



# COMPARATIVE MARKETING PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION USING CHRIST COLLEGE (BANGALORE, INDIA) AND LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY (LIVERPOOL, UK) AS CASE STUDIES

Ian Vandewalle\* & Suniti Phadke\*\*

## Abstract

*This paper describes some of the marketing research undertaken by Liverpool Hope University, UK and Christ College, Bangalore, India. Both universities share a Christian foundation and are similar in their Mission, values and ethos. Both operate in an increasingly competitive environment and the paper begins by outlining the key challenges for both the UK and Indian university sectors.*

*The paper also highlights the findings of undergraduate students' choice behaviour for choosing and enrolling for undergraduate courses of Christ College. The findings are based on a longitudinal survey compiled over 4 years adopting a questionnaire. Strategic marketing initiatives to reinforce a "positive image" of Christ College and "enhance students overall experience" were drawn based on the findings.*

*The paper then explores a range of techniques, including familiarity/favourability dimensions, attribute identification measures, perceptual*

\* Business School, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK, e-mail: [vandewi@hope.ac.uk](mailto:vandewi@hope.ac.uk)

\*\* Office of International Affairs, Christ College, Bangalore, e-mail: [phadkesuniti@hotmail.com](mailto:phadkesuniti@hotmail.com)

*mapping techniques and expectancy-experience analysis undertaken at Liverpool Hope University to help assess its market position and explore perceived gaps in the service provision.*

*The methods are critiqued and the benefits of the research for each university are discussed.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Marketing; Positioning, Customer Perceptions; Higher Education

## Introduction

Universities across the globe share a number of key marketing challenges in common that principally relate to increased student demand and the effects of globalisation. The situation is aptly summarised by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (hefce) who note:

*"...global competition has intensified and high level skills and knowledge have become ever more central to...[national]...economic success. Demand for higher learning is escalating across the world, and there has been a dramatic expansion of HE in some other countries, leading to increased competition for students".*

HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006-11 (Consultation) November 2005/45; para 2 page 8

The phenomenon of globalisation may in part, at least, be driven by the increased use of the internet, new technologies and advances in mass communications. This has had the effect of opening up access to the HE market, driving demand for e-learning programmes, as well as creating a shop front for university promotional activities. In turn, this accessibility has created greater accountability and transparency of university provision, through the use of league tables, government statistics, benchmarking and the like. Stakeholders are better informed and are increasingly more selective about their university choices and their expectations of experience. The HE market is becoming more customer led; provision is increasingly ephemeral and more vocationally oriented as it strives to meet market needs. Deregulation of higher education has also opened up the market to increased competition and students are more mobile and more prepared to travel than ever before. In addition the market is compounded by national policy drivers and local conditions that impact on the market position.

Table 1 indicates comparative statistics of the higher education system in U.K and India and provides the context for the marketing strategies within the respective environments.

**Table 1: Comparison of the Higher Education Systems in India and the UK.**

| India  | UK   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16,000 colleges</li> <li>• 300 universities</li> <li>• 8 million students</li> <li>• 400,000 Teachers</li> <li>• Government spends only 0.9% of the Total expenditure on HE</li> <li>• 7% of the age group (17-23) enter the portals of university</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44 specialist colleges</li> <li>• 151 FECs (hefce, 2005)</li> <li>• 86 universities</li> <li>• 1 million students (hesa, 2004)</li> <li>• 70,000 Teachers (hefce, 2002)</li> <li>• Government spends only 0.78 % of the Total expenditure on HE (AUT, 2004)</li> <li>• Target of 50% of the age group (18-23) to enter the portals of university (hefce 2005)</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Source:<br/>Government of India:<br/><a href="http://www.education.nic.in">www.education.nic.in</a></p> <p>Government of India:<br/><a href="http://www.indiabudget.nic.in/ub2004-2005/eb/vol2htm">www.indiabudget.nic.in/ub2004-2005/eb/vol2htm</a></p>  | <p>Source:<br/><a href="http://Hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlets/2005/cl11_05/">Hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlets/2005/cl11_05/</a> Circular 11/2005.<br/>hesa (2004): <a href="http://www.hesa.ac.uk">www.hesa.ac.uk</a><br/><a href="http://Hefce.ac.uk/hefce/2002/02_43.HTM">Hefce.ac.uk/hefce/2002/02_43.HTM</a>. ac<br/><a href="http://www.aut.org.uk.cfm?articleid=827">www.aut.org.uk.cfm?articleid=827</a><br/>Higher Education spending fall revealed by AUT research; April 2004, News<br/>Hefce; Strategic Plan 2006-11: Consultation Document. November 2005/45, p 21</p> |

## The Indian HE Market

The Indian HE market is one of the largest in the world, with student enrolment growing at about 5% over the past two decades ([www.ugc.ac.in](http://www.ugc.ac.in)). The Indian higher educational institutions' challenge is to remain credible, reputable and competitive. The major challenges they face include:

- Financial resource limitations: The funding share for higher education of the overall total provision for the union has fallen from 28.19 per cent in 1990-91 to 17.7 percent in 2003-04 (People's Democracy 2003). This has impacted on the quality of provision.
- Aggressive competition: India is a signatory to The General Agreement on Trade in Services of the WTO and this has opened up the higher education sector to foreign institutions, which has also led to an increase in private providers.
- Rapid advancement in technology which has seen increased pressure on resources to update information and communication technologies and their infrastructure, as well as to facilitate students learning of knowledge and skills needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Provision of a relevant high quality education: The development of relevant and quality curricula for the graduates so that they have marketable skills still remains a major challenge.
- Pursuing Access and Equity within the India HE sector which remains very elitist. According to a UGC survey, 70 per cent of students completing university education are from 20 per cent top income groups (Biswas 2003). Furthermore, only 7% of the age group 17-23 enter the portals of university (Singh 2005). To provide HE for people from lower socio economic groups, women, and ethnic minorities' access and at affordable costs will remain a major challenge.
- The commodification of higher education. There is a need to maintain a balance between *market driven* and *value driven* philosophies and develop them in a synergistic manner. Recent trends show the dominance of the 'market' paradigm, which is evident from the number of institutions seeking to engage with the demands of globalization. However, for an institution like Christ College a major challenge is to balance the "Role of Education" with the "Trading of Education." The former concept acknowledges the importance of education as a social tool for the creation of a knowledge-based society with democratic, tolerant and active citizens. However the

“Trading of Education” concept considers education as a commodity with the supply of education as per the market needs and for profit.

- Other Challenges include changing the values and attitudes of the students and tutors, the increased cost of delivery, accountability to multiple agencies from central and state Government and the deregulation of higher education.

## The UK HE Market

English has become the common language of the global community and the UK is therefore expecting to see demand for its HE provision to increase substantially over the next few years. Indeed, the British Council predicts the overseas market will grow at about 5% per annum until 2025 (British Council, 2005), although, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (hesa), non-EU overseas student numbers for 2002-03 showed an increase of 23% on the previous year, building on the 8% per annum increases over the previous three years (hesa, 2004). Nonetheless, there is much competition from other English speaking countries, particularly the USA and Australia, and an increasing number of EU universities have adopted delivery in English to attract the international market. Global competitiveness therefore remains an issue for UK universities which are, in turn, operating within a number idiosyncratic national policy drivers, which include:

- The government’s Widening Participation agenda which aims to increase participation of 18-30 year olds to 50% by 2010 (hefce 2005).
- Emphasis on transparency and accountability, through Widening Participation Targets, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), hesa statistics, Access Regulator, Quality Assurance rating, Institutional Audits and a number of independently published League Tables.
- Market convergence resulting from the benchmarking of academic provision.
- Increasing vocational provision and employability through the funding of Foundation Degrees, opening up Higher Education opportunities (and creating competition) with the FE sector.
- Reduced public subsidy and the introduction of variable fees from September 2006 which has led to a plethora of funding options across the sector, increasing student choice considerations.
- Increased stakeholder demands and complexity through raising expectations and enhancing university profiles within the local economy and local community.

- Stratification and deregulation of universities: as a result of the above influences, individual universities can no longer satisfy all stakeholder requirements and so in recent years there have been suggestions of a repositioning and stratification of HE to include a research elite, teaching only universities, FECs, as well as private and corporate universities (MacLeod, 2004).

## The Sector Response

Strategic Marketing of the university sector is well practiced in some countries, notably the USA (Kotler and Fox, 1995). However, whilst the need for marketing in the UK sector has been recognized for some time (Howarth, 1991), it has been slow to adopt this approach and to date, there is little published material on the subject. This accords with studies elsewhere, for instance Ford *et al* (1999) comparing experiences in the USA and New Zealand, note that

“Service industries have been reluctant to adopt this kind... [a marketing orientation].. of focus, and nowhere has this been truer than in the case of higher education” (p 171).

In the UK, the funding council also acknowledges that ... “only a few [universities] have clear marketing strategies or market analysis”... and that they need “A focused, effective and realistic senior management team...[that]...needs to recognise the realities of the institution’s position, and have a clear sense of where they are trying to take the institution and a practical strategy for doing so....” (hefce 2001).

## Our Response

The response of Christ College was to formulate and implement a number of strategic marketing initiatives and proactively prepare ourselves over the next three years to improve our market position in the Indian HE market. The study was designed to help develop and implement specific strategies for enhancing student perception and experience.

## Introduction to Christ College

The Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) founded Christ College in 1969. Christ College, a premier educational institution, is dedicated to the motto of “excellence and service.” It has around 6000 students and offers both Undergraduate and Postgraduate programs. Christ College has the rare distinction

of being the only college in Karnataka to be awarded Grade A+ by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an independent Council under the University Grants Commission ([www.christcollege.edu](http://www.christcollege.edu)). Christ College ranks among top 10 colleges in India (ORG Marg survey, 2005) and attracts students from all over the country, as well as internationally. The courses offered by Christ College are in demand and for all courses the number of applications received are much more than the seats available.

## Aims of the Christ College Study

- i) To identify the factors that contribute to students' choice in selecting Christ College for undergraduate study.
- ii) To formulate and implement marketing plans for attracting better quality students and enhancing the potential applicant pool.

## Research Methodology

A longitudinal survey conducted over four years from 2002 to 2005 was compiled for the present study. A detailed questionnaire was developed and administered in the first two weeks of the students reporting to the various courses in the beginning of the academic year. 300 undergraduate first year students were chosen randomly every year allowing representation for each course offered.

The questionnaire contained several statements measuring the students' perception of Christ College on factors such as quality of faculty, teaching-learning systems, physical facilities, library, computer facilities, campus, cafeteria, general security and hygiene etc. The analysis of the statements measuring factors that contributes to students' choice in the selection of Christ College for undergraduate courses is presented.

## Results

It was found that the primary reason why students chose Christ College was- (1) reputation, image and brand of the college, followed by (2) courses offered and (3) positive word of mouth, especially from current students and alumni. The survey found that consistently over 4 years more than 95% of the respondents selected these criteria as top 3. Proximity to Residence was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> important reason for selecting the college.

It was also found that the choice behaviour pattern of students has not changed over the 4 years as it was noticed that the above three factors and the order of preference has not changed. This consistency in the decision making process amongst the students over the last 4 years has some specific strategic planning implications.

The Survey also revealed that students' choice behaviours were not influenced by seeing print advertisements, brochures, and a colourful website of the college. These factors were the least influential in the choice making process for enrollment. However, the respondents did consider these communication tools as important for collecting information about College.

## Strategic Marketing Plan

The above findings helped Christ College to formulate and implement a marketing plan and integrated it into the corporate plan. There was clear evidence that the choice behaviour of students was based on the reputation of Christ College and that this was communicated through positive word of mouth, rather than via mass communication. The aims of strategic marketing were therefore:

- a) To make the Brand Experience exceed the Brand Perception. Here, the aim was to improve Brand equity by focusing on creating a memorable total student experience from the first point of enquiry to the returned scholar as a member of an alumni association for life.
- b) To attract potential scholarly students with higher grades to apply to Christ College.

Strategic marketing initiatives were formulated using three major marketing concepts to attain the above-mentioned objectives:

- i) **7 Ps framework of service marketing mix** (McCarthy, 1996; Booms and Bitner 1981; Lautenborn 1990;). The 7Ps framework was used to act as guideline to reinforce a "Positive Image" of Christ College as shown in Table 2. The idea here is to focus on student centric strategies, derived from Lautenborns' concept of 4Cs.



**Table 2: Strategic marketing initiatives to reinforce "Positive Image" of Christ College**

| Major Decision Areas (7 'P's) | Desired Outcomes  | Key Strategic Initiatives Undertaken  |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Product                       | Marketable Qualification  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updating curriculum regularly</li> <li>• Field based learning experiences made mandatory</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary and career oriented courses</li> <li>• Value added courses for holistic development</li> </ul>   |
| Place                         | Multiple utilization of prime location                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging faculty, students, industry and professionals to leverage for increasing the quality of life of the community</li> </ul>   |
| Promotion                     | Maximizing information about Christ College and its services      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To further reduce cost on advertisement, print brochures/ fliers</li> <li>• Periodically update website content</li> <li>• To enhance the total student experience by encouraging and systematizing intercollegiate events, student associations, Industry interface and community work</li> </ul> |
| Physical Evidence             | Create a lasting impression                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green and clean environment</li> <li>• Infrastructure facilities</li> <li>• Dress code for students</li> </ul>   |
| Process                       | Memorable service encounters with teaching and non-teaching staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage of technology for teaching</li> <li>• Innovative teaching methods for joyful learning</li> <li>• Admission Procedures made easy</li> <li>• Encouraging student participation</li> <li>• Leveraging on technology to add value to students</li> </ul>   |

Table 2 (Contd.)

| Major Decision Areas (7 'P's) | Desired Outcomes  | Key Strategic Initiatives Undertaken   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| People                        | Best suited teaching, non-teaching personnel and students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on systematic recruitment and scientific selection process</li> <li>• Proactive training programs</li> <li>• Equitable reward and recognition policy</li> <li>• Rigorous student admission process</li> </ul> |
| Price                         | Value for money   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient utilization of resources</li> <li>• High corporate citizenship behaviour</li> <li>• Increase in number of student seats</li> </ul>  |

ii) **Service Quality Dimensions** (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988)

Table 3 shows the application of service quality dimensions in "Improving the student perception and total experience."

Table 3: Focus on Service quality dimensions for improving students' perception and experience

| Service Quality Dimensions | Objective  | Major Initiatives Proposed   |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Responsiveness             | To provide prompt service and be helpful   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rewarding meritorious students</li> <li>• Scholarships for economically weak students</li> <li>• Training staff to be sensitive and caring to students and parents needs</li> <li>• Parents access to academic/ attendance record on the net</li> <li>• Recruiting staff with service mind set</li> </ul> |
| Assurance                  | Personnel possessing knowledge, skills, ability and attitudes aligned with College motto | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of qualified and experienced personnel in a planned manner</li> </ul>   |

| Service quality dimensions | Objective   | Major Initiatives proposed  |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Empathy                    | To understand feelings of all stakeholders                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring of students</li> <li>• Professional counseling</li> <li>• Alumni Meetings for feedback</li> <li>• Student feedback on content and pedagogy</li> <li>• Open Door Policy by management and faculty</li> <li>• Sensitization programs for students and faculty</li> </ul> |
| Tangibles                  | Appearance and ambience represents quality                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building facilities like student center, auditorium, conference halls, Wi-Fi classrooms</li> <li>• Brochures, fliers, CDs of high quality</li> <li>• Dress code for staff</li> </ul>   |
| Reliability                | Increase consistency, dependability and accuracy of services provided | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periodic quality audits for monitoring and improving processes</li> <li>• Regular Interaction with industry professionals and academic community</li> <li>• Compulsory courses to inculcate moral values and ethics</li> </ul>   |

**iii) Services Marketing Triangle** (Zeithaml and Bitner 2000; Parasuraman A. 1996)

Based on the services marketing triangle, the three types of marketing (internal, external and interactive) were aligned to "Build and maintain relationship with the students and other stakeholders" (Table 4). Technology is being integrated in the service triangle to provide new levels of service to stakeholders.

**Table 4: Aligning External, Internal and Interactive marketing for building and maintaining relationships**

| 3 Types of Marketing  | Expected Results                                  | Approaches  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>External marketing</b><br>Christ College promises to deliver services to stakeholders      | Positive brand image                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide relevant, timely and accurate information to students through Website, Brochures, Education fairs, Visits to schools</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Internal marketing</b><br>Christ College enabling promises through employees               | Faculty engagement through loyalty and commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff provided with tools/technology solutions/appropriate internal systems</li> <li>Providing individual and professional opportunities for growth and development</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Interactive marketing</b><br>Teaching /Non Teaching staff keeping promises to the students | Maximum positive encounters                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training teaching/non-teaching personnel on the importance of engaging in flawless service behaviours</li> <li>Performance appraisal and accountability process to assess teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes</li> </ul> |

## Introduction to Liverpool Hope University

Hope's origins date back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the Anglican and Catholic churches independently established colleges to train women for the teaching profession. These colleges merged and the provision has now diversified to cover a broad range of liberal arts and sciences. There are currently over 7,000 students studying at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including PhD. Liverpool Hope has a long heritage and tradition and prides itself on being the only ecumenical university in Europe. The university performs well in all quality audits (the Business and Management programmes, for instance, achieved the top grade in the last national quality assurance audit, placing them in the top 5% of UK Business Schools). However, the university is relatively small and competes locally with two other much larger secular universities within Liverpool and at least a further 10 other universities within a 30 mile radius.

The aim of this research was to gain a better understanding of our position in the market and to identify gaps, both in provision and overall customer experience that would inform our strategic planning.

## Research Methodology

Complementary methods of eliciting customer perceptions were selected:

### **i) Familiarity/favourability image measurement**

The method of Kotler and Fox (1995) and Kotler and Andreasen (1996) was adopted to develop a familiarity/favourability map of customer perceptions of Hope's position. This involves the use of a five-point Likert Scale defining the dimensions of favourability and familiarity. Hope and its regional competitor HEIs were compared. The minimum sample size was set at 30 and questionnaires were distributed and completed anonymously in sixth forms and colleges in Merseyside and across the Northwest region. Respondents were given about 15 minutes to complete the form. Results for each HEI were totaled, the mean calculated and the university then placed at the appropriate point on the bi-dimensional scale.

### **ii) Attribute identification & Perceptual Mapping**

There are a number of tools used to analyze customer perceptions, including Cluster Analysis (Stockburger, 2001; 1), Factor Analysis (Hauser and Koppelman, 1979; 495), Similarity Trees (Fassino, 1984; 22) and Perceptual Maps (Rice, 2001).

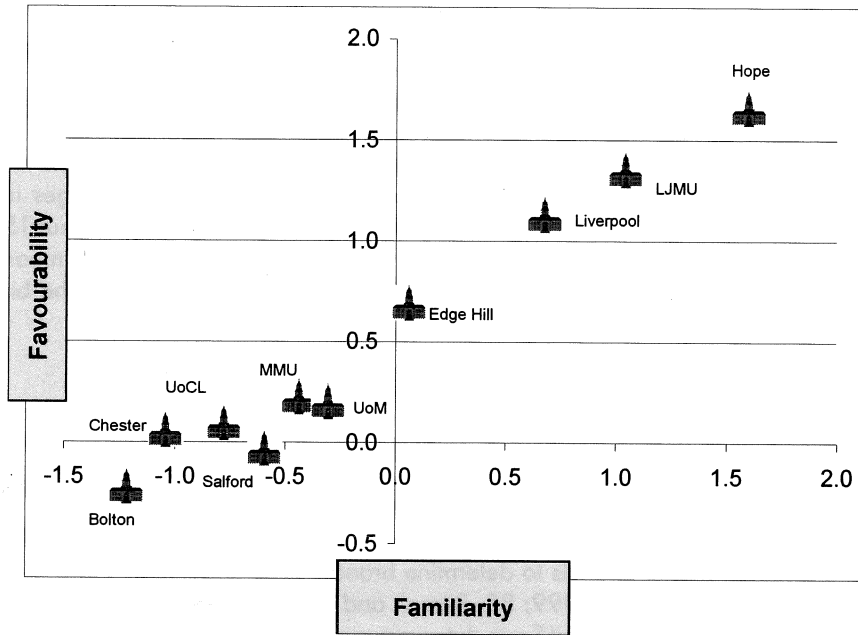
Perceptual Mapping was selected for this study since it is a technique commonly employed in market analysis to determine brand positioning (Neal, 1980: 34; Ganesh and Oakenfull, 1999; 85; Bijmolt and Wedel, 1999; 277, Romaniuk and Sharp, 2000; 219). Likert Scale data were processed according to the method of Romaniuk and Sharp (2000) whereby a comparison of expected and observed results reveals favourable attributes of a brand (where attributes refers to the university selection criteria). Hope and its regional competitor HEIs were again compared against attributes previously identified by focus groups. The minimum sample size was set at 30 and questionnaires were distributed to incoming first year students at Hope and in sixth forms/colleges in Merseyside and across the Northwest region. These data were also used to produce perceptual maps (Rice, 2001) comparing the position of each HEI against the university selection criteria.

### **iii) Expectation/Experience Analysis**

Expectation/Experience analysis (Kotler and Fox, 1995) was undertaken. Cohorts of First Year Hope students (minimum size, 30) were asked to rate their reasons

why they came to Hope, using a 5-point Likert Scale, according to their expectations (derived from focus group responses). This was compared to cohorts of Second Year Hope students who were asked to rate their experience at Hope, using the same criteria. Likert Scale data were converted to nominal values as before, responses were summated and the mean obtained for each of the identified expectations.

## Example Results

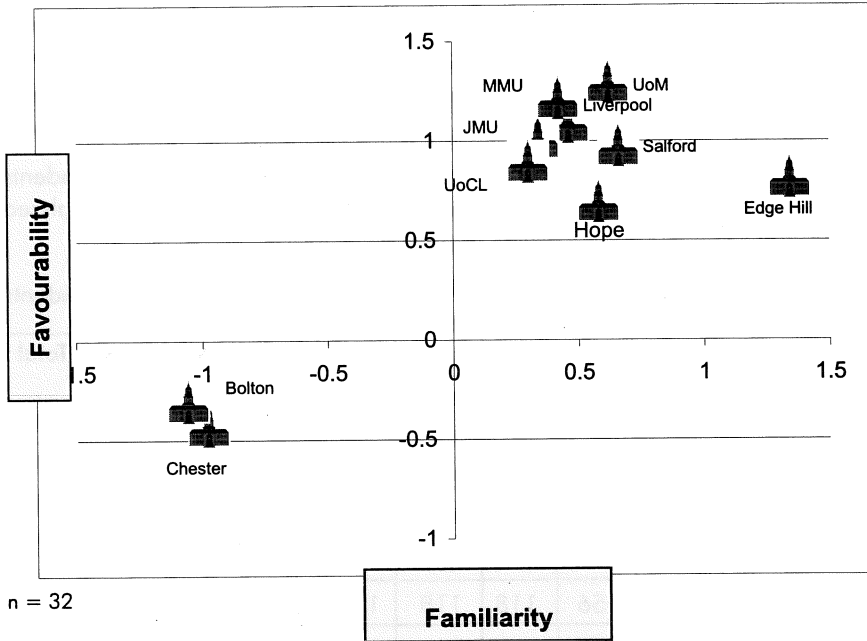


n = 120

Figure 1: Familiarity/Favourability Image: Merseyside Sixth Form Students

120 students from across Merseyside Sixth Form Colleges completed Likert scale questionnaires (see Method above). Mean values were calculated for each university on the dimensions for Familiarity and Favourability. The maximum value in either dimension is 2.5.

The results indicate that the Merseyside HEIs are relatively well placed with Hope being viewed as the most familiar and favourable HEI. Similar surveys carried out in sixth forms and colleges across the Northwest, indicate that Hope's position shifts according to the location of the students surveyed (see Figure 2 for instance, showing results for Wigan).



**Figure 2: Familiarity/Favourability Image: Wigan Students**

Students from a Wigan Sixth Form College, completed Likert scale questionnaires (see Methodology above). Mean values were calculated for each university on the dimensions for Familiarity and Favourability. The maximum value in either dimension is 2.5.

The town of Wigan is located Northwest of the Greater Manchester conurbation but with good transport links to Liverpool and Preston (UoCL). It is also relatively close to Edge Hill, although Chester is some distance away.

In this case, results indicate that most of the universities are clustered together, indicating similar perceptions in the minds of the students, but with Hope being

viewed least favourably of this cluster. Edge Hill is probably the most conveniently located and is most familiar to the students.

This survey method therefore provides information about those locations where we need to improve perceptions of our image or simply raise our profile.

## Attribute Identification

Once the general positioning of Hope is known, individual attributes can then be identified. Focus Groups were established to identify the main criteria for University selection. From this, a questionnaire was developed and respondents surveyed as indicated in the Methodology section above and the data analysed according to method of Romaniuk and Sharp (2000).

**Table 5: Comparison of Criteria for University Selection: In-coming Hope Students**

| Observed     | Hope       | UoL        | Edge Hill  | Chester    | LJMU       | UoCL       | MMU        | UoM        | Total       |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Reputation   | 179        | 202        | 127        | 129        | 173        | 141        | 158        | 181        | 1290        |
| Location     | 165        | 175        | 125        | 135        | 168        | 126        | 137        | 145        | 1176        |
| Facilities   | 125        | 159        | 117        | 125        | 150        | 130        | 135        | 153        | 1094        |
| Social life  | 123        | 159        | 104        | 117        | 154        | 128        | 142        | 147        | 1074        |
| Courses      | 145        | 156        | 118        | 118        | 124        | 119        | 125        | 153        | 1058        |
| Support      | 143        | 138        | 107        | 111        | 123        | 110        | 122        | 132        | 986         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>880</b> | <b>989</b> | <b>698</b> | <b>735</b> | <b>892</b> | <b>754</b> | <b>819</b> | <b>911</b> | <b>6678</b> |

Table 5 shows:

- Which attributes are perceived as the most important in the customers' minds. Here "Reputation" is regarded as the most important attribute, whilst "Support" is apparently least important.
- Which Brand is most popular (receives the most responses). Here, the University of Liverpool gains most responses, whilst Edge Hill, the least. Hope is the fourth most popular according to our current customers.

Further analysis of this data will reveal expected results for each attribute (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2000). So for instance, if the perceived reputation for Hope is equal to the average within the sector, then:



$$\frac{\text{Reputation (Hope)}}{\text{Total for Hope}} = \frac{\text{Reputation (total of all universities)}}{\text{Total for all attributes}}$$

and (from Table 5)

$$\text{Expected Reputation for Hope} = \frac{880 \times 1290}{6670} = 170$$

Similar expected values are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Expected Attribute Values: In-coming Hope Students**

| Expected    | Hope | UoL | Edge Hill | Chester | LJMU | UoCL | MMU | UoM |
|-------------|------|-----|-----------|---------|------|------|-----|-----|
| Reputation  | 170  | 191 | 135       | 142     | 172  | 146  | 158 | 176 |
| Location    | 155  | 174 | 123       | 129     | 157  | 133  | 144 | 160 |
| Facilities  | 144  | 162 | 114       | 117     | 146  | 124  | 134 | 149 |
| Social life | 142  | 159 | 112       | 118     | 143  | 121  | 132 | 147 |
| Courses     | 139  | 157 | 111       | 116     | 141  | 119  | 130 | 144 |
| Support     | 130  | 146 | 103       | 109     | 132  | 111  | 121 | 135 |

Table 7 shows the deviation of expected from observed results. This indicates which attributes the brand scores above or below expectation. It gives information on how the brand is performing on specific attributes and identifies which are possibly in need of remedial action.

**Table 7: Deviations of Expected from Observed Data**

| Deviation   | Hope | UoL | Edge Hill | Chester | LJMU | UoCL | MMU | UoM |
|-------------|------|-----|-----------|---------|------|------|-----|-----|
| Reputation  | 9    | 11  | -8        | -13     | 1    | -5   | 0   | 5   |
| Location    | 10   | 1   | 2         | 6       | 11   | -7   | -7  | -15 |
| Facilities  | -19  | -3  | 3         | 8       | 4    | 6    | 1   | 4   |
| Social life | -19  | 0   | -8        | -1      | 11   | 7    | 10  | 0   |
| Courses     | 6    | 2   | 7         | 2       | -17  | 0    | -5  | 9   |
| Support     | 14   | -8  | 4         | 2       | -9   | -1   | 1   | -3  |

It is also possible to identify which attributes are perceived as being particularly strong, or weak (Table 8). These are attributes that show a deviation of more than 50% of the largest deviation (-19).

**Table 8: Attribute Analysis of Competitor Universities: In-coming Hope Students**

|           | <b>Positive Attributes</b> | <b>Negative Attributes</b> |
|-----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Hope      | Location, Support          | Facilities, Social Life    |
| UoL       | Reputation                 | Support                    |
| Edge Hill |                            |                            |
| Chester   |                            | Reputation                 |
| LJMU      | Location, Social Life      | Courses                    |
| UoCL      |                            |                            |
| MMU       | Social life                |                            |
| UoM       |                            | Location                   |

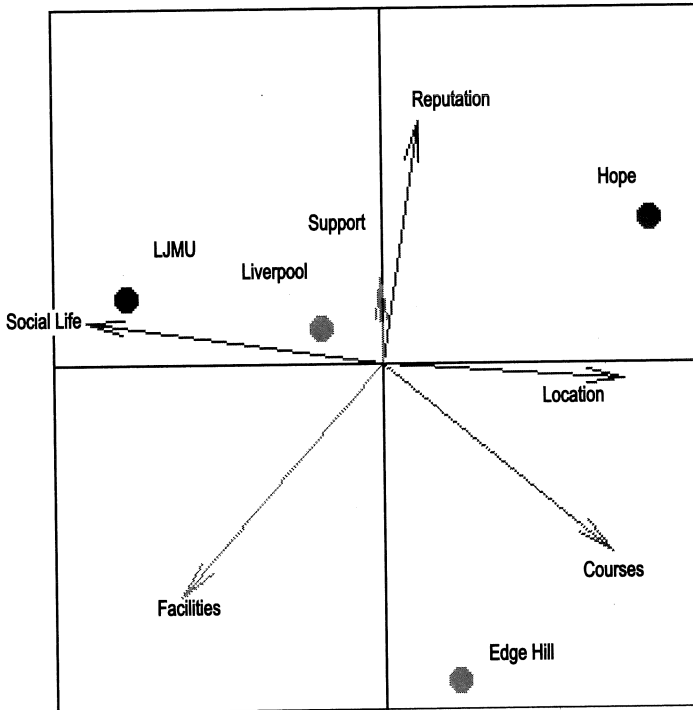
Hope students therefore perceive Hope to be strong on 'Reputation' and 'Student Support' but weak on 'Facilities' and 'Social Life'.

Analysis of students in sixth forms and colleges in Merseyside and across the Northwest show differences in perception. Merseyside students identify Hope's location and support as positive attributes but our courses are considered to be weak. Location is confirmed as a positive attribute across the survey.

It is clear from this analysis where perceived strengths and weaknesses lie. Hope can then engage with student cohorts, bringing them onto the campus to sample our provision or we can customize our promotional material to take account of customer perceptions.

## Perceptual Mapping

Data from the University Selection Survey were also used to produce perceptual maps for Hope and selected competing HEIs.



**Figure 3: Perceptual Map for Merseyside HEIs : in-coming Hope Students**

57 Hope students were surveyed using the method outlined above. Total responses for each attribute were collected and mean data computed using DSS Market Visioner Software.

The perceptual map needs some explanation (see for example, Rice, 2001: Lilien and Rangaswamy, 2001): The length of line indicates how well attributes are differentiated between the brands; the longer the line, the more important that attribute is. Here then, 'Location' is a poor differentiator for these HEIs, whilst 'Social Life', 'Facilities' and 'Courses' are perceived as more important.

The closer the angle between attributes, the closer they are seen as related. The above map indicates that Hope students perceive 'Support' and 'Reputation' as comparatively closely related attributes.

Brands that are close together are perceived as similar and therefore compete against each other in the minds of the customers. In this case, none of the Merseyside HEIs are particularly close together and so there is little perception of similarity.

Finally, those brands that are situated close to the origin (centre) of the map have no real distinguishing characteristics. In this case, the University of Liverpool probably falls into this category. Hope is located separate from the other Merseyside HEIs and is not seen to compete with them on the criteria tested. It is well placed with respect to 'Reputation' and 'Location', but at the far end of 'Facilities' (lines are also extrapolated back).

Further analysis of this kind indicates that Hope does not compete with the other Merseyside HEIs and that usually 'Reputation' and 'Location' are perceived as the main differentiators, with 'Support' and 'Facilities' normally being relatively poor differentiators in the minds of the customers.

## Expectation/Experience Analysis

The expectations of in-coming Year-One Hope students were compared to the experiences of our Year Two students as indicated in the Methodology section above. The results are expressed in the form of a snake chart (Kotler and Fox, 1995: 235, Lilien and Rangaswamy, 2001:8) to expose gaps in the provision (analogous to the SERVQUAL gap score scale, Parasuraman *et al* 1988, 1991) and areas where customer expectations have been exceeded (see Figure 4).

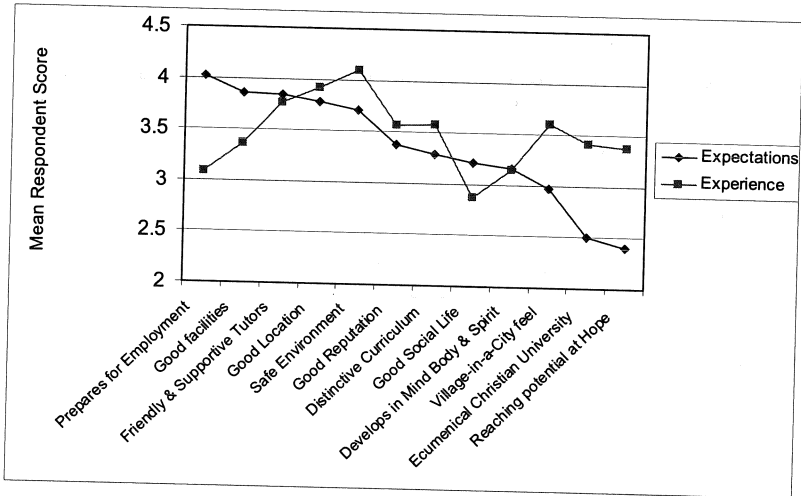


Figure 4: Comparison of Expectations and Experience of Hope Students

56 in-coming first-year Hope students were surveyed, using a 5-point Likert Scale, together with 56 second-year students (selected at random). Mean responses for expectation were plotted alongside mean responses for experience.

Results indicate that the major declines in expectation were around issues of employability within the curriculum, the facilities and the social life. However, Hope is currently exceeding customer expectations for location, a safe environment for study, the village-in-a-city feel and the fact we are an ecumenical Christian university. Students also feel that we are helping them reach their potential.

## Critique of Research Methodology

There are a number of criticisms relating to the methodology:

At both Christ College and Liverpool Hope University, most of these studies elicited the perceptions of current students. These students had made positive choices to attend these institutions and are therefore unlikely to give negative comments overall. It would have useful to have included an evaluation from students whose final choice was elsewhere to further investigate choice behaviours.

In the Liverpool Hope investigation, the familiarity/favourability measure appears a relatively poor differentiator of university choice: the more unfamiliar the university, the less favourably they are viewed. The technique used alone, gives limited information and further analysis (in this case via attribute studies) is necessary.

## Overall Benefits of Study

The findings of the study aided Christ College:

- i) To understand students choice behaviour pattern underpinning enrollment to the various courses.
- ii) To formulate a marketing plan to enhance Christ College's image and focus on specific activities to delight the students by creating a memorable total experience. The study benefited the college by introducing marketing concepts into the corporate plan which reinforce the positive image in the students' minds and endorse its high value position. This has resulted in satisfied students becoming brand ambassadors by promoting the institution and its services.
- iii) The services marketing activities introduced and reviewed periodically between 2002–2005 has indicated that the strategies were effective. It was found that attractiveness of Christ College has dramatically improved as a destination for Higher Education between 2002–2005 as is evident from the number of students applying for various courses, which has increased from 1:4 to 1: 8 (i.e. for every one enrollment there were eight potential applicants).

At Liverpool Hope University, this analysis has enabled us to identify which attributes are perceived as most important in the minds of our customers, to detect gaps in our provision and identify those areas where we are exceeding customer expectations. The results of this investigation have informed our strategic marketing planning processes and we have

- reviewed and re-organised our student support mechanisms, bringing them together in a central landmark building.
- reviewed our academic offering using techniques such as the programme assessment matrix and market/opportunity matrix (Kotler and Fox, 1995).

## Conclusions

This paper outlines differing approaches to marketing in Christian institutions operating in the same global environment but in different local conditions. However, whilst the approaches may be different, the outcomes are broadly similar. In both institutions, market analysis has led to:

- centralising marketing within strategic planning
- a re-alignment of academic programmes
- a review of student support structures and acknowledgement of the centrality of the student experience
- targeted marketing activity within a better understanding of market position.
- Excerpts from International Conference, Higher Education Marketing, Cyprus.

## References

1. Bijmolt, T. H. A. and Wedel, M. A comparison of multidimensional scaling methods for perceptual mapping. *Journal of Marketing Research* 1999: 36, 2; 277-285.
2. Biswas K. Globalisation Throws Higher Education Into Peril, *People's Democracy*, 2003. Vol. XXVII, No. 50, December 14.
3. Booms B.H and Bitner, M.J. Marketing Strategies and Organization Structures for Service Firms, in J. H. Donnelly and W.R. George, *Marketing of Services* (Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1981, pp 47-51.
4. British Council. Education UK Marketing, 2005; [www.britishcouncil.org/ecs/news/2004/0101/index.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/ecs/news/2004/0101/index.htm).

5. Dearing, R. Higher Education in the Learning Society: The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997. <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/other/uso/plan/dearing.htm>.
6. DSS Research. Market Visioner: Perceptual Map 2001. [www.dssresearch.com](http://www.dssresearch.com)
7. Fassino, M. J. Similarity Trees: New Approach Eliminates Inherent Shortcomings of Perceptual Maps. *Marketing News*, 1984; 18, 1 (part 2); 22-24.
8. Ford, J. J. M, Joseph, M. and Joseph, B. Importance-performance analysis as a strategic tool for service marketers: the case of service quality perceptions of business students in New Zealand and the USA, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 1999; 13, 2: 171-186.
9. Ganesh, J. and Oakenfull, G. International product positioning: An illustration using perceptual mapping techniques. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 1999; 13, 2; 85-111.
10. Hauser, J. R. and Koppelman, F. S. Alternative Perceptual Mapping Techniques: Relative Accuracy and Usefulness. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 1979; 16, 4; 495.
11. HEFCE (2001) *Supply and Demand in Higher Education*, October 01/62.
12. HEFCE (2002) News: Funding for Universities and Colleges in 2002-2003, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2002, (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/HEFCE/2002/fund0203.htm>).
13. [hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlelets/2005/cl11\\_05/](http://hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlelets/2005/cl11_05/) Circular 11/2005. Capital funding for directly funded further education colleges. 2005.
14. [hefce.ac.uk/hefce/2002/02\\_43.HTM](http://hefce.ac.uk/hefce/2002/02_43.HTM). Academic Staff: Trends and Projections. October 2002/43.
15. Hefce; Strategic Plan 2006-11: Consultation Document. November 2005/45, p21.
16. hesa (2004): [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk).
17. Howarth, A. Market forces in Higher Education *Higher Education Quarterly*, 1991: 45, 1; Winter, 5-13.
18. Kotler, P. and Andreasen, A. R. *Strategic Marketing for Non-Profit Organisations*, 1996; Prentice Hall Inc.
19. Kotler, P. and Fox, K.F.A. *Strategic Marketing for Educational Universities* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), 1995; Prentice Hall Inc.
20. Kulandaiswamy, V.C. Reconstruction of HE in India, *University News*, 2005; 43, 27, July 4-10.
21. Lautenborn R. New Marketing Litany: 4P's Passe; C-Words Taken Over, 1990; *Advertising Age*, October 1, p. 26.
22. Lilien, G., L. and Rangaswamy, A. Marketing Engineering: Product Positioning using perceptual and Preference Maps, 2001; (<http://www.nd.edu/~cmela/mark370/chap4/sld001.htm>).
23. MacLeod, D. No research required for new universities, 2004; *Guardian*, July 16th, 2004.

24. McCarthy J. *Basic marketing, A Managerial Approach*, 1996; 12<sup>th</sup> ed (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin).
25. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India website; 2005 [www.education.nic.in](http://www.education.nic.in)
26. Ministry of Finance, Government of India, 2005:[www.indiabudget.nic.in/ub2004-2005/eb/vol2htm](http://www.indiabudget.nic.in/ub2004-2005/eb/vol2htm)
27. Neal, W., D. Strategic Product Positioning: A Step-by Step Guide, *Business*, 1980; 30, 3; 34.
28. ORG-Marg survey of colleges. Top 10 colleges of India, 2005; *India Today*, June 13.
29. Parasuraman A. Understanding and leveraging the role of customer service in external, interactive and internal marketing, 1996; Frontiers in services conference presentation, Nashville, TN.
30. Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. and Berry, L.L. SERVQUAL: a multiple item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality, *Journal of Retailing*, 1988; 64, 1; 12-40.
31. Parasuraman, A., Berry, L.L. and Zeithaml, V. (1991) Refinement and reassessment of the SERVQUAL scale, *Journal of Retailing*, 67, 4; 420-50.
32. Porter, M. E. (1996) What is strategy? *Harvard Business Review*, 74, 6; 61-78.
33. Rice, M. (2001) *An Introduction to Brand/Perceptual Mapping*.
34. [www.yorku.ca/faculty/academic](http://www.yorku.ca/faculty/academic), 1-4.
35. Romaniuk, J. and Sharp, B. (2000) Using known patterns in image data to determine brand positioning. *International Journal of Market Research*, 42, 2; 219-230.
36. Singh S. Management of Universities in India: Major challenges and required responses, 2005; *University News*, 43, 33 August 15-21.
37. Stockburger, D.W. (2001) *Multivariate Statistics Concepts, Models and Applications*, [www.psychstat.smsu.edu](http://www.psychstat.smsu.edu): 1-15.
38. The British Council Education UK Marketing: [www.educationuk.britishcouncil.org/pmi/positioning\\_for\\_success/global\\_analysis/index.html](http://www.educationuk.britishcouncil.org/pmi/positioning_for_success/global_analysis/index.html) (2004).
39. The White Paper "Higher Education: A New Framework" (1992) DfEE.
40. UGC (2005) [www.ugc.ac.in](http://www.ugc.ac.in)
41. Zeithaml V. A., and Bitner M.J. *Services Marketing :Integrating Customer focus across the firm"* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2000; Irwin McGraw-Hill, p. 16 [www.aut.org.uk.cfm?articleid=827](http://www.aut.org.uk.cfm?articleid=827) Higher Education.