



# The Presentation Role in the Study's Selection: Tourism and Environmental Protection (University of Sarajevo)

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of the paper is to investigate the presentation role in study selection. Presentation and promotion of studies are major issues that academic institutions focus on in order to attract students. The study included students from the University of Sarajevo's I, II, and III cycles of tourism and environmental protection. Three kinds of reference criteria and indicators were selected: attractive presentation features, promotion approach, and presentation influence on decision. The study's findings revealed that the faculty's official website and recommendations are the most influential marketing tools, that the presentation of the study influences choice and decision-making, and that the study's conception, the modernity of the educational infrastructure, field teaching, as well as the geographical aspect of tourism and environmental protection, are particularly appealing factors.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study's presentation plays a crucial role in the decision-making process. „Decisions taken when continuing education are long-term decisions that affect future life, such as work, self-satisfaction, and subsequent social activities“ (Adam & Gunarto, 2021). „In academic settings, presentations are important for sharing knowledge and ideas with students as the key factor to the success of information delivery and audience engagement“ (Suwartono & Furqon, 2021). The effectiveness of an academic presentation is influenced by its content, the nature and design of the academic program, the technical and creative organization, and the modes used for its promotion. Various scholars (Adam & Gunarto, 2021; Kango et al., 2021; Suwartono & Furqon, 2021; Garner & Alley, 2013; Jusaj, 2019; Boardman & McCormick, 2019) have stated that promotion in education is a fundamental marketing component that encourages the acquisition of academic products by highlighting their benefits and providing comprehending materials, while also incorporating physical, media, and digital strategies, along with word-of-mouth endorsements that are essential for establishing the academic reputation. It includes visiting schools, installing banners, brochures and using social media, etc. The quality of promotion is also an important aspect to support the audience to comprehend the materials, thus, well-structured and instructional presentations that incorporate examples and visual illustrations are significantly more effective.

Institutions of higher education are encountering intense competition from both the public and private sectors, necessitating a more sustainable approach to academic promotion. „Students' choice and decision-making in higher education have gained superior importance since higher education has become market-oriented and very competitive (Jusaj, 2019). „Increasingly fierce competition

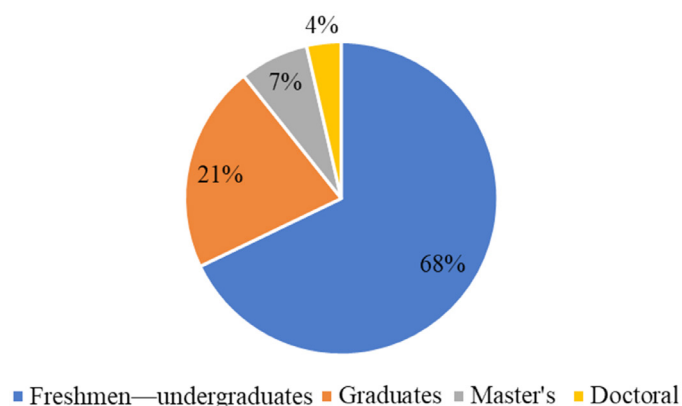
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from universities in getting new students requires universities to carry out marketing activities well, one of which is through promotion and formation of a good college image to influence the decisions of prospective new students in choosing a university“ (Kango et al., 2021). A wide array of internal and external factors plays a crucial role in shaping a student’s decision-making process and selection of academic programs: these include motivation, personal interests and abilities, educators, family, friends, environmental influences, available facilities, promotional efforts, offered programs and scholarships, financial assistance, parental expectations, and geographical proximity to home. Various modes of academic presentation have different impacts: WOM (word of mouth), as, for example, the review from alumni students, contributes to the university’s image and reputation and attracts interest; promotion through digital media (internet, social media, and social networks) has an extensive reach with lower costs, accounting for videos as more effective than images; physical promotion (exhibitions, festival bazaars, or educational fairs) enables direct interaction with potential consumers to share experiences and communicate the advantages and disadvantages of the product.

In this study, key attractive elements of an academic presentation were selected—attributive features of the tourism and environmental protection academic program (University of Sarajevo): its concept and nature (curriculum and geographical aspects), availability - affability of academic staff, applicability and prosperity of the diploma, the attractiveness of the study presentation, and the study image and popularity.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research aims to investigate the role of presentation in study selection. Universities are challenged with high levels of competition today; therefore, they must recognize their assets in order to produce competitive academic presentations. The students’ attitudes were critical to determining which presentation aspects influenced their decision-making. As a result, the face-to-face survey with combined (open-ended) questions and semi-formal interviews was conducted with students of the geography academic program of tourism and environmental protection (University of Sarajevo) across all three cycles. Three categories of elements were selected: the attractive aspects of the study presentation, the mode or the promotion strategy, and the overall presentation impact on the decision. The study’s presentation content included the important attribution elements in terms of the study specifications, as well as an assessment of the mode and presentation effectiveness on the selection. The paper analyzes the study presentation’s major strengths, which are critical for long-term promotion to attract new students.



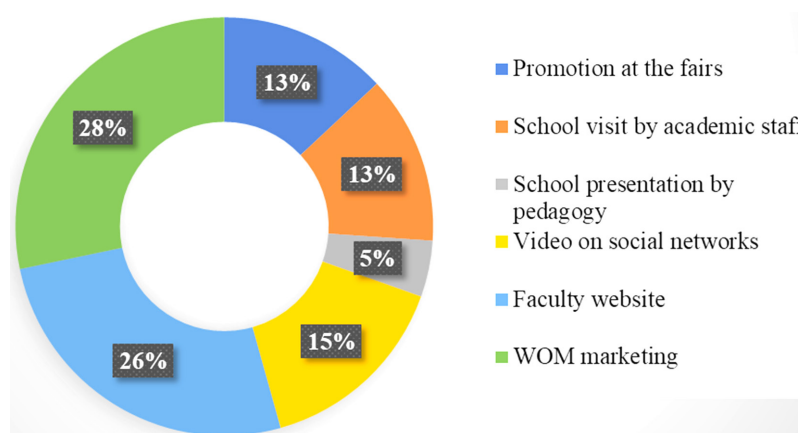
**Figure 1.** Respondent Profile by Year of Study

Source: Own research

### 3. RESULTS

Tourism and environmental protection study (University of Sarajevo) is promoted through several channels:

- Fairs: University Fair and Sarajevo Festival of Tourism (Center Skenderija);
- Internet: official website of the Faculty of Science, Department of Geography (University of Sarajevo), and social media promotional videos (Facebook and Instagram);
- Cooperation with schools: academic staff conducts direct promotion through visits to secondary schools throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Collaboration with the Association of Pedagogues in the Canton of Sarajevo: promotion of the study presentation on class community meetings across the pedagogues program (area: professional orientation with high school students), 2020-2022;
- Word of mouth: reviews and recommendations from students and acquaintances directly (first-hand) and indirectly (via internet forums, etc.)



**Figure 2.** Modes of the study presentation promotion

**Source:** Own research

According to Figure 2, the most powerful modes of study presentation are ranked as follows:

- Oral recommendation (28%);
- Presentation on the official study/faculty portal (26%);
- Social media promotion (Instagram, Facebook, etc.) (15%);
- Promotion at fairs and school visits by academic staff (13%);
- Study presentation by a school pedagogue (2%).

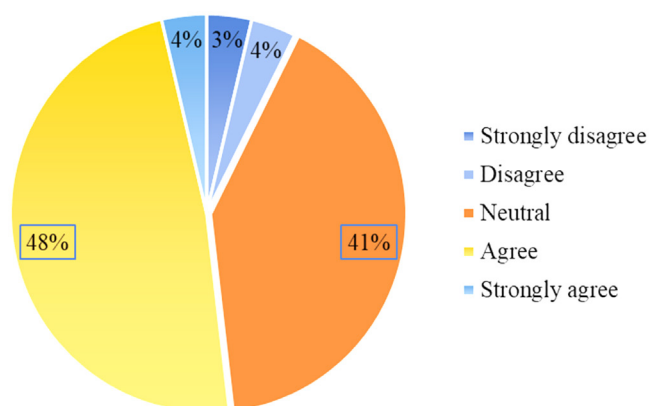
The findings indicate that *positive word-of-mouth (WOM)* serves as the leading mode for promoting the study and stands as the most powerful marketing tool in this context, thus also supports the conclusions drawn by [Kango et al. \(2021\)](#), which assert that word-of-mouth, alongside customer experience, offers the most effective promotion in shaping college selection decisions. The choice of study and decision-making process are greatly influenced by the experiences of students or alumni, the viewpoint of close friends, family, or other acquaintances whose counsel is valued, as well as their accomplishments with the earned diploma (employment in the profession, etc.). However, recommendations do not always have to come from persons who have completed that study (they do not have to be users of the academic product), such as the advice of a well-meaning friend who would be helpful with finding work in that field, etc. A positive assessment and a commendable image of the study attract new students while maintaining the study's engaging components (Figure 4).

*The study presentation on the official university portal* (academic promotion via digital media—the Internet) is the most relevant/ representative source, which allows the individual to become more familiar with the study concept by providing transparent curricula and syllabuses, as well as promoting interesting study activities. This information are always available and allows for comparisons with different study programs. Faculties promote major academic events through relevant stories, gallery of photos and videos, as well as the opportunity to communicate with interested clients. The internet presentation of tourism and environmental protection studies put in the foreground the following components: the organization at the faculty; the concept of study in all three cycles; international cooperation; a bulletin board with useful information for students and advertisements; scientific research work; publishing activities; specific events: field classes throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina; practical work in cooperation with the economy, tourism, and ecological sectors; programmers activities in the GIS center; modern laboratories and IT centers, etc. Furthermore, a supplement to the diploma was provided, along with guidance on how to apply it in the labor market.

*Promotional videos on social networks* require financial investments due to the certain costs of advertising; yet, this form of presentation ranks third in terms of impact on decision-making. However, students stated that there are too many commercials on social media, resulting in their saturation and a lack of time and that everyone will only view video content in which they are already interested, which supports the [Kango et al. \(2021\)](#) allegation that the drawback of this promotion is that digital media has many competitors. Young people are generally aware of their ambitions and opportunities, and they will be willing to pay attention to anything that interests them rather than study that they have no desire for. Promotional video covers typically include the faculty's title, which can be a barrier to entry if the individual has no interest in that field (how to create and impose a video should apply some marketing strategies that are rarely used in academic settings).

*Promotion at fairs and high school visits by academic staff* have similar effects because both provide a visual demonstration and access to promotional materials (brochures, PPTs, video presentations, etc.), as well as the opportunity for direct communication with academic representatives and the exchange of information and experiences.

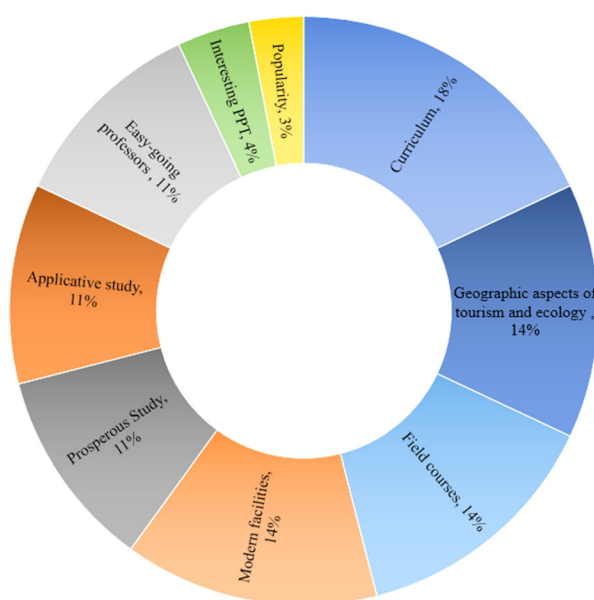
*The study promotion in the pedagogy classes* during the implementation of professional orientation program with high school pupils (2020-2022), where pedagogies were required to present our studies to their graduates, had the smallest impact on study choice and selection. However, because pedagogues are not a qualified profession to promote various disciplines, it is reasonable that additional clarifications were lacking.



**Figure 3.** The presentation impact on the study selection

Source: Own research

Regarding the general impact of the presentation on the study choice, 52% of respondents are positive about it (SA: 4%, A: 48%). Young people are interested in knowing what kind of higher education they will be receiving, what courses they will be studying, what skills and knowledge they will be acquiring, what opportunities for development and employment they will have, and what the academic environment will be like. A competent study presentation delivers the majority of the information directly (by academic representatives) or indirectly (via advertising media, etc.). Nonetheless, a sizeable minority of students (41%) had a neutral opinion about the study presentation impact on their choice. According to this category, studies are frequently promoted in a more favorable light than they deserve, making media and web presentations less credible as indicators. Recommendations and experiences of people who have completed certain higher educational programs are considered more important. Their attitude additionally highlights the effectiveness of word-of-mouth marketing.



**Figure 4.** Attractive features of the study presentation

**Source:** Own research

The most attractive elements of the study presentation are ranked as follows:

- Study conception: curriculum (18%);
- Geographical aspects of tourism and (geo)ecology, field teaching, and modern faculty's environment (14%);
- Accessible professors, applicable and prosperous studies (11%);
- Interesting PPT or video presentation—concise, informative, and innovative (4%);
- Popularity of studies in terms of numerous enrolled students.

*The study conception*, which takes into account both the specific subject matter and the disciplines that will be studied, is a key determinant in the decision-making process for students. This gives the student a better understanding of the type of study program and how to apply the knowledge and skills he has accomplished. Course modules provide objectives, teaching units, criteria, standards, and outcomes through acquired competencies, skills, and knowledge. Aware young people want to achieve applied and competitive knowledge, which will provide them with multiple job prospects. Geographic aspects of tourism and environmental protection has been a unique study in Bosnia and Herzegovina (University of Sarajevo) that integrates two exceptionally appealing scientific fields, even though they will be independent study programs beginning in 2024/25 (Innovated plans and programs). Geographical approaches to tourism and (geo)ecology

are a relatively new trend in Europe and the rest of the world (since tourism has traditionally been dealt with by economists and ecology by biologists), and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the study of tourism and environmental protection was established in 2005 (University of Sarajevo, Natural Faculty of Mathematics, Department of Geography; Bologna Reform) and has grown in popularity.

Among the most appealing aspects of tourism and environmental protection studies, aside from the geographically diverse study concept, are *the modern faculty environment* and *field teaching*. The study takes place in the modern tall building with gardens of the Faculty of Science (University of Sarajevo) in the capital urban area near the center, which has air-conditioned classrooms, modernly equipped IT centers and laboratories, and a pleasant environment. Route-stationary field teaching is an integral part of the curriculum for undergraduate studies from the first to the fourth year. It's held every spring in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in neighboring countries (Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro). Expert teams (often 3-5 university professors and assistants) plan, organizing, and conduct field teaching in collaboration with faculty management and agreed tour operators while adhering to the curriculum features as well as the students' requirements. The field image and video collection is impressive because it promotes both the application of professional skills in the open environment and the country's most popular tourist and eco-sites.



**Figure 5.** Study of Tourism & Env. Protection (in a modern skyscraper), Dep. of Geography, Faculty of Science (including both – tall and short pinky objects), University of Sarajevo

**Source:** Faculty of Science Sarajevo (2022)

One of the things that draws young people in is the *professor's inherent reputation—accessibility*, which they have heard about from current or former students. Though they are a genuine minority in the explored study, rigid academics do not negatively impact the positive reputation that presently exists on this side. Effective interaction between students and professors fosters a pleasant environment that students are proud to tell their peers about, which in turn stimulates potential interest.

When selecting a study, other appealing aspects include its *applicability and prosperity* in terms of job prospects. In Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as other parts of the world, tourism and protecting the environment are strategic sectors. Because the tourism industry offers far better employment prospects than the environmental protection industry due to its wider range of occupations and the country's continuous expansion in tourism, diploma in this sector is particularly in high demand.



**Figure 6.** Field teaching with graduate students included visiting the Museum of Sarajevo 1878-1918 as an internationally popular site in Bosnia and Herzegovina—Prince Ferdinand ft. Sofia (Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia)

**Source:** Own photo

*Video and PowerPoint presentations* are one of the three most important aspects in study selection, and they are promoted through all channels, including social media, the faculty's official website, educational fairs, and the cabinet. The advantages of social media include information technology accessibility and packaged content that highlights the most appealing aspects of the study in a compressed time. Nonetheless, they cannot replace much more precise information, overview tables of the study plan and program, and a plethora of other exhaustive resources available on the faculty's website, but they do constitute a bright complement to well-organised university portal content.

The *study's popularity* in terms of student numbers is the least effective component of its presentation because most young people, despite seeking socialisation, prefer a more serious clientele ("nice guys") at university. Professors are more accessible and dedicated to their students in a less congested environment, which is beneficial for young people.

#### 4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The study of tourism and environmental protection has grown in popularity during the last two decades. It's one of the leading programs at the University of Sarajevo's Faculty of Science and Mathematics and the most demanded in the Department of Geography. It's mostly the first choice among applicants, accounting for the majority of students enrolled in geography. Since tourism and environmental protection studies are separate and innovative study programs beginning in the academic year 2024/2025, effective monitoring and innovative study presentations will be required. Some of the numerous academic challenges lie ahead, with mandatory monitoring of numerous elements: interest and demand structure; number of enrolled students; evaluation of student perceptions and satisfaction (reviews); evaluation of academic staff teaching performance, especially in relation to new courses on which external collaborators are engaged; implementation of module outcomes in practice; degree of collaboration with business entities; success in the profession; feedback in terms of a successful response to labor market demands; creating more effective studies presentations based on their upcoming new-built image, etc.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Study presentation and promotion have a favorable impact on decision-making. The content of the study presentation, the way of promotion, and the power of its overall influence are important aspects of the study's selection. „The image of the institution is formed through practical marketing activities“ (Kango et al., 2021). The crucial modes of the study presentation are: WOM, the academic web, and social networks. However, the key to a successful study presentation—number 1—is a commendable image (positive impression) of the study. „Sales have a significant effect on choosing a college, and the image of education has a significant effect on college decisions (Kango et al., 2021). The findings demonstrated that the essential pulling factor in enhancing the study's reputation and image is its human resources—academic staff. As a result, academic departments ought to make the largest investments in their staff, keeping in mind many crucial criteria for desirable academic employees: prudent hiring; enthusiasm; pedagogic skills; evaluation of their work with students; and stimulation. For academic staff to establish productive connections with students and foster good communication, pedagogical training is required. Monitoring professors' and assistants' performance through student surveys might help identify those who are highly regarded and preferred by students; additionally, those should be encouraged through management recognition or financial incentives. Another area where funding should be increased is the faculty website, where studies are presented. This is because the website more authentically reflects the nature of the studies, presenting noteworthy accomplishments and current events alongside tangible teaching materials. A well-maintained faculty website that provides up-to-date and clear information fosters interest and confidence when selecting a degree or study. Social media promotion is also crucial, but it comes after word-of-mouth and academic web presentations. While Facebook and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms worldwide, young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina prefer to use TikTok, Badoo, and other networks. For this reason, it should be more deliberate about which social media platforms to use to promote the study of tourism and environmental protection. A sustainable presentation of the studies should sublimate its most attractive components, which in the given example are: the structural concept, field teaching, and modern environment, then the professor's accessibility and the prosperity of the study, and so on. In order to reconcile “pleasant with useful,” modern students demand learning, practice, and enjoyment from their studies, as well as a sense of belonging to a higher education community. Such an experience is provided by the study of tourism and environmental protection, sublimating its geographically popular conception, a modern env. with GIS and labs, practical classes in economic and administrative centers, field classes in top nation's touristic and eco-sites, friendly academic staff, and a successful diploma with numerous employment opportunities.

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