

# THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

A U S T R A L I A

# **BRANDING AND POSITIONING IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR**

*Andrew Everett*

*Director, UQ International*



*“A brand is a living entity –  
and it is enriched or undermined  
cumulatively over time,  
the product of a thousand small gestures.”*

*Michael Eisner, CEO Disney*

*The new world for University brands:*

*more segments*

*more locations*

*more noise*



# WHY BRAND HIGHER EDUCATION?

- Increasing competition for traditional and non-traditional students
  - Limited or decreasing government funding
  - Increasing market fragmentation
  - Volatility in financial markets
- More universities will be focusing on value-adding
- More non-traditional competition
  - Private providers
  - Online providers

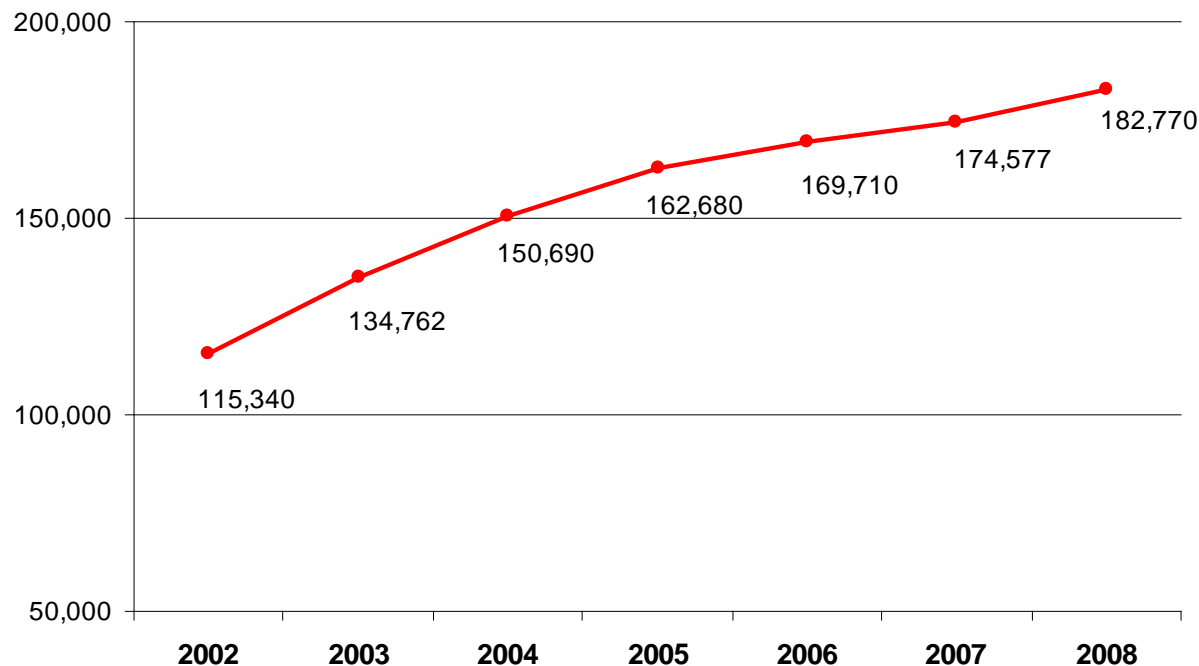


# THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT



# INTERNATIONAL DEMAND

- Australia is one of the leading destinations for international higher education – attracting more than 182,000 international students in 2008 (up from about 115,000 in 2002)



Source:  
Access Economics,  
April 2009

# WHAT FACTORS HAVE BEEN IN AUSTRALIA'S FAVOUR?

- Global economic trends
- Relative independence of universities in approaching the market
- Working together where it makes sense
  - GO8
  - AEI
- Competition





# IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA

- True growth in demand for Australian higher education is - in the longer term - likely to be driven by international students
- What are the implications for our brand strategy, marketing budgets and resources?
  - How do we effectively – and consistently – manage the brand message across progressively more diverse markets?
  - How do we manage the “brand experience” of an increasingly international student body?



# BRANDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA



# WHAT BARRIERS EXIST?

- Lack of understanding of brand management principles
- Lack of funding
- Resistance to “cheapening” the hallowed halls of academia by applying commercial principles
- Devolved structures
  - especially relevant in Australia where Admissions, Marketing and Advancement / Fundraising are traditionally viewed as separate departments and often report through different members of the University Executive

# REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS

- Education about marketing and branding for university leadership
- Buy-in from internal stakeholders
- On-going marketing research agenda
- Cross-functional teams
- Marketing goals that are measurable and reported on
- Continuous improvement / refinement, based on tangible results



# DEALING WITH COMPETITION

- Through market research
  - Reports from the field, public market intelligence and understanding the motivations and decision-making processes of your existing students
- Through advice
  - Government and other agencies
  - Collaboration between universities
- Internal improvements
  - Better products , processes, services and communication

# SUCCESSFUL POSITIONING

- Successful brand positioning is:
  - based on comprehensive research with key internal and external audiences
  - reflects – but isn't identical to – university mission
  - endorsed by senior leadership
  - communicated to and embraced by university community
  - emphasizes reasons why:
    - prospective students choose the university
    - alumni are proud to be associated with the university
    - business leaders, government and media seek partnerships and sponsorships
    - community members appreciate institution

# THE MAGIC BULLET?

- Sadly, there is no magic bullet
  - There are very few clear “rights” or “wrongs”
  - Effective brand management is a long term commitment
  - The key is finding what works best for YOUR institution
    - Draw on best practice / competitor activity – but don’t be ruled by it
  - Developing a basis of comparison / benchmarking progress is critical to maintaining support and understanding what future success will look like



# RESOURCES: BRANDING BOOKS

- Aaker, David – Building Strong Brands
- Aaker, David – Brand Portfolio Strategy: Creating Relevance, Differentiation, Energy, Leverage, and Clarity
- Beckwith, Harry – Selling the Invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing
- Atkin, Douglas – The Culting of Brands: When Customers Become True Believers
- Schultz, Don & Schultz, Heidi – Brand Babble: Sense and Nonsense about Branding
- Ries, Al & Trout, Jack – Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind
- Trout, Jack – Differentiate or Die: Survival in Our Era of Killer Competition





# RESOURCES: ONLINE

- Academic Impressions – [www.academicimpressions.com](http://www.academicimpressions.com)
- American Marketing Association – [www.marketingpower.com](http://www.marketingpower.com)
- CASE – [www.case.org](http://www.case.org)

