentiation may help to attract academic staff and the most capable students, increase the institution-student match (Moogan, 2011), reduce barriers to entry as well as increase retention rates (Nemko, 2008). Thus universities need to be aware of the decision-making variables and identify the factors that influence student decision-making (Moogan, 2011). Furthermore, in order to communicate effectively with prospective students, they need to identify the information needs and preferred sources of information of their target market (de Jager and du Plooy, 2010).

Looking from the student-to-be graduate perspective today, choosing the "right" university becomes a very complex and critical task. Young people are being bombarded with commercial messages promoting educational institutions; on the other hand, the

information is more widely available, easier to access and helps to make informed decisions (de Jager and du Plooy, 2010). User-friendliness and accessibility internet environments attract more young people to search for information in the web. It enables universities to create conditions for attractive and interactive information retrieval.

Thus the **aim** of this article is to disclose possibilities to present universities to school graduates in Web 2.0 environments. The aim divides into several **goals**: 1) to disclose graduate students' decision-making process and basic choice factors of studies at universities; 2) to form main information blocks necessary for graduate decision-making while searching for the information on the Internet; 3) to highlight the possibilities provided by Web 2.0 webpages for dissemination of university information for prospective students. 4) to reveal the usage of Web 2.0 webpages by Lithuanian universities for information dissemination for prospective students; and 5) to provide recommendations for dissemination via Web 2.0 website. These goals are achieved by applying case study strategy and the analysis of scientific literature, **methods** of observation and quantitative content analysis.

The paper is divided into several parts. The theoretical part reveals the graduate students' decision-making process and basic choice factors of studies at universities followed by theoretical analysis of information that prospective students search on universities webpages and potential usage of Web 2.0 website for dissemination of university information. The empirical part provides the methodology of research and analysis of Web 2.0 webpages usage by Lithuanian universities for information dissemination for prospective students. Finally, conclusions, recommendations and references are provided.

2. Graduate Student Decision-Making Process

The choice of the further studies, according to many scholars (Hossler, 1999; Bren, 2001; Shankle, 2009), can be defined as a composite, multi-phase process. It is the process when a person wishes to continue further formal education after high school and makes a decision which higher education institution to choose for his/her further studies. Over the last few decades this problem has been researched by various authors from the United States (Chapman, 1981; Hossler and Gallagher 1987; Paulsen, 1990; Brennan, 2001). Later on, according to de Jager and du Plooy (2010), this research spread worldwide: in Great Britain (Moog et al., 2001), Australia (James, 2000), Belgium (Germeijs and Verschueren, 2007), Malaysia (Ariffina et al., 2008), Australia (James, 2000). Some studies analyse specific groups of students: international students (Chen and Zimitat, 2006), students from lower social class (Connor and Dewson, 2001), students from the provinces or remote areas (Chenoweth and Galliher, 2004).

According to Hossler et al. (1998), most studies aiming to perceive the processes of graduate decision-making grouped into several categories a) *sociological models*; b) *economic models*; c) *combined models*. No matter what model graduates apply while making the decision, still there are a few phases of decision-making process. Scholars

(Chapman, 1981; Jackson, 1982; Hanson and Litten, 1982; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Maring, 2006, etc.) emphasize various phases: identification of the need for further studies, information retrieval and processing, identification of alternatives and consideration, and choice. This article is based on a simplified model of decision-making process (Kotler, 1995; Hossler, 1987). According to this model, the graduate decision-making process depends on: predisposition (a strong inclination to follow a particular activity or career), information search, and choice-making.

This process most clearly appears in the last years of the school. In particular, a prospective student is the most active in collecting information required for decision-making during the last year of his/her studies at school (Hossler et al., 1998). According to scholars (Cosseria and Du Toit, 2002; Bacila, 2008; Saichaie, 2011) most of the students begin the search for the information on the further higher education a few years before graduation from the high school. In this phase students collect and assimilate the required information before considering various options and making a list of most appealing institutions (Evans and Chi, 2008). It is important to highlight that in the phase of information search graduates may collect information by applying several strategies and therefore act differently. Scholars (Yamamoto, 2006; Barber et al., 2009) distinguish two types of the search: internal and external search. It is important to emphasize the importance of external sources in graduate decision-making process as vital for information-based decisions. Therefore the paper provides the analysis of external information sources.

3. External Information Sources for Graduate Decision-Making

While discussing the importance of external information sources for graduate decision-making, Mentz and Whiteside (2003) state, that a graduate as a consumer chooses how and what information sources to use. While Lee and Morrish (2012) note that the prior information search experience may help the user to select the right information more easily. But in case the user did not have any previous experience, users are engaged in a large amount of information and thus selection of useful external information becomes more complicated.

Scholars (Strauss, 1998; Perna, 2005; Al-Yousef, 2009; de Jager and du Plooy, 2010) emphasize two types of external information sources:

1) *Personal/internal sources*—such as previously acquired personal experience, friends, family, career planning teachers, the reference group and opinion leaders

2) *Independent/external environmental sources*—such as media, government agencies and other organizations, the Internet and other consulting experts (Simões and Soares, 2010).

De Jager and du Plooy (2010) note that some external sources are more attractive to prospective students for collection of information than internal ones. Garma and Moy (2003) found out that Australian students searched for the information in variety of sources: school teachers, university handout materials, university open-day events. De

Jager and du Plooy (2010) research confirms that students prefer their own experience-based information sources (such as visits to universities, open days and career exhibitions) that have been identified as the most significant sources of information. Prospective students were also more likely to engage with the university if they have previously participated in certain activities organized by that particular university. Hence, one of the information sources is the information officially provided by university. According to Kotler and Fox (1995), Drewes, Michael (2006), Gibbons, Vignoles (2012), the *list of prospective higher education institutions to study at* is usually drawn on the basis of the accumulated information.

In order to satisfy their need to study at the best university, prospective students seek for well-founded answers. Wiese et al. (2010) state that higher education institutions use different ways for promotion of their institution: by word of mouth, on the Internet website, during the open-door days, by providing booklets, organizing alumni networks, advertisements in newspapers, the radio and television commercials.

Tucciarone (2009), Schimmel et al. (2010), Saichaie (2011) agree that the representation of a higher education institution is the most important information source and forms first impression of prospective students about the university. Băcilă et al. (2006) found that 61 per cent of pupils refer to the Internet websites of universities as the most frequent information source on the Internet. It can be stated that the above-mentioned role of technologies becomes the integral part of the choice process.

Information provided on the website has to be visually attractive for further reading or browsing. According to Poock (2006), the participants of the survey stated that university photos presented in the website were evaluated as the elements creating diversity. Saichaie (2011) assumes that pupils "want" a visually distinct content with interactive references to the activity of the organization. The presentation of large amount of information was also negatively evaluated. Poock and Lefond (2001) concluded that the ratio 30:70 of the presented information (photos and texts) is the most ideal version for the institutional website and distinguished eight categories of an effective website for a user: content, pleasant experience, website structure, graphic elements are well-balanced, convenient browsing, website uniqueness, the information oriented to target groups, access speed.

Schimmel et al, (2010) points out, that the Internet websites is a gateway to other communication forms. Increase of technology usage for dissemination of university information, annually allows reaching greater target audience. In the contemporary society, as Saichaie (2011) notes, prospective students have possibilities to find official information about an institution promptly, as well as to connect to other information presented in unofficial sources (blogs, forums, etc.). The importance of university websites can be illustrated by citing Meyer and Jones (2012, p. 7), based on Noel-Levitz (2010) research material: "one in four students reported "removing a school from their prospective list because of bad experience on the website of the school" and 92 per cent said they would be disappointed with a school or remove it from the list, if they "didn't find the information they needed on the school website". Thus, university website dominates as a primary, the most frequently used and the most important information source.

4. Information in the Internet

Lee and You (2009) carried out research for solving the essential problem: How can the Internet possibilities be applied in order to meet the students' needs in the process of the search? Having evaluated particular websites, the authors (ibid) concluded: "users (prospective students) want to know the information on prices of studies, requirements of admission, and contact data of the admission service." Christiansen et al. (2003) performed the analysis of the information about universities which is necessary for pupils and concluded that three fourths of the respondents pointed out the ratings of the higher education institutions in the country, the price of studies and accommodation facilities as important information. More than 90 per cent of the respondents noted that employment possibility after graduation was an important element of the information. Therefore, this part of the article searches for the answer to the question: what kind of information do prospective students search for on the Internet?

The school-leavers searching for the information about a university, according to Whiteside, Mentz (2003), should find useful information on the priorities of this particular university offered in the form of studies, accreditation, ratings and achievements, accommodation facilities, study fees and location in the website's structure. Kittle and Ciba (2001) present the most typical characteristics of higher education institutions, which are emphasized by prospective students as essential factors in choosing the particular educational institution: the programmes offered by the university, the policy of quality, the location and value added. In certain cases prospective students search for requirements for admission and the information on study programmes, the map of the university territory, contacts and community information on university websites. According to Saichaie (2011), entrants pay great attention to the admission conditions presented on the website. Thus, three essential fields of the higher education institution websites are distinguished: *Admission* (information on the admission process), *Faculty* (academic life and study information), and *Virtual excursion* (events representing the institution).

Information on studies (programmes, the supply of study subjects, location, and accreditation), according to Schimmel et al., (2010), is the most important aspect of the website for a school leaver in choosing his/her studies. As Mattern, Wyatt (2009) note, future students are also interested in science incentive scholarships, the standards of the institution's readiness, the policy of the changes in prices. Future students (Tavares et al., 2008) also pointed out the following: university's infrastructure, library, usage of computers, the quality of study programmes and researches and other extracurricular factors (sport, free time, canteens, etc.). Hoyt et al. (2003) proved that pupils with higher than average abilities are interested in the university rating, the entirety of the students, the possibility to study the accredited programmes, assignation of scholarships. Table 1 presents the generalized results of the analysis of the information, which is necessary for entrants to universities and which was distinguished in scientific literature (modified by authors from Raposo and Alves, 2007). The main criteria influencing the choice of

the particular institution are related to the information on institution's reputation, the fee for studies and location.

Table 1. The information necessary for a school graduate

Information blocks	**Institution's reputation**						**Tuition fee**		**Location of the university**	**Living facilities**	**Financial aid**	**Employment opportunities**	**Other**				
Subcategories / Authors	**University reputation**	**Accreditation**	**Quality management policy**	**Programmes and degrees**	**University size, contingent**	**Internationality**	**Price**	**Value offered**	**Location**	**Accommodation facilities**	**Financial aid**	**Job opportunities**	**Library sources**	**Variety of student services**	**Teaching methods/quality**	**Safety issues**	**Flexibility**
Murphy (1981)	x						x										
Webb (1993)	x			x			x		x								
Chapman (1993)	x																
Martin (1994)	x												x				
Coccari and Javalgi (1995)				x			x							x	x		
Kallio (1995)	x			x	x					x	x						
Lin (1997)						x	x			x					x		
Davis (1998)	x			x	x									x			
Kittle and Ciba (2001)			x	x				x									
Donnellan (2002)				x					x								
Soutar and Turner (2002)	x			x								x			x		
Christiansen et al. (2003)	x				x		x			x	x	x		x		x	
Holdswoth and Nind (2003)							x		x	x		x					x
Hoyt et al. (2003)	x		x		x		x		x		x	x		x			
Whiteside and Mentz (2003)	x	x					x		x	x							
Shanka et al. (2005)							x		x						x	x	
Tavares et al. (2008)	x			x			x			x		x	x	x			x
Lee and You (2009)							x										
Matter and Wyatt (2009)			x				x				x						
Schimmel et al. (2010)		x							x				x				
Saichaie (2011)					x		x				x						
	30						14		7	6	5	5	16				

The next chapter analyses the possibilities for dissemination of the identified formation groups, the factors of which functioning in the higher education institution influence the choices of school leavers' further studies, in the Web 2.0 environments.

5. Web 2.0 Possibilities for Dissemination of University Information to Attract New Students

In the beginning of the Internet era, websites were available only for organizations and created by information technology professionals. The sites were built with intention to provide static information on "read-only" basis. Now these web information design principles are known as Web 1.0 technology. Around 2004 paradigmatic transformation took place. Internet users were not satisfied just to read information. An increasing need for immediate feedback, communication and information sharing created a demand for interactive technologies—Web 2.0 technologies—the new generation of web based "read-write" principle. According to this principle, users cannot only read web content, but also edit, upload, share ideas and knowledge. Antoni et al. (2010) identify several specific features that distinguish Web 2.0 technologies: in order to use software the consumer needs to be connected to the network; it is free or partially free; it is a social tool that can be used by other web users (registered or open access).

Scholars began to analyse Web 2.0 technologies, its possibilities, implementation and impact from various perspectives. Informational technologies specialists define technical issues of Web 2.0; philosophers and sociologists analyse what impact Web 2.0 technologies make on present society; while educational science and management scientists explore its implementation in educational and business environments. Finally, Web 2.0 technologies became an object of trans-discipline research. Scholars provide a wide range of research of Web 2.0 implementation in higher education for student activity administration and cooperation using different tools (Conole et al., 2006; Mayes, 2006; Berg et al., 2007; DeRossi, 2007; Mason, Rennie, 2007; Madge et al., 2009; Kennelly, 2009; Selwyn, 2009; Whittock, 2009; Conole, Culver, 2010; Njenga, Fourie, 2010, etc.). While only a few studies (Schimmel et al., 2010; Trusov et al., 2010; Rizavi et al., 2011; Meyer and Jones, 2012) were found regarding higher education information dissemination to the prospective students. Web 2.0 technologies influence on career decision-making was analyzed by a few scholars (Heller, 2009; Skeels and Grudin, 2009; Hooley et al., 2010). This lack of scholar attention may be due to quite innovative Web 2.0 usage in higher education. Western universities noticed a great potential of Web 2.0 in information dissemination back in 2007 and its usage has been growing up in tremendous speed. Over 470 universities worldwide could be found on Facebook in 2010. Within the period of three months this number has increased to over 530. Whereas Lithuanian universities began using Web 2.0 to establish virtual communities only in 2010 (Jucevičienė and Valinevičienė, 2010).

This booming may be caused by vast value-added possibilities of Web 2.0 that universities understood. Scholars have found that prospective graduate students have their e-expectations for university web information. In 2007, students stated that they wanted "a connection" with the institution and faculty (Meyer and Jones, 2012). According to Meyer (2008), institutions need to find ways to put a more human face on the institution, by increasing the interactivity that students and others may have with the institution.

There are many social networking sites, providing similar services in various languages and interfaces. Yet, when trying to plan proper social network performance, it is necessary to pay attention to some software quality issues. Plaza et al. (2008) distinguished five characteristics defining functionality as main approach to digital dissemination channel quality: suitability; accuracy; interoperability; security; functional compliance. All these sub-characteristics need to be analysed more closely.

1) Authors define suitability as "The capacity of the software product to provide an appropriate set of functions for specified tasks and user objectives" (Plaza et al., 2008, p. 15). Speaking about appropriate functions, Web 2.0 has many advantages comparing to the usual printed communication. According to Meyer (2008), video medium advantages include rapid, worldwide proliferation as well as enhanced credibility as "images tend to be perceived as more believable than simple texts" because videos are a superior storytelling media, connecting emotionally with viewers more quickly and immediately than text descriptions. (Giannatelli and Paggetti, 2011).

2) Meanwhile accuracy depends on administrators and users, as social network content is user generated by nature (Juceviciene and Valineviciene, 2010). According to Trusov et al. (2010), to make an influence to target users, the information stream in the web should be constant and active and content should be current and authentic (Meyer and Jones , 2012). So the problematic issue is that prospective students will be interested in information if it is up-to-date and constant.

3) Interoperability stands for an ability to mesh-up different tools or media types. Web 2.0 technologies have tremendous abilities to integrate various media types and tools, by simply uploading or posting content on one page and embedding it in other pages. Video, sound files, podcasts, posts and comments are widely available and (usually) open to use or reuse.

4) Yet, every new technology has its strengths and weaknesses. While using open access Web 2.0 content, there is always a danger for insecure content and its validity. These concerns came up because of open and uncontrollable nature of Web 2.0. Everyone can write everything despite one's competency on the subject, especially when writing anonymously. But in the case of higher education dissemination, an official Web 2.0 website can be trusted and controlled by university representatives only in some cases.

5) Thinking about functional compliance it is important to understand to what extent Web 2.0 technologies are already used. For example, social networking sites wide usage among school graduates have been proved by various scholars. According to Valinevičienė (2010), Web 2.0 based information is popular among students for several reasons: availability—web information much more quickly achieved than conventional scientific sources; flexibility—the information can be easily copied, edited, etc.; user-friendliness—the information can be obtained in usual environment that students use every day.

Concluding the quality issues discussed above, we may see Web 2.0 technologies are a convenient, ready-to-use, functional and attractive environment for universities information dissemination. It is suitable, as it provides a wide range of information dissemination tools (in various formats and channels) and are user-friendly, attractive to the prospective students, as they use these Web 2.0 tools every day and already

familiar with it. Various formats (video, sound, podcasts, etc.) enable creative approach to information dissemination and expand possibilities, attractiveness. These formats have high degree of functional compliance and can be mashed-up for best results. Web 2.0 solves prospective students' need for quick response and human interaction during information seeking process which was proven as a very important factor.

Yet it is important to highlight possible problematic features of Web 2.0-based information dissemination. Using Web 2.0 tools require information flow to be constant, on-time and frequently updated, because prospective students need information "here" and "now." This requires many more resources (time, information extent, ICT skills) for dissemination in comparison with Web 1-based static institutional Web pages. Web 2.0 pages can't replace usual institutional Web pages, because Web 2.0 pages only expand dissemination possibilities.

6. Research Methodology

The purpose of this empirical research is to find out to what extent Lithuanian universities use Web 2.0 tools for information dissemination to prospective students. Empirical data was collected using observation and quantitative content analysis. The whole research was done in three stages:

1) Dissemination channels. In order to find out what kind of Web 2.0 tools and how many of them are used for Lithuanian universities dissemination, a quantitative content analysis of universities webpages was performed. We took a list of all Lithuanian universities from an official educational institutions data base AIKOS. 20 universities (public and private) were identified. We analysed official webpages of all 20 universities, looking for links to official university Web 2.0 based pages. We assume, based on the research done by Schimmel et al., (2010), that prospective students firstly look for information on the official site and then continue on Web 2.0 pages.

2) Target user extent. To prove usability and importance of official universities Web 2.0 pages, as widely used information source, we analysed to what extent students or prospective students use official university Web 2.0 pages. This analysis was based on a count of webpage unique users (members) that receive the information, provided by university via Web 2.0 pages.

We analysed Web 2.0 web pages of 5 biggest Lithuanian universities that, according to Lithuanian Department of Statistics, in 2011–2012 had the biggest number of students: Vilnius University; Mykolas Romeris University; Kaunas University of Technology; Vilnius Gediminas Technical University; Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences. We analysed 5 most popular Web 2.0 based dissemination channels that were found in the first stage of this research.

3) Information sufficiency. Analysis of scientific literature showed that in order to make a decision and search on university web pages prospective students need 6 main information blocks: reputation; tuition fee; location of the university; living facilities; financial aid; employment opportunities. We have analysed the 5 biggest above-

mentioned Lithuanian universities' Web 2.0 web pages, searching for 5 most popular Web 2.0 based dissemination channels that were found in the first stage of this research.

7. Results and Findings

An empirical research was performed to disclose possibilities to present Lithuanian universities to school graduates in Web 2.0 environments.

(1) Having analysed webpages of 20 Lithuanian universities it has been established that 16 (76%) of Lithuanian universities operate at least one website created on the basis of Web 2.0 technology for their official presentation (see Table 2).

Table 2. Range of official Lithuanian universities Web 2.0 web pages

Universities	OVERALL	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	LinkedIn	Google+	RSS	Foursquare	Vimeo	Pinterest	Vkontakte	Flickr	My University
Vilnius University	**6**	x	x	x	_	x	_	x	_	_	_	_	x
LCC International University	**6**	x	x	x	x	x	_	_	x	_	_	_	_
Vilnius Gediminas Technical University	**5**	x	x	x	x	_	x	_	_	_	_	_	_
Kazimieras Simonavicius University	**5**	x	x	x	_	x	_	_	_	x	_	_	_
European Humanities University	**5**	x	x	_	_	_	x	_	_	_	x	x	_
Mykolas Romeris University	**4**	x	x	x	x	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Kaunas University of Technology	**3**	x	x	x	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Lithuanian University of Health Sciences	**3**	x	_	x	x	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
International Business School at Vilnius University	**3**	x	_	x	x	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Vytautas Magnus University	**2**	x	x	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences	**2**	x	x	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
ISM University of Management and Economics	**2**	x	_	_	x	_		_	_	_	_	_	_
Lithuanian Sports University	**1**	x	_		_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Aleksandras Stulginskis University	**1**	x	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
The General Jonas Zemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania	**1**	x	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre	**1**	_	_	_	_	_	x	_	_	_	_	_	_
Klaipeda University	**0**	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Siauliai University	**0**	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Vilnius Academy of Arts	**0**	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Academy of Management & Business	**0**	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Vilnius St. Joseph Seminary	**0**	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Tool popularity:	**15**	**9**	**8**	**6**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**

The variety of Web 2.0 distributes from 1 to 6 different web pages. Five most frequently used Web 2.0 web pages were:

- *Facebook* (15 institutions, 75% of universities);

YouTube (9 institutions, 45% of universities);

- *Twitter* (8 institutions, 40% of universities);

LinkedIn (6 institutions, 30% of universities);

- *Google+* (3 institutions, 15% of universities).

Social networking tools were employed more frequently than other types of Web 2.0 tools. This may be due to more possibilities that social networking tools provide for dissemination. There were several big universities that used none or only one of Web 2.0 tools. Concluding the findings in this stage, it is important to emphasize that some of Lithuanian universities employ many Web 2.0 tools creating its "Virtual face" in a creative and functional way.

2) In order to define to what extent Web 2.0-based dissemination channels are used by virtual community members (including prospective students), 5 biggest Lithuanian universities' official Web 2.0 pages were analysed. We narrowed our analysis by analysing 5 most popular Web 2.0 based dissemination channels (see Table 3).

Table 3. Members of official universities' Web 2.0 pages

Universities	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter	LinkedIn	Google+
Vilnius University	2588	106	1060	_	104
Mykolas Romeris University	37889	69	135	x	_
Kaunas University of Technology	8673	92	90	_	_
Vilnius Gediminas Technical University	9812	52	147	x	_
Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences	1899	9	_	_	_
Overall:	**60861**	**328**	**1432**	**0**	**104**

The results show that almost 61 thousand Facebook users receive information from universities. Facebook is the leading information source having a lot more members than other Web 2.0 pages. Therefore, Facebook can be referred to as biggest channel for information dissemination.

During the research a strange phenomenon was observed. One university has a strong advantage comparing to others in Facebook member account. We can assume that it is somehow connected with institutional culture or attitudes of universities. It is important to point out that universities do not create their Web 2.0 webpages in vain. They have thousands of followers and it proves Web 2.0 webpages to be an effective channel for university information dissemination.

3) Having analysed Web 2.0-based dissemination channels information for prospective student's decision making 5 biggest Lithuanian universities' official Web 2.0 pages were analysed in comparison to official Web 1.0 pages (see Table 4).

Table 4. Information dissemination in universities' Web 1 and Web 2.0 pages

	Vilnius University		**Mykolas Romeris University**		**Kaunas University of Technology**		**Vilnius Gediminas Technical University**		**Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences**	
	Web 1	**Web 2**	**Web 1**	**Web 2**	**Web 1**	**Web 2**	**Web 1**	**Web 2**	**Web 1**	**Web 2**
Institution's reputation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tuition fee	x	_	x	_	x	_	x	_	x	_
Location of the university	x	x	x	x	x	x	_	x	_	x
Living facilities	_	_	x	x	x	x	x	_	x	_
Financial aid	x	x	x	x	x	_	x	x	x	x
Job opportunities	x	x	x	x	_	_	_	_	_	_

The analysis shows that prospective students can find more information on university official Web 1.0-based web pages than in Web 2.0 pages. Such sensitive information as tuition fees is more likely to be presented in a usual written official form on an official webpage. Yet, information about university reputation and achievements is provided in all possible dissemination channels. It is important to highlight that information on Web 2.0 webpages is provided in more creative and attractive forms and targeted at young people (prospective students), whereas, Web 1.0 webpages provide official and static information. Concluding the findings in this stage, it is important to emphasize that not all sort of information may be provided via Web 2.0 webpages. Lithuanian universities do not provide enough information that prospective students may need.

8. Conclusions

1) Choosing the further studies is a composite, multi-phase process. In this process a person strives to continue further formal education after finishing high school and makes a decision which higher education institution to choose for his/her studies. The most active information retrieval stage, which is very important for making information-based decisions, begins in the last years of the school.

2) Nowadays technologies allow use of a variety of different external environmental information sources. A university website is one of them. The analysis of scientific literature revealed that the prospective students give priority to the most attractive and convenient ways of information search including Web 2.0 based webpages. It is important to emphasize 6 main information blocks that prospective students need for decision making and search on university webpages: reputation of the institution, tuition fees, location of the university, living facilities, financial aid, and job opportunities.

3) Usage of Web 2.0 webpages operating as the channels for university dissemination, create more value-added comparing to traditional Web 1.0-based official webpages. This value is created because of "connection" and rich-format (sound, video, etc.) possibilities

that Web 2.0 may provide. But dissemination of university information via Web 2.0 can only be effective if it is creative and ensures timely and constant information flow. Concerning dissemination Web 2.0 webpages are more time consuming compared to Web 1.0 webpages. Yet, it is more attractive and user-friendly. Thus, Web 2.0 poses a challenge to universities to do their best in creative and effective dissemination.

4) In the case of Lithuania, it showed that universities use Web 2.0 webpages for their dissemination in a large extent. The extent of dissemination does not depend on the size of the university therefore cultural issues are assumed to be more important. However, not all of the information needed for a prospective student for decision-making was provided in universities official Web 2.0 webpages. Some information was only found on the Web 1.0 official university webpages. It can be assumed that in the case of Lithuanian universities Web 2.0 is often used in addition to Web 1.0 webpages.

(5) This paper can be regarded as a recommendation to provide possibilities for Lithuanian universities to present themselves in Web 2.0 environments. Our suggestion regarding the universities is to operate Web 2.0 webpages more widely by employing more convenient tools.

Universities should present information about tuition fees, location, living facilities and financial aid by using Web 2.0 technologies Universities can use external links or sources in communicating job opportunities for specific academic programmes.

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UNIVERSITETŲ PRISISTATYMAS POTENCIALIAI STOJANTIEMS ABITURIENTAMS WEB 2.0 APLINKOSE

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Santrauka. *Abiturientų tolesnių studijų pasirinkimas daugelio mokslininkų apibrėžiamas kaip sudėtinis daugiaetapis procesas. Informacijos paieškos etape būsimi studentai atlieka būtinosios informacijos kaupimą ir asimiliaciją sudarant galimų aukštojo mokslo institucijų sąrašą. Pasitelkę šiuolaikines technologijas universitetai sukuria sąlygas interaktyviai informacijos paieškai. Dėl Web 2.0 pagrindu kuriamų įrankių patogumo ir prieinamumo vis daugiau jaunų žmonių informacijos ieško saityne. Web 2.0 aplinkų taikymo galimybės universitetuose tyrinėtos skirtingais taikymo aspektais (studentų veiklos administravimui, bendravimui, mokymuisi), taip pat aptikta darbų Web 2.0 aplinkų, skirtų specialistų karjeros valdymui, klausimais. Universitetų sklaidos Web 2.0 aplinkose galimybės abiturientų studijų pasirinkimo proceso aspektu nebuvo analizuotos.*

Straipsnyje siekiama atskleisti universitetų prisistatymo Web 2.0 aplinkose sąlygas, akcentuojant abiturientų tolesnių studijų pasirinkimui aktualios informacijos pateikimo galimybes.

Taikant atvejo studijos strategiją ir mokslinės literatūros analizės, stebėjimo ir kiekybinės turinio analizės metodus nustatyta, kad universiteto teikiama informacija yra labai svarbi mokyklų abiturientams, o jos pakankamumas padeda priimti informacija paremtus sprendimus. Sprendimams priimti studentai ieško informacijos apie universiteto reputaciją,

studijų mokestį, universiteto vietą, apgyvendinimo ir finansinės pagalbos bei įsidarbinimo galimybes. Šiuolaikiniai abiturientai linkę ieškoti informacijos internete ir pasikliauti oficialia universiteto informacija. Tuo tarpu Web 2.0 pagrindu sukurti tinklalapiai universitetus įgalina reikalingą informaciją pateikti kūrybiškai, patraukliai, įvairiais formatais. Nustatyta, kad 76 proc. Lietuvos universitetų oficialiai sklaidai naudoja bent vieną Web 2.0 technologijos pagrindu sukurtą tinklalapį. Naudojama nuo 1 iki 6 skirtingų įrankių. Tačiau atliekant analizę nustatyta, kad ne visa abiturientams reikalinga informacija buvo publikuojama Web 2.0 aplinkose. Todėl straipsnio autoriai rekomenduoja Lietuvos universitetams kūrybiškai ir gausiau teikti abiturientams reikalingtą informaciją apie studijų kainą ir galimą finansinę pagalbą bei, pasinaudojus antriniais šaltiniais, plačiau informuoti apie įsidarbinimo galimybes.

Raktažodžiai: *studijų pasirinkimo etapai, informacijos paieška, abiturientai, Web 2.0, universitetų sklaida.*