ORIGINAL PAPER

University marketing directors' views on the components of a university brand

Rehnuma Ali-Choudhury · Roger Bennett ·
Sharmila Savani

Abstract Marketing and communications directors and managers in 25 universities in London and the south east of England were interviewed to establish their opinions regarding the major components of a university brand that they deemed to be relevant to student recruitment. The respondents described ten main elements of a university brand that they believed prospective students take into account when evaluating institutions. These included a university's educational identity (notably vis-à-vis whether it pursued a widening participation agenda and the degree of diversity of its student body), the institution's location, the employability of its graduates, its visual imagery and its general 'ambience' (as being 'friendly', 'welcoming', etc.). Reputation, sports and social facilities, learning environment, courses offered and community links were also assumed to represent important factors of a university's brand, looked at from a potential student's point of view. Interviewees from post-1992 (i.e. mass market) universities voiced concerns regarding the need to transmit certain forms of marketing message about the non-traditional natures of their student intakes (in order to defend their core markets) and the negative impact this might have on a post-1992 institution's capacity to recruit in other market segments.

Keywords Branding · Universities · Corporate identity · Organisational identity · Student recruitment

1 Introduction

Until the early 1960s, the most commonly cited definition of the word 'university' was perhaps that of John Henry Newman, who claimed that a university was 'a place

R. Ali-Choudhury · R. Bennett (✉) · S. Savani
Centre for Research in Marketing, London Metropolitan Business School, 84 Moorgate,
London EC2M 6SQ, UK
e-mail: r.bennett@londonmet.ac.uk
URL: http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/cermark

for liberal education and the teaching of universal knowledge' (Newman 1889 p. 5). Universities, according to Newman, needed to comprise communities of scholars devoted to the pursuit of knowledge *for its own sake*, without having to provide students with vocational skills and competences. Since the 1960s, however, a torrent of change has affected most sectors of the British university system, necessitating a fresh approach to the characterisation of 'what a university is' (Smith and Langslow 1999). Notable examples of these changes include the implementation of the Robbins Report of 1963, whereby 18 universities were created from pre-existing colleges of advanced technology (Robbins 1963; Smith 1999); the Education Reform Act of 1992, under which 42 polytechnics became universities (commonly known as 'post-1992' universities; Bakewell and Gibson-Sweet 1998); the Dearing Report (1997) that led to the introduction of tuition fees for entrants to undergraduate programmes; and the conversion in 2005 of a number of institutes of higher education into universities (see Chapleo 2007). In consequence, the British university system has shifted from an elite to a 'mass' recruitment situation (Lomas 2002; IMHE 2005) accompanied by significant increases in the numbers of students entering institutions (particularly the post-1992 and post-2005 universities) from lower socio-economic categories. This has allegedly led to the commercialisation of the British higher education system (Stilwell 2003; Drummond 2004; Lynch and Baines 2004) and to its 'commodification' (Doti 2004; Hayrinen-Alestalo and Peltola 2006). In Britain (and in many other western countries), governments have required universities to attract and enrol greater numbers of students, to offer many more types of degree course than in the past (Tysome 2007) and to generate their own income (often by recruiting heavily from abroad) (Binsardi and Ekwulugo 2003; Marginson 2006).

Developments of this nature have compelled large numbers of universities to commit themselves to and become heavily involved in marketing and, especially, in branding (Naudé and Ivy 1999; Binsardi and Ekwulugo 2003; Chapleo 2007). 'Mass market' universities in particular require strong brands in order, inter alia, to enhance awareness of their existence and course offerings among potential recruits (plus their parents and school careers advisors); to differentiate themselves from rivals; and to gain market share. This in turn has encouraged 'middle market' universities to promote themselves more aggressively than in the past, both to retain market share and to maintain the quality of their student intakes (Naudé and Ivy 1999; Melewar and Akel 2005).

1.1 Aims of the research

Although much has been written about the factors that determine a student's choice of university, research into the *actual processes* that underlie institutions' branding decisions has been sparse. A fundamental lacuna in the field is lack of knowledge of what *exactly* university decision makers (rather than academic commentators) regard as comprising a university brand. The most critical decision makers in this respect are perhaps the university marketing executives who direct and control institutions' promotional budgets and campaigns, who influence vice-chancellors and other senior academics with regard to branding matters, who determine the contents and characters of a university's advertisements and other marketing communications and

who, therefore, play a critical role in student recruitment. University marketing directors and managers are significant decision takers in their own right where branding issues are concerned, and once an institution's brand identity has been decided, they act as champions, gatekeepers and defenders of the chosen brand. It is vitally important, therefore, to understand *marketing directors and managers'* interpretations of the nature and components of a university brand and their opinions of what the brand means to prospective students, as these opinions will drive an institution's marketing activities. Accordingly, the research reported in the current paper sought to contribute to contemporary knowledge of the processes that drive university branding decisions via an empirical study of the views of 25 marketing or communications directors or managers of universities in London and the south east of England concerning how potential student recruits perceived university brands and which components of a brand the respondents believed prospective recruits would take into account when selecting a university.

Participants were requested to adopt a *student* perspective on the issue because the opinions of potential recruits are critical for a university's financial survival. This is analogous to the need for the marketing manager of a commercial business to assess the perceptions of one of the firm's product brands or of a corporate brand as a whole that are held by *potential paying customers*, as opposed to the views of other audiences (especially people who are unlikely ever to buy the firm's products). Universities do of course have multiple stakeholders (academic and administrative staff, funding bodies, boards of governors, private donors, national and local government agencies, etc.) and groups they need to impress (e.g. the media [especially national newspapers], alumni, employers), but the people they rely on ultimately for their well-being are the students they recruit, for without sufficient recruitment, an institution will collapse. Therefore, the investigation reported below was restricted to marketing directors and managers' interpretations of the elements of a university's brand that they deemed to be held by *prospective students*. Aspects of a university's brand image and identity that are relevant to potential recruits could differ substantially from those possessed by (say) politicians or officials in state funding bodies. Hence, the interviewees were asked to look at the issue only from a prospective student's perspective.

In order to compare the predictions of extant theory with the (practitioner) interviewees' actual views, a literature review was undertaken to identify the brand components that academic marketing theory and prior research on students' choice of university suggest that potential recruits might believe are integral to a university brand. Literature reviews executed prior to an interview-based study help the researcher understand the theoretical background to the issues that might be involved (Yin 1989). Strauss (1987) commented that there were no compelling reasons why ideas obtained from a literature review should not be used as an integral part of a qualitative research design *provided* the prior literature covered had itself been derived from careful investigation. The outputs to the literature review (see below) were subsequently compared with the interviewees' opinions. If major disparities between the prognostications of the academic literature in the field and the views of practitioners occur, then their existence should be seen as an issue of major concern both for those who produce the research literature and those who manage institutions (cf. Hodgkinson and Johnson 1994).

2 Literature review

2.1 Brand components

Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2008) characterised a university's brand as 'a manifestation of the institution's features that distinguish it from others, reflect its capacity to satisfy students' needs, engender trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and help potential recruits to make wise enrolment decisions' (p.4). A strong university brand can engender the belief that an institution is excellent (Palacio et al. 2002), that the prospect of enrolling at the institution should be seriously considered and that attendance will add value to a person and be a pleasant experience (cf. Chun and Davis 2006). In the commercial domain, a number of prior studies have attempted to decompose brands into definitive components (e.g. de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley 1998a; Balmer and Soenen 1999; Alessandri 2001; Melewar and Jenkins 2002; Stern 2006). An examination of this literature suggests three major concepts that are relevant to the current investigation, namely that a brand (a) represents a collection of promises presented to the outside world concerning its benefits (see in particular Ambler and Styles 1996; Balmer and Gray 2003; Gutman and Miaoulis 2003), (b) involves a set of realities (rather than promises) that define the brand's inherent nature (see Hatch and Schultz 1997; Stern 2006) and (c) comprises various symbolic elements (LeBlanc and Nguyen 1996; Simoes et al. 2005).

Promises might be made about the student's subsequent social and educational experiences at the institution, career prospects on graduation, etc. Arguably, the intangible nature of educational services causes promises to represent particularly important components of a university brand (cf. Balmer and Gray 2003) due to the need to emphasise clues associated with physical evidence of the brand's values (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn 2003). *Realities* in the present context could relate to, for example, a university's matriculation requirements, physical make up and social situation (see van Rekom and van Riel 2000; Bennett and Kottasz 2006), student drop out rates (Bennett 2007), whether the university is elite and exclusive rather than comprehensive and mass market (van Rekom and van Riel 2000), whether it places research above teaching (Ivy 2001) and whether it offers a desired degree programme (Binsardi and Ekwulugo 2003).

Symbolic representations of a university's brand include its name, logo and strapline, stationery, advertisement designs and other visual cues seen by the public and which designate aesthetically the aims, values and 'meaning' of the organisation (Simoes et al. 2005 p.158). These symbols are embodied in the institution's marketing and other communications, which themselves can be an integral part of the university's brand. (Stern et al. (2001) noted the critical importance of symbolic representations for any service organisation, consequent to the intangibility of its products.)

2.2 Determinants of student choices

Research into university choice has suggested that a number of core variables can influence a student's preference for a particular institution, implying that university

marketing managers should in principle incorporate these variables into their perceptions of the contents of a university brand. The variables concerned include a university's general status and reputation (Hussey and Duncombe 1999; van Rekom and van Riel 2000; Palacio et al. 2002), the physical quality of the university's campuses (Binsardi and Ekwulugo 2003; Gray et al. 2003) and the attractiveness of the geographical areas in which these campuses are situated (Moogan et al. 2001). Studies have concluded that potential recruits are impressed by an institution's learning environment (Gatfield et al. 1999; Gutman and Miaoulis 2003), as evidenced by the calibres of its library, information technology and other learning facilities (LeBlanc and Nguyen 1996), by the extent of its student support services (Bennett and Kottasz 2006) and the (publicised) qualifications of its faculty (Gatfield et al. 1999; Gray et al. 2003). Bennett's (2007) survey of the student recruitment advertisements of 100 UK universities revealed that imagery connected with an institution's social environment featured heavily (both pictorially and textually) in recruitment messages, implying that social factors represented a key element of a typical student's choice of institution. Social considerations include the existence within a university of numerous clubs, societies, sports facilities and opportunities to socialise on-campus (Gatfield et al. 1999). Some universities emphasise in their promotional materials the good jobs and career opportunities available to their students on graduation (Moogan et al. 2001; Ivy 2001), plus the *general* usefulness (i.e. not necessarily job-related) of a degree from a particular institution (Gray et al. 2003). For mass market (as opposed to selective) universities, geographical convenience might be a critical decision factor (Alreck and Settle 1999), together with the availability of a wide range of programmes (Binsardi and Ekwulugo 2003), ease of entry (Gatfield et al. 1999; Ivy 2001) and the level of difficulty of an institution's courses (Palacio et al. 2002; Binsardi and Ekwulugo 2003). Other variables that have been stated to be capable of affecting students' entry decisions mentioned by the literature in the field include a university's publicly expressed academic values (Hussey and Duncombe 1999; Chapleo 2007) and academic mission (Gatfield et al. 1999; Ivy 2001), the pre-existing composition of an institution's student body (van Rekom and van Riel 2000) and a university's logo and other symbolic representations (Baker and Balmer 1997; Naudé and Ivy 1999; Melewar and Akel 2005).

3 Research methodology

Interviews were conducted with senior marketing or communication managers in 25 higher education institutions mainly in London and the south east of England. In 2008, Greater London had 43 government funded universities (about a third of the total for England) with around 320,000 students (HESA 2008), and even more institutions (e.g. Brighton University, the University of Sussex, the University of Surrey in Guildford) lie within commuting distance of the capital. Hence, universities in the region serve a large market for local domestic students (16% of all UK undergraduates study in London [see Mayor of London 2003]), but equally, they have to compete vigorously for recruits. London is also an attractive destination for overseas students (24% of whom attend London universities) and for people

from other more distant parts of the United Kingdom due perhaps to London's extensive social, entertainment and cultural amenities (Mayor of London 2003).

The sample comprised respondents in 11 post-1992 universities, eight middle-ranking pre-1992 universities and six former institutes of higher education that had become universities between 2005 and 2007. (The post-1992 and post-2005 institutions tend to recruit 'diverse' and 'non-traditional' students in terms of the latter's social and cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, engagement in paid term time employment, family status, age on entry [many mature students attend these universities] and prior educational experience. Typically, students enter post-1992 and post-2005 institutions on the basis of matriculation qualifications somewhat lower than those demanded by older universities.) Institutions in these disparate sectors were included in order to identify similarities and differences across institutional groupings. If evidence gathered from the three sources points in the same directions, this implies some degree of uniformity in branding decisions and vice versa. However, very high status universities, such as Oxford, Cambridge and the London School of Economics, were not approached on the grounds that they do not have to compete for students in the same ways as the other members of the sample. These internationally renowned institutions are greatly oversubscribed, impose entry requirements over and above those demanded by other universities, do not have to advertise in order to attract students and recruit most of their domestic intakes from a narrow section of the community. As such, they serve markets that differ in many crucial respects from those served by the rest of the UK higher education system. Examples of institutions participating in the study that agreed to allow their names to be mentioned in publications arising from the research were (in the post-1992 group) South Bank University, Kingston University and London Metropolitan University; in the pre-1992 group, the University of Reading, City University and Queen Mary College; and in the very recently created group of universities, Canterbury Christ Church University and Buckinghamshire New University. A sample of 25 institutions corresponds with the figure of between 20 and 30 recommended by McGivern (2003) as that necessary to understand the interviewees' collective views on specific issues. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggested that 20 or more interviews on the same topic should be sufficient to ensure that subsequent coding exercises result in all emergent coding categories being saturated.

Marketing and communications managers rather than other university administrators were selected for interview as they represent expert commentators (see Flick 2006) on university branding policies, are routinely exposed to university branding issues and take decisions on branding activities. Experts are 'key informants' who can draw upon their professional experience and specialist knowledge to attempt to define the fundamental characteristics of relevant matters (Tremblay 1982 p.19). Senior university marketing executives are intimately involved in the formation of marketing communications related to student recruitment, have full access to in-house research and other relevant institutional data, routinely interact with administrative managers responsible for student support and welfare and will be familiar with the views of members of academic faculty on promotional and institutional branding matters. Hence, their opinions should be based on a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding the *genres* of promotional message and imagery most likely to attract students.

Following the procedure for conducting expert interviews recommended by Meuser and Nagel (2002), discussions with the respondents focussed on topics within their fields of expertise rather than on their backgrounds or views on collateral topics. Interviews with experts are less likely to stray into unproductive subject areas (Flick 2006), but rely on the interviewee being genuinely knowledgeable about the subject in hand. To check the latter, the participants were asked to state the number of years they had 'worked in marketing' and the types of position they had occupied. The average number of years spent in marketing was 11 (range seven to 22), typically in middle management positions. On average, the interviewees had been in their current job for 5.2 years. Accordingly, there were no grounds for believing that the respondents were not competent to voice meaningful opinions. No other questions were asked about a person's private background. Individual rather than focus group interviews were undertaken because the marketing managers lived and worked in widely dispersed geographical districts and were busy people whose time was at a premium. Also, it was possible to explore via individual interviews a participant's views without the person being influenced by the comments of others or by fears of what other group members would think of them if they reported particular opinions (McGivern 2003). The interviewees worked for *competing* universities and so might have been reluctant in a group setting to disclose information about their institutions that they regarded as sensitive or confidential.

3.1 Contents of the interviews

A 'semi-standardised' interview methodology (Groeben 1990) was applied, which is suitable for situations where (as in the present case) the interviewee has a 'complex stock of knowledge about the topic under study' (Flick 2006 p.155). This knowledge enables the respondents spontaneously to express their views on open-ended questions (see below for details) and thereafter to answer specific 'theory-driven hypothesis-directed questions oriented to the scientific literature on the subject or based on the researcher's theoretical presuppositions' (p.156). Within 2 weeks of an interview, the relevant researcher completed a rough content analysis of the interview transcript and summarised the respondent's essential statements in the form of concepts listed on powerpoint slides that were then emailed to the interviewee. The person was invited to confirm the accuracy of the summary or, if his or her recollection of the interview differed from the points on the slides, to reformulate statements or replace them with more appropriate ones. This procedure provided 'communicative validation' of the interviewer's interpretations of the respondent's answers to the open-ended questions contained in the interview schedule (Flick 2006 p.157).

An interview began by asking the respondent to state in general terms his or her views on the meaning of a 'university brand' as this might be seen by a potential student. No prompts were offered as the intention was to record any unexpected responses, thus possibly extending the pre-existing theory contained in prior literature on the subject (Jarratt 1996). Then, the interviewee was asked to specify, again without prompts, what he or she believed that prospective students regarded as constituting the main elements of a university brand. For each of the primary items mentioned, the manager was then requested to explain 'Why did you select this item?' Questioning of this nature allegedly identifies fundamental issues through

'forcing meaningful elaboration' (Lazarus 1989 p.49). Thereafter, a more directed approach was adopted in order to cover specific topics derived from the literature review and to 'stimulate the elicitation of comments' regarding these topics (Patton 1990 p.91). This was deemed appropriate for the later part of the interview consequent to the need to collect information on a relatively wide range of matters in a limited time period and to clarify a university's behaviour in relation to *specific* issues (Marshall and Rossman 1999). Nevertheless, the execution of the directed part of the interview followed the procedure recommended by Eisenhardt (1989), whereby the participants were themselves allowed (a) to determine the emphasis given to various issues, (b) to detail the factors they considered most relevant and (c) to omit or explain the perceived irrelevance of other variables. An outline of the interview schedule is shown in the Appendix to the paper.

Although the main purpose of the study was to establish the respondents' views on the basic elements of a university brand, the interviewers took the opportunity to create a platform for future research by concluding each interview with an open-ended question worded: 'What key factors influence decisions on your university's brand identity?' (It is recognised that a separate interview schedule within a fresh study would be necessary to address this matter properly.) Interviews were taped, transcribed and entered into the QSR N-VIVO package. A two-stage analysis strategy was adopted, beginning with the delineation of the responses of each interviewee followed by the integration of information across respondents. The former generated a list of issues that the participants believed to be important; the latter, an overall pattern of similarities and differences across institutions.

3.2 Coding

Codes for the interviewees' comments were generated using the constant comparison technique (Bogdan and Bilden 1982), an approach recommended by Flick (2006) for the analysis of the outcomes to interviews involving expert respondents. Thus, provisional codes were allocated following the analysis of the comments of the first person interviewed, and the remarks of the second and subsequent respondents were then allotted to these codes wherever possible. New codes were created for emerging sub-categories, and, where appropriate, existing codes were adjusted, supplemented or combined until a set of comprehensive and mutually exclusive codes arose that exhausted all the interviewees' remarks. Coding decisions were taken independently by two of the authors and compared. The total number of agreements divided by the number of decisions was 87% (a proportion considered as meritorious by Krippendorff 1980). Disagreements were resolved by revisiting the original transcripts and through discussions between the two reviewers, using the third author as an umpire if required.

4 Results

4.1 Responses to open-ended questions

The interviews began with the (open-ended) questions shown in the Appendix items 1 to 3. As regards item 1, none of the respondents attempted to interpret their

understanding of the term university brand in terms of language commonly associated with academic work in the branding field (for taxonomies of academic constructions of the meaning of the word 'brand', see Stern 2006). In all cases, responses to item 1 were phrased in quintessentially practical terms. Interviewees typically described the *tangible characteristics* of what they believed represented the brands of their own universities and the brand management processes followed within their institutions. There was no discussion of the fundamental meaning of the concept of a brand. Instead, the participants proffered numerous *examples* of institutional activities related to branding (e.g. developing visual identity, visiting schools or FE colleges to promote a particular university, setting up committees to discuss brand management and measures to secure greater brand awareness in the local community), but without attempting to articulate a definition of brand as a general construct. The basic notion of university brand was, it seems, defined predominantly in relation to operational activities.

Table 1 gives a summary of the main responses to the open-ended Appendix item 2 concerning the brand components that the interviewees deemed most important to potential recruits. (Only elements mentioned by more than 20% of the sample are listed.) All the participants (without prompt) stated that prospective students regarded an institution's overall 'ambience' to represent a critical part of its brand. Various words and phrases were employed to express this idea, including 'an open, friendly, inviting and inspiring atmosphere', 'having an atmosphere that makes the (prospective) student feel comfortable', 'having a friendly spirit' and "projecting the message that this is 'a university that welcomes people like me'". A potential student's perceptions of the 'climate', 'aura' and general 'feel' of an institution were, the respondents universally alleged, a primary element of the university's brand as seen from the student's perspective. Six of the participants from post-1992 institutions used the phrase 'down-to-earth' to describe the way they believed their brand was interpreted by potential recruits. Respondents in pre-1992 institutions, conversely, tended to employ words and expressions, such as 'academically world-class', 'stimulating and challenging' and 'top class for research' to delineate the ambience of their university's brand.

A second key element of an institution's brand (as perceived by potential recruits) mentioned by all the interviewees was 'location'. Geographical location was critical because (even in pre-1992 universities) students were increasingly likely to live at home and commute to a local university. Therefore, a location within convenient travelling distance was a primary and attractive feature of a university's 'product'. The shift towards domestic students living at home and travelling to a nearby institution has been very noticeable in Britain during recent years (Callender and Wilkinson 2003), consequent to the introduction of tuition fees and substantial increases in the costs of accommodation (Goddard 2004; Finch et al. 2006). By 2004, a quarter of all UK students were residing in their parental home (compared with 12.8% in 1994—see Fazackerley 2004); 39% for students living in London (Goddard 2004). The marketing manager of a large pre-1992 university on the outskirts of London observed that:

'A survey we did last year found that the first reason that people didn't come was that they got last minute offers from a more preferred university; the

Table 1 Elements of a university brand

Element	Percentage of respondents specifying the element			Prior literature mentioning the element
	Pre-1992 universities $N=8$	Post-1992 universities $N=11$	Ex-HEIs $N=6$	
Ambience	100	100	100	de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998b), James et al. (1999), Palacio et al. (2002), de Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003), Gray et al. (2003), Chapleo (2005)
Location				
Convenience	100	100	100	Alreck and Settle (1999), James et al. (1999), Chapleo (2005), Maringe (2006), Chapleo (2007)
Physical attractiveness	88	73	66	Hemsley-Brown (1999), Ivy (2001), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Gray et al. (2003), Chapleo (2005)
Association with London	88	82	N/A	Moogan et al. (2001)
Safety and security	88	82	50	Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Gray et al. (2003)
Employability				
Career prospects in general	100	73	83	James et al. (1999), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Gray et al. (2003), Chapleo (2005), Maringe (2006)
Vocational training	50	73	83	Hemsley-Brown (1999), James et al. (1999)
Courses offered	62	82	66	Bakewell and Gibson-Sweet (1998), Hemsley-Brown (1999), James et al. (1999), Palacio et al. (2002), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Maringe (2006)
Diversity of the student body				
Inclusiveness	50	100	66	Hemsley-Brown (1999), Bean (2000), Gray et al. (2003), Read et al. (2003), Asmar (2005), Melewar and Akel (2005), Bennett and Kottasz (2006)
Ease of entry	25	91	83	Bakewell and Gibson-Sweet (1998), Gatfield et al. (1999), James et al. (1999), Ivy (2001), Palacio et al. (2002), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Maringe (2006)
Level of difficulty of courses	25	82	66	Palacio et al. (2002), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Maringe (2006)
Community links	25	36	100	James et al. (1999)
Visual imagery	75	82	83	Baker and Balmer (1997), Ivy (2001), Stern et al. (2001), Gray et al. (2003), Hill et al. (2004), Melewar and Akel (2005), Simoes et al. (2005), Maringe (2006), Bennett (2007), Chapleo (2007)

second was that alternative universities have a more convenient campus location.'

Whilst accommodation and travelling costs did not represent critical choice criteria for overseas students, he continued, they were 'a dominant consideration' for domestic recruits.

Once the travelling convenience of a candidate institution had been established, students would, as many of the respondents asserted, then consider the physical attractiveness and safety of the university's campuses (see Table 1). Large majorities of the respondents in the pre- and post-1992s and half of those in the ex-HEIs reported that prospective students (and their parents) were more and more concerned with physical safety and security issues, which often were associated in their minds with the presence of a diverse student body within an institution, i.e. the more diverse the students, the less safe the environment was perceived to be.

All but four of the universities were in or near to London (only three of the institutions were outside reasonable travelling distance to London). Most of the interviewees in the London or near-to-London institutions stated without prompt that prospective recruits saw a London or near-London address as an important and positive element of a university's brand. This was true even among institutions that were 50 to 60 miles outside central London. Two of the sample universities had incorporated 'London' into their titles (London South Bank rather than South Bank, and Brunel West London as opposed to 'Brunel'). Representatives of both commented (without prompt) on the significant improvements in their universities' recruitment that had occurred consequent to the inclusion of 'London' in their institution's titles. Another respondent noted that:

'London of course has all the advantages of London. It has a brand of its own right that is globally recognised. London has a stronger brand than the university.'

Other participants described a London connection as 'a huge selling point, especially for international students', a 'guarantee of a great social life' and 'meaning you can go to really exciting places'.

Table 1 above indicates a widespread assumption among the respondents that potential recruits' perceptions of a university's brand included the students' assessments of the 'employability' of the institution's graduates. This applied both to graduates' career prospects *in general* and the amount of vocationally relevant education they would receive (although the vocational aspect was less salient in relation to the pre-1992 universities in the sample—see Table 1). Links with employers were mentioned by 11 of the interviewees in the vocational training context. As one person commented:

'Links with employers, especially those with well-known companies, articulate the employability of our students and differentiate us from competitors.'

Another respondent stated that:

'London is an expensive city to live in so people want to known that they will be employable at the end. If we show them the names of big name companies

that send their staff here for training and which take our students, this kind of endorses the educational product we are trying to sell.'

The range of the courses offered by a particular institution was also regarded as a vital component of prospective students' perceptions of a university's brand. Local *community* (rather than employer) links were mentioned by many of the respondents, including all six of the representatives of ex-HEIs. Community links were normally defined as special relationships with certain national or ethnic groups (e.g. Polish, Turkish, Bangladeshi) in an institution's catchment area. These associations were seen as helping to define a university's brand.

Two brand components were discussed at much greater length than anything else: the composition of the existing study body within a university (and its impact on the institution's brand) and the role of visual images in the definition of an institution's brand identity. These are considered below.

1. Composition of the student body

All 11 of the interviewees in post-1992 universities claimed that student diversity was a key element of their university's brand. Diversity was defined by these respondents mainly in terms of their institution recruiting largely from ethnic minority communities and taking many people who did not have conventional educational backgrounds. Students of this nature, the respondents alleged, constituted the core market of London's post-1992 universities, so it was necessary to attack these segments aggressively and to incorporate student diversity explicitly and conspicuously into an institution's brand. One interviewee noted how:

'Actual students (i.e., mainly non-white students) appear in the photographs in the prospectuses who stand as advocates endorsing the university. The photographs contain ethnicities and lifestyles that showcase our brand.'

Another person in a post-1992 university commented on how it was 'vitally necessary' (in order to retain market share) for her university to 'demonstrate its pride in the fact that we take people who have already got a lot of life experience (i.e. individuals with few formal academic qualifications) and give them an educational opportunity'. A third interviewee in a post-1992 observed how the 'government's policy of concentrating non-traditional students in inner-city new universities' (where there was a lack of differentiation between institutions) had meant that 'we need to push even further the point that we are a university for diverse students, and to do this big time'. None of the respondents in the post-1992 institutions regarded competition from pre-1992 universities as a significant consideration in relation to the need to include student diversity in the brand. In the words of one of the interviewees in a post-1992 university:

'We had a good niche being a widening participation university, and proactively so. But then the government told all universities—including the Russell Group—that they had to "do" widening participation. This encroached on our territory and diluted our brand. Now the pre-1992s have moved out of widening participation and seem very happy to stay out of it. We are happier if they stay out.'

The repercussions of the prominence of the diversity component of a London post-1992's brand were not always welcomed. All but one of the respondents in the

post-1992s commented on the difficulties this created. For example, according to one of the interviewees:

'We avoid playing up to the white middle class model and a lot of our diverse students like that, but unfortunately the heavy projection of diverse and ethnic images blocks off all our other (domestic) markets.'

Another typical statement concerning this matter was:

'We have such a high widening participation agenda that it puts off many (potential) students. It means we miss out on the traditional UK white 18 year old market because of our heavy emphasis on widening participation in a very ethnic urban university. Youngsters in the traditional white 18 year old market will not have come into contact with so many diverse types of people and often find the prospect of meeting people from different backgrounds to be quite nerve-wracking.'

Yet another respondent stated that:

'Saying to prospective students that we have a diverse population means saying something that many find quite scary. The majority of these traditional students are not interested in coming into a diverse environment. They don't want to work with 20 different nationalities and people of widely different literacy and numeracy levels.'

Comments of this nature were common and were founded, it seems, on the participants' (widespread) experience and knowledge of the drivers of student recruitment in their own universities. The respondents justified their remarks on the basis of what they had seen and heard at open days and clearing events and from general observation and their involvement in developing and maintaining the effectiveness of promotional materials aimed at attracting new students. The interviewees saw the issue as problematic because of the possibly adverse consequences of transmitting mixed messages to disparate audiences, given the need to concentrate on an institution's core market. Different market segments (domestic, local, national, European Union [west and east], overseas) could require different approaches.

Respondents in pre-1992 universities discussed the impact of the pre-existing composition of an institution's student body on prospective students' perceptions of a pre-1992 university's brand in somewhat different terms. Diversity was mentioned, but invariably in the context of disparities in students' courses, interests and personal development needs. For example, one respondent stated that:

'We have a very diverse student body. We have part time and full time students and their attitudes and needs are very different. The MBA (Master of Business Administration) students are in a world of their own. What people really want is to come to an environment where there is going to be "someone like me".'

Several of the respondents in the pre-1992 institutions alleged that 'challenge and opportunity' was a crucial element of their university's brand and was regarded as such by potential newcomers. This was exemplified by the following statement.

'Our brand says we provide challenge and opportunity. It says to students that they are going somewhere and will be looked after during the journey. If they feel that, then they will come and study at the university.'

Ease of entry to an institution and the levels of 'challenge' offered by a university's courses were also mentioned by many of the participants in the context of diversity and widening participation. The head of marketing of one of the post-1992 universities in the sample observed that:

'The flip-side of being something for everybody is that it is very easy to get into this university. This creates negative perceptions that we take just anybody. We have to fight against this. They (i.e., prospective students) have to understand that just because we are here for them (i.e., for diverse students) and their needs, this doesn't mean we are not providing a quality service.'

Interviewees in pre-1992 universities also considered entry requirements and the academic levels of an institution's programmes to represent significant dimensions of a university brand. A typical comment offered in this regard was:

'Students (i.e., prospective recruits) realise from what our brand says that the level of our courses is not suitable for everyone.'

Another person representing a pre-1992 said:

'Students know when they come to open days that we expect everyone who enrols here to be academically capable of doing the course. We stress that in all our promotional materials. It's not a matter of being elitist; it's just that people need to be made aware that doing a degree here is only appropriate for people of a particular ability level.'

Overall, the respondents in the pre-1992s emphasised the 'quality of education' aspect of their institutions' brands, whereas interviewees in the post-1992s stressed their universities' abilities to offer to a wide range of people the *experience* of higher education.

2. Visual imagery

Prospective students were regarded by the interviewees as being heavily influenced by the visual images used to transmit a university's brand. Visual imagery was described by one of the respondents as 'what they (i.e. potential recruits) see of us, the photography we use, the colours, the way we describe ourselves in newspapers and in our cinema advertisements'.

All but one of the interviewees who (without prompt) asserted that visual imagery was a major component of a university brand spoke at some length about their institutions' logos. A logo "presents the 'style' of the institution"; one person in a pre-1992 university alleged: 'it says that we are lively, vibrant, dynamic and top class'. An interviewee in an ex-HEI commented that:

'A distinctive logo gets people talking about it, even if the logo is really dreadful. It increases our visibility a lot.'

Seven of the interviewees in post-1992 universities spoke explicitly of the 'widening participation' aspect of the visual imagery they employed. For example, one person reported how:

> 'We made a conscious decision to use all our students in the promotional material to reflect the "actual" students that we have here. We say "this is who we are". A black women said "I came to this university because you had a picture on the back of a bus of a black women of about my age and I felt this was the university for me".'

A second respondent in a post-1992 institution noted that:

> 'We are diverse so we have to be seen as diverse, whether it's the images we are using or the language that we are using alongside the images. Using simple language tells people we are not elitist.'

Unfortunately, he continued, 'these things do project the message that we are dumbing down'. Visual imagery was reported to have been employed extensively by all the sample universities to illustrate how students at their institutions received help, support and mentoring.

4.2 Responses to semi-structured questions

By the time the interviews reached the sections that required opinions on specific pre-defined issues, nearly all of the participants had already discussed matters connected with the symbolic representations of a brand (Appendix item 4), so little more was said about visual imagery. Answers to the second part of item 4 (regarding the brand elements deemed most important for marketing) generated a relatively similar set of responses across the three types of institution (see Table 2). The interviewees' comments coded under the Table 2 heading 'Educational identity' tended in the case of post-1992 university respondents to relate to diversity, inclusiveness and offering people a chance to improve their lives. In the pre-1992s, the participants focussed mainly on the projection of marketing messages concerning the level and quality of an institution's programmes.

Table 2 Brand elements deemed most important for marketing

Element	Percentage of respondents specifying the element		
	Pre-1992 universities $N=8$	Post-1992 universities $N=11$	Ex-HEIs $N=6$
Educational identity of the institution	100	100	50
The learning environment	88	73	100
Employability of graduates	88	73	83
Reputation	75	73	50
Location	66	82	50
Social and sports facilities	50	45	50

Many respondents regarded a university's learning environment to represent a marketable commodity that could be 'sold' as part of the institution's brand. However, the interviewees did *not* emphasise library or IT facilities in this connection (only four of the 25 respondents included these in their descriptions of brand elements crucial for marketing), but they did stress the role of lecturers. In pre-1992 universities, this was expressed mainly in terms of faculty members' expertise, research standing, qualifications and international status. Respondents in post-1992 institutions mainly discussed the importance of lecturers in relation to (in the words of one interviewee) 'nurturing and caring for the student and getting involved in the student's learning'. University social and sports facilities were viewed as important for marketing an institution's brand (see Table 2). Social aspects were typically described in terms of the availability either on-campus or nearby of restaurants, bars, leisure amenities and cultural attractions.

A university's overall *reputation* was often regarded as a significant brand marketing weapon. As one interviewee put it:

'Reputation comes top of the list for young people entering education because they need to know they are making the right choice.'

Respondents in both the pre- and post-1992 sectors commented on the high intensity of competition within their particular sector and the lack of real differentiation (apart from geographical location) between institutions. Reputation had the capacity, several of the interviewees claimed, to act as a differentiating factor and could be made concrete, in the words of one of the pre-1992 university respondents, by 'talking about the reputations of particular departments, individual academics, and of the university's learning and teaching experience'. A participant from a post-1992 institution observed that 'reputation creates (prospective students') expectations', and how:

'As a post-1992 we get our reputation through word-of-mouth. They (prospective students) listen to their friends, peer group and family more than they do to our marketing.'

Item 5 of the interview schedule queried the specific service elements of a university brand that the respondents believed prospective recruits would consider significant and why. As mentioned previously, the interviewees did not normally discuss service factors in terms of an institution's library, IT facilities, etc. Instead, they focussed on potential students' 'contact experiences' (a term employed by ten of the interviewees) and 'customer care' (mentioned by 17 people). Contact experiences were described by one interviewee as 'what happens when they (i.e. prospective students) phone us, email us, speak to us, come to an open day, or if someone goes out to their school and college'. Another person characterised contact experience as 'how somebody answers the telephone, how somebody is greeted at reception, how kindly a student is treated when they ask a question'. Images of an institution being good at customer care, a respondent in a post-1992 university remarked, were difficult to create because "faculty hate the use of the term 'student customer'". Nevertheless, he continued, students were 'more and more buying into services and expect to be given high levels of customer care'.

None of the interviewees believed that a university's vision and mission (Appendix item 6) affected potential students' perceptions of its brand. However,

two of the respondents in post-1992 institutions thought that strong commitments to diversity, 'opportunity for all', etc., that appeared in prospectuses might be read by prospective students. Location (item 7) was regarded as critical, as previously discussed. Responses to Appendix item 8 (concerning the influence of a university's culture) were rather superficial and did not suggest that the interviewees saw any meaningful connections between internal culture and students' attitudes towards a university's brand. Replies focussed on the effects on potential recruits' perceptions of whether a university was 'multi-cultural', catered primarily for diverse students or was more 'academically oriented' in the traditional sense. It is relevant to note that at no point during the interviews did the participants use terminology, such as corporate personality, organisational identity, corporate identity or other words and phrases relating to constructs familiar to marketing academics. The respondents did not seem to have come across these concepts. Answers to Appendix item 9 largely repeated what had gone before and usually involved, for example, employability, diversity within a university's student body, having a 'friendly' ambience, 'having a good learning environment' and catering for people of a particular sort. Vague responses emerged for Appendix item 10, which queried the factors that influence decisions on an institution's brand identity. Several interviewees simply listed the stakeholders they perceived their universities to possess (students, staff, the government, local businesses, etc.). Four respondents stated that student recruitment drove branding decisions. Vice-chancellors personally took major branding decisions in six of the 25 universities (though always after receiving advice from a marketing manager or from a committee), by the head of marketing in 11 universities and by a multi-disciplinary team in the nine remaining institutions.

5 Conclusion and discussion

This study asked 25 university marketing and communications directors and managers in London and the south east of England to outline what they believed young people who were considering entering university regarded as constituting the main elements of a university brand. The respondents suggested that potential students perceived the existence of six major components of an institution's brand, many of which had parallels within the academic literature in the field, viz 'ambience', e.g. being friendly, inviting, innovative, down-to-earth or 'for people like me' (cf. James et al. 1999; Palacio et al. 2002; Gray et al. 2003; Chapleo 2005), location (an issue emphasised by Alreck and Settle 1999; Maringe 2006; Chapleo 2007), degree of diversity (see Bean 2000; van Rekom and van Riel 2000; Bennett and Kottasz 2006) and factors to do with visual imagery (cf. Baker and Balmer 1997; Ivy 2001; Melewar and Akel 2005; Simoes et al. 2005) and with employability (James et al. 1999; Ivy 2001; Moogan et al. 2001). People in post-1992 universities viewed the degree of the diversity of an institution's student body to represent an extremely important part of its brand, as this was perceived by prospective recruits. Other critical elements were stated to involve the range of the courses offered by a particular university (cf. Bakewell and Gibson-Sweet 1998; Binsardi and Ekwulugo 2003; Maringe 2006), reputation (see Hussey and Duncombe 1999; Palacio et al. 2002) and community links (James et al. 1999). In

reply to prompted questions, the respondents generally agreed that an institution's learning environment and sports and social facilities (cf. Gatfield et al. 1999; Binsardi and Ekwulugo 2003; Gray et al. 2003; Bennett 2007) also comprised significant components of a university brand.

Pre- and post-1992 universities appeared to adopt differing approaches to the projection of their institutions' educational identities. Interviewees in pre-1992s tended to define their universities' brands in terms of the levels of an institution's courses, of the fact that it was something of an achievement to gain admission and of the academic research-based excellence of faculty members and programmes. Representatives of post-1992 institutions felt that since their universities' core markets comprised in large part 'non-traditional' mature (over 21 years old on entry) widening-access students mainly from ethnic minorities and people who possessed non-traditional entry qualifications, then in order to retain market share within these core constituencies, their institutions needed to transmit strong brand images, which alleged that their universities were ideal places for people with characteristics of this type. Unfortunately, the projection of such brand images discouraged other groups from wanting to apply to these institutions.

The meaning of the term university brand was articulated predominantly in terms of the brand management activities undertaken by the respondents' institutions. Participants' views on the components of a university brand (as they believed they were perceived by prospective students) were supported by relevant academic literature, although matters pertaining to brand personality, corporate identity, brand essence, organisational identity and certain other constructs prominent in the academic brand marketing research literature were not mentioned by members of the sample. This is consistent with the view of many commentators that there exists a growing academic-practitioner divide where brand modelling is concerned (see Gabriel et al. 2006 for further information on this matter). De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998a, b) and de Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003) observed in other industry sectors comparable disparities between, on the one hand, the knowledge and perspectives of commercial brand managers and, on the other, the contents of extant marketing theory.

5.1 Discussion

An important policy implication of the findings is the need to address the (difficult) problem of building a university brand that means something to each of a number of quite different potential student audiences, but without diluting the brand and/or rendering it unattractive to certain groups. For example, a pre-1992 institution that anchors its brand against academically challenging courses, traditional approaches and being a 'part of the establishment' could well discourage applications from academically able youngsters from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Equally, a post-1992 that continually drives home the message that its students are diverse, that it caters for people with minimal entry qualifications or that it provides extensive help to recruits who have problems with basic Math and English might put off potential applicants with better educational credentials. Unfortunately, for university brand managers, however, the segregation of British universities into disparate categories (the Russell Group, the Million Plus Group, the 1994 Group, etc.) results

directly from government policies over which they have no control, making it difficult for institutions to extend their brands beyond the confines defined by their heritage category.

As the study progressed, it became clear that the universities in the sample were spending very large amounts of money on branding activities. Indeed, a number of the sample institutions possessed what in effect were entire departments devoted to branding and brand management. This is not surprising perhaps, given the long-term decline in government spending on higher education as a whole (measured by the annual average amount spent on each student in the system) and hence the need for institutions in various sub-sectors of the higher education market to compete aggressively for students and the resource income they generate. Competition among universities was supposed to create wider student choice and improved efficiency. Arguably, the major consequence of competition has been the diversion of considerable amounts of universities' incomes towards marketing and brand management. It is relevant to note moreover that, as the visual imagery associated with the brands of specific institutions becomes ever more sophisticated, competition will drive rival universities to improve their own visual representations, thus diluting the impact of the (excellent) visual portrayal of any one institution.

5.2 Limitations and directions for further research

A number of limitations apply to the study. Only marketing and communications directors and managers were interviewed, not university vice-chancellors, academic facility or university administrators. It would be useful to compare the opinions of representatives of these groups of how potential students perceive their institutions' brands. The size of the sample was modest compared to the total number of universities in the UK (about 150), and the internationally famous British universities (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College) were excluded from the study. However, there are no a priori grounds for supposing that the sample universities were unrepresentative of their particular sectors of the market. Also, it seems reasonable to suppose that the branding problems and opportunities of ancient and/or internationally pre-eminent universities differ significantly from those of higher education institutions in general.

A number of the interviewees in the present study reported that their universities had made extensive use of external consultants prior to taking crucial brand decisions. More research is needed into the roles of outside consultants in university brand management and their influence on the shaping of the brand identities of particular institutions. Another field for future research could be the examination, via case studies, of the experiences of institutions that within the last few years have renamed themselves and/or have completed comprehensive rebranding exercises, as competition within their sectors is almost sure to cause other universities to do the same. The problems arising from the possibility that heavy recruitment of one type of student (e.g. diverse and 'non-traditional') could deter other socio-economic groups from selecting a particular university have not been addressed at length by the educational research literature, except indirectly (e.g. Read et al. 2003; Bennett and Kottasz 2006; Bennett 2007). Clearly, further research is needed into this matter.

Appendix: The interview schedule

1. What is your interpretation of the term university brand, looking at the issue from a prospective student's perspective, e.g. how was the brand perceived during open days by prospective students?
2. If you had to describe the most important things in the brand of a university, looking at the matter from the viewpoint of prospective students, what would these be?
3. Which two or three of the above are the most important and why?
4. What are the main symbolic representations of the university and the main communications activities that contribute to the brand, e.g. name, logo, advertising slogans? Which elements of the brand are most important for marketing the brand?
5. What service elements do you think are important for a university brand (from a prospective student's point of view) and why, e.g. library, IT and other facilities, student support services, teaching staff and administrative support?
6. What impact do you think the institution's vision and mission has on potential students? Which aspects are most important, e.g. strategic direction, market position?
7. How do you think the physical situation and geographical location of the university influences prospective students, e.g. physical quality of the university's premises, attractiveness of the geographical areas in which campuses are situated, convenience of the location vis-à-vis travelling to classes?
8. How do you think the culture of the university influences potential students, e.g. its organisational values, positioning, organisational personality and corporate identity?
9. Which elements of the university's image are given particular emphasis in order to attract potential students, e.g. heritage and reputation, graduation prospects, modernity, innovativeness, suitability of the institution for certain types of student, ease of entry, levels of fees?
10. What key factors influence decisions on your university's brand identity, e.g. recruitment considerations, internal educational ethos, financial problems?
11. Who takes these decisions?
12. How many years have you worked in the area of marketing and what types of positions have you occupied?

References

Alessandri S (2001) Modelling corporate identity: a concept explication and theoretical explanation. Corp Comm Int J 6(4):173–182

Alreck P, Settle R (1999) Strategies for building consumer brand preference. J Prod Brand Manag 8 (2):130–144

Ambler T, Styles C (1996) Brand development versus new product development: towards a process model of extension decisions. Mark Intell Plann 14(7):10–19

Asmar C (2005) Internationalising students: reassessing diasporic and local student difference. Stud High Educ 30(3):291–309

Baker M, Balmer J (1997) Visual identity: trappings or substance? Eur J Market 31(5):366–382

Bakewell C, Gibson-Sweet M (1998) Strategic marketing in a changing environment: are the new UK universities in danger of being 'stuck in the middle'? Int J Educ Manag 12(3):108–113

Balmer J, Gray E (2003) Corporate brands: what are they? What of them? Eur J Market 37(7/8):972–997

Balmer J, Soenen G (1999) The acid test of corporate identity management. J Market Manag 15(1):69–92

Bean D (2000) Is branding a solution to widening participation? Education Marketing March 2000, pp 18–20

Bennett R (2007) Advertising message strategies for encouraging young white working class males to consider entering British universities. J Bus Res 60(9):932–941

Bennett R, Ali-Choudhury R (2008) Prospective students' perceptions of university brands: an empirical study. J Market High Educ (in press)

Bennett R, Kottasz R (2006) Widening participation and student expectations of higher education. Int J Manag Educ 5(2):47–65

Binsardi A, Ekwulugo F (2003) International marketing of British education: research on the students' perception and the UK market penetration. Market Intell Plann 21(5):318–327

Bogdan R, Bilden S (1982) Qualitative research for education: an introduction to theory and methods, 2nd edn. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA

Callender C, Wilkinson D (2003) Student income and expenditure survey 2002/3, DfES Research Report No. 487. Department for Education and Skills, London

Chapleo C (2005) Do universities have 'successful' brands? Int J Educ Adv 6(1):54–64

Chapleo C (2007) Barriers to brand building the UK universities? Int J Nonprofit Volunt Sect Mark 12 (1):23–32

Chun R, Davies G (2006) The influence of corporate character on customers and employees: exploring similarities and differences. J Acad Mark Sci 34(2):138–146

Dearing Report (1997) The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education: report of the committee. HMSO, London

de Chernatony L, Dall'Olmo Riley (1998a) Modelling the components of the brand. Eur J Mark 32(11/12):1074–1090

de Chernatony L, Dall'Olmo Riley F (1998b) Defining a brand: beyond the literature with experts' interpretations. J Market Manag 14(5):417–443

de Chernatony L, Segal-Horn S (2003) The criteria for successful service brands. Eur J Mark 37(7/8): 1095–1118

Doti J (2004) Is higher education becoming a commodity. J High Educ Policy Manag 26(3):363–369

Drummond G (2004) Consumer confusion: reduction strategies in higher education. Int J Educ Manag 18 (5):317–323

Eisenhardt K (1989) Building theories from case study research. Acad Manage Rev 14(4):532–550

Fazackerley A (2004) University life is a far cry from stereotype. The Times Higher, 23 April 2004, pp 5–6

Finch S, Jones A, Parfrement J, Cebulla A, Connor H, Hillage J, Pollard E, Tyers C, Hunt W, Loukas G (2006) Student income and expenditure survey 2004/5. DfES Research Report No. 725. Department for Education and Skills, London

Flick U (2006) An introduction to qualitative research, 3rd edn. Sage, London

Gabriel H, Kottasz R, Bennett R (2006) Advertising planning, ad-agency use of advertising models, and the academic practitioner divide. Market Intell Plann 24(5):505–527

Gatfield T, Barker M, Graham P (1999) Measuring communication impact of university advertising materials. Corp Comm Int J 4(2):73–79

Goddard A (2004) Even rent-free students should quit costly capital. The Times Higher, 19 March 2004, pp 2–3

Gray B, Fam K, Llanes V (2003) Branding universities in Asian markets. J Prod Brand Manag 12(2):108–120

Groeben N (1990) Subjective theories and the explanation of human action. In: Semin G, Gergen K (eds) Everyday understanding: social and scientific implications. Sage, London, pp 19–44

Guba Y, Lincoln Y (1994) Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In: Denzin N, Lincoln Y (eds) Handbook of qualitative research. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA

Gutman J, Miaoulis G (2003) Communicating a quality position in service delivery: an application in higher education. Manag Serv Qual 13(2):105–111

Hatch M, Schultz M (1997) Relations between organisational culture, identity and image. Eur J Mark 31 (5/6):356–365

Hayrinen-Alestalo M, Peltola U (2006) The problem of a market-oriented university. High Educ 52 (2):251–281

Hemsley-Brown J (1999) College choice: perceptions and priorities. Educ Manage Adm 27(1):85–98

HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) (2008) Students in Higher Education Institutions, Higher Education Funding Council for England, Bristol

Hill D, Blodgett J, Baer R, Wakefield K (2004) An investigation of visualisation and documentation strategies in services advertising. J Serv Res 7(2):155–166

Hodgkinson G, Johnson G (1994) Exploring the mental models of competitive strategists: the case for a processual approach. J Manag Stud 31(4):525–551

Hussey M, Duncombe N (1999) Projecting the right image: using projective techniques to measure brand image. Qual Market Res Int J 2(1):22–30

IMHE (Institutional Management in Higher Education) (2005) Higher education management and policy: the dynamics of massification and differentiation: a comparative look at higher education systems in the United Kingdom and California. High Educ Manag Policy 16(3):7–34 OECD

Ivy J (2001) Higher education institution image: a correspondence analysis approach. Int J Educ Manag 15 (6):276–282

James R, Baldwin G, Mcinnis C (1999) Which university? The factors influencing the choices of prospective undergraduates. Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne, Australia

Jarratt D (1996) A comparison of two alternative interviewing techniques used within an integrated research design: a case study in outshopping using semi-structured and non-directed interviewing techniques. Mark Intell Plann 14(6):6–15

Krippendorff K (1980) Content analysis: an introduction to methodology. Sage, London

Lazarus A (1989) The practice of multi-modal therapy. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore

LeBlanc G, Nguyen N (1996) Cues used by customers evaluating corporate image in service firms: an empirical study in financial institutions. Int J Serv Ind Manage 7(2):44–56

Lomas L (2002) Does the development of mass education necessary mean the end of quality? Qual High Educ 8(1):71–79

Lynch R, Baines P (2004) Strategy development in UK higher education: towards resource-based competitive advantages. J High Educ Policy Manag 26(2):171–187

Marginson S (2006) Dynamics of national and global competition in higher education. High Educ 52 (1):1–39

Maringe F (2006) University and course choice: implications for positioning, recruitment and marketing. Int J Educ Manag 20(6):466–479

Marshall C, Rossman G (1999) Designing qualitative research, 3rd edn. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA

Mayor of London (2003) The Mayor of London's Response to the White Paper on Education. http://www.london.gov.uk/publications/education/jsp.

McGivern Y (2003) The practice of market and social research: an introduction. FT Prentice Hall, London

Melewar T, Akel S (2005) The role of corporate identity in the higher education sector: a case study. Corp Commu Int J 10(1):41–57

Melewar T, Jenkins E (2002) Defining the corporate identity construct. Corp Reputation Rev 5(1):76–90

Meuser M, Nagel U (2002) Expert interviews in qualitative research: a discussion of methodology. In: Bogner A, Merz W (eds) The expert interview. Leske and Budrich, Oplader, pp 71–95

Moogan Y, Baron S, Bainbridge S (2001) Timings and trade-offs in the marketing of higher education courses: a conjoint approach. Mark Intell Plann 19(3):179–187

Naudé P, Ivy J (1999) The marketing strategies of universities in the United Kingdom. Int J Educ Manag 13(3):126–134

Newman J (1889) The idea of a university defined and illustrated in nine discourses delivered to the Catholics of Dublin. In: Ker I (ed) The idea of a University. The Clarendon Press, Oxford, p 1976

Palacio A, Meneses G, Pérez P (2002) The configuration of the university image and its relationship with the satisfaction of students. J Educ Admin 40(5):486–505

Patton M (1990) Qualitative evaluation and research methods. Sage, Newbury Park, CA

Read B, Archer L, Leathwood C (2003) Challenging cultures: student conceptions of 'belonging' and 'isolation' at a post-1992 university. Stud High Educ 28(3):261–277

Robbins L (1963) Higher Education: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Simoes C, Dibb S, Fisk R (2005) Managing corporate identity: an internal perspective. J Acad Market Sci 33(2):153–168

Smith D (1999) The changing idea of a university. In: Smith D, Langslow A (eds) The idea of a University. Jessica Kingsley, London

Smith D, Langslow A (eds) (1999) The idea of a University. Jessica Kingsley, London

Stern B (2006) What does brand mean? Historical analysis method and construct definition. J Acad Market Sci 34(2):216–223

Stern B, Zinkhan G, Jaju A (2001) Marketing images: construct definition, measurement issues, and theory development. Marketing Theory 1(2):201–224

Stilwell F (2003) Higher education, commercial criteria and economic incentives. J High Educ Policy Manag 25(1):51–61

Strauss A (1987) Qualitative analysis for social scientists. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Tremblay M (1982) The key informant technique. In: Burgess R (ed) Field research: a sourcebook and field manual. Allen and Unwin, London

Tysome T (2007) Dearing still shapes the agenda he set. The Times Higher, July 27, pp 6–7

van Rekom J, van Riel C (2000) Operational measures of organisational identity: a review of existing methods. Corp Reputation Rev 3(4):334–350

Yin R (1989) Case study research: design and method. Sage, London