

# Assessment of Stakeholders Perception on Marketing Techniques adopted by Universities in Tripura State

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conceived as an attempt to assess the stakeholder's perception on the marketing techniques adopted by the universities in Tripura, India. A total of 247 respondents inclusive of students and parents as stakeholders were interviewed. The perceptions on the marketing techniques were different from students and parents. While students preferred personal counselling, social media, web site, parents have considered personal counselling, TV talks and presentations to be important for deciding about the institution.

## Keywords

Stakeholders, Marketing Techniques, Personal Counseling, Presentations, Social Media, SMS Campaign, Email campaign, Web site, advertisements, TV Talk shows

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## Introduction

Marketing is considered as an art of generating demand and the process of convincing the existing as well as new customers. Competition in all the business sectors is growing rapidly and education sector is no exception to it. With the emergence of the universities both public and private, universities are facing ever increasing competition and difficulties to attract students. Growing number of choices in the tertiary education level are increasing and with the advent of private universities, the prospective students have plenty of options to choose from. In order to be successful, the universities should realize the factors which actually influence the choice, and accordingly devise marketing procedures to give complete factual information to the potential students to make their university as their school of choice.

## Professional Education in Tripura

Tripura is the third smallest state in India, predominantly a hilly region with Agartala as the capital. It has wide ethnic groups and is known as 'Daughter of Mother Nature'. Tripura has lush green landscapes and rich in human resources. It has cultural diversity in the population basically are tribals and non-tribals. The state is divided into eight districts where most of the population live in these districts are scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Tripura has 95% literacy rate which is the highest compared to other states.

The importance of higher education has been growing constantly and several knowledge based industries are being set up in the state. Since last one decade, significant growth was seen in the technical institutions and had also witnessed significant increase in enrollments both in schools and professional education because of the decline in dropout rates over the years. For the last few decades, the decentralization of higher education delivery was the main focus and also on creation and development of infrastructure has been the mainstay at Tripura.

To cater to the population of Tripura State, it has one Central University (Tripura University) and one Private university (ICFAI University Tripura) in addition to universities run by state government. All facets of education are available in the state such as technical, medical, agricultural, legal, teacher and para medical. The available information on educational statistics from various census reports revealed that the overall literacy rate in India has increased from 61 percent in 1987 in males to 82 percent in 2018 and in females it was 32 percent in 1987 to 65 percent in 2018. The state has shown significant improvements in literacy levels both among boy and girls. The gap from 28.8 in 1987-88 has narrowed down to 16.9 in the year 2017-18 (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Literacy rates in Tripura State

Literacy	1987-88	1993-94	1999-00	2007-08	2014	2017-18
Male Literacy Rate	60.5	65.5	69.2	76.6	80.3	81.5
Female Literacy Rate	31.7	37.9	43.8	54.9	61.8	64.6
Gap	28.8	27.6	25.4	21.7	18.5	16.9

Source: National Sample Survey @ Observer Research Foundation's India Data Labs

<https://www.orfonline.org/research/literacy-in-india-the-gender-and-age-dimension-57150/>

**Stakeholders of Higher Education:** Stakeholders are the ones who are associated with the institution for its welfare and the success of their students. It may be a collective entity such as community, local businesses, organizations, and committees etc. However, Students are the most important and one of the stakeholders of the higher education institution. Students are the primary customers to the institution because they are the ones who pay the fee and secondly the parents who sponsor their wards for education. Hence, universities must recognize the importance of the

stakeholders in the education who are crucial to the development of the institution as they can lend their voice to ideas, express their opinions and perspectives and also take leadership responsibilities.

### Why to Market Higher Education?

Education is a human oriented activity meaning the development of the personality which in turn determines the society's development. The journey of education starts at home first from the childhood and father and mother are the teachers, then move to school and subsequently move to the society. Systematic learning takes place at the school for attaining discipline, knowledge, personality, attitude and aptitude etc. To meet the current population, large number of universities have come into existence and as a result the competition has increased. When few universities were available, there was no need for any marketing initiative to attract the students as demand for the seats were higher than the supply. But in the current situation, the trend has been reversed, the supply is higher than the demand, hence the need for more and more marketing techniques is increasing. The university's demand in the market emphasizes the need to make sure it chooses the appropriate marketing technique to get maximum benefit. The institutions are increasingly becoming very active, competitive and aggressive in their marketing approach to convey their messages more favourably to all stakeholders such as parents and prospective students.

### Marketing Techniques

With the growing number of universities, the competition has been increasing year after year. Universities are adopting various marketing techniques to exhibit the supremacy of their universities.

The marketing techniques that are being adopted by the universities are (1) Personal Counseling: marketing executives meet the prospective students and their parents personally to explain about the programs offered by the university. They meet them at their colleges or visit their homes. This will help the student and parents to get complete information; (2) Presentations and Seminars: The marketing officials visit the colleges and schools, seek time with the head of the institution for giving a presentation about the university and its standing and the programs offered to a larger group; (3) Web Site: Information with regard to the programs, accreditations, recognitions etc. are displayed. Potential students looking for admission into the university will check for the details before their come to a decision; (4) Social Media (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter). Students and parents have become smart phone mobile addicts. Social media platforms like facebook, linkedin and twitter etc. are ruling the world networking with the people around the globe. It has become one of the tools for the marketing officials to get connected through these platforms to the potential students and parents for promoting the university programs; (5) Email Campaign: Email campaign is another strategy where the students and parents can be contacted. Emails periodically are sent to the students giving updates on the university. This is another way of keeping the potential students in contact; (6) SMS

Campaign: SMS campaign is one more strategy to keep sending the alerts about the programs of the university, dead lines of the applications etc. to the potential students and parents; (7) TV Talk Shows: With the increase and scope of electronic media to reach the people, TV plays a vital role. The university officials are invited to the TV studio for an open question and answer session. The potential students or parents can call the university officials directly and get the information required; (8) Advertisement & Press Releases. Universities release the advertisement for admissions in the newspaper and also press releases of the events appear from time to time.

### Review of Literature

Various views exist on the definition of the stakeholders in professional education. Freeman et.al., (1984) has defined the stakeholder as a group or individuals who can affect the institution or the ones who are affected by the institution. Burrows (1999) has split the stakeholders into internal and external stakeholders. The internal are the staff and potential students of the university and the external are the employers, society and media.

The governments articulate its policies through various means such as persuasion and financial incentives that suit to influence the autonomous universities. The governments also delegate the responsibilities to people who may be inducted into the boards or committees to serve the university (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008). The universities are kept in isolation from the prevailing environment such as socio, economic and political. The present situation requires the universities to exhibit the relevance of their existence to the society. The only way to do this is to involve outsiders, whom are called the stakeholders (Bjorkquist, 2008).

Amaral and Magalhães (2002) affirms that the stakeholders in the universities refers to single or a collective entity where group of people who have legitimate interest in the university affairs and possess the right to intervene. Burrows (1999) states that the stakeholders are the people who have got regulatory powers, students, parents, employers and employees like faculty and non-teaching personnel.

Jongbloed et. al., (2008) opines that only the students are the main stakeholders in the university, when they are satisfied with the university will automatically recommend to others. Students who have passed out from the university will come back for higher education.

Burrows (1999) affirms that the universities should identify the stakeholders from all groups such as teaching, political and society and each of them to be given a different approach and strategy. Stakeholders in the institution may be different types depending on the objectives of the university to fulfil. As per Bertrand and Busugutala (1998), the universities should also consider the non-student demands such as professional entities, memberships of the associations in addition to identifying the stakeholders and provide defined services to the non-students.

## Objective of the Study & Instrument for Data Collection

The objective of the study was to assess the stakeholders' perception on the marketing techniques such as personal counselling, presentation, Email, SMS campaign, web site, social media, TV Talk shows and advertisement., adopted by the universities in Tripura. The stakeholders in the study were prospective students and parents.

Survey research design was employed using a self-designed questionnaire for the collection of data. The content validity of questionnaire was discussed with the students of final year higher secondary school and their parents. The data was collected on a Likert Scale of 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree) from 247 people constituting 60% prospective students and 40% were their parents.

## Results

### Analysis of demographic profiles of respondents

The demographic profile of the population indicates that out of 247 sample populations, there were 183 (74%) males and 64 (24%) females. The population consisted of 148 (60%) students and 99 (40%) parents. 24% population was looking at management as their courses, 27% were looking for health education (medical, para medical and nursing) and rest 49% were focusing on technical education (engineering and polytechnic).

### Analysis of Student's perception of Marketing Techniques

The descriptive statistics from table 2 Indicate that students have preferred Personal Counselling (mean=4.189) followed by social media (mean=4.027). Personal counselling has been found to be the first choice where the marketing executives meet the prospective students to explain the merits and demerits of the programs and the standing of the university compared to others. Majority of the students are on the social media platforms and the content delivered to them gives all the required information.

**Table 2.** Students' perception on Marketing Techniques

Marketing Technique	Mean	Std Deviation	Rank
PERSONAL COUNSELING	4.189	0.759	1
SOCIAL MEDIA	4.027	0.773	2
WEBSITE	3.919	1.034	3
PRESENTATIONS	3.784	1.181	4
EMAIL	3.669	1.109	5
SMS CAMPAIGN	3.635	1.031	6
TV TALK	3.108	1.051	7
ADVERTISEMNT	2.378	1.287	8

Students have also given equal importance to the web site (mean=3.919), presentations (mean=3.784). Students before

taking a decision will browse all the web sites of the universities and draw as much information as they need to make the comparative study about the universities. The TV talk shows and the advertisement did not impress the students much. The advertisements only gives brief information and the shelf life of the advertisements is not much and students tend to forget very fast.

### Analysis of Parent's perception of Marketing Techniques

The results from table 3 indicate that personal counselling (mean=4.171) by the executives has been found to be the first choice, again it helps the parents to seek as much information as they need to know about the programs and the universities. Parents preferred TV talk shows (mean=3.707) after the personal counseling because they can directly talk to the Deans of the program on the show which will give them first hand information.

**Table 3.** Parent's perception of Marketing Techniques

Marketing Technique	Mean	Std Deviation	Rank
PERSONAL COUNSELING	4.171	0.936	1
TV TALK	3.707	1.033	2
PRESENTATIONS	3.192	1.283	3
SMS CAMP	2.818	1.312	4
EMAIL	2.808	1.448	5
WEB SITE	2.707	1.350	6
SOCIAL MEDIA	2.576	1.051	7
ADVERTI	2.384	0.976	8

Social media and advertisement as found to be the last preference for the parents as some of them may not be on social media platforms and may not be well versed with the smart phones.

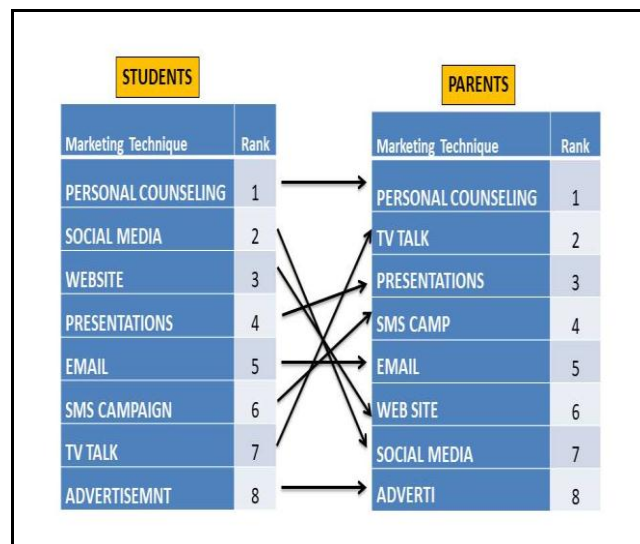
### Comparison of Students and Parents Perspectives

Analysis of Variance was used to assess the differences between the perceptions of students and parents (Table 4). Results indicate that there are no differences between students and parents perception on the Personal Counselling and Advertisements. However significant differences were found between them on presentations, SMS campaign, Social Media, Email Campaign, web site and TV Talkshow ( $P < 0.000$ ),

**Table 4. Analysis of Variance**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PER COUNS	Between Groups	.018	1	.018	.029	0.864
	Within Groups	150.784	245	.615		
	Total	150.802	246			
PRESENTATIONS	Between Groups	86.567	1	86.567	67.703	0.000
	Within Groups	313.263	245	1.279		
	Total	399.830	246			
SOCIAL MEDIA	Between Groups	41.370	1	41.370	40.665	0.000
	Within Groups	249.245	245	1.017		
	Total	290.615	246			
SMS CAMP	Between Groups	39.591	1	39.591	29.843	0.000
	Within Groups	325.025	245	1.327		
	Total	364.615	246			
EMAIL	Between Groups	54.880	1	54.880	37.423	0.000
	Within Groups	359.282	245	1.466		
	Total	414.162	246			
WEBSITE	Between Groups	73.198	1	73.198	49.488	0.000
	Within Groups	362.381	245	1.479		
	Total	435.579	246			
TV TALK	Between Groups	21.281	1	21.281	19.544	0.000
	Within Groups	266.775	245	1.089		
	Total	288.057	246			
ADVERTISEMNT	Between Groups	.002	1	.002	.002	0.967
	Within Groups	252.225	245	1.029		
	Total	252.227	246			

Figure 1 depicts the comparison of ranks in the perspectives of the students and parents. It is shown in figure that there is no change in the ranking of perspectives in case of Personal Counselling, Email campaign and advertisement; they remain the same for students and parents. However in case of Social Media and web site, downward trend in the rankings of the parents perspective, but in case of SMS campaign, Presentations and TV Talk shows upward trend is seen in the case of parents perspective.



**Figure 1.** Comparison of students and parents perspective rankings

## Conclusion

With the mushrooming of the private universities, the students have the advantage because humongous opportunities are available to them to choose from for admission to higher education. However, the universities are facing severe competition to attract the students. They are adopting various marketing techniques to show that their institution is the best compared to others. In that direction, the current study was conducted to assess the perception of the students and parents on the marketing techniques being adopted by the universities in Tripura. The techniques adopted were personal counseling, social media platforms like facebook, twitter, website, presentation, email campaigns, SMS campaigns, TV talk shows and print media advertisements.

Statistical analysis shows that there is no difference in the perception of students and parents on personal counseling and advertisement. However, significant differences were observed on all other techniques. The results indicated that both students and parents have preferred personal counseling by the marketing executives to get complete information about the institution. While students have preferred social media platform, website, the parents did not give as much importance as the students given to these techniques. Parents have preferred TV Talk shows, presentations and SMS campaign compared to students. Advertisement is the last technique they have preferred because it may not give the true picture of the institution.

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