

## Presentation of the Initial Model of Marketing of Iranian Universities

Fatemeh Nehzat<sup>1</sup>, Nadergholi Ghuorchiyani<sup>2\*</sup>, Amirhossein Mohammad Davoudi<sup>3</sup>, Kamran Mohammadhani<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PhD student in Higher Education Management, Department of Higher Educational Management, Faculty of Management and Economics, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2\*</sup> Professor, Department of Higher Educational Management, Faculty of Management and Economics, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. [Naghuorchiyani@gmail.com](mailto:Naghuorchiyani@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Humanities, Saveh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Saveh, Iran. [Adavoudi838@yahoo.com](mailto:Adavoudi838@yahoo.com)

<sup>4</sup> Professor, Department of Higher Educational Management, Faculty of Management and Economics, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

### Article History

**Submission Date:** 12 May 2022

**Revised Date:** 20 July 2022

**Accepted Date:** 28 September 2022

**Available Online:** December 2022

### JEL Classification:

### Keyword:

Marketing  
Educational Support  
Marketing of Higher Education  
Centers

### Abstract

Given that educational systems consume a significant portion of each country's budget, it is essential to ensure optimal performance quality to prevent the squandering of human and material resources and to foster the ability to compete in a future world where "marketing" stands as a paramount component for the survival of any organization. Hence, the researcher undertook the task of modeling the marketing strategies of Iranian universities.

This study adopts an applied approach, utilizing a mixed-methods design involving field data collection. The qualitative segment employs thematic analysis through two distinct avenues: content analysis of written documents and content analysis of interviews conducted with 11 experts. These experts, who are university professors and managers of knowledge-based companies, were selected using the snowball sampling method. Through semi-structured interviews, theoretical saturation was achieved. Subsequently, Maxqda 12 software was employed for data analysis.

In the quantitative phase, a descriptive-survey method was employed. A 44-question questionnaire was developed and administered to a cohort of 30 university presidents and managers of knowledge-based companies. The questionnaire's validity was ascertained through expert opinions in the field, and its reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha method. The resulting reliability coefficient of 0.821 indicates the questionnaire's satisfactory reliability.

Ultimately, the modeled framework for Iranian universities' marketing, encompassing both educational and non-educational dimensions, was subjected to validation by 20 experts. The evaluation yielded five dimensions: philosophy and goals (average score: 512.3), theoretical foundations (average score: 568.3), executive principles (average score: 452.3), evaluation systems (average score: 3.342), and executive mechanisms (average score: 739.3). The study's findings underscore that, among these dimensions, the educational dimension holds greater priority with a coefficient of 0.848, compared to the non-educational dimension with a coefficient of 690.0. Additionally, among the individual components, the education method emerged as the most pivotal, boasting a coefficient of 793.0 within the 12 identified components.

\* Corresponding Author: [Naghuorchiyani@gmail.com](mailto:Naghuorchiyani@gmail.com)

## Introduction

In various countries around the world, the comprehensive growth and development of a nation have been significantly enhanced by a robust higher education system. Consequently, educational planners are driven to continuously enhance its efficacy. To achieve this, the focus on higher education marketing has been central to university systems, serving as the core of their operations and initiatives in recent years (Aslani et al., 2019: 24). Despite recognizing the significance of customer orientation as the initial stride in advancing educational marketing programs, the intricate nature of the educational marketing concept, particularly in the realm of higher education, has led to a lack of consensus on this matter (Akbari, 2019: 105). Organizational challenges emerge when striving to deliver high-quality services that cater to a diverse array of demands from both domestic and international clientele, potentially varying and conflicting in nature (Soheil Sarv et al., 2018: 36). Professors and staff stand as pivotal factors in overseeing educational marketing within universities (Bolotov, 2019: 126). Neglecting these needs and expectations may result in diminished educational quality within higher education institutions, leading to customer dissatisfaction, reputational erosion, reduced competitive capacity, and compromised outcomes (Bourabian and Verhaeghe, 2021: 6). The diminishing role of government funding in higher education has necessitated greater competitiveness and market orientation among higher education institutions (Babaei Kasmai and Nadi, 2017: 57), propelling them towards a marketing-oriented approach. Addressing student issues and concerns and striving for their satisfaction assumes paramount importance, given their role in recommending the university and fostering educational tourism, potentially serving as a crucial marker of internationalization

(Al-Surmi, Cao, and Duan, 2020: 41). Models serve as guiding frameworks, thus a cohesive marketing model is indispensable to assist higher education institutions in managing student satisfaction across various domains, encompassing products, services, communications, and marketing strategies (Lozano et al., 2021: 179). The absence of a suitable model to enhance university quality and its direct influence on student recruitment serves as the primary motivation for this research.

## Research Context:

Recognizing the significance of this issue, the need for high-quality credentials, and the country's aspiration for a stronger presence in the global higher education landscape, coupled with the aim to boost economic revenue, foster the growth of the higher education industry, and transition away from a dependency on oil-based economies, the researcher endeavors to contribute to university internationalization by presenting a marketing model for higher education institutions, aimed at attracting a larger student populace (Yavari Far et al., 2018: 35).

## Research Background:

A study titled "Government, marketing, and governance of higher education: Governance and Management of Higher Education in India" by Mathur (2020) explored marketing-related matters in higher education. The study, conducted with 132 university administrators, revealed that government and administrators significantly influence the education market in India, with governance primarily affecting the "product" (students), as they represent a key marketing factor in higher education.

Another study, "Investigation of the impact of marketing capabilities on company performance with the role of moderator of market orientation, strategic marketing, and organizational strength

(case study of Mino Company)" by Aslani et al. (2019), delved into marketing solutions in private companies. The research aimed to investigate the influence of marketing capabilities on company performance, incorporating market orientation, strategic marketing, and organizational strength as moderating factors in Mino Company. The findings underscored the significant impact of marketing capabilities, market orientation, strategic marketing, and organizational strength on performance.

### Research Methodology:

This study employs a mixed-method approach, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the qualitative phase, primary components were identified via thematic analysis, utilizing semi-structured interviews. The study's participants include experts in educational management and strategic marketing, with a track record of scholarly contributions and teaching experience in these domains. The criteria for inclusion encompassed a minimum of three years of experience in higher education, along with a doctoral degree in educational management and strategic marketing. The study employs purposive sampling, a non-random selection method aimed at specific cases (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2003: 96), resulting in 11 experts participating in the qualitative segment. Thematic analysis, facilitated by MAXQDA12 software, was applied to determine essential determinants of higher education marketing. Quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire featuring 44 items on a 5-

point Likert scale, targeting university presidents and knowledge-based company managers. Due to constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and time limitations, the sample was reduced to 100 individuals using a stepwise sampling approach.

The interviews, averaging 84 minutes each, were subjected to thematic analysis using MAXQDA12 software. The data underwent iterative coding, clustering similar codes into classes, and deriving themes. The involvement of multiple researchers, extended engagement with the data, and diverse sampling contributed to data validity. Qualitative content analysis was conducted using MAXQDA12, while structural equations were analyzed with SmartPLS3 software and model validity was assessed using SPSS25.

### Results:

This section delves into the components of marketing for higher education centers, derived from interviews with 11 experts. Thematic analysis was conducted through open, axial, and selective coding, facilitated by MAXQDA software. In the open coding phase, interviews were transcribed and entered into the software, with open codes assigned to each sentence. This yielded 72 initial themes, later condensed to 44 final open codes and 12 axial codes categorized under two selected dimensions. These dimensions pertain to the marketing of higher education centers. The 11 interviews yielded a total of 205 semi-structured references, culminating in 44 open-coded themes extracted from the initial 72 basic themes.

Row	Extractive Indicators (initial open codes)	Interviewee code
1	The importance of having a good and professional instructors	I10, I6, I5, I1, I7
2	The importance of having international instructors	I3, I11, I5
3	The relevance of the academic qualifications of instructors in universities with the courses offered	I9, I5, I4, I2, I11
4	Academic experience to teach at universities	I3, I4, I11, I54
5	Teaching methods of instructors in the university	I10, I8, I3
6	Use of international instructors	I10, I9, I1, I6, I11
7	The level of instructors' mastery of educational technologies	I6, I8, I10, I3, I4

Row	Extractive Indicators (initial open codes)	Interviewee code
8	How to provide educational content	I10, I8, I1, I3, I4
9	Educational content based on individual abilities	I3, I1, I5, I4, I6
10	Total opinions of professors and students based on each discipline	I2, I6, I10, I9
11	Educational content based on group activities	I11, I9, I10, I4, I5
12	Educational content based on team activities	I6, I1, I2
13	The time to use face-to-face defined facilities	I11, I7, I10, I3, I8
14	Educational scheduling by universities and students	I8, I3, I5, I4, I2
15	Time to use non-face-to-face facilities under the students and professors consideration	I4, I3, I2, I8, I6
16	Appropriate timing of lessons by professors and students	I3, I9, I5, I4, I21
17	Teaching methods of professors and student affairs	I5, I8, I7, I6, I4
18	Individual education based on advanced facilities	I5, I11, I4, I3
19	Group education (practical lessons)	I1, I2, I9, I7, I5
20	Educating through virtual networks	I8, I7, I11, I15
21	face-to-face training	I7, I3, I9, I10, I11
22	Evaluation of students	I1, I9, I1322
23	Face-to-face individual evaluation	I3, I7, I3
24	Non-face-to-face individual evaluation	I11, I3, I14, I2, I9
25	Face-to-face and non-face-to-face group evaluation	I10, I1, I2, I4
26	The role of employees in marketing	I6, I7, I5, I4
27	Hiring specialized staff in education and...	I10, I3, I8, I2
28	Hiring employees from graduates	I7, I5, I1, I7
29	Using students (in the form of student employees)	I11, I8, I4, I9
30	Providing in-service classes for employees	I4, I2, I6
31	Providing sports services in universities	I4, I2, I8, I5, I9
32	Providing sports services within the complex	I8, I2, I9, I1
33	Providing sports services outside the university (as a contract with sports facilities)	I11, I1, I3, I8, I6
34	Providing cultural and artistic services	I6, I9, I3, I21
35	Family counseling for students	I2, I1, I10, I7
36	entertainment services (student and family trips to places of entertainment and pilgrimage)	I5, I8, I7, I6, I4
37	Providing international education services	I5, I6, I4, I13
38	Introducing the top students to the best universities in the world	I1, I2, I11, I7, I10
39	Providing consulting services in printing and editing articles in ISI journals	I2, I6, I10, I9
40	Scholarships for top students	I11, I9, I10, I4, I5
41	Providing services and amenities	I6, I1, I241
42	Providing student services to all regions The university is equipped with computer equipment Providing welfare facilities for students	I11, I7, I10, I3, I8
43	Providing accommodation to all students	I8, I3, I5, I4, I2
44	Providing technology and technology services to all students	I4, I3, I2, I8, I6
45	Cultural-social services	I3, I9, I5, I4, I2
46	The work of educational groups	I5, I8, I7, I6, I4
47	Forming a think tank	I2, I6, I7, I9
48	Academic counseling	I11, I9, I3, I4, I5
49	Individual psychological consultations	I6, I5, I2
50	Providing economic services	I9, I7, I10, I3, I850
51	Student loan payment	I8, I3, I5, I4, I2
52	Student tuition installments	I4, I3, I5, I9, I6
53	Providing a suitable educational environment	I10, I6, I5, I1, I753
54	Having a suitable urban geographical location for the university	I3, I11, I554
55	Having a geographical location away from environmental pollution	I9, I5, I4, I2, I11
56	Having an educational space for individual studies of students in the university	I3, I4, I11, I5
57	Equipping the university with educational laboratories	I10, I8, I3

Row	Extractive Indicators (initial open codes)	Interviewee code
58	Equipping the university with computer equipment	I10, I9, I1, I6, I11
59	Providing welfare facilities for students	I6, I8, I10, I3, I4
60	Payment of student discounts for tuition (top students)	I10, I8, I1, I3, I4
61	Proportion between expertise and professors' teaching courses	I3, I1, I5, I4, I6
62	Suitability between professors' interests and teaching courses	I2, I6, I10, I9
63	Ergonomics and physical working conditions (light, weather, etc.) in the university	I11, I9, I10, I4, I5
64	Technology and hardware equipment needed by students	I6, I1, I264
65	Mental health of the workplace for employees	I11, I7, I10, I3, I8
66	Compliance with professional ethics in the university	I8, I3, I5, I4, I2
67	Providing organizational facilities in a democratic way	I4, I3, I2, I8, I6
68	Adherence to obligations arising from job, duty and responsibility areas	I3, I9, I5, I4, I2
69	Emphasis on meritocracy and precedence over relationships	I5, I8, I7, I6, I4
70	More attention to people who work more in the organization	I5, I11, I4, I370
71	Management based on moderation	I1, I2, I9, I7, I5
72	Use of students in universities	I8, I7, I11, I15

Based on the concepts and categories, and following simultaneous interviews with five collaborators involved in the analysis and validation of interview data, the initial 72 themes were condensed and refined to 44 themes. These themes were carefully reviewed, corrected, and harmonized using specialized software. Through this iterative process, the core open codes emerged. Subsequently, with the validation and refinement of these open codes, the groundwork for the creation of axial codes was established.

In the subsequent phase of thematic analysis, known as the axial coding stage, a continuous and iterative comparison was undertaken among the derived codes from the prior phase. This led to the creation of axial codes, wherein multiple fundamental themes were grouped together under an overarching organizing theme. As described in the third chapter, axial codes were sometimes generated by amalgamating several basic themes, occasionally by subsuming various basic themes beneath a broader existing basic theme, and at times, by amalgamating multiple basic themes within an organizing theme.

It is noteworthy that the interview process was extended until theoretical saturation was reached. The point of

theoretical saturation was identified when no new meaningful insights or additional value were generated from multiple interviews, signifying that the data collection had comprehensively covered the research objectives.

References	Component (axial codes)
54	instructors
	Educational content
	Education time
	Education method
	Evaluation method
151	welfare amenities
	Social, cultural and artistic services
	Economic services
	Educational environment
	International education services
	staff
	Sports services

The themes selected in the axial codes section are given in the table with the number of references in them, and finally, the axial and base codes associated with each are given.

**Selective Codes Integration:**

In the preceding phase, open and organizing codes were derived, and in this stage, axial codes were selected and placed within the dimensions previously identified in the theoretical literature section. It's important to note that organizing themes



aren't produced solely after all open codes are generated; rather, they are conceived and refined in a parallel and iterative process of comparison.

Appropriate axial codes were matched with each fundamental theme and positioned accordingly. The content analysis section also incorporates the primary open codes as dimensions. The table below presents all axial codes nested under the umbrella of their respective chosen codes (dimensions). The overarching theme is shaded in dark gray, axial codes in light gray, and open codes in

white. Adjacent to each dimension (chosen code), axial code (component), and index (open code), a numerical value indicates the count of references from experts. Finally, the total number of references for each component (sum of sub-codes) is provided next to the component.

(Note: Due to the limitations of this text-based format, I am unable to create a visual table as described. If you need further assistance, such as creating a visual representation, I recommend using a spreadsheet or data visualization tool.)

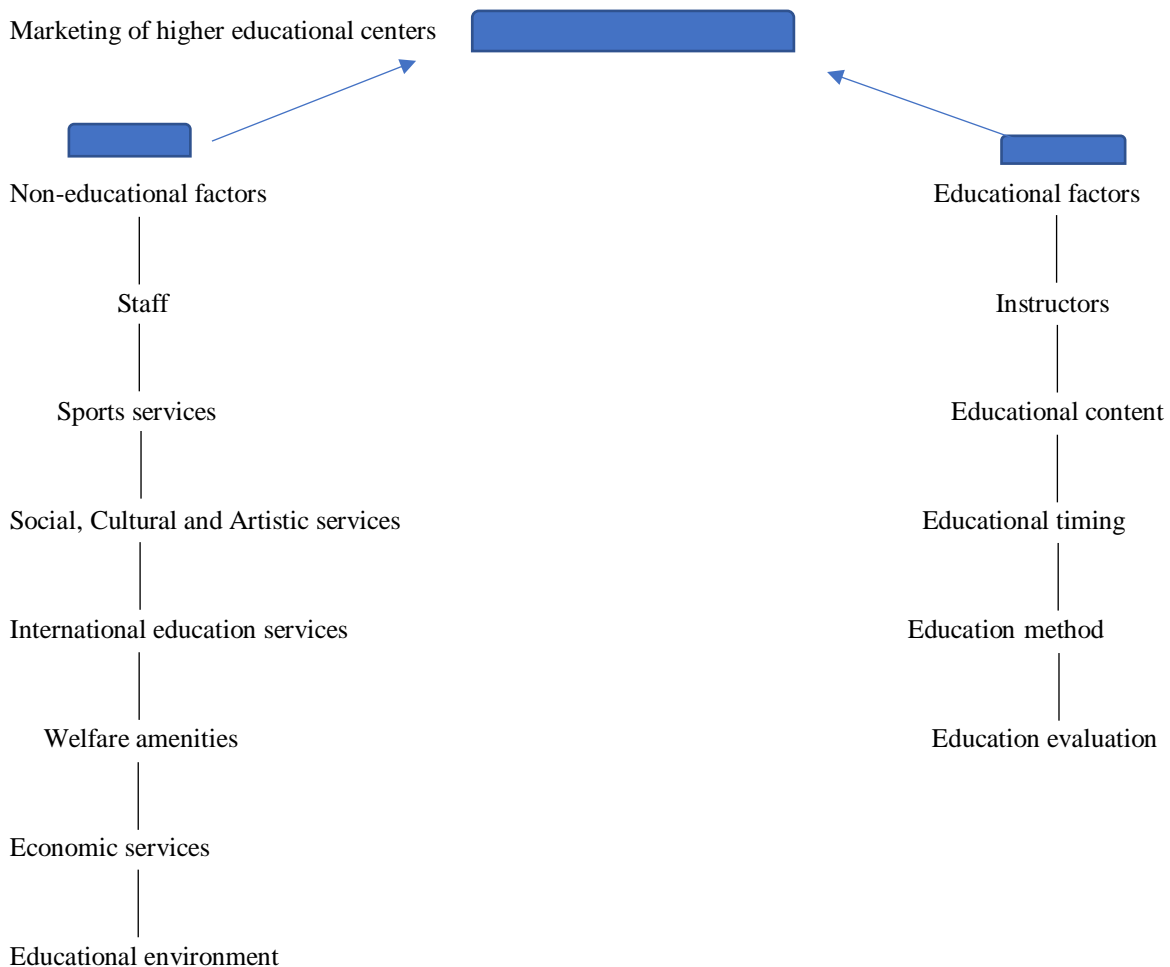
#### Selective codes, axial codes and open codes

Open codes, axial and selective codes of marketing in higher education
Marketing of higher education centers (205)
Educational (3) total sub-codes (54)
<b>Instructors</b>
Use of international instructors The relevance of the educational qualifications of the instructors in the university with the courses offered, the teaching experience selected for teaching in the university, the teaching methods of the instructors in the university The level of instructors mastery of educational technologies
<b>Educational content</b>
Educational content based on individual abilities, total opinions of professors and students based on each discipline, educational content based on group activities
<b>Education time</b>
The time to use face-to-face facilities as defined, the time to use non-face-to-face facilities with students and professors consideration
<b>Education method</b>
Training based on advanced facilities, individual training, group training (practical lessons), training through virtual networks, face-to-face training
<b>Educational evaluation</b>
Face-to-face individual evaluation. Non-face-to-face individual evaluation Face-to-face and non-face-to-face group evaluation
Non-educational ( total of sub-codes) 151
<b>Education content</b>
Hiring specialized staff in education and... Hiring employees from graduates Using students (in the form of student employees) providing in-service classes for employees
<b>Sports services</b>
Providing sports services in the university. Providing sports services within the complex Providing sports services outside the university (as a contract with sports facilities)
Social, cultural and artistic services
Family counseling for students Family entertainment services (student and family travel to places of entertainment and pilgrimage) work of educational groups, formation of think tanks, academic counseling Individual psychological consultations
International education services

Providing international education services Introducing the top students to the best universities in the world Providing consulting services in the printing and editing of articles in ISI journals, scholarships to top students
<b>welfare amenities</b>
Providing student services to all areas, providing accommodation to all students Providing technology and technology services to all students
<b>Economical services</b>
Student loan payment
Student tuition installments
<b>Educational environment</b>
Having a suitable urban geographical location for the university Having a geographical location away from environmental pollution Having an educational space for students' individual studies in the university. Making the university equipped with educational laboratories. Making the university equipped with computer equipment
The total number of selective codes (2), the total number of axial codes (12), the total number of open codes (44) and the total number of references to open, axial and selective codes was equal to 205 references from 11 interviews.

Themes received from eleven semi-structured interviews focusing on the marketing of higher education centers

Finally, the integration of the primary model was determined as follows



### Discussion and Conclusion:

Recent decades have seen universities and knowledge-based companies achieve remarkable success, attributing much of it to an intangible factor known as marketing. While numerous models and theories have been proposed by management scholars, most lack comprehensive applicability and fail to address university-specific factors. Moreover, the exploration of these factors within the context of our society has been lacking.

A prevailing challenge in many non-Western societies, including ours, is the absence of indigenous theories grounded in societal management systems. This scarcity can be attributed, in part, to the predominant use of quantitative research methods within a positivist paradigm. We contend that adopting a qualitative approach, which fosters deep insights into phenomena and human behavior, can facilitate the creation of indigenous theories to benefit researchers and the scientific community.

A distinctive feature of this study lies in its methodological approach, employing qualitative methods and theory development. While existing models often lean toward quantitative methodologies, our study incorporates qualitative techniques, supported by modern technology such as the Max QDA software. This innovative blend of methods contributes to a more comprehensive exploration of the subject matter.

Our study builds upon established Western findings and theories in educational marketing, augmenting them with components specifically tailored to the marketing field. Semi-structured interviews were initially employed to identify marketing indicators for educational centers, leading to the identification of two dimensions, twelve components, and forty-four indicators.

Subsequently, utilizing structural equation modeling, we assessed the influence of each dimension and component on the marketing of educational centers. The outcomes revealed that the educational dimension, with a coefficient of 0.848, and the non-educational dimension, with a coefficient of 0.69, hold the most significant impact and importance within the model. These findings align with previous studies by Babaei Kasmay (2016), Aslani et al. (2019), Bolotov (2019), Arasteh and Rezaei (2013), Prota and Selvin (2019), and Azizi Shamami (2016).

In conclusion, based on the validated model encompassing five dimensions (philosophy and goal, theoretical foundations, executive principles, evaluation system, and executive mechanism), several recommendations emerge:

1. Conduct a needs assessment of both educational and non-educational dimensions and components for students and post-graduates.
2. Develop incentive policies through the Ministry of Science to establish quality indicators for educational marketing in higher education institutions and centers.
3. Foster policy coherence and coordination among different departments to successfully market higher education centers across the nation.
4. Address intellectual concerns of investors, founders, and students by formulating clear rules and regulations, involving adept decision-makers within the government and the Ministry of Science.
5. Facilitate the formulation of realistic laws and regulations in collaboration with stakeholders and practitioners (professors, managers, and employees) to lay the foundation for successful marketing of higher education centers.



This study's comprehensive approach and insights contribute to the advancement of the field and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the marketing of higher education centers.

## References

- Aslani, Farshid, Ashtari, Samaneh, Hasani, Azar and Daryani, Abbas. (2019). Investigating the impact of marketing capabilities on company performance with the role of market orientation, strategic marketing and organizational strength as moderators (case study of Mino company). *Specialized scientific quarterly of new research approaches in management and accounting*, 4(37), 21-37.
- Arasteh, Hamid Reza. Rezaei, Saeed. (2014). Marketing in higher education, identifying criteria and information sources in university selection, *Educational Planning Studies*, No. 5, Spring and Summer 2013, pp. 52-33.
- Babaei Kasmali, Roya, Nadi, Mohammad Ali. (2017). Validation of marketing model for private higher education institutions (a mixed study). *Management Research*, 29(No. 2 (Serial 113)), 55-70.
- Baghi Nasrabadi, Ali, Behzadnia, Mehrdad. (2019). The relationship between strategic human resource management and job performance: the mediating role of ethical climate. *Scientific Journal "Organizational Culture Management"*, 18(4), 751-774.
- Heydari, Ali, Khanlari, Amir, Mahdavi, Shadi, (2016) Measuring the specific brand value of universities and higher education institutions (case study: Tehran management schools), *Modern Marketing Research Quarterly*, 7th year, no. Third.
- Azizi Shamami, Mustafa. (2016) *Marketing Development in Non-Profit Higher Education Institutions: A Mixed Research, Socio-Cultural Development Studies Quarterly*, Sixth Term, Number One, Summer 2016, pp. 105-139.
- Mohammadiha, Parya, Mohammad Davoudi, Amirhossein, Mosleh, Maryam. (2018). Educational marketing in Azad University is a strategy for sustainable development. *Medicine and Cultivation*, 28(3), 84-97.
- Bolotov, V., (2019). Interviewed by Yu. Varshavskaya. Cherez 10 let nikakogo EGE ne budet [In 10 years there will be no unified national test]. [https://mel.fm/yege/9830471-bolotov\\_ege](https://mel.fm/yege/9830471-bolotov_ege).
- Bourabain, D., & Verhaeghe, P. P. (2021). Shiny on the Outside, Rotten on the Inside? Perceptions of Female Early Career Researchers on Diversity Policies in Higher Education Institutions. *Higher Education Policy*, 1-19.
- Gajić, J. (2012). Importance of marketing mix in higher education institutions. *Singidunum journal of applied sciences*, 9(1), 29-41.
- Mathur, K. (2020). State, Market and Governance of Higher Education. *Governance and Management of Higher Education in India*, 25.23-39.
- Perrotta, C. & Selwyn, S. (2019). Deep learning goes to school: toward a relational understanding of AI in education. *Learning, Media and Technology*: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2020.1686017.217-231>.
- Tashakkori, A., and C. Teddlie (2003). *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, First Edition, Sage Publication Inc.113-91.
- Williamson, B. (2020). Making markets through digital platforms: Pearson, Edu-business, and the (e) valuation of higher education. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1-17.

**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**

*Nehzat F., Ghuorchiyani N., Mohammad Davoudi A., Mohammadkhani K. (2022). Presentation of the Initial Model of Marketing of Iranian Universities, 3(4): 69-78.*

**DOI:**

**Url:** [https://ijfaes.srbiau.ac.ir/article\\_16607.html](https://ijfaes.srbiau.ac.ir/article_16607.html)

**Journal homepage:** <https://ijfaes.srbiau.ac.ir>