

# The Emerging Strategies for Higher Education Marketing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** Trends on marketplace proves higher education institutions as being a global product that provoke a worldwide competition of students and finding ever more creative ways to satisfy their needs and preferences. It is the explicit recognition of the tension on new marketing tools which our paper seeks to highlight as the basis for attaining higher education institutional positioning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The review was intended to find out apart from traditional marketing mix tools, what else marketing strategies are emerging to promote higher education institutions? And to find out, how the emerging marketing strategies are effective to win client's attention? The study applied a qualitative content analysis approach to search for literatures in business and education suitable to respond to the research questions. Searching of secondary data was made using electronic and online databases. The search was limited to publications between 2000 and 2016 years. The aim was to obtain more current literature on trends of higher education marketing whereby published scholarly journal articles, conference papers and reports were used. A total of 51 articles were reviewed for empirical and theoretical literatures while 18 conference papers and reports were also included. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the secondary data. The found emerging marketing strategies developed a new model for higher education marketing. Whereby the findings established that student life cycle, benchmarking and networking, and the use of new media are emerging contemporary marketing tools of higher education positioning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Higher Education Marketing, Marketplace, Student Life Cycle, Benchmarking and Networking, and New Media

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## 1. Background Information

### 1.1. Introduction

Higher education marketing plays a critical role in attracting new students. Yet marketing strategies of some higher education institutions have been difficult due to limited budgets, increased competition, outdated information, and media saturation. Despite the use of traditional marketing mix tools higher education institutions may still be stressfully due to decrease in applicants, and decrease in government funding, while innovation and adoption of new marketing strategies in higher education remains more important.

According to Sampaio [59], more students than ever are seeking higher education access in many countries, causing tertiary enrollment to jump by 77 percent over the past decade [68]. Further prediction was also done [37] which

suggests that the global demand for higher education access would continue to rise.

The elements of globalization in higher education (HE) sector are widespread and multifaceted and the higher education marketing is now well established as a global phenomenon for both public and private universities, especially in the major-English speaking nations: South Africa, Canada, the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom. In the context of increasing competition for home-based and overseas students, global higher educational institutions now recognize that they need to market themselves in a climate of both local and international competition. In higher education system, as in business it is possible to see the features of the exchange process [52].

Research in university recruitment has shown the potential of marketing when used by higher education institutions as a student recruitment tool [31]. There are gaps between the information that potential students want and the information

provided by universities in their traditional forms of communications. These gaps indicate room for improvement in the field of marketing communication for higher education.

Effective marketing communication in higher education requires an environment of co-creation in which universities and their stakeholders (university executive and staff, students and employers, faculty, regional actors, business, policy, NGOs etc.) interact. Communication and multiple intelligence literature suggest that effective teaching involves reaching students, and that reaching students involves taking their frames of reference into account. Knowing where our students are coming from and meeting them there may increase the chance that students will absorb the information we seek to teach [19].

The market forces and increased student choice have resulted in the growth competition of higher education institutions who cater for a wide range of students including mature aged and students who may not be ready for direct entry into universities due to low academic achievement in high schools.

### ***1.2. Demand Side Issues of Higher Education Marketing***

Marketing is a process that comprises defining markets, quantifying the needs of the customer groups (segments) within these markets, and determining the value propositions to meet these needs [48]. In brief, the marketing process first requires service providers to understand the market with regards to its segments, particularly those of value to develop, and thereon proceed to the planning of marketing strategies. Such marketing strategies are often understood against the 4Ps+E: product, price, promotion, place, and environment. Marketing analysis can be of help when a country positions itself in exporting educational services. Many market segments can be revealed by observing the attributes of certain student groups [24, 28, 43, 62, 65].

Segmentation can be done in different ways: benefit segmentation, demographic segmentation, and lifestyle segmentation. Higher education institutions, in their multiplex roles of social, political, epistemological and capital reform, are by their constitution expected to both symbolize and enact transformation. To attract and retain students, individual higher education institutions must understand the needs and concerns of these prospective students in the markets. Indeed market segmentation and strategies are extremely important in the export of higher educational services.

Literature on higher education marketing, which originated in the UK and US in the 1980s was a theoretical-normative in nature and was based on models developed for use by the business sector [57]. Research that began to emerge in the 1990s interpreted marketing within the narrower definition of marketing communications, and was based on the assumption that in order for any HE institution to market itself successfully, managers would need to examine the decision making process and potential students' search for information.

There was also much debate about who are the customers of higher education: "students can be either considered as customers (with courses as the higher education products) or as products with the employers being the customers" [18]. Such comments serve to highlight increasing concern regarding the marketing of private higher education through the use of business terminology. In some cases, opponents of the introduction of market forces in higher education believe that the business world morally contradicts the values of education, therefore, they would argue that educationalists ought to oppose any form of marketing in their institution.

Later, it was recognized that higher education was not a product, but a service, and the marketing of services was sufficiently different from the marketing of products, to justify different approaches [55]. Some scholars [46] focused on the nature of services, and services marketing and he highlighted the key characteristics that provided a basis for services marketing: the nature of the service i.e. that education is "people based", and emphasized the importance of relationships with customers. Business Sector Marketing theory (BSM), and associated definitions of the concepts of marketing have continued to be used to underpin research on higher education marketing. Marketing in the context of education is also considered as the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated educational programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with a target market to achieve HE marketing organizational objectives [7, 37, 43].

Research in university recruitment has shown the potential of marketing when used by higher education institutions as a student recruitment tool [24, 30, 31, 39, 61]. A key theme of research in this field is the marketing communication, where gaps between the information that potential students want and the information provided by universities in their traditional forms of communications have been identified [4, 5, 17, 24, 61]. These gaps indicate room for improvement in the field of marketing communication for higher education.

### ***1.3. The Dynamics of Higher Education Marketing and Marketing Communications***

Globally, marketization of higher education began during the 1980's [29, 42, 58]. It gained momentum after a massive growth of private universities to cater for market demand. This has led the industry being dominated by the business minded people seeking profit and therefore striving to compete in the marketplace [1]. Scholars [55, 56, 10, 9] as cited in Xiong, (2012), the booming of private universities has forced higher education institutions both private and public institutions to compete globally for revenue and profit and therefore arose the need for marketing strategies of higher education for their survival and well-being as well as ensure gaining of a competitive advantage at the global arena.

Marketization of higher education has also decentralized provision of education from public institutions (universities) to private institutions with a belief to 'increase efficiency' which in turn improving the quality of education being provided. Scholars [1, 8] have suggested a need to

understand the market being characterized by students, employers of graduates, staff, parents or guardians of students, financial and business interest actors, government and other stakeholders. There are numerous studies conducted and focused on analyzing and understanding the market for higher education and its changing dynamics in India where he pointed out that availability of enough information allows active participation of students (customers/consumers) in the market to make informed decision concerning HE institutions [17, 23, 38, 49, 51].

Generally, the key issue to note here is that, marketing composition helps higher education institutions especially universities to identify the relevant marketing strategies to support their marketing initiative. Globalization has blurred the boundaries between nations in quest for knowledge to create a knowledge society. Therefore, marketization of higher education at the global level goes hand in hand with internationalization of education systems and institutions. It is viewed as one of the best way to attract students who are primary customers of HE institutions and therefore these institutions should aim at meeting students' expectations and needs with information on facilities, reputation, curriculum, and quality of students and teaching staff which has influence on students' decision. On the other hand, inadequate information limits students' evaluation of these institutions on issues like programs offered and ranking or reputation of an institution which is helpful in making choices.

## 2. Methodology

A qualitative content analysis is the approach mostly applied in health studies as well as education studies which has also been adopted to social science research [27, 20, 11, 34]. The study has applied a qualitative content analysis approach involving extensive search for literature in business and education suitable to respond to the research questions under this study. Searching of secondary data was made using electronic and online databases such as Emerald Insight, Jstor, Sage and Ajol. Also, internet searching was involved to obtain the relevant literature for the study where snowball technique was employed (references of references). When searching was done key words such as Higher Education, marketing, marketization, branding, marketing of service, planning, positioning and segmentation were used in searching for relevant data. The search was limited to publications between 2000 and 2016. The aim was to obtain more current literature on trends of HE marketing where published scholarly journal articles, conference papers and reports were used. A total of 51 articles were reviewed for empirical and theoretical literature while 18 conference papers and reports were also included in a review for this study. Review of the empirical literature was done while considering the aim of the study, methodology, findings and implications of the study. Thematic analysis has been applied in analyzing the secondary data where patterns of relationship between the concepts of the study have been identified which in turn has helped the researchers to build a

conceptual framework of the HE marketing.

## 3. Practical Approaches of Higher Education Marketing

Higher education institutions should be aware and responsive to the "current or projected gaps in performance against their competitors" by considering the identified strategic marketing tools as justified through various researches:

### 3.1. Market Planning

As part of strategic planning of an institution, private HE institutions should also plan on how to govern the needs, expectations and preferences of students, 'stakeholders and markets' and also plan on ways to 'attract', 'satisfy' and 'retain' them. With the market, driven economy which has been influenced with privatization of HE, institutions operating as businesses need to re-assess their policies, re-evaluate the way they are 'managed and promoted' to maximize productivity [11, 29, 36, 45, 59]. Market planning for higher education institutions should be partly market demand needs and institutional needs. Transformation of higher education is a commodity in the marketplace which is having a positional value to maximize the value of the services/ products from these institutions.

### 3.2. Market Competition and Segmentation

With an increasingly competitive environment for higher education institutions, this calls for strategies to create a competitive advantage. Identifying ones' market becomes a necessity if higher education institutions intend to respond to its customer's needs and expectations in order to identify different target markets.

The higher education marketing is never free of competition and is characterized by vertical segmentation of aligned groupings, elite research universities, aspirant research universities and teaching-focused (universities or other). The elite research universities are leading with their prestigious status which also in turn creates intensive prospective students' competition for entry in these institutions. Aspirant research universities are also striving for social status to turn to the first segment which is always not possible as a number for elite universities is limited. They also struggle to secure funds and revenues for expansion and recognition. They focus on quality of service and tend to give room for innovative programs which later 'brain drain' to elite universities after showing signs of success. For them competition do not undermine the quality of their services i.e. teaching but hardly recognizable as a customer's quality is centered on prestigious universities. The third segment of the teaching-focused institutions targets the mass higher education. They are usually under-funded and therefore struggle for revenue and expansion and are characterized with scarce resources which jeopardize quality of service over 'market pressure' [45, 59].

It is noted segmentation to be applicable from national to international and global level with caution on differences in stratification among nations. An increasingly competitive market as a result of higher education expansion, demands higher education institutions compete in the market place for students, revenues and resources and therefore price is no longer a dominant factor of competition (whether high or low) as now competition has moved to quality advantage of the services. This kind of segmentation might be a challenge among emerging higher education institutions, but they should adapt to new marketing forces in order to gain and maintain customer's.

### **3.3. Market Positioning**

Positioning is "the place which a product occupies in a given market as perceived by the product's targeted customers" [19] as cited in Jurkowitsch, Vignali, Kaufmann, (2006). It implies how the market stakeholders especially customers view and weigh a brand in a market. Image, quality of teaching and facilities, learning environment (campus life), and ease of accessibility of services are important features for promotional purposes of higher education institutions and therefore should be included in institutions' promotional tools [38].

There are some information which have been displayed on the positioning of education as a result of education expansion and its effects on the labor market outcomes. The study was conducted with a sample aged 20-35 in 28 countries between 1985-2007 respectively [12]. The researcher looked at how the educational expansion has influenced employers reward on education as having absolute or relative value. The study employed the 'human capital' model that insists on skills being the influence of high wages and the 'positional good' model that implies the relative education position determining the labor market rewards (earnings). The study revealed that in communities where there was high level of expansion, higher education had become a 'positional good' in labor market where high level of education is relatively an indicator of rewards rather than an absolute indicator of skills. The researcher insisted that the findings doesn't mean the human capita perspective is less important but the expansion has increasingly forced employers to demand higher levels of education even with jobs that require less education. The findings of the study represented the western countries, the question remains in African context whether if the expansion of higher education has an absolute or relative value in the African labor market. Are the employers being influenced in any way with the expansion? Is higher education a positioning good or a human capital investment? The author [44] implies a remarkable positional hierarchy in HE as being more stable overtime as compared to other industries. Focusing on market demand he insists that since higher education is operating as a 'positional good', prospective students tend to consider the positional aspect other than the teaching quality of the institutions as they aspire for opportunities and status in future after graduating.

With regard to the above studies, students are likely to be more informed of reputation other than teaching quality information which is rarely available. Therefore, prestigious higher education institutions are in a good position of getting more students as most of prospective students overlook the quality of program teaching factor in making decision. For higher education institutions to achieve a competitive advantage in the global marketplace, positioning themselves in the minds of their customers is very important.

### **3.4. Market Branding**

Branding entails creation and portrayal of an accurate, favorable and attractive image of an organization which is also important with higher education institutions. It is obligatory for HE institutions to differentiate themselves from others to establish their position in the market, attract students, revenues, resources, and other stakeholders and achieve a competitive advantage over others. The image portrayed by the HE institutions effects the attitude that publics have on an institution and therefore determines student's willingness to apply to an institution and other publics involvement with an institution such as funders and employers (companies). It is very important for HE institutions to be cautious and considerate of their image with the limited number of students and limited funds at the global place as these institutions compete for the same. Customer impression matters as it may affect applying for enrolment of students, donating and staffing of these institution internationally and therefore requires market branding of these institutions [31, 33]. Scholars [69] suggests that higher education institutions can become better and strong brands if at all given a chance to express their multiple values and identities paradoxically as what [69] insists of the university operating as a holding company where schools, faculties and department are autonomous of individual branding.

Therefore, Market branding seems not to work in higher education context as it did in other industries. A number of higher education institutions have been regarded as best or leading but they lack a clear identity.

## **4. Results**

Following the review of contents and analysis, the following marketing strategies was found to emerge in higher education settings.

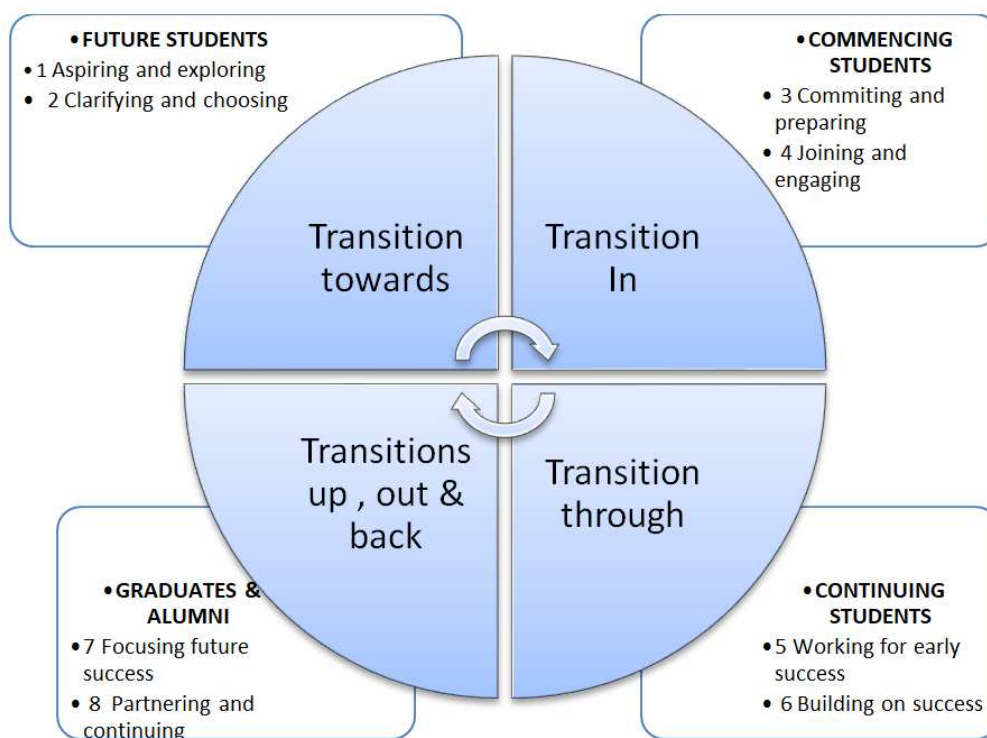
### **4.1. Student Life Cycle**

The notion of the 'student lifecycle' is a conceptual shorthand for describing the constellation of evolving identities, needs and purposes as students enter into, move through and graduate from university. It can be usefully viewed as a series of transitions towards (future students), into (commencing students), through (continuing students), up and out (graduates) and back (alumni) to university [41].

The student lifecycle begins with the first contact. From

the moment a prospective student or other individual connects with your institution whether virtually, through a recruiting event, or via one of many possible inbound or outbound communications, your institution has an opportunity to nurture and grow that relationship over time. But how do you communicate and share the information from this initial contact with the appropriate individuals in your institution? Can you ensure that the individual's information is not lost, but also kept secure? And how do you tie that initial contact information to the individual's

subsequent application, enrollment, and giving history? Can you capture and track all the affiliations and relationships that an individual contact has in order for you to personalize communications and interactions? Will you be able to track that initial contact throughout the relationship lifecycle to know if the person applied for admission and enrolled and if she completed her program and graduated successfully? Finally, will you be able to measure the effectiveness of your recruiting and retention efforts from this initial contact? [22, 57].



**Figure 1.** Student Lifecycle Framework [41].

Providing a valuable experience at every stage of the student lifecycle allows institutions to advance their mission and achieve strategic goals in the areas of growth, intelligence, quality, and efficiency. Today's higher education market is evolving rapidly, with unprecedented forces exerting pressure on colleges and universities. Factors like increased competition, decreased funding, higher student expectations, and smaller applicant pools can create large challenges for institutions. On the student side, rising costs, tight job markets, and challenging demographic trends make the prospect of higher education equally daunting [2, 21, 25, 27, 57].

It was found that, marketing research emerges by engaging with prospective students, and the way institutions are positioned in the marketplace. A student's interaction with their institutions is important and goes far beyond administration and transactional systems. Currently, highly effective education and research institutions are building a framework that supports the intersection of academics, administrative processes, and long-term constituent relationships to promote student success. They need solutions

that adapt quickly to diverse and changing education models. They expect operational excellence and a natural, intuitive, real-time user experience that promotes productivity and supports learning through collaboration. Finally, they want every system that supports and interacts with students to be flexible and scalable enough to keep pace with the speed of technology and retain customer.

Brand positioning is actively speculated by students themselves. Through student life cycle higher education institutions learn to realize the full potential of their brand to attract the right students to help them grow and stand out. It was discovered that, managing student finances and funding education is also very crucial. Financing a university education is becoming more challenging for students and their families. Around the globe, many governments are reducing their support for higher education and changing the mix of available funding. Many countries are introducing new student payment requirements such as student loan schemes or work and study programs. And students are looking to third-party sources of funding, such as foundations, scholarships, and corporate sponsors, as well as

increasing the number of hours spent working to finance their education. Audience Segmentation is tied with this attribute to understand student's best positioning, messaging, marketing channels, and support processes in order to take advantage of academic programs and expand their reach.

In order to win customers, merge academics and collaboration with student information are harmonized. Higher education is an increasingly digital, distributed, and mobile experience. Students and faculty need real-time access to online learning, collaboration tools, and resources from anywhere in the world, on any device, and enhanced by rich digital media. The effectiveness of student life cycle as a new marketing tool is enhanced Program Viability whereby drive through strategic programmatic growth in order to understand how educational programs align with market demand and workforce alignment to ensure success.

Further inputs on the effectiveness of student life cycle as a marketing strategy of higher education entities is done through provision of an holistic view between constituents and service providers. Investment Analysis using data insights, benchmarks and modeling accurately forecast to achieve institutional enrollment goals. An individual's relationship with your institution is not limited to academic or administrative functions. Your constituents change roles and requirements for information and access over time. From obtaining a parking permit, to accessing research materials through the library, to purchasing books, joining a research team, becoming an employee, and so on each role or activity requires a specific type of access to information. Predictive Modeling must be geared to get insights through advanced analytics that lead to solutions across the student lifecycle, as well as specifically for enrollment, financial aid, student engagement and retention.

Because many of the systems supporting these functions have been built independently, creating a holistic campus environment requires them to be connected throughout your institution. Higher education solutions help colleges and universities.

- i. Connect the entire campus community;
- ii. Integrate multiple, disparate systems throughout your institution;
- iii. Improve the user experience and access to information.
- iv. Enhance service to the campus community;
- v. Simplify and speed up access to information that users need, and
- vi. Secure access based on each individual's role and affiliations.

Cultivate continued opportunity for individual growth and lifelong learning offers relationships with your institution do not end when a student graduates, achieves his or her goals, or leaves for other reasons. Continuing to cultivate and grow the relationship each individual has with your institution gives an opportunity to deepen the relationship and pursue future opportunities for learning and engagement.

Supporting grants management and research is highly affecting the market place of higher education and student life cycle. As researchers and research programs have

become more global and data intensive, it is increasingly challenging for higher education institutions to keep pace with the new demands. No longer are institutions able to manage discrete research projects within the confines of a department or even the institution itself. Cross-discipline and global collaboration, managing the deluge of data, securing access, and meeting the needs for data integrity and accountability are issues that research organizations face today as well as building an infrastructure to meet future needs and expectations. Similarly, managing the financial aspects of a research project is becoming more challenging. Competition for grants and sponsored research funding is increasing, as are pressures to secure more grants and reduce costs. Principal investigators and research administrators must contend with increasingly complex program requirements, institutional review boards, conflict-of-interest requirements, and reporting requirements.

The practical implication of student lifecycle perspective in higher education marketing is the understanding that students have different identity-related tasks and needs at different stages, and that this requires a corresponding matching in the design and culture of the learning environment. The simplifying assumption that 'they are all students' and that we can relate to them consistently can result in considerable missed opportunities for enriching students' experience and their success eventually to lose market.

#### **4.2. Benchmarking and Networking**

It was found out that most institutions of higher education desire to learn from each other and to share aspects of good practice. What is new in this century however, is the increasing interest in the formalization of such comparisons by adopting contemporary benchmarking and networking. Definitions of benchmarking vary widely, from the practical "a self-improvement tool for organizations which allows them to compare themselves with others, to identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses and learn how to improve. Benchmarking is a way of finding and adopting best practices" The major contribution of benchmarking and networking as emerging marketing tool have been established in quality assurance, accreditation systems, and the drive to increase the effectiveness of higher education management throughout planning, leading, organizing, controlling, and human resources.

From the above it is clear that process oriented benchmarking within higher education seeks to answer some of the following questions: how good, and in what areas, does the university we want to be? How well is the university or college doing compared to others? Across the university as a whole which part of it is doing best, and how do they do it? How can universities introduce into their own practice what is done well in others? How does an institution improve its performance while retaining its unique features? And - more competitively - in the longer term how an institution might become better than the best in the context of its own mission?

It was found out [3, 9, 25, 27] that, there are seven main

approaches to benchmarking and networking as emerging tools of higher education marketing:

- i. Strategic benchmarking, which used where organizations seek to improve their overall performance by focusing in on specific strategies or processes. In marketing perspective the focus is on delivering quality product (program) to prospective students,
- ii. Performance or Competitive Benchmarking, a process whereby organizations use performance measures to compare themselves against similar organizations. The marketing focus in this factor is on product sustainability, innovation and flexibility,
- iii. Process Benchmarking, which focuses on specific processes or operations, in higher education examples might be enquiry management, enrolment or timetabling,
- iv. Functional and Generic Benchmarking, which involves partnerships of organizations drawn from different sectors that wish to improve some specific activity or process. The focus here is on searching for new organizational networks, and strengthening the formal for the purpose of learning and development,
- v. External Benchmarking, which enable the comparison of the organizations functions and key processes against good practice organizations. The key marketing strategy here is based on product standards,
- vi. Internal Good Practice Benchmarking, which establishes of good practice organization- wide through the comparison of internal activities or operations. The marketing strategy occurs through business creativity that considered the organizational mission and vision, and
- vii. International Benchmarking, it can be undertaken internationally as well as nationally. The commonsense approach to contemporary benchmarking draws appropriately from a mix of all these approaches and organizational learning and marketing is best done when it is carried out within a spirit of partnership and collaboration that enable both parties to learn from each other.

Benchmarking and networking are suggested as instruments for higher education marketing tool seeking for qualitative changes and higher performance results. Benchmarking and networking are not only enforced externally but also perceived as means for continuous learning of the total quality management of higher education systems. It is effective under networking circumstances and can help HEIs to satisfy stakeholder needs and meet win emerging challenges.

#### 4.3. New Media

Engaging with social media has been detected as being among the emerging strategies of higher education marketing because of its positive business experience and the high adoption rate of the social media by the younger generation. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is basically an umbrella term that encompasses all communication technologies such as internet, wireless networks, cell phones, satellite communications, digital

television just to mention few that provide access to information.. ICT tools are important not only in higher education but also permeate and integrate with other sectors [8, 16, 53, 66-68]. It is reasonable to assume that engagement of social media applications as part of higher education marketing has contributed to increase enrolment and help prospective students make better-informed decisions regarding their study choice and university selection. However, special attention is required about how future university students use the social media and what impact the social media have on the decision making process of future students regarding their choice for a study and university.

Social networks have effective among higher education leaders, administrators, and researchers on a number of ways that include the ongoing need to reduce costs, cope with global competition for students, faculty, and researchers, gain insight for more-informed decision-making and strategic planning, keep pace with the speed of technology advancements, link education and research programs to outcomes, and meet increasingly rigorous standards for accountability and regulatory compliance. Other outcomes include the ranges from distance learning delivery modes, connectivity between institutions, ministries and stakeholders and thus making the availability of ICT service much more usefully in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The New Media Consortium's 2014 Horizon Report lists six short to medium-term (i.e. next five years) trends in the use of technology in institutional marketing, teaching and learning, all of which have policy implications at institutional level. Social media and helps to increase use in higher education and enables collaboration between educators and students to create virtual professional communities of practice across institutions, online learning environments providing opportunities for group problem-solving and peer-to-peer collaboration and for making personalized learning scalable, the emergence of data-informed learning analytics for monitoring student learning at a personalized level and identifying students at risk of failing in order to improve student success, and shifting students from consumers to creators through the use of dedicated spaces equipped with video equipment, 3D printers and other technology that allows students to bring their assignments to production and to create entrepreneurial start-ups [6, 13].

The use of social networks for higher education the 21<sup>st</sup> century has helped higher education institutions to remain competitive by using innovative technologies in teaching and learning in order to improve the quality of activities and attract new learners. This research established from the Technology Adoption Model in [67] that, system adoption is influenced by attitudes, perceived ease – of – use, perceived usefulness and user behavioral intentions. Therefore, in institutions where ICT have been used creatively there is a big difference in the way of searching new students, teachers teach and students learn, and help students acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like digital literacy, innovative thinking, creativity, sound reasoning and effective communication to enhance the quality of higher education.



### Conceptual Framework Model for Higher Education Marketing (2017)

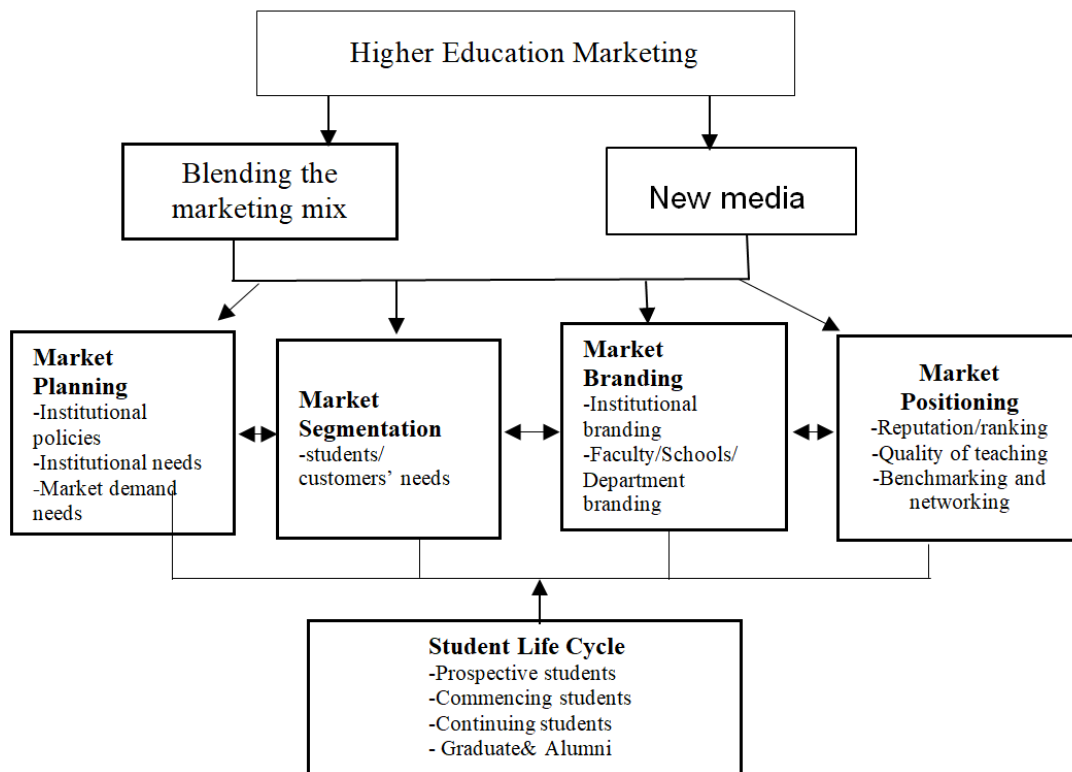


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework Model for Higher Education Marketing (2017).

The proposed model has considered the traditional marketing mix and added some other elements: planning, segmentation, branding, positioning, new media (communication) and student life cycle as additional tools when marketing HE institutions. The traditional marketing mix seemed not to be sufficient in explaining the marketing of HE, a gap which is filled by considering market planning where concentration is made on assessing the institutional policies linking with the demand at the market as well as the needs of the institution. Also, HE institutions have to decide on the market they want to serve (nationally and internationally) where market segmentation is very important as it gives room for HE institutions to accurately identify the real needs of their customers (students) and not the perceived needs by these institutions. Market branding also provides an opportunity for HE institutions to foster their image to attract more students by encouraging faculty, school and department branding as they reflect different identities. Market positioning reflecting institutional performance analysis focusing on the quality of teaching, reputation of the institution, quality of the management, partnership with other institutions/ stakeholders as well as performance of the institution in a competitive environment. Since students are the customers as well as products of HE institutions considering student life cycle become a necessity when marketing HE institutions. When these institutions plans, segment, brand and position themselves in a competitive market environment student life cycle should be the core factor and of paramount importance in the whole process

where concentration should be made on the prospective students, commencing students, continuing students and graduate/alumni as they all have a positive impact on the survival and future of HE institutions.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the transformation, competition has remained a challenge for most higher education institutions at the global marketplace as they are still struggling with national and international competitions. In order to catch up with the rest of the world changes institutional policies and practices, marketing strategies, as well as higher education infrastructure should be reflected. While struggling to withstand competition at the global marketplace higher education institutions should focus into responding to the expectations and needs of home market in terms of curriculum development that reflect the actual needs of the continent. Successful higher education institutions are concentrating on the complete student lifecycle from the first contact with a prospective student, through enrollment and graduation, alumni pursuits, lifelong learning, and beyond. Furthermore, universities have made meaningful inroads in adoption and potentiality of social media, as well as concentrating on benchmarking and networking to improve its brand-positioning.

This paper therefore recommends that in order to succeed in institutional branding and positioning, higher education



institutions should be vigilant in order to adapt to the changes in the marketing environment. Since the traditional marketing mix (price, promotion, people, product, and planning) alone is not sufficient, higher education institutions should consider vision, energy and teamwork to increase its performance in marketing strategies. The adoption of contemporary marketing strategies would enable them to identify the key processes that need improvement and to search for applicable solutions. Greater environmental uncertainty and limited resources are some of the aspects that would require the development of marketing communication and practices if these practices are to be adopted effectively.

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