E-GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC MARKETING TOOLS FOR UNIVERSITIES: A BENCHMARKING PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper, a brief review of the literature related to e-governance models and public marketing is made in order to justify the importance of bringing about e-business practices into the context of universities.

In terms of the study's internal objective, e-governance and public marketing tools are proposed in order both to disseminate the mission and the institutional culture of each university into a formal scheme of benchmarking tools and to obtain accountable and more efficient processes for performing a more efficient administration and other internal activities. On the other hand, in what concerns to its external objective, examples of good institutional governance practices are presented. This kind of governance practices is presented as a strategic tool to create a front-office side that facilitates both interaction and promotion with the public. Furthermore, it will determine the creation of collaborative networks promoted from the University.

Finally, from the results obtained in the ambit of the international research project *OBSEREGIO* that was developed by two Portuguese Universities (Beira Interior and Évora) and two Spanish Universities (Extremadura and Salamanca), a benchmarking proposal is suggested in order to reach both internal and external aimed goals.

Key Words:

Benchmarking; e-governance; public marketing.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

The present political, economic and global competitive context has been causing important changes in the competitive base of the countries, in the structure and in the functions performed by the Government, in the external and internal relationships, leading to the search for conditions and competences, which are able to incorporate quick changes both in the organizations and in the society in general. In this scenario, the universities have been called to play a strategic role both in the economic and in the social development of the country and of regions where the universities are located. The University is, then, a relevant actor in the construction of the social system, when considering the development of people, intellectual capital and formation of professionals that have a generalized vision of the processes and that identify social responsibilities in order to answer them.

In this sense, universities should be able to give answers which are suitable to its social and public responsibility, through: i) education and learning; ii) commercialization of the investigation; iii) cooperation with the industry; and iv) cooperation with the research institutions. Simultaneously, the University should be an entity which promotes the sustainability, both at the level of its internal structure and at the level of the interactions with its targets.

The increasing competition and the reduction of the public financing came to alert the universities to the need of improvement of its management (benchmarking can be a useful management tool in this task) and to the need of a raising number of students (e.g., through efficient politics and marketing campaigns). This paper aims to demonstrate the importance of benchmarking for universities through its contribution both to carry out more effective evaluations and to detect organizational problems. We decided to develop the area of the *Governance Pro-Sustainability* in order to exemplify some benchmarks that can be implemented in the University.

2. ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY:

The concept of governance applied to the University is related to the exercise of controlling the power of the different centres and departments which integrate the University. This kind of exercise is based on the drawing of an adequate system which executes different levels of institutional power that are integrated on a model of electronic governance (*e-governance*), which is structured over different *Internal Information Systems* (*IIS*). Those systems make use of data warehouses that consist of information that is extracted or introduced by users. The full operation of these new digital e-governance platforms implies the transposition of the models of e-business models into organizational and relational networks of the Universities.

Traditionally, the effectiveness of the governance can be measured through the extent of the responsibility of the governments, in relation to the citizens. However, in this particular field, it should not be neglected the way the power of the governance is exercised, as well as the way the citizens express their opinion, and the way as the decision-making evolves public fields (Keefer, 2004).

In this sense, the governance models embrace public institutions and processes of decision-making that not only include the citizens but also demand for a growing civil participation.

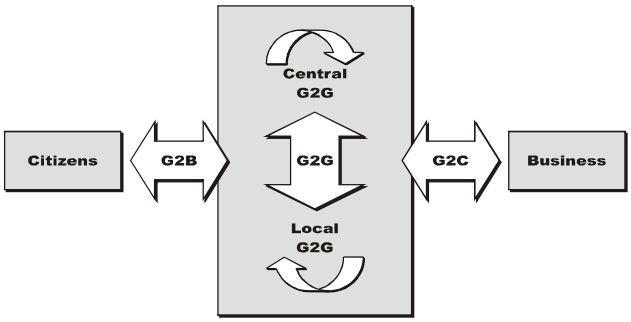
The exercise of a governance model must include independent but interconnected units, whose activities should be clear, accountable, responsible, and, especially, regular, in order to reduce the inequalities in terms of the access to the services that are offered by public institutions. The more entrepreneurial governance plans of the Nations, in general, and public institutions, in private, should make use of the broadest spectrum possible of electronic platforms, in order to guarantee greater levels of public services governance, taking into consideration the intrinsic potential of using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

An ideal model of e-governance can be implemented through the four following dimensions (Leitner, 2003): i) adaptation and coordination of the public politics (so much to the vertical level as to the horizontal level); ii) participatory democracy (of the most representative players in what concerns to the services offering); iii) constitution of cooperative networks (for the implementation of public politics for development); and iv) access to clear and open informative systems of governance.

According to Klazar *et al.* (2005), the users of e-governance services can be grouped in five basic groups, namely: 1) the non users of the Internet service (to obtain information or transact with the Government); 2) the Transactors (that perform payments by using credit card or banking transference); 3) the Suppliers (that supply personal information or household information to the Government); 4) the Information Seekers (that use Internet to obtain information from a Website of the Government); and 5) the Consultants (that use Internet to express a point of view or to participate in public consultations.

In the vision of Backus (2001) the formal mechanisms of e-governance should surpass the creation of an online presence. In this way, those mechanisms include the use of electronic tools that simplify operations and procedures, according to the following aims: a) create interaction between the Government and the citizens; b) establish inter-relations between the Government and the units of business; c) manage internal operations of the Government, in a more efficient way. The most common mechanism of e-governance embraces three fundamental kinds of inter-relations, namely: G2C, G2B and G2G (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Interrelations in the field of e-governance.



Source: Based on Backus (2001: 2).

According to Backus (2001) the implementation of a model of e-governance can include four phases: i) information; ii) interaction; iii) transaction; and iv) transformation.

The initial phase of information is based on the creation of a web presence, through the availability both of the information that is considered relevant for citizens (G2C) and the units of business (G2B). At an internal level, the first phase admits the creation of e-governance mechanisms (G2G) that are directed to the dissemination of information through dynamic electronic tools.

In the second interaction phase, interactive relations and intake processes between the Government and the citizens (G2C) are established between the Government and the units of business (G2B), namely, through the availability of e-mails which enable a future contact, search engines, forms and documents for downloading. In terms of internal relations (G2G), the Governments implement intranets that are intended to be internal communication and exchange data networks.

In the third phase, which is related to transaction, the keywords are complete transactions. That means that the value attributed by the users of the service (G2C and G2B) is, progressively, higher. In this phase, a bigger degree of complexity arises, which is, essentially, due to security and personal issues that are associated with the offering of electronic services (for example, the use of digital signature and the implementation of e-procurement systems with units of business). At the internal level, the redesign of the offering of electronic services (G2G) is performed. This procedure requires adequate legislation and a higher simplification of the internal activities of the Government.

In the fourth phase of transformation, the key-terms are integration and change. It corresponds to the full integration of information systems, which provide the supply of services (G2C and G2B), by making the access to a virtual corner available.

The basic idea is to provide a point of exclusive contact that is centralized for the totality of the users. Furthermore, the rhythm of drastic changes should be intensified, in terms of culture, processes and responsibilities of e-governance of the institution (G2G). It must also be stressed that this last phase should provide greater levels of efficiency, which should be characterized by the reduction of costs and the increase of the utility that is obtained by the users.

By establishing a bridge between the brief literature review, that was previously made, the reality of the Portuguese Universities and, in special, the case of the University of Beira Interior (Covilhã, Portugal), a progressive implementation of formal mechanisms of e-governance, is detected. These mechanisms aim to adapt the extent of services that are offered, in relation to the external and internal public, through the dissemination of ICT, that is a fundamental electronic tool that promotes a greater simplification and transparency of the electronic platforms and the virtual corners specially designed for this effect.

In the University of Beira Interior case, an institutional strategy oriented for the creation of e-governance systems was implemented. They are based on the progressive development of simple, measurable, accountable, realistic, and team-related projects that are, the SMART projects (Backus, 2001).

The phase of development of the systems of e-governance in the Portuguese University that was previously mentioned corresponds to the fourth phase of

transformation, in which, on the one hand, the degree of complexity of the operations is already considerable and, on the other hand, the value that is attributed by the users to the current use of this kind of e-governance systems is, gradually, greater.

The ideal approach is based on the implementation of public marketing practices, which are based on the mix that embraces the SMART Projects with an institutional and competitive approach, which should be controlled and corrected through the use of benchmarking tools directed to an effective implementation of the Institutional and Public Marketing, both at the external and at the internal level.

3. PUBLIC MARKETING AND MARKETING OF THE UNIVERSITIES:

In the last years the public sector has been suffering important changes that have been also having its repercussions in the field of marketing. Dunleavy and Hood (1995) refer that the alterations which were produced in the activities developed by the public administration were translated in several aspects such as the increase of the competition between public entities, private companies and others service supplying organizations; the increase of the subcontracting for the services supply chain; the attempt both to proceed the evaluation of the performance and to introduce more transparency and rigour in the processes; the bigger decentralization and the approach to the users of the services.

Given this context, Flavián and Lozano (2004) mention that an approach between the public sector and its clients has been produced, as a result of the adoption of some marketing strategies by the public administration. This happens in order to satisfy the needs of the citizens more efficiently.

Public marketing concerns to the activities that are carried out by the organizations that form the Public Administration and that intend to satisfy the social needs (Santesmases, 2004). Silvério (2002) also includes, in a broad sense, the activities of the public institutes, public companies and private companies of public interest in the framework of public marketing.

According to Ortigueira (1998), the public marketing is the element that benefits and facilitates the exchange relations between the citizens and the public entities and organizations.

In a broader sense, Epstein (1990) identifies the public marketing as the strategy of the public sector that aims to guarantee that the public has, in fact, the attention that it deserves.

In a more restrictive way, Vela and Bocigas (1996) consider that the public marketing includes a series of techniques that are used by the central, regional or local administration in order to make citizens behave in a certain way (such as making them pay more taxes, drive more prudently, avoid the forest fires, adopt e-governance mechanisms, etc.).

We also believe that the University, perceived as a public service, should adopt adjusted and adequate marketing strategies in order to direct its activities both to external market and internal market.

Nowadays, the Portuguese universities are facing a reality which is ruled out by a growing competition, reduction of the number of students, financial restrictions and changing financing system. Because of this, the future of the Portuguese universities will depend on their capacity to attract and retain students (Alves, 2003; Lopes and Raposo,

2004). The universities will be able to develop this capacity if they both base its activity on competitiveness criteria and use the marketing tools in a more adequate way. Therefore, the public universities need to reach high levels of quality and efficiency in order to attract more graduate and post-graduate students.

In this way, the marketing strategies should be also developed by universities, since they are public organizations that supply services, through the establishment of linkages with several publics. However the development of marketing strategies in the University is not easy and it shouldn't be restricted to questions of image, advertising and sales. It should also embraces, for example, the systematic accomplishment of studies about the external and internal environment, the analysis of the desires, needs and demands of several publics, the periodic revision of the structure of the educational offering, etc.

According to Ponce (2005), the University must be at the service of the society and should be clearly integrated in its external environment. It should influence the society in order to improve its global level of development and it should contribute to a broad social transformation mechanism.

4. THE BENCHMARKING, A TOOL FOR THE PUBLIC MARKETING OF THE UNIVERSITY:

The benchmarking is a process of learning which is structured in a way that makes it possible to evaluate the products/services and the strengths/weaknesses of an organization, aiming its own improvement and auto-control (Garlick and Pryor, 2004). Therefore, it corresponds to a systematic and continuous process that measures and compares the working processes of an organization with the ones of another organization which is considered as a reference.

Methodologically, the main challenge of this tool is not to stand out the linear relations between a University and its region. It comprises a broader set of strategic interactions. The strategic priorities for the regional development should result in the development of processes that connected, for example, to the economic and educational development, or connected to the regeneration of the community and to the creation of new firms, provides a value that is added to the activities that are developed inside the University (Charles and Benneworth, 2002).

According to Garlick and Pryor (2004), the aims of the benchmarking tools are related to the evaluation of the quality and performance of the organizational practices. These tools are based on learning, collaboration, revision and leadership processes that are subject to a continuous improvement process.

In the perspective of McKinnon, Walker and Davis (2000), the benchmarking for the University attends both to provide to its administration ways to evaluate the performance of the institution and to implement improvements in the activities. It can also be used to compare performances and to evaluate its competitive position in comparison to other universities.

The University plays the role of teaching, investigating and offering services to the community. Because of that the benchmarking tries to go for beyond the simple collecting of data. It tries both to identify the interrelationship between the University and the other actors and to identify the definition of broader strategies.

The framework for sustainability. Benchmarks proposals:

The benchmarks that are proposed in this present article in the framework of the *Pro-Sustainability Governance of the University* consider the participation of the University in the creation of e-governance systems, in planning prospective scenarios, and in promoting sustainability at distinct levels, such as administrative systems, academic community, cooperating mechanisms and environment. This framework assumes a great importance as long term development should be based on processes aiming to reach sustainability. Thus, for each benchmark that is proposed in this framework, we consider a set of indicators, which are presented by considering following standardized layouts in Tables 1 to 7.

Table 1. Benchmark (generic layout).

- **Profile:**
  The role played by the University, that will depend on the nature of the benchmark and on the degree of participation, which may result in simultaneous roles: *leader* (commanding and coordinating the parts which are involved in the implementation of the benchmark); *partner* (congregating the parts which are interested in the consecution of common objectives and joint work); *promoter* (fomenting or determining); and/or *propellant* (transmitter of movement)..
- **Justification:**
  Adequate description of the reasons why that element is important and what is really being evaluated.
- **Data sources:**
  Kind of data source (it must be credible and reliable).
- **Good practice:**
  Precise and observable description of the good practices. In this way, the universities will be able to evaluate the implementation of good practices.
- **Operational mechanism:**
  The way how the benchmark should be implemented.
- **Generic indicators:**
  Indicators that will serve as reference to the benchmark evaluation.
- **Evaluation:**
  Retrospective: An evaluation based on the past performance, which is measured through several indicators.
  Qualitative: In this item, we usually ask users to identify its performance, taking as reference a five point scale (the maximum limit [5 points] corresponds to the present practice).
  Evaluation scale:

1	2	3	4	5

  Levels of the scale:
  1.- No participation.
  2.- No substantial participation.
  3.- Internal participation.
  4.- Internal participation and no external substantial participation.
  5.- Substantial participation, both at external and internal level.
- **External:**
  Evaluation carried out by a panel of external specialists.

Table 2. Benchmark A: Creation of e-governance systems.

- **Profile:**
  Promoter.
- **Justification:**
  Electronic governance implies the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which can assume the form of local nets of computers, the internet and the mobile computation. The electronic governance systems in the University aim to simplify and improve the supply of services to its publics, through the promotion of a bigger efficiency and facility of use of the service with support in the technologies, the simplification and transparency in the relationships, the economy of costs, and the development of a modern service with orientation for the customer.
- **Data sources:**
  Primary sources of data (evidences of the electronic governance system and University databases).
- **Good practice:**
  – Creation of mechanisms that facilitate the obtaining and share of several kinds of information and knowledge, from any place and in the most convenient way;
  – Availability of all basic services, in an online basis;
  – Availability of search mechanisms to all agents that interact with the University;
  – Use of ICT in e-learning systems of the University, with the aim of increasing the quality of the education and the information flows;
  – Availability of virtual corners for teachers, members of staff and students, with the aim of simplifying academic and administrative processes;
  – Implementation of an account information system based in a digital platform, that permit to find, conveniently, the indispensable economic and financial information to support the strategic decision-making of the University;
  – Training for the use of ICT, by teachers, staff, and students of the University, in order to increase the penetration rate of penetration of the e-governance systems;
  – Creation of adequate conditions for the development of telematic work and long distance education format, at a postgraduate level.
- **Generic indicators:**
  – Number of virtual corners;
  – Number of Internal Information Systems (IIS) of the University;
  – Number of e-learning platforms;
  – Index of simplification of the administrative and academic service (Number of documents used in e-governance systems/Number of documents used in traditional governance systems);
  – Number of activities of telematic work;
  – Number of post-graduations offered in a long distance education format;
  – Number of national and international research projects related with the development of systems or components to support the e-governance of the University.
- **Evaluation:**
  Retrospective:
  – Number of virtual corners;
  – Number of Internal Information Systems (IIS) of the University;
  – Number of e-learning platforms;
  – Index of simplification of the administrative and academic service (Number of documents used in e-governance systems/Number of documents used in traditional governance systems);
  – Number of activities of telematic work;
  – Number of post-graduations offered in a long distance education format;
  – Number of national and international research projects related with the development of systems or components to support the e-governance of the University.

Continues...

Table 2. Benchmark A: Creation of e-governance systems *(continuation)*.

- **Evaluation:**
  Qualitative:
  Evaluation scale:

1	2	3	4	5
No development of e-governance systems		Internal development of e-governance systems oriented for internal users		Internal and external commitment with the development of e-governance systems oriented both for external and internal users

  Levels of the scale:
  1.- No participation.
  2.- No substantial participation.
  3.- Internal participation.
  4.- Internal participation and no external substantial participation.
  5.- Substantial participation, both at external and internal level.

- **External:**
  Evaluation carried out by a panel of external specialists.

Table 3. Benchmark B: Promotion of the participation of the administrative systems of the University.

- **Profile:**
  Promoter.
- **Justification:**
  The universities that have been having more success in the way they introduce sustainability in their practices in their education process and in their management are those whose administration is more engaged in promoting the long term sustainability. However, even these institutions can fail in the long term, if their actions are not supported by all the sub-systems of the institution. The promotion of the sustainability can assume several forms: the adoption of politics that assure that the sustainable practices are incorporated in the way of living of the university (in what respects to the internal public as well as to the external public); the implementation of projects that may be sustainable (ex. recycling, green technologies, training about environment practices); etc.
- **Data sources:**
  Primary sources of information and internal documents (that certify the commitment with the sustainable principles of the corporative plan and of changes implementation).
- **Good practice:**
  Encouraging and stimulating the work of a multidisciplinary group formed by members of all services, of education and external departments, in order to create a formal commitment directed to the development of sustainability promotional activities.
- **Generic indicators:**
  – Formal piece of the commitment;
  – Evaluation of the working group.

Continues...

Table 3. Benchmark B: Promotion of the participation of the administrative systems of the University *(continuation)*.

- **Evaluation:**
  Qualitative:
  Evaluation scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Inexistence of a formal commitment with the sustainable development		A formal group participates, regularly, in meetings in order to review the performance, but there are still many limitations		The administration and the various departments work, in a pro-active way, in order to improve the sustainable development

  Levels of the scale:
  1.- No participation.
  2.- No substantial participation.
  3.- Internal participation.
  4.- Internal participation and no external substantial participation.
  5.- Substantial participation, both at external and internal level.

- **External:**
  Evaluation carried out by a panel of external specialists.

Table 4. Benchmark C: Mechanisms of interaction between the students and the local community.

- **Profile:**
  Promoter.
- **Justification:**
  Despite of the importance of education offering sustainability, the civic responsibilities of students must be stressed. The University should also carry out an effort in order to encourage the students to organize and to participate in activities related to the promotion of associations and to the supply services at the local community.
- **Data sources:**
  Primary sources of information.
- **Good practice:**
  The University can encourage its students to contribute both to the organization of activities and to the supply of services to the community in a responsible way. The intervention of the institution aims to assure that all students have the opportunity to participate in activities that aim the sustainable development of the community. Furthermore, it aims to incorporate the criterion of communitarian participation in the attribution of research premiums; to promote periods of training in organizations where the students can demonstrate and implement practices of sustainable development; and to promote the elimination of social exclusion barriers.
- **Generic indicators:**
  – Number of organized and implemented activities;
  – Periodicity of the activities.

Continues...

Table 4. Benchmark C: Mechanisms of interaction between the students and the local community *(continuation)*.

- **Evaluation:**

  Retrospective:

  – Number of activities which are developed by the students in articulation with the community/Total number of activities which are developed by the students.

  Qualitative:

  Evaluation scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Inexistence of formal mechanisms for encouraging the participation of students in local community groups		Existence of several networks in order to promote interacting relationships established between the students and the local community		Existence of formal mechanisms in order to assure that students have knowledge about sustainability and that they participate, in pro-active way, in the local community activities

  Levels of the scale:

  1.- No participation.
  2.- No substantial participation.
  3.- Internal participation.
  4.- Internal participation and no external substantial participation.
  5.- Substantial participation, both at external and internal level.

- **External:**

  Evaluation carried out by a panel of external specialists.

Table 5. Benchmark D: Mechanisms of cooperation between University and units of business.

- **Profile:**

  Leader, promoter.

- **Justification:**

  The University plays an important role in the edification of the regional social system, since it contributes for developing both the human capital and the training of professionals. In this sense, the promotion of a set of initiatives that reinforce the cooperation between the institutions of higher education and the firms/institutions of the external environment is essential. The opportunities that result from this kind of cooperation could be located at the level of the retention of highly qualified human capital in the region, and at the promotion of exploratory contacts for promoting interaction relationships between firms, R&D centres and universities located in different areas.

- **Data sources:**

  Primary sources of information.

- **Good practice:**

  One of the functions of the University is the creation of mechanisms that stimulate the cooperation between firms and other entities, in order to somehow contribute for the sustainability of the University and the region. This cooperation is the main transmission channel of the knowledge from the universities, into the local enterprises and regional economy. It can also assume several orientations, but they must be assisted and supported by offices which act as an interface between the University and the external environment.

Continues...

Table 5. Benchmark D: Mechanisms of cooperation between University and units of business *(continuation)*.

- **Generic indicators:**
  – Identification of offices which promote the cooperation with the external environment;
  – Identification of offices which promote specific training;
  – Number of cooperation projects.

- **Evaluation:**
  Retrospective:
  – Number of offices that support firms;
  – Number of students who participate in vocational training programs;
  – Number of activities which are developed by the offices that promote cooperation.
  Qualitative:
  Evaluation scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Inexistence of formal mechanisms to develop the cooperation with the external environment		Existence of some partnerships in order to promote the cooperation with the external environment		Existence of formal mechanisms that assure the cooperation with the external environment

  Levels of the scale:
  1.- No participation.
  2.- No substantial participation.
  3.- Internal participation.
  4.- Internal participation and no external substantial participation.
  5.- Substantial participation, both at external and internal level.

- **External:**
  Evaluation carried out by a panel of external specialists.

Table 6. Benchmark E: Creation and certification of an institutional system of environmental management.

- **Profile:**
  Leader, promoter.

- **Justification:**
  The academic and research activities should keep the objective of creating and, subsequently, certifying an *Environmental Management System* (EMS), given the importance that the promotion of environmental sustainability assumes.

- **Data sources:**
  Primary sources of information (the existence of an EMS and related researches).

- **Good practice:**
  The creation of an EMS implies the development of a simple system that covers the products/services which are used and delivered; the continuous development of the human resources; and the communication of the results to the administration. It also involves the construction of a formal system in order to assure the education and the research activities in the area, as well as the production of an annual report with suggestions of improvements and its subsequent communication to the community.

Continues...

Table 6. Benchmark E: Creation and certification of an institutional system of environmental management *(continuation)*.

- **Generic indicators:**
  – Evidences of an EMS;
  – Environmental practices which are implemented by the institution (for example, the use of residual water, saving of energy, use of alternative non-pollutant energies, promotion of recycling, preservation of natural resources, etc.).

- **Evaluation:**
  Retrospective:
  – Number of environmental practices.
  Qualitative:
  Evaluation scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Inexistence of an EMS for the measurement of the University environmental performance		Existence of a formal EMS with targets and procedures which are set for each department. Annual evaluation of the University performance		The EMS is, completely, implemented and the practices are disseminated at the institution

  Levels of the scale:
  1.- No participation.
  2.- No substantial participation.
  3.- Internal participation.
  4.- Internal participation and no external substantial participation.
  5.- Substantial participation, both at external and internal level.

- **External:**
  Evaluation carried out by a panel of external specialists.

Table 7. Benchmark F: Design of prospective scenarios.

- **Profile:**
  Leader, promoter, partner.

- **Justification:**
  The Universities should continuously apply forecasting techniques in order to design prospective scenarios that provide a greater adequacy of the strategic development plan of the institution in articulation with international, national, and local agents and also assure this way the desirable sustainability of the developed activities.

- **Data sources:**
  – Secondary sources of data;
  – Primary sources of information.

- **Good practice:**
  Organizing and promoting activities of forecasting and designing scenarios.

Continues...

Table 7. Benchmark F: Design of prospective scenarios *(continuation)*.

- **Generic indicators:**
  – Results of impact studies;
  – Forecasting economic and operational indicators related both to the institution and to the region (ex. multipliers, GDP, number of students, income per capita, etc.);
  – Analytical instruments of strategic planning.

- **Evaluation:**
  Retrospective:
  – Number of studies related both to the design and construction of prospective scenarios.
  Qualitative:
  Evaluation scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Inexistence of forecasting studies to prospective scenarios		Internal participation in forecasting studies to draw prospective scenarios at the regional level, without participation of external agents		Effective participation of the University in forecasting studies with transmission and use of the information provided by external partners

  Levels of the scale:
  1.- No participation.
  2.- No substantial participation.
  3.- Internal participation.
  4.- Internal participation and no external substantial participation.
  5.- Substantial participation, both at external and internal level.

- **External:**
  Evaluation carried out by a panel of external specialists.

5. CONCLUSIONS:

The mechanisms of e-governance assume a special importance, in terms of developing governance strategies that are directed to the sustainability of public institutions, in general, and of University, in particular.

This growing importance is justified by the creation of digital platforms for offering distinct services. On the one hand, they make the internal relations (G2G) more efficient, and on the other hand, they contribute to the establishment of new kinds of external relations (G2B and G2C).

The existence of this kind of platforms should be integrated in an institutional information system, in order to facilitate the adoption and the subsequent control of the best institutional practices, both at an internal and an external level. Additionally, these platforms should be adequate to the proposal of benchmarking tools now presented and applied in the University.

These benchmarking tools help the University to identify both their strengths and weaknesses at an internal level, and to face threats and opportunities at the external level, in order to improve global quality of services and efficiency. This will contribute to speed up the improvement of best practices and performance of the institution.

The use of benchmarking tools also provides a means of assessing the regional impact of the University, namely, in what concerns the business creation, entrepreneurship, human capital and innovation processes.

The resulting conditions of the public marketing practices implementation represent an opportunity to expand the traditional concept of marketing to a new field with new challenges: the public marketing. However, a marketing concept that aims to be suitable for public policy it must be based on an exchange between government and citizens, meeting both the criteria for a marketing exchange and the features of the political governance. A public sector marketing orientation can help University administration to enhance relationships with its publics.

In the public and institutional framework, the sustainability of these networks requires the expansion of the Kotlerian Marketing mix approach based on the 4P's (Product, Promotion, Place and Price) into a new digital marketing mix approach for e-governance mechanisms, which must explore 4C's (Customer needs and wants, Communication, Convenience, and Cost to the Customer). This aims to reach even best practices, in terms of the sustainable functioning of the University. In future researches, this topic should be developed, taking into consideration the results from the adoption of the proposed benchmarking tools by the Universities.

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