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## Innovative marketing as a tool for building a positive image of an institution of higher education and increasing the competitiveness of its graduates - Analysis of the functional use of projects of the Department of Marketing Communications at the Faculty of Multimedia Communications of TBU in Zlín and their potential for integration into the teaching process

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### Abstract

Authors of this paper focus on mapping the current trends at institutions of higher education in the context of combining theory with practice during the study, thanks to which the future graduates will be able to find a better job on the labour market. Part of this paper is an analysis of the functional connection between the real life and a university study program through projects implemented at a selected academic workplace, within innovative marketing, whose task is to build a positive image of the institution of higher education and its reputation in the public as well as professional environment. Student projects, as a part of an innovative marketing, combine theoretical lessons with engaging students into a real-life working process in the given field and the possibilities of such field to provide them a cooperation with a selected commercial sector, application of the obtained theoretical knowledge in real life, further personal development, teamwork, own portfolio and other competencies that provide them with a strategic advantage when looking for their future job.

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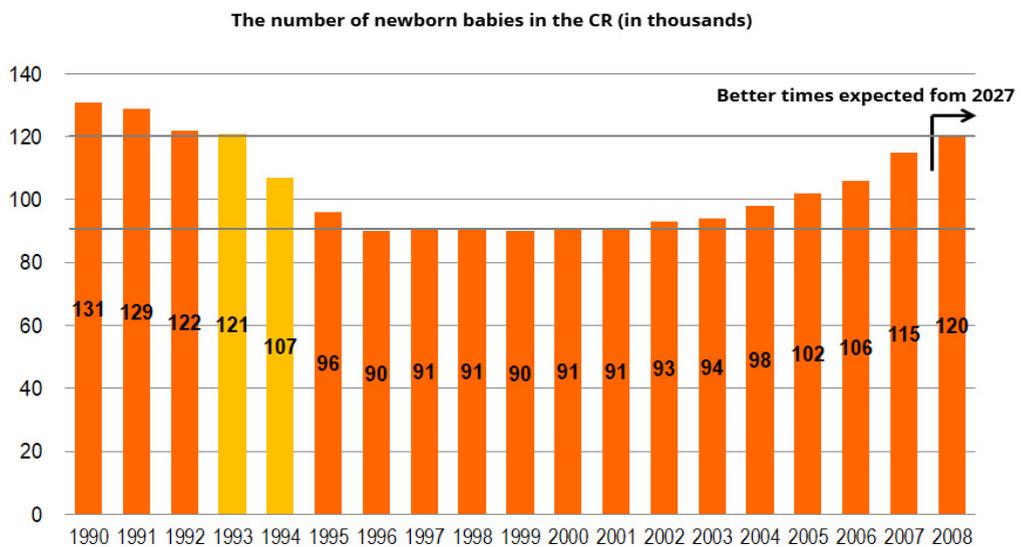
**Keywords:** innovative marketing; higher education institution; student projects; building up a positive image of higher learning; the competitiveness of graduates; linking theory and practice

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## 1. An Analysis of the Target Group of Prospective Applicants for Admissions to Higher Education Institutions in the CR (Demographic Indicators, the Current Situation, and a Prognosis for the Future)

Nowadays, there are growing concerns that the number of secondary-school students will soon decrease significantly. This will not only dramatically affect the educational structure within this age group, but it will also affect further and higher education, as well as the overall market situation influenced by the integration of job seekers in the labour market.

The following graph (Graph 1.) depicts a population curve showing the number of newborn babies (in thousands) in the CR between 1990 and 2008. There was a significant decrease in the number of newborn babies in the CR between 1993 and 1996, when their numbers even fell by about 31 thousand. Therefore, a significant decrease in the number of applicants for admissions to higher education institutions should be expected in years to come.



Graph 1. Population curve – the number of newborn babies in the CR between 1990 and 2008 (expressed in thousands), Source: Internal materials of Tomas Bata University in Zlín processed according to the: Czech Statistical Office[online]. [cited on 2014-06-28]. Available on: <http://www.czso.cz/csu/2010ediciplan.nsf/p/4032-10>

In the 1990s, the Czech economy as well as the whole society went through significant transformational change, which also had an impact on the higher education system. New private and public higher education institutions were gradually established, new and up-to-date education programmes were offered, and new educational levels became available. Population decline among students entering higher education also affects Tomas Bata University in Zlín (abbr. TBU in Zlín). In the academic years 2010/2011 and 2012/2013, their numbers decreased by 1,012.

It may be assumed that population decline among students entering higher education will result in an excess of supply over demand. Thus, individual higher education institutions will be put under more intense competitive pressure and their efforts to address as many prospective applicants to their degree courses as possible will be intensified. Although the situation may be viewed as negative, it also has a positive effect on higher education. In this way, higher education institutions are being forced to improve the quality of the degree programmes and courses offered, and to adapt their offer to the current market demand – the demands of prospective employers (businesses

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