

***Marketing 'development studies' in HEIs: are we selling 'white saviours'?***

The public communication of higher education activities through marketing has an impact on student imaginations of not only the role of universities, but at a disciplinary level, the imagination of that discipline. This study brings together two distinct disciplines in a novel way to empirically explore a new area of interdisciplinary study: representations of 'international development' in university course marketing practices. The common theoretical link between them is neoliberalism, specifically the neoliberal logic that drives course marketing practices and the sale of 'development' as a neoliberal product. The 'neoliberal university', debated among critical higher education scholars (Robertson, 2010; Ball, 2012), is a distinct site of the increased marketisation and commercialisation of HE in the UK. Stephen Ball (2007; 2012) has written extensively on how neoliberalism is reshaping the educational terrain to produce customer-students and university management as business management. Within this context, as central government funding for universities decrease, critical focus has turned to how courses are marketed to, particularly, international students. This is done largely based on marketised ideals of the superiority of western knowledge (Robertson, 2010), UK universities are branded as leading providers of expert knowledge (Chapleo, 2010) and holders of UK degrees are assured greater success with one than without (Sidhu, 2006). The marketing logic of UK universities produces narratives of the UK and 'expert knowledge' that are designed to appeal to potential students. There is an urgent need to examine the specific consequences of course marketing practices on student imaginations of a discipline, and thus add a new and deeper layer to established scholarship on course marketing.

We focus on development studies because critical scholarship since the 1990s argues that neoliberal theory directs practices of 'development' and that the concept of 'development' has become a product sold and bought by audiences in the global north (Escobar, 2012; Peet and Hartwick, 2015). Neoliberal development is expressed in political values that emphasise agency and individual freedoms for self-actualisation, and where development practices are paternalistic and focus on empowering individuals in the global south to self-improve. Economic values emphasise free market economics to achieve targets to halve poverty, by creating conditions where individuals realise progress through free market engagement and increases to their productivity or capacity for labour. Postcolonial scholarship argues these manifestations of neoliberal development embrace two narratives reflected in commonplace representations of 'development' by NGOs (Yanacopoulos, 2015), campaigns like 'Make Poverty History' (Harrison, 2010) and the Department for International Development's policy documents (Biccum, 2005). These are: (1) stoic black and brown individuals who live in the global south with an infinite capacity for labour, requiring only development agents in the global north to help empower them (Wilson, 2015); and (2) a dualism that states that one part of the world is developing, emerging and progressing, while the other is developed and progressed socially and economically enough to be in a position to intervene to improve the other (Martin and Griffin, 2012). These messages are contingent on processes of 'othering', which Edward Said (1978) describes as a dichotomy between the Occident and Orient, where the latter is inferior to the former, with inferiority explained through racialized discourse that produces a 'White Man's burden' to bring his rationality, order and progress to other lands in need of maturation. This study enables us to critically query whether problematic images and tropes are being fed into student imaginations? And ask whose values are appealed to and edified in the call to study 'development'.

The study builds on a conceptual framework developed by the authors (2017) that draws together three marketing rationales that are commonly used to sell UK university courses (brand recognition, value-added to future workers and degree as product, Furedi, 2011; Nielsen, 2011) and four key conceptualisation of 'development' that are sold by development actors to a northern public (a

positive association, a commodity, an act of global citizenship, an exercise in northern nation-branding). We operationalise the conceptual framework and empirically explore the marketing of development studies courses, asking what is sold? How? And to what effect on students? Specifically we ask: (RQ1) how is 'development' visually and textually represented in course webpages and brochures? (RQ2) What marketing rationales are applied by university communications teams to market development studies courses? And, what tensions emerge between these different actors? (RQ3) What do students think 'development' is and to what extent has marketing material informed these ideas?

Our findings draw on interviews with university marketing professionals and academics engaged in marketing their own development studies courses at two UK universities, and data from focus groups with development studies students. We highlight and explore a series of tensions between and amongst marketing professionals and students over dominant representations of expertise and the 'development subject' in marketing materials and the relative subordinated role of alternative knowledges produced by women, racialised minorities and marginalised citizens from the global south. We discuss our findings in light of current debates on inclusive curricula and inclusive approaches to development practice, making a case for 'pro-education' marketing. This concept was originally developed by Maringe and Gibbs (2009) to mean ethical marketing, and that we have adapted to mean that learning objectives inspired by anti-racist and feminist theory should play a central role in shaping marketing communications between (potential) students and universities, which appears to be in opposition to current marketing rationales applied in a neoliberal higher education marketplace.

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