

Impact of NEP 2020 on Marketing Strategies of Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has caused big changes in the higher education system of India. NEP 2020 aims to create a higher education system that is more inclusive and flexible, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, contextual, and internationally oriented. Because of these expectations, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) cannot just update their academic programs but must also change, diversify, and modernize their marketing approach to be in alignment with the expectations of the NEP 2020. This paper investigates the influence of NEP 2020 on marketing strategies undertaken by HEIs. It examines key components of branding, marketing, digital, programmatic positioning, stakeholder engagement, and international partnerships. The paper synthesizes the literature and policy documents to better capture new ideas and perspectives that can potentially impact marketing decisions in the post-NEP 2020 landscape. The paper constructs a preliminary marketing framework that connects the NEP guidelines to the dynamics of institutions' marketing. This framework and understanding are intended to provide academic leaders and policymakers with innovative ways to reposition their institution within an increasingly competitive higher education environment. The study offers a basis for future research and a call to action for promoting new approaches to marketing in higher education, informed by the possibilities created by NEP 2020.*

Keywords: *NEP 2020, Higher Education, Marketing Strategies, Conceptual Study, Institutional Branding, Policy Impact, Digital Outreach, Internationalization, Higher Education Reforms, Strategic Positioning*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian higher education system is undergoing substantial transformation especially with the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to reform the system in terms of structure, pedagogy and governance (Ministry of Education, 2020). The NEP is learner-centered and multidisciplinary with global applicability. Universities are being encouraged to improve their academic programs and reconsider their marketing orientation (Aithal & Aithal, 2021). The move toward increased university autonomy demands that universities show a clear identity and competitive advantage in the academic marketplace (Kumar & Kapoor, 2021). The research shows that marketing for higher education has evolved

from little more than promotional and merchandising work, to building a brand, managing the student experience and digital engagement (Ivy, 2008; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). The NEP's focus areas of internationalization, outcome-based learning and social inclusion open the way for higher education institutions to critically - scrutinize what they are trying to communicate in order to attract a student market that is inclusive and globally-informed (Gupta & Sharma, 2022). The new consumerism and digitalisation means higher education marketers must use integrated marketing communication (IMC), use data to reveal the marketplace, and tell stories with their education brands (Maringe, 2010; Maringe & Gibbs, 2009). This study looks at how NEP 2020 has acted as a driver for marketing change in Indian higher education. It presents institutions with both opportunities and challenges in developing innovative marketing strategies that align with the new educational vision and competitive environment.

1.1 Over View and Background of NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an overhaul of India's education system, replacing the policy from 1986 after more than thirty years. For transforming the education sector, NEP 2020 has been announced by Ministry of Education, Government of India. It aims to preserve India's cultural heritage and values while making education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary and relevant for the needs of twenty first century. Revamping both school and higher education systems is in the core ethos of NEP 2020. For higher education, the policy envisions a more student-focused and research-driven ecosystem. It backs increased institutional autonomy, removal of strict disciplinary silos, promotion of multidisciplinary pedagogy through creation of large and adequately equipped Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Flexible curriculum featuring multi entry-exit under Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), internationalization alongside foreign university collaborations are other notable highlights aimed at international competitiveness. Another priority is improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to fifty percent by 2035 while ensuring equity, inclusion and accessibility. NEP focuses on development in skills coupled with employability opportunities along with value-based education. It suggests setting up the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to manage and monitor the quality and performance of higher education institutions (HEIs) through a streamlined and more efficient regulatory mechanism. Having ample changes, NEP 2020 transforms the operational paradigm for advanced educational institutions by redefining their interactions as well as branding vis-a-vis stakeholders. With increasing competition among HEIs, sophisticated marketing becomes pivotal in defining institutional identity and enrollment, as well as projecting scholarly achievement. Understanding the NEP 2020 is important in understanding new marketing issues amongst higher educational institutions within a dynamic environment.

1.2 Need for Strategic Marketing in Higher Education

In the competitive and global education landscape, strategic marketing has become essential for higher education institutions (HEIs) to stand out and attract quality students (Maringe & Gibbs, 2009). As public funding decreases and student expectations rise, institutions must adopt market-focused strategies to maintain sustainability and visibility (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Strategic marketing helps HEIs define their unique value propositions, build brand identity, and match their offerings with the needs of various stakeholders (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Additionally, the digital revolution has changed how students search for and interact with academic institutions. This makes it crucial for HEIs to use online

platforms, social media, and data-driven communication strategies (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). New policies like NEP 2020 promote institutional autonomy, internationalization, and multidisciplinary learning. These trends require strategic marketing to convey changes effectively and attract a larger audience (Gupta & Sharma, 2022). Strategic marketing is no longer just about promotions; it also involves program design, student experience, alumni engagement, and employer branding. Therefore, incorporating marketing into the strategic planning of HEIs is vital for success in a changing academic environment influenced by reforms, technology, and global standards.

2. MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Concept of Marketing in Academic Institutions

Historically, higher education institutions (HEIs) have primarily concentrated on achieving academic excellence and disseminating knowledge. Nonetheless, the increasing competition, the globalization of education, and evolving student expectations have necessitated the integration of marketing principles into the academic realm (Kotler & Fox, 1995). In academic environments, marketing is a strategic endeavour where institutions identify, comprehend, and address the needs of various stakeholders, such as students, parents, alumni, and employers, while highlighting their distinct academic offerings (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). This requires a transition from a product-centric perspective to a service-oriented approach, emphasizing student satisfaction, employability, and the institution's reputation.

2.2 Strategic Marketing Framework in Education

A strategic marketing model for higher education entails environmental scanning, segmentation, targeting, positioning (STP) and articulation of value propositions establishing stakeholder mutual benefit. Maringe and Gibbs (2009) argue that successful marketing approaches in HEIs should be rooted in the mission and competitive advantage of the institution as well as in the way stakeholders would be engaged. The model encompasses curriculum development activities, pricing tactics such as grants and fees, delivery vehicles including online and blended, and relationship management. Strategic marketing also encourages consideration of such performance indicators as student retention, brand equity, and alumni satisfaction in decision making and resource allocation.

2.3 Role of Branding, Communication, and Outreach in Higher Education

In the realm of higher education, branding plays a crucial role in establishing a distinct identity for institutions that appeals to both students and stakeholders (Chapleo, 2010). This identity embodies the institution's core values, academic prowess, campus atmosphere, and career prospects. Employing effective communication strategies, such as digital marketing, content-focused outreach, and storytelling, can significantly enhance visibility and engagement (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). Activities like webinars, collaborations, community initiatives, and alumni participation serve as key interactions to foster institutional trust and lasting relationships, ultimately leading to increased enrollment and an improved reputation.

3. CHANGING DYNAMICS OF MARKETING STRATEGIES POST – NEP 2020

3.1 Transition from Conventional to Digital and Experiential Marketing

The introduction of NEP 2020 has led to a significant transformation in the marketing strategies of higher education institutions. Traditionally, these institutions depended on print media, word-of-mouth, and in-person events to draw students. However, with NEP's emphasis on technology and digital tools, there has been a shift towards digital and experiential marketing techniques. Now, social media campaigns, influencer collaborations, virtual campus tours, interactive websites, webinars, and AI chatbots play a crucial role in engaging prospective students. Institutions are focusing on digitally showcasing student experiences, success stories, and learning environments. This strategy provides a more immersive and personalized experience for their audience, aligning with NEP's vision of digital empowerment and enhanced access to information.

3.2 Focus on Outcome-Based Education and Value Proposition

NEP 2020 underscores the importance of outcome-based education (OBE), skill development, and employability. Consequently, marketing strategies are crafted to clearly communicate value. Institutions are increasingly highlighting graduate outcomes, placement statistics, internship opportunities, and industry partnerships as key selling points. Rather than solely emphasizing course content, marketing now focuses on how academic programs translate into real-world success. This outcome-oriented narrative aligns with the policy's objective of making education more relevant to current economic and social demands. It is crucial for attracting students who are seeking value and a good return on their educational investment.

3.3 Aligning Course Offerings with Multidisciplinary Focus

A primary aim of NEP 2020 is to dismantle rigid disciplinary boundaries and promote a multidisciplinary approach to learning. To stay relevant, higher education institutions are rebranding and repositioning their programs to emphasize interdisciplinary offerings, such as combining liberal arts with data analytics, commerce with digital marketing, or science with humanities. Marketing strategies now reflect this shift by portraying the institution as a hub for holistic, flexible, and future-ready education. Promotional materials focus on unique combinations, open electives, and interdisciplinary research opportunities. This approach helps institutions distinguish themselves in a competitive education market and appeals to students seeking personalized, broad-based academic paths.

4. EMERGING MARKETING TRENDS IN HEI

4.1 Personalized Communication and Student Engagement

Post-NEP 2020, higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly embracing personalized communication to attract and keep students. The policy focuses on student-centered and flexible education. This shift requires institutions to connect with students more individually. Personalized emails, course suggestions based on student interests, and interactive chat support are crucial tools for building meaningful relationships. HEIs use CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems and AI-based analytics to monitor prospective students'

behavior and adjust their communication. For example, SRM University and Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham use AI-driven platforms to provide tailored program content and admission guidance based on a student's browsing history and academic profile. This approach improves response rates, enriches the student experience, and builds trust before enrolment. Additionally, two-way engagement through webinars, WhatsApp groups, virtual counselling sessions, and feedback mechanisms creates an interactive environment that aligns with NEP's vision of participatory and inclusive learning. By offering these personalized experiences, HEIs not only meet educational goals but also enhance their competitiveness in the changing academic market.

4.2 Social Media and Digital Platforms in Education Promotion

Social media and digital platforms play a crucial role in the marketing strategies of higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly following the NEP 2020's push for digital integration and global exposure. Institutions are actively leveraging platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Facebook to showcase academic accomplishments, student experiences, campus life, and projects driven by innovation. These platforms facilitate real-time engagement, extensive reach, and cost-efficient advertising. For example, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) and IIT Madras use Instagram reels and LinkedIn updates to promote hackathons, placement drives, and international exchange programs, effectively engaging with Gen-Z audiences. Moreover, digital advertising through Google Ads, SEO-optimized content, influencer collaborations, and virtual campus tours has become a common practice. This trend aligns with NEP's emphasis on enhancing access, visibility, and inclusion in higher education. HEIs now focus on mobile-friendly websites, digital brochures, interactive forms, and live Q&A sessions during admission periods. By maintaining a consistent digital presence, institutions can expand their reach both nationally and internationally while strengthening their brand identity. Social media analytics provide insights into engagement, enabling real-time adjustments in messaging. This flexibility in communication allows HEIs to cater to student interests and remain competitive in the rapidly evolving education market.

4.3 International Collaborations and Global Marketing Strategies

NEP 2020 has significantly advocated for the internationalization of higher education, urging Indian HEIs to form global alliances, welcome international faculty, and draw in foreign students. In reaction, institutions are implementing global marketing strategies to expand their international footprint. Key components of institutional marketing efforts include partnerships with foreign universities, dual degree offerings, student exchange programs, and collaborative research projects. For instance, Shiv Nadar University and Ashoka University highlight their collaborations with institutions such as Yale, MIT, and Sciences Po to underscore global standards and attract top-tier applicants. These partnerships are promoted through specialized international admission portals, multilingual promotional content, global education fairs, and webinars targeting international students. Institutions also emphasize their branding alongside international accreditation and rankings, showcasing credentials like QS and Times Higher Education ratings to build credibility. Additionally, NEP's allowance for foreign universities to operate in India has heightened the need for Indian HEIs to adopt a globally competitive approach. Consequently, many universities are crafting region-specific marketing strategies, offering internationally recognized curricula, and highlighting global career prospects.

Through these initiatives, HEIs effectively convey their significance in the global education arena while aligning with NEP’s vision of positioning India as a global knowledge hub.

5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 Linking NEP 2020 Provisions with Marketing Strategy Variables

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has brought significant changes to the higher education sector. It affects academic structures along with how institutions reach out and brand themselves. To respond to these changes, higher education institutions (HEIs) have had to update their marketing strategies to reflect the key aspects of the policy. This framework aims to connect NEP 2020 directives with the marketing variables that influence institutional positioning and competitiveness. At the core, NEP 2020 provisions like multidisciplinary learning, digital integration, internationalization, autonomy, and outcome-based education act as drivers of change. These policy components impact several important marketing variables:

Table 1

NEP 2020 Provisions	Marketing Strategy Variables
Multidisciplinary Curriculum	Program Differentiation and Curriculum Branding
Digital and Online Education Emphasis	Digital Marketing, SEO, Virtual Tours, Social Media Outreach
Institutional Autonomy	Customized Branding, Strategic Positioning, Unique Value Propositions
Focus on Employability & Skill Development	Outcome-Based Promotion, Placement Statistics, Career Path Highlighting
Internationalization and Global Exposure	Global Partnerships, Cross-border Marketing, International Student Recruitment
Inclusivity and Accessibility	Regional Language Campaigns, Community Engagement, Inclusive Communication

This framework outlines how NEP-driven reforms are changing institutional identity and marketing priorities. Higher education institutions are redefining themselves as not just academic centres, but also as brands that offer global exposure, connection to industry, and student-focused learning. The changing link between policy and marketing shows a shift in how education is delivered and marketed; they need to work together to achieve policy goals and meet market demands. This framework can also serve as a basis for future studies that examine the effect of NEP 2020 on institutional performance and visibility.

5.2 Proposed Model for Strategic Marketing Transformation in HEIs Post-NEP 2020

In response to the changes introduced by NEP 2020, this study presents a marketing transformation model for higher education institutions (HEIs). The goal is to update marketing strategies to fit the new policy landscape. The model starts with the key impacts of NEP 2020,

which brings important reforms like multidisciplinary learning, digital integration, institutional autonomy, outcome-based education, and a strong emphasis on internationalization. These changes push HEIs to rethink their strategic direction. The next part of the model covers five response areas: academic innovation, digital transformation, brand positioning, global orientation, and student-focused communication. Academic innovation aims to create flexible, interdisciplinary programs that address the needs of a fast-changing job market. Digital transformation involves using social media, virtual tours, webinars, and AI tools to connect with potential students. Brand positioning is about defining and sharing a unique institutional identity that aligns with the vision of the NEP. Global orientation focuses on building international partnerships, drawing foreign students, and promoting global skills. Finally, student-focused communication highlights personalized messages that showcase career outcomes, skill development, and hands-on learning experiences. These strategic responses lead to important marketing aspects such as program branding, digital outreach, stakeholder engagement, and outcome-focused promotion. When executed well, these strategies are expected to boost institutional visibility, increase student enrolment, strengthen brand identity, and connect the institution with national goals and global standards. This proposed model acts as a flexible guide for HEIs looking to use NEP 2020 as a driver for sustainable marketing innovation and institutional growth.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

6.1 Strategic Recommendations for academic Leaders

The enactment of NEP 2020 has made academic leaders' key agents of change. They play a significant role in transforming how institutions approach marketing. To stay competitive and relevant, higher education institutions (HEIs) must move beyond traditional academic roles and prioritize marketing. The following recommendations, along with examples, explain how academic leadership can respond effectively.

6.1.1 Integrate Marketing into Institutional Strategy

Academic leaders should include marketing goals in the overall strategic plan of the institution. For example, IIT Madras has positioned itself as an innovation-driven institution by consistently branding its research parks, incubation centers, and global patents. This connection between vision and marketing has improved its standing both nationally and internationally.

6.1.2 Emphasize Digital Transformation

Investing in digital outreach is essential. Institutions like SRM Institute of Science and Technology have adopted AI-powered chatbots, virtual campus tours, and Instagram reels to engage prospective students online. Academic leaders need to support IT departments and marketing teams in using these tools to improve visibility and reach.

6.1.3 Promote Outcome-Based Branding

NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of employability and skills. HEIs should promote student outcomes such as placements, internships, and entrepreneurship support. For instance, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) regularly shares placement statistics and success stories on digital platforms, reinforcing its value to prospective students and parents.

6.1.4 Foster Multidisciplinary Innovation

Leaders should urge departments to develop interdisciplinary programs that can be marketed as unique offerings. Ashoka University, for example, has successfully promoted its liberal arts model by combining humanities with economics, data science, and psychology. This approach attracts a diverse range of students across different fields.

6.1.5 Strengthen International Collaborations and Global Branding

With the NEP's focus on internationalization, institutions need to build global partnerships and promote them effectively. Shiv Nadar University has partnered with Yale and Duke University, using these collaborations in its marketing campaigns to attract global talent and establish itself as a world-class institution.

6.1.6 Encourage Data-Driven Marketing Decisions

Academic leaders should invest in data analytics to monitor student engagement, preferences, and behavior. For example, Amity University utilizes CRM and Google Analytics to refine its campaigns, resulting in more personalized communication with students and better conversion rates. In conclusion, academic leaders must serve as strategic enablers, combining educational excellence with modern marketing practices. By taking initiative in these areas, they can ensure their institutions not only comply with NEP 2020 but also thrive in the competitive academic environment it has created.

6.2 Policy – Level considerations for branding and outreach

In light of NEP 2020, higher education institutions (HEIs) need to view branding and outreach not just as promotional tasks but as essential parts of their policies. At the policy level, branding should match the academic mission, vision, and long-term goals of the institution. This ensures a consistent approach in both internal governance and external communication. Firstly, institutions should develop a branding policy that reflects NEP 2020 priorities like multidisciplinary learning, inclusivity, skill development, and global relevance. This policy should direct how academically programs, faculty expertise, research achievements, and student outcomes are presented in national and international contexts. Secondly, HEIs must establish a communication and outreach policy that requires the use of digital platforms, multilingual content, and personalized engagement strategies to connect with diverse groups. For instance, universities like IIT Hyderabad and Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham have included digital storytelling and outreach in regional languages as part of their institutional strategies to expand access. Additionally, a stakeholder engagement policy is vital. This should lay out structured ways to engage with alumni, industry partners, schools, and international collaborators. These policies ensure outreach activities are consistent, coordinated, and reflect institutional values. Moreover, policies must back data-driven branding practices. Institutions should encourage the use of analytics to understand target audiences, measure the impact of campaigns, and improve future strategies. This fosters accountability and responsiveness in outreach efforts. Finally, to enhance global standing, institutions should think about a global marketing policy that covers international partnership branding, foreign student recruitment campaigns, and participation in global rankings, all in line with NEP 2020's goal of internationalization. By making these policy-level considerations part of their foundation, HEIs can build a strong and sustainable brand presence in both the national and global education landscape.

7. FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This conceptual study offers a basic understanding of how NEP 2020 has shaped marketing strategies in Indian higher education institutions. There is still plenty of room for future research to broaden and confirm these insights through real-world investigations. One important area for future study is the quantitative evaluation of how effective the marketing strategies used by higher education institutions have been since the NEP was implemented. Surveys and statistical models can measure how specific marketing factors, like digital engagement, brand perception, and student satisfaction, affect enrollment and institutional performance. Moreover, comparative studies across different regions or types of institutions, such as public versus private or autonomous versus affiliated, can show how varying governance models and funding structures influence the adoption of marketing approaches driven by the NEP. Future research can also look into how students perceive institutional branding in the post-NEP period, focusing on trust, value alignment, and decision-making patterns. Another interesting direction is to analyze the role of international collaborations and strategies for attracting foreign students in light of NEP 2020's push for global integration. Long-term studies can assess how ongoing policy-driven branding efforts impact institutional reputation and academic results over time. Finally, case studies on institutions that have effectively implemented NEP-aligned marketing strategies can provide practical examples for others to follow. By exploring these areas, future research can greatly enhance the development of a more effective, strategic, and inclusive marketing framework for India's higher education sector.

8. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has started a major change in India's higher education system. It urges institutions to rethink their academic identity and how they connect with people. This study shows how higher education institutions (HEIs) are moving from traditional promotion methods to strategic marketing. They are now using digital engagement, outcome-based communication, and global branding in their work. The policy's focus on multidisciplinary education, autonomy, internationalization, and skill development calls for a marketing approach that prioritizes students, emphasizes value, and competes on a global scale. Therefore, strategic marketing becomes an essential tool for institutions to stand out and gain visibility in a fast-changing academic landscape. Academic leaders need to connect branding and outreach with the objectives of the NEP, while being guided by policy frameworks and informed decision-making. This study lays a conceptual foundation, but future research can further investigate how effective these marketing changes are in HEIs and what challenges they face. In the end, NEP 2020 offers both a push and a chance for higher education institutions to innovate and take the lead with strategic marketing.

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