Global or disconnected futures?
The challenges of communicating and understanding in a segmented world.

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Prepared by The Knowledge Partnership Asia

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Overview

- Significance of culture in international education marketing communications
- Strategic implications - need for analysis via education segmentation
- Examples, education market segmentation in action
✓ It all looks the same from up there......But it isn’t .....  
✓ Its much more than a cliché to be truly global  
✓ One world – many education markets, not well defined ....And what’s more  
✓ West going East ....  
✓ Markets now within markets, regional mobility – blurring of lines e.g. Singapore.....
Many sellers but not many connect (customise) for specific markets

Modest sector differentiation (cast indistinct images beyond location, history).

Increasingly not generic international country markets (if there ever was).

Multiple patterns of international student mobility (regionalism and reverse migration increasing).

Students increasingly seek valued differentiation – prove it is good for me.

Institutions struggle with alignment to global student markets – is market A or B a better fit for us and why?
Value is determined by the student.
# It Starts at Home...Sample Differences between Asian/Middle Eastern & Western Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family ties:</th>
<th>Asia/Middle East</th>
<th>West</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong - Live with close relatives</td>
<td>Weak - Live in nuclear or often one-parent families</td>
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| Children:           | Family provides protection in exchange for lifelong loyalty | Supposed to take care of themselves as soon as possible |

| Opinions:           | Opinions predetermined collectively | Personal opinions expected |

| Communications:     | Relatively indirect to maintain harmony. Respecting an individual’s honour and saving face are key drivers | Speaking one's mind is characteristic of an honest person |

| Friendships:        | Personal relationships are highly valued in Middle Eastern culture. Long-lasting + trust | Lasting friendships can be difficult to achieve. |
Asian Social Etiquette 101

✓ DO SMILE as smiling is considered polite.

✓ DO say Thank You - Saying *terima kasih (thank you) after receiving services or favours is polite.*

✓ DO always use your right hand, when shaking hands, offering a gift, handing or receiving something, eating, pointing or generally touching another person.

✓ DO bring gifts as a kind gesture if you are meeting somebody for the first time, as this is widely appreciated (i.e. something from your home country such as chocolates, university’s memorabilia – t-shirts, magnets, cups, etc).
DON’T overstay your welcome. The host will not indicate when the visit has been long enough, since it is considered extremely rude. It is up to the guest to estimate the length of their visit and initiate the farewell.

DON’T offer to shake the hand of opposite sex, unless they offer their hands first.

DON’T be late - Always be on time, if not early.

Concept of “Face” in Asian cultures - An intentional lack of directness in conversation is favored by people from many Asian cultures because preserving harmony between people is often more important than getting at exact “truth”. (E.g. at education fairs, it is not pleasant to reject a student admission into the university based on poor grades, especially with many other students around, but wiser to provide and encourage this student with other possible educational options)
Middle Eastern Social Etiquette 101

✓ DO be aware that Middle Eastern people tend to use closer physical proximity when communicating than Westerners. It can be perceived as impolite if you back up.

✓ DO - Initial greetings among Arabs usually begin with handshake and customary greeting “As-salam alaikum,” (peace be upon you) to which the reply is “Wa alaikum as-salam,” (and upon you be peace). As relationships developed into friendships, not uncommon for handshakes to be accompanied by a hug or kiss of the cheek. In Arab society, you should wait for the woman to extend her hand first.

✓ DO show respect towards your Middle Eastern students by taking a sensitive approach to appropriate behaviour and cultural gestures. (E.g. Using the left hand to pass something, drinking alcohol or eating pork while in presence of your Middle Eastern students should be avoided.)

✓ DO dress suitably and conservative in manner. Especially important for women, who must wear modest clothing that covers arms and legs. A headscarf is also advisable.
DON’T criticise your Middle Eastern student in front of his peers, as this may cause loss of face and harm individual’s sense of honour.

DON’T schedule any meetings during holy month of Ramadan if at all possible as activities tends to be reduced. Although foreigners are not required to fast, it is considered impolite to eat or drink in front of others during this time.

DON’T give “thumbs up” sign while in Middle East (considered an offensive gesture).

DON’T inquire too much about a male student’s wife or female relatives. To a traditional Arab male, not considered a topic for public conversation but a private matter and could be taken offensively. Polite to inquire about family as long as they are not female.
Assumptions Westerners Make about Effective HE Communications - Do they apply elsewhere and if so how?

- Education intangible and experiential, so explain face-to-face.
- Communicating education brands best done through education concepts-programs, teaching, learning, pedagogy, staffing etc.
- ‘Softer’ aspects significant part of effective positioning (emotional connect).
- Advertising does not build reputation (awareness, yes).
- Web-based typically leads institutional communications
- Third parties referral works best (stimulating word of mouth e.g. graduates).
- Stakeholder management builds reputation
- Evidence of successful students impacts seriously e.g. impact on society.
- Student centric (benefits/outcomes) beats any (almost) loud noise branding.
Examples of International HE Communication Nuances
(Generally Speaking...)

- Education fairs/talks – more opportunities for face-to-face interactions.
- On-campus (schools/uni) visits.
- Posters (must not be too long and wordy).
- Eye catching ads – must be real to audience, mean something to them rather than just another ad.
- Word of mouth – hearing about others’ experience at universities very useful (first hand- trust factor).
- Presence of a local office/in-country staff.
- Online channels:
  - Email campaigns good so long as not SPAM. Participants also prefer specific university contact that they can relate to, liaise with and respond to.
  - Search engine results (Paid/Organic), many would click on results that feature highly in Google search. Few look at other pages beyond current search results page.
  - Website – local language translation
- Use of Mobile media: mobile apps, opt-in SMS notifications, QR Codes
  - Apps should be fun not serious – if not, will not reach intended audience. university
  - No SMS – participants feel an invasion of their privacy. It feels too ‘cheap’ for promotion – acceptable for current students if it is tuition fees payment reminder.
  - Some markets are not familiar with the use of QR codes.
## Comparative Effectiveness of Communication Channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asian Markets</th>
<th>Middle East Markets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face (E.g. Education Fairs, Agents Visits)</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
<td>Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Media (E.g. Magazines &amp; Newspapers)</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-of-Mouth</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media (TV, Radio)</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Not Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online (E.g. Websites, Social Media)</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Media</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Not Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print (E.g. pamphlets, flyers, brochures and posters)</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videoconferencing</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Not Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>Not Effective</td>
<td>Not Effective</td>
</tr>
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</table>
So Let’s Segment and Get Connected

Segmentation means...

- Defining a market attributes/characteristics

- Only positively competing for those known to value highly something that you are consistently excellent at delivering

- Identify and customise for ‘student groups’

- Reaching audiences with differentiated programs/courses, services and communications.

Think Pizzas, Wine as a segmented market case studies !!
Ways to Segment an International Education Market

1. Geographic (location)
2. Demographic (age/sex)
3. Behavioural (motivators/expectations)
4. Psychographic (lifestyle)
Go after M.I. to discover....... 

A. Fundamental student motivations/expectations

B. Student concerns and barriers

C. Student choice factors

Weighting of factors is important (not just getting long lists)
Why Does Segmented and Aligned International Communications Matter?
Key Factors Of Considerations In Student Choice:

- Reputation & Rankings of universities.
- Recognition of Degrees by Professional Bodies.
- Country of degree.
- Cost of tuition fees.
- Employability.
- Cost of living (overseas) & Distance from Singapore.
- Amount of time taken to complete a degree (i.e. esp. for Diploma students from local polytechnics).
- Style of Learning (British-styled vs. Australian/NZ-styled vs. American-styled).
- Location of Institution (i.e. city, suburban, rural).
Market Segmentation – India

Key Factors Of Considerations In Student Choice:

- Reputation and rankings of universities.
- Availability of Scholarships / Scholarship opportunities.
- Cost of tuition fees.
- Cost of living.
- Country of degree.
- Currency exchange rate.
- Opportunities for work & internships.
- Ease of migration after graduation.
Key Factors Of Considerations In Student Choice:

- Reputation (Ivy League, Russell Group, Group of Eight).
- Availability of Scholarships / Scholarship opportunities.
- Country of degree (1st choice - USA, 2nd choice - UK, 3rd choice – Australia, 4th choice – other European countries).
- Affordability: Cost of tuition fees + Cost of living.
- Opportunities to find work (including part-time work during normal semester) in host country (with an option for migration).
- Familiarity with name of university (e.g. is this a popular university among my peers?, have my peers heard of this university before? Are there any negative vibes/comments about my university of choice?, etc).
- Recognition of Degrees by Professional Bodies.
Key Factors Of Considerations In Student Choice:

- University’s recognition by the Ministry of Higher Education.
- Availability of local government scholarships.
- Types of programs offered.
- Entry requirements.
- Country/city’s attitude towards Arabs (word-of-mouth from friends who had gone to a particular country or city to study).
- “Success-rate” of other Arab students who had previously studied there.
- Preference for major cities that are more vibrant and more ‘child-friendly’ (with plenty of different activities for the children).
- Child-care options (especially for those with young children).
- Education options for their accompanying children.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Level Segments/Descriptors: PG Example</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Next stepper</strong> - I have always wanted to do postgraduate studies as I see it seems a natural progression from my undergraduate studies.</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investor</strong> - Postgraduate qualifications will provide me an edge over other graduates in my field of interest in the employment market as I believe it to be very competitive.</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mogul</strong> - I believe postgraduate studies will make me more successful. It will open up more options for me in life whether it is better job opportunities, travel or a role in research or academia.</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forever Young</strong> * - I do not want to leave university even after I graduate. I enjoy university life too much and I'm not ready to move on yet.</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unfulfilled</strong> * - I feel I have not learnt enough as an undergraduate student and postgraduate studies will fill that gap.</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undecided</strong> * - I'm unsure of my directions in life and doing a postgraduate course is a good fallback to give me time to consider my options.</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specialist</strong> - I'm really passionate about my area of interest and postgraduate studies will allow me to pursue that even more. I enjoy the whole idea of life-long learning.</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dutiful child</strong> * - My family has strong expectations that I will do postgraduate studies. I feel obligated to do so even if I made the decision myself.</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egomaniac</strong> * - I think postgraduate studies will greatly improve my reputation and social standing. It is a prestigious thing to do and people look up to someone with a postgraduate qualification.</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paperchaser</strong> - I need postgraduate studies to advance any further in my current job/career. The piece of paper will give me what I need to go further or even change my career.</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>None of the above</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example - Indonesia, Malaysia

Online Social Media strategy:
✧ Tell stories about university, faculty and facilities, diversity of international students, social activities, food and entertainment, life on-campus through investment in social media – build up a resource of images and videos.
✧ Tailoring customized messaging for individual online social media platforms (what is acceptable on Twitter doesn’t necessarily works on Facebook).
✧ Videos and pictures via YouTube and Flickr (e.g. social activities, anything fun – student life related, course contents, application procedures, demo of a step-by-step guide to use the online learning platform).
✧ Blogging – creates online community for interaction and feedback among students and prospective students. Primary focus on student life, faculty/research updates, alumni and admissions news. e.g. US universities that blog.

✧ Why Social Media?
  • Facebook – Indonesia 4th (202.69% - penetration of online population), Malaysia - 19th (83.62%)
  • Twitter – Indonesia - 15 percent of the world’s Tweets (2.4 million), Malaysia (500k)
  • YouTube is where students search for videos. The videos have to be fun, not an academic lecture. Should profile the university, campus, student life, etc.

*BBC Report Indonesia as “one of the most twitter and Facebook friendly nations on Earth”*
Impact of Social Media in Middle East Markets

Example - Kuwait & UAE

• Use of Social Media among the highest and faster growing number of users in the world:
  • Twitter – Saudi Arabia is among the fastest growing users with 51% user penetration
  • Facebook – institution’s official page in Arabic, updates on events, latest news
  • Blogs – student life, faculty/research updates, alumni and admissions news
  • YouTube – short clips/comedy on the use of English, Arabic subtitles
  • Watwet - Arab social networking and mini-blogging platform - similar to Twitter
  • Linkedin Groups
  • Mobile Media - QR Codes in advertising in Middle East
Are overseas degree qualifications losing their shine?
CLOSE