Strategic Marketing for Higher Education

Where **Value-Dominant Innovation** drives **Strategy** and **Performance**

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Summary. Strategic Marketing for Higher Education presents a disruptive model and a roadmap that connects purpose, mission-driven branding, foresight, innovation, stakeholder marketing and relationships, educational experiences design and evaluation, integrated communication, reputation, and data-driven implementation.

Based on case studies from different countries, the book organizes and summarizes the most relevant scientific and practitioners' knowledge on how to transform and manage resilient and sustainable higher education institutions through marketing and innovation strategies and programs.

Readers will learn how to redefine their institution's brand, service model and value proposition in ways that are both distinctive and socially meaningful, using a humanistic marketing paradigm, integrating the Value-Dominant Logic (VDL) into a service business model.

The book offers a guide for translating the value proposition into person-centric experiences. It shows how to use marketing research, future studies, artificial intelligence, stakeholder journey mapping and digital tools to design, implement, evaluate, and improve data-driven innovation programs and services.

Finally, it presents a path for translating marketing strategies into actions that generate enrollment, engagement, loyalty, and more importantly, stakeholder success and social value.

Regenerating higher education is a worthwhile project that needs a map and teams for making it possible. Marketing would provide that map, and higher education decision-makers and marketers are the teams that, like the sherpas in a mountaineering expedition, are capable of leading the educational institutions to new summits.

Keywords. Strategic marketing, Higher education, Humanistic marketing, Higher education management, Value-Dominant Logic, University Innovation, Artificial intelligence, Sustainable value creation, Branding.

Challenging the status quo takes commitment, courage, imagination, and above all, dedication to learning. Today's survival depends on our ability to stay awake, adjust to new ideas, remain vigilant, and to face the challenge of change.

Martin Luther King*

* Quoted by McNaughton, 2023

A new marketing vision for higher-ed

Why we are writing this book

Every industry and organization, including Higher Education, is living through one of the most profound transformations in its history. Universities are being challenged by social trends like demographic decline in some geographic areas and massification in others; by new competitors from the platform economy; by technological shifts driven by artificial intelligence and immersive media; and by increasing pressure to contribute visibly to social, environmental and economic wellbeing. In this context, "business as usual" is no longer an option. Yet, in many institutions, marketing is still understood primarily as promotion or a recruitment mechanisms, something that happens downstream, once strategies, programs and budgets have been decided. Moreover, even when communications and marketing are effectively integrated and contribute to managerial decision-making, they tend to prioritize reputation and positioning over the advancement of institutional purpose and the fulfillment of the university's broader socio-cultural mission to serve future generations. We believe this view is no longer adequate and, in fact, is not aligned the mission of universities. If marketing remains a late-stage communication function, they will struggle to offer relevant educational services, differentiate themselves in highly crowded and fragmented markets, build meaningful relationships with stakeholders, and justify their role in societies that are asking hard questions about the value of higher education.

This book is our first answer to a simple but demanding question: ***How can strategic marketing help universities regenerate themselves, reimagine their brand, cultural role, and value for people and society in a world shaped by New Age Technologies***[1]***?***

We do not see marketing as a set of tactics to increase enrollments or improve reputation (and ranking position) in the short term. We understand it as a humanistic, service-based, data-informed way of thinking and managing: a discipline that connects identity, strategy, data intelligence, innovation, programs, communication, and stakeholder relationships in a coherent systemic architecture. Our vision is that universities can use marketing not to "sell" or "position" what they already are, but to design what they need to become—institutions that are more person-centered, more socially responsible, and more financially sustainable.

Who this book is for

This book, written by authors with long experience in the higher education sector (in leadership, research and teaching positions), is proposed first and foremost for **university leaders** who are responsible for strategic decisions:

- Members of the executive board, rectors, presidents, vice-chancellors, and provosts.
- Deans, directors and heads of schools and faculties.
- Leaders of marketing, communication, institutional research, planning, innovation, quality, continuing education, and lifelong learning.

It is also intended for **academic and professional managers and staff** who want to understand how strategic marketing can support their work:

- Program directors and heads of department who are engaged in designing or renewing curricula and services.
- Managers of student services, alumni offices, corporate relations, technology transfer, extension, and community engagement.

1. V. Kumar and Philip Kotler, *Transformative Marketing: Combining New Age Technologies and Human Insights* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

We assume that our readers are not necessarily trained marketers. Many may be academics, administrators, or professionals who have learned marketing "on the job" while facing concrete challenges: a new degree that fails to attract enough students; a reputation that lags behind reality; a fragmented portfolio; or a weak connection between institutional mission and the programs and services actually offered.

Our aim is to provide them with a language, a set of concepts and a practical toolbox to address these challenges systematically.

What we propose

The main contribution of the book is represented in the original Strategic Marketing Actionable Roadmap Task (SMART) model that will guide universities to design and implement a clear, humanistic business model and a strategic marketing system aligned with their identity and purpose.

This is accomplished in three steps or moves:

1. **From purpose to business model**. We begin by exploring the missions of universities in the twenty-first century, the pressures they face, and the need to redefine their brand (identity) and value proposition in ways that are both distinctive and socially meaningful. We present the humanistic marketing paradigm for universities, integrating the Values-Dominant Logic into a service business model.
2. **From brand to innovation**. We then translate this humanistic service business model into programs and services, experiences and capabilities through a data-driven innovation process that translates the brand into person-centric experiences. We show how to use marketing research, foresight, worldbuilding, stakeholder journey mapping and digital tools to design, implement, evaluate, and continually improve programs and services—treating innovation as a data-driven and iterative process rather than a sequence of isolated projects.
3. **From design to implementation**. Finally, we present a path for translating marketing strategies into actions that generate enrollment, engagement, loyalty, and more importantly, human flourishing and social value.

Throughout the book, we argue that marketing in higher education must be:

- **Human-centered**, seeing students, staff, alumni, and partners as persons with life projects, not as "targets."
- **Stakeholder-oriented**, going beyond students to include employers, governments, communities, and the environment.
- **Evidence-based and forward-looking**, combining data analytics with prospective and scenarios.
- **Prosocial**, aligned with sustainability and quality of life, not only with institutional survival.

Our vision is that, used in this way, marketing becomes an integrating discipline that helps universities make better choices: which programs to open, transform or close; which segments and territories to serve; which alliances to build; which narratives to tell; and how to allocate scarce resources with clarity and responsibility.

Who we are

Inspired by Prof. Kotler's books (especially the seminal one published in 1995 with Karen Fox, Strategic Marketing for Higher Education), and a recent one (written with Prof. V.Kumar, Transformative Marketing: Combining New Age Technologies and Human Insights), we write this book as **practitioner-scholars** in Marketing and Education, who move daily between academic work and institutional decision-making. We have been professors, researchers, department heads, and consultants involved in strategy, marketing and innovation projects in universities and business schools in different countries.

This dual experience shapes the entire book. We not only draw on academic research in marketing, service management, higher education, and future studies, but also translate it into instruments that we have developed and tested in real institutions. Our ambition is modest and bold at the same time. Modest, because we know that no single book can solve the structural problems or offer the complete solution for regenerating higher education institutions. Bold, because we believe that if more universities adopt a humanistic, strategic view of marketing and

management, they will be better equipped to serve their students, their communities, and the world in the decades to come.

This is the horizon that guides our work. We invite you to read the following chapters not only as a handbook or guide, but as an invitation to rethink what your institution is, whom it serves, and what story it tells about the present and future of higher education and societies.

Statement on the use of Generative AI

Generative AI tools (ChatGPT and Perplexity) were used exclusively to improve the language of Prof. Reynaldo Rivera's contributions (as the Author's primary language is Spanish). All intellectual content, research design, and data analysis were conducted solely by the authors[2].

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2. We used the following sources for guidance on the use of generative AI: Taylor & Francis AI Policies (https://taylorandfrancis.com/our-policies/ai-policy/); Arizona State University AI Policy (https://libguides.asu.edu/generativeai/acknowledgement); and Journal of Governance & Regulation (URL: https://virtusinterpress.org/Statement-on-the-Use-of-Generative-AI-9508.html).

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