

# Educational Marketing Tools on the Way to Customer: Analogies with Approaches in Technical Systems Description

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the creation of a "box" model for describing the non-material complex "marketing of educational services" - "university" by analogy with the description of technical systems. The "box" approach has been studied in various industries, including marketing. Studies have shown that despite the similarity of names, the "box" approach in describing marketing strategies cannot fully explain the mechanism of influence of the educational service provider (university) on the customer. The results of the bibliometric analysis for the queries "educational market", "neuromarketing", and "educational marketing" showed that the process of marketing educational products takes place in the directions from the "supplier" of services to the "supplier" of services. This feature was considered when describing the educational marketing complex using the "box" approach. An attempt is made to describe each characteristic of the "white" box model concerning the complex "marketing of educational services" - "university". In the course of the description, it was established that the "box" model should be supplemented with blocks for the complex testing and parametric identification of the model's output parameters (responses). The list of parameters X, K, U, Z, and Y can be expanded; however, the fundamental approach to modeling a system will remain unchanged, in the center of which is the customer and the supplier. A feature of the model is a non-standard approach to parametric identification. In contrast to the material model, the intangible object "marketing of educational services" - "university" can have several options for parametric identification. The "white" box model with blocks for the complex testing and parametric identification of output parameters (responses) of the model allows you to move from a qualitative to a quantitative description of the main characteristics of an object and predict its behavior depending on the purpose of parametric identification.

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## 1 Introduction

Creating effective marketing tools for educational programs is the subject of research by scientists and practitioners. Marketing of educational products is a dynamic system with periodically changing initial data. The result of the "work" of marketing educational services is generally unchanged (the sale of educational services) but may have different sub-results. The "university" system provides educational services and can change its configuration and control mechanisms. A disturbing influence plays an important role under which dynamic systems "university" and "marketing of educational services" can exist.

As seen from the above, the "marketing of educational services" system has analogies with technical systems, the functioning of which is based on the above parameters. This similarity was discovered by marketers, who suggested using the "box" model to predict the behavior of potential customers based on their previous reactions [1].

The educational services industry must constantly respond to new challenges. Hence, the use of deterministic factor analysis and a clear description of the elements is necessary for the effectiveness of the "sale" of the educational program.

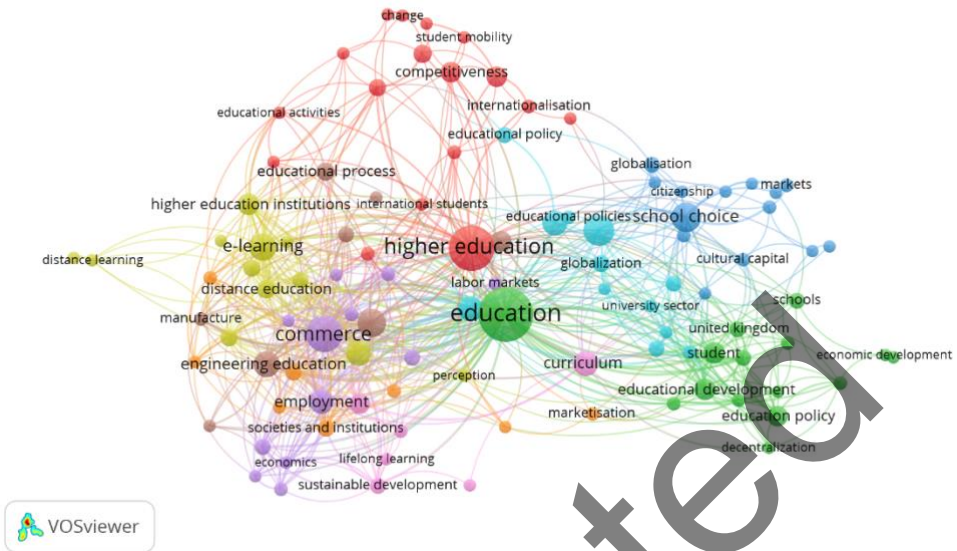
The evolution in the description of systems and their testing from the "black" to the "white" box [2] is a natural process in the search for optimal management and control solutions. In this paper, based on bibliometric analysis and the previously used "box" approach in describing the dynamic system "quality of education", an attempt was made to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing educational services by assessing customers' behavior.

## 2 Literature Review

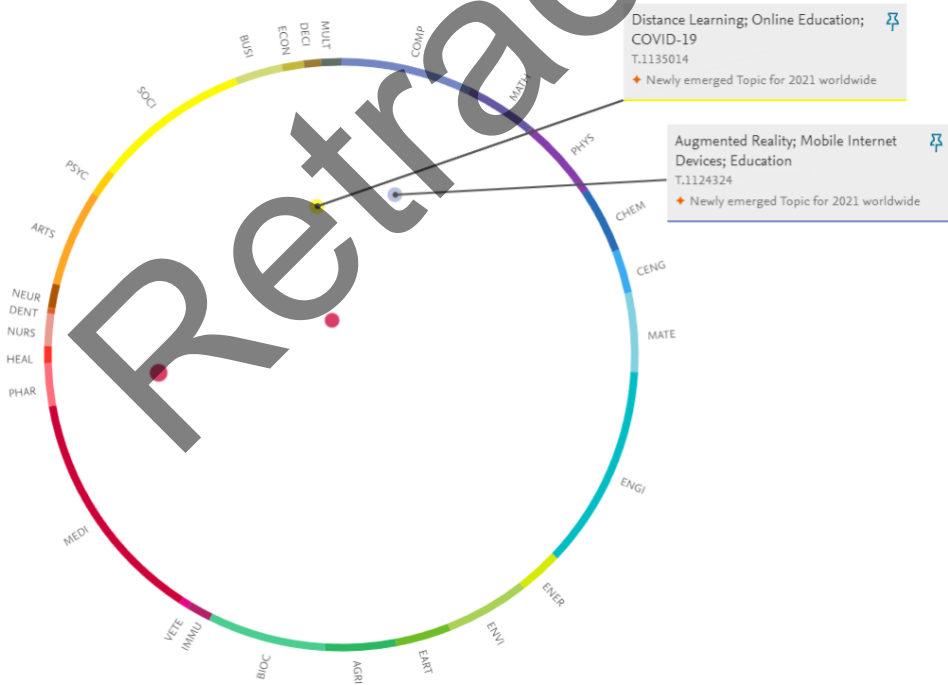
The dynamic system "marketing of educational services" ensures the achievement of sustainable development goals [2-56], in particular SDG 4 [57], digitalization of educational services [58-75], the use of various decision-making tools [76-84], including the use of artificial intelligence [85-100], and as a result - specific applications in the "university – science - business" link [95-110]. At the preliminary stage of analyzing these and other factors, the "educational market" environment should be considered.

The entry of an educational product into the market is preceded by an analysis of the most promising directions for developing the educational market [111-150]. At this stage of the investigation, there is no need to determine potential customers' behavior (reaction) to certain features of the marketing of educational services. As the results of the bibliometric analysis for the query "educational market" (Figure 1, dataset for analysis - Scopus database, tool for analysis - VOSviewer) show, the keywords are associated with various aspects of the provision of educational services and not with the methods of promoting an educational product to the market. In this case, it is necessary to conduct additional bibliometric analysis to identify tools for promoting educational products on the market.

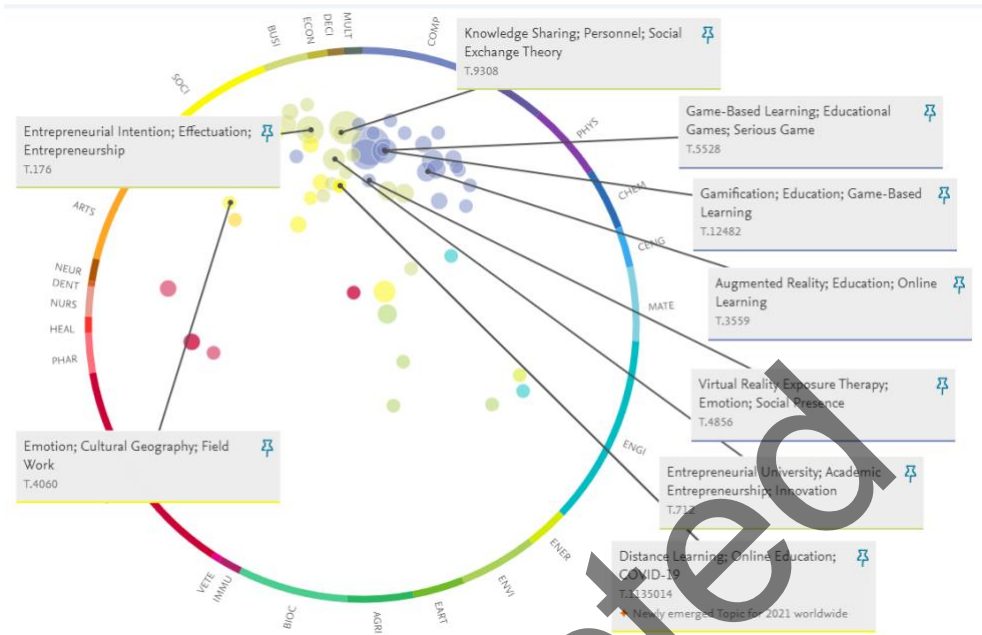
As the results of the bibliometric analysis for the query "educational market" (Figures 2 and 3, hereinafter dataset for analysis - Scopus database, tool for analysis - Scival) show, potential customers are interested in new teaching methods, the possibility of commercializing learning outcomes (knowledge and technology transfer), as well as taking into account the behavior and emotions of the customer in the process of choosing an educational product in a competitive market (elements of neuromarketing). The last topic is the starting point for further selection of the educational marketing type and the "box" model for describing the "marketing of educational services" system. Of interest is the fact that the results of bibliometric analysis for the query "neuromarketing" (Figure 4) have common themes with the query "educational market". Thus, the two requests have an important connection, forming the basis of the model's description for promoting educational services.



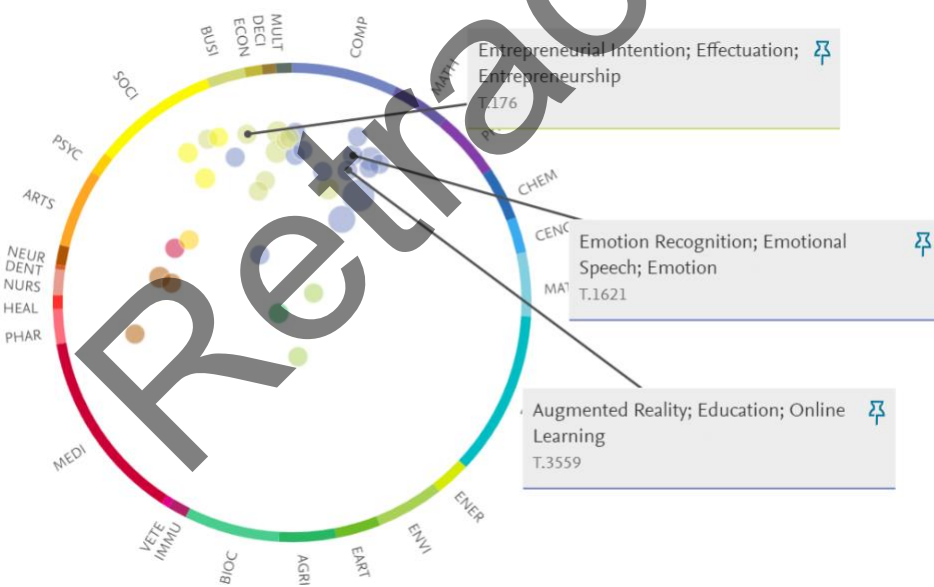
**Fig. 1.** Map of keywords on demand "educational market"



**Fig. 2.** Wheel of key topics on demand "educational market" (newly emerged Topics for 2021)



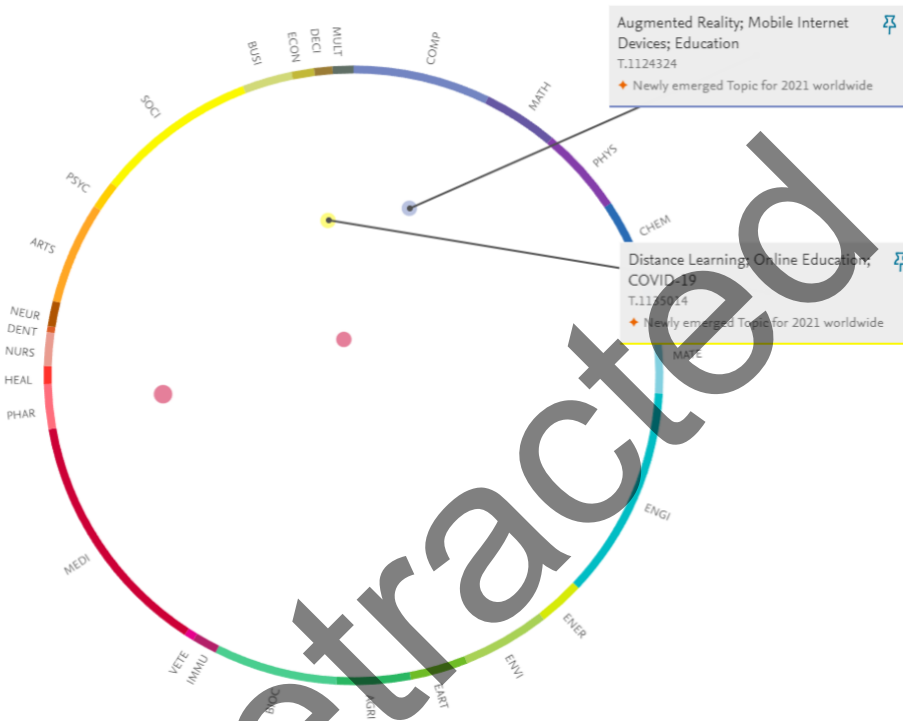
**Fig. 3.** Wheel of key topics on demand "educational market" (top 1% topics by prominence)



**Fig. 4.** Wheel of key topics on demand "neuromarketing" (top 1% topics by prominence)

During the process of bibliometric analysis, another important detail was established, which emphasizes the complex nature of the "marketing of educational services" system. The authors conducted a bibliometric analysis on the request "educational marketing". By definition [86], "Educational marketing is a marketing tactic that educates prospects on the value of the results they can get from using your products or services. It describes the process of teaching your leads about a certain topic or industry that can guide their purchasing decision". Thus, the results of the bibliometric analysis for this query will show how potential

customers can be involved in the process of testing, and then buying a product. Notably, the query "educational marketing" (Figures 5 and 6) returned similar topics to the previous two queries. At the same time, neuromarketing tools are detailed in the topics, allowing us to speak confidently about the relevance of the studied problem of using neuromarketing in the educational field.

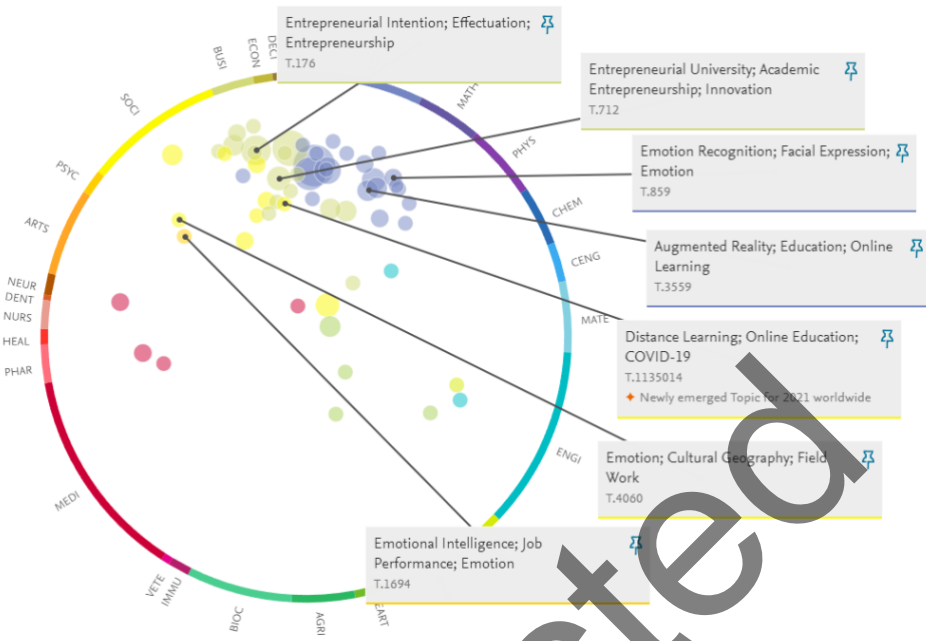


**Fig. 5.** Wheel of key topics on demand "educational marketing" (newly emerged topics for 2021)

The results of the bibliometric analysis for the three queries described above showed that the process of marketing educational products takes place in the directions from the "supplier" of services to the "supplier" of services. This feature should be considered when describing the nature of the "marketing of educational services" system using the "box" approach.

### 3 Research Methodology, Results and Discussion

The "box" model has applicable in various sectors of the economy, information technology, and engineering [151-171] and has proven to be an effective tool for describing the state of a dynamic system. In education, "black" and "white" boxes are associated with closedness (or the inability to reproduce for further analysis, for example, the absence of lecture notes) or openness of data [172, 173], as well as the search for solutions to educational problems [174].



**Fig. 6.** Wheel of key topics on demand "educational marketing" (top 1% topics by prominence)

The use of the "box" model in marketing fundamentally differs from the evolution of "boxes" in technical systems. At some stages, the essence of "box" modeling is similar, at other stages, it has a radically different meaning.

The "black" box model in marketing "is used to predict future consumer behavior based on past behavior" [175]. By analogy with technical systems, this "box" has clear input and output data, and the "black" is the buyer's mind. The "black" box in educational marketing, by analogy with the description of technical systems, characterizes the uncertainty in the parameters of the system itself and the parameters of its control. The list of system parameters is known (values, motives, etc.), but the control parameters are not set. In a technical system, this is already a characteristic of a "gray box". Thus, the "black box" model in marketing "covers" the model of "black" and "grey" boxes in the description of technical systems. Although such a combination allows determining the system's parameters, it does not solve the problem of determining the optimal control method. White box marketing is associated with "converting business strategies into executable plans and actions, requires organizations to be transparent, encourage healthy debates and challenge assumptions and internal biases, with a clear understanding of data-driven insights and associated limitations" [176].

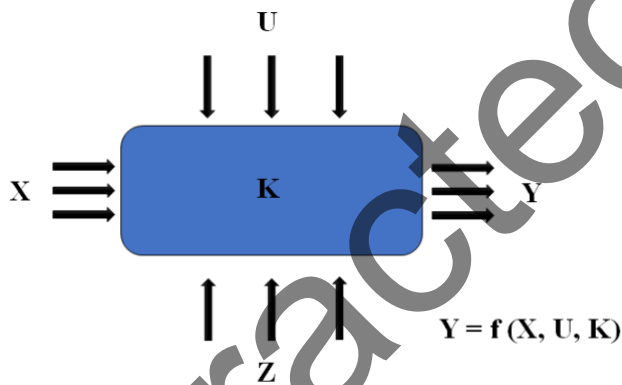
As can be seen from this short analysis, the less "physical" and "technical" the system, the more qualitative assessment in the description of the system in the "box" approach. The difficulty in describing the non-material system "marketing of educational services" is also associated with the need to consider the system's specific parameters and control parameters. In the system's center is the customer with his "parameters" - feelings, feelings, emotions, and reactions to the environment. The customer influences the parameters of the university system management and the set of characteristics of this system. Thus, we have two "boxes" in one, essentially a non-trivial system. Below is a variant of the description of the "white" box system for the "marketing of educational services" - "university" complex.

Traditionally, the "white" box system can be represented in Figure 7. The central part of the system (K + U + Z) is a "transformer", which requires a detailed description, taking into

account the presence of two "boxes" in one. Accordingly, the parameters X and Y must also be described regarding marketing and educational applications.

*Input parameters (stimuli).*

One of the main input parameters is the marketing mix. It is used as a description of the "black" box approach in marketing [177], and we use it in our white box model for the "marketing of educational services" - "university" complex. The educational component is a set of characteristics of an educational program planned to be "sold" and (which is an additional advantage) benchmarking data of educational programs at other universities. These two blocks describe the situation "at the entrance" when a potential customer decides to start looking for a suitable educational product and enters the market. However, this is an incomplete picture of a person and his behavior. We need additional parameters and stimuli that encourage the customer to decide the level of behavioral motives. The design of promotional materials, immersive technologies, and the invitation of influencers to popularization events are important initial data for determining the "transformer".



**Fig. 7.** "White" box model: X – input parameters (stimuli); Y – output parameters (response); U – control parameters; K – system's parameters; Z – disturbing parameters

*System's parameters.*

The parameters of the "marketing of educational services" system are a set of characteristics that will contribute to making a positive decision by a potential customer of educational services. In fact, unique features of educational programs are formed here. How to evaluate them? The procedure answers this question for accreditation of educational programs, which is used by the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA) [178]. In each criterion for accreditation of educational programs, innovative practices are highlighted, which are the best marketing tool. The parameters of the "university" system are its infrastructure and regulatory framework, which regulates the processes of ensuring the quality of education. An example of units that simultaneously belong to two systems are the behavioral laboratory and the laboratory of virtual and augmented reality.

*Control parameters.*

This block contains regulatory documents regulating the university's activities and the educational program's functioning. This is the regulatory framework of the university (as in the system parameters block), as well as the national regulatory framework and international recommendations. If we talk about neuromarketing, an additional control parameter is the results of a study of the content of visual advertising, which was obtained in a behavioral laboratory. The control of immersive marketing technologies can be carried out based on the feedback of internal and external stakeholders on the product that was used. Control

parameters can also result from the joint preparation of training scenarios by internal stakeholders of the educational program.

*Disturbing parameters.*

Disturbing parameters cannot be attributed to any of the systems that make up the "transformer" complex. Among them: a change in the popularity of an educational program, the introduction of new regulations, the outflow or influx of applicants to the country, martial law, force majeure in a particular region, a pandemic, etc. Reduction of disturbing influences is inertial and not always possible.

*Output parameters (response).*

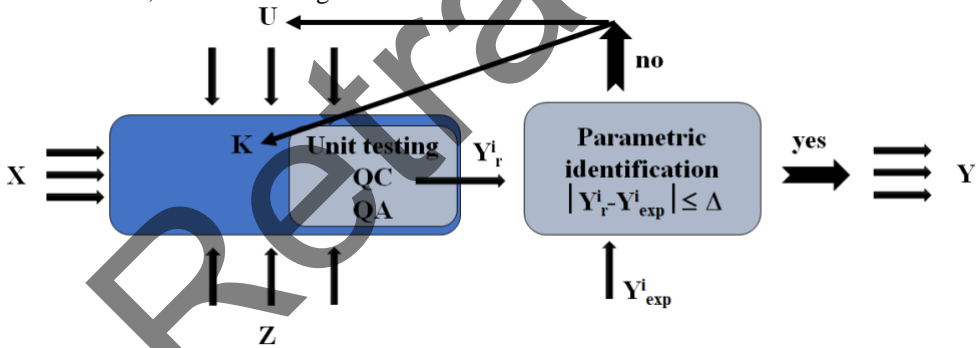
Here is a partial list of these options:

1. Purchase of an educational product (personal result).
2. Increasing the number of students in the educational program (result for the organization)
3. Accreditation of the educational program.
4. Leadership of the educational program based on national benchmarking results.
5. Increasing rating indicators in industry-specific national and international ratings, as well as ratings of employers.

The effectiveness of the "white" box system can be confirmed by testing and parametric identification of the object. The testing process must verify or falsify the hypothesis about the effectiveness of the "transformer" to achieve the parameter Y.

Variants of parametric identification of the complex "marketing of educational services" - "university":

1. Determination of the minimum discrepancy for the system with a constant structure.
2. Achieving the set discrepancy value by changing the characteristics of the "transformer", as shown in Figure 8.



**Fig. 8.** "White" box model with the additional blocks "testing" and "parametric identification":  $Y_r^i$  – real value;  $Y_{exp}^i$  – expected value;  $\Delta$  – discrepancy.

During the parametric identification of the "marketing of educational services" - "university" complex, it is important to consider various variants of the discrepancy.

1. Condition  $Y_r^i > Y_{exp}^i$  is a positive simulation result. For example, the number of buyers of an educational product is greater than expected. In this case, the discrepancy loses meaning, and parametric identification is unnecessary.

2. Condition  $Y_r^i < Y_{exp}^i$  is a positive simulation result. For example, a marketing company selling an educational product used a smaller budget than planned. The mismatch loses its meaning.

3. Condition  $|Y_r^i - Y_{exp}^i| \leq \Delta$ . For example, the range of places is based on the results of benchmarking educational programs.



## 4 Conclusions

The search for analogies between the description of material and non-material systems leads to non-trivial conclusions. Description of an intangible system using a "box" approach is an effective method for finding optimal solutions to provide the required output parameters. For the "marketing of educational services" - "university" complex, the "white" box model with the addition of testing blocks and parametric identification allows not only finding responses to changes in input data but also effectively managing the "transformer" block. The list of parameters X, K, U, Z, and Y can be expanded; however, the fundamental approach to modeling a system will remain unchanged, in the center of which is the customer and the supplier. A feature of the model is a non-standard approach to parametric identification. In contrast to the material model, the intangible object "marketing of educational services" - "university" can have several options for parametric identification.

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