International **J**ournal of Applied Research

Souvik Sarkar
Research Scholar,
Bundelkhand University,
Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, India

Higher education and strategies to promote it

Souvik Sarkar

Abstract
Information and communication technologies have enhanced and changed the nature and context of communication exchange, allowing for a broader range of competition. Although higher education institutes are not typically thought of as a business, colleges and universities utilize marketing strategies in order to compete for students.

Colleges and universities are relying on data-driven analytics to determine who, how, and where they are reaching their audiences. The use of analytics software is increasing as the higher education web ecosystem is becoming increasingly complex, and the amount of material institutions have online is expanding (domains, sub-domains, etc). Getting a better handle of this data is a new area of concentration for colleges and universities.

Keywords: Higher Education, Strategies, Institution

Introduction
Technological Considerations and Practices provide different aspects of marketing management and technological innovations in all parts of education, including K-12, non-formal, and distance education. Many of these branding and marketing approaches are feasible for most colleges and universities.

Institutions are placing more emphasis on responsive web design to create intuitive and easy to navigate websites that can be viewed on multiple devices and platforms.

Administrators want their institutions to receive a prominent spot in search engine results, particularly Google. Especially for institutions that offer niche programs, it is increasingly important to ensure that search results include these programs at the top.

While recent polls indicate nearly every institution of higher education use some form of social media, it is unclear that many are realizing any ROI on simply establishing Facebook or Twitter accounts.

Alongside the rise of mobile technology and connected devices, colleges and universities are making greater investments in having a mobile presence. This includes not only mobile versions of websites and other content, but also making a greater amount of course content mobile-friendly.

Alongside the use of web analytics and other methods of harnessing "big data" in higher education, colleges and universities are relying more heavily on content management and customer relations systems.

CRM systems are especially important tools for admissions professionals engaged in outreach to prospective students. Beyond the changes brought by technology, marketing and branding trends have shown a progressive reliance on more creative outreach efforts, as well as design and advertising campaigns.

Some are more artistically-oriented than others, but most attempts are to appeal more personally to students that may be interested in higher education. Examples include placing QR codes (to interact with smartphones) in public places, crowd sourcing photos and videos to share campus events, making creative advertising videos (with the intent to go viral), and upgrading housing and other facilities to attract students.

Review of related literature
With reference to previous research by Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001), Mazzarol (1998) and Wilkins & Huisman (2011), the factors image and reputation have been incorporated within the conceptual framework. Image and reputationis interrelated to people, process and

Correspondence
Souvik Sarkar
Research Scholar,
Bundelkhand University,
Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, India

promotion. The connection between image and people is motivated by HEIs staff and their role to interact, inform and manage prospective students during the enrollment process (Ivy, 2008; Pratminingsih & Soedijati, 2011; Nicholls *et al.* 1995).

HEIs could also strengthen their image through promotion and encouragement of well-thought-of professors (Enache, 2011) [7]. The interaction between staff and students could thus affect the perceived image (Ivy, 2008) and therefore be linked to people. Image and process are also interrelated, due to HEIs management of a smooth enrollment phase.

This management can improve a higher educational service quality for the university and since the service quality experienced by students could affect the image, this is an important factor for HEIs. (Enache, 2011) [7].

Image is also connected to promotion. HEIs use of promotion and its portrayed message can influence the image perceived by its receivers (Enache, 2011) [7].

Universities use different marketing channels to inform these receivers, which could be students, potential funders and the general public (Ibid, 2011; Ivy, 2008).

The message can be distributed through different promotional channels and is therefore associated with the HEI´s image. Reputation is also important for universities in order to attract students. As it is difficult to improve an already damaged reputation, promotional activities are important for HEIs. (Enache, 2011) [7].

People is interrelated with reputation, due to the interactions between HEIs staff and students (Ivy, 2008). Reputation is also connected towards process since it deals with the enrollment, retention and graduation phase.

The enrollment phase plays an important role for HEIs as it informs students about knowledge regarding educational services. This knowledge can be fruitful during the retention stage as well as the graduation phase since it can provide improved reputation for HEIs. (Enache, 2011) [7].

Research Study
The combination of the four Ps together with the factors IT, image and reputation into the conceptual framework will facilitate HEIs to attract and enroll foreign students. In this way, HEIs can achieve constructive performances in terms of attracting and enrolling foreign students.

According to a recent report by communications agency Noir Blanc, "93% of administrators in higher education already considered their institution to be a brand." However, that same report notes that "in many cases, this is really more wishful thinking than objective truth.

In reality, only the larger institutions have adapted their communications policies to include the brand angle and integrated it into their strategies."

Blanc report emphasizes four main elements to branding strategy for higher education. Branding requires "patient and rigorous effort," and relies heavily on timing. A university brand can be damaged much more quickly than it can be successfully built, so consistency in purpose and messaging is necessary. For instance, "a mediocre ranking is not catastrophic, but a series of low rankings can do long-term damage to the image."

According to Noir Blanc, "it is very important to keep promises, particularly when it comes to the quality of the education provided." Institutions must be committed to maintaining and improving quality.

In turn, their "communications must constantly be underpinned by facts, data, and irrefutable evidence: rankings, accreditations, applicant data (number and quality), recruitment of professors, placement of graduates, agreements with prestigious partners, media presence anything that demonstrates the quality, as the excellence of the institution helps craft and strengthens its brand."

"It is essential to ensure consistency among positioning, identity, strategy, stated goals, and communications. It is also important to carefully monitor the consistency not only of the messages expressed by the communications department, but also those of the professors, students and governing authorities. They must all speak with the same voice."

Institutions should ensure that their brand is not diluted by attempting to "cover every market at once and meet everyone's expectations." Institutions should leverage multiple angles in order to maximize growth of a brand.

This includes mobilizing alumni networks and current students to be brand ambassadors; maximizing merchandising potential (e.g., branded clothing and apparel, gifts, and other items, particularly related to athletics); and taking advantage of event organization in order to attract greater public attention (e.g., conferences, galas, or forums for students and businesses).

One of the most significant ways branding and marketing of higher education has changed in recent years has been in the online space, using a variety of new platforms for external engagement and communication. The terms "social" and

"digital" refer to the use of both social media and digital marketing more generally, and include the role of effective and intuitive websites.

Institutions are making greater use of social media and digital platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and podcasts to market their programs, while website design and interface is proving a crucial component in how colleges and universities present themselves to prospective students.

According to one recent analysis, which refers to the university website as "the ultimate brand statement," a homepage is a key component in the student experience, and can make or break decisions about whether to attend: A university's homepage is the hub of its web presence and in attempting to appeal to a diverse range of visitors, the challenge is staying intuitive and uncluttered. If visitors have to go back to your homepage every time to find the content they're seeking, they aren't likely to stay on your site very long.

Website navigation is an integral component of overall site architecture from which all content can flow from. To achieve this, it has become common for universities to ensure their homepage is a clearly laid out portal to all of the content that students are looking for online.

This means websites often now feature elements such as "well-placed navigation bars" and engaging visuals (e.g., slideshows, multimedia content, etc.), and ensure that "calls to action" (e.g., "Apply Now" buttons) feature prominently throughout the website experience.

Broader trends in the use of social media platforms, however, have shown that while their use at colleges, universities, community colleges, and other academic institutions has exploded in the last few years, the success of such enterprises is uncertain.

Significance of the study

Most institutions have experienced significant growing pains in their attempts to manage the variety of initiatives that are taken up by various programs, departments, academic units, and schools, which in many instances leads to a duplication of efforts.

Notably, most of these are event-driven and involve direct interaction with prospective students. Thus, while institutions are indeed relying on social media and digital presence to define their brand and attract students, traditional forms of outreach are still among the most effective and popular recruitment strategies that institutions use to increase enrollments.

Other findings from the poll about marketing in higher education include: Among the least effective strategies and tactics for both private and public four-year institutions were radio ads, asking current students or alumni for applicant referrals, online college fairs, and billboard/bus/outdoor advertising.

Running television ads was rated a top practice only by two-year public institutions, but was not being used by more than a quarter of survey respondents in this sector.

Other institutions have chosen to relax standards in other areas to boost their international enrollments in particular, such as required language proficiency, in favor of admitting those students that exhibit strong academic backgrounds.

Conclusion

A trend in recent years for institutions has been to admit international students with weak language skills (but strong academic skills) on a conditional basis, allowing students to strengthen language abilities once admitted.

These types of admissions are often called "intensive English enrollments," and several institutions have reported a distinct increase in enrollments as a result of such admissions policies that feature remedial language programs.

Changes are taking place within higher education and the increased flow of IT-based information is told to be one contributing factor. IT has also been affecting the way HEIs generate knowledge. As a result, different universities now have the ability to offer websites and databases for foreign students. Universities' e-mail responses and websites shall aim to provide relevant information for potential students.

No matter whether public or private, should strengthen their brand by using online activities. This should be done through utilizing name and e-mail addresses to stimulate the satisfaction for online prospective students. As a whole, previous research concludes that it gains successful outcomes in the recruitment process through deeper insight into e-business strategies and online customer service.

References

1. Altbach PG, Knight J. The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. Journal of Studies in International Education. 2007; 11:290-305.
2. Altbach PG. Globalization and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. In National Education Association (Ed). The NEA 2005 almanac of higher education. Washington, DC: National Education Association, 2004, 63-74.
3. Barisch H, Kotler P. A Framework for Marketing Image Management. Sloan Management Review. 1991; 32(2):94-104.
4. Binsardi A, Ekwulugo F. International marketing of British education: Research on the students' perception and the UK market penetration. Marketing Intelligence and Planning. 2003; 21(5):318-327.
5. Bryman A, Bell A. Business Research Methods. Third Edition. Oxford University Press, 2011.
6. Christensen L. *et al.* Marknadsundersökning–en handbok. Tredje uppl. Studentlitteratur, Lund, 2010.
7. Enache I-C. Marketing Higher Education Using the 7 p´s framework. Bulletin of the Transylvania University of Brasov. 2011; 4(1):23-30.
8. Fosket N. School and marketization. Educational Management and Administration. 1998; 26(2):197-210.
9. Ghauri P, Cateora P. International Marketing. McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2010.