Marketing development studies in HEIs

A critical exploration of representations and their effect on student imaginations of 'development'

Final Research Report

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

This study brings together two distinct bodies of literature to forge a new area of inquiry: critical postcolonial theories of development, focusing on work around the politics of representations; and critical research on the neoliberalisation of higher education and the growing importance given to marketing logic in student recruitment. As a scoping study, it goes further than producing a literature review and engages in primary study of two UK universities to test the proof of concept and to make a rigorous case for further research.

The proof of concept is coded into the conceptual framework guiding the study. This framework identifies six different frames from the two disciplinary literatures that explain: (1) How UK universities approach marketing themselves to students, and the conceptualisations of students therein (i.e. through brand recognition, selling degrees as a product, or projecting discourses of a global workforce). And, (2) how 'development is marketed to audiences in the global north, and the conceptualisations of the audience therein (i.e. selling development as a positive association, commodity, or an act of global citizenship). Together, the first set of frames suggests approaches to market development studies courses, and the second, the content of marketing materials.

The study methodology made use of two case studies to examine how development studies courses are marketed and to what effect on students. Early findings suggest the internal organisation of marketing functions i.e. the architectures of marketing, affect the content of marketing messages and thus the representations of development that are present in marketing materials. A decentralised structure where departments had a greater say in the content of marketing messages, images and texts, seemed to produce a large number of recognisable development tropes that often resonated with student expectations and imaginations of what 'development' is. This includes reflecting problematic racialized and gendered ideas of development. A centralised structure provided a more generic descriptor of a postgraduate degree and the skills students can expect. This may well reflect the typical student profile of this case study institution where their development studies degree was offered via distance learning.

The study objectives were to test the robustness of the conceptual framework, develop suitable analytical framework(s) and refine the research questions for further studies. Early analysis suggests the conceptual framework and the analytical frameworks are adequate for this and further study. The findings have raised additional questions around the architecture of marketing and its determination of marketing content at the level of the discipline. Findings also suggest a differentiated effect of marketing messages on different types of students. Addressing these questions through further study would allow a deeper understanding who is really being targeted and spoken to in development studies marketing and what this suggests about whose values are edified in the call to study development.

Research rationale

This study aims to bring together two distinct bodies of literature to forge a new area of inquiry: critical postcolonial theories of development, focusing on work around the politics of representations (Jazeel, 2019; Fernández-Aballí, 2016); and critical research on the neoliberalisation of higher education and the growing importance given to marketing logic in student recruitment (Ball, 2012). As a scoping study, it goes further than producing a literature review and engages in primary study of two UK universities to test the proof of concept and to make a rigorous case for further research.

The idea of examining the marketing of development studies in UK higher education came through critical reflection on my own role within the academy, and the realisation that the kind of scrutiny academics typically reserve for our teaching (the reflexive teacher) or research (the reflexive researcher), are rarely applied to our managerial and administrative selves (the reflexive administrator).

As course director of a postgraduate development studies programme, I was asked to contribute images and/or text to professional marketing and communication colleagues for course brochures and webpages, designed to recruit students. Simultaneously, but through a separate process, I was held responsible for managing (and at times increasing) student numbers. The marketing materials, I hoped, would convey 'development' as a complex concept. At its heart the message was, 'we will teach you to think critically about this subject'. Despite these measured words, over the years many students remarked they thought the programme would be vocational and offer industry specific skills. Irrespective of my intent, these students had their own interpretation of the words and images of 'development' that drew them to apply to the programme, in numbers sufficient for its continued viability. The issue in this vignette is not communicating more clearly programme aims and objectives, as I had initially diagnosed, but is more complex. The marketing of development studies is part of a much wider structural concern with the marketing logics that are mobilised by UK universities for student recruitment, and where these logics intersect with particular representations of 'development' that resonate with (prospective) student imaginations of the discipline. The concerns of this study coalesce around a central question: what values and whose are appealed to and edified in the call to study 'development'.

Research aims and objectives

The aim of this scoping study has been to explore the consequences of the marketing logic employed by two UK higher education institutions that drive the course marketing practices of postgraduate development studies programmes. Of particular interest is the effect on student imaginations of 'development'. The study objectives are to:

(i)   Test the robustness of the conceptual framework guiding the study;

(ii)   Develop an appropriate analytical framework; and

(iii)   Refine the research questions in preparation for further studies.

Research questions

The three research questions guiding this inquiry ask: in marketing development studies, what is sold? How? And to what effect on students? Specifically, I 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?

Overview of literature

This section engages with two bodies of literature: marketing in higher education and representations of 'development' in critical development studies[1]. The common theoretical link between them is neoliberalism, an ontology that is unevenly applied, but one that usefully refers to an "evolving web of relays, routines, and relations of market-oriented political practices" (Peck, 2010, p.1). Of particular relevance to this study are these market-orientated political practices. These practices may or may not be problematic in and of themselves. However, when observed in the context of UK higher education, critics argue the market-orientation of universities produce:

> "Complex relationships [between state organisations and commercial ones, that are] built upon contract rather than collegiality and aimed at profit generation rather than knowledge for its own sake or public service enfold[s] public universities into the field of commerce." (Ball, 2012, p.24).

The growing marketization of higher education, to critics of neoliberalising processes (e.g. Robertson and Komljenovic, 2016; Ball, Dworkin and Vryonides, 2010), is driving competition between universities: competition for students (where international students are highly prized[2]), staff and research income. With all three principally valued for their contributions to university revenue and prestige (as prestige goes on to generate revenue). Marketing strategies that employ techniques including brand-building, the production of promotional materials and international recruitment fairs, are so well established that Maringe and Gibbs (2009, p.163) conclude that "adopting a marketing orientation is no longer an optional choice in higher education". This conclusion is reinforced by the UK Government's most recent White Paper on higher education (2016) which clearly states that ostensibly public universities ought to operate on the same principles as commercial organisations, this mean a focus on the student as a customer and with the threat of market failure if a university is commercially unviable.

The convergence of British government policy and university behaviours potentially engenders a paradigm shift, one where customer-students are serviced by the university and the business of the university is (re)orientated to student employment and satisfaction.

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[1] A fuller discussion of the neoliberalisation of higher education, course marketing and the 'selling' of development studies is available here. In this report, I am presenting salient insights from Patel and Mun (2017) 'Marketing 'development' in the neoliberal university: A critical insight into UK Higher Education Institutions' DPU Working Paper 191, London: The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London.

[2] Fees from international students (excluding EU students) make up over 14% of university income (Universities UK, 2014).

Where much of the debate in critical higher education and marketing scholarship takes place with the university as the unit of analysis, in this study the focus is on marketing a discipline –development studies - and the effects of course marketing on student imaginations of the discipline. The study uses a postcolonial lens to unpack why certain representations of 'development' are made, and how they are made, in the context of marketing development studies courses. Postcolonialism as an analytical lens allows us to see market-orientated political practices as political practices that are set in a historic and social context that may be harmful, and not as innocuous practices in service of a well-functioning market.

Representations of 'development' within the wider development industry (which universities are a part of, alongside NGOs, multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and private sector development consultants), have a well-documented tendency to project problematic gendered and racialized tropes of poor brown and black women who need saving (Wilson, 2011; Dogra, 2011). The antecedents of this is set in Orientalised constructions of the 'other' in Western imaginary (Said, 1978), and colonial-era politics of 'saving' discourses that cement a social hierarchy where are white men are on top (as saviours) and brown women at the bottom (to be saved) (Spivak, 1988). Despite vocal critique of such representations in development fundraising campaigns and advocacy (two clear examples of where and how 'development' is marketed), such representations persist (see Harrison, 2010). Nathanson (2013, p. 106), argues:
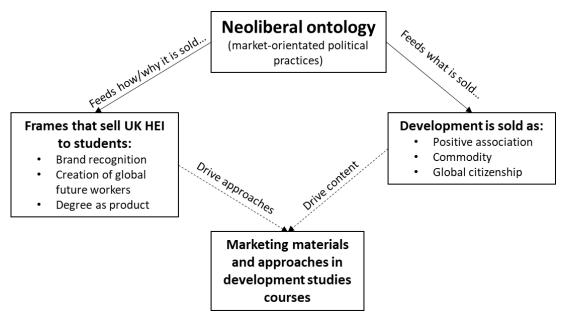
> "Portrayals likes these are no accidents. The rationale goes like this: the happy pictures do not attract money. Nor do complex explanations of why people are suffering. And for agencies in the business of aid, it's the dollars that count. What matters is that people connect emotionally and that they perceive easy solutions."

Contemporary discourses of 'development', reflected in development studies course marketing materials, thus have the potential to reinforce or challenge problematic representations of the discipline. This in turn may affect imaginations of 'development' among students, with wider implications for how the discipline is taught and subsequently applied.

Conceptual framework

Drawing on relevant disciplinary literatures, the remainder of this section introduces a series of frames to understand (1) how UK universities approach marketing themselves to students, and the conceptualisations of students therein; and (2) how 'development is marketed to audiences in the global north, and the conceptualisations of the audience therein. Together, these frames produce the conceptual framework for this study as the former suggests approaches to market development studies courses, and the latter the content of marketing materials.

Diagram 1 Conceptual Framework

Neoliberal ontology
(market-orientated political practices)

Feeds how/why it is sold…

Feeds what is sold…

Frames that sell UK HEI to students:
- Brand recognition
- Creation of global future workers
- Degree as product

Development is sold as:
- Positive association
- Commodity
- Global citizenship

Drive approaches

Drive content

Marketing materials and approaches in development studies courses

(Adapted from Patel and Mun, 2017, p.22)

While students are primarily conceptualised as learners in teaching and learning discourse within academia, it is worth considering the ways in which neoliberal ontology in market-orientated political practices is redefining this traditional idea of the student and the relationships between the university and the student. The three marketing frames used to market UK universities to students are brand recognition, a discourse on the creation of future global workers, and an emphasis on a degree as a product that is bought and sold in a business transaction. In the process of implementing these marketing frames, this section posits students themselves are branded, made global workers and transactional customers.

Marketing through brand recognition
Branding students

Since universities are competing for the custom of fee-paying students, they are expected to develop their own niche identity and actively engage in branding. Branding, image creation and reputation management are an essential part of any commercial strategy and fiercely protected by universities. In student marketing literature, a brand is a unique competitive identity that serves to recruit students into higher education (Lomer, et al 2018). Branding (a verb) concerns building associations between the brand (UK HEI) and consumers of the brand (students).

The branding capacities of a university, Klassen (2002) argues in the US context, are closely tied to its academic reputation and financial capabilities, with top-ranked 'prestigious' universities able to consistently attract revenue streams from student income, alumni donations and research grants. In the UK context, we can observe

processes such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) being mobilised as university branding to affect staff and student recruitment. For example, there is a marketability in student recruitment to being associated with a university branded as 'research excellent', which is particularly interesting as students are unlikely to actively contribute to 4* research outputs but are courted through university branding (see image 1) to associate themselves with 'excellence'.

Image 1 'Research Excellence' as brand

(Screengrabs from department webpages of two UK higher education institutions. Captured: 09/2018)

Balaji, Roy and Sadeque's (2016) study on social identity and university branding in Malaysia, further suggests that university branding shapes how students see themselves and want themselves to be seen. Their study foregrounds psychology and suggests, "Brand personality allows for differentiation and competitive positioning and enables the students to identify themselves with the university and to express their personality" through the university (2016, p.3025). Studies on consumer-company relationships reinforce this idea that customers (or students in our case) develop a strong association with a brand that reflects their beliefs and self-perception, and in turn, the brand can come to mould their self-perception. Tobacco companies, for example, remain infamous for branding smoking as cool, youthful and socially desirable (Carpenter et al, 2005). Of relevance to this study is that consequently, if universities brand themselves as agents of international development with global impact, students wanting to associate themselves with such visions and to project themselves in alignment, may be drawn to the brand.

Marketing 'the global'
Making students 'global' workers

Where universities position themselves as 'global universities' that offer world-class education and globally competitive degrees, in their marketing discourses, students are imagined as 'global workers' or 'global citizens'. There is a geography to the 'global university'; typically, it is universities in the global north that are considered the training ground for a 'global knowledge economy' (Canaan and Shumar, 2008).

A key aspect to making 'global universities' that in turn make students 'global workers' is embedded in the internationalisation agenda. Specifically, curricula that value and emphasise knowledge of other places and people as a way to mimic exposure to cultural diversity, a classroom that introduces UK students to multinational working environments, and/or the presence of international students on campus are mark the university as 'international' (Martin and Griffiths, 2012). International students are not only conceptualised by UK universities as economic players that generate revenue and contribute to the host country's economy (Universities UK, 2014), they are an instrument for marketing the international and global credentials of universities.

For students, they are sold an idea of a world-class education at a global university, where they will learn skills that will give them a competitive edge in any global industry. Within this, they are also being sold an idea of the relative superiority of a UK education over any other kind (Sidhu, 2006). A material effect of marketing UK and northern universities as global and superior, is increased education migration from countries in the global south to the global north (Maringe and Carter, 2007). In the study of development, a discipline primarily concerned with the politics of improvement in the global south, the geographies of migrating students is particularly interesting, as growing numbers of students from the global south come to the north to study their home countries.

Marketing degrees as products
Making students transactional customers

The third approach to marketing the university is in many ways the most straightforward but also the most obviously contested. That is, the university sells both a direct product to students in the form of a degree or certificate, and indirectly sells social capital to join a global elite network. For the self-interested student, a degree is a personal investment for personal gains. The creeping pervasiveness of this logic, which conceptualises students as customers in a transactional relationship, is noted by Maringe and Gibbs (2009, p.163) who write:

> "Issues of value for money are gradually taking centre stage in students' union charters and campaigns for the improvement of services and quality of educational provision. Thus, rather than remaining at the periphery of decision-making, students are increasingly becoming an integral part of the core business of universities. Whether it is the design of curriculum, the planning of a variety of service encounters, library and accommodation services among others, student input and views become integral to the university's decision-making and strategic planning. A customer focus will thus revolutionize the way universities conduct their core business of teaching, learning, research, and community service."

The conceptualisation of students as customers is the most contested of all three conceptualisations of students discussed so far. While there is rigorous debate on the

extent to which students and staff feed or contest the idea of students as customers in UK higher education (see Clayson and Haley, 2005), the end product of a degree and all that is represented by that degree e.g. a global education, an association with research excellence and so on, is a product that is packaged and sold to people who want to purchase it. The influence of student and university staff resistant to this concept of 'the student as customer', does not appear to affect university marketing in either the content of marketing messages, the medium of delivery or the target audience.

In the conceptual framing of this study, these three marketing frames may work concurrently to influence marketing professionals in higher education institutions. They are not presented as exclusive determinants of marketing approaches. Similarly, the next three frames that identify how 'development' is marketed to audiences in the global north are not exclusive. They also work in parallel to affect conceptualisations of 'development'. It is important to note that the literature review focuses on audiences in the global north, yet in the study, students who come to UK universities to read postgraduate degrees in development studies are from the global north and south; that is, the audience for development studies marketing messages is international. The literature does not disaggregate between these two (very broad) audience types when discussing how development is sold. For the purposes of this study, where the empirical component is on high tariff UK universities, I have assumed that the international students that respond to marketing messages are similar to the audiences in the global north, but for geography i.e. they are likely to be of a similar class disposition as UK/home students, have access to Euro-American consumer goods and cultural exports, and are Anglophone. The empirical findings (discussed later) suggest a need for greater conceptual disaggregation between audiences in the global south and north in the marketing of 'development'.

Marketing development as a positive association
Making individuals cosmopolitan

The marketing of 'development' for a northern public has changed considerably since the 1990s. Prior to this, the marketing of 'development' was typified by international NGO (INGO) responses to famine in Ethiopia in the 1980s. The images of disaster viewed by northern audiences were designed to invoke sympathy and drive the viewer to take action through donating money. Authors remarking on this period call these images 'poverty porn' (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008). The conscious (though partial) shift from INGOs in particular, to more considerate representations of development have produced, Cameron and Haanstra (2008) argue, images of 'development' that are culturally popular, woke and "sexy".

To Biccum (2011) and Fernández-Aballí (2016), development marketing has turned its focus to the 'northern self' from a 'southern other', where the latter is distant and imagined in ways illustrated by Said (1978), the former represents a highly individualised

response to a development crisis (e.g. famine, poor health and sanitation). The northern self is made "sophisticated, affluent, cosmopolitan and sexy" (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008, p. 1476) through their generosity as individual donors, supporters and consumers of a worthy cause; actions that do not recognise development crises in structures of inequality or historises them in northern practices of colonialism and slavery.

Critically, Cameron and Haanstra (2008) suggest that the construction of the northern individual as 'good' and 'well intentioned' (they use the term cosmopolitan though we could also use the term 'global citizen' as Biccum (2011) does), does not mark any significant change in the imagination of 'development' or the global south. They observe a reversal in what is made implicit and what is made explicit. For example, a focus on southern need and want (as found in campaigns of the recent past), implicitly creates a north that is full and should therefore be generous. In making development 'sexy' and constructing a cosmopolitan northern benefactor, the northern self is explicit and makes implicit the southern recipient's parochialism. In (re)making development representations, the north-south dualism exists intact, othering still takes place and partial and situated accounts of development are still generated. What has changed is the conceptualisation of the northern audience and the making of cosmopolitan individuals.

Marketing development as a commodity
Making consumers by making ethics purchasable

This frame is related to the previous framing of marketing development as a positive association and the subsequent making of cosmopolitan individuals. It suggests that supporting a worthy cause and marking oneself as beneficent requires the making of 'development' as a commodity. For example, the purchase of wristbands, ribbons, t-shirts and red noses in order to raise awareness, demands that 'development' is an idea or object that is traded. Ponte and Richey (2014) use the term "Brand Aid" to refer to the phenomenon of branding development problems and the people they affect in consumable products sold to northern audiences.

A good example of this is the social enterprise, TOMS shoes, where the purchase of a pair of shoes in the global north triggers a corporate donation summed up by the simple marketing messages: 'With every product you purchase, TOMS will help a person in need'. Over time, the business has expanded from providing shoes in the global south, to other development goods like water and sanitation services. Ponte and Richey (2014) argue that 'development' as the cause tied to a product is marketed in a top-down way that rests on the imagination of northern audiences of needy people in the global south, coveting or needing goods easily available in the global north. Simultaneously, northern audiences imagine themselves as helpful and giving in a globalised marketplace where consumers can make a difference through their consumption choices.

The images in **Image 2**, typify the content on much of the TOMS UK website. The positive image of 'development' in the second image of children shows how the two frames that market development work together: we can see happy children clutching a pair of shoes generously given by the northern consumer marking the consumer as helpful. This is done without disrupting tired tropes of young black and brown bodies lacking goods, dependent on and satisfied by northern (or western) altruism. It is a simple narrative devoid of any context.

Image 2 Marketing 'development' as a commodity

(Images of screengrabs from https://www.toms.co.uk, accessed October 2018)

TOMS shoes in particular (and there are other examples of development commodities e.g. RED products, see Richey and Ponte, 2008; and Cameron and Haanstra, 2008), uses simple storytelling to sell their product, in marked contrast to advertising that focuses on the product - the shoes. TOMS shoes achieve the effect of creating a development product through cause-related marketing, an approach to marketing that comes from business studies in which private sector companies associate their products with a moral good. What is being sold here, it seems, is a moral good, the product is incidental. For the consumer, the purchase of the moral good is *the* moral action.

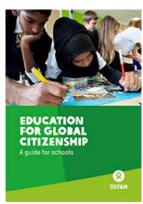## Marketing development as global citizenship
Making individuals global citizens

This framing of 'development' as a representation of global citizenship rests upon notions of a global responsibility borne by people in the global north towards those in the global south. It is a contemporary frame within global citizenship education that can be traced back to Kipling's 19th century 'White Man's Burden'. In a development context, global citizenship education refers to learning outcomes that help "enable young people to develop the core competencies which allow them to actively engage with the world, and help to make it a more just and sustainable place" (Oxfam, 2017). Central to global citizenship education is the idea of an interconnected world, and the importance of individual rights and responsibilities to ensure our interconnected world is more just.

In the UK context, Biccum (2007) identifies the importance of global citizenship education in schools in the 1990s (following the election of Tony Blair's and his internationalist ideology) as a politically-driven initiative to produce a British citizenry knowledgeable of other cultures, places and people, with regard for a common humanity and supportive of northern efforts of 'development' in the global south. It was Blair's government after all that founded the Department for International Development (DFID) and set about building a coalition of support for an expansive programme of international aid (Biccum, 2007). And, it was DFID, with Oxfam, that invested in the production of global citizenship teaching materials, to help craft the message of a global citizenship as outward-looking northern students (see Image 3).

Image 3 Teaching Global Citizenship, an Oxfam guide

Martin and Griffiths (2012, p.912) examine global citizenship education in-depth and argue that its teachers "prepare their pupils 'to play an active role as citizens' [which in its global context is interpreted] based on the liberal concept of care". They explain that this means (2012, p.912):

> "The notion of aid, responsibility, and poverty alleviation retain the Other as an object of benevolence. The global citizen is somehow naturally endowed with the ability and inclination to 'help' the Other. To be addressed as a global citizen is to be marked as benevolent."

To Martin and Griffiths, global citizenship education is grounded in the same tropes of Othered 'development'-needing people in the global south, and to whom people in the global north have an individualised sense of responsibility. This, Biccum (2011, p.1334) adds, advocates a model of "entrepreneurialised activism that promotes market-based solutions to development", and does not promote political literacy of development issues like poverty and inequality. Although these authors focus on secondary education, there are connections to higher education and the packaging of development studies programmes as crafting a type of global citizenship where 'global citizens' (national and international students on university programmes) are sold the capacity and self-belief to intervene and bring about change in societies to which they may or may not be members.

Across all six frames, there is a commonality of market-orientated political practices at work i.e. a neoliberal ontology, where there is a conscious packaging of discourses to market both degrees and development. This study aims to identify the course marketing practices of development studies degrees and to explore the consequences of particular marketing logics used by two UK higher education institutions. The usefulness of the conceptual framework presented here is discussed at the end of the report in light of the study aims.

Methodology

This exploratory study involved primary data collection at two universities in the UK that teach postgraduate development studies programmes. This sample allows the study to meet its objectives, specifically: to test the robustness of the conceptual framework, develop a suitable analytical framework, and to refine the research questions for further studies. Furthermore, it can suggest patterns to examine or identify areas that need closer study through follow-up research. Ethical approval for the study was secured in September 2018 from the UCL Research Ethics Committee. The data controller for this project is UCL.

Sample selection

The two universities share common characteristics that might affect the apparatus of university marketing. Both are large, research-intensive universities with a considerable number and range of postgraduate offerings. They command high fees from national and international postgraduate students. Both universities are competitively and uniquely positioned in their field, and so do not engage in the "aggressive" marketing often ascribed to "mass market" universities that need to capture a market share of students to maintain commercial viability (Ali-Choudhury et al, 2009). In their teaching of development studies, both offer a range of postgraduate courses, one focuses on on-site study and the other on distance learning. While the mode of study might affect the student profile, this study explores whether it affects the content of development studies course marketing or its affects on student imaginations. Access to the universities was secured through two gatekeepers working at the institutions.

Research Methods

A series of research methods were utilised to address the three research questions. RQ1 asked: how is 'development' visually and textually represented in course webpages and brochures? To answer this question, we collated publicly accessible course brochures and closely read the webpages of two development studies programmes. The documents were analysed in NVivo (data analysis software) and the webpages were captured using the 'NCapture' tool. In total, 22 documents were analysed: two course brochures and twenty document-webpages. To identify the webpages, we located the 'home' webpage of a specific development studies course, and then navigated away (clicking on hyperlinks on the page) and navigated to this webpage (tracing back to institutional or departmental homepages), a research technique recommended by Pauwels (2011). This approach allowed us to capture the organisation of the website, specifically its structure and navigational options, and allow us to see the points at which audiences are allowed to leave the site, or whether they can engage with the material on it (e.g. comment on it). This information tells us who is in control of the medium and suggests to what ends (e.g. in a commercial webpage this might mean being guided to a basket to buy a product).

RQ2 asked what marketing rationales are applied by university communications teams to market development studies courses? And, what tensions emerge between these different actors? To address this question nine semi-structured interviews were held with professionals involved in the production of marketing materials. These professionals included academic leads on the programmes, marketing and communication officers at department level and university-level marketing managers. Respondents were identified through purposive sampling, building on access via department gatekeepers, then snowball sampling. The data allow us to speak to the organisational structure of marketing teams, why particular discourses are given prominence in marketing material and what tensions exist between actors involved in the production of that material.

RQ3 asked what do students think 'development' is and to what extent has marketing material informed these ideas? To address this question we held two group interviews with students recently enrolled on a development studies postgraduate programme (prior to lectures that offer critical definitions of 'development'). On-site students were recruited through an email that invited them to participate in a group discussion. Selection was on a first to reply basis. Eight students took part in the on-site discussions. The distance learning students were also recruited through an email and participated through a group WhatsApp call. Connectivity issues meant some students were not able to maintain the call. I either called these students separately and asked the same questions as I had asked of the group, or they answered my questions over email through two rounds of follow up questions and clarifications. Whilst this is not ideal as the group dynamic was lost, the data was still revealing in terms of student's individual understandings of development and their engagement with marketing materials. Five students took part in these discussions.

Analytical frameworks

Two analytical frameworks were developed to analyse the data produced: one for the analysis of development studies marketing material, and one for the analysis of interview data. The analysis of course webpages and brochures was approached through a cultural studies lens. This meant identifying the social context and conventions within which visual and textual artefacts are read and employed a multimodal analysis of webpages (i.e. reading the text and image together) to understand them as social and cultural cues. Drawing on the work of Lister and Wells (2004) and Pauwels (2011) on visual analysis, and Gasper and Apthorpe (1996) on analysing discourses of 'development' in official documents; I developed an analytical framework suitable for analysing development studies marketing materials. The framework has three components: (i) textual analysis identifying typologies of development subjects; dualisms; tropes; narratives and counter-narratives of development; and oversimplifications. (ii) Visual analysis identifying the photographic conventions (e.g. framing of images, viewing position, use of foreground and background) and social conventions (e.g. use of visual metaphors and gaze) deployed in marketing imagery. (iii) Webpage analysis identifying

typographical signifiers, cross-modal interplay and the significance of page structure and navigation.

The second analytical framework was developed through a grounded approach to identifying key concepts and codes for analysis relevant to identifying conceptualisations of 'development' among marketing professionals and students, and the influence of marketing materials on students. With reference to group interviews with students, examples of grounded codes include: development as a *place*, an *application* and a scholarly *concept*, with these ideas informed by *life experience*, *professional experiences*, *scholarship* and *course marketing*. With reference to individual interviews with professionals, example codes include a parent code of 'course marketing rationales', and child codes of *demonstrate value for money*, *targets*, and *fulfil brand promise*. The codes were arrived at through an iterative process that involved reading and re-reading interview transcripts and continually identifying new codes until the data were saturated.

The findings yielded through use of these analytical frameworks are discussed in the next section.

Selected findings

The findings presented in this section are salient to addressing the research objectives of the study. All findings are indicative and will develop through planned iterative processes of presentation and feedback (see 'dissemination and outputs' below). The section is structured by the three research questions.

RQ1 How is 'development' visually and textually represented in course webpages and brochures?

In university 1 (on-site) salient findings are:

- Multimodality matters for the viewer's comprehension and interpretation. We found that all the images we analysed were decontextualized and abstract from the text. The link had to be forcibly intuited or imagined by the viewer, which leads to issues of gaze and agency. For example, images of 'Africaesque' city landscapes were amidst text that described career opportunities with a development studies degree.

- The images viewed are entirely suggestive of the global south, without ever being specific as to geographic places, social context, nations or cultures. Suggestions are made through the architecture of buildings, people's dress and their bodies, and heavily built-up or seemingly barren landscapes. The lack of context to the image leads the viewer to imagine this is a pre- or on-going development image and not the 'end product'. Possibly appealing to viewer's preconceptions or familiarity with development tropes.

- The predominant images on the programme webpage are framed in a wide angle from afar. The content of the frame is full and busy. The raised viewing position of the viewer allows for a clear overview of a busy scene. The effect is one where we, the viewer, are not a part of the goings on in the scene, instead we are cast as interested observers. This viewing position may symbolise development workers, who may see a bigger picture, though lack detailed insight into specifics.

- There are multiple constructions of 'development' in the text. Variously, development is a subject one teaches and researches; it is also an industry comprised of organisations that a degree-holder is primed to work in.

In university 2 (distance learning):

- The images analysed in the course brochure and webpage have no captions nor any clear relationship to the text. In the course brochure, most images are generic images of student-like activities (e.g. typing on a laptop or walking on a campus somewhere); such images invite the viewer to imagine themselves as students and are conventional in university prospectus.

- There are very few 'development' images. One in the course brochure is of a brown girl in shabby clothes looking down at her hands and therefore not directly engaging with the viewer in the photo. We cannot see what she is doing, is looking

at, or even what is happening in the background behind her. The frame and content of the image meets general expectations of a development image as one depicting a helpless subject with limited agency. It stands in stark contrast to the other images in the same document.

- The text is focused on the ways in which the degree enhances one's career; the presumption is the student is already working in the development sector or is in a professional in a related sector. The text does not define 'development' or set its contours and assumes a knowledgeable audience.

RQ2 What marketing rationales are applied by university communications teams to market development studies courses? And, what tensions emerge between these different actors?

- There are different architectures of marketing in both institutions with different degrees of autonomy in course marketing. In University 1, a decentralised model of marketing meant departments had a greater say in the content (images and text) of marketing materials. In University 2, a more centralised model meant departments were consulted on some key messages and images, but the production of the webpages and brochures was centrally controlled. This may explain the use of more generic images in the marketing materials of University 2.

- The importance of meeting targets (of student numbers and related financial targets) was paramount to both universities. However, there was a noticeable tension between academics involved in course marketing and professional marketers. The academics themselves were a major source of tension. They did not want to market their courses, but were not prepared to let the professionals do it entirely either. So, where academics engaged, they did so reluctantly and often without the requisite skills. One professional marketer's comments typified how many felt about academics and their involvement in course marketing, "The prospective student is always in my mind. 'What does the student want to get out of this degree', not what does the academic think they want the student to know, or what research they want to showcase." (University 1).

- Discourses of branding were predominant amongst professional marketers. This was often framed as "what do we want people to *feel* about us" (University 1). In both institutions, the course fed from the university brand. In these high tariff, research-intensive institutions, 'excellence' was a brand, and development studies courses were expected by these professionals to signify 'excellence'. Typically, this was done by stating the skills students can expect to gain through the course and their employment prospects after it.

RQ3 What do students think 'development' is and to what extent has marketing material informed these ideas?

- The differences in student profile between and within the two institutions was a factor in how students understood development and the role of marketing materials in that understanding. Students from so called 'developing countries' or the global south (a term I will use here), without any experience within the development industry were highly critical of the term 'development' and keen to query how it was applied; to which countries and regarding which contexts. For example, one student was talking about the use of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a significant indicator of a country's development, adding with reference to China, "how is that development? If we define development 'we don't want people to live in fear', how can we say we are a developed country?" This student, and others with a similar profile, was drawing on his experience of living in the global south to query mainstream ideas of development. The ideas of development the student saw in marketing messages do not speak to this nuance.

- Conversely, students from the global north with at least two years of experience in the development industry found marketing messages (coded in images and text) did relate to their ideas of development. On being shown a series of images from course marketing materials, one student remarked, "Honestly if that would have been a picture of an old library in Nairobi, I wouldn't have an interest in studying it because I don't want to work in the preservation of the colonial heritage of cities in the global south for example. So I was like, OK, yes, yes, slums are a reality in all their glory and devastation". For students with this profile in both institutions, there was a familiarity with crude context-less representations of development (discussed under RQ1 findings). They recognised these images to be images of 'development'.

The conclusion to this report relates the findings to the study aims and objectives.

Conclusion

Revisiting the study aim and objectives

The aim of this study was to explore the consequences of marketing logic on student imaginations of 'development'. The findings suggest that the representations of development that are crafted in marketing materials are shaped by the architecture of marketing within universities, particularly the degree of autonomy departments have over marketing content. For students viewing and engaging with marketing materials there is a noteworthy difference between students who have come to understand development through the experience of living in the global south, and those who have worked in the development industry. In both cases, conceptualisations of development in marketing materials were recognisable, but engendered deeper questioning of the concept from southern students viewing these images from 'outside' of the industry.

The study objectives focused on methodology: particularly the appropriateness of the conceptual framework, analytical framework and research questions. Early analysis suggests the conceptual framework is adequate. The three frames that are used to sell development are evident in the ways in which development is conceptualised to students and how students in turn engage with these conceptualisations, this is particularly apparent in discussions of student motivations to study development at postgraduate level with discourses of applying one's good intentions globally. The frames that are used to sell UK higher education institutions to students are also evident, though some are foregrounded. For example, because the two case study institutions are well established, they engage in different patterns of marketing that do not seem to be directed by selling degrees as a product to students. Marketing professionals interviewed in this study actively spoke against these practices in the industry. Yet, both institutions relied heavily on brand recognition and all students spoke about the importance of the institution in their choice to undertake postgraduate study. A wider sample of institutions is required to assess whether a neoliberal ontology adequately explains why certain approaches to marketing and certain representations of development take hold.

With reference to the second research objective, these analytical frameworks produced robust data. The codes generated in the analysis of individual and group interview data will be used in any follow up study as a sound and tested analytical framework.

The research questions that have guided this study remain relevant and appropriate for further studies. However, this study has raised additional questions around the architecture of marketing and its determination of marketing content at the level of the discipline. And, the differentiated effect of marketing messages on different types of students along the axis of global north/south and with/out development industry experience. Addressing this last question would allow us to understand who is really

being targeted and spoken to in development studies marketing and what does this suggest about whose values are edified in the call to study development.

Dissemination and outputs

To date, the outputs of this study are:

- A conference paper and presentation at the SRHE Annual Conference in December 2018

- A presentation at University College London, in the Bartlett Development Planning Unit's 30:30 seminar series.

- An Interim and this Final report to the SRHE

- A conference paper and presentation at the Development Studies Association (DSA) annual conference, scheduled 19-21 June.

Further intended outputs include a peer review journal article and accompanying blog drawing on the conference papers. Additionally, a key outcome of this study is that its content forms the basis for a deeper enquiry into the marketing of development studies and its impact in light of the rationales of market-orientated political practices. This is likely to demand expanding the study to include more universities with a wider range of student profiles, and a greater probing of where and how students come to encounter 'development'.

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