

Export market orientation in universities: Bridging the gap between export marketing and higher education

Recent developments in export marketing literature have resulted in the conceptualisation of the export market orientation construct in the traditional manufacturing setting. However, there is little research investigating the applicability of export market orientation in the higher education context despite the importance of the export market in shaping the direction of the higher education marketing. Building on the existent literature as regards export marketing, services marketing and higher education management, the authors propose a conceptual view of export market orientation components from a higher education management perspective. This paper aims to shed light on the implementation of export marketing in universities (i.e., export market orientation) (EMO) in the context of international students' recruitment, and thereby add to the limited research knowledge regarding the international marketing of higher education. The implications for researchers and managers are considered. The paper concludes by offering suggestions for empirical research into this important topic.

Keywords Export market orientation, Universities, Higher Education, International students

Introduction

Research in the field of export market orientation (EMO) has been developed in the context of the manufacturing industry (Akyol & Akehurst, 2003; Cadogan, Salminen, Puumalainen, & Sundqvist, 2001; Cadogan, Sundqvist, & Salminen, 2002; Diamantopoulos & Cadogan, 1996). However, as services' organisations are expanding globally, it seems worthwhile to extend this concept to a service setting. Specifically, higher education export activities have increased considerably in the last few decades (Gürüz, 2012; Van Der Wende, 2001). For example, in the USA, UK and Australia, there is a significant transnational education characterised by a considerable flow of international students to higher education institutions in these countries to receive education. These nations are said to be primary exporters of higher education (Gürüz, 2012). Nowadays, institutions are keener to implement strategic marketing activities to attract international students (Pinar, Trapp, Girard, & Boyt, 2011). Lately, the economic environment has had a major negative impact on the financial situation of most higher education institutions (Molesworth, Scullion, & Nixon, 2011). Hence, higher education institutions have long been relying on foreign markets as a key source of funding (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008). With the wave of globalisation and increased liberalisation of trade in services (Verger, 2008), there has been increased competition within the education sector worldwide. Therefore, it is necessary for universities to monitor the activities of other institutions serving export markets. In addition, in targeting a number of foreign markets with perhaps different cultural regulatory environments and different requirements for the job market, higher education institutions sometimes struggle to recognise and embrace the different needs of these markets. It is in this context that universities are trying to implement strategic marketing to prosper and in some cases to survive in the current competitive marketplace for higher education.

Despite the importance of export markets in the higher education marketplace, no research has hitherto investigated the conceptualisation of EMO in a higher education context.

In the last two decades, there has been a growth in the general literature of higher education marketing. Few studies (Caruana, Ramaseshan, & Ewing, 1998; Siu & Wilson, 1998; Wasmer & Bruner, 2000) examined market orientation (MO) in higher education. In perceiving education as a not-for-profit sector, Siu and Wilson (1998) presented a new model of MO that takes into account the specificities of the not-for-profit sector. Siu and Wilson (1998) criticised the suitability of concepts such as profit and competition and replaced them with “employee orientation” and “long-term survival” (Liao, Foreman, & Sargeant, 2000). Nonetheless, emphasis was given to not-for-profit rather than the independent nature of the education sector. Indeed, perceiving higher education institutions as purely not-for-profit organisations can be misleading. Universities do seek lucrative gains from international students and other ancillary services provided to different institutions (e.g., advisory services) (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003). In addition, the competition dimension should not be excluded as it is perceived as an important element driving the strategic orientation of universities to adopt an MO approach (Maringe, 2005).

The view advocating the marketisation of higher education and the suitability of some concepts related to business and management (i.e. revenues and competition) is present in the literature of international higher education management (Ho & Hung, 2008; Molesworth et al., 2010). To date, this literature has focused on some questions relating to student behaviour (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Paswan

& Audesh, 2009; Shah & Laino, 2006; Vauterin, Linnanen, & Marttila, 2011). Most of these studies were based on a consumer/student perspective, rather than examining how strategic managers in universities can develop and enhance their international marketing behaviour (Conway, Mackay, & Yorke, 1994) with specific reference to conceptualising EMO (referring to the implementation of export marketing) in the educational setting. Limited empirical evidence exists about how universities can manage their marketing activities towards their export markets. One reason for this lack of attention to the higher education area could be that exporting has traditionally been associated mainly with tangible product industries (Leonidou, Katsikeas, & Coudounaris, 2010). As a result, the export marketing literature -despite being rich and well established- may not fully capture the intricacies of higher education services.

This article aims to bring the export marketing and international higher education management literatures together in order to advance the discussion about the implementation of export marketing in universities. This conceptual paper seeks to examine the process by which universities manage their information-based marketing activities towards their export markets in relation to international students' recruitment. Therefore, the paper intends to contribute to existing literature on export marketing by extending EMO in a new and peculiar context: higher education.

Although marketing is believed to be a noteworthy practice in higher education institutions operating internationally (Conway et al., 1994), much of the evidence to date remains anecdotal or speculative. In this respect, the current study also aims to contribute to the literature on higher education marketing. In particular, it aims to

inform the process of how universities can implement marketing for their foreign markets.

First, the article offers a review of the literature into exporting in higher education, although being very limited. Therefore, the authors draw from the literature into exporting services as a premise to discuss exporting the services of higher education. The discussion then turns to the broader literature of international marketing of higher education given that research on export marketing in higher education is virtually inexistent. This opens the door to arguing the applicability of export marketing in higher education. Then the authors present a brief review of the literature into EMO. Following the review of these literatures and their inter-relationships, the article then continues to consider the components of EMO in universities. Finally, the article concludes by presenting a discussion integrating implications for both managers and academia, and suggests key areas for future research.

Exporting in higher education

The emergence of the export philosophy in the higher education context has materialised through the expansion of a transnational higher education. The provision of transnational higher education has increased rapidly since the second half of the 20th century (Hatakenaka, 2004). In a study by Mazzarol, Soutar, and Seng (2003), the authors discussed the development of transnational higher education with an increasing flow of international students undertaking fee-paying programs in different host countries (e.g. The UK, Australia, Canada, the USA, and New Zealand). For many education institutions such fees are a vital source of funding.

A number of authors (e.g. Bennell & Pearce, 2003; De Vita & Case, 2003; Harman, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Martens & Starke, 2008; Mazzarol et al., 2003; Mazzarol & Hosie, 1996) have argued that higher education has gradually been discovered as a lucrative service industry and export commodity driven by the competitive rush for international students and their funds (Molesworth et al., 2010). Governments of industrialised countries have actively sought to take advantage of a growing international market (Martens & Starke, 2008). Explicitly, the UK and Australia are said to be primary export nations (Gürüz, 2012; OECD, 2004).

In support of the exporting philosophy in higher education, Marginson (2006) offers a segmentation of the educational suppliers on the global market and identifies two exporting segments namely, exporting national research universities and teaching-focused export institutions. Both types of institutions are largely revenue driven and hence dominated by commercial provision (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002; Marginson, 2006). This is the case of a number of institutions in the Australia, New Zealand, the USA and the UK.

The literature addressing exporting in higher education remains not only limited but also anecdotal and speculative with lack of theoretical underpinning. The notion of exporting is still vaguely referred to with no clear understanding of what is exported and to whom it is exported in higher education. To explore the issue further we draw from the literature into exporting services as a premise to discuss exporting the services of higher education.

Exporting the services of higher education

The exporting activity has long been associated with physical goods. According to Lovelock (2001, p. 290), when exporting physical goods, “the produced goods leave country A, where they are defined as exports, and are transported to country B to be consumed, where they are defined as imports”. Conversely, being intangible performances, services may not necessarily fit into the pattern of exporting goods. Daniels (2000) suggests that exporting services involves services sold by the residents of one country to residents of another country. These are international exports and imports in the conventional balance of payments (BOP) sense. From this perspective, the notion of goods/services transportability invoked in the definition of exporting physical goods may not be a condition in services’ exports. Indeed, service delivery can take place domestically and still have an impact on international trade flows (Cowell, 1983; Dunning, 1989).

Unlike manufactured goods where the exported good itself crosses borders, in their study examining the export behaviour of services firms Clark, Rajaratnam, and Smith (1996) argue that services’ exports can take other forms according to the type of the exported service. In the case of a contact based service, consumers may cross borders to receive the service (Segebarth, 1990; Stare, 2002). Roberts (1999) refers to domestically located exports in this regard through the provision of services to foreign customers in the domestic market. In higher education, the phenomenon of transnational education illustrates the movement of consumers (students) to a host country to receive the service (education) (Marginson, 2006). The OECD and the GATS agreements recognise international students’ recruitment as a domestically located export education (Knight, 2003; Lewis, 2005; Martens & Starke, 2008).

International marketing and universities

The export market is of crucial importance in generating increased revenues for universities (De Vita & Case, 2003; Russell, 2005). Bolsmann and Miller (2008) suggest that the export market has been an important target of universities when designing and implementing marketing efforts. However, despite the growing importance of this subject, empirical research specifically related to the export marketing of higher education is inexistent to the best knowledge of the authors. However, Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007) claim that some attention has been given to the broader topic of the international marketing of higher education.

A review of the literature reveals some studies (e.g., Gomes & Murphy, 2003; Russell, 2005, Shah & Laino, 2006) on some aspects of international marketing in universities. This stream of research focused on examining the behaviour of international students. The work of Mazzarol (1998), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) and Russell (2005) indicate the presence of some influential factors on the decision process of students in selecting a study destination. This research confirmed that quality of programmes; institution image and reputation are decisive selling points in influencing international students' decision-making regarding their choice of programme and place of study. However, most of this literature is general, as it examines some of the general principles of marketing (e.g., purchase decision process), without making specific reference to theories/models of international and/or export marketing.

There is also a dearth of research examining strategic themes of the export marketing of higher education. Vauterin et al. (2011) applied the relationship marketing paradigm to

higher education. The authors presented a view of market orientation in universities as building strategic relationships with industry. While the study solely focus on one aspect of the market (i.e. industry), it overlooks other players in the international education environment (e.g. students). In addition, the study draws upon models of general marketing (i.e. relationship marketing) and misses to contextualise market orientation in an international setting. In an attempt to tap some of the specificities of international marketing, Shah and Laino (2006) investigated the expectations of international students from different countries when seeking education from an American university. The study revealed the existence of considerable differences in expectations. Therefore, Shah and Laino (2006) argued that an adaptation approach is essential when designing communications strategies to prospective international students. Shah and Laino's (2006) study is the first to use the model of adaptation versus standardisation of international marketing strategy. However, this study overemphasises the contingencies with regards to how much to standardise or adapt. The model disregards the nature of international marketing activities which should be carried out. Furthermore, research on the international marketing of higher education seems to be restricted to interpreting marketing within the narrower definition of marketing communications.

Most of these studies were based on a consumer/student perspective, with a core theme: investigating the decision-making process of international students. Yet, there is a dearth of research examining strategic themes of the export marketing of higher education. None of the studies examined managers' perceptions of the export marketing behaviour in higher education institutions. Specifically, the conceptualisation of EMO

(referring to the implementation of export marketing) in the educational setting remains an unchartered territory.

Applicability of export marketing in higher education

A number of authors (e.g. Conway et al., 1994; Litten, 1980; Maringe, 2005) argued that the marketing of higher education presents some peculiarities. Umashankar (2001) suggests that the intangibility of educational offerings (Russell, 2005) makes the nature of the core business of universities quite ambiguous. A review of the literature of higher education marketing reveals some discrepancies when identifying the nature of core business of higher education institutions. Whilst some authors (Levitt, 1980; Litten, 1980) traditionally approached the marketing of higher education with a product-marketing perspective, a more recent research stream (Nicholls, Harris, Morgan, Clarke, & Sims, 1995; Molesworth et al., 2010) advocate the service nature of educational offerings.

Another difficulty rising from the specific context of higher education is the blurred identity of the customer (Conway et al., 1994, p.31; Nicholls et al., 1995). Naude and Ivy (1999) refer to confounding student roles of: customer, process component, and product. They claim that the student is not only a consumer but also takes a significant part in the educational process. The debate on the role of students is quite apparent in the literature of higher education marketing. While some authors (Levitt, 1980; Litten, 1980) regarded students as the customers with courses as the higher education products, others (Kotler & Fox, 1985; Conway et al., 1994) considered students as products with the employers being the customers.

These peculiarities are also inherent in the export marketing of higher education. Questions like: what do universities export? And to whom universities export (i.e. who are the export customers of universities)? are basic issues which need to be answered before extending the model of export market orientation to the academic sector. The discussion now turns to identifying the core business of exporting universities as well as universities' export customers.

Nature of exporting universities' offerings (the core business)

The obvious question worth addressing is about identifying the service(s) which universities provide to their export markets. A recent and general consensus is about teaching and research as the main higher education services offered to students (Nicholls et al., 1995; Ng & Forbes 2008). These educational services are delivered to national and international students alike. Accordingly, the generic term: student is used subsequently. From the above, the core educational services supplied to students include both: teaching which refers to the main activity characterising taught programmes; and Research corresponding to research programmes offered to students. In addition to the core services, universities provide auxiliary services related to: accommodation, library facilities, student loans and finance, employment or placement services, legal and immigration advice, etc (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001).

Identification of the export customer

The groundwork of adopting an export market orientation is the universities' identification of their export customers (Conway et al., 1994). Recalled earlier, one of the peculiarities in the marketing of higher education is the range of roles performed by the student (Conway et al., 1994; Litten, 1980; Kinnell, 1989; Owlia & Aspinwall,

1996). This is confirmed by Weaver (1976), who sees four parties as potential customers: Governments, its administrators, teachers/academics and the actual consumers (the learners, their families, employers and society as a whole). In the same line of arguments, Robinson and Long (1987) distinguishes between primary, secondary and tertiary customers. They perceive primary customers as being the students, secondary customers as the paymasters, i.e. local education authorities, employers, etc. and tertiary customers as validating bodies, ex-students, employers, parents, etc.

According to marketing theory, “customers are the ones who receive the benefit of the product or service and they are the ones who put their hands in their pockets to pay for it” (Lindsay & Rodgers, 1998, p.167). Both of these conditions can apply to the student and the industry (employing organisations). In essence, students are the ones who mostly and directly benefit from the educational services that universities provide. In addition, they are likely to be the ones paying for the education they receive. Thus, students are perceived as the main customer of the higher education institutions. Another marketing concept that can be put forward to confirm the primacy given to students as the main customer is the concept of “Interaction” (Cowell, 1983). This interaction is described by Gummesson (1991, p.68) as the “point of marketing” which is likely to influence the customer’s purchases. It can be then concluded that, since the student participates heavily in the interaction process with the university and its members, its position as the main customer is thereby reinforced. Similarly, the international student can be argued to be the main export customer for exporting universities.

With teaching and research as the key services provided by universities to their export customers: international students, it can be concluded that export marketing is applicable to the educational setting. Therefore, a conceptual framework of export market orientation in universities is designed subsequently.

EMO

The concept of EMO was proposed by Diamantopoulos and Cadogan (1996) to extend the application of market orientation to exporting organisations. EMO refers to the implementation of marketing in an export setting (based on Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). According to Cadogan, Diamantopoulos, and De Mortanges (1999, p.690), EMO consists of three coordinated information based activities, namely, “generation, dissemination and response to export market intelligence. These activities are oriented towards export customers, competitors, and exogenous market influences. Such activities are carried out through a coordinating mechanism”.

1. Export intelligence generation. This dimension refers to activities which constitute the creation of export market intelligence (e.g., export market research, export assistance) and which are focused towards export customers, competitors, or the related environmental changes (Souchon & Diamantopoulos, 1996, p.53).
2. Export intelligence dissemination. It includes activities which involve the sharing of export market intelligence (e.g., formal meetings) and which are focused towards export customers, competitors, or the related environmental changes (Cadogan et al., 1999, p.692).
3. Export intelligence responsiveness. It includes the design and implementation of all responses to the intelligence that has been generated and disseminated. Such

responses are directed towards export customers, competitors, and the related environmental changes (Diamantopoulos & Cadogan, 1996, p.38).

4. Coordinating mechanism. This reflects a coordinated effort to create superior value (Slater & Narver, 1990) and an organisation-wide responsibility for market-oriented activities (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990) and ensures that market-oriented activities are carried out effectively and efficiently (Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995, p.54).

Conceptualising EMO offered a foundation to the model of EMO. The model suggests that a well developed EMO is associated with superior export performance (Cadogan et al., 2001; Cadogan et al., 2002). Although EMO has been one of the most influential frameworks in the export marketing literature, it is maintained that the bulk of EMO research is biased towards the traditional physical goods and manufacturing sectors. Cadogan et al. (2000) and Inglis (2008) call for research into EMO from the perspective of some other international entities operating in different sectors (e.g., not-for-profit organisations, non-traditional organisations, organisations in the public sector). Relevant investigations of EMO in context-specific markets are almost inexistent. Therefore, our study aims to shed some light on the application of EMO in higher education.

EMO in universities

This study is the first to present an EMO framework for a higher education institution that can be envisioned as all of the information based activities geared towards foreign markets. Figure 1 provides a conceptual view of the four components of export market orientation (Cadogan et al., 1999) in universities. As shown in this framework, EMO in

universities is based on a view of the export market. In this context, the starting point is the market. Therefore, market needs are expected to stimulate the university to react with its services. This is consistent with the marketing literature (e.g., Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990) maintaining that “market orientation is prevalent when information concerning customers guides, product development and marketing efforts” (Wood & Bhuian, 1993, p.9).

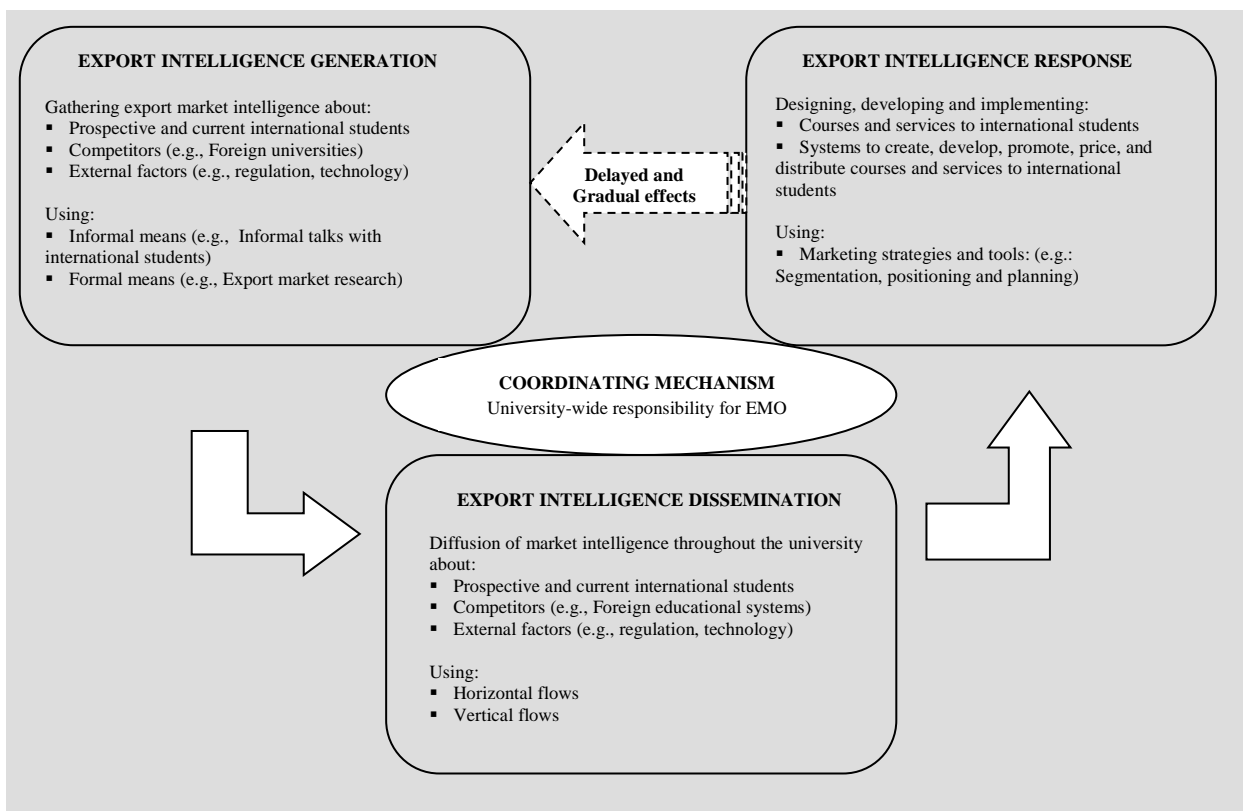


Figure. 1 Export market orientation in universities

A number of authors (e.g. Caruana et al., 1998; Mazzarol & Hosie, 1996; Stewart, 1991) suggest that market oriented universities should gather, disseminate and respond to relevant market intelligence. The need for implementing these information based activities is even greater in an export setting given the complexity of the environment and the variety of markets (Diamantopoulos & Cadogan, 1996). Superior knowledge

and awareness of the market components as well as a constant surveillance of the market are central to the implementation of information-based marketing activities (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Hence, the starting point of an export market oriented university is export market information generation. The generation of market intelligence pertains primarily to the needs and expectations of prospective and current international students (e.g., details of courses, fees). Universities collect relevant secondary data from higher education bodies (e.g., Higher Education Statistics Agency HESA), education partners and agents overseas, and analyse figures from prior performance. In addition to secondary data, proactive universities regularly carry out market research through primary data collection (surveys, focus groups with international students) and participate in international fairs overseas in order to track the different needs of students from different countries. This is in line with building a listening orientation towards international students to learn how to serve them better, and therefore improve students' experiences (Ng & Forbes, 2008).

Additionally, export-market oriented universities periodically review the likely effect of changes in key market trends (e.g., competition, regulation, technological, political and economic developments) characterising the university's export environment. This implies the necessity of monitoring export marketing activities implemented by other universities (e.g., new courses developed by competing universities). Moreover, the regulatory environment is particularly crucial in a higher education context given the effect immigration regulations can have on the decision process of international students of a study destination (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Also, universities need to have an up to date knowledge of immigration regulations and visa requirements as some studies (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007) reported that one

of the most important needs of international students is to receive advice and help with their immigration papers.

The intelligence generated from the previous phase needs to be disseminated throughout the university both hierarchically and horizontally. In order to realise a successful diffusion of seminal export market information, interdepartmental meetings can be scheduled on a regular basis.

Subsequent to the information dissemination stage, universities' design and implementation of responses to the intelligence generated and disseminated is achievable. The use of different marketing strategies (e.g. segmentation, positioning, planning) will enable marketing operatives to develop new programmes and also to implement systems to market different educational services internationally. For example, when sensing a market need for a particular programme or service, export market oriented universities implements the course/service in a timely fashion in order to respond to foreign market trends.

Responding to changes taking place in the higher education environment will invariably have an effect on generating further information. Interestingly, among the outcomes expected from responding to international students' wants and preferences is to satisfy them. Thus, in order to know whether the responsive actions that have been taken had a positive or negative effect on the students, continuous monitoring of the students' reactions seems necessary. However, the effect that the responsiveness stage exerts on generating further market information would be gradual, as it will take a period of time for students to realise the changes carried out, to experience them, and to subsequently

express their thoughts regarding the quality of these changes. From the above, it can be concluded that export market oriented activities represent a continuous and cyclical process.

The activities of generating, disseminating and responding to export market intelligence are carried out through a coordinating mechanism. Diamantopoulos and Cadogan (1996) stated that if the organisation's export coordination is characterised by high levels of intra- and interfunctional cooperation as well as a lack of dysfunctional conflict, then EMO activities will be performed effectively and efficiently. Hence, Cadogan et al. (1999) perceived coordination as an important part of the EMO construct. This is supported by the fact that coordination is vital to the effective and efficient execution of export intelligence generation, dissemination and responsiveness.

Several scholars (e.g., De Boer, Jurgen, & Liudvika, 2007; Karol & Ginsburg, 1990) perceive universities as organisations with mission statements, employees and management systems. Universities are social units with potentially a number of organisational phenomena such as communication channels, cooperation, interfunctional conflict and shared work-related goals (based on Cadogan et al., 1999; Etzioni, 1964). The presence or lack of these organisational themes shapes export coordination (Diamantopoulos & Cadogan, 1996). Export coordination refer to continuous liaison essentially between the international office and different schools/departments through formal (meetings, reports, intranet portal) and informal means (as part of everyday communication) to share key foreign markets trends and developments. This is necessary since information-based export marketing activities cannot be carried out solely by the international marketing office (based on Grönroos,

1999). The coordinating mechanism reflects a concerted effort of different university departments and an organisationwide responsibility for export market-oriented activities.

An important aspect of export coordination is sharing the same work-related goals (Cadogan et al., 1999). A university characterised by a common drive to implement export marketing is less likely to witness dysfunctional conflict mainly between the schools and the international marketing office. Divergence in work-related goals features some regional and internally oriented universities which prioritise the expansion of academic programmes rather than market needs (Bartell, 2003). In addition, a lack of dysfunctional conflict and effective communication among different university departments are both required for a fluid dissemination of relevant export market information. Furthermore, the presence of a sense of responsibility and cooperation within a university would increase the sensitivity of university members - both academics and administrators - to relevant information and facilitate effective responsiveness.

Discussion

The paper is the first to present a conceptualisation of EMO in higher education. EMO in universities consists of coordinated information based activities geared towards foreign markets in the context of international students' recruitment. Universities should seek relevant information about the targeted foreign markets and the environmental forces influencing market needs; disseminate relevant information throughout the university; and respond to the intelligence in a timely fashion manner.

These activities should be carried out through a coordinating mechanism and university-wide responsibility.

The present study contributed to the literature of EMO by providing a framework which reveals the information-based activities for an effective implementation of export marketing in universities serving foreign markets. The paper attempts to respond to previous calls for investigations into export marketing frameworks from the perspective of international services marketers (Cadogan et al., 2000).

Although marketing is believed to be a noteworthy practice in higher education institutions operating internationally (Conway et al., 1994), much of the evidence to date remains anecdotal or speculative. In this respect, the current study also contributes to the literature on higher education marketing. In particular, it presents a systematic framework on EMO in universities, and thereby informs the process of how universities can implement marketing for their foreign markets. This framework could help international marketing managers in universities to better understand and guide export marketing activities.

An important implication of this study rests on the insistence to monitor the export environment of university. Key export market trends (e.g. competition, regulation) have to be constantly monitored and due export marketing strategies taken, when changes in the export market place are noticed. The need for formulating marketing strategies which are aligned to changes in export market conditions is another area of concern that is to be given importance by university managers. Also, managers should scan the

environment for finding out suitable opportunities for expansion rather than relying on serving traditional markets (e.g. China, India) as a main source of export revenues.

The cyclical process presented in the framework suggests that EMO is a continuous process and that managers in universities should be proactive to students' needs and wants. An ongoing market research analysis and planning will enable alignment of university's efforts with the expectations of its foreign markets. Rather than relying on traditional reactive methods of monitoring the market (e.g. fairs and exhibitions), newer and more proactive ways could be used perhaps through social media and some other technology based tools for more proactive sensing of the market.

As recalled earlier, coordination between the international office and other departments/schools is essential for an effective EMO. Hence, this study presents implications to managers and academics alike. Investigating foreign market needs and the forces influencing them enables academics to become well-informed about the up-to-date trends of the job market. This is attributable to the fact that students' needs and preferences are generally in line with industry requirements, due to their concerns regarding employment prospects (Desmarez & Thys-Clement, 1994). Awareness of the job market needs should influence heads of schools to adapt the programmes offered accordingly, in order for the curricula to fit within the social and economic arena where universities operate.

Conclusions

An obvious direction for future research would be to further explore the concepts of exporting and export marketing in higher education, perhaps through a qualitative

methodology given the dearth of research in this field. Qualitative research would provide deeper insights into how universities may perceive and implement export marketing in the context of international students' recruitment. A qualitative exploratory study would hopefully pave the way to operationalise the elements of the conceptual view presented. Specifically we recommend development of a scale to measure EMO in universities. Future research should also examine the usefulness of EMO in higher education. This would have considerable managerial implications as understanding the role of EMO is crucial for universities' management to support its implementation.

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