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**PERCEPTION OF MARKETING PRACTICES IN MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The marketing practices followed by the management institutions differ from institutions to institutions. The implementation of marketing practices is highly essential to attract the students as well as the placement opportunities to the institutions. The extent of application of marketing practices by the institutions relate to the interest in running the MBA programmes at the institutions. The profile of the institutions plays an important role in the determination of the extent of application of marketing practices. Hence, the present study focuses on the profile of the institutions and the extent of implementation of marketing practices of the institutions. The institutions are classified into B-Schools, MBA at engineering colleges and MBA at Arts and Science Colleges as Group I, II and III institutions respectively. After the mushrooming growth of management institutions and consequent competition, now it is a valid point to see and check whether or not management institutions really produce competent personnels required by the industry. In India, the pace of globalization, liberalization and privatization is remarkable. Management education in today's context has gained tremendous coverage. The focus of management education is to provide a functional and vocational orientation to the management students by preparing them mentally and technically for their careers. The responsibilities of the management institutions are not only to deliver good education and prepare the student for securing immediate placement but also to prepare the students for a long term and profitable performance in their job. Hence, the final sample of 143 institutions and 423 students are included to process the data. For the present study descriptive research design has been adopted.

The present study concludes that the levels of implementation of marketing practices by the B-schools are better than by the engineering colleges. The arts and sciences colleges are very poor in this aspect. There is a wide gap between the B-schools and arts and science colleges regarding the implementation of marketing practices have a significant positive impact on the students' satisfaction on management institutions. The service quality in the B-schools is perceived as higher by the students than in engineering colleges and arts and science colleges.

The level of perception on core and value added service quality is not upto the level of expectation on it. The higher service quality gap is noticed in the case of arts and science colleges. The service fairness at B-schools is perceived at a higher rate than in other group of institutions. The two service quality and service fairness among the institutions have a significant positive impact on students' satisfaction on the management institutions. The present study identified the wide gap between the B-schools and arts and science colleges regarding the aspect of marketing practices, service quality and service fairness. If the arts and science colleges continue this trend in future, the marketability of the MBA programmes will be highly questionable in near future. At the same time, the engineering colleges are moderate in implementing the marketing practices. If they enrich their services and service quality, they can be a competitor for the B-schools.

**KEY WORDS:** Marketing Practices, B-Schools, Globalization, Liberalization and Privatization

## INTRODUCTION

Services are major component of every national economy and their contribution to the development is inevitable. Services contribute an average of more than 60 percent to the gross national product of the industrial nations, but they are also rapidly moving to the forefront in many other nations as well. Even in the least developed countries, services typically contribute to at least 45 percent of GDP. Understanding customer expectation is a prerequisite for delivering superior service. Marketing of education services is gaining momentum with the entry of private institutions, change in people's attitude towards education and the changing scope for the different courses being offered. The technological changes and the shrinking global boundaries have increased the significance of marketing for the education services. The education service can be described as a high contact, consumer and people based service. With the changes in education and the job market, the market for unconventional courses is increasing. So no marketer can afford to ignore these markets. As the education service is intangible, inseparable and perishable, certain implications exist for marketing.

Service quality is not consistent for all customers or even a single customer at all times. So the marketers' job becomes tough. They are required to ensure that these features of the education services are better utilized to meet the varying needs of the customers. The marketing mix can be better utilized to overcome the problems associated with the specific service features of education. By offering education with enhanced features like updated syllabus and industry interaction, they can improve the quality of the product. With franchising and better infrastructure facilities and experienced instructors, marketers can meet customer expectations. With the right mix of all the Ps, tailor-made customer focused courses can be offered. Technology like computers, LCD projectors and multimedia, has helped service providers offer better services to more customers. It has enabled them to concentrate more on knowledge management rather than on preparation of teaching notes. It has paved the way for increasing the scope of the market and scale of operations with the introduction of modern systems like web based training. There has been a complete transformation in the field of education in India in the past 15 years. Of late, there is a shift in focus from conventional courses like engineering and commerce to specialized courses in management.

The higher education in India has witnessed a 13 fold increase in the number of universities, a 25 fold increase in the number of colleges and a 30 fold increase in the involvement of students since independence. India has been nearing to a 1000 business schools. Of these 953 are recognized by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). Just 15 business schools are globally benchmarked as per a study (Business World, 2004). Both the events of liberalization and globalization lead to sea-changes in offering services in the Indian management education. Much of the changes have occurred from 1995. AICTE committee (2003) has critically examined the Indian management education with a view to develop policy and action plan. In recent years, there are so many up gradations with relevant changes in methodology, curriculum and content of the MBA programmes to keep pace with the present changes. Due to customer orientation, management education has become so widespread that it is now almost a necessity for a good career in management. Despite the fact that management education serves a major purpose to industries worldwide providing a vast pool of trained manpower armed with managerial skill to handle the complexities of decision making, voices criticizing and challenging the quality of such education can also be heard.

The mushroom growth of management education in India intensifies the competition among institutions. Now, the arts and science colleges, engineering colleges and business schools have started MBA programmes apart from the reputed business-schools like Indian Institutions of Management. Even though the degree offered by the university is the same, the quality of the MBA graduates significantly varies from one another. The quality of MBA graduates highly rests on the institutions through which the students have gone through their MBA programmes. Hence, all management course offering institutions are trying to shape their courses according to the need of their customers (students) and also to bring their student's up to the global expectations. The customers for the business schools are not bothering about the price they pay but they focus more on the service quality offered by the institutions. The service quality of education in the management institutions plays a predominant role in selecting the institutions for their further study among the students. With the opening up of the gates to private and foreign institutions to provide management education services, intense competition may exist in the years to come. There are some basic flaws in the management education system like neglecting empowerment oriented education and participative education. These have to be corrected by the marketers if they are to survive in this globalized era. Hence this study has been proposed.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

After the mushrooming growth of management institutions and consequent competition, now it is a valid point to see and check whether or not management institutions really produce competent personnels required by the industry. In India, the pace of globalization, liberalization and privatization is remarkable. Management education in today's context has gained tremendous coverage. The focus of management education is to provide a functional and vocational orientation to the management students by preparing them mentally and technically for their careers. The responsibilities of the management institutions are not only to deliver good education and prepare the student for securing immediate placement but also to prepare the students for a long term and profitable performance in their job.

The universities and deemed universities are conducting and permitting their affiliated institutions to conduct the MBA programmes. The intake of MBA students is regularized through counseling programme conducted by Government of Tamilnadu but the quota is only 50 percent. The remaining 50 percent of admission is decided by the management. The choice of the institutions among the students is the important key factor determining the rank of the management institutions. The students' choice of management institutions depends upon the marketing practices of the institutions, services and service quality offered by the institution. A group of institutions are achieving and growing at a remarkable level whereas the remaining are in doom. Such a wide difference is caused by the services at their institutions. Hence, the service orientation of the management institutions is becoming an important factor in determining the success of the institutions and also acts as a survival factor.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the proposed research model, the objectives of the present study are confined.

1. To reveal the profile of the management institutions.
2. To exhibit the level of implementation of marketing practices by the management institutions.

**METHODS AND MATERIALS**

The Management institutions for the present study are selected by the census method. All Management institutions under the affiliation of Anna University, Trichy, Madurai and Tirunelveli Regions, Madurai Kamaraj University, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and Alagappa University were included for the study as per the view of the Management institutions. The students' perspective on the service quality in Management institutions, service fairness and overall attitude towards Management institutions have been collected from the sampled students. The purposive sampling was adopted to select the number of students for the present study. In total, 5 students from each institution were selected as the sample of the study. Hence, the selected sample size came to 143 Management institutions and 715 students respectively. The response rate on the questionnaire given to the management institutions is 100 percent whereas the response rate on the questionnaire given to students is 59.16 percent to the total of 715 students. Hence, the final sample of 143 institutions and 423 students are included to process the data. For the present study descriptive research design has been adopted.

**DISCUSSION**

**TABLE 1: Group of Institutions**

Sl. No.	Group	Number of institutions	Percent of the total
1.	B-Schools (Group I)	26	18.18
2.	MBA at Engineering Colleges as department (Group II)	71	49.65
3.	MBA at Arts and Science Colleges as department (Group III)	46	32.17
	Total	143	100.00

Source: Primary Data.

As a maximum of 49.65 percent of institutions are belonging to Group II category which is followed by Group III institutions which constitute 32.17 percent. The number of B-Schools constitutes 18.18 percent. The analysis reveals that the number of management institutions at the Engineering colleges is higher than in MBA institutions at the Arts and Science Colleges.

**TABLE 2: Years of Establishment of the Colleges/Institutions**

Sl. No.	Years of establishment	Number of institutions in			Total
		Group I	Group II	Group III	
1.	Less than 5 years	1	4	—	5
2.	5–10	5	14	—	19
3.	10.1–15	9	28	6	43
4.	15.1–20	9	12	13	34
5.	Above 20	2	13	27	42
	Total	26	71	46	143

Source: Primary Data.

The important years of establishment of the colleges/institutions among the institutions are 10.1 to 15 and above 20.00 years which constitute 30.07 and 29.37 percent to the total respectively. The most important years of establishment among the Group I and II are 15.1 to 20 and 10.1 to 15 years which constitute 34.62 and 39.44 percent to the total respectively. The most important years of establishment among the Group III institutions are above 20 years which constitute 58.69 percent to the total. The years

of establishment of the colleges/institutions are identified as higher in Group III institutions than in Group I and II institutions.

**TABLE 3: Admission Procedure at Management Institutions**

Sl. No.	Admission procedure	Number of institutions in			Total
		Group I	Group II	Group III	
1.	Based on merit only	5	22	4	31
2.	Based on donation	11	19	10	40
3.	Based on merit and donation	7	23	27	57
4.	Discretion of board	3	7	5	15
	Total	26	71	46	143

Source: Primary Data.

Table 3 shows the distribution of institutions on the basis of their admission procedures. The highly followed procedure in the institutions is both merit and donation which constitutes 39.86 percent to the total. In the case of Group I institutions, it is merit only which constitutes 57.69 percent to its total. In the case of Group II and III institutions, it is both merit and donation which constitutes 32.39 and 58.69 percent to its total respectively. The analysis infers that the B-Schools are highly following merit-based admission compared to other group of management institutions.

**TABLE 4: View on Variables in Marketing Practices**

Sl. No.	Variables in marketing practices	Number of institutions in			'F' statistics
		Group I	Group II	Group III	
1.	High speed internet connectivity	3.7887	3.3845	3.0861	3.2667*
2.	100 percent placement	3.8341	3.2672	2.9674	3.3894*
3.	Screening process	3.5897	3.0911	2.8246	3.1106*
4.	Diversity of subjects	3.7249	3.3884	2.9089	3.2664*
5.	Seminar arrangement	3.6677	3.2641	3.0943	2.5497
6.	Trained faculties	3.5996	3.0917	2.8482	3.1089*
7.	Accreditation	3.6973	3.2446	2.7519	3.3044*
8.	Need based programmes to students	3.7342	3.1948	2.8046	3.4565*
9.	Boarding facilities	3.5241	3.1073	2.6533	3.5087*
10.	Variety of specialization	3.6089	3.2249	2.7908	3.3961*
11.	Concessional pricing	3.7682	3.1956	2.8864	3.5017*
12.	Library and computer facilities	3.8118	3.2638	2.9807	3.2693*
13.	Management development programmes	3.7029	3.2027	2.8149	3.1704*
14.	Autonomous status	3.7641	3.2144	2.9244	3.0877*
15.	Highly paid facilities	3.6845	3.1388	2.7667	2.9043
16.	Magazines and journals published	3.7024	3.2039	2.8844	2.8845
17.	Installment in payment of fees	3.8491	3.1493	2.9039	3.1667*
18.	Need based services to students	3.6629	3.0244	2.6447	3.4509*
19.	Variety of facilities	3.7346	3.2193	2.7388	3.5217*
20.	Fee reduction to meritorial students	3.8245	3.1556	2.8842	3.5088*
21.	Free education to select students	3.7308	3.2904	2.9017	3.2492*

\*Significant at five percent level.

The highly viewed variable in the first 21 variables of marketing practices in the Group I institutions is 100 percent placement and installment of payment of fees since its mean scores are 3.8341 and 3.8491 respectively. In the case of Group II institutions, these are diversity of subjects and high speed internet connectivity since its mean scores are 3.3884 and 3.3845 respectively. In the case of Group III institutions,

these are seminar arrangement and high speed internet connectivity since its mean scores are 3.0943 and 3.0861 respectively. Regarding the view on variables in first 21 marketing practices, the significant difference among the three groups of institutions has been noticed in the case of 18 variables out of 21 variables since its respective 'F' statistics is significant at five percent level. The mean scores of last 21 variables in marketing practices in the three groups of institutions and its respective 'F' statistics are computed and presented in Table 3.12.

**TABLE 5: View on Variables in Marketing Practices**

Sl. No.	Variables in marketing practices	Number of institutions in			'F' statistics
		Group I	Group II	Group III	
1.	Achievements of ALUMINI	3.8846	3.5048	3.0145	3.2673*
2.	Multiple placement option	3.7961	3.4102	3.1173	2.4549
3.	Location of the institution	3.6969	3.4733	2.8557	3.1084*
4.	International conference arrangement	3.8041	3.3896	2.9796	3.3667*
5.	Hostel facilities	3.8492	3.5042	3.0245	3.0145*
6.	Collaboration with foreign universities	3.7887	3.4551	3.1099	2.8087
7.	Industry interaction	3.8504	3.3994	2.9394	3.3409*
8.	Conveyance facilities	3.8667	3.4027	2.8868	3.5991*
9.	Financial scholarship	3.9142	3.5209	3.0445	3.4208*
10.	Annual student meet arrangement	3.7896	3.3089	2.9108	3.1446*
11.	Business banking	3.6691	3.2684	2.9965	2.9091
12.	Student exchange	3.8044	3.2097	2.8089	3.5142*
13.	MOU with industries	3.8739	3.3066	3.0884	3.3944*
14.	MOU with foreign institutions	3.8504	3.2944	3.1492	3.1082*
15.	Residential programmes	3.7667	3.1886	3.0917	2.8011
16.	Dedicated faculties	3.7996	3.2847	2.9029	3.2445*
17.	Faculty development programmes	3.8146	3.2609	2.9938	3.1902*
18.	Visiting faculties	3.9608	3.3881	2.8864	3.4304*
19.	Lateral placement	3.7334	3.1489	2.9089	3.3917*
20.	Need based working plan to students	3.8049	3.2807	2.9947	3.5042*
21.	Soft skill development to students	3.9107	3.1011	2.9059	3.4129*

\*Significant at five percent level.

The highly viewed variables in last 21 variables of marketing practices in Group I institutions are visiting faculties and financial scholarship since their mean scores are 3.9608 and 3.9142 respectively. In the case of Group II institutions, these two are financial scholarship and achievements of Alumini since their mean scores are 3.5209 and 3.5048 respectively. In the case of Group III institutions, these are MOU with foreign institutions and multiple placement options since their mean scores are 3.1492 and 3.1173 respectively. Regarding the view on the variables in marketing practices, the significant difference among the three group of institutions has been noticed in the case of 18 variables out of last 21 variables since its 'F' statistics are significant at five percent level. In total, the rate of implementation of variables in marketing practices is higher in Group I institutions than in Group II and III institutions.

**TABLE 6: Important Marketing Practices (IMPs) Adopted by Management Institutions**

Sl.No.	IMPs	Number of variables in	Eigen value	Per cent of variation explained	Cumulative per cent of variation explained
1.	Academic facilities	6	4.6963	11.45	11.45
2.	Infrastructure	5	3.7034	9.03	20.48
3.	Brand building	5	3.5891	8.75	29.23
4.	Reputation	5	3.2565	7.94	37.17
5.	Customizing service	4	3.0891	7.53	44.70
6.	Placement	4	2.9196	7.12	51.82
7.	Facilities	5	2.9045	7.08	58.90
8.	Service pricing	4	2.8733	7.01	65.91
9.	Personal concept zone	3	2.2599	5.51	71.42
KMO measure of sampling adequacy: 0.7389			Bartlett's test of sphericity: Chi-square value: 86.89*		

\* Significant at five per cent level.

The scores of 42 variables in marketing practices have been included to narrate the variables into Important Marketing Practices (IMPs). Initially, the data validity for factor analysis has been conducted with the help of Kaiser-Meyer-Ohlin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Both these two tests satisfy the validity of data for factor analysis. Out of 42 variables, one variable has been dropped by the factor analysis since its factor loading in IMPs is lesser than its standard minimum. Hence, the 41 variables are narrated by the exploratory factor analysis into nine important marketing practices (IMPs).

The eigen value, percent of variation explained and the number of variables in each IMPs are shown in Table 6.

The first two IMPs identified by the factor analysis are academic facilities and infrastructure since their eigen values are 4.6963 and 3.7034 respectively. The per cent of variation explained by these two IMPs are 11.45 and 9.03 per cent respectively. It shows that the above said two IMPs explain all the variables in IMPs to an extent of 11.45 and 9.03 per cent respectively. The next two IMPs are brand building and reputation since its eigen values are 3.5891 and 3.2565 respectively. The next three important marketing practices identified by the factor analysis are customizing service, placement and faculties since their eigen values are 3.0891, 2.9196 and 2.9045 respectively. The per cent of variation explained by these three IMPs are 7.53, 7.12 and 7.08 per cent respectively. The last two IMPs identified by the factor analysis are service pricing and personal concept zone since their eigen values are 7.01 and 5.51 respectively. In total, the narrated nine IMPs explain the variables in IMPs to an extent of 71.42 per cent.

**TABLE 7: View on Important Marketing Practices**

Sl. No.	IMPs	Number of institutions in			'F' statistics
		Group I	Group II	Group III	
1.	Academic facilities	3.7429	3.2808	2.9391	3.3942*
2.	Infrastructure	3.7776	3.3561	2.9578	3.2091*
3.	Brand building	3.7558	3.2852	2.9587	3.1733*
4.	Reputation	3.7392	3.2725	2.9738	3.0911*
5.	Customizing service	3.7781	3.1503	2.8375	3.2509*
6.	Placement	3.8386	3.2688	3.0281	3.2919*
7.	Faculties	3.7558	3.2245	2.8286	3.1886*
8.	Service pricing	3.7932	3.1977	2.8941	3.2094*
9.	Personal concept zone	3.7694	3.4129	2.8840	3.2245*

\*Significant at five percent level.

Source: Primary Data.

The rate of implementation of IMPs by the various groups of management institutions has been measured by the mean score of variables in each IMP. The mean score of each IMP in group I, II and III institutions has been computed separately along with its 'F' statistics. The results are illustrated in Table 7. The highly implemented IMPs by the group I institutions are placement and service pricing since their mean scores are 3.8386 and 3.7932 respectively. In the case of group II institutions, these are personal concept zone and infrastructure since their mean scores are 3.4129 and 3.3561 respectively. In the case of group III institutions, these are placement and reputation since their mean scores are 3.0281 and 2.9738 respectively. Regarding the level of implementation of IMPs, the significant difference among the three groups of institutions has been noticed in the case of implementation of all nine IMPs since their respective 'F' statistics are significant at five percent level.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following policy implications are drawn.

#### 1. Placement Cell

One of the important marketing practices adopted by the successful business schools and the value added service quality expected by the students is 'placement cell'. The effective placement cell should be developed/enriched in order to satisfy the students towards the MBA programmes. An effective placement officer should be positioned to provide 100 per cent placement to all final year MBA students.

#### 2. MOU for Industrial Tie-up

The students are expecting more MOUs with the popular industries for their project and placement. The management institutions are advised to go for MOU with many industries which can provide more placement opportunities to them.

#### 3. Soft Skills Development

Nowadays, the requirement of soft skills among the students is essential for better placement. Hence, the management institutions are advised to design their syllabus and teaching methodology in order to enrich the soft skills among their students. For the development of soft skills, these institutions may utilize the outside talents.

#### 4. Personality Development Programmes

The personality development programmes are also expected by the students in order to develop their personality. The institutions are advised to conduct so many personality development programmes from the external resources or some specialized agencies.



### **5. Adaptive System**

Irrespective of the type of management institutions (B-schools, MBA in Engineering Colleges and Arts and Science Colleges) the strategy of education should be to provide quality education through an adaptive system. Education provided should match with the industry requirements and competent enough to have competitive advantages; and it should be holistic and value based.

### **6. Change in Pedagogy in Management - Institutions**

The employability of the MBA students may be increased with the help of change in pedagogy in management institutions. The teaching pedagogy should include group discussions, role plays, case studies, seminars, interactive sections through vertical means, cassettes, CDs, Video conferencing, industrial visits, internship training and project report and others.

### **7. Professionalism in Management Education**

The professionalism in management education could be ensured only when the institutions provide: proper infrastructure facilities in the form of State of the art class rooms, updated library, computer labs, etc. (including NET); training facility for skill development; institution – industry interaction; opportunity for placement and an affordable fee structure.

### **8. Justification of Service Fairness**

Since the service fairness is one of the important factors in determining the students' satisfaction on the management institutions, the management institutions are advised to establish the service fairness among their students' mind. The level of service fairness in Arts and Science Colleges is poor compared to other two groups of institutions. Nowadays, the students are weighing the worthiness of the payment of fees. Hence the institutions are advised to provide adequate services in order to establish service fairness among the students.

### **9. Brand Building Programmes**

One of the important marketing practices adopted by the successful management institutions is brand building programmes. The management institutions are advised to conduct so many management development programmes (MDPs), Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) and Research Orientation Programmes (ROPs) in order to build up the image among the industrial people and also among the public. By that programmes, they can build up their image. These images will be helpful to attract the quality students and also potential employers to provide employment to the capable students. Eventhough the brand building programmes are costlier to the institutions, the benefit of the programmes are much higher than the cost.

### **10. Customizing Service**

Unlike physical goods, service is often based primarily on personal interaction or information processing, both of which lend them well to customization. This is because a human service provider can adjust to the needs of the customer as part of the interaction, and a service offering based primarily on information may customize by merely changing hints of information. The customizing service to the students is essential to establish the MBA programmes at various types of institutions. Since the expectation of different groups of students are different in nature and degree, the management institutions are advised to satisfy all groups of students through the provision of various required services to the students.

### **11. Employee Incentives**

In the study area, only a few management institutions are paying a salary on a par with the UGC pay whereas a very few are paying more than that. Most of the institutions are paying only a lower salary to their faculties. It is not only affecting the standard of living of the faculties but also their service quality. In order to ensure better service quality to the students, the employee incentives should be properly assessed and enriched at regular intervals. The saving through the under payment to their faculties results in a damage in the provision of better service quality by the institutions.

### 12. Feed Back System

The service quality gap in management institutions is in negative. It reveals that the level of perception on service quality in management institutions is not up to their level of expectation. The only useful tool to minimize the service quality in management institutions is feedback system. A range of methods for collecting students' feedback is recognized as good practice in generating valid data and ensuring appropriate responses.

### 13. Decision Making Skill Programmes

Management education emphasizes decision making skills by integrating knowledge and the application of knowledge. The involvement of the faculty in this activity is important. A faculty member is not only confined to the provision of subject knowledge but also to help the student to develop skills to take managerial decisions. The faculty may be given feedback about their performance or study material; this can influence them to develop courses on the basis of shared beliefs and understanding. This approach would be useful to create a student centric atmosphere and the gap can be reduced between the management and the students.

### 14. Research and Development Cell

The management institutions/department in colleges should have a research and development cell at their premises. Then only they can examine the students' expectation from the MBA programmes and from the institutions at regular period of intervals. It will be useful to the policy makers to design appropriate service orientation / service strategy of the students in the changing scenario.

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