

Marketing Practices in Higher Education: Assam Vs Rest of India – A Parents’ Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Due to commercialization and privatization of education, violation in the education sector has increased all over the country which has made it a luxurious product affordable by the high income group of consumers only. This has created problems for the middle and lower income groups of stakeholders in finding a guaranteed place in good HEIs. Literature reveals that there tends to be quite a significant section of the student population, hailing from the state, who move out to other parts of the country every year for getting higher degrees. Therefore this paper attempts to identify whether there exists any difference between the parents’ perception of educational practices in HEIs within and outside Assam.

The Population of the study is confined to the parents belonging to six professional groups within the geographical area of Dibrugarh Town, employed in government and semi- government organizations with an average salary ranging from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 50,000 and above per month, considering them to be a representative section of people who can afford higher education of their wards within or outside Assam. The impact of educational practices as per parents’ perception has been calculated on the basis of impact index. The questionnaire constructed was based on the 7 Ps of service marketing which were analysed in context to the topic under study.

Keywords: Commercialization, Privatization, Higher Educational Institutions, Perceptions, Educational Practices.

INTRODUCTION:

The Indian higher education sector has been through a major transformation phase since the last few decades. A shift from the compulsory social and public service towards private, commercial and international product has in a way redefined the very role of higher education in India with academic considerations often taking a backseat. In a way, private and foreign Higher Education Institutes (noted as HEIs hereafter) meet the need for a quality education among students who are unable to gain admission to the best institutions in India but have the desire and the means to study in a private organization. Therefore the private institutions have definitely created a market for themselves in creating a broader access in higher education which was never possible in a restricted government environment.

In the competitive environment, the commercialization of higher education is growing very fast leading to the introduction of new technologies to compete in the global environment, intending to provide the Students better facilities than their competitors. But these include huge capital investments from the HEIs. Therefore, in order to recover their cost and fulfill their profit motive, huge fees are charged from the students. Many private HEIs often make false promises at the time of admission, of which most of them are not fulfilled.

Higher education is gradually becoming a product affordable only by a certain section of the ‘affluents’ in society who are ready to turn a blind eye to the unethical practices adopted by these institutions. However, sustainable learning, a well established career and a secure future in this competitive world, still attract the

larger masses of the society – with or without the affordability to buy their children/wards good higher education by ethical means. There are many who realize the tactfully concealed malpractices of the institutions anytime between ‘post admission’ to ‘post passing out’ of their children/wards. This fact emphasizes upon the need to carry out researches that intend to draw attention towards such unethical practices of HEIs and disseminate the findings thereof to all stakeholders at large.

Commercialization of Higher Education:

Establishing and running an educational institution is a Fundamental Right of Occupation guaranteed under Section 19(1)(g) of the Constitution. According to Article 19(6) of the Constitution, the State can make regulations and impose reasonable restrictions in public interest. The Honorable Supreme Court has observed that- “Education accepted as a useful activity, whether for charity or for profit, is an occupation. Nevertheless, it does not cease to be a service to the society. And even though an occupation, it cannot be equated to a trade or a business”. There has been an increasing trend towards privatization of higher education in India. Due to various constraints, the Government cannot take up the responsibility to provide higher education all by itself and a part of the responsibility has to be delegated to the private sector, subject to certain conditions in order to prevent commercialization. The private sector making its foray into higher education is not new to India. A large number of Educational institutions have been set up in India without the financial assistance of the Government. So in the given context, there is a pressing need for the Private Sector to pitch in and that at the risk of privatization and monopolization of higher education by the Private Sector.

The activities of such institutions clearly need to be controlled. Unfortunately, the relevant laws are ambiguous on this point. The 1956 University Grants Commission Act or the 1993 All India Council for Technical Education, for example, do not prohibit the operation of private and foreign institutions in India, nor do they have provisions concerning the functioning of these institutions in India. The laws relating to foreign exchange do place some restrictions in this area, but these are being increasingly diluted. Therefore higher education is dominated still by the affordability aspect and not quality in excellence. In order to stop the gross commercialization of education, there should be an effective regulation system which permits only eligible and genuine partners to sustain in the market.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The under- mentioned are a few of the literature from an extensive reviews that have been surveyed for the purpose of research work:

- ❖ According to **Altbach, (2002)**, with the advent of a global, market-driven economy, conditions for higher education have changed. Universities now face a proliferation of expectations and demands. The trends in massification, accountability, privatisation, marketisation, and an unprecedented level of students' participation have caused a shift in the boundaries between the public and the private sectors.
- ❖ **Veloutsou, Paton, & Lewis, (2005)**, says that in Europe, state-controlled universities have introduced students' fees and engaged in institutional marketing to distinguish themselves at a time when higher education provision has become available to increasing numbers of students. In meeting this demand and securing their own financial futures as competition intensifies, institutions are “engaging in professional marketing activities” rather than enriching the educational and social offering to society.
- ❖ **Moore (2006)** suggests the way that higher education institutions might manage ethics is to “rely primarily upon and encourage, the integrity of staff”. In doing so, universities' own values in relation to their purpose become clear which need to be promoted and reinforced through the behaviour of *all* the staff.
- ❖ **Final Report UNESCO. (2002)** cited that the World Conference on Higher Education 1998 which was attended by 5,000 participants from 182 states with 30 Ministers of Education agreed that: “Higher education should be considered as a public service. While diversified sources of funding, private and public, are necessary, public support for higher education and research remains essential to ensure a balanced achievement of its educational and social missions.”
- ❖ According to **C.Premasai**, establishing and running an educational institution is a Fundamental Right of Occupation guaranteed under Section 19(1)(g) of the Constitution. According to Article

19(6) of the Constitution, the State can make regulations and impose reasonable restrictions in public interest. The Honble Supreme Court has observed that- *“Education accepted as a useful activity, whether for charity or for profit, is an occupation. Nevertheless, it does not cease to be a service to the society. And even though an occupation, it cannot be equated to a trade or a business”*.

Gap Analysis:

The review of literature exhibits that in our country a few studies have been conducted regarding ethical aspects in marketing of higher educational institutions. Moreover the impact of commercialization and its marketing practices in the higher educational institutions has not been emphasized as yet. This study is an addition to the existing literature and there is scope for further research about the ethical issues in marketing of higher educational institutions.

OBJECTIVE:

To identify whether there exists any difference between the parents’ perception of educational practices in HEIs within and outside Assam.

Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference between the parent’s perception of educational practices in HEIs within and outside Assam.

Rationality:

Due to commercialization and privatization of education, violation in the education sector has increased all over the country which has made it a luxurious product affordable by the high income group of consumers only. This section of the society push their way into the most reputed and promising institutions of higher education within and outside the state without bothering to either investigate into or voice their opinion against malpractices in these institutions. This has created problems for the middle and lower income groups of stakeholders in finding a guaranteed place in good HEIs.

METHODOLOGY:

The Population of the study is confined to the parents belonging to six professional groups which include: Academicians, Lawyers, Doctors, Engineers, Entrepreneurs/ Businessmen and Executive/ Officers within the geographical area of Dibrugarh Town, employed in government and semi- government organizations with an average salary ranging from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 50,000 and above per month, considering them to be a representative section of people who can afford higher education of their wards within or outside Assam. Population is determined by obtaining employee lists from the selected organisations. The sample design for the study is Judgmental Sampling, a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher selects units to be sampled based on their knowledge and professional judgment. This sampling is used as the population for the study is homogeneous from the point of view of income.

The sample size included in the study is 323 i.e. approximately 19% of the total population of 1697. The adequate sample size for a population of 2000 in the categorical data was found to be 323 at 5% margin of error as compared in the sample size determination table developed by Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins. Therefore a sample of 323 was accepted as the final sample size of the study. The universe and sample plan, based on the above guidelines, have been depicted in table 1.1.

Method of Data Collection:

A structured close-ended questionnaire was distributed among the sample respondents for collection of primary data followed by face-to-face interactions with the sample respondents for drawing deeper insight into the matter under survey; secondary data has been collected from various related literature and official records and publications of the selected organizations.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS:

The Relative Frequencies of the parents’ perceptions of educational practices in HEIs within and outside Assam

were calculated and perceptions were compared with the help of bar charts. The impact of educational practices on parents’ perception has been calculated on the basis of impact index. The hypothesis is judged on the basis of impact index as the data are obtained on a five-point ordinal scale.

Impact Index:

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is a predictor of consumer spending and economic growth at the macro level. Originally developed by Claes Fornell, this index was used for measuring customer satisfaction in a ten point scale. It has been modified to a five point scale as given below for measuring the impact level of different factors in the present study.

LEVEL	RANGE	IMPACT LEVEL
Level I	0% - 20%	No Impact
Level II	20% - 40%	Some Impact
Level III	40% - 60%	Moderate
Level IV	60% - 80%	High Impact
Level V	80% - 100%	Maximum Impact

Total Weighted Scores = 5 x SA + 4 x A + 3 x N + 2 x D + 1 x SD.

(SA stands for Strongly Agree; A stands for Agree; N stands for Neutral; D stands for Disagree; SD stands for Strongly Disagree.)

Maximum Scores = Total no. of respondents x 5.

Formula for calculating the Impact Index is:

$$\text{Impact Index (IT)} = \frac{\text{TotalWeightedScore}}{\text{MaximumScor}} \times 100$$

$$\text{IT} = \sum_i \frac{mi}{ri} \times 100$$

Content Validity of Questionnaire:

The questionnaire constructed was based on the 7 Ps of service marketing as depicted in figure 1.1.

- **Product:** For the purpose of the study, Product constitutes the various courses provided by the HEIs and their course contents.
- **Price:** The components of Price, for the study, include admission fees, hostel fees and all other expenses related to education during the period of pursuing a course of study.
- **Place:** Place refers to the location of the HEI.
- **Promotion:** HEIs need to inform the market about its offerings with the help of multiple sets of channels. These channels consist of advertising through – word of mouth, newspapers, internet, etc.
- **People:** People in HEIs include faculties, administrative and other support staff who interact with prospective and existing students before, during and after the enrolment.
- **Process:** Process is related to the delivery of services which include the administrative and formal functions of the HEIs like admission procedures, transparency of operation, requests for registration, examination and evaluation, etc.
- **Physical Evidence:** Physical evidence in HEIs indicates the infrastructural arrangements required to ensure a conducive teaching-learning process. That apart, degree certificates can also be considered physical evidence.

The service marketer encounters many challenges in the form of heterogeneity of the services, requirements of customers, interaction with customers while delivering service, perishability of service and intangibility of offer, etc. These unique characteristics of services necessitate the extension of scope of marketing mix in higher education sector.

INCOME ANALYSIS OF THE PARENTS:

The monthly income of the respondents justifies the affordability of the respondent in facilitating higher education to their children/wards.

The population is based on a particular economic stratum of people. Taking into consideration the accepted rule of B.E., M.B.B.S. equivalent to M.A., M.Sc., M.Com. as the minimum qualification, people employed to salaried jobs of government and semi-government organisations have been found to get an average salary

between Rs.15,000 – Rs.50,000 per month. Considering this to be an economic class, who can afford higher education for their wards, professionals in this category has been taken as the population. It was found that the income of the respondents from the aforesaid six select professional groups range between Rs.30,000 and above Rs.1,05,000 per month. This justifies that the income of the respondent is adequate enough to afford higher education for their wards.

Preference for Place of Education of Children (Considered as Place Factor of Marketing Mix):

The table 1.2 highlights the preference for place of higher education of children based on the monthly income of respondents.

- The table translates that 75% of parents in the income group of Above Rs.1,05,000 prefer HEIs within Assam, followed by 73%, 56% & 55% of parents in income groups of Rs.30,000- Rs.45,000 ; Rs.90,000- Rs.1,05,000 ; and Rs.75,000- Rs.90,000 respectively as compared to outside Assam.
- It has been observed that 55% and 54% of parents in the income group of Rs.60,000- Rs.75,000 and Rs.45,000- Rs.60,000 respectively prefer HEIs outside Assam as compared to within Assam.
- As noticed from the overall opinion of parents, the preference for place of HEIs for children is given to the institutions within Assam by 56% of parents as compared to 44% outside Assam irrespective of their income strata.

Preference for Status of Educational Institutions:

Table 1.3 depicts the responses of parents regarding the preference in status of HEIs for their wards.

- It has been found that 85% of the parents prefer State Universities for higher education within Assam as against 15% who prefer State Universities outside Assam.
- It has been revealed that 73% of the respondents prefer Central Universities for higher education outside Assam as against 27% who prefer Central Universities within Assam.
- It was found that 65% of parents preferred Private Universities for higher education of their wards outside Assam to 35% within Assam. Interestingly, this indicates that the Private Universities within the State are not relied upon by the parents as much as those outside the State.
- Therefore, in sum, it can be stated that the status of State University for higher education is most preferred by 44% of parents followed by 31% in case of Central University and 13% in case of Private University.

Reasons for choosing Higher Educational Institution:

Table 1.4 highlights the reasons for choosing a particular institution by the parents.

It has been revealed that among the reasons for choosing HEIs for their wards, 47% of parents prefer HEIs with better teaching facilities, 26% with better infrastructure and 25% with higher job prospects. Moreover it has been noticed that there is not much difference in the reasons for choosing HEIs within and outside Assam.

Types of Courses Preferred (Considered as Product Factor of Marketing Mix):

Table 1.5 depicts the preference of parents towards various courses for their wards.

The table reveals that Graduation, Post Graduation and Medical are the most preferred courses chosen by the parents for their wards within Assam whereas Engineering, Law and other professional courses are most preferred outside Assam.

Comparison of Overall Educational Practices Based on Professions:

The comparison of overall educational practices (as mentioned in table 1.6) in the HEIs within and outside Assam on the basis of six professional clusters has been presented in table 1.6a & 1.6b in a summated form.

Discussions of table 1.6a & 1.6b:

Table 1.6a reveals that 47% (40% + 7%) of parents belonging to the Executives cluster, agree that the educational practices are prevalent in the HEIs within Assam followed by 40% of parents in the Doctors and Engineers clusters respectively.

On the other hand, Table 1.6b reveals that 53% (41% + 12%) of parents belonging to the Academicians cluster, agree that the discussed educational practices are prevalent in the HEIs outside Assam followed by 48% of parents in the Lawyers and Executives clusters respectively.

Overall, as shown in Figure 1.2 it can be construed that parents belonging to Doctors and Entrepreneurs clusters have similar perception about the prevalence of the above- discussed educational practices in the HEIs within

and outside Assam. However, parents belonging to the Academicians and Lawyers clusters perceive that these practices are more prevalent in the HEIs outside Assam.

Impact Index:

The hypothesis set for the study has been judged with the help of impact index:

Overall Impact Index of Educational Practices Within and Outside Assam

- Table 1.7a shows that the overall impact index of the educational practices in the HEIs within Assam as perceived by the parents is 63.20%. It indicates that the impact of the educational practices within Assam is high as it is 63%, which falls in level –IV i.e. high impact.
- Table 1.7b shows that the overall impact index of the educational practices in the HEIs outside Assam as perceived by the parents is 66.55%. It telegraphs that the impact of the educational practices outside Assam is high as it is 67%, which falls in level –IV i.e. high impact.
- Therefore, on comparison of the overall index, it is found that the index stands at 63% within Assam and 67% outside Assam which falls in level- IV i.e. high impact. It indicates that there is no difference in the educational practices of the HEIs within and outside Assam as perceived by the parents in order to take their decision regarding the choice of HEIs.

Factor-wise comparison of Impact Index of Educational Practices of Higher Educational Institutions:

Out of the 7Ps of marketing mix, the first two Ps, Place and Product, have been analysed in sub points 1.10 and 1.13 respectively. Hence, they are not included in the impact index.

Five Parameters have been considered to judge the impact of marketing of educational practices in HEIs within and outside Assam and are depicted in table 1.8a & 1.8b.

- Based on parents' perception, the impact of price of services of HEIs within Assam is found to be 62.9% as compared to 62.17% outside Assam. The tables 1.8a & 1.8b reveal that the impact level with regard to price of the HEIs within and outside Assam is between 62% and 63% which is considered as high impact as it falls under level- IV i.e. high impact.
- As perceived by parents, the impact of promotion in respect of HEIs within Assam is found to be 67.34% as compared to 68.74% outside Assam. The tables 1.8a & 1.8b reveal that the impact level with regard to price of the HEIs within and outside Assam is between 67% and 69% which is considered as high impact as it falls under level- IV i.e. high impact.
- Parents perceive that the impact of process in respect of HEIs within Assam is found to be 65.06% as compared to 65.85% outside Assam. The tables 1.8a & 1.8b reveal that the impact level with regard to price of the HEIs within and outside Assam is between 65% and 66% which is considered as high impact as it falls under level- IV i.e. high impact.
- Based on parents' perception, the impact of physical evidence prevalent in HEIs within Assam is found to be 61.57% as compared to 66.45% outside Assam. The tables 1.8a & 1.8b reveal that the impact level with regard to physical evidence of the HEIs within and outside Assam is between 61% and 67% which is considered as high impact as it falls under level- IV i.e. high impact.
- The impact of people, as per parents' perception, with regard to HEIs within Assam is found to be 67.14% as compared to 72.47% outside Assam. The tables 1.8a & 1.8b reveal that the impact level with regard to people in respect of HEIs within and outside Assam is between 67% and 73% which is considered as high impact as it falls under level- IV i.e. high impact.
- The tables 1.7a & 1.7b reveal the overall impact level of various educational practices on the decisions of the parents regarding the HEIs within and outside Assam. Almost all the parameters depict a good picture as it is above sixty percent. It reveals that the combined impact index is as high as 63.20% within Assam and 66.55% outside Assam which falls in the Level – IV, i.e., good.

Major Findings of the Study:

A comparison of the educational practices, as perceived by the parents, in the HEIs within and outside Assam, have been done in a segregated form, based on the 7Ps of service marketing of which five parameters have been combined to fulfil the aforesaid objective. The findings thus derived indicate the following:

Based on Price:

- ❖ The data set for fee structure of the HEIs in respect of admission and hostel fees reveals that 44% of parents agree to the affordability of fees for higher education within Assam as compared to 37% for outside Assam.

Based on Promotion:

- ❖ The data set for advertising information that includes the informational sources for locating HEIs telegraphs that on an average 52% of parents agree that the sources (newspapers, leaflets; word of mouth; information brochures; edu fairs; internet; hoardings and Banners; and sponsoring of events) are relevant sources of information within Assam as compared to 54% for outside Assam. This indicates that the sources for locating HEIs is more or less similar within and outside Assam in the opinion of parents.
- ❖ It was also noticed that word-of-mouth, which is considered a very effective tool of information communication in marketing, proved to be a lesser effective promotional tool for advertisement about HEIs as perceived by parents; be it with regard to within Assam or outside Assam.
- ❖ In the opinion of parents, it has been found that Newspaper leaflets and internet are the highly rated sources for locating the HEIs both within and outside Assam.

Based on Process:

- ❖ The data set for admission procedure of the HEIs reflects that 40% of the parents believe that standard admission procedure is adopted in the HEIs both within and outside Assam for students' selection. Also the extent of uniformity is satisfactory in both the places.
- ❖ It has been found that above 60% of the parents believe that the preference for admission of candidates in HEIs both within and outside Assam depends largely on competitive exams and on merit.
- ❖ The data set for operational transparency reveals that 27% of the parents believe that HEIs are transparent in organizational practices within Assam as compared to 30% for outside Assam. This reveals that there is poor operational transparency in HEIs both within and outside Assam; and this is slightly higher in case of HEIs outside the State.
- ❖ It was also noticed that transparency is quite average with regard to employment, recruitment, collaboration and affiliation of the HEIs both within and outside the State.
- ❖ The effectiveness of RTI in HEIs both within and outside Assam was rated to be satisfactory by 50% of parents.

Based on Physical evidence:

- ❖ The data set for accommodation information translates that 40% of the parents found accommodation provided by the HEIs, its facilities and environment highly favorable for students within Assam as compared to 42% for outside Assam.
- ❖ The data set for teaching information of HEIs reflects that 33% of the parents agree that standard teaching aids are used, appropriate industry –institution interface takes place, there exists regularity in course duration, appropriate facilities are provided and that there exists ease in accessing them in the HEIs within Assam as compared to 44% for outside Assam.
- ❖ It has been revealed that the type of teaching aids - such as online education, industrial training, virtual learning environment, etc.- were found to be least satisfactory by the parents. Also the facilities provided were opined to be not easily accessible by the students. This was similar for both within and outside Assam.

Based on People:

- ❖ The data set for academic information of HEIs telegraphs that 38% of the parents highly agree to the appropriateness of faculty qualification and permanency, standard strength of the class, appropriate infrastructure, teacher –student relation and type of task given to students in HEIs within Assam, as compared to 46% for outside Assam.

The impact index calculated shows that the impact level of the five Ps of service marketing regarding the HEIs within and outside Assam, depicts a good picture as it is above sixty percent. It reveals that the combined impact index is as high as 63.20% within Assam and 66.55% outside Assam which falls in the level- IV, i.e. good.

Areas for Improvement:

The areas where parents believe need improvement in the HEIs, based on the present study, are as follows:

- ✓ Academic staff should be increased: The HEIs should have sufficient academic staff so that they may not be overloaded with work. The parents suggest that if the faculty- student ratio is appropriate, then they can pay attention to the students' development and guide them properly.
- ✓ Proper laboratory with proper infrastructure: There should be Proper Laboratory and infrastructure facilities easily available to the students so that they may not face problems during their practicals.
- ✓ Syllabus should be updated according to need: The courses and syllabii should be updated from time to time so that the students can cope up with the new challenges in the job market.

- ✓ Continuous motivational talks for students: Frequent motivational sessions should be conducted for the students during their course curriculum so as to motivate them to achieve excellence.
- ✓ Malpractices must be minimized: By having a strict and proper legal framework of the governing and statutory bodies the malpractices can be minimized.
- ✓ More emphasis should be given to practical approach: Initiatives should be taken for practical and field based learning to make the students well equipped with the application of theories.
- ✓ Ethical values in teaching must be considered: Ethical values should be a part of the teaching process so that the students can distinguish between right and wrong deeds in their work environment.
- ✓ More emphasis on quality education rather than profit making: The main objective of HEIs should be quality education and creating a brand image in quality and excellence.

Model Based on SWOT Analysis:

Certain findings of the study have been grouped into different parameters to develop a model named AAFATT (i.e. Advertisement, Admissions, Fees, Accommodation, Transparency in operation and Teaching). The model is based on a SWOT analysis of the various findings.

Model 1: AAFATT Model based on SWOT Analysis

	STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESSES (W)	OPPRUTUNITIES (O)	THREATS (T)
Advertisement → A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisement sources most accessed by parents and most used by HEIs. ✓ Internet, ✓ Newspapers and Leaflets, ✓ Information Brochures, ✓ Edu-Fairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misleading advertisements. • False promises about placements • False statement of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Campus and infrastructure, ✓ Affiliation and Accreditation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASCI Guidelines for Advertising of Educational Institutions and Programs. • National Authority for Regulation in Accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions, Bill 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less effective legal and regulatory framework.
Admissions → A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State- Level Competitive Examination. • Nation-wide competitive Examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Uniformity in admissions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination system as per the concerned regulating bodies of HE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biased selection of candidates.
Fee → F		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging unreasonable fees from non-residential students. • Capitation fees. • Non-refund of full amount in case of not joining. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AICTE Regulation. • Apex Court 2003 regulation. • Educational Tribunals Act 2010 (Proposed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy to HEIs in fee fixation.
Acco moda tion → A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to hostel facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory and regulating bodies of the HEIs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of students protection.
Transparan cy in operation → T		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of students and Recruitment process of staff. • Collaboration and Affiliation information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTI 	

Teaching process → T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy in teaching process. • Qualified and competent faculty members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Industrial Training. • Lack in online education and virtual learning environment. • Lack of accessibility to modern teaching aids. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid developments in Knowledge and Technology Infrastructure across the globe. 	
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Inference to the Hypothesis:

The impact index calculated shows that the impact level of educational practices of HEIs on parents choice of institution within and outside Assam - taking into consideration the five Ps of service marketing - depicts a good picture as it is above sixty percent. It reveals that the combined impact index is as high as 63.20% within Assam and 66.55% outside Assam which falls in level- IV, i.e. good. Therefore it reveals that the parents have similar perceptions about the educational practices of HEIs within and outside Assam. Thus the findings conform to the Hypothesis “there is no significant difference between the parents’ perception of ethics in educational practices of higher educational institutions within and outside Assam”.

SUGGESTIONS:

General Sugesstions:

- Besides education boards, UGC and similar bodies that work independently to govern the educational system, screening committees can be formed, with representations from the aforesated institutions, at the unit level to supervise and control educational malpractices.
- Standards for use of modern technology as teaching aid and for academic purposes should be fixed by the regulatory bodies like UGC, in order to maintain parity among the educational institutions.
- HEIs should maintain parity with their global counterparts with regard to course structure and functioning.
- Faculty exchange and student exchange programmes to improve the teaching-learning process should be made a regular feature of all HEIs and should be made mandatory just like Refresher and Orientation courses.
- Emphasis should be given to build strong industry- academia relationship.
- Higher education should include more job-oriented courses for offering better placement opportunities.
- Awareness programmes about the ethical and legal perspective of education should be conducted either by the government, regulatory bodies, NGOs and also the HEIs for parents, students and the public at large.
- It should be made mandatory for all HEIs to include the legal provisions relating to all promises and procedures contained in any form of promotion and advertising medium.

Suggestions based on the AAFATT Model:

Advertisement → A	All information provided by the HEIs to students and parents through various advertising media should be true and fair. The ASCI guidelines for advertising of educational Institutions and Programs should be strictly followed by the HEIs so as to avoid misleading advertisements for attracting students. The National Authority for Regulation in Accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2009, should also be considered for proper affiliation and accreditation.
Admissions → A	Admissions should be taken by considering the examination norms as per the concerned bodies to avoid biases in admission procedure. Selection of candidates for admission should be based on merit and competitive exams and organisation-wide examinations must be avoided. The admission norms of private institutions should be in line with government institutions to maintain uniformity in admissions.
Fee → F	HEIs should charge reasonable fees during admissions and hostel accommodation. Fixation of fee should be done as per the rules mandated by the statutory and governing bodies to avoid malpractices. The concerned bodies should construct a team in every individual institutions so as to keep a check on the activities of the HEIs and provide fair report to the concerned higher bodies for necessary action. The AICTE Regulation, Apex Court 2003 Regulations and Educational Tribunals Act 2010 should be considered while charging extra fees, capitation fess and for non- refund of total fees in case the student does not join.

<p>Accomodation →A</p>	<p>HEIs should provide a list for hostel accommodation to the students during admissions. They should give proper information related to facilities provided in the hostel and the ease of accessing the facilities. Strict regulations required for all HEIs admitting outstation candidates to have proper accommodation arrangements for operating or getting license. The authorities should check that the facilities provided should be availed by the students truly and if any safety measures are violated in the hostels, strict actions should be taken. Provision should be made by the concerned authority to issue guidelines for working and management of non- institutional and private hostels. Only those hostels complying with the guidelines should be permitted and given license for running hostels.</p>
<p>Transparancy in Operation → T</p>	<p>The operations of the HEIs should be transparent. Various guidelines have been stated by the concerned bodies for employment of students and recruitment process of staff and collaborations. The provisions for RTI should be considered by the parents, students and all other stakeholders for checking the transparency of the organisation.</p>
<p>Teaching process → T</p>	<p>HEIs should provide Internet zone within the institutional campus, ensuring the ease of accessibility to the students. There should be industrial training programmes and workshops for students on compulsory basis for giving them hands-on and practical work experience. Due to rapid developments in knowledge and technology infrastructure across the globe, organisations need to upgrade their teaching- learning infrastructure continually (for example; video/tele- conference classes may be made possible in the absence of the faculty).</p>

CONCLUSION:

So far as the various components and features of higher education are concerned, not much difference has been noticed in the parents’ perception regarding their availability and provisions made for facilitation of the same in institutions both within and outside the state of Assam. In spite of this, literature reveals statistics (relating to student outflow) that is not in favour of the Higher Education Sector of Assam. There tends to be quite a significant section of the student population, hailing from the state, who move out to other parts of the country every year for getting higher degrees. The more concerning fact is that the students who hold better score-sheets have a greater tendency to seek admissions in institutions outside the state. Moreover, the glam and glory of the large number of private players in education, outside Assam, are so tactfully placed in the limelight that the comparatively lesser populace of higher educational institutions (mostly Government initiated) within Assam happen to lack attention of both the students as well as their wards. As such, there is a felt need to project the institutions of the state in a more attractive and extensive manner. Also, more of public as well as private initiatives in developing nationally and globally competitive Higher Educational Institutions within Assam needs to be strategized with an aim to attract students from within and across the state as well as the country.

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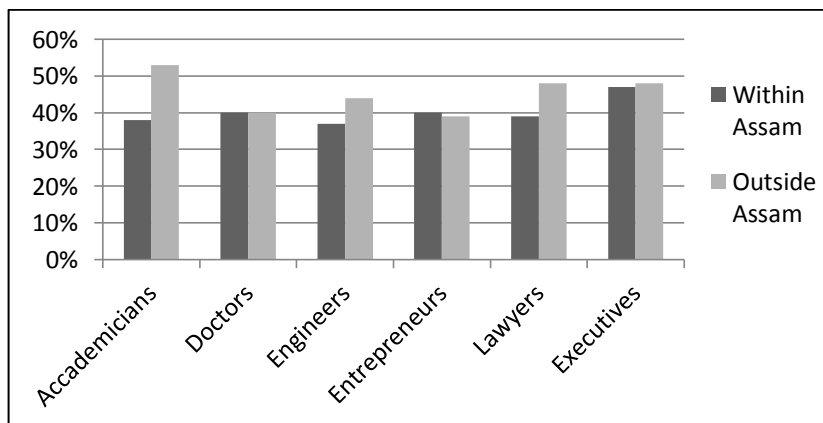
FIGURES

Figure 1.1: 7Ps of Marketing Mix in Higher Educational Institutions:



Source: Self Developed

Figure 1.2: Cluster-wise comparison of overall educational practices in the Higher Educational Institutions within and outside Assam.



Source: Compiled from survey data

TABLES

Table 1.1: Universe & Sample Plan of the Study.

No.	Basic Category	Professional Organisations	Population	Sample 19%
1.	Academicians	Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh	114	22
		DHSK Commerce College, Dibrugarh	26	5
		DHSK College, Dibrugarh	79	15
		DHSK Law College, Dibrugarh	13	2
		MDK Girls College, Dibrugarh	41	8
		Total	273	52
2.	Lawyers	Bar Association, Dibrugarh	380	72
		Total	380	72
3.	Doctors	Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh	304	58
		Total	304	58
4.	Engineers	P.W.D. National Highway (NH), Dibrugarh.	59	11
		P.W.D. Roads, Dibrugarh.	115	22
		Total	174	33
5.	Entrepreneurs/ Businessmen	Eastern Assam Chamber of Commerce, Dibrugarh.	100	19
		Total	100	19
6.	Executives / Officers (Management & Administrative)	Life Insurance Corporation of India, Dibrugarh.	69	13
		United Bank of India, Dibrugarh.	54	10
		Income Tax Department of India, Dibrugarh.	62	12
		BSNL, Dibrugarh.	281	54
		Total	466	89
7.	GRAND TOTAL		1697	323

Table 1.2: Preference for place of Education of Children.

Sl. No.	Income Groups (per month)	Within Assam (%)	Outside Assam (%)	Total (%)
1.	Rs.30,000- Rs.45,000.	73	27	14
2.	Rs.45,000- Rs.60,000.	46	54	21
3.	Rs.60,000- Rs.75,000.	45	55	14
4.	Rs.75,000- Rs.90,000.	55	45	26
5.	Rs.90,000- Rs.1,05,000.	56	44	18
6.	Above Rs.1,05,000	75	25	7
	Total	56	44	100

Source: Compiled from survey data

Table 1.3: Preference for Status of Educational Institutions

Sl. No.	Status of Higher Educational Institutions	Within Assam (%)	Outside Assam (%)	Total (%)
1.	State University.	85	15	44
2.	Central University.	27	73	31
3.	Private University.	35	65	13
4.	Multiple.	44	56	12
	Total	56	44	100

Source: Compiled from survey data.

Table 1.4: Reasons for choosing Higher Educational Institution

Sl. No.	Reasons for Choosing Higher Educational Institution.	Within Assam (%)	Outside Assam (%)	Total(%)
1.	Higher Job Prospects	13	14	25

2.	Easy Entry.	08	02	10
3.	Better Teaching Facilities.	27	21	47
4.	Better infrastructure.	12	14	26
5.	More Exposure.	03	12	15
6.	Brand Name.	04	02	06
7.	Lesser Course Fees.	06	02	08
8.	More Alternatives Available. (more choice of subjects)	05	05	10

Source: Compiled from survey data

Table 1.5: Types of Courses Preferred

Sl. No.	Courses offered	Within Assam (%)	Outside Assam (%)	Total (%)
1.	Graduation	62.4	37.6	31.27
2.	Post Graduation	64.7	35.3	5.26
3.	Medical	82.6	17.4	7.12
4.	Engineering	37.2	62.8	13.31
5.	Management	58.9	41.1	17.34
6.	Law	45.0	55.0	6.19
7.	Other Professional Courses	46.03	53.97	19.50
	Total	55.7	44.3	100%

Source: Compiled from survey data

Table 1.6: Educational Practices in the Higher Educational Institutions

Sl. No.	Educational Practices	Sl. No.	Educational Practices
1	Advertisement Index	9	Operational Transparency Index
2	Selection Index	10	Faculty Qualification Index
3	Preference For Admission Index	11	Task Of Student Index
4	Admission Fee Index	12	Teaching Aids Index
5	Hostel Fee Index	13	Industry Institution Interface Index
6	Type Of Hostel Index	14	Regularity In Course Index
7	Hostel Facilities Index	15	Education Facilities Index
8	Hostel Environment Index		

Table 1.6a: Cluster-wise comparison of educational practices within Assam

Sl. No.	Professional Clusters	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1	Academicians	9	18	36	30	8
2	Doctors	9	13	39	35	5
3	Engineers	8	18	36	31	6
4	Entrepreneurs	7	16	36	31	9
5	Lawyers	10	15	35	31	8
6	Executives	7	13	32	40	7

Source: Compiled from survey data

Table 1.6b: Cluster-wise comparison of educational practices outside Assam

Sl. No.	Professional Clusters	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1	Academicians	6	10	31	41	12
2	Doctors	7	10	43	34	6
3	Engineers	5	14	37	34	10
4	Entrepreneurs	5	12	43	29	10
5	Lawyers	7	11	34	37	11

6	Executives	7	12	34	39	9
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Source: Compiled from survey data

Table 1.7a: Overall Impact Index of Educational Practices within Assam

Sl. No	Educational Practices	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total Scores	Maximum Scores	Impact index%
1	Advertisement Index	166	270	666	886	273	7613	11305	67.34
2	Selection Index	65	85	312	408	99	3298	4845	68.07
3	Preference For Admission Index	103	269	513	568	162	5262	8075	65.16
4	Admission Fee Index	118	295	647	736	142	6303	9690	65.05
5	Hostel Fee Index	154	303	599	480	79	4872	8075	60.33
6	Type Of Hostel Index	196	319	582	446	72	4724	8075	58.50
7	Hostel Facilities Index	293	401	1073	898	242	9116	14535	62.72
8	Hostel Environment Index	175	262	629	454	95	4877	8075	60.40
9	Operational Transparency Index	151	204	890	543	150	6151	9690	63.48
10	Faculty Qualification Index	121	133	332	316	67	2982	4845	61.55
11	Task Of Student Index	91	112	395	893	124	5692	8075	70.49
12	Teaching Aids Index	234	494	1046	969	164	9056	14535	62.30
13	Industry Institution Interface Index	159	450	962	607	83	6788	11305	60.04
14	Regularity In Course Index	186	354	639	632	127	5974	9690	61.65
15	Education Facilities Index	219	517	1214	1115	165	10180	16150	63.03
	Overall Index	2431	4468	10499	9951	2044	92888	146965	63.20

Source: Compiled from survey data

Table 1.7b: Overall Impact Index of Educational Practices outside Assam

Sl. No.	Educational Practices	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total Scores	Maximum Scores	Impact index%
1	Advertisement Index	156	262	624	876	343	7771	11305	68.74
2	Selection Index	39	81	329	423	97	3365	4845	69.45
3	Preference For Admission Index	117	248	530	551	169	5252	8075	65.04
4	Admission Fee Index	155	270	724	651	138	6161	9690	63.58
5	Hostel Fee Index	167	268	635	449	96	4884	8075	60.48
6	Type Of Hostel Index	169	262	626	427	131	4934	8075	61.10
7	Hostel Facilities Index	185	251	1036	1120	315	9850	14535	67.77
8	Hostel Environment Index	153	186	689	486	101	5041	8075	62.43
9	Operational Transparency Index	110	197	873	641	117	6272	9690	64.73
10	Faculty Qualification Index	62	90	331	364	122	3301	4845	68.13

11	Task Of Student Index	41	70	365	909	230	6062	8075	75.07
12	Teaching Aids Index	130	229	1056	1154	338	10062	14535	69.23
13	Industry Institution Interface Index	105	246	912	860	136	7453	11305	65.93
14	Regularity In Course Index	179	255	697	669	138	6146	9690	63.43
15	Education Facilities Index	79	273	1230	1307	341	11248	16150	69.65
	Overall Index	1847	3188	10657	10887	2812	97802	146965	66.55

Source: Compiled from survey data

Table 1.8a: Impact of marketing factors Within Assam

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total Scores	Maximum Scores	Impact index %
Price Index	272	598	1246	1216	221	11175	17765	62.9
Promotional Index	166	270	666	886	273	7613	11305	67.34
Process Index	319	558	1715	1519	411	14711	22610	65.06
Physical Evidence Index	1462	2797	6145	5121	948	50715	82365	61.57
People Index	212	245	727	1209	191	8674	12920	67.14
overall Index	2431	4468	10499	9951	2044	92888	146965	63.20

Source: Compiled from survey data

Table 1.8b: Impact of marketing factors outside Assam

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total Scores	Maximum Scores	Impact index %
Price Index	322	538	1359	1100	234	11045	17765	62.17
Promotional Index	156	262	624	876	343	7771	11305	68.74
Process Index	266	526	1732	1615	383	14889	22610	65.85
Physical Evidence Index	1000	1702	6246	6023	1500	54734	82365	66.45
People Index	103	160	696	1273	352	9363	12920	72.47
Overall Index	1847	3188	10657	10887	2812	97802	146965	66.55

Source: Compiled from survey data
