

How Do Universities Contact their Alumni? Practices of the Best Universities in the World University Rankings

Üniversiteler mezunlarıyla nasıl iletişim kurarlar? Dünya üniversite sıralamasındaki en iyi üniversitelerin uygulamaları

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Özet

Son yıllarda, yükseköğretim kurumları tarafından sunulan hizmetlerin kalitesi, hem araştırmacılar hem de politika yapımcılar tarafından yoğun bir şekilde tartışılmaktadır. Şüphesiz, mezun olunan okul ile mezunlar arasında güçlü ve yaşam boyu süren bir ilişki, yükseköğretim kurumlarının kalitesinin temel göstergelerinden biridir. Bu çalışma dünyadaki en iyi üniversiteler tarafından mezunlarıyla yaşam boyu süren bir ilişki kurmak için kullanılan araç ve metodları incelemektedir. Çalışmada yapılan ankette mezunlarla iletişim kurmak için kullanılan kanallar, üniversiteler tarafından mezunlara sunulan hizmetler ve mezunların üniversitelere hangi yollarla katkı yaptıklarına ilişkin sorular yer almaktadır. Anket, Times Higher Education tarafından yapılan 2016–2017 Dünya Üniversiteler Sıralamasındaki en iyi 200 üniversiteye gönderilmiş ve böylece en iyi uygulamaların belirlenmesine çalışılmıştır. Çalışmanın literatüre ana katkısı, üniversiteler ile mezunlar arasındaki ilişkiye yönelik en iyi uygulamaların temel unsurlarını açıklamak ve bu ilişkinin iyileştirilebilmesi için uygulanabilecek politika önerileri sunmaktır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Mezunlar, kalite, üniversite-mezun ilişkisi.

Since 1980s, higher education institutions have been facing an increasing competition in most of the countries (Heckman & Guskey, 1998). As a result of this, these institutions have started to implement more dynamic practices similar to the business sector (Stephenson & Yerger, 2015). Although applying business practices, in particular, marketing

Abstract

In recent years, the quality of the services provided by higher education institutions has been intensively debated both by researchers and policy makers. Undoubtedly, a strong and lifelong relationship between alumni and their alma mater is one of the main indicators of the quality of higher education institutions. This study investigates the tools and methods used by the best universities in the world in order to create and develop a lifelong relationship with their alumni. The survey used in the study asked about the channels used to contact with alumni, the services provided to alumni by the universities and the ways used by the alumni to contribute to their universities. This survey was sent to the best two hundred universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016–2017 in order to find out best practices. The main contribution of the present study is to explain the fundamental elements of best practices with regard to the relations between alumni and universities and to present policy proposals which can be implemented in order to improve these relations.

Keywords: Alumni, quality, university-alumni relationship.

strategies, to the higher education institutions is still relatively uncommon, universities and colleges have long been concerned with the area of alumni relations (Heckman & Guskey, 1998).

Without doubt, alumni have a significant role in giving support to higher education institutions (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010). One of the main contributions of alumni is the

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critical assessment of the benefits of education they received from their universities (Moore & Kuol, 2007). Moreover, alumni can provide a number of other services such as making financial donations, serving on advisory boards, assisting in capital campaigns, attracting prospective students and offering cooperative education and employment opportunities for students and graduates (Heckman & Guskey, 1998).

Although higher education institutions can obtain many benefits from their alumni, the number of existing studies which focus on alumni relations development is very small and most of the studies deal with the fund-raising role of alumni from a US perspective (Ebert, Axelsson, & Harbor, 2015). In this study, we try to fill in this gap and contribute to the existing literature by investigating the tools, methods, and channels used to create and develop alumni relations in the best universities in the world. Although developing strong ties with alumni has become a significant issue in Turkish higher education system in recent years, most of the Turkish universities still do not have a strong and continuous relationship with their alumni. By presenting the best practices used to develop alumni relations in the world, it is expected that this study will be a helpful guide for the Turkish universities which face difficulties with regard to developing a firm and permanent relationship with their alumni.

Literature Review

In the existing literature, although there are many studies which investigate the fundraising component of alumni relations, the number of studies examining the channels used by universities in order to create and strengthen the relations with their alumni is very limited. In this section, the results of studies which investigate the determinants and dimensions of alumni support are discussed, and ■ Table 1 sums up the results of these studies.

Belfield and Beney (2000) examined the determinants of alumni giving by employing data from two public sector universities in the UK. The results of the empirical analysis show that there are systematic differences in alumni support which depend on the personal characteristics, the efficiency of request and the features and the quality of the higher education that the students receive (Belfield & Beney, 2000). McAlexander and Koenig (2001) explored the effect of alumni-university relationship and alumni evaluations on loyalty. Within the study, a telephone survey was used and 481 alumni who graduated from a large western university in the US three to eight years before the study responded to the survey (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). The results indicate that the relationship between alumni and the university influences loyalty-related behaviours such

as donating money, purchasing licenced products, and suggesting the university (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001).

Wunnava and Lauze (2001) investigated the determinants of alumni giving at Middlebury College (this is a small, private, liberal arts college in the US) by using a micro level dataset of alumni donations which covers the period between 1972 and 1994. The results of the regression analysis indicate that the main determinants of alumni giving are volunteering during college, graduation from a social science division, language school attendance, residence in states with alumni chapters and employment within the financial sector. (Wunnava & Lauze, 2001). Moreover, Wunnava and Lauze (2001) found that alumni who have relatives attending the same college and alumni who played sports during school years are more likely to donate than others.

Clotfelter (2003) examined alumni giving at 34 colleges and universities in the US. In the analysis, the results of a survey mailed to every person who registered between 1951 and 1976 at these colleges and universities (The number of alumni participated to the survey is 12214) were used (Clotfelter, 2003). Based on the results, Clotfelter (2003) suggests that the level of contributions is related to higher income and the degree of alumni's satisfaction with the school experience (Clotfelter, 2003). Gaier (2005) probed into the relationship between level of academic satisfaction and alumni involvement. Alumni giving and/or alumni participating with their university is defined as alumni involvement (Gaier, 2005). Within the study, the survey results from 1608 alumni who graduated from a Midwest State University were used and it was found that together with the increasing level of academic satisfaction, the propensity of alumni giving and alumni participation rises (Gaier, 2005).

Levine (2008) analysed the relationship between the communication tools of colleges and the donations of undergraduate alumni. In order to investigate this issue, Levine (2008) used a survey which was sent to 250 annual giving and development directors at private US colleges. 58 of these directors responded to the questions in the survey (Levine, 2008). According to the results of the analysis, it was found that although the total number of communication tools sent to the alumni is not correlated with the higher amounts of alumni giving, the frequency of the communication tools' delivery has a positive effect on the level of alumni giving (Levine, 2008).

Sung and Yang (2009) investigated the associations among the factors which influence the supportive attitude of students to their universities. The data set used was obtained from a survey of undergraduate students who attended a private university in Seoul in the Fall term of 2005 (Sung &

Table 1. Studies analysing alumni-university relations in the literature.

Author(s)	Sample	Results
Belfield & Beney (2000)	Two public universities in the UK	Alumni support depends on personal characteristics, the efficiency of request and the features and the quality of the higher education.
McAlexander & Koenig (2001)	481 alumni graduated from a large Western university in the US	The relationship between alumni and university influences loyalty-related behaviour.
Wunnava & Lauze (2001)	25,185 alumni who graduated from Middlebury College	The main determinants of alumni giving are volunteering for the college, majoring in a social science division, language school attendance, residence in states with alumni chapters and employment within the financial sector.
Clotfelter (2003)	12,214 alumni who registered different colleges and universities in 1951 and 1976 in the US	The level of contributions is related to higher income and the degree of satisfaction with alumni's school experience.
Gaier (2005)	1608 alumni from a midwest state university	Together with the increasing level of academic satisfaction the propensity of alumni giving and alumni participation rises.
Levine (2008)	250 annual giving and development directors at private US colleges	The frequency of communication tools' delivery has a positive effect on the level of alumni giving.
Sung & Yang (2009)	Undergraduate students who attended a private university in the fall term of 2005	Universities develop a good relationship with their students in order to increase their support.
Weerts & Ronca (2009)	1441 alumni who graduated from University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW)	The level of donation is associated with income, religious background, alumni beliefs about institutional needs and the number of institutions competing for alumni giving.
Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford (2010)	A dataset from a research-intensive university	Non-monetary support behaviours are realised through political advocacy and volunteerism.
Meer & Rosen (2012)	13,831 alumni from an anonymous research university	Student loans and scholarship aid decrease alumni contributions.
McDearmon (2013)	A large public research university in the Midwest of the US	The likelihood of support the university is higher for those who have increased alumni role identity than the others who don't have it.
Bastedo, Samuels, & Kleinman (2014)	A data set which is comprised of 240 medium and large private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States over the period of 2002–2008	There is a positive relationship between charismatic leadership and the amount of financial donations.
Borden, Shaker, & Kienker (2014)	A large, public, multi-campus higher education institution across three years	Mixed results with regard to the relationship among alumni status, propensity to donate and the amount donated.
Stephenson & Bell (2014)	2763 alumni of a medium-sized state-run higher education institution in the Mid-Atlantic region of the US	The number of donations rises together with the increasing brand identification.
Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon (2015)	A data set obtained from a private elite university for two consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students	Student giving strongly predicts young alumni's donation patterns.
Skari (2014)	A multistate sample of 7330 alumni from 18 public community colleges in the US	The determinants of the probability of donation are student experience, age, wealth and donating to other organizations.
Stephenson & Yerger (2015)	2763 alumni of a medium-sized state-run higher education institution in the Mid-Atlantic region of the US.	Satisfaction with student affairs has a bigger effect on alumni support than the satisfaction with campus resources.
Ebert, Axelsson, & Harbor (2015)	Stockholm University	An efficient alumni programme should be constructed by taking into consideration the institutional aims for this programme and it should be unique to the conditions of the university.

Yung, 2009). The results of the analysis indicate that universities develop a good relationship with their students in order to increase their support (Sung & Yang, 2009). Weerts and Ronca (2009) examined the features of alumni donors by using a dataset of 1441 alumni graduated from University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW). Weerts and Ronca (2009) employed classification and regression tree methodology and found that the level of donation is associated with income, religious background, alumni beliefs about institutional

needs, and the number of institutions competing for alumni giving.

Weerts et al. (2010) sought non-monetary support behaviours of alumni by using a dataset from a research extensive university. In order to examine this issue, Weerts et al. (2010) used both focus groups and confirmatory factor analysis. According to the results of the analysis, Weerts et al. (2010) concluded that non-monetary support behaviours are realised through political advocacy (contacting legislators, the gover-



nor's office, local politicians and serving on a political action team) and volunteerism (mentoring new alumni, recruiting students, and participating in special events).

Meer and Rosen (2012) investigated the effect of financial aid packages for undergraduates on their subsequent donations as alumni. The authors use a micro level dataset from an anonymous research university (13,831 alumni) in their estimations (Meer & Rosen, 2012). The findings of this analysis generally indicate that student loans and scholarship aid decrease alumni contributions (Meer & Rosen, 2012). McDearmon (2013) examined the relationship between alumni role identity and the behaviours of support in a large public research university in the Midwest of the US by conducting an online survey. McDearmon (2013) concludes that the likelihood of support for the university is higher for those who have increased alumni role identity than the others who do not have it.

Bastedo, Samuels and Kleinman (2014) investigated the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational performance in higher education institutions. Bastedo et al. (2014) measured organizational performance by employing presidential compensation, applications and donations from alumni, foundations and corporations as dependent variables. In the analysis, the authors used a data set comprised of 240 medium and large private non-profit colleges and universities in the US over the period of 2002–2008 (Bastedo et al., 2014). According to the results of the analysis, Bastedo et al. (2014) conclude that there is a positive relationship between charismatic leadership and the amount of financial donations from alumni, foundations and corporations. Borden, Shaker, and Kienker (2014) compared philanthropic giving by faculty and staff alumni with the philanthropic giving of non-alumni faculty and staff. The authors analysed a large, public, and multi-campus higher education institution for three years and found that the tendency to donate and the amount of donation among those who preferred to donate changes according to personal and positional characteristics (Borden et al., 2014).

Stephenson and Bell (2014) investigated the factors which determine alumni donations by drawing on a survey sent to the alumni of a medium-sized state-run university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the US. The data set consists of 2763 surveys (Stephenson & Bell, 2014). According to the results, the authors suggest that together with the increasing brand identification, the number of donations also rises (Stephenson & Bell, 2014).

Skari (2014) analysed the determinants of alumni giving by using a multistate sample of 7330 alumni. The dataset was obtained from 18 public community colleges located in different states of the US (Skari, 2014). Based on the results, Skari (2014) argues that the determinants of the probability of dona-

tion are student experience, age, wealth and donating to other organizations.

Freeland, Spenner, and McCalmon (2015) examined the factors that determine the contributions of students and if student giving is a predictor of young alumni donation patterns. The authors used a data set obtained from a private elite university for two consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students. According to the results, Freeland et al., (2015) suggest that student giving strongly predicts young alumni's donation patterns.

Stephenson and Yerger (2015) analysed the association between alumni satisfaction, choosing to donate, and donor level by employing a data set obtained from a survey which was sent to all alumni of a medium-sized, state university in the mid-Atlantic region of the US. In the analysis, authors used the responses from 2763 surveys. Based on the results, Stephenson and Yerger (2015) argue that satisfaction with student affairs has a bigger effect on alumni support than the satisfaction with campus resources.

Unlike the previous studies explained above, Ebert et al. (2015) investigated the development of alumni relations by focusing on Stockholm University as a case study. Ebert et al. (2015) explored the efforts of Stockholm University in order to create and develop alumni relations. Based on the evaluations, the authors argue that an efficient alumni programme should be constructed by taking into consideration the institutional aims for this programme and it should be unique to the conditions of the university (Ebert et al., 2015).

As can be clearly seen from the above literature review, almost all of the studies in the existing literature focus on alumni donations and do not investigate the tools and methods that the universities use in order to develop the relations with their alumni. Hence, in this study we try to fill in this gap in the literature by assessing the methods used by the best universities in the world for creating and maintaining quality alumni relations.

Methodology of the Study

In order to examine the tools and methods used for developing alumni relations qualitatively, we draw on the survey technique. The survey technique is used to obtain information and opinions of respondents about a specific issue. Since we aim to find out and to evaluate the tools and methods used to develop alumni relations, we chose this technique. We sent a short questionnaire to top 200 universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016–2017 (Times Higher Education, 2016). Since all of these universities have alumni relations departments, the questionnaire was directly sent to these departments by e-mail. Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016–2017



covers 980 universities from 79 countries and evaluates these universities in terms of teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook (Times Higher Education, 2016).

■ Table 2 shows the questions of our questionnaire.

The questions in our questionnaire are mainly about the channels used to contact with alumni, the services provided to alumni, how the university obtains information about the career development of its alumni, the contributions of alumni to the university, and the amount of alumni donations.

We sent this questionnaire to the top 200 universities in November 2016 and we obtained responses from 16 universities between November 2016 and January 2017. These universities are:

- University of Oxford, UK
- Imperial College London, UK
- ETH, Zurich-Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland
- University of Michigan, US
- National University of Singapore, Singapore
- London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK
- New York University, US
- University of Melbourne, Australia
- University of British Columbia, Canada
- University of Maryland, US
- Purdue University, US
- University of Groningen, Netherlands
- University of Basel, Switzerland
- University of Geneva, Switzerland
- Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, US
- Technical University of Denmark, Denmark

Among these universities, Imperial College London, National University of Singapore, University of Geneva and Technical University of Denmark stated that they didn't have enough data to reply our questions or they suggested us to examine their alumni websites. Here, we present the answers of the other 12 universities which responded to the questionnaire.

Findings & Discussion

■ Table 3, 4, and 5 show the responses of the universities. In ■ Table 3, we see the replies of the University of Oxford, ETH-Zurich-Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, University of Michigan and London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). ■ Table 4 presents the replies of the New York University, University of British Columbia, University of Maryland, and Purdue University. Finally, ■

■ Table 2. The questionnaire.

Questions
1. How do you contact with your alumni (mail, e-mail, newsletters, social media)? Could you please explain briefly?
2. Do you use a specific programme in order to contact with your alumni? Could you please explain briefly?
3. Which services do you provide to your alumni? Could you please explain briefly?
4. How do you get informed about their career development? Could you please explain briefly?
5. How do you update your alumni's career development information? Could you please explain briefly?
6. In general, how do you keep your ties strong with your alumni? Could you please explain briefly?
7. In which way can your alumni contribute to your university? Could you please explain briefly?
8. Approximately what is the proportion of the donations of alumni in your university's total budget?
9. (Optional) How much donation do you collect from your alumni annually?
10. Please write below if you have any other comments about your alumni services.

Table 5 shows the replies of the University of Melbourne, University of Groningen, University of Basel and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

When we analyse the answers of the University of Oxford, we find that the University of Oxford uses online tools such as e-mails, e-newsletters, alumni office website and social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) in order to contact their alumni. The university draws on the Development and Alumni Relations System (DARS) which is a bespoke customer relationship management tool created by the Blackboud. The Blackboud is an American software supplier whose products are designed for non-profit organizations. The services provided by the University of Oxford are annual alumni weekend in Oxford, alumni weekends in North America (every two years), Asia and continental Europe (approximately in every three years), regional alumni events, career services through the career services office, professional networking events organized by the alumni office, accessing online professional networking platforms, discounts, accessing electronic journals and guided tours. The University of Oxford encourages its alumni to complete the cover sheet that accompanies the Oxford Today (semiannual magazine) in order to get informed about alumni's career development. Also, when the alumni sign up to the Oxford Community online, they are asked to complete their professional details. To update information about career development of its alumni, the University of Oxford mainly relies on updates received from its alumni. The University of Oxford maintains



■ **Table 3.** The responses of the universities (Part I).

Universities/Questions	University of Oxford	ETH, Zurich-Swiss Federal Institute of Technology	University of Michigan	London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
Methods used to contact with alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mail - E-newsletters - Social media - Alumni office website - Oxford Today Magazine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mail - Newsletter 10 times per year - Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing, Twitter) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mail - Monthly e-newsletter - Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) - Monthly print magazine - Direct mail and some printed materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mails - Monthly e-newsletter - Mails - Annual magazine - Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
Programmes used to contact with alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and alumni relations system (DARS) 	For e-mails database is used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salesforce - Marketing cloud - Social studio 	iModules
Services provided to alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Annual Alumni Weekend in Oxford - Alumni weekends - Regional alumni events - Career services - Discounts - Access to electronic journals - Guided tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ETH Alumni Network - Career Network - Training - Career Consulting and Coaching - Job Platform - ETH Alumni Publications - Discounts - Access to the ETH library - Social events - MyAlumni Portal - Lifelong forwarding e-mail address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career services and professional development - 5 star travel programme - Family camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career services - Learning and development opportunities - Alumni mentoring network - Alumni e-mail forwarding services - Free lifelong access to the LSE library - Access to the LSE research - Discounts
Information about career development of alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Oxford Alumni Community online - By the cover sheet accompanies to Oxford Today 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through MyAlumni Portal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career team - Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Survey of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE survey) - Career info when alumni register for events or sign up for an account on the alumni website
Updating info. about career dev. of alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updates from Alumni 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through MyAlumni Portal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salesforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DLHE Survey - Career info. When alumni register for events or sign up for an account on the alumni website
Keeping strong tie with alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing events - Regular communication - Supporting volunteer-led groups - Providing alumni with services and resources - Interviewing them for the Alumni Voices Podcast Series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invitation to events - Newsletter 10 times a year - Mailings with interesting information - Career services - Offering benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through the contact methods and services provided to alumni - Maintaining a strong and consistent brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A regular programme of communications, events, volunteering opportunities, international groups
Contributions of alumni to the university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mentoring students - Organizing events - Making financial donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through donations - Acting as ambassadors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donating funds - Giving their time to volunteer at events - Offering their skills and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donations - Volunteering as group leaders, committee members, speakers at events - Mentoring current students
The proportions of donations	No information	No information	No information	No information
The amount of donations	No information	No information	No information	No information

■ **Table 4.** The responses of the universities (Part II).

Universities/Questions	New York University	University of Brit. Colombia	University of Maryland	Purdue University
Methods used to contact with alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- E-mail- Social media- Mail (in the US)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- E-newsletters or e-blasts- Mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- E-mail- E-newsletters- Social media- Mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- E-mail,- Newsletters- Social media- Mail (only in the US)
Programmes used to contact with alumni	iModules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social media-E-mail-Blackboud	Currently no Considering to use Graduway	iModules
Services provided to alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Alumni Programming for networking- Career Advice- Discounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Regional global events- Alumni Cards- Library borrowing privileges and journal access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Online mentoring services- Various naming opportunities- Connection point for questions	
Information about career development of alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Updates from Alumni- When they get in touch with career development department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Updates from Alumni- LinkedIn- Research team that looks at the info. on the internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Self reported- LinkedIn- Search agencies contracted to Purdue Uni.
Updating info. about career dev. of alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Updates from Alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Updates from Alumni- LinkedIn- Research team that looks at the info. on the internet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- CRM iModules- Advance CS System
Keeping strong tie with alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Through communications strategy via communication channels- Through events around the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Regular communication- New alumni centre	Regular communication on what is going on within the campus and how they can connect with other alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The university is a membership based organization- The university also has a student membership based organization
Contributions of alumni to the university	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mentoring students- Organizing events- Volunteering their time by participating alumni club	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mentoring students- Volunteering their time- Making financial donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Buying a membership in the alumni association- Buying naming rights to a variety spaces and places on campus- Making financial donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Time (volunteerism)- Talent (serving on advisory councils, speaking in classes, mentoring the students,- Treasure (money, books, antique eq., lab. eq., real estate)
The proportions of donations	Very small	-	Most of the money comes from the state	Small
The amount of donations	No information	1.5 billion USD for 7 years	2.5 million USD	300 million USD annually

strong ties with its alumni by organizing events, communicating with its alumni regularly, providing alumni with services and resources, and interviewing them for the Alumni Voices Podcast Series. The alumni contribute to the university through a number of channels such as mentoring students, organizing academic, cultural, social, business and networking events, organizing Fresher's parties for students, organizing events for prospective students, and making financial donations. Finally, we did not receive any information about the proportion and amount of financial donations of the University of Oxford's alumni.

The ETH-Zurich Swiss Federal Institute of Technology relies on e-mails and social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing and Twitter in order to contact its alumni. The institute also sends newsletters ten times a year to the alumni. Although the ETH-Zurich does not use a specific programme in order to contact their alumni, the institute benefits from its own database for e-mails. The services provided under the ETH Alumni Network offer various benefits such as training, career consulting and coaching, job platform (online job board), ETH alumni publications (newsletter, job journal, globe), discounts



■ **Table 5.** The responses of the universities (Part III).

Universities/Questions	University of Melbourne	University of Groningen	University of Basel	Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Methods used to contact alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mail - Mail - Alumni magazine (semiannual) - Social Media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram) - E-news 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mail - Newsletters - Alumni Magazine - Social media - Events - Telephone Campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mail - Mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mail - Social media - Mail
Programmes used to contact alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swift Digital - Advance System integrated with Encompass and Orion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Database: Raisers Edge - Digital Newsletter: Mailchimp - Events: Eventbrite 	Being at graduation and graduation ceremonies	iModules (current use) Marketo (in the near future)
Services provided to alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discounts - Concession-priced library borrowing membership - Exclusive access to the university's online library service - Alumni events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional and international alumni networks - Each faculty and school has its own alumni programme 	They have a small catalogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteer opportunities - Use of university gyms - Libraries - Discounts - Online store - Credit card - Career services - Local and national retailer discounts - Travel program
Information about career development of alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graduate outcomes survey - Career outcomes survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Alumni Monitor - LinkedIn 	Done by career services of the university	It is self-reported. The information is not very well
Updating info. about career development of alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update your details campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LinkedIn - Questionnaires in Newsletters 	They are not active in this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alumni database - Records from alumni online/LinkedIn
Keeping strong ties with alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alumni relations staff in every faculty - Hosting a series of university wide engagement events - Volunteering alumni opportunities 	Alumni Chapters: Knit groups of alumni Organizing gatherings a few times per year	Providing information about university's events	Many ways: buying a university t-shirt, getting a credit card, being a volunteer in alumni board, donations
Contributions of alumni to the university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving donations to Believe - Volunteering as committee members, guest speakers - Event volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ubo Emmius: A fund for donation to scientific research - Fund raising campaigns - Crowdfunding platform 	No information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteering their time - Making financial donations
The proportions of donations	60% of the donors are alumni	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private donations are not significant - The money comes from canton, fed. gov. 	No information
The amount of donations	No information	2.5 million Euros each year	No information	No information

on purchases of laptops, software and support services, access to the ETH library and MyAlumni portal and lifelong forwarding e-mail address. The ETH-Zurich obtains and updates information about the career development of its alumni through MyAlumni portal. In order to keep strong ties with its alumni, the institute invites alumni to events, sends newsletters

and interesting information, and offers career services and various benefits.

Similar to the University of Oxford and the ETH-Zurich Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, University of Michigan uses e-mails, monthly e-newsletters, printed magazines, direct mails and some printed materials in order to contact its alum-



ni. University of Michigan uses sales force to manage alumni data and employs Marketing Cloud and Social Studio to manage digital communications. The services provided to the alumni of University of Michigan are career services and professional development, opportunities to engage with other alumni, 5-star travel programme and family camp. In order to get information about the career development of its alumni, University of Michigan has a career team that contacts its alumni regularly. University of Michigan also conducts surveys to obtain data from its alumni. To update information about the career development of its alumni, the university uses Salesforce. Salesforce is a customer relationship platform which has cloud-based applications for sales, service, marketing and other activities of organizations. University of Michigan keeps a strong tie with its alumni through the contact methods and services provided. Moreover, the university makes an effort to maintain a strong and consistent brand that its alumni can connect and believe in. Alumni contributes to the University of Michigan by donating funds, spending time to volunteer at events, and offering their skills and services through networking with current students and fellow alumni. Finally, the University of Michigan does not give any information about the proportion and the amount of its alumni's donations.

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) draws on e-mails which include a monthly e-newsletter, mails which contain an annual magazine and social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) in order to contact its alumni. The programme used for communication in the LSE is iModules. iModules is an American online constituent engagement management provider for educational institutions. There are a number of services provided to the alumni of the LSE. These services are career services, learning and development opportunities, alumni mentoring network, alumni e-mail forwarding services, free lifelong access to the LSE library, access to the LSE research, and various discounts. The LSE uses Annual Survey of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE Survey) which is conducted in the UK annually to get information about the career development of its alumni. Moreover, the LSE obtains information when alumni register for events or sign up for an account on the alumni website. In order to keep a strong tie with its alumni LSE, uses a regular programme of communications, events, volunteering opportunities and international groups. Alumni contributes to the LSE by donating money, volunteering as group leaders, committee members, speakers at events and mentoring current students. With regard to the proportion and the amount of financial donations of its alumni, we could not obtain any information from the LSE.

In the New York University (NYU), electronic tools such as e-mails and social media accounts and mails (only in the US) are used in order to contact with alumni. With regard to the programmes used, it is found that the NYU draws on iModules. The NYU provides its alumni the following services: Alumni programming for networking, career advice and discounts. In order to get information about alumni's career development and to update this information, the NYU mainly relies on the updates from its alumni. The NYU primarily uses communication channels in order to keep a strong tie with its alumni. The Alumni contribute to its alma mater by volunteering their time, participating at alumni clubs, organizing events, mentoring students and making financial donations. Concerning the proportion of financial donations, the NYU states that the proportion of these donations is small. However, the exact amount of donations is not specified.

The University of British Columbia mainly contacts its alumni through its bi-weekly e-newsletters or e-blasts. The university also mails information to its alumni. The University of British Columbia primarily draws on social media accounts and e-mails in order to communicate with its alumni. Furthermore, the university employs a Blackboud programme to manage alumni data. The services provided by the University of British Columbia are regular global events, alumni cards which offer discounts (across the university and Vancouver), library borrowing privileges and journal access. In order to get informed about alumni's career development and to update this information, the University of British Columbia uses updates from alumni and LinkedIn. The university also has a research team that looks at the information available on the internet. The University of British Columbia communicates with its alumni regularly and uses its new alumni centre to keep a strong tie with its alumni. The alumni of the University of British Columbia contribute to the university by three channels: (1) mentoring students, (2) volunteering their time, and (3) making financial donations. Finally, in relation to the proportion and the amount of financial donations, the university states that they have completed 1.5 billion USD fundraising campaign over the last seven years.

In the University of Maryland, electronic channels such as e-mails, e-newsletters and social media accounts (mainly Facebook) are employed in order to keep in contact with alumni. Mail is mostly used for soliciting funds. The University of Maryland does not use a specific programme for communication currently. However, they consider using Graduway. Graduway is a provider of alumni networking platforms. With regard to the services provided to alumni, the University of Maryland procures the following services: (1) online mentoring



services, (2) various naming opportunities (spaces and places on campus, brick campaign), and (3) connection point for questions. In order to get informed about the career development of alumni and to update this information, the University of Maryland uses LinkedIn. The university consistently communicates with its alumni about what is going on within campus and how they can connect with other alumni in their geographic area to keep a strong tie with its alumni. Alumni contribute to the University of Maryland by buying a membership in the alumni association, buying the naming rights to a variety of spaces and places on campus, and making financial donations. Since the University of Maryland is a public university, most money comes from the state of Maryland. However, the money which comes from the state goes up and down according to its budget. So, the difference is made up by raising funds from alumni and business organizations. The amount of financial donations of alumni is approximately 2.5 million USD.

Similar to the previous four universities, Purdue University uses e-mails, newsletters and social media accounts in order to contact its alumni. In addition to these channels, the university sends mails to the alumni who live in the US. As a specific programme Purdue University employs iModules since this customer relationship platform allows the university to create and send blast e-mails and newsletters in a very easy way. The services provided to alumni by the university are alumni clubs, alumni groups, online networking and a centre which helps alumni to find career opportunities. With regard to getting informed about the career development of alumni, Purdue University mainly relies on the self-reports of the alumni and the information obtained from search agencies which contracted to Purdue University. In order to update this information, the university mainly uses iModules or advance computer science system. The Purdue University gets help from its student membership based organization in order to keep a strong tie with its alumni. The alumni contribute to Purdue University by volunteering their time, serving on advisory councils, speaking in classes, mentoring students and making donations (money, books, antiques etc.). Finally, the annual amount of financial donations is 300 million USD which constitute a small part of the total budget.

The University of Melbourne contacts with its alumni mainly via e-mails. The university also mails printed invitations to its alumni for selected events. Twice a year the University of Melbourne mails printed version of the alumni magazine within Australia and selected areas in the world. This magazine is also delivered by e-mail. The university uses social media accounts (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram) and sends e-news to over 150,000 alumni by e-mail for eight

months of the year. For digital communications, the University of Melbourne relies on Swift digital as a specific programme. In addition to this, the university uses the Advance system integrated with Encompass and Orion for its database. There are a number of services provided to the alumni by the university such as discounts, concession-priced library borrowing membership, exclusive access to the university's online library service and alumni events. In order to get information about the career development of its alumni, the University of Melbourne uses graduate outcomes survey coordinated by the University Planning Office which reports whether alumni work, study, or do not seek either work or study. Moreover, the survey obtains information about employer, sector, whether the work is related to the area of study, and salary from those employed. The university currently works on a new survey called as career outcomes survey to gather information about alumni's career outcomes. The University of Melbourne recently runs an "update your details" campaign to confirm the contact details of its alumni, and this helps the university in updating information about the career development of its graduates. In order to keep a strong tie with its alumni, both alumni relations staff at the faculty level and the central office run a series of events in Australia and internationally. The university also offers volunteering opportunities to its alumni. Alumni can contribute to the University of Melbourne by giving donations, volunteering for activities and attending alumni events. In 2015, over 4000 alumni gave donations to the Believe (The campaign of the university of Melbourne), over 1900 alumni volunteered in support of the university as committee members, guest speakers and event volunteers, and over 12,000 alumni participated in alumni events. Finally, with regard to the proportion and the amount of donations given by alumni, the university states that 60% of its donors are alumni.

The University of Groningen uses many channels such as e-mails, newsletters, alumni magazine, social media accounts (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), events and telephone campaigns in order to keep in contact with alumni. The specific programmes that the university employs are Raisers Edge for database, Mailchimp for digital newsletters, and Eventbrite for events. The services provided by the University of Groningen are regional and international networks where alumni can meet, interact and network. Moreover, each faculty and most of the schools in the university have its own alumni programme. In the Netherlands, there is a National Alumni Monitor. So, the University of Groningen uses this monitor together with LinkedIn in order to get informed about the career development of its alumni. LinkedIn is also used to update the information about alumni's career development. In



order to keep a strong tie with its alumni, the University of Groningen relies on alumni chapters which are knit groups of alumni and organizes gatherings a few times each year. The main contribution of alumni to the University of Groningen is financial donations. For this purpose, the university has created a fund for donation to scientific research which is called as Ubbo Emmius. In addition to this fund, the University of Groningen has a crowdfunding platform and organizes fund raising campaigns. Although the university tries to get financial donations by using a number of different channels, the proportion of these donations is small and the amount is 2.5 million Euros per year.

The University of Basel draws on e-mails and mails in order to contact its alumni. However, unlike other universities, it does not use social media accounts. With regard to the question about the specific programmes used, the University of Basel replied that they attended graduation ceremonies. So, we interpret this answer as the university does not use a specific programme. In terms of the services provided, the University of Basel only has a small catalogue for its alumni. Information about the career development of alumni is collected by the career services of the university. However, in order the University of Basel currently does not do anything to update this information. The university provides information about the events organized in order to keep a strong tie with its alumni. With regard to the contribution of alumni to the university, the University of Basel does not provide any information. Finally, similar to the New York University, Purdue University and the University of Groningen, the proportion of financial donations is small since most of the money comes from the federal government.

The State University of New Jersey mainly communicates with its alumni by e-mails. The university also uses mails in order to contact with some of its alumni. In addition to these channels, the State University of New Jersey draws on social media accounts (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) intensively. The university currently employs iModules, and will use Marketo in the near future as specific programmes. Marketo is an American software company which produces marketing automation software. The University of New Jersey provides many services to its alumni such as volunteer opportunities, privilege to use university gyms, libraries, discounted insurance products, online store, credit card, career services, local and national retailer discounts and travel programme. In order to get information about the career development of its alumni, the university mainly relies on self-reports. So, the information is not very good. To update this information, the updates from alumni which are added to the

alumni database, online records from alumni, and LinkedIn are used. To keep a strong tie with its alumni, the University of New Jersey states that all of the work of their staff and volunteers (graduate gets an alumni credit card or buys a shirt on the university's store or being a volunteer in alumni board or makes financial donations etc.) focuses on building and fostering this tie. The alumni of the University of New Jersey mainly contributes to the university by volunteering their time and making financial donations. Finally, the university states that they do not have any information about the proportion and the amount of financial donations.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the 1980s, service sectors have been confronted with fierce competition in both developed and developing countries. Without doubt, higher education institutions and particular universities have been affected by this fierce competition intensively. As a result of this competition, universities have started to build and maintain a lifelong relationship with their alumni since this relationship has turned out to be one of the main indicators of a university's competitive power and its quality level.

In this study, we investigate how the best universities in the world create, maintain and improve a lifelong relationship with their alumni in detail. In order to do this, we sent a short questionnaire to the alumni relations departments of top 200 universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016–2017 (Times Higher Education, 2016). The questionnaire consists of a number of questions about the tools and methods used by the universities in order to contact alumni, the services provided to alumni by the universities, and in response to these services, the contributions of alumni to their universities. We sent this questionnaire to the universities at the beginning of November 2016, and 12 universities replied the questions.

According to the answers, universities use a number of channels and especially electronic channels (e-mails, e-newsletters, social media accounts) in order to contact their alumni. They also draw on specific professional software programmes for communication. In order to obtain information about career development of alumni, universities mainly rely on self-reports and online sources. In relation to the services provided by the universities, the answers we have received demonstrate that best universities provide many services such as special events (alumni weekends, global and regional alumni events), career services, discounts and the privilege to access university's facilities. In response to these services, alumni contribute to their universities by many ways such as



volunteering their time, mentoring students, organizing events and making financial donations. However, according to the answers, the proportion and amount of the donations in most of these universities are small.

As our study clearly demonstrates, best universities in the world pay particular attention to developing and maintaining strong ties with their alumni, and in order to achieve these objectives, they use specialized tools. When we compare Turkish universities with the best universities, we can say that Turkish universities are still in their infancy with regard to building and sustaining a strong relationship with their alumni. So, in order to benefit from the contributions of their alumni more effectively, Turkish universities should put more effort into developing and maintaining lifelong relations with their alumni. With regard to the tools and methods used, we suggest that Turkish universities, specifically public universities, should prefer free online tools and methods given that they have limited financial sources.

To conclude, we argue that building and maintaining a lifelong relationship with alumni is of vital importance in terms of the competitive power and quality level of the universities today. The answers we have collected from the best universities in the world show that these universities have already realized this fact and they are trying their best to develop their relationships with alumni. Although our study provides detailed information with regard to the tools and methods employed by the best universities in the world, the dataset we use covers only 12 universities from 200 top-ranking universities in the world. So, we need more comprehensive analyses in order to reach more accurate results. With this in mind, we suggest that the universities aiming to increase their competitive power and quality level should improve their relations with alumni since these relations provide mutual benefits both to the universities and their alumni.

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