



НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИЙ
УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

The impact of universities` information accountability and transparency on the diversity in higher education system

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Context of the research: evidence from Russia

- ✓ Public and expert debate regarding the quality of higher education and the closed nature of the whole higher education system (especially on post-soviet space)
- ✓ Increasing competition for consumers in the conditions of demographic decline
- ✓ Entering the global market and world rankings

Theoretical/conceptual frameworks

- ✓ *Transparency and accountability (incl. information transparency) – one of the main 7 principals of New Public Service*
- ✓ *Two types of accountability: accountability to politicians and accountability to customers*

- ✓ *Open education system – open society: ability to capture and take into account the changes in the environment for its own development*

New public management
[R. Denhardt, 2000]

Open society
[K. Popper, 1945; M. Cornforth, 1968]

Stakeholder theory

[Freeman R.E., Phillips R.A., 2002]

Information theory

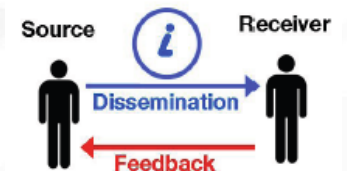
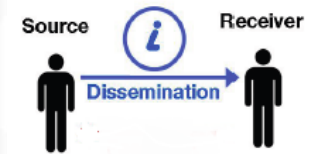
[C. Shannon, 1948]

Signaling model

[M. Spence, 1974]

- ✓ University stakeholder groups [Salmi, 2002]: Government, students, society, employers, graduates, teachers.

- ✓ One-sided and two-way communication



Theoretical/conceptual frameworks 2

Is a **process**
which ensures
responsibility for the
results of activities to
stakeholders

Accountability



**One-sided
communication**

Accountability to authorities

Accountability that governments call for from universities to produce proofs of the quality of their activity: implementing different forms and standards, including HEIs' licensing, monitoring etc.

Voluntary accountability to consumers

Voluntary participation in the monitoring - both public and private, the publication of performance indicators, research and presentation of student satisfaction, voluntary accreditation programs, the establishment of boards of trustees, etc.

**Two-way
communication**



Transparency

Transparency is a **qualitative** characteristic, assumed as accessibility, velocity and effortlessness of information. Information transparency is not only the existence of great amount of information about HEIs activity but also the ability to participate interactively and to be involved in the process of information exchange

Formation of unique signals: only that information which is not constant for the university

The history of the issue in Russia

- Extremely closed and nonpublic information system in the education field led to prosperity of bad-quality institutions
- Historically, focusing on only one stakeholder led to reproduction of one-sided communication

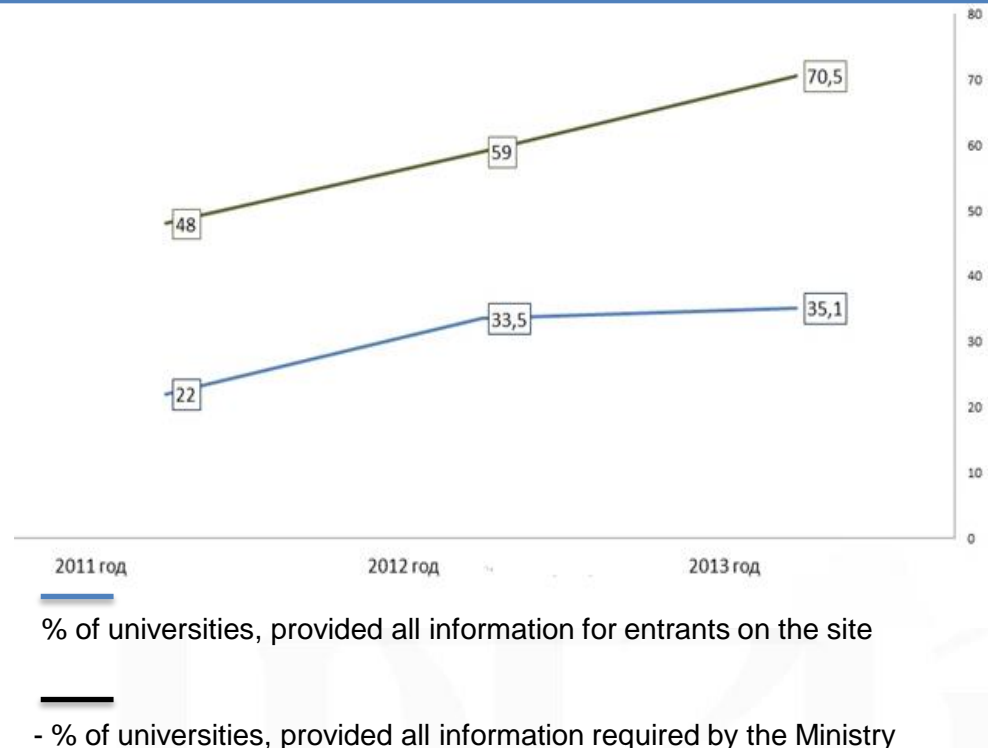
Chronology of decisions in Russia:

2010 - The Public Chamber, HSE and RIA Novosti produced the first monitoring of the websites of Russian universities

2010 - The Public Chamber amend the education act- all universities required to have sites

2012 – Resolution of the Government about requirements to information about the educational institutions in the Internet

2013 - Resolution of the Government, supplementing the previous requirements with regard to updating of data



Research design

- ✓ Analysis of the results of annual «Transparency» monitoring of Russian HEIs` websites for entrants, developed by the National Research University Higher School of Economics and RIA Novosti (matching with the requirements of the Ministry) to determine the impact of accountability to the government on the diversify of the HE system
- ✓ Student survey: the university entrants (2013) were questioned before the publication of the final results - **420 people**, planning to enter one of the Moscow universities Moreover + **11 standardized interviews** with Moscow universities entrants to establish the current information demand from entrants and to determine the situation with system diversity based on demand

Findings 1 - Accountability

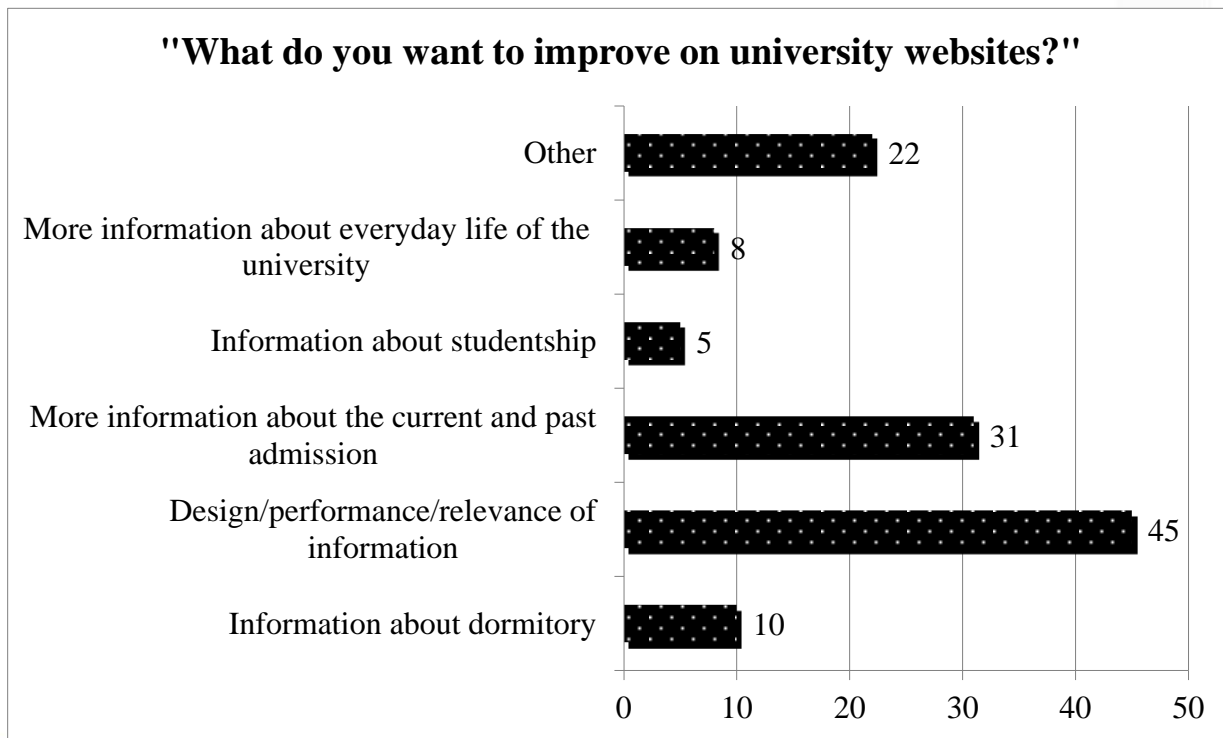
- ✓ Forming one-sided communication (only reporting): providing the information on the website, required by the Ministry of Education and Government
- ✓ Ignoring the interests of other stakeholder groups



Diversification levelling and improvement of the quality - general levelling of the market and improving the quality of educational services by reducing opportunistic behavior and fraud, but at the expense of a single unified reporting forms eliminate distinctions and is not possible to classify the universities (no unique signals)

Findings 2: Transparency

- ✓ Information about dormitories and lists of new students with their scores are most significant (84% and 99%, respectively). At the same time a large number of entrants noted that this information is not mentioned on websites (35% and 26%)
- ✓ About half of the students expressed the low level of design and inconvenient search for information

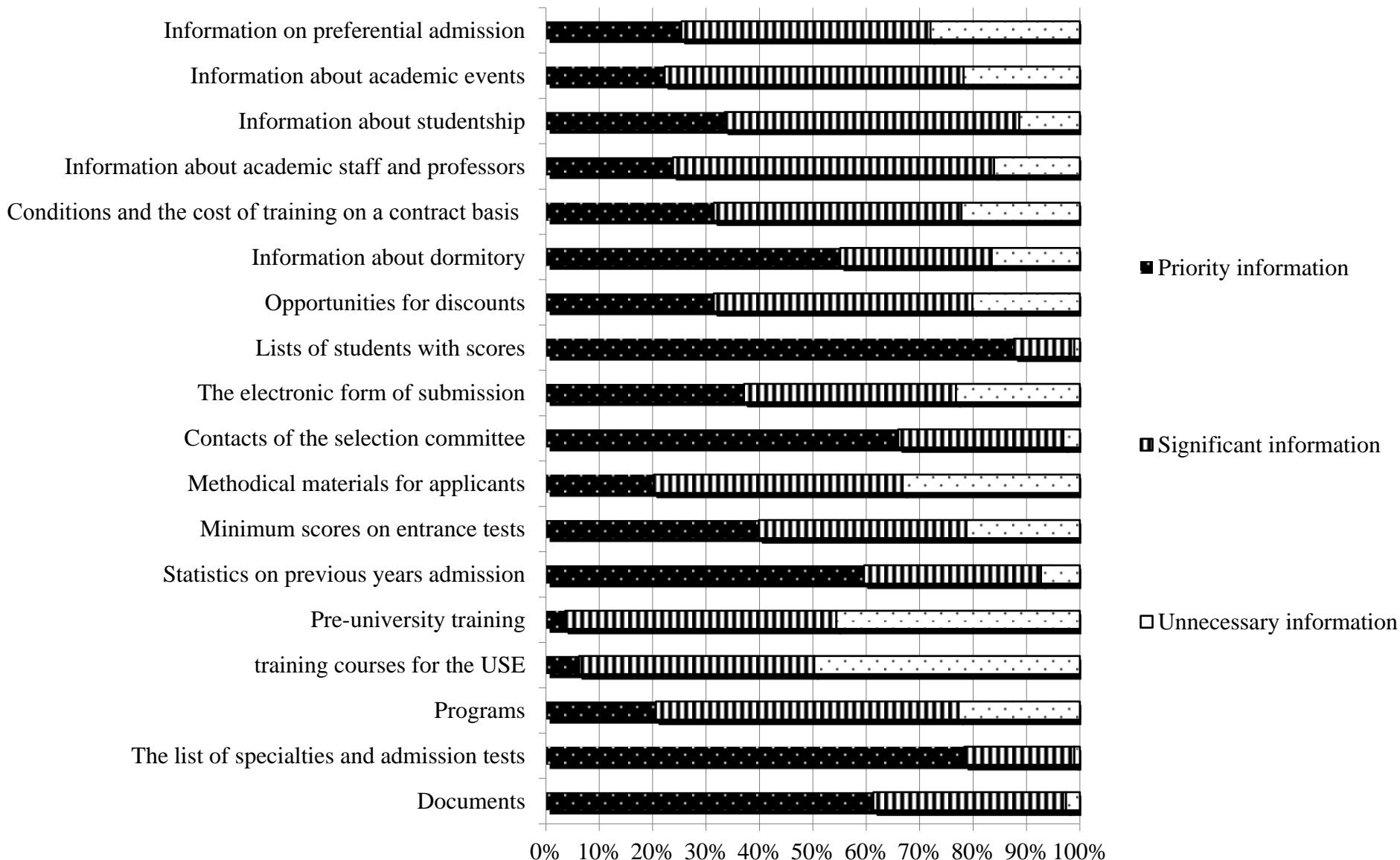


"All the information is often scattered around, we can't find a proper data"

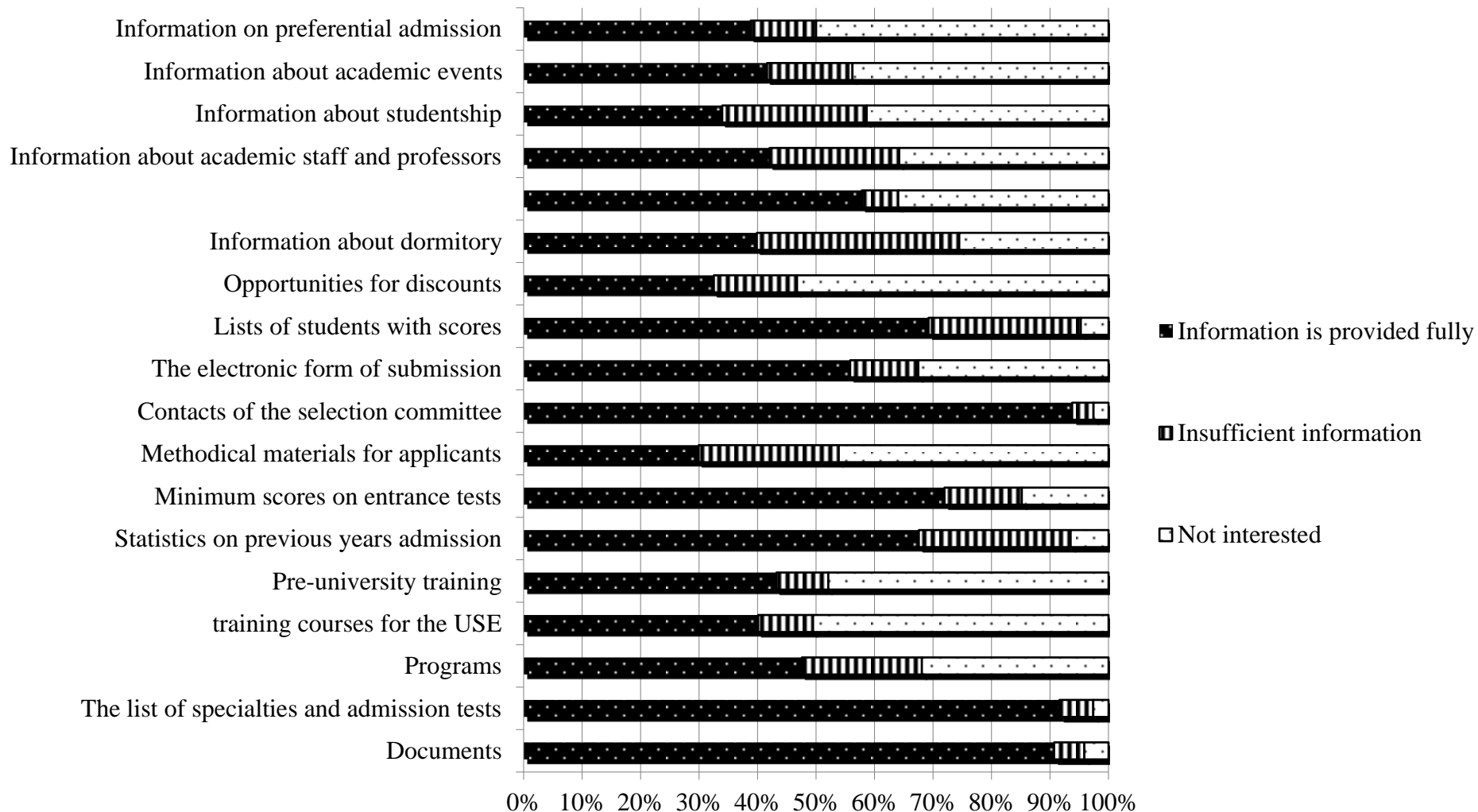


The reluctance of universities to establish two-way communication and to become transparent

Which information you need on website of the university?



The quality of information on universities websites



Finding 3: Why universities are not transparent?

- ✓ Most active responded entrants were from leading universities (according to the monitoring of «Quality admission to public universities of the Russian Federation»)– 180 students, only 37 of them were satisfied with the quality of information on universities' Websites
- ✓ Entrants are often restricted to a small amount of information and are not interested in studying the education market. Despite the fact that almost all of the key information has been identified as important for the entrants, the responses of their use have yielded conflicting results. Information about the teachers was not significant for 19% of prospective students, but 56% haven't even look for it at all.

[H. Simon] theory of bounded rationality:

Consumer decision-making is bounded rationally, as the person is not able to take into account the long-term consequences of their actions due to their limited cognitive abilities and environmental conditions



Cognitive misers (or immature consumers) - interested in the most instrumental, purely application information

Marginal consumers - interested in the high-quality information, that demonstrates the advantages of the particular HEI

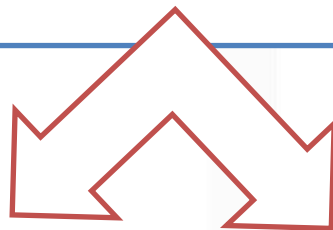
Findings 4 – Diversity, quality and transparency

- ✓ Unqualified demand for the information only about 15% of the survey participants can be attributed to this group of marginal consumers, others simply do not make any demands on the information
- ✓ Reacting to the non-qualified demand for the information, HEIs keep supplying with the minimum set of information



Minimum diversification - the lack of demand for information leads to the result that universities place only a minimum set of standardized information on their Websites, which leads to their alignment and depersonalization and the inability to identify the real quality.

**prestigious universities,
which attract marginal
consumers**



**broad group of HEIs that can
be fairly differentiated by
their positioning**



Thank you for your attention!

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