Preface

Why is there a need for marketing in Higher Education? Can the academic programmes offered by the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) be termed as “Educational Products” and the students be the end users, i.e. customers, for these products? While discussing marketing and advertising in higher education, Anctil (2008) states:

*Marketing helps organizations identify needs, develop products and services to address those needs, and puts those goods and services into the hands of the people in need. When seen in this context, marketing is a dynamic process that is responsive and innovative (p. 26).*

Marketing is being transferred from business applications to many academic institutions, and the pressures of a global economy and the pervasiveness of the Internet have had profound influence on education (Cook, 2011). Mukerji and Tripathi (2004) consider the education sector in the present milieu as a complex market, and every educational product has its Product Life Cycle (PLC) spanned in four stages beginning with introduction, followed by growth, maturity, and decline stage, and each stage has a different marketing strategy. This life cycle could be termed the Academic Program Life Cycle (APLC).

The importance of the application of marketing in the educational sector, especially in tertiary education, has been rightly pointed out by Ng and Forbes (2009) when they state that a marketing orientation could help universities compete in the global arena, but only if the right principles are well applied. It is not wrong to view the student as the consumer or customer, but it is important to realize that universities must go all the way to understand what that means. While discussing Service Driven market orientation in Higher Education, Voon (2008) suggests that service providers, like institutions of higher learning, need to be committed to fully understanding and responding to the real needs of customers. Nevertheless, mere customer orientation is not enough. The service providers need to be competitor-oriented so as to deliver better services that will be perceived as quality. Organizations need to examine diverse program components to determine how best they can articulate the advantages of their programs to potential students as well as maintain the standards of excellence—including student recruitment, retention, and program completion—that all stakeholders demand (Bedford, 2011).

Besides, legitimate and generative debates have been had about whether students should be seen as customers in our universities. An important compilation of such debates was put together in a very significant edited volume by Molesworth, Scullion, and Nixon (2011). In that volume, Maringe, in an article titled “The Student as Consumer: Affordances and Constrains in a Transforming Higher Education Environment” argues that placing the consumer at the heart of decision-making in HE helps to democratize the HE experience, increase accountability, and contribute to a better quality HE experience for all involved (p. 51). Whatever we do in the name of improvement has the ultimate goal of creating more or better value for students.
Evidently, a significant amount of effort in terms of undertaking researches and studies is being made by institutions for understanding the needs of the students (here seen as customers) and in designing the right kind of academic programmes and support services so as to provide quality need-based education. This is being largely accomplished by integrating the advancements in technology for accessible education. It is also noteworthy that while applying the concept of marketing in the field of education, one needs to understand the differences between the business sector and the education sector. In this regard, Nicolescu (2009) visualises that marketing principles and marketing ideas can be applied to the higher education sector, but not in the same way as in the business sector. The differences in types of products/services offered, the scope of targeted markets, and the organization of specific marketing activities that exist between the business and the higher education sectors make marketing concepts only partially applicable to the higher education sector.

However, the problem in HE has been that of perpetual borrowing from the business sector with little generative theory and evidence to underpin what we do and what we value in our own sector. The use of terms and concepts, such as service encounters, loyalty, customers, consumers, customer experience, and customer satisfaction, have met with vigorous resistance from those on the left of the debate (see for example Gibbs, 2011; Brown, 2011; Furedi, 2011). Research on HE marketing is thus being driven largely by people with a marketing background working in HE. Thus, in this milieu, higher education institutions must rethink the ways by which they can relate to prospective students as well as current students the institutions aim to engage and retain (Salmons & Maringe, 2012).

The present book is an attempt to present important contributions that integrate technological advancements and marketing strategies in higher education in the present era of international alliances for improved accessibility and higher quality standards. It begins with an interesting contribution by Chris Chapleo, “What is the Secret of Successful University Brands?” This case explores a broad question about university branding and corporate branding, and asks how the concept of brand “adds value to organizations beyond the usual focus of consumer product marketing.” The research approach in this study involved generating construct to determine what makes a successful university brand, and subsequently testing these among a larger sample of UK university “customers.” Findings explore the variables that compose successful university brands and the significant inter-relationships of these variables. Finally, the paper offers initial conclusions on what forms a successful university brand and proposes variables associated with such brands.

The second paper by Victor Wang uses a real case to illustrate that marketing educational programs through technology is affected by one’s philosophies, be it positive or negative, depending on the nature and kind of philosophies adopted. A number of philosophies are discussed in relationship to marketing educational programs via technology and relationships between these philosophies and different types of universities/colleges are drawn. In the paper, the author recommended that universities/colleges need to seriously consider hiring administrators with right philosophies so that they work towards achieving the mission of higher education institution.

The following chapter “Business Lessons for Higher Education Marketing” authored by Ruth Gannon Cook and Kathryn Ley indicates that securing educational marketing services may be a costly approach in order to attract and keep customers or students. They state that recent business marketing approaches dependent on market analysis and planning have stimulated the growth of marketing firms offering sophisticated quantitative market analyses so as to identify an organization’s potential and current customers and their needs. However, the analytical study contrasts educational service provider to enrollment outcomes at two nonprofit higher education institutions.
The next paper is based on research conducted by Mourad and Shamma in Cairo which aimed to discover the dimensions which can be used to segment the university system in Egypt. They discover that two important factors distinguish universities in their market positioning and these are perceived quality and level of internationalization. While doing so, they identify a four classification system of universities in Egypt. With different scores on the two by two matrix, they identify an interesting classification of higher education institutions and these segments are legacy, prestige, imitators, and the uncertain.

The subsequent case study by Thomas J. Hayes and Mary M. Walker explores the growing importance of mobile technology and mobile Internet usage which they claim is overtaking desktop learning amongst young people, and reveals the opportunities and challenges which this new way of experiencing teaching and learning creates. The implications from this study point towards the important fact that mobile application features have value for current students and is in line with their usage of mobile technology, and it is an important channel for reaching students.

The sixth paper by Vanessa Ann Quintal, Tekle Shanka, and Pattamaporn Chuanuwatanakul from Curtin, Australia, explores the relationship between student experience and loyalty. Based on a convenience sample of 400 through a pen and paper survey, they discover that home students and overseas students share much in common in terms of their expectations of the university image, facilities for career preparation, and personal and academic development. However, the paper identifies subtle differences and advises the development of what the authors term a “Gestalt student experience.”

The next case chapter by Ruth Gannon Cook, “They’re Here, Now How Do You Keep Them? Lessons Learned with First Year College Students,” is a study on determining factors that affect the students’ attitudes and retention throughout their college years and also finding out ways of improving student retention in higher education setup. The results indicated that while many factors affect simple measures of enlistment and peer-mentoring fared best to positively influence student attitudes and responses in the college-orientation class, and peer involvement offered the most promise of future brand commitment to student retention at the university.

Gilbert Ahamer in the case study, “How Technologies Can Localize Learners in Multicultural Space: A Newly Developed ‘Global Studies’ Curriculum,” identifies ways in which technological innovations can be used to enhance the suitability of global learning. This is demonstrated with the help of a newly developed online-supported curriculum, “Global Studies,” which takes account of the necessities of interdisciplinary, intercultural, and interparadigmatic learning. The Web platform allows students to present their professional views and discuss them in a peer review which is enriched by the broad international and intercultural backgrounds of the participating students, thus generating cultures of understanding, which is a prerequisite for future careers in development cooperation, diplomacy, and transnational organizations.

The following three papers look variously at social media in higher education marketing. The first being a case study by Efthymios Constantiniades and Marc C. Zinck Stagno, “Higher Education Marketing: A Study on the Impact of Social Media on Study Selection and University Choice,” that looks not only at different types of social media, but also varied ways and levels of participation and their implications for higher education marketing. It presents the results of a study that identifies the role and importance of social media on the choice of future students for a study and university in comparison with the traditional university marketing channels in The Netherlands.

In the following paper, “Using Social Network Sites for Higher Education Marketing and Recruitment,” by Natalia Rekhter examines how the rapid penetration of Social Network Sites (SNSs) into the daily life affects higher education marketing. Growth in Internet Penetration Rates and strong international
SNSs membership suggests further globalization of marketing strategies and inclusion of lower income countries into targeted markets. Concerns associated with the use of SNSs include dearth of fluency in the sites’ content and operation among admission personnel, lack in users’ privacy, and absence of control over the content.

The third paper in this series is by H. K. Leng, who explores Facebook, in particular, and its potential for engaging participants and inviting them to contribute content to generate “shared cultural meaning” of the brand. The findings of the study suggest that marketing on SNSs remains in its infancy. Educational institutions in Singapore have started using SNSs as a marketing communications tool. However, as has been discovered by the author, the majority of visitors were using these sites as an extension to existing mediums for seeking information, so there is clearly the potential for the educational institutions to move to the next level in leveraging on SNSs to engage their members and generating a shared cultural meaning of their brands.

In the twelfth paper, “Marketing to and Developing Faculty Members to Create High Quality, Highly Interactive Online Courses,” Jace Hargis focuses on ways of developing high quality online courses by soliciting and securing exemplar faculty members, who redesign their course in order to offer them in a high quality online environment. This creates highly engaging online learning opportunities, which are better than their current face-to-face classes.

Lynn Wilson in the next chapter, “Increasing Graduate Education Relevance through Innovative Marketing: Interview with Mike Scorzo,” uses the interview method to illustrate how innovative collaborations encouraging interdisciplinary flexibility, such as customized specializations, internships, and transdisciplinary partnerships within and beyond traditional higher education circles, can be used to develop academically rigorous graduate programs that serve the needs of employers in the emerging field of environmental policy.

The subsequent paper by Matt Elbeck and Brian A. Vander Schee focuses on how to meet MBA student expectations of website effectiveness through an efficient e-service delivery in Higher Education. Using another innovative KANO approach, they engaged 110 MBA students who identified 23 features that characterize ideal college websites. The paper provides useful advice and perspectives on management and design to those who have the responsibility of designing and developing websites in universities.

Eileen Bridges in the case study “Technology in Marketing Education: Insights from Sales Training” highlights on the ways the company training programs provide insights for university classrooms, particularly those in schools and colleges of business. It shows an increase in usage of technology-based training among successful firms. The present findings regarding business adoption of training technology are consistent with consumer research that suggests satisfaction increases with experience in use. The research suggests that university learning environments focused on business should utilize technology as appropriate to learning goals, but should not gratuitously replace traditional classroom learning activities.

Sneha Chandra, Thorsten Gruber, and Anthony Lowrie in the sixteenth paper begin with an excellent and well-researched piece on how to mitigate failure amongst students through understanding the factors that male and female students consider important amongst their teachers/professors. The paper uses an innovative “laddering interviewing” technique to explore service recovery encounters and discovers that both male and female students value staff, who listen actively, who demonstrate expertise, show friendliness and empathy. However, it also discovers that female students prefer more communal approaches to problem solving while their male counterparts show preference for quick fix solutions.
The next study by Michael Roszkowski and Scott Spreat, “You Name It: Comparing Holistic and Analytical Methods of Eliciting Preferences in Naming an Online Program using Ranks as a Concurrent Validity Criterion,” explores ways to solicit and analyze student ratings and perspectives on programs and faculty. For this, current and prospective students of the university were surveyed about their preferences for a name for a new online series of courses to be launched by a university. Preferences for each of five names were solicited by means of analytical ratings, holistic ratings, and rankings.

Chris Robertson in the next chapter, “Co-Constructing a Learning Community: A Tool for Developing International Understanding,” explores the development of professional understanding across a large group of professionals and academics from eight different countries engaged in an international project. The study was focused on developing a suite of appropriate electronic tools to support the wide range of professionals (doctors, teachers, care and family workers, psychologists and medical and occupational therapists) who may be involved in working with and providing support for vulnerable children and families, which would be relevant across European countries.

The paper “Assessing Learning via Web 2.0 Technologies: A Dichotomy” by Victor C. X. Wang and Beth Kania-Gosche gives an interesting account of examples of online assessments from both andragogical and pedagogical methods. The authors in the study state that since traditional age students learn differently from non-traditional age students, especially in the virtual environment, educators are accordingly encouraged to employ either pedagogical or andragogical assessment methods. So in order to use the proper tests or methods to assess online learning, educators are encouraged to possess both pedagogical and andragogical knowledge and/or skills.

Finally, the chapter “Lighting the Fires of Entrepreneurialism? Constructions of Meaning in an English Inner City Academy” by Philip A. Woods and Glenys J. Woods aims to refine the conceptual understanding of entrepreneurialism in the context of public education, drawing on data concerning constructions of meaning around entrepreneurialism in an inner city academy in England. The authors highlight effects of power in forming the discourse and meanings around entrepreneurialism, the layers of meaning in these constructions, and the presence of both business entrepreneurialism and alternative groundings for entrepreneurialism. It concludes by refining the typology of entrepreneurialism, placing it in the context of levels of meaning, and suggesting three implications for schools and educational policy.

Developing marketing strategies for Higher Education is about creating value products and value added services for the students. It is hoped that this volume will go a long way to suggest ways in which such value can be created besides paving the way for further research in this direction. The HEIs are striving hard to become centres of excellence for providing quality learning experiences because knowledge acquisition and sharing, or in short, learning, is going through dramatic changes because of rapidly emerging new information and communication technologies and the social transformation they generate (Khan, 2011). Hence, it becomes imperative for HEIs to not only devise innovative strategies to attract potential students or market their programs in international competitive educational environments, but also to formulate technology-centered support services that can create continuous learning environments.

Purnendu Tripathi
IGNOU, India

Siran Mukerji
IGNOU, India
REFERENCES


