

# A SWOT Analysis for Organizing a Summer School: Case Study for “Advanced Summer School in Analyzing Market Data 2013”

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**Abstract:** *The economics scholars agree that investment in education is a competitive advantage. After participating and graduating the “Advanced Summer School in Analyzing Market Data 2013”, the students will gain some formal competences is applied knowledge in Statistics with the IBM SPSS Statistics software. Studies show that the employers seek also practical competences in the undergraduate students, along with the theoretical knowledge. The article focuses on a SWOT analysis for organizing a Summer School in order to compose lists of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The purpose of the “Advanced Summer School in Analyzing Market Data 2013” is to train undergraduate students from social-human sciences to gain competences which are valued in the market and a certificate for attendance, to develop an appropriate training program which combines applied knowledge, statistics and IBM SPSS software and to create a „Summer School quality brand” with high-quality training programs for the Faculty of Administration and Business.*

**Key words:** SWOT, Summer School, Competences, Education, Knowledge.

**JEL Classification:** I21, M53, M10

## 1.Introduction

Organising a Summer School represents a continuity for the supply of educational programs by the Faculty of Administration

and Business, University of Bucharest. It could represent an opportunity for the students who are interested in continuous learning, after the semesters end. Although it has

a formal structure, a Summer School is more flexible compared to the University classes due to the flexibility of educational themes, time frame, grading structure, diplomas etc. Usually, a Summer School has a period of days or weeks, and the scheduled duration of "Advanced Summer School in Analyzing Market Data 2013" (ASSAMD2013) is for a week. The theme of this Summer School is related to Applied Statistics using "IBM SPSS Statistics". The program includes an average of 6 hours training per day and includes a separate topic for every day: Day 1, Working with data in SPSS, Day 2, Univariate descriptive statistics with tables and graphs, Day 3: Multivariate descriptive statistics with tables and graphs, Day 4: Inferential statistics, part 1 and Day 5: Inferential statistics, part 2. Organising a Summer School event needs resources, management and marketing and SWOT analysis was chosen in this study to identify the priorities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the ASSAMD2013 event. After graduating, the students receive a certificate for the specific competences. On <http://targetjobs.co.uk> we find that key skills for statisticians include good IT skills, numerical skills, analytical skills, written and verbal communication skills, self-confidence and good interpersonal skills. Due to the heterogeneous competences needed by a statistician, and to the mix of interdisciplinary competences like IT, numerical and verbal skills, we consider appropriate this research in organising this Summer School, for the purpose of a deeper understanding of the management components and strategy for this event.

## 2. Literature review

Matsudaira (2008: 829) argues that the summer school may be a more cost-effective

way of raising student achievement scores than class-size reductions.

Lindahl (2001) compared learning during the school year, when schools are open, with learning during the summer, when schools are closed, and show that math skills are lost when pupils are not in school.

Sahinidis and Bouris (2008: 63) show that there is a significant correlation between the employee perceived training effectiveness and their commitment, job satisfaction and motivation and additionally, high correlations were found between the latter three variables.

Nartgun S., Ozen, Rasit and Nartgun Z. (2012: 260) found that summer school was not an advantage for students who had lower incomes; it could be considered as an opportunity for university students and there was no difference between the summer semester and fall and spring semesters.

Serbu, Miron, and Paun (2012: 743) focused on a SWOT analysis to find some possible solutions for the Romanian higher education and argued that there is low correlation between field of study and qualifications obtained in the labor market.

## 3. Main elements for organizing the "Advanced Summer School in Analyzing Market Data 2013" (ASSAMD2013)

Education demands relevance with today's multidimensional digital age. The Summer School is organized as a training program due to its component of practical knowledge learned and applied with IBM SPSS Statistics.

The management problem is mainly related to the available choices for

allocating resources and the identification of the priorities for the event. The event is a factor of change and relevant aspects of the ASSAMD2013 are related to the competences gained by the students, the brand of the organisers, the logistics etc. and other aspects which will be analyzed using the SWOT analysis. Some relevant issues in organising an event are related to choosing the appropriate organisers of the event, according to their ability of organising an event, their past experience, ability of negotiating, their character, ability of communication etc.

Organising a summer school for the first time has a high degree of uncertainty because in the past was not organised this type of event by the Faculty of Administration and Business – however scientific conferences were organised, workshops and other related scientific and educational events if were necessary within the undertaken projects. The Romanian Education System is chronic underfunded, the funded opportunities for the teaching staff are limited and teaching at a summer school is an opportunity for continuing the teaching activity.

Due to the Romanian actual teaching context, the knowledge taught during the semesters are in general appreciated rather more theoretical than practical, so the practical skills are well appreciated by the students, and this could be an important reason for attending the event.

Although Informatics Laboratories exist within The Faculty of Administration and Business - except Informatics (and related fields) no economics and statistics disciplines are learned using computer software within the formal courses during the semesters. ASSAMD2013 is an opportunity for combining practical knowledge with statistics/econometrics knowledge and IT skills.

The practical knowledge is considered to be valuable by the business environment. In the sociologic study regarding "Situatia si rezultatele participarii elevilor si studentilor la programele si stagiile de practica scolară din Romania anul 2010" evidence was found that 46% of the employers appreciate „experience in the profession/job” and 34% appreciate „enhanced practical skills”. The same study argues that 70% of the students consider that the school trains them well for doing their work, but they still need practical skills to find job easier and the careers with economics degrees are very appreciated professions.

The summer period (between semesters) when the event is organised can be appreciated as an advantage by some students, but others may not appreciate it. Choosing the title and the theme for the summer school was related to the values presented earlier, a valuable market mix of elements which include IT and Statistics.

The structure of the program was intended to be rigorous enough to be considered a challenge for the students due the formal knowledge from Statistics and IBM SPSS but flexible enough to be applied in the fields of social-human sciences by the undergraduates from economics, administration and business, marketing, public relations, sociology and other related fields. The choice of the period for organizing the event is restricted to the program of the professors, the ability to do the logistics and the duration between holidays.

- The main objective of ASSAMD2013 is to train 20 participants, preferable from undergraduate level, with diverse research profiles for 6 hours a day, 5 days from one week, to gain competences which are

valued in the market, and a certificate for attendance;

- Specific objectives include:

➤ Developing a „Summer school quality brand“ with high-quality training programs for the Faculty of Administration and Business;

➤ Developing a training program for the

ASSAMD2013 which includes applied knowledge, statistics and IBM SPSS software.

#### 4. A SWOT Analysis for ASSAMD2013

A SWOT Analysis that presents strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is a way for a strategic organization of the ASSAMD2013 event.

##### 4.1 Strengths:

- Summer School Strategy;
- High number of professors and students;
- Availability of Computer Software licenses for IBM SPSS software;
- Availability of logistics for physical computers, Internet, classrooms etc.;
- High Quality of Staff;
- Tradition (old University) with reputation;
- Valuable services provided;
- Located in Bucharest;
- Focus on real life issues and cases;
- Low prices for attendance;
- Efficient and responsible management of the event.

##### 4.2 Weaknesses:

- Budget for the event;
- No Summer school present or similar past events;

- Little applied knowledge within the teaching curricula;
- Low financial resources and support;
- Poor fundraising history;
- The institutional routines for administrative and financial management within the University of Bucharest;
- The quantity and quality of the connections with the business environment, media, partners, supporters and networks;
- Poor visibility of a new summer school event;
- Little information regarding the opportunities of public and private funding;
- Weak advertisement and promotional activities.

##### 4.3 Opportunities

- Scope of the Summer School Strategy;
- Developing a competitive priced program;
- Developing innovative training programs;
- Creating networks and infrastructure for knowledge dissemination;
- Summer school programs of high-quality;
- Good reputation for the Faculty of Administration and Business;
- New funding schemes through Private, National or European Union programs;
- Developing a more complex Advanced Summer School from UEFISCDI funding;
- Partnerships with business environment;
- Developing new training programs and project due to the Life Long Learning Strategy of the European Union;

- The training sector will become more important in the knowledge-based economy;
- The investments in human resources are growing;
- Competences in Applied Computer Software are very appreciated by the labor market;
- Cultivating partnerships between the University and NGO's;
- Developing a rigorous methodology for training programs, applied manuals and guides for training programs using computer software;
- Increasing financial self-reliance and need to search for other external sources of funding

### Conclusions

Organizing a summer school is an opportunity of gaining practical competences for the participants and represents an

opportunity for participating at an educational program between the school semesters. From an organizer's point of view, creating a (new) summer school rises issues of resources allocation, themes of the event, schedule, title, program, targeted competences etc.

Starting a new summer school has a high degree of uncertainty and the use of SWOT analysis as a management tool can reduce the uncertainty, identify and prioritize the elements of the processes to improve the allocation decisions. Strong evidence were found in the literature that math skills are reduced if students don't have a continuity in the learning process, so a numerical oriented summer school makes sense. Other relevant reasons for choosing a numerical oriented program are related to the competences gained by the participants which are appreciated both as a profession and by the labor market.

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