Chapter 36
Comprehensive Marketing Intensity Indicator for Higher Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Higher educational institutions (HEI) have lately involved the marketing approach both locally and globally. While almost all HEI now involve marketing of education service, there is no comprehensive assessment indicator available for the marketing intensity. Marketing intensity as a new term is the holistic involvement of an organization into marketing not reflected solely by monetary variables. The chapter attempts to bring the term marketing intensity into the discussion of HEI and to build a comprehensive marketing intensity indicator, which may be easily used to compare HEI with respect to marketing intensity. The chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical model of the indicator.

INTRODUCTION

The discussion over the marketing approach of HEI is a recent one (not more than two decades) but having multitude of approaches. The institution is perceived by researchers as a company or a business entity and the stakeholders of HEI as customers either direct or indirect. The division of entities related to HEI on the basis of different parameters is an issue not agreed upon by the researchers. What is agreed is the characteristic of the HEI services i.e. intangibility, inseparability, perishability etc. All these discussion highlights the subjective issues while deciding about the HEI in the light of specific or general marketing strategies. The question which is of paramount importance is the intensity of an HEI with respect to marketing strategies. In a general sense, it may be decided only on the basis of the

amount spend/cost incurred on marketing. But it is to be noted that HEI may not market their services only through funds apportioned for marketing. Whether consciously or unconsciously, an HEI is marketing on several parameters both monetary and non-monetary and that all may not be reflected in their marketing expenses. Thus, it may, several times be misleading to decide on the basis of money/amount spend on marketing exclusively mentioned in the appropriate heads of the accounts.

When such an assessment is made by an individual, specially, having no or less assess to the quantitative data, it makes the task a complicated one. Any potential entity to the HEI thus fails to assess the marketing pace of the HEI in a simple yet comprehensive manner. In this backdrop, there is a need to assess the marketing intensity of HEI through a comprehensive method while following the principle of objectivity. This is in order to minimize the subjective analysis on the marketing intensity by individuals where the mind may not stuck to particular parameter at multiple times and may give more priority to intuitive judgment which involves selections of parameter comfortable and easy for the individual. Thus, the objective of the study is to attempt the development of a comprehensive indicator of marketing intensity for HEI that is objective, as well as parsimonious, in order to minimize the quick, intuitive and subjective judgment on marketing intensity of HEI free from hindsight and biases (free here means minimization).

In this chapter an attempt is made to create a benchmark marketing intensity indicator that is easy to apply without much mathematical calculations and at the same time relevant for marketing assessment. This assessment can be done both by the institutions as well as third parties or the students itself. As the higher educational institutions are using more marketing strategies than before, it is high time that a simple and comprehensive marketing intensity indicator is developed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature related to marketing of higher educational institutions is scarce and that too does not include the discussion on marketing intensity. The primary reason is the unavailability of a comprehensive indicator for HEI. However, other aspects of marketing related to HEI has been captured in researches as well has been critically examined.

The customer concept related to HEI has been highlighted and discussed by Marzo, Pedraja and Rivera (2007). Their conclusions were the generalizations on the basis of sample universities of Europe. They have categorized the users of university services into two, i.e. stakeholders who are defined as availing services indirectly and customers availing services indirectly. Though, past studies have highlighted that the concept of customer in higher education is similar to the concept of customer in other businesses (Sax, 2004; Svensson & Wood, 2007). While according to Marzo, Pedraja and Rivera (2007) stakeholders in context of universities include students, their families, the community, society, the personnel, public authorities; customers include somebody who pays to receive the university service. The customer of higher education has been identified by many researchers but there remain no consensus. However, it is but natural due to differences in the policies and procedures of different countries.

Studies specifically focusing on the discussion of customers in higher education are myriad. According to Kotler and Fox (1985) customers in HEI include students, employers, teaching personnel, society, public administration, families, administrative and service personnel. Later on Robinson and Long (1987) removed society and public administration from the list of HEI customers. Further, the list was reduced to the list only including students, employers and teaching personnel (Ermer, 1993). The

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