

The promotional stance of internationalised universities in the process of globalisation



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Introduction



Norman Fairclough (1993):



“marketization” of university discourse

Market-oriented institutional discourse



use of marketing and corporate-related terms like “market”, “competition”, “corporate identity”, “strategic plans”, “commodity” or “customers/clients/consumers”



Fairclough, N. (1993). “Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: The universities”. *Discourse and Society*, 4(2): 133-168.

Introduction

Why “internationalised” and not “international”?

- **Internationalisation** is “the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society” (European Parliament, 2015: 29)
- **Internationalised universities** are those that place internationalisation high on their agenda.



Map of globally-interconnected academic network

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/comment/internationalisation-2-0-scaling-up-to-meet-the-challenges>

Research question

What are the key topics or recurrent themes that internationalised universities bring to the fore to project an image of themselves and establish their institutional identity?



Data collection and analysis

- Ten prestigious European universities (*Webometrics Ranking of World Universities*, edition 2017.1.1 Jan 2017)

University of Edinburgh (GB)

VU Amsterdam University (NL)

University of Oslo (NO)

Heidelberg University (DE)

University of Helsinki (FI)

Lund University (SE)

Aarhus University (DK)

University of Bologna (IT)

University of Zurich (CH)

University of Granada (ES)

- “Why study at...?” / “Why choose...?” subsections of university websites (main sections = study / international).



Data collection and analysis

Methodology:

Qualitative text analysis of university websites

Texts were scanned for key topics and recurrent themes

Themes and subthemes were identified. Text samples were extracted

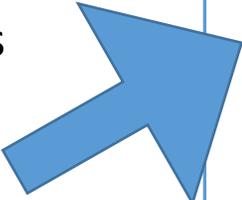
Themes and subthemes were classified and examined



Findings and discussion

Theme 1: Education

Subthemes:

1. Number and range of degrees and PhD programmes
 2. Teaching staff of international repute
 3. Availability of study grants
 4. Favourable tuition fees
 5. Advice and supervision
 6. Innovative teaching techniques
 7. Collaboration in projects and other initiatives
 8. Career services
- 

Text sample

VU Amsterdam devotes considerable attention to personal study advice. Right at the start of your course of study, you will be introduced to your faculty's study advisor. This person can help you plan your study, choose any extra courses that may be useful, discuss personal matters which may affect your study and can advise you with career choices. [\[Amsterdam\]](#)

Findings and discussion

Theme 2: Research

Subthemes:

1. Innovation
 2. Staff of top scientist and foremost researchers
 3. Range of researching areas
 4. Research achievements with an international impact
 5. Centres/Campuses of excellence
 6. Centres for research-based innovation
- 

Text sample

Our academics' research achievements have global implications (...)

- we devised technology used in today's smartphones
- our scientists created Dolly the Sheep, the first mammal to be cloned from an adult somatic cell
- we created the first genetically engineered hepatitis B vaccine
- we pioneered the first automated industrial assembly robot (...) [\[Edinburgh\]](#)

Findings and discussion

Theme 3: Internationality

Subthemes:

1. Activities that the university performs against an international background (e.g. international cooperation projects, teaching and researching staff of international repute, international accreditation of study programmes, or English-medium tuition)
2. Opportunities offered to students for international success (e.g. internships, exchange agreements)
3. Services that maintain the university on an international competitive edge: (e.g. int. associations, int. relations office, global student community)

Text samples

You can choose from over 200 degree programmes, including 58 international programmes and 33 delivered in the English language. [\[Bologna\]](#)

As a dynamic institution of higher education and research with a broad international reach, the University of Zurich maintains student exchange agreements with over 250 partner universities. Each year, several hundreds of exchange students from all over the globe come to UZH to study and expand their horizons at one of our many institutes or departments. [\[Zurich\]](#)

Findings and discussion

Theme 4: Prestige

Subthemes:

1. World rankings
2. Age and tradition
3. Recognised quality
4. Awards received

Text samples

AU is consistently ranked as one of the world's top universities. It was ranked number 65 in the 2016 Shanghai ranking and number 98 on the 2016 The World University Ranking. [\[Aarhus\]](#)

It is the favourite destination for European exchange students (LLP/Erasmus). In 2007 it was awarded with the Gold Star of the Erasmus Programme. [\[Granada\]](#)

Findings and discussion

Theme 5: Social life

Subthemes:

1. The city and the country (e.g. safe, clean, politically stable, eco-friendly, multicultural, with a reasonable cost of living, with a rich and cultural heritage, supporters of gender equality, with an interesting outdoor life)
2. Life at the campus (e.g. small town with all kinds of services, special event programmes, housing facilities, student societies, lifelong community, meal discounts and many other benefits to students)

Text samples

Helsinki is one of the safest cities in the world to live in. We have a fabulously functioning democracy, reasonably stable economy, advanced transportation systems and no risk of natural disasters. [[Helsinki](#)]

The main campus of Blindern (...) offers proximity to the forests and hills surrounding the city and affords wonderful views of the Oslo Fjord (...) You can choose among 60 different sports activities in four training centres (...) you can eat at more than 40 on campus restaurants and cafes with a varied selection of menus at student friendly prices. [[Oslo](#)]

Findings and discussion

Theme 6: Singularity (USPs)

Subthemes:

1. Study programmes & quality of staff
 2. Location
 3. Facilities
 4. Investment for the future (e.g. employability, internships, entrepreneurships, startups)
1. Social responsibility (e.g. fair-trade, healthy food, sports, counselling, sports, quota scheme, solidarity projects)
 2. Sustainability (e.g. travelling, green campus, climate, environment, renewable energy)

Text samples

Helsinki is the 4th most innovative city in the world when it comes to startups. The local startups offer great opportunities for students and graduates to jump into the working life and get experience more valuable than any other. Helsinki Think Company is the entrepreneurship society of the University of Helsinki. [\[Helsinki\]](#)

We are investing in transforming our buildings and surroundings to the highest environmental Standards. We're committed to being a world leader in addressing global challenges including poverty, climate change and the growing demand for energy, food and water. Our campuses are sensitively managed to promote biodiversity and tranquillity. [\[Edinburgh\]](#)

Concluding remarks

- Internationalised universities exploit six themes or topics to project an image of themselves, to appear convincingly reliable and to appeal to students for effective enrolment.
- Internationalised universities establish their institutional identity through such themes (e.g. Edinburgh v Oslo & Helsinki).

Concluding remarks

- “The ‘product’ on offer is not simply (or perhaps not at all) courses and study programmes – but all the ‘extras’ – that is, an exciting experience coupled with a friendly atmosphere, beautiful surroundings, and campus (support) facilities” (Askehave, 2007: 739)
- Internationalised universities have adopted a promotional stance that permeates institutional discourse and makes it more persuasive, promotional and marketing-oriented.

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