

Marketing as Crucial Factor for Higher Education National Strategies Application: A Quantitative Study of Expert Perspectives for Policy Adoption and Stakeholder Engagement in Higher Education

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Abstract

The adoption and promotion of a national strategy for higher education require a robust marketing framework that aligns with the expectations of the public and key stakeholders. This study employs a quantitative research approach, surveying 190 experts in marketing, strategy, higher education and ministry officials to identify critical marketing elements that enhance the acceptance and implementation of such strategies. The findings reveal that strategic communication, digital engagement, public trust-building and stakeholder collaboration significantly influence the success of higher education policies. Statistical analyses demonstrate the correlation between these marketing elements and public adoption rates, providing actionable insights for policymakers and educational institutions. The study contributes to the field by establishing an evidence-based marketing framework tailored for national higher education strategies.

Keywords: Higher education marketing, strategic communication, digital engagement, public trust, stakeholder collaboration.

1. Introduction

Higher education is a cornerstone of national development, fostering economic growth, social mobility and innovation. Governments and policymakers worldwide recognize the importance of well-structured higher education strategies to improve accessibility, quality and relevance in an increasingly competitive global economy. However, the successful implementation of such

strategies depends not only on their design but also on how effectively they are communicated and accepted by key stakeholders, including students, faculty members, educational institutions, government agencies and the general public.

Despite the critical role of marketing in shaping public perceptions and facilitating policy adoption, limited research exists on the impact of marketing strategies in the context of national higher education policies. Traditional studies often focus on higher education branding, institutional positioning and student recruitment strategies. However, the broader role of marketing in promoting large-scale national strategies remains an underexplored area. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the influence of strategic marketing elements on the adoption and implementation of national higher education policies.

Marketing in higher education is more than just a tool for student recruitment; it encompasses a comprehensive framework that involves strategic communication, public engagement and trust-building among stakeholders [9]. Digital engagement, branding and stakeholder collaboration have emerged as pillar elements in ensuring policy acceptance. With the rise of digital platforms and social media, educational institutions and policymakers have new opportunities to engage audiences. These marketing techniques have vital role in shaping public perception and influencing attitudes toward policy changes [12].

Public trust is a key determinant of policy success. Higher education reforms often face resistance due to skepticism, lack of awareness or misinformation. Effective communication strategies help mitigate these challenges by providing clear, evidence-based information that enhances credibility and enhances stakeholder confidence. Moreover, collaboration with various stakeholders, including educators, industry leaders and policymakers, can enhance the legitimacy of higher education policies, leading to higher adoption rates.

In an era where information dissemination and public perception significantly impact policy success, marketing emerges as a crucial factor in ensuring the effectiveness of national higher education strategies. This study based on a quantitative research approach to identify the most influential marketing elements contributing to the success of national higher education strategies [10]. By surveying experts in marketing, strategy, higher education, and government, the research assesses the impact of digital engagement, strategic communication, public trust-building and stakeholder collaboration on policy adoption. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers and educational institutions seeking to design and implement effective higher education strategies. Furthermore, contributes to the existing literature by offering empirical evidence on the role of marketing in policy promotion. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of marketing in higher education at the institutional level, but few have explored its significance in shaping national education policies.

2. Literature review

The relationship between marketing strategies and the adoption of higher education policies has gained significant attention in recent years [13]. Effective marketing efforts have the potential to enhance stakeholder engagement, improve public perception, and lead to higher policy adoption rates (PAR). However, there is a notable gap in empirical research that directly quantifies the influence of specific marketing elements on national policy adoption. While numerous studies have analyzed marketing within higher education institutions—primarily focusing on branding, student recruitment, and institutional reputation—fewer have explored the role of marketing at the national policy level.

Empirical evidence suggests that higher education institutions and policymakers who strategically implement marketing campaigns experience increased policy engagement and greater public support. Studies indicate that institutions leveraging digital platforms tend to enhance their brand perception and strengthen stakeholder relationships. Additionally, research has demonstrated that the integration of multiple marketing elements, including Strategic Communication (SC), Digital Engagement (DE), Public Trust (PT), and Stakeholder Collaboration (SCB), results in higher policy adoption rates. These variables are the primary focus of this study, with the Policy Adoption Rate (PAR) serving as the dependent variable. This section examines the critical role of marketing in higher education policy adoption and the empirical evidence supporting the influence of each independent variable on policy success.

2.1 The role of marketing in higher education policy adoption

Marketing in higher education is no longer limited to institutional branding or student recruitment; it has evolved into a powerful strategic tool that shapes public perception, engages stakeholders, and facilitates the successful implementation of national policies [6]. Policymakers and higher education institutions increasingly employ marketing strategies to promote educational reforms, build public trust, and foster acceptance of new initiatives. Through effective communication frameworks, marketing bridges the gap between policy objectives and public understanding, ensuring that stakeholders are well-informed and supportive.

The importance of marketing in policy adoption has grown as national education systems prioritize objectives such as expanding access to higher education, improving institutional quality, and enhancing global competitiveness [7]. Transparent and persuasive marketing campaigns are essential for gaining public buy-in, especially when policies involve significant changes, such as tuition fee adjustments, curriculum updates, or the integration of digital learning platforms.

While previous research has primarily examined institutional-level marketing efforts, such as university branding and positioning, relatively few studies have investigated how marketing strategies influence the acceptance of higher education policies at the national level. Ineffective communication often results in low public awareness, resistance to change, and misinterpretation of policies. This study aims to address this research gap by analyzing how Strategic

Communication (SC), Digital Engagement (DE), Public Trust (PT), and Stakeholder Collaboration (SCB) influence the Policy Adoption Rate (PAR). Understanding these relationships will provide valuable insights for policymakers seeking to implement successful educational reforms.

2.2 Strategic communication (SC) and PAR

Strategic Communication (SC) refers to the deliberate planning and execution of messaging efforts designed to inform, persuade, and engage stakeholders. In the context of higher education policy adoption, SC ensures that policy messages are clear, consistent, and transparent, thereby fostering greater public understanding and acceptance[11]. Effective SC campaigns build credibility and reduce misinformation, ultimately leading to higher policy adoption rates.

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of SC on public perception and policy acceptance. For instance, a study found that national education policies supported by well-structured communication campaigns experienced a 35% increase in public support compared to those with inconsistent messaging. Similarly, transparent communication has been shown to reduce policy resistance by addressing stakeholder concerns proactively.

Furthermore, policies that involve tuition reforms, digital learning initiatives, and curriculum modifications often face substantial challenges when communication efforts are inadequate. Ambiguous or fragmented messaging can lead to public skepticism and diminish the likelihood of successful implementation [14]. By employing SPSS correlation and regression analysis, this study evaluates the relationship between SC and PAR. The hypothesis (H1) suggests that higher levels of Strategic Communication are directly associated with greater policy adoption, as stakeholders are more likely to support policies they clearly understand and perceive as credible.

2.3 Digital engagement (DE) and PAR

The increasing reliance on digital platforms has transformed the way higher education policies are communicated and promoted [3]. Digital Engagement (DE) encompasses a wide range of online channels, including social media platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and TikTok, as well as institutional websites, digital newsletters, and interactive feedback mechanisms. These platforms provide policymakers with an opportunity to engage directly with stakeholders, disseminate policy information in real-time, and counteract misinformation [2].

Studies have highlighted the positive correlation between digital engagement and public awareness of policies. Also demonstrated that higher education institutions utilizing targeted social media campaigns saw a 40% increase in public engagement with policy discussions [18]. In addition digital platforms facilitate two-way communication, allowing policymakers to gather feedback, address concerns, and adjust strategies based on public sentiment. This interactive approach builds transparency and fosters trust, contributing to higher policy adoption rates [5]. Another advantage of digital engagement is its ability to reach a diverse audience across geographic and demographic boundaries. Policymakers can tailor digital content to specific

groups, ensuring inclusive representation and broader policy acceptance [16]. Through the use of SPSS regression models, this study examines the impact of DE on PAR, testing the hypothesis (H2) that increased digital visibility and interactive engagement lead to greater policy adoption.

2.4 Public trust (PT) and PAR

Public Trust (PT) is widely recognized as a key determinant of policy success. Policies that lack public confidence often face resistance, skepticism, and misinformation, resulting in lower adoption rates [15]. Trust is particularly critical in higher education, where institutional credibility and transparency play a significant role in shaping public perception.

Previous research has demonstrated that public trust in both educational institutions and policymakers significantly influences policy acceptance. For instance, a study found that students and parents were more likely to support policies implemented by institutions they perceived as credible and trustworthy. Similarly, concluded that policies perceived as transparent and evidence-based had higher acceptance rates [8].

Building public trust requires clear and honest communication. Effective strategies include transparency in decision-making, showcasing policy success stories, and providing empirical evidence supporting the proposed reforms [17]. Additionally, engaging communities in the policy development process through town halls, forums, and public consultations can further strengthen trust. Study quantifies PT as an independent variable using SPSS correlation analysis to determine its impact on PAR. The hypothesis (H3) predicts a direct relationship between public trust and policy adoption rates, asserting that policies perceived as trustworthy are more likely to gain public support.

2.5 Stakeholder collaboration (SCB) and PAR

Stakeholder Collaboration (SCB) involves the active participation of government agencies, higher education institutions, industry partners, and the public in the development and implementation of policies [1]. Collaborative policymaking fosters legitimacy, alignment, and long-term sustainability by ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered.

Empirical evidence suggests that stakeholder-involved policies are more likely to succeed. For example, research found that policies co-created with educators, students, and industry experts faced significantly less resistance and demonstrated higher sustainability over time [4]. Also higher education policies developed with faculty and administrative input resulted in smoother implementation and greater acceptance.

Stakeholder collaboration also enhances the relevance of policies by aligning them with institutional goals and community needs. Establishing transparent dialogue through joint committees, working groups, and public consultations encourages knowledge exchange and strengthens stakeholder commitment. Study uses SPSS regression models to assess the effect of

SCB on PAR. The hypothesis (H4) posits that greater stakeholder collaboration leads to higher policy adoption rates, reinforcing the importance of inclusive policymaking.

3. Methodology

This study employed a structured survey methodology to investigate the impact of strategic communication, digital engagement, public trust, and stakeholder collaboration on policy adoption and stakeholder engagement in higher education. The survey was conducted in the first semester of 2025, targeting 190 experts across four key professional domains: marketing, strategy, higher education administration, and government policy. The research design combined descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, utilizing correlation analysis and multiple regression modeling to assess the relationships between marketing elements and public engagement outcomes.

3.1 Survey Design

The survey was designed to measure the perceived effectiveness of marketing elements in influencing public and stakeholder engagement. It consisted of four primary sections, each corresponding to a key marketing and communication factor:

1. Strategic Communication

- Evaluated the clarity and effectiveness of policy messaging.
- Assessed how well institutions articulate policy objectives and align communication strategies with stakeholder expectations.
- Measured transparency and openness in policy dissemination.

2. Digital Engagement

- Analyzed the role of digital tools such as websites, social media, and email campaigns in fostering stakeholder awareness.
- Measured the frequency and effectiveness of online engagement activities in policy communication.
- Examined the relationship between digital presence and public participation in higher education initiatives.

3. Public Trust and Perception

- Explored the impact of trust-building mechanisms on policy acceptance.
- Assessed institutional credibility and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns.
- Measured public confidence in educational institutions and government agencies involved in policy execution.

4. Stakeholder Collaboration

- Investigated partnerships between educational institutions, private businesses, and government entities.
- Measured the extent to which collaboration influences policy adoption rates.

-Assessed the effectiveness of cross-sector engagement in improving educational outcomes. Each section contained Likert-scale questions (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to quantify perceptions of effectiveness. Open-ended responses were also included to allow participants to provide qualitative insights.

3.2 Hypotheses

Based on existing research and theoretical models in higher education policy adoption and strategic communication, the study proposed the following hypotheses:

- H1: Clear and consistent messaging positively correlates with public acceptance of higher education strategies.
- H2: Higher digital engagement enhances stakeholder awareness and involvement in policy discussions.
- H3: Public trust in educational institutions significantly influences policy adoption rates and institutional credibility.
- H4: Strong stakeholder collaboration leads to higher policy implementation success by fostering multi-sector engagement.

3.3 Data analysis

To analyze the survey responses, SPSS was used for both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The key analytical techniques used is descriptive statistics measuring mean, standard deviation and frequency distributions were calculated for each variable to understand overall trends. Also correlation analysis used to determine the strength and direction of relationships between factors and multiple regression modeling was conducted to assess the predictive power of the independent variables (communication, engagement, trust, and collaboration) on the dependent variable (policy adoption rates) and ANOVA tests were performed to determine the statistical significance of the regression model ($F = 15.72$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the examined marketing strategies collectively influence policy implementation success.

3.4 Research validity and reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study the survey instrument was pre-tested with a pilot group of 20 professionals to refine questions and improve clarity. Cronbach's Alpha (α) was used to assess internal consistency, with an overall reliability score of 0.87, indicating high reliability and multicollinearity tests were conducted to confirm that independent variables did not have excessive correlations, ensuring robust regression results.

4. Results

The participant demographics were categorized as follows:

Professional Roles

Marketing Professionals (43%) – Experts specializing in branding, public relations, and digital marketing within higher education institutions or consultancy firms.
Higher Education Administrators (27%) – University deans, department heads, and strategic planners responsible for institutional outreach and engagement.
Policy Analysts & Ministry Officials (19%) – Professionals involved in shaping higher education policies and their implementation at the government level.
Academic Researchers (11%) – Scholars with expertise in higher education policy, communication, and public trust studies.

Experience in Higher Education Strategy & Marketing

Less than 3 years (15%) – Early-career professionals working on strategy development or engagement campaigns.
3 to 5 years (38%) – Mid-career experts with experience in executing marketing and engagement initiatives.
More than 5 years (47%) – Senior professionals responsible for shaping long-term strategic communication and policy adoption frameworks.

The descriptive statistics (Table 1) reveal generally positive perceptions across the examined communication strategies and their impact on policy adoption. The mean values for all variables range from 3.8 to 4.5, indicating that strategic communication, digital engagement, public trust, and stakeholder collaboration are widely practiced and well-regarded.

Public Trust (Mean = 4.5) had the highest average score, emphasizing its critical role in ensuring successful policy adoption. Similarly, Strategic Communication (Mean = 4.2) and Stakeholder Collaboration (Mean = 4.0) suggest that organizations recognize the importance of transparent and inclusive engagement. Digital Engagement (Mean = 3.8) showed a slightly lower mean, which may indicate room for improvement in leveraging digital tools for public communication. Overall, these statistics suggest that organizations emphasize trust-building and stakeholder involvement as key strategies for enhancing policy adoption rates.

Descriptive Statistics (Table 1)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Strategic Communication (SC)	4.2	0.6	2.5	5.0
Digital Engagement (DE)	3.8	0.7	2.0	5.0
Public Trust (PT)	4.5	0.5	3.2	5.0
Stakeholder Collaboration (SCB)	4.0	0.8	2.8	5.0
Policy Adoption Rate (PAR)	3.9	0.6	3.0	5.0

Table 2 presents the correlation between communication strategies and policy adoption rates. The results indicate strong positive relationships between all variables and policy adoption, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.65 to 0.81.

Public Trust ($r = 0.81$, $p < 0.001$) showed the strongest correlation with policy adoption, highlighting its pivotal role in successful policy implementation. Digital Engagement ($r = 0.72$) and Stakeholder Collaboration ($r = 0.70$) also demonstrated strong associations, suggesting that organizations leveraging digital platforms and fostering collaborative efforts see higher policy adoption rates.

Strategic Communication ($r = 0.65$) showed a moderate correlation, reinforcing its role in shaping public perception and engagement, although its impact appears slightly less direct than that of public trust. These findings underscore the importance of fostering trust and engagement to improve policy acceptance.

Correlation Analysis (Table 2)

Variable	Correlation with AI Ranking (r)	p-value
Strategic Communication (SC)	0.65	0.001
Digital Engagement (DE)	0.72	0.0005
Public Trust (PT)	0.81	0.0001
Stakeholder Collaboration (SCB)	0.70	0.002

The multiple regression analysis (Table 3) quantifies the relative influence of each communication strategy on policy adoption. The standardized beta coefficients reveal that Public Trust ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$) is the most influential predictor, reinforcing its strong correlation observed earlier.

Digital Engagement ($\beta = 0.31$) and Stakeholder Collaboration ($\beta = 0.28$) also significantly contribute to policy adoption, indicating that interactive digital platforms and multi-stakeholder partnerships are critical for successful policy implementation. Strategic Communication ($\beta = 0.24$) remains a positive predictor but has a slightly lower impact compared to the other factors. These findings suggest that while all four communication strategies are essential, building trust and fostering digital engagement are the most effective approaches for enhancing policy adoption rates.

Multiple Regression Analysis (Table 3)

Variable	Beta Coefficient (β)	p-value
Strategic Communication (SC)	0.24	0.002
Digital Engagement (DE)	0.31	0.001
Public Trust (PT)	0.40	0.0001
Stakeholder Collaboration (SCB)	0.28	0.003

The ANOVA results (Table 4) indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 15.72$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the examined communication strategies collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in policy adoption rates.

The low p-value (< 0.001) suggests that the independent variables, including public trust, digital engagement, stakeholder collaboration, and strategic messaging, significantly impact policy adoption outcomes.

The high F-statistic (15.72) further supports the strength of the model, demonstrating that the combined effect of these communication strategies is unlikely to be due to random chance.

$R^2 = 0.68$, indicating that approximately 68% of the variance in policy adoption rates is explained by the included communication factors, reinforcing their substantial influence.

These findings validate the importance of strategic communication, digital engagement, public trust, and stakeholder collaboration as critical components in shaping policy adoption success. The significance of these factors highlights the necessity for policymakers to invest in transparent communication, media engagement, and inclusive stakeholder discussions to enhance policy implementation. The results suggest that **all four factors significantly contribute** to explaining policy adoption outcomes, with **public trust and transparency** having the strongest individual effect ($F = 22.95$, $p < 0.001$). These findings emphasize the need for **data-driven and trust-based policy communication strategies** to maximize public support and engagement.

ANOVA (Table 4)

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-Value	p-Value
Regression Model	482.76	4	120.69	15.72	< 0.001
Public Trust & Transparency	168.42	1	168.42	22.95	< 0.001
Digital & Media Engagement	125.67	1	125.67	17.12	< 0.001
Stakeholder Collaboration	98.35	1	98.35	14.30	< 0.01
Strategic Messaging & Awareness	90.32	1	90.32	12.78	< 0.01
Residual (Error)	227.54	30	7.58		
Total	710.30	34			

Table 5 presents the factor analysis results, grouping communication strategies into key underlying factors based on their eigenvalues and variance explained. The analysis identifies four primary factors that collectively explain a significant proportion of variance in policy adoption effectiveness.

Factor 1: Public Trust & Transparency (Eigenvalue = 5.10, Variance Explained = 34.0%) emerges as the most dominant factor, reinforcing the critical role of trust in successful policy adoption. Variables in this factor include Transparency in Communication, Institutional Credibility, Ethical Leadership, and Public Sentiment, all of which contribute to fostering public confidence and cooperation.

Factor 2: Digital & Media Engagement (Eigenvalue = 4.20, Variance Explained = 28.0%) encompasses Social Media Outreach, Website Accessibility, Digital Content Strategy, and Interactive Platforms, highlighting the growing importance of digital communication in policy dissemination and public engagement.

Factor 3: Stakeholder Collaboration & Policy Framing (Eigenvalue = 3.75, Variance Explained = 22.0%) focuses on the Inclusivity of Policy Discussions, Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, Community Feedback Mechanisms, and Framing Strategies, emphasizing the necessity of collaborative governance models to drive policy success.

Factor 4: Strategic Messaging & Public Awareness (Eigenvalue = 3.10, Variance Explained = 16.0%) includes Crisis Communication, Persuasive Messaging, and Public Awareness Campaigns, demonstrating the role of clear and strategic messaging in shaping public opinion and driving policy adoption.

Factor Analysis (Table 5)

Factor	Variables Included	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained
Factor 1: Public Trust & Transparency	Transparency in Communication, Institutional Credibility, Ethical Leadership, Public Sentiment	5.10	34.0%
Factor 2: Digital & Media Engagement	Social Media Outreach, Website Accessibility, Digital Content Strategy, Interactive Platforms	4.20	28.0%
Factor 3: Stakeholder Collaboration & Policy Framing	Inclusivity of Policy Discussions, Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, Community Feedback Mechanisms, Framing Strategies	3.75	22.0%
Factor 4: Strategic Messaging & Public Awareness	Crisis Communication, Persuasive Messaging, Public Awareness Campaigns	3.10	16.0%

5. Discussion

Findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the impact of strategic communication, public trust, digital engagement, and stakeholder collaboration on policy adoption rates. The ANOVA results confirm that these communication strategies collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in policy adoption outcomes ($F = 15.72, p < 0.001$), reinforcing their critical role in shaping successful policy implementation. Results contribute to the broader understanding of policy communication dynamics, reinforcing existing theories on public engagement and strategic governance. They also suggest that a multi-faceted communication approach is necessary, integrating transparency, digital tools, collaboration, and effective messaging to maximize policy effectiveness. Among the examined factors:

Public Trust and Transparency emerged as the most influential variable ($F = 22.95, p < 0.001$), highlighting the necessity of open and honest communication between policymakers and the public. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting that trust enhances policy acceptance and compliance.

Digital and Media Engagement was also a strong predictor ($F = 17.12, p < 0.001$), underscoring the growing role of digital platforms in modern policymaking. Effective use of social media and digital campaigns can significantly improve public awareness and support.

Stakeholder Collaboration ($F = 14.30, p < 0.01$) demonstrated its importance in multi-sector policymaking, emphasizing the need for partnerships between government entities, private sectors, and community organizations to ensure broad-based policy acceptance.

Strategic Messaging & Awareness ($F = 12.78, p < 0.01$) confirmed that well-structured communication campaigns can enhance policy legitimacy and engagement, supporting the idea that clear, accessible, and persuasive messaging improves public perception and adoption.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the pivotal role of strategic communication in policy adoption, demonstrating that effective engagement with the public, stakeholders, and media can significantly influence policy success. Given the statistical significance of these findings, policymakers should prioritize evidence-based communication strategies to improve policy adoption rates. Future research can explore how emerging digital technologies (e.g., AI-driven communication, personalized messaging) further influence policy engagement and decision-making. By integrating these insights, policymakers can create more effective, inclusive, and widely accepted policies, ensuring that governance remains responsive to the needs of the public. The key takeaways include public trust is the foundation of policy adoption, necessitating transparency and credibility in government communication, digital and media strategies must be optimized to reach a broader audience, particularly in an era of fast-paced information dissemination, collaborative policymaking enhances legitimacy, as policies developed with stakeholder input are more likely to gain public acceptance and strategic messaging is crucial in framing policy narratives and ensuring that complex policies are easily understood by the public.

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