

Study Of Marketing Strategy Within Private Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Many nations now include private universities in their mix of higher education options. India boasts the second-highest number of privately-run universities in the world, with another 50,000 institutions falling under the umbrella of "private" or "deemed to be" status. Of the other 50,000, however, only 5,000 get funding from the government (Central & State Govt. together). The goal of this research is to provide a detailed account and critical evaluation of the marketing strategies used by HEIs in their efforts to recruit new students. Despite the long history of marketing in academia, many faculty and administrators still refuse to accept students as customers. This article analyzes this controversy through the lenses of market orientation, customer orientation, and service and relationship marketing. The study concludes that students should be considered clients throughout the planning phase of the marketing strategy and offers suggestions for how the conflict may be resolved.

Keywords: private higher education institutions, educational marketing, market orientation, customer orientation, service and relationship marketing,

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Drucker [1], marketing is "the entire business considered from the point of view of its eventual consequence that is from the customer's point of view" (p. 39). Most businesses with a market focus would agree. According to Kotler [2], a customer-centric approach is at the heart of a market-driven mindset. Since marketing in academia has been around for a while, there is an emphasis on the student body as a consumer. However, the student is not universally accepted as a client in higher education, and the dispute about whom the consumer continues. In reality, this is a very contentious and even emotionally charged subject. Faculty and staff members may respond that students are not consumers if you pose this topic to them. Faculty members often say, "Students should have a great customer experience, but universities should abandon the customer service paradigm as soon as possible." To meet the rising demand for higher education, a number of new organizations have joined the system, some supported by the government in the form of publicly funded universities while others are privately funded

and operated. Private institutions were legalized and even promoted in many nations. But private institutions established lately across the globe have spent much on infrastructure development and upkeep. However, students would certainly see themselves in the role of consumer. Perhaps the disagreement stems from people's differing conceptions of what it means to be a client and the seeming tension between upholding academic standards and satisfying customers' needs. Lack of customer orientation might be seen as a failure to treat pupils as consumers, which has consequences that should be examined. As "how the consumer of the service is defined...partly impacts the perspective the institution has of the consumer, and consequently the service they deliver them," the impression that students are not consumers is significant [3]. This means that targeting the right clientele is essential. "This study seeks to clarify the topic, of whether students are genuinely customers, by examining the dispute within the context of market and customer orientation and services and relationship marketing." The study does this by examining the market and customer orientation,

marketing in higher education, and discussing students as consumers, all of which lead to a proposal.

India, being developing nation and ranked second in population, has taken proper step to increase the higher educational facilities in the country without financial burden to the government by letting to create Private Universities in the country. Because of this, private institutions may now be established in each Indian state according to section 22 of the UGC statute. "About 22 states in the country have utilized this opportunities to promote and permit private universities and as per UGC website information, presently 296 private universities are functioning in the country and are given the power to award degrees with nomenclature as specified by UGC with prior approvals designated statutory councils". To counter this, each year the UGC must receive reports from all Private Universities detailing their Undergraduate Degree Programs, Graduate Degree/Diploma Programs, and Doctoral Degree Programs, as well as the admissions requirements for each, as well as details about the courses themselves, how they are taught, how they are assessed, and where their graduates end up working. As a result of these UGC mandates, private institutions around the nation have begun offering higher education, and are working on plans to recruit a diverse student body by focusing on skills that are in high demand from both the business world and society at large. Numerous studies have been conducted on the problems and solutions facing private universities in India [4], the enhancement of the quality of higher education [5], the introduction of new ideas and methods to the field [6], and the evaluation of academic institutions' research performance [7]. In this paper, we examine the workings of India's private higher education institutions, including the number of such institutions across India's various states, their approaches to infrastructure, course selection, pedagogy, research funding, research promotion, research output, industry partnerships and knowledge transfer, international partnerships, and more [8].

II. MARKET AND CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

Market orientation has been proven to help businesses compete by fostering better value creation and maintenance through the strategic use of the marketing mix, articulation of a connection between customer wants and company capabilities, and analysis of the marketplace from the client's point of view. In addition, studies suggest that a company's bottom line will

improve if its leaders foster an atmosphere inside the company that encourages staff to put customers' needs first. Building a marketing culture inside a company demands that all workers at all levels and functions have the capacity and knowledge to think of consumers as vital, so developing a customer mindset [9]. "Customer mindset" is defined as "the amount to which an individual employee feels that understanding and pleasing customers, whether within or external to the firm, is fundamental to the effective execution of his or her work" [10]. In addition, a customer-centric mindset is essential for customer-centricity, and customer-centricity is crucial to market-centricity [11].

Market (and consumer) orientation is particularly salient in the context of higher education. According to Conway, Mackay, and Yorke [12], strategic planning in higher education should contain a market focus. Retention is a significant and expensive problem at most institutions, and the higher education industry is becoming more competitive. Retention rates, greater competition, and rising costs to attract new students pose challenges for the higher education sector. As a consequence, universities have devoted more resources to advertising in an attempt to attract and retain students. It is becoming more apparent that successful businesses in other sectors have used marketing strategies that schools should do. According to one of these marketing beliefs, it is cheaper to maintain an existing client than to recruit a new one. Higher education institutions appear to recognise this holds for them, stressing the necessity for a market (and customer) orientation. It becomes natural, therefore, that higher education institutions might benefit from a market focus in building effective customer relationship management techniques. Therefore, it is crucial to get a consensus on the target market.

III. MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Colleges and universities have been using marketing strategies for a long time. For example, universities market themselves to students and other demographics and participate in branding [13]. Higher education institutions engage in these promotional actions to aid in their recruitment and retention efforts (recruiting and retention related to the purpose of a business to obtain and retain a customer, per Drucker). Retention from freshman to sophomore year and graduation rate per class are indicators often used to evaluate a school's

effectiveness. The rate of first-year, full-time students who return to the same institution for their second year of study. The cohort graduation rate is the fraction of first-year students who earn bachelor's degrees within a certain time frame. The percentage of students who stay in school until they graduate is an important indicator of both student and institutional performance. Therefore, pupils should be treated as clients. In the United States, it is usual for colleges and universities to market themselves (and in the U.K.) actively. Any successful product launch begins with research into the target market. The same holds for college-level learning. The subject of who the client is has been brought to the forefront by studies in marketing and customer satisfaction in higher education. The age-old question of whether a student is a client or not [14]. Studies in this field provide light on the contrasting viewpoints, but the higher education industry is no different from any other in that it serves a diverse clientele. Students, potential employers, and other interested parties are all considered customers. Because how customers are categorised affects the services they get. There are ramifications to be investigated if students are not treated as consumers, which might signify a lack of customer orientation.

Consequently, the clientele is important. A customer-centric approach was discussed by Maguad [15] in the context of universities. Some members of the established educational establishment have difficulty accepting the idea that students are clients. Maguad debunks the patronising customer stereotype by elucidating the nuances of the customer experience and how they apply to today's pupils. End-of-course surveys, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), and similar student satisfaction surveys are commonplace in U.S. higher education, even though they would be unnecessary if students were not consumers. The National Student Satisfaction Survey and the Student Satisfaction Approach are used to collecting student feedback and ratings in the United Kingdom. One's "customer orientation," or the degree to which they prioritise their customers' needs and wants, is a key indicator of their business success. In addition, studies show that putting the customer first is the key to success in the market.

As one of the four pillars of service marketing, "inseparability" emphasis the need to instill a customer-

centric culture at all company levels and a market-driven business model, each worker accepts personal accountability for the client's satisfaction. Bean and Bradley [16] showed that contentment substantially impacted student performance and other researchers have come to similar conclusions. In a poll of people working in higher education, Guilbault [17] found that teachers were the least likely to see themselves as customers (with one responder saying I wanted to let you know what I tell my students, they are NOT my customer). This viewpoint sheds light on a serious problem in that many professors do not prioritise student happiness, which negatively affects evaluations of the institution and the likelihood of its students deciding to stay there. These drawbacks suggest that teachers improve their services by focusing on pupils' contentment. Recognising students as a consumer does not imply that teachers are obligated to provide free education or that student expect a grade as a sign of approval. If the student is seen as a consumer, their needs and preferences should be prioritised. Since the consumer is always right, this is how business is conducted. The idea that the customer is always right, which has been around since 1909 and popularised by Harry Gordon Selfridge, is no longer ubiquitous.

IV. STUDENTS AS CUSTOMERS

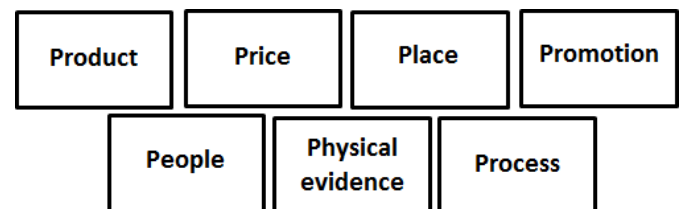
The service of higher education [18]. It is widely known that higher education serves various consumers and stakeholders (potential employees, the government, and society), but Ostrom et al. [19] argue that students should be seen as the primary customers. Ostrom et al. [19] use service blueprinting to describe education as a service system. The use of blueprinting by Ostrom et al. [19]. "highlights the phases in the process, the points of interaction that take place, and the tangible evidence that exists from the customer's point of view." Cuthbert [20] believes that thinking of students as consumers is a logical result of taking marketing in higher education seriously. Mazzarol [18] emphasises relationships and data backup using this strategy in higher education marketing. Hanover Research [21] notes that "universities are realising that students are also consumers and the necessity to deliver a great customer experience throughout the student lifecycle" (p. 3). (p. 3). In addition, according to Caru and Cova [22], a customer experience is generated everywhere there is a monetary transaction. This concept shows that higher education should be led by concentrating on students as consumers.

Indeed, the student population sees itself as a consumer. However, many scholars do not agree with this point of view. One possible explanation is the widespread belief that teaching morally sound material and offering excellent service are incompatible goals. Unfortunately, research has not confirmed this. Koris and Nokelainen [23] established the reliability and validity of the Student-Customer Orientation Questionnaire (SCOQ), which helps universities "identify the domains of educational experience in which students want higher-education institutions (HEI) to be student-customer oriented" [23]. The outcomes of this research suggest that "students want to be regarded like consumers in terms of student feedback, classroom studies, and to some degree even in terms of communication..." [23]. However, the data showed that students did not "express explicit expectations" in grading or "view[s] themselves as consumers when it comes to curriculum design, rigor, classroom conduct, and graduation" [23]. Tinto [24] argues that the fundamental element of successful retention strategies and ensuring student achievement is "institutional commitment to students." The International Center for Student Retention found in 2006 that "how the institution interacts with students is of paramount relevance to retention, persistence, and completion." (Institutional Factors, 1, Retention 101) Colleges and universities must keep a welcoming campus community in mind when crafting retention strategies. The strength of interactions among students, professors, and administrative staff is proposed as a metric of a supportive campus climate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Other studies have mentioned student trust as a key feature in retention. Ghosh et al. [25] found that student's confidence in their school correlated with higher enrollment and retention rates. According to Ghosh et al. [25], a college's reputation for openness, friendliness, authenticity, and candor with its students is a key factor in fostering trust. According to the findings, trust is directly related to happy customers. As the researchers put it, "a student as customer orientation" is essential for friendliness [25]. These traits tend to characterise what a consumer mindset looks like in higher education institutions. Consumer retention rates are predicted to rise if the positive correlation between customer mindset and customer pleasure holds. Increased student retention is one target for higher education institutions, which is the expected effect of a higher education institution having a market orientation. To that end, we also seek to boost student morale, test scores, and

graduation rates. The client mentality is a precursor to market orientation. It is hypothesised that a focus on the customer at universities would increase happiness, retention, and, ultimately, the number of students who complete their degrees.

V. THE 7PS OF EDUCATIONAL MARKETING

When compared to the marketing of tangible goods, HE needs additional tweaks to the marketing mix [26]. Product, pricing, placement, and promotion are the four pillars of the traditional marketing mix. When it comes to providing educational services, this blend may be modified and still be useful. The findings of this study were published in [27]. Speculations, however, show that this marketing mix is unsuitable for promoting services (Ibid, 1995). In addition to the original four Ps, Nicholls et al. [27]. Highlight the importance of the Ps people and process in achieving superior service performance. The four Ps concept is most often applied to tangible goods. Nevertheless, a new strategy must be implemented in the educational service industry. The classic 4Ps model was expanded to include "people," "physical evidence," and "process" to explain the effective marketing of services. [28]



The 7Ps methodology has been identified and linked to services marketing in particular. The belief is that HEIs may benefit from a more all-encompassing marketing approach if they consider the extra three Ps of people, process, and physical proof. Ivy, [28] each element of the 7Ps strategy may have different results, and some elements can even impact others.

Some of the 7Ps methodologies were employed in the research. Instead of concentrating on pricing, product, and tangible proof, as was formerly the case, modern marketers look to the "four Ps": location, promotion, people, and process. Since there are few connections between the published studies on marketing inside HEIs and the other three Ps, we felt it best to focus on the remaining four Ps. Several studies have extended the four Ps to include information technology (I.T.) [29], as

well as reputation and image [30]. Important aspects of services marketing to HEIs mentioned in I.T., image, and reputation include location, promotion, people, and process. The research detailed and evaluated these relationships in more detail because of their interdependence. The second goal was to learn more about the marketing strategies used by HEIs. The research's conclusion might have been too constrained if the 7Ps method had been applied. A more in-depth study performance might be accomplished by concentrating on four distinct Ps. The research only included the last four Ps; thus, the conceptual framework had to be expanded to accommodate this. Complementary marketing variables for student recruitment and enrolment include information technology (I.T.), public perception, and institutional credibility. After introducing the four included Ps, a more thorough discussion and justification of these elements will be provided.

A. Place

The four Ps used in this investigation will be discussed below. Markets at universities leverage location, also known as a distribution channel, to serve better their student customers' desires, requirements, and expectations [31]. Since the introduction of I.T. as a new educational service, students no longer need to be physically present at a university to access a wealth of essential information. Blackboard and other similar IT-based instruments provide students access to course materials and a variety of educational inputs. Other information technology resources have also emerged as potential entry points for obtaining scholarly content suitable for educational use. Internet sites, electronic mail, and video and telephone-based conferences are just some of the instances that have been identified.

A higher education institution (HEI) may gain a competitive edge by deploying novel methods and online learning [32].

There are two schools of thought on this topic, both of which aim to educate the public. If college grads are the product, institutions should focus on finding methods to integrate them into the workforce. The potential for new technologies to facilitate the dissemination of information to pupils has contributed to their elevated status. Media outlets like radio and television are common examples of how HEIs could disseminate information to the public. Moreover, because administrative tasks are handled partly by online

information, it may be possible to hire fewer people. The channels might serve as feedback or make online courses accessible to students. In this approach, students have more options for sharing their thoughts and submitting assignments. Once we reach the second scenario, we must consider how an HEI connects to the economy and workforce. "If the educational product reflects the needs and wants of this market, the place will most likely be successful." Higher education institutions (HEIs) need to be aware of the needs of the job market so that they can provide students with an appropriate education. The importance of location cannot be overstated since it influences the quality of service provided and the likelihood of going above and beyond for customers. According to [31], Place-related factors that Nicholls et al. [27] highlight include classroom settings, educator practices, and technological elements.

B. Promotion

The market might be aware of HEIs' offers in various ways [31]. Advertising, PR, publicity, promotional-based sales activities, and one-on-one client interactions are all examples of possible distribution methods [23]. Previous studies indicated that students identified the need for personal counsel when they compared enrollment options, demonstrating the significance of the personal sales interaction between the HEI and the student. Colleges and universities must communicate with potential students to facilitate their comprehension of the educational offering. A website is a valuable tool for disseminating course materials to students. Each [31] According to Ivy [28], however, it is not likely to be beneficial to depend only on the internet as a route of communication. A website might inform prospective students after their first contact with the institution and be an efficient tool for enrolling them. The website should also provide the student with background information and details about the university's resources and expectations. The necessities and potentials of such schooling are intertwined. Ivy [28] notes that open days and exhibits are also significant outlets for HEIs and a website that educates potential students. Universities may also use advertising and email to reach and persuade prospective students to enroll effectively. The institution may benefit from the assistance of alums who could share their positive experiences with current and future students. In this way, they might share their experiences as a successful alumnus of that institution with prospective students and urge them to attend.

According to Enache [31], students are the most valuable customers for higher education institutions. Colleges and universities tailor their advertising strategies to suit the demographic they are trying to reach and the needs and preferences of their prospective students. Both Ivy [28] and Enache [31] emphasise the significance of advertising and public relations as dissemination mechanisms (2011). Because it may be crucial to the success of an institution's overall marketing strategy, promotion is also crucial for higher education institutions. The institution and its associated societal advantages are routinely advertised to the general public and prospective donors.

Given that students have access to various information sources, marketing to the general public and prospective sponsors must take a more direct strategy. Using a public relations office as a hub, the institution might try to increase support for its programs and services from the general public. Since the advertising approach affects the institution's public perception, higher education institutions must be conscious of the message they convey. Institutions of higher education (HEIs) must manage and maintain a positive reputation since it is hard to repair a damaged or corrupted one. As a result, HEIs must factor in reputation, which has been highlighted as a critical motivator. Higher education institutions (HEIs) rely heavily on promotion, a sort of marketing, to educate and enroll their prospective students. However, a few schools avoid promotional efforts altogether [20]. Culture may play a role in this since it is possible for the marketing to convey undesirable ideals that are unrelated to the culture of the firm. Along with the significance of one's public persona and standing [31], higher education institutions need to create a marketing plan that prioritises the student as the target audience.

C. People

The third category, "people," consists of those working in higher education institutions and having contact with potential students before, during, and after enrolment [28]. The staff consequently constitutes a significant component of students' happiness. The human element is crucial because of the connections between procedure and advancement. Employees play a crucial role in the learning process since high-contact service is predicated on direct human connection [31]. In-person contact with helpful, administrative, and teaching personnel is the foundation for these exchanges. How faculty members

are perceived may affect how many prospective students sign up for classes. The percentage of faculty may thus impact students with doctoral degrees. Public and well-known figures working at the institution, such as specialists who often appear on television and other media, might also impact a student's decision to attend [27].

Service to potential students is paramount; this is where administrative personnel comes in. Consequently, the reputation of the HEI may be affected by the behavior of its faculty and students. The student's perception of the level of service they get is crucial, and this applies to both front-line service (lecturers) and back-line service (administrative). If universities invested in promoting and supporting their most renowned faculty members, they would reap the benefits of increased student and public satisfaction, a more positive public image, and higher quality educational services. An effective educational program is built on its employees' shoulders, and that foundation's quality rests squarely on their shoulders and their capacity to perform as promised. Higher education institutions rely not just on present employees but also on alums. Those who have attended the university may provide prospective students with information on the education and other issues linked to that institution based on their personal experiences. According to a recent study, A student's decision to enroll may be affected by the lecturer's facilitative role and the way an administrative assistant handles a single phone call [24]. Enrollment workers are involved because they interact with prospective students and handle their inquiries. How administrative personnel responds to these requests may affect students' early perceptions of the schools. Staff members continue to be vital once students have enrolled. As a result, the university's personnel is an integral part of the marketing mix [27].

Publications and research records of a renowned professor are other elements that might influence a student's decision to enroll [24]. First impressions matter, especially when providing knowledge to curious kids. Upon meeting university staff for the first time, prospective students may form opinions. It has been shown Hence if HEIs hire highly fitted employees, the institution might increase their marketing mix. To sum up, both Enache [31] and Oplatka [32] cite human beings as the primary driver of change and the most crucial ancillary aspect of service marketing.

D. Process

The service delivery procedure is connected to logistics [23]. The academic administration and formalities are part of the service offering. Registration requests, taking exams, evaluating courses, and announcing test scores and diplomas are all part of enrolment [24]. It has been said that the process includes fun and social activities. The educational system may include a great deal of paperwork and red tape for pupils. Both students and higher education institutions (HEIs) might benefit from a smoother approach [27]. Since the end user (the students) is integral to the manufacturing process, the university must ensure that they have a strong grasp of the steps required to get the product (the education). Cooperation with personnel is essential since the service requires contact to develop the product. It has been shown [28]. Since HE consumption is typically spread out over longer periods and prepayment is required, face-to-face interactions with employees are crucial. During the enrollment process, HEIs are responsible for ensuring that students are enrolled in the appropriate classes, that their grades are computed correctly, and that they are granted the appropriate degrees. Maintaining adequate housing, flexible class times, and library hours would contribute to happy students. [24].

During enrolment, potential students are converted into enrolled ones. The university's image and reputation might be enhanced via the integration of processes and people, resulting in the recruitment of more students. Enrollment in the HEI increases the likelihood that students will gain knowledge. The dropout rate and the degree to which students can successfully transition into the workforce after graduation may be influenced by how smoothly students can enroll in a higher education institution (HEI). [32]

VI. CONCLUSION

There are now several private institutions in India, located in each of the states. Private colleges are struggling to survive in the absence of state and federal funding by differentiating themselves via 21st century infrastructure, curriculum, and industry integrated program design. In this study, we examine the commercial approaches used by a selection of private colleges in India. These institutions span a wide range of locations throughout the nation. (1) "The plans for expansion of some private institutions with regard to facilities, curriculum, and course fees, It's important to consider the institution's (2) admissions strategies, (3)

innovative strategies (in terms of innovative curriculum, quality education delivered by quality faculty, etc.), (4) research strategies (in terms of their research investments, research promotions, and research output, etc.), and (5) overall strategies Strategies for Working Together in the Fields of Industry, Other Institutions, and International Higher Education Strategies for Placement in Terms of Placement Services; Strategies for Adopting New Technologies to Increase the Value of Services Offered to Stakeholders; and Strategies for Engaging Students in Research."

Research on the role of marketing in higher education is ongoing. Many people still refuse to embrace the idea that students should be considered a client in higher education, despite the widespread acceptance of marketing strategies. Since students are now seen as customers, providing them with the service they expect is essential if institutions thrive in the increasingly competitive higher education industry. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, websites, and email services are only some of the I.T. features the research found to have implemented. It also showed how often people engage in physical events like open homes, seminars, and fairs, emphasising personal contact and brokers. Personal sales connections, public relations, collaborations with international HEIs, internet activities, and continuing students were significant aspects of promotion. Billboards, newspapers, television commercials, and word of mouth are different marketing tools. Managers and members of the Recruitment department are in charge of implementing these campaigns. Many unique individuals are included in the marketing strategy, all of whom are made to feel that they play a vital role. Various departments at universities are devoted to assisting international students in various ways. Employees' English proficiency varies throughout various sections. The staff coordinates all communication with parents and international students, including emails, phone calls, seminars, fairs, open homes, and other recruiting and informational events. Candidates are selected from the top of the organisational structure, although experience and merit are also major factors in hiring. Students may become closer to the faculty and staff at their institution by completing the application, admission, and confirmation processes online. The enrolment process's last day consists of finishing the visa application, finding housing, and other logistics. It is also clear that HEIs seldom provide students with feedback on, or

invitations to, social gatherings and other forms of entertainment. It serves as a foundational data point for further engagement stages. “Besides Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, direct email and surveys, HEIs use databases to inform foreign students. Presently, many databases are at their infancy stages of development”. Language barriers also occur to a certain level, and the research found them undervalued and overlooked. Universities spend money on state-of-the-art, beautifully designed buildings and promote further spending on public-facing activities like fundraising events. Finding qualified researchers depends on the goals of upper management. Universities also use public relations. Typical instances of interactions that boost one's image and reputation are those with well-known individuals, politicians, and foreign and domestic students.

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