

A multi-stakeholder perspective of relationship marketing in higher education institutions

Varsha Jain, Emmanuel Mogaji, Himani Sharma & Anantha S. Babbili

To cite this article: Varsha Jain, Emmanuel Mogaji, Himani Sharma & Anantha S. Babbili (2022): A multi-stakeholder perspective of relationship marketing in higher education institutions, Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, DOI: [10.1080/08841241.2022.2034201](https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2022.2034201)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2022.2034201>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 16 Mar 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2461



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 4 View citing articles [↗](#)

A multi-stakeholder perspective of relationship marketing in higher education institutions

Varsha Jain ^a, Emmanuel Mogaji ^b, Himani Sharma^c and Anantha S. Babbili^d

^aDepartment of Integrated Marketing Communications, MICA, Ahmedabad, India; ^bDepartment of Marketing, Events and Tourism, University of Greenwich, London, UK; ^cDepartment of Media and Communications, MICA, Ahmedabad, India; ^dDepartment of Communication & Media, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, TX, USA

ABSTRACT

This study discusses a robust narrative of the relationship between higher education and the stakeholders in the digital era. It proposes an integrated higher education marketing framework using the Cue-Utilization approach with perceived situational appropriateness as the frame of reference. A multi-stakeholder perspective is explored using semi-structured in-depth interviews with India, the UK, Nigeria, and UAE participants. The study's findings indicate that relationship quality associated with relationship marketing is critical for student engagement. The results further validate the cues that are the surrogate indicators of high relationship quality in an ecosystem of higher education. It illustrates through a framework the factors affecting relationship marketing and their role in enhancing stakeholder engagement. Digitization adds another layer of complexity in relationships and relationship marketing for higher education in the given context. Therefore, nurturing relationships and increasing digital scalability can constitute the most relevant factors for advanced higher education marketing.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 27 July 2021

Accepted 16 December 2021

KEYWORDS


Relationship quality;
relationship marketing;
higher education marketing;
stakeholder engagement;
value co-creation

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions' rising internet and social media adoption has encouraged the acceptance of diverse networking and marketing strategies (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The pandemic has further induced the need to redefine and revisit the marketing efforts during a crisis (Dash & Chakraborty, 2021). Dekimpe and Deleersnyder (2018) define these marketing efforts by summarizing studies that explain how priorities shift during an economic upturn or downturn. There is a significant change in the medium of communication, market disposition, and consumer behavior (Hoekstra & Leeflang, 2020).

Like every other service organization, higher education institutions have been swift in adapting the changes to benefit stakeholders (i.e. students, faculty, industry, administrators, and government) spread beyond the geographical borders (Omoruyi & Rembielak,

CONTACT Emmanuel Mogaji  e.o.mogaji@greenwich.ac.uk

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2022.2034201>.

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

2019). As a result, higher education institutions were challenged to re-evaluate their priorities, incorporate digital communication mediums, and revisit their values to connect with their stakeholders. This connection recognized the vitality of stakeholders and the relationship between the stakeholders and higher education. As discussed earlier, the debate around new marketing efforts also involves a deep consideration for relationship marketing in the digital era. The recent decades have witnessed the evolving dynamics of relationship-driven marketing in higher education for reflecting the interdependencies between education, society, and the economy worldwide (Jongbloed et al., 2008). As a result, the higher education sector is keen on optimizing relationship marketing for gaining a competitive advantage in a highly competitive human-intensive industry (Layton & Domegan, 2021). According to Khashab et al. (2020), universities and institutions intend to do so by planning, identifying, prioritizing, and engaging with stakeholders through continued interactions. Universities now prioritize valuing the relationships with the stakeholders by focusing on relationship marketing strategies for value creation, similar to the idea of relationship marketing suggested by Gummesson (1994). Gummesson acknowledged that relationship marketing valued consumers first and emphasized mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises to benefit the parties involved. The study recognizes the same and focuses on discussing the need for an integrated relationship marketing system for higher education, which is driven by the principles of mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises. It draws motivation from the disruption caused by the pandemic, resulting in an understanding of the importance of physical proximity, peer associations, and relationship building in a human-centric higher education ecosystem. The study also discusses the lived experiences and opinions of the stakeholders (i.e. learners, faculty, and administrators of educational institutions and industry professionals) essential to this ecosystem.

Subsequently, the study operates on three research objectives. First, the study focuses on discussing relationship marketing, relationship quality, and the factors affecting them in higher education. It takes into consideration both online and offline environments in higher education. Second, the study explores the role of relationship quality in enhancing stakeholder engagement. It uses various internal and external cues while interacting with the study participants to explore their narratives of relationship quality. Third, the study develops a framework based on stakeholders' narratives and presents them from the lens of value creation as an outcome of mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises. The framework effectively showcases the anecdotal factors that connect higher education with the stakeholders and contributes to a network of continued interactions leading to desired outcomes.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Relationship marketing in higher education

Leverin and Liljander (2006) define relationship marketing as focusing on attracting, maintaining, and improving relationships with the stakeholders. The phenomenon was traditionally drawn from the notion of transaction-based relationships for long-term association with the customer. At present, relationship marketing has become a critical

marketing strategy in service markets like higher education. These strategies are aimed at producing value with the stakeholders involved.

Scholarship around relationship marketing presents two distinct perspectives of the phenomenon. One view posits relationship marketing as a promotional prospect optimizing the data for strengthening one-to-one relationships (Peppers & Rogers, 2016). This perspective is driven by the philosophy of culminating all marketing activities and data points for maintaining successful relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Another view associates relationship marketing with social, economic, and psychological value as essential for keeping relationships collaborative (Sheth et al., 2012). However, in this study, relationship marketing is conceptualized using a third lens which positions it as a critical medium to connect with the stakeholders and enhance engagement in changing times.

Amidst the various definitions of relationship marketing, the study adapts one of the most cited definitions, specified by Grönroos (1994): ‘to identify and establish, maintain and enhance and, when necessary, terminate relationships with customers, and other stakeholders, at a profit so that the objectives of all parties involved are met; this is done by mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises’. However, the study argues against the need for the termination of relationships. It advocates the need for continuous engagement and lifelong relationships with the stakeholders.

The explanation of relationship marketing by Ballantyne (2003), further unveils a critical historical perspective of relationship marketing while reflecting on its potential for the future. The authors emphasize the idea of value exchange and its role in strengthening relationships. The current study borrows from their explanation and argues that value must be offered and delivered to the stakeholders through an interactive process. The value provided is the value gained. In the context of higher education values, i.e. trust, commitment, communication, and service quality, need management, interaction, and networking for them to yield desired results. It resonates with Gummesson’s (1987) explanation of relationship marketing, emphasizing developing long-term relationships by integrating both business and service perspectives.

Building upon the seminal definitions given by the scholars, relationship marketing has been operationalized in the context of higher education. In higher education, Helgesen (2008) defines relationship marketing as a series of activities intended to attract, motivate, and enhance the relationship with the stakeholders. Some of the recent studies which offer an explanation and examination of relationship marketing for higher education address the factors of innovation in educational marketing (Riccomini et al., 2021), alumni commitment (Pedro & Andraz, 2021), and emotion and psychometric evaluation for relationship marketing (Kautish et al., 2021). Relationship marketing in higher education, indeed, has received great academic attention in recent years.

Despite being considerably examined by various scholars across disciplines, relationship marketing is still relatively underexplored in the context of higher education. It has been discussed as an umbrella term incorporating different ideas. This study positions relationship marketing as a central theme for higher education marketing in the post-pandemic world. The study supports Plummer’s (2021) argument, ‘relationships will be the core of emerging marketing practices.’ Therefore, it argues that, while the pandemic concerns are gradually subsiding, organizations, including those in the higher education sector, need to focus on building and maintaining relationships to flourish. Relationship

marketing can potentially create new value for stakeholders and build a strong network of relationships. Therefore, it can be defined as an integrated process of engaging with the stakeholders through continuous interactions to strengthen higher education's long-term association and value creation.

2.2. Relationship quality in higher education

Relationship quality is associated with the concept of relationship marketing. It is measured by the constructs of satisfaction, trust, and commitment in a relationship, where the quality of interaction between the two parties is interpreted as an accumulated value (Gummesson, 1987). Therefore, relationship quality can be operationalized as an intangible value enhancing the relationships between the parties involved (Levitt, 1983); in the context of this study, the parties are higher education and the stakeholders. Further, Verma et al. (2016) define relationship quality as the overall strength of a relationship. It involves a certain degree of social exchange between the actors. Relationship quality as a research construct has been pointedly explored in interdisciplinary literature. Some of the recent studies have examined relationship quality in the context of student satisfaction in higher education in Serbia (Rajic et al., 2019), student satisfaction as the mediator between relationship and quality of teachers, research, facilities, and curriculum in higher education (Kalam & Hossain, 2020), relationship quality as the critical construct for internal marketing in higher education (Artanti et al., 2020) and influence of self-congruence on students' educational involvement (Freeman et al., 2020). However, the construct needs further exploration in the context of an ever-transforming environment in higher education.

Farooqi (2014) suggests that relationship quality is the outcome of a relationship that fosters affection, nurturance, and wellbeing. This can be further explicated with Dush and Amato's (2005) explanation of high and low relationship quality. High relationship quality involves the interplay of subjective experiences like intimacy, wellbeing, and care. Irritation, conflicts, and hostility characterize low relationship quality. They argue that high relationship quality positively impacts the actors' mental and physical wellbeing, unlike intense relationship quality that can deteriorate over time. Another perspective of relationship quality establishes it as a personal attribute in particular, which has been used to explore social media engagement of learners (Clark et al., 2017), sense of belonging among the students and faculty associated with an institution (Korpershoek et al., 2020), and student–faculty relationships (Snijders et al., 2020). However, this study borrows from Dash and Amato's explanation of relationship quality as a superstructure supporting the relationship between relationship marketing and stakeholder engagement. It argues that high relationship quality enables good understanding and engagement between the stakeholders and higher education.

Another debated dimension contributing to relationship quality is service quality. Both service quality and relationship quality have a relational orientation in theory. However, service quality is perceived as an antecedent for relationship quality (Wong & Sohal, 2002). Service quality relates to the feeling of comparison and satisfaction for a service (Keating et al., 2003). However, it is defined as a tangible outcome that can be measured by the degree of service, its perishability, and its consumption (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Unlike relationship quality, service quality is driven by expectations and not emotions.

Crosby et al. (1990) defined relationship quality as the trade-off between values and risks, which intangible factors may cause. Therefore, the two constructs differ yet overlap in various contexts.

2.3. Stakeholder engagement in higher education

Freeman et al. (2010) defined a stakeholder as ‘any group or individual who can be affected or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives.’ According to Bhatnagar et al. (2020), higher education institutions develop their social groups through stakeholders who engage and contribute to achieving the desired outcomes. The authors highlighted that the engagement of stakeholders rests on the ability of higher education institutions to involve them constructively. In a study by Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010), administrators, staff, faculty, students, special interest groups, and community members are identified as key stakeholders in higher education. This study considers four stakeholders (students, faculty members, administrators, and industry professionals). These are selected based on several factors in the existing literature. Cho (2017) pointed out that students and faculty are the primary stakeholders in higher education. While students can be the change agents, the faculty could be the catalysts facilitating the change. They support the ecosystem and must be engaged by the administrators Adekalu et al. (2018). In addition, administrators are the backbone of any institution. They coordinate and administer the operations to facilitate smooth functioning (Smoluk, 2018). Administrators are also responsible for creating a nexus between the industry and higher education. Therefore, there is a need to identify and understand the demands of the stakeholders for effective engagement (Sulkowski et al., 2018). In the current scenario, scholars have extended these notions in the context of stakeholder engagement in an online environment. Schaninger and Lauricella (2020) discussed that online stakeholder engagement is a data-backed approach. Stakeholders are encouraged to relay their thoughts and opinions in an online space (Degtjarjova et al., 2018).

Existing studies have demonstrated robustness in theoretically explaining the concept and practice of stakeholder engagement (Sheila et al., 2021). This concept has further expanded the scope for exploring stakeholder engagement mediated by relationship quality in the current digital era (Sharma, Soetan, Farinloye, Mogaji, & Noite, 2022). As a strategic move, stakeholder engagement is particularly beneficial for a knowledge-intensive industry driven by human capital like higher education. However, the value of such relationships should not be limited to the mere purpose of marketing. Therefore, to address this gap, the study builds upon these perspectives and advances stakeholder engagement theory as an essential factor for relationship marketing in higher education. The contemporary understanding of stakeholder engagement is discussed and illustrated with the proposed conceptual framework. Additionally, the study analyses associations of stakeholders’ engagement and their relationship quality, leading.

3. Theoretical framework

The study adopted the Cue Utilization framework (Olson & Jacoby, 1972) for identifying the factors that impacted the quality of the relationship between the stakeholder and higher education. The framework provided a comprehensive understanding of

stakeholders' perceptions of relationship quality in higher education marketing. It helped identify and acknowledge internal and external cues as surrogate indicators of quality (Olson & Jacoby, 1972).

The literature so far has adopted the cue-utilization framework in the context of measuring factors affecting store brand quality (Richardson et al., 1994), cues driving initial acquisition of psycho-motor skills (Wiggins et al., 2004), enhancing firm's reputation, perceived quality of automobile brands (Leong et al., 2013), luxury brand advertising (Ko, 2020), and in-store marketing of private labels (Mishra et al., 2021). However, there is limited attention on relationship quality. This study deconstructs specific intrinsic and extrinsic cues evoked by predictive and confidence values (Rao & Monroe, 1988).

A mixed set of cues leads to relationship quality, which harbors the relationship between higher education and the stakeholders. Therefore, the stakeholders rely on both while engaging with the institutions. The literature on relationship quality establishes shared values and perceived benefits as the critical internal cues. The study builds upon those and uses them to diagnose the mindsets of the stakeholders. It also introduces new opportunities and digital connectivity as additional cues. The external cues the stakeholders rely on for a relationship with higher education include the brand name, digital cognizance, visibility, and return on investments. These cues are used to assess the functional and operational value of the relationship between the stakeholders and higher education.

4. Methodology

4.1. *Semi-structured in-depth interviews*

An exploratory research design is used to comprehend the stakeholders' narratives in relationship marketing for higher education (Deetz, 1996). Qualitative data was obtained using semi-structured in-depth interviews with different stakeholders from India, Nigeria, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the United Kingdom (UK). Interviews were used to 'generate data and unravel key insights from the stakeholders' experiences' (Miller & Glassner, 2016). This approach was considered suitable in a multi-channel (online and offline) higher education marketing context for exploring the phenomenon of relationship quality based on the participants' experiences.

4.2. *Participants*

Different stakeholders, including students, faculty, administrators, industry professionals, and service providers from four countries, participated in the study. The differences and similarities of the countries were taken into consideration. As mentioned, India (South Asia), the UK (Western Europe), Dubai (the Middle East), and Nigeria (Africa) were the site of the study. Their diverse socio-cultural practices, economic conditions, geographical diversities, and political backgrounds helped identify and prioritize the cues affecting higher education relationships. With the world's largest youth population of approximately 500 million, India has the most extensive higher education system ASM IBMR (2020). The stakeholders involved are open to new opportunities for collaborations and sustaining internal partnerships for individual growth and institutional progress, thus

making it an ideal site for comprehending the phenomenon of relationship quality from the lens of value co-creation. The UK is another good site offering multiple opportunities for students in higher education to grow and work toward employability. It is home to many domestic and international students pursuing higher education (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019). Dubai has established a vibrant higher education system in a brief time. The scale and ambition of higher education have opened many opportunities to grow, and this has encouraged the stakeholders to seek global education and contribute to the ecosystem of learning. Finally, Nigeria's fourth site has effectively strengthened its higher education system during the pandemic (Adeyanju et al., 2021). Renewed focus and glocalization are adding new dimensions to the fabric of relationship marketing in higher education.

Participants were initially recruited using purposive sampling to encapsulate diverse perspectives and experiences for enhancing the study's quality. Subsequently, snowball sampling was used to recruit the participants. The principle of chain referral was followed (Naderifar et al., 2017) to create a synergistic flow in data collection. The synergistic flow here indicates a productive relationship between the participants and the authors. The study used the shared referrals for approaching the participants until meaning saturation was attained (Hennink et al., 2016). Total, 60 in-depth interviews were conducted with learners ($n = 25$), faculty ($n = 17$), administrators ($n = 09$), and industry professionals ($n = 09$). (The demographic profile of the participants is shown in Table 2, Appendix B).

4.3. Data collection

The data was collected through an interview guide (Table 1, Appendix A) developed using the Cue-Utilization Framework (Wagner-Menghin, de Bruin, & van Merriënboer, 2020) and an extensive literature review. Initially, general cues were used to diagnose relationships and relationship marketing for higher education among the participants. During the interviews conducted, the interviewers also used some impromptu cues, other than those mentioned in the protocol. The interview protocol was revised and refined after a pilot study with ten participants from India and Nigeria. Following the pilot study, the protocol was modified in terms of the vocabulary and structure of questions. The updated protocol included a series of open-ended questions to encourage the participants for an insightful discussion based on their understanding of relationship quality and its significance in higher education marketing. The protocol had a distinct set of questions for different stakeholders (students, faculty, educational technologists/administrators, and industry professionals).

The interview protocol focused on four investigation areas: comprehension, retrieval, judgment, and response (D'Ardenne, 2015). The first phase focused on exploring cognizance of the role of stakeholders in higher education and marketing. The second phase leveraged upon participants' *a priori* knowledge of the relationship dynamics between the stakeholders and the higher education ecosystem. The role of digitization and online spaces was also discussed in this context. In the third phase, participants unraveled the enablers and barriers by introducing internal cues (shared values, beliefs of the participants, and opportunities) and external cues (recognition of the brand name, digital visibility, return on investments, and job market requirements), influencing relationship quality. Finally, in the last stage, the participants were involved in a dialogue to discuss the potential benefits of high relationship quality in the online environment with stakeholders and their impact on relationship marketing in higher education.

With the help of the revised interview protocol, in-depth interviews were conducted between January and March 2021 by the second and the third researcher. Each interview lasted between 50–80 minutes. The interviews were conducted online to connect with participants in different countries under different time zones while optimizing the Zoom application. Interviews were recorded with the prior consent of the participants. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the data. The participants were briefed before the interview commenced. The questions and probes were specifically designed and placed to encourage the participants to explain and elaborate on their ideas and experiences about relationship quality. Both open-ended and non-direct questions were asked to minimize researcher bias. Numeric codes were used for each participant to maintain anonymity. The interviews were audio-recorded, later transcribed by a professional, and converted into a PDF document.

4.4. Data analysis

The transcribed interviews were exported to NVivo, a qualitative analysis software tool used for thematic analysis (Farinloye et al., 2019). Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves an in-depth exploration of data by reading and re-reading to unravel the hidden meanings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008). This approach is considered suitable for studies when the present situation influences the construct and meanings for the participants (Nowell et al., 2017). The second and third authors analyzed the data, coding for key themes in NVivo. The other two co-authors ensured the elimination of researchers' bias by regularly administering the process of data collection. They were not directly involved in the data collection and remained detached from the data (Perry et al., 2015), which later benefitted in performing inter-coder reliability assessment.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six thematic analysis phases were adopted to analyze the qualitative data. The first phase was concerned with gaining familiarity and immersing with the data. In this phase, the authors read and re-read the transcripts to understand better the insights shared. Second, initial codes around relationship quality, relationship marketing, factors affecting them, and prospects for higher education marketing were developed. The third phase was concerned with increasing the codes and categorizing them. Theories supported by the literature drove the categories. Subsequently, a detailed codebook was developed, which helped in the initial development of the framework. The codes were then sorted (Tuckett, 2005) to categorize the participants under different heads and consider their differences and similarities. The next phase involved the culmination of the codes into relevant themes driven by the insights. These themes reflected the perspectives of the stakeholder about relationship quality for higher education marketing. During this phase, themes overlapping or did not have sufficient data to support them were merged. In the fifth stage, the researchers thematically mapped the data and set the basis for the proposed framework. The codes were cross-verified by the other two researchers during this phase using randomly selected transcripts (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020) to avoid bias. The results were compared, and no modifications were needed. The sixth and final stage involved a write-up of the report presented in the next section.

4.5. Reliability of the study

To ensure that the study's findings are reliable, the researchers performed a manual inter-coder reliability check based on the guidelines given by O'Connor and Joffe (2020). Two authors who were not involved in the data analysis coded six randomly selected transcripts to ensure the reliability of the coding frame. Later, member checks were done by encouraging participants to verify transcripts. Additionally, a detailed account of the methods, procedures, data, and decision points was maintained as an audit trail, in line with Shenton (2004). Finally, intense peer debriefing, cross-coding checks, and constant comparative data analysis bolstered the study's credibility (Miles et al., 2014). The emergent themes are presented in Table 3 and Table 4 (Appendix C) to show the different stages of the analysis and improve the trustworthiness and traceability of our data analysis.

5. Results

5.1. Theme 1: factors affecting relationship marketing and relationship quality

The experiences and thoughts shared by the participants unraveled the key factors that affect the relationship between the stakeholders and universities. The elements are aligned by relationship marketing and communication strategies which are evaluated by relationship quality. When asked to discuss the relationship and quality, participants defined it as emotions associated with a connection between the given actors. It was also revealed that relationships involve validation, affection, nurturing, communication, and trust. Participants accepted these elements as critical to long-term associations between the actors.

It was a common belief that in the digital era, trust, communication, commitment, and service quality were critical for relationship marketing and relationship quality. The factors evolve and expand with time and changing structure of the learning ecosystem, technological advancements, and socio-economic conditions. This could be further understood through the participants' quotes;

'Relationship Building is fundamental for the growth of any organization. It is important to be aware of the different relationships and associations while being a part of the organization. The more we engage with the students and other stakeholders, the better they feel about the institution, which is a kind of an investment that we are making towards the future' (Administrator).

'Technology is the current enabler that can contribute to relationship building. However, the relationships developed and grew only when there were commonalities and shared perceptions. While joining an institution, a student first analyzes the external attributes and only after joining gets to experience the internal attributes. This is why we say that everything in the system is important for creating relationships. However, not all experiences are positive, and not all expectations are fulfilled' (Faculty).

These responses helped in conceptualizing the factors affecting relationship marketing and relationship quality in the higher education ecosystem. The factors including trust, communication, commitment, and service quality were diagnosed as attributes that govern stakeholders' perceptions and choices. Therefore, it is critical to focus on these elements of relationship-building to develop favorable outcomes.

5.2. Theme 2: relationship quality leading to stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement in higher education was then further explored in the context of its impact on relationship quality. Participants were asked to share their understanding that stakeholder engagement is a never-ending circular process if the experiences are positive. A particular emphasis was laid on exploring the phenomenon in the context of these unprecedented times when the pandemic has ushered in multiple changes. Participants shared their ideas and discussed how pandemic restates the fact engagement is possible only when the relationships are mutually amicable. A majority of the participants acknowledged that the pandemic allowed them to connect wholeheartedly with the institution. One of them quoted the following;

‘Engagement is a prolonged notion. Talking about stakeholder engagement, I believe that engagement is high when there is due autonomy and openness. Complex systems may often disrupt the ecosystem. But at times, disruption is needed to rebuild the foundations or rather repair the foundations. Pandemic brought in one such disruption’ (Faculty).

Participants also agreed on how relationship quality often determines the level of engagement with the stakeholders. They highlighted that when relationships are all-inclusive and positive, there is high retention and association between the stakeholders. However, they also acknowledged that the idea of being all-inclusive is convoluted and not well defined and, thus, may have subjective interpretations. Therefore, despite all possible efforts, the engagement might decline. Another insight that many participants shared was how high relationship quality has a direct impact on value co-creation. The stakeholders get involved and establish a bilateral relationship working on the principle of communal wellbeing.

One of the participants stated:

‘Relationships among the stakeholders boost their roles and responsibilities. However, expectations may vary for all and may affect them differently. In higher education, when relationships are conducive, it subsequently leads to high engagement. It can also motivate the students who are the primary stakeholders to get involved in co-creation’ (Administrator).

It was observed during the interviews that some participants did find the need for having engagement. They advocated that engagement is a considerable commitment, and relationships become complicated when too much to commit. Instead, it is helpful if the roles are defined within the boundaries, and each is aware of how they can co-create. It is the common opinion that digital mediums have enhanced engagement and serve as a platform for higher education marketing.

5.3. Theme 3: relationship quality and its benefits for higher education marketing

During the interview process, participants were aware of the relationships and their accompanying benefits. Positive publicity and high visibility were the main benefits. They explained that universities have the advantage of channeling internal human resources for marketing and that students, faculty members, and other stakeholders are ambassadors who define the institution’s brand name. This process induced more confidence and allowed the stakeholders to explore various benefits. One of the participants responded:

'The success of the students defines the success of the institution. Student achievement, both academic and non-academic, are mementos validating the quality of the institution. If the students' achievements are recognized, they are automatically inclined to a positive relationship and promote the institution' (Administrator).

Similarly, another participant quoted:

'Industry is always welcoming to individuals who value relationships. They perform better and are more productive in teams. If an employee carries their association with their alma mater and benefits the organization, they are always valued' (Industry professional).

Therefore, it can be posited that relationship quality is a multi-dimensional construct that connects industry and academia. It generates positive outcomes and paves the way for new opportunities for expansion and collaboration.

5.4. Theme 4: value co-creation and future of higher education marketing

Value co-creation is perceived as a collaborative effort between the actors. In other words, it is a medium to achieve the desired goal of enhancing the brand image of an institution in higher education. However, value co-creation is a process-driven element that could also carry negative consequences. Therefore, it needs to evolve as an outcome of efforts rather than being imposed. The participants quoted;

'Value co-creation cannot be taught. It has more to do with the alignment of the ideas and goals. If students co-create with the universities, they have certain expectations. Similarly, the industry also has its expectations. It is more likely a transactional relationship' (Industry professional).

'Technology and social media have a major role to play in co-creation. As students, we get a medium to connect and can share context for the growth of institution' (Student).

'Value co-creation needs to be understood as an ideological practice but driven with good intentions and ethics. It should not become another way of involving the stakeholders in marketing for the institution. Anyway, an institution cannot compromise on its academic dignity. However, this is an ideal situation which is missing its essence today in higher education' (Faculty).

6. Discussion

The study presents a robust narrative of the relationship between higher education and the stakeholders in a digital era. Analysis of the data reveals diverse perspectives of stakeholders with similar ideas despite belonging to different age groups. It explains that effective stakeholder engagement can create a positive perception about the universities and encourage the stakeholders through positive word-of-mouth communication. This process is fundamental in an ever-changing and unstable environment where competition is intense. The study presents a holistic relationship between universities and stakeholders instead of a dyadic relationship between selected stakeholders.

Our study recognizes the inherent differences between universities in developed and developing countries (Ndofirepi et al., 2020). Still, ultimately, the stakeholders expect a relationship and engagement, irrespective of the type of university or location. The study argues that the universities need to strengthen the relationship quality with the

stakeholders and create a holistic ecosystem. This ecosystem is possible with the help of a balanced approach towards adopting new marketing and communication strategies and building upon the core values (Mogaji et al., 2021). The ongoing global pandemic has ushered in the realization that technology is the enabler, but humans are the true power behind it. Therefore, even if the world seems to be adopting a techno-sensitive environment, the power of human relationships can surpass any such technological advancement.

6.1. Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to relationship marketing theory by focusing on relationship quality as the critical determinant for stakeholder engagement. It does so by making two contributions. The study theoretically extends the cues that influence relationship marketing by bringing in a digital perspective (Ko, 2020; Mogaji et al., 2022; Olson & Jacoby, 1972). It argues that the value system, perceived benefits, and shared opportunities are essential in an ecosystem of learning in changing times. However, brand image, digital presence, and returns generated are equally responsible for boosting any relationship (Gökerik et al., 2018; Mishra et al., 2021). These cues need to be optimized by the universities to attract stakeholders and sustain successful relationships.

In addition, the study also focuses on deliberating how value co-creation involves mutual involvement of all stakeholders and, thus, cannot be done without collaborative strategies (Hinson & Mogaji, 2020). Even though relationship quality as a higher-order construct has been generously explored in various contexts (Artanti et al., 2020; Japutra et al., 2020; Kalam & Hossain, 2020), this study provides theoretical insight into how value co-creation is achieved through the mutual involvement of all stakeholders and, thus, cannot be done without collaborative strategies.

Based on findings from our study, it could be inferred that a balance between the expectations of various stakeholders is the key. As suggested by Cao et al. (2020), engagement intention, which leads to engagement behavior, is moderated by social media. Thus, social media contextual factors can implicate different stakeholders and dominate their behavior, benefiting competitors in influencing stakeholders in a competitive market. Therefore, in the future, universities and institutions will have to focus more on humanizing their marketing approaches rather than aggressively meeting the sales target of getting more admissions, scalability, and visibility in the market (Nguyen & Mogaji, 2022). Social media can simply be used as one of the mediums.

The study proposed a framework, illustrated in Figure 1, which gives a holistic overview of the associations between relationship marketing and stakeholder engagement in higher education mediated by relationship quality. Details delivered by the participants confirm relationship quality as a phenomenon leading to long-term benefits for higher education. The mutually beneficial outcomes are linked by positive word of mouth, which stakeholders engage in when the relationship quality is maintained. Collaborations also benefit the higher education system as they represent a sense of achievement and a competitive edge over others. The framework illustrates how relationship marketing aids student engagement through trust, commitment, communication, and service quality, as defined in the literature (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2002). The framework extends to reflect upon the experiences and expectations of the stakeholders and their role in value co-creation. It

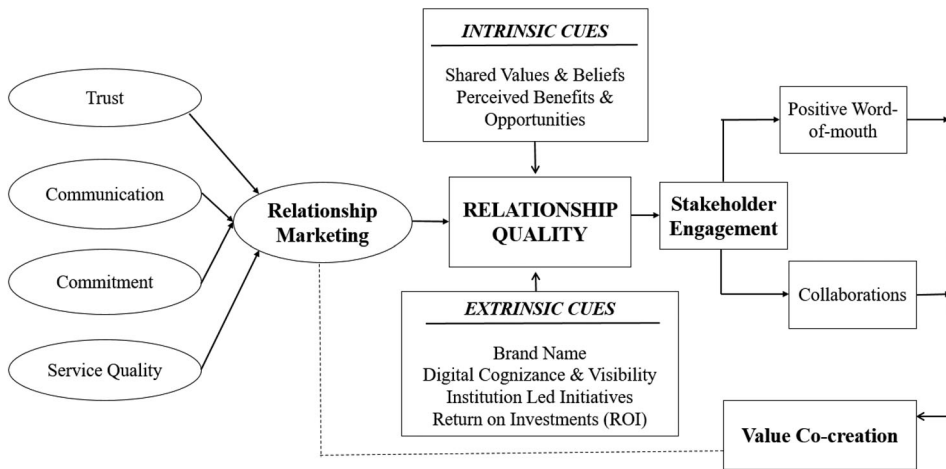


Figure 1. Integrated Higher Education Marketing Framework of Stakeholder Engagement and Relationships.

further establishes value co-creation as an outcome of stakeholder engagement in the given ecosystem, where stakeholders comprehend value co-creation as a two-way process involving higher education and stakeholders through a series of actions. Given the context of the ongoing shifts due to the global pandemic, the framework revitalizes the understanding of high relationship quality as the key for relationship marketing in higher education.

6.2. Practical implications

As the markets for higher education are growing worldwide, it is essential to understand how universities can gain support from stakeholders. This study has several implications for educational leaders, marketing practitioners, and internal stakeholders in higher education. First, educational leaders need to acknowledge the changes and transformations in the culture of higher education marketing. Shifts are disruptive and dynamic, demanding new marketing practices and policies (Kiraka et al., 2020; Uncles, 2018). New marketing practices require a renewed understanding of stakeholders' roles and relationships (Olaleye et al., 2020). The roles should be clearly defined, directed, and assessed to ensure the synthesis of long-term goals. If new relationships are formed, the existing relationships should continue to be nurtured by the leaders. This relationship will help create an active environment for collaborations and future growth (Chattopadhyay, Kupe, Schatzer, & Mogaji, 2022). Second, marketing practitioners should seek to optimize the potential of high relationship quality between the stakeholders and universities. Their marketing strategies should thrive on high commitment, compassion, collegiality, and concern, especially when the online environment challenges these values. However, there may be some criticism against the exploitation of stakeholders for engaging them in higher education marketing. Therefore, it is critical to conduct market sensing activities for regular feedback (Volkova & Plakhotnik, 2021), involve stakeholders at all stages of marketing interventions (Buyucek et al., 2016), and eliminate the risk of

misalignment of goals and ideas. Finally, the internal stakeholders should recognize the benefits of relationship quality and value co-creation for their individual growth. A clear vision and understanding of the long-term benefits can develop coherent relationships, establishing congruence between the stakeholders and universities.

7. Conclusion

Consequently, the study develops a comprehensive understanding of relationship quality by elucidating a framework for higher education marketing. The study's findings suggest that the discussed intrinsic and extrinsic cues are the surrogate indicators of high relationship quality as a mediator between relationship marketing and student engagement. A high relationship quality enhances stakeholder engagement in higher education marketing and leads to value co-creation with the universities.

Despite being a multi-stakeholder study, the study had limitations of its own and opportunities for future research. Statistical validation of the framework is proposed as this could redefine relationship quality in online spaces. Countries can be compared and contrasted based on economic scenarios and the availability of resources for extended findings. Further, extensive work on digital engagement and relationship quality is also possible. This relationship can be explored using simulative techniques, experiments, and methodologies like digital ethnography or netnography. Additionally, the concept of service quality can be explored and discussed in relationship marketing in higher education in uncertain times. Researchers can extend further and examine the narratives of government regulators, competitors, higher education media, and alumni in a given context.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Varsha Jain  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6740-4857>

Emmanuel Mogaji  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0544-4842>

References

- Adekalu, S. O., Krauss, S. E., & Ismail, I. A. (2018). Teaching professors' challenges about community engagement outreach and intervention in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Academic Research of Business and Social Science*, 8, 191–204. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v8-i8/4458>
- Adeyanju, S., Ajilore, O., Ogunlalu, O., & Onatunji, A. (2021). Innovating in the face of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: Case studies from Nigerian universities. *STAR Scholar Book Series*, 104–120.
- Artanti, Y., Hartini, S., & Widyastuti, N. U. (2020). Improving relationship quality: A relational model Of internal marketing And commitment To customer service In higher education. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 8(4), 55–68. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2020.847>
- ASM IBMR. (2020). Emerging Trends in Higher Education in India. <https://www.asmiibr.edu.in/blog/emerging-trends-in-higher-education-in-india/>.
- Ballantyne, D. (2003). "A relationship-mediated theory of internal marketing." *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(9), 1242–1260. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560310486979>

- Benneworth, P., & Jongbloed, AEW. (2010). Who matters to universities? A stakeholder perspective on humanities, arts, and social sciences valorisation. *Higher Education*, 59(5), 567–588. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9265-2>
- Bhatnagar, S., Agrawal, S., Sharma, D., & Singh, M. (2020). Perception on the community engagement of students of higher education institutions. *SSRN Electron*, 1–16. <http://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3664052>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Buyucek, N., Kubacki, K., Thiele, S. R., & Pang, B. (2016). A systematic Review of stakeholder involvement in social marketing interventions. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 24(1), 8–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2015.11.001>
- Cao, D., Meadows, M., Wong, D., & Xia, S. (2020). Understanding consumers' social media engagement behavior: An examination of the moderation effect of social media context. *Journal of Business Research*, 122, 2–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.06.025>
- Chattopadhyay, A., Kupe, T., Schatzer, N. F., & Mogaji, E. (2022). Fireside Chat with Three vice chancellors from Three continents: Re-imagining higher education in Emerging economies. In E. Mogaji, V. Jain, F. Maringe, & R. E. Hinson (Eds.), *Re-imagining Educational Futures in Developing countries*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88234-1_5
- Cho, Y. H. (2017). Towards an engaged campus: Measuring and comparing definitive stakeholders' perceptions of university social engagement in South Korea. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 18(2), 185–202. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-12-2015-0194>
- Clark, M., Fine, M. B., & Scheuer, C. L. (2017). Relationship quality in higher education marketing: The role of social media engagement. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 27(1), 40–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2016.1269036>
- Crosby, L. A., Evans, K. R., & Cowles, D. (1990). Relationship quality in Services selling: An interpersonal influence perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(3), 68–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299005400306>
- D'Ardenne, J. (2015). *Developing interview protocols. Cognitive interviewing practice*. Sage Publications.
- Dash, G., & Chakraborty, D. (2021). Digital transformation of marketing strategies during a pandemic: Evidence from an Emerging economy during COVID-19. *Sustainability*, 13(12), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126735>
- Deetz, S. (1996). Commentary: The positioning of the researcher in studies of organizations: De-hatching literary theory. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 5(4), 387–391. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105649269654014>
- Degtjarjova, I., Lapiņa, I., & Freidenfelds, D. (2018). Student as a stakeholder: “voice of the customer” in higher education quality development. *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 388–398. <https://doi.org/10.21272/mmi.2018.2-30>
- Dekimpe, M. G., & Deleersnyder, B. (2018). Business cycle research in marketing: A review and a research agenda. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 46(1), 31–58. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-017-0542-9>
- Dush, C. M. K., & Amato, P. R. (2005). Consequences of relationship status and quality for subjective wellbeing. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(5), 607–627. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407505056438>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., & Kumar, V. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 101994–102040. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>
- Farinloye, T., Mogaji, E., Aririguzoh, S., & Kieu, T. (2019). Qualitatively exploring the effect of change in the residential environment on travel behavior. *Travel Behaviour and Society*, 17, 26–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tbs.2019.06.001>
- Farooqi, S. R. (2014). The construct of relationship quality. *Journal of Relationships Research*, 5, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jrr.2014.2>
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2008). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>

- Freeman, R. E., Harrison, J. S., Wicks, A. C., Parmar, B. L., & De Colle, S. (2010). *Stakeholder theory: The state of the Art*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gökerik, M., Gürbüz, A., Erkan, I., & Sap, S. (2018). Surprise me with your ads! The impacts of guerrilla marketing in social media on brand image. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 30(5), 1222–1238. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-10-2017-0257>
- Grönroos, C. (1994). From marketing Mix to relationship marketing: Towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Management Decision*, 32(2), 4–20. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251749410054774>
- Gummesson, E. (1987). The New marketing: Developing long term InteractiveRelationships. *Long Range Planning*, 20(4), 10–20. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301\(87\)90151-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301(87)90151-8)
- Gummesson, E. (1994). Broadening and specifying relationship marketing. *Asia-Australia Marketing Journal*, 2(1), 31–43. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1320-1646\(94\)70276-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1320-1646(94)70276-8)
- Helgesen, O. (2008). Marketing for Higher Education: a relationship marketing approach. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 18(1), 50–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841240802100188>
- Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Marconi, V. C. (2016). Code Saturation versus meaning Saturation: How many interviews Are enough? *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(4), 591–608. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316665344>
- Hinson, R. E., & Mogaji, E. (2020). Co-creation of value by universities and prospective students: Towards an informed decision-making process. In E. Mogaji, F. Maringe, and R. Hinson (Eds.), *Higher education marketing in Africa* (pp. 17–46). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hoekstra, J. C., & Leeftang, P. S. H. (2020). Marketing in the era of COVID-19. *Italian Journal of Marketing*, 249–260. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43039-020-00016-3>
- Japutra, A., Utami, A., Molinillo, S., & Ekaputra, I. (2020). Influence of customer application experience and value in use on loyalty toward retailers. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 59, 102390–102400. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102390>
- Jongbloed, B., Enders, J., & Salerno, C. (2008). Higher education and its communities: Interconnections, interdependencies and a research agenda. *Higher Education*, 56(3), 303–324. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-008-9128-2>
- Kalam, A., & Hossain, M. A. (2020). Does student satisfaction mediate the relationship between quality of higher education and the institutional image? SSRN, 1-22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3627153>
- Kautish, P., Sharma, R., & Khare, A. (2021). Multi-Item Scale Development for online consumption emotion construct And psychometric evaluation for relationship marketing. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 20(2), 91–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2020.1717282>
- Keating, B., Rugimbana, R., & Quazi, A. (2003). Differentiating between service quality and relationship quality in cyberspace. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 13(3), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09604520310476481>
- Khashab, B., Gulliver, S. R., & Ayoubi, R. M. (2020). A framework for customer relationship management strategy orientation support in higher education institutions. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 28(3), 246–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2018.1522363>
- Kiraka, R., Maringe, F., & Kanyutu, W. (2020). University league tables and ranking systems in Africa: Emerging prospects, challenges and opportunities. In E. Mogaji, F. Maringe, and R. Hinson (Eds.), *Understanding the Higher Education Market in Africa* (pp. 199–214). Routledge.
- Ko, E. (2020). Luxury brand advertising: Theory and practice. *Journal of Advertising*, 39(6), 757–760. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1786916>
- Korpershoek, H., Canrinus, E. T., Fokkens-Bruinsma, M., & Boer, H. B. (2020). The relationships between school belonging and students' motivational, social-emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes in secondary education: A meta-analytic review. *Research Papers in Education*, 35(6), 641–680. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1615116>
- Layton, R. A., & Domegan, C. (2021). The next normal for marketing — The dynamics of a pandemic, provisioning systems, and the changing patterns of daily life. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 29(1), 4–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1839334921998514>
- Leong, V., Muhamad, N., & Sumardi, W. H. (2013). Cue utilization theory: A multidimensional measurement on the perceived quality of asian automobile brands. *Australia & New Zealand*

- Marketing Academy*, 1–8. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268945569_Cue_utilisation_theory_A_multidimensional_measurement_on_perceived_quality_of_Asian_automobile_brands
- Levitt, T. (1983). After the sale is over. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 62 No. 1, pp. 87–93.
- Leverin, A., & Liljander, V. (2006). Does relationship marketing improve customer relationship satisfaction and loyalty? *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 24(4), 232–251. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02652320610671333>
- Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Miller, J., & Glassner, B. (2016). The ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’: Finding realities in interviews. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative data analysis* (pp. 51–66). Sage Publications.
- Mishra, S., Malhotra, G., & Saxena, G. (2021). In-store marketing of private labels: Applying cue utilization theory. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 49(1), 145–163. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-04-2020-0152>
- Mogaji, E., Jain, V., Maringe, F., & Hinson, R. E. (2022). Reimagining educational Futures in Developing Countries: An introduction. In E. Mogaji, V. Jain, F. Maringe, & R. E. Hinson (Eds.), *Re-imagining Educational Futures in Developing countries* (pp. 3–14). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mogaji, E., Watat, J. K., Olaleye, S. A., & Ukpabi, D. (2021). Recruit, retain, and report: UK universities’ strategic communication with stakeholders on twitter. In M. A. Camilleri (Ed.), *Strategic corporate communication in the digital age* (pp. 89–114). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Mogaji, E., & Yoon, H. (2019). Thematic analysis of marketing messages in UK universities’ prospectuses. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33(7), 1561–1581. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-05-2018-0149>
- Morgan, R., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 58(3), 20–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800302>
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful Method of sampling in Qualitative research. *Strides Development Medical Education*, 14(3), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>
- Ndofirepi, E., Farinloye, T., & Ademiju, E. (2020). Marketing mix in a heterogeneous higher education market: A case of Africa. In E. Mogaji, F. Maringe, and R. Hinson (Eds.), *Understanding the higher education market in Africa* (pp. 241–262). Routledge.
- Nguyen, N. P., & Mogaji, E. (2022). Universities’ endowments in Developing Countries: The perspectives, stakeholders and Practical implications. In E. Mogaji, V. Jain, F. Maringe, & R. E. Hinson (Eds.), *Re-imagining Educational Futures in Developing countries* (pp. 261–282). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the Trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- O’Connor, C., & Joffe, H. (2020). Intercoder reliability in Qualitative Research: Debates and Practical guidelines. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919899220>
- Olaleye, S., Ukpabi, D., & Mogaji, E. (2020). Public vs private universities in Nigeria: Market dynamics perspective. In E. Mogaji, F. Maringe, & R. E. Hinson (Eds.), *Understanding the Higher Education Market in Africa* (pp. 19–36). Routledge.
- Olson, J. C., & Jacoby, J. (1972). *Cue Utilization in the quality perception process*. SV - proceedings of the third annual conference of the association for consumer research, 167–179.
- Omoruyi, T., & Rembielak, G. (2019). Relationship marketing and its role in the experience of international students in the United Kingdom higher education institutions. *Oeconomia*, 18(4), 69–76. <https://doi.org/10.22630/ASPE.2019.18.4.46>
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V., & Berry, L. (1988). Servqual: A multiple-Item Scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 12–36.
- Pedro, I. H., & Andraz, J. M. (2021). Alumni commitment in higher education institutions: Determinants and empirical evidence. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 33(1), 29–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2019.1656138>
- Peppers, D., & Rogers, M. (2016). *Managing customer relationships: A Strategic framework*, 1–24. John Wiley and Sons.

- Perry, S. P., Dovidio, J. F., Murphy, M. C., & Van Ryn, M. (2015). The joint effect of bias awareness and self-reported prejudice on intergroup anxiety and intentions for intergroup contact. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 21(1), 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037147>
- Plummer, M. (2021). How The Pandemic Changed Customer Relationships. Forbes Technology Council. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2021/07/27/how-the-pandemic-changed-customer-relationships/?sh=565a05d65f18>.
- Rajic, T., Ivan, N., & Milošević, I. (2019). An integrative model of relationship quality in higher education setting: Evidence from Serbia. *Industrija*, 47(2), 43–59. <https://doi.org/10.5937/industrija47-22044>
- Rao, A. R., & Monroe, K. B. (1988). The moderating effect of prior knowledge on cue utilization in product evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 253–264. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209162>
- Riccomini, F. E., Cirani, C. B. S., Pedro, S., Garzaro, D. M., & Kevin, K. S. (2021). Innovation in educational marketing: A study applied to Brazilian private higher education institutions. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2021.1966157>
- Richardson, P. S., Dick, A. S., & Jain, A. K. (1994). Extrinsic and intrinsic Cue effects on perceptions of store brand quality. *Journal of Marketing*, 58(4), 28–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800403>
- Schaninger, B., & Lauricella, T. (2020). A data-backed approach to stakeholder engagement. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-organization-blog/a-data-backed-approach-to-stakeholder-engagement>: McKinsey & Company.
- Sharma, H., Soetan, T., Farinloye, T., Mogaji, E., & Noite, M. D. F. (2022). Ai adoption in universities in Emerging Economies: Prospects, challenges and recommendations. In E. Mogaji, V. Jain, F. Maringe, & R. E. Hinson (Eds.), *Re-imagining Educational Futures in Developing countries* (pp. 159–174). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sheila, N. A., Zhu, C., Kintu, M. J., & Kataike, J. (2021). Assessing higher education institutional stakeholders' perceptions and needs for community engagement: An empirical evidence from Uganda. *Heliyon*, 7(4), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06612>
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63–75. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Sheth, J. N., Parvatiyar, A., & Sinha, M. (2012). The conceptual foundations of relationship marketing: Review and synthesis. *Economic Sociology: The European Electronic Newsletter*, 13(3), 4–26.
- Sheth, J., & Parvatiyar, A. (2002). Evolving relationship marketing into a discipline. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 1(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1300/J366v01n01_02
- Smoluk, B. (2018). A dynamically engaged university, knowledge spillovers, and the local economy. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 8(1), 24–34. <https://doi.org/10.12735/jfe.v8n1p24>
- Snijders, I., Wijni, L., Rikers, R. M., & Loyens, S. M. (2020). Building bridges in higher education: Student-faculty relationship quality, student engagement, and student loyalty. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 100, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101538>
- Sulkowski, A., Edwards, M., & Freeman, R. (2018). Shake your stakeholder: Firms leading engagement to cocreate sustainable value. *Organization & Environment*, 31(2018), 223–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026617722129>
- Tuckett, A. G. (2005). Applying thematic analysis theory to practice: A researcher's experience. *Contemporary Nurse*, 75–87. <https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.19.1-2.75>
- Uncles, M. D. (2018). Directions in higher education: A marketing perspective. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 26(2), 187–193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2018.05.009>
- Verma, V., Sharma, D., & Sheth, J. (2016). Does relationship marketing matter in online retailing? A meta-analytic approach. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44(2), 206–217. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0429-6>
- Volkova, N. V., & Plakhotnik, M. S. (2021). Commitment of key internal stakeholders during internationalization: Challenges of emerging market culture. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2021.1933672>

- Wagner-Menghin, M., de Bruin, A. B., & van Merriënboer, J. J. (2020). Communication skills supervisors' monitoring of history-taking performance: An observational study on how doctors and non-doctors use cues to prepare feedback. *BMC Medical Education*, 20(1), 1–11.
- Wiggins, M. W., Brouwers, S., Davies, J., & Loveday, T. (2004). Trait-based Cue Utilization and initial skill acquisition: Implications for models of the progression to expertise. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5(541), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00541>
- Wong, A., & Sohal, A. (2002). An examination of the relationship between trust, commitment, and relationship quality. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 30(1), 34–50. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550210415248>