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**INTERNATIONAL MARKETING OF
UK EDUCATION-
A STUDY ON STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE**

POOJA SHAH

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Chester for the degree of Master of Business Administration**



**CHESTER BUSINESS SCHOOL
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- My Dissertation supervisor Prof. Gautam Rajkhowa
- Students of the Selected Universities

Abstract

The central purpose of this study is to determine the international marketing strategies of education that attract and help international students to make their decision to study in the UK. The study majorly focuses on the research on international students' perspectives. It looks at various researches done by other authors and researchers in this sector. This research also recommends the strategy model to be used by the institutions for promoting the education worldwide.

According to the study, UK education is expanding at an explosive rate all over the world. International students get attracted towards the various marketing strategies followed by the UK universities through various government bodies and also through a number of educational agents in the home country.

Literature Review gives a background study to this research. It gives information about the previous study that had been done on marketing education internationally. This chapter highlights various disciplines like marketing, international marketing, decision-making process of international students etc. It also explains the models used in marketing mix, product level model. The conceptual model is generated and worked upon throughout this study.

In Research Methodology, researcher has cited all the methods and techniques used for this study. Researcher has also given her choice of research method and its justification. The information on data collection methods and analysis is also provided in methodology.

In the next chapter findings and analysis are provided by using appropriate research method. Analysis is done using questionnaire and a telephonic interview.

In the conclusion part, researcher has concluded her findings from the research and the responses received. The researcher has also given appropriate recommendations based on the research done. Limitations and challenges faced by the researcher are also cited at the end.

Declaration

This work is original and has not been submitted previously for any academic purpose.
All secondary sources are acknowledged.

Signed:

Date:

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

The higher education sector continues to be an important contributor to the UK economy. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2008), 202,225 students gained post-graduate qualifications in 2007- and the number of people choosing to pursue post-graduate studies is rising. During the academic year 2004-05, there were 2.48 million students in higher education in the UK, the sector enjoyed a total income of £18 billion and employed 346,000 people (HESA, 2008). Overseas students (students from outside of the EU) are an important part of Higher education sector. Again in 2004-05 academic year, there were approximately 218,000 overseas students, having an estimated direct monetary impact on the UK economy of £2.87 billion (Vickers and Bekhradnia, 2007), and British Council (2006). This impact, comprising university fees and living expenditures, any also give rise to substantial multiplier effects, as estimated by Greenaway and Tuck (1995). This impact is in addition to the fact that many overseas graduates find employment in the UK after graduation, thus adding to the pool of highly skilled labour and providing benefits for the UK economy. They also have a positive impact on regional development, Robson *et al.* (1997) and Universities UK (2001). Meanwhile, international students are expected to offer a number of non-monetary benefits to universities in terms of diversity of students' cohorts, previous experiences and alumni networks.

However the past three decades had a different graph to present, the function of higher education was moved from being a model of providing public goods to a marketable service industry model, the so-called "from aid to trade" (Harman, 2004; Smart & Ang, 1993) from the international perspective. In the 1960s and 1970s, subsidizing international students were viewed as "a form of foreign aid" (Williams, 1981). The 1980s and 1990s saw a drastic reduction in government funding in many Western countries. Higher education institutions then took a marketing approach to their education for international students— charging full-cost fees and undertaking various marketing and recruiting activities.

1.2 Statistical Information

There are almost twice as many international students studying in the UK now as there were 10 years ago, says an annual report on university trends. The number of non-

European students has virtually doubled, according to today's report, published by Universities UK. International students provided a bigger source of income for UK universities in 2007/08 than government grants for research, the report adds.

One in 10 enrolments in 2007-08 – 229,640 students – was from outside the EU. In 1998-99, the figure was 117,290, which makes the increase 96%. Students from outside the EU pay more for courses at UK universities than their European counterparts. In 2007-08, £1.88bn of UK universities' income came from non-EU students, while £1.76bn came from government research grants. China provides the most students to UK universities, with 19,385 enrolments for first degrees, and 21,990 enrolments for post-graduate degrees.

The report also reveals a 3.7% drop in the number of part-time undergraduate students between 2006-07 and 2007-08 (www.guardian.co.uk). It says: "This may be a cause for concern, as part-time study plays an increasingly important role in meeting the higher level skills agenda and in lifelong learning. The increased global competition among institutions offering higher education has made retaining matriculated students equally as important as attracting and enrolling them (Kotler & Fox, 1995; Elliot & Healy, 2001). A growing number of students drop out before completing their programs (Hugstad, 1997; Schertzer & Schertzer, 2004). As seen in the 1990s, Australia and the United Kingdom have viewed education as being a global service industry, have moved international education to a more "marketing-oriented" system (Kinnell, 1989; Mazzarol & Hosie, 1996; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002a), and have engaged in aggressive marketing and recruiting of international students.

The Patterns of Higher Education Institutions in the UK report reveals that in some UK universities as many as three quarters (79%) of degrees are awarded at least an upper second, while in others as few as 48% are given a first or 2:1. It also shows that between 1998-99 and 2007-08, there have been "above average" increases in the numbers of students signing up to study subjects allied to medicine, such as nursing, as well as a growth in biological sciences (including psychology), mathematical sciences, law, mass communication and documentation (including media studies), historical and philosophical studies, education, social studies, and creative arts and design (including drama and music).

1.3 Research Objectives

This study investigates the factors determining overseas students' decisions to apply for a post-graduate degree at a UK university. Understanding these determinants may enable both the international students and the policy makers to make better decisions in selecting the overseas market for UK higher education.

- By applying the concept of marketing mix, what were the major factors that were considered by international students, whilst making a decision to acquire higher education in the UK?
- What, according to international students, is the best promotional strategy to attract more international students into the UK?
- The factors influencing the purchase intention of international students

1.4 Justification for the research

This study initially seeks to understand the applicability of the concept of international marketing in the college/university choice process for international students, and second, to bridge main domain of study— marketing of higher education, particularly regarding issues related to international students and decision making. This study focuses on what experiences students undergo whilst making their decision to study abroad, pre-arrival and post arrival challenges, and the throughout experience during the course which includes, traditional vs. western culture, study and work culture etc. This study considers the development of international marketing principles and practices in UK universities through study of students' perceptions, with specific reference to a study of three universities, i.e. University of Chester, University of Wales Lampeter-London and Glyndwr University- Wrexham.

The researcher's interest in this subject under scrutiny increased because of a work experience of over three years in domestic as well as international marketing projects. The marketing strategy of international universities interested the researcher to study the elements of marketing applied to attract more international students to enrol themselves for higher education in the UK. Out of the 4Ps in marketing mix i.e. product, price, promotion and place, the major element considered by most of the international students was the price factor. Implicit throughout the analysis is the assumption is the assumption that when overseas students select a university, this decision is made

following two earlier decisions, namely what subject to study and the country (UK) in which to study. Rather than rely on survey methods to deduce preferences for an overseas tertiary education or a case study methodology as applied by Chapman and Pyvis (2006), the researcher used UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) data on overseas student applications and admissions.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the factors considered by international students in pursuing their degree from the UK. It will describe the rationale behind the discussion and decision, based on the empirical observations made by the researcher and other authors, which will be elaborated further. Finally it will put forward the approach adopted in the structuring of this dissertation.

1.5 Methodology

A flexible approach has been considered for the research of this study which uses both qualitative and quantitative methodology and passive observation. Qualitative approach included an interview with an Educational Consultant from India, Mumbai, Ms. Nazia Siddique and quantitative data was obtained by international students using a structured questionnaire and 62 international students responded for participation in the survey from three different universities, i.e. University of Chester (Chester), University of Wales- Lampeter (London) and Glyndwr University- (Wrexham).

1.6 Outline of the chapters

1.6. (i) Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter gives a brief summary about the history of the research, facts and figures obtained from (www.guardian.co.uk) and it highlights the research objectives undertaken and the related methodology opted for this study.

1.6. (ii) Chapter Two: Literature Review

In order to place the research in context this chapter begins by outlining the theoretical framework underpinning this research. It begins with the discussion of importance of UK Higher Education system and the elements that are considered by international students whilst making their decision of studying in the UK and the challenges they experienced whilst taking their decision. The conceptual model and its explanation elaborate to the understanding of the factors considered by International students and their experiences.

1.6. (iii) Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter starts with a description of the understanding of philosophical issues which the research design is based. It discusses the different approaches and strategies to the research and will show the logical step-by-step approach to the choices made in the data collection and analysis methods used. Throughout it reviews the various problems related to the primary and secondary research process and the solutions adopted.

1.6. (iv) Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents a pattern of results and analyses for their relevant research questions. It explores the acceptance or rejection of the theories and concepts employed for the study. It draws attention to the research questions and the pragmatic results achieved after the questionnaire surveyed and provides a complete analysis of the structured telephonic - interview.

1.6. (v) Chapter: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter is the summary of the dissertation. It summarises the approach undertaken in order to fulfil the requirements of the question and its aims. It sets out the findings of the research before drawing the dissertation to a conclusion. It also provides an assessment of the value of the research done and it is an outline of possible future research standards. It provides the conclusion on the basis of findings and analysis of data.

1.7 Definitions

The researcher has used some terms in the research study which needs to be explained. They are as follows:

1.7. (i) British Council: UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. It runs programs in arts, science, sports, business and English language. (www.britishcouncil.org)

1.7. (ii) Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA): It is the official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education. This agency promotes and enhances the ability of Government and its agencies to determine higher education policy and allocate funding. (www.hesa.ac.uk)

1.7. (iii) *The UK Council for Overseas Students Affairs (UKCOSA)*: It is the UK's national advisory body who serves the interest of an international students and people who work with them. This body encourages and assists international students, to and from UK, to support students develop a global experience to serve human development. (www.ukcisa.org.uk)

1.7. (iv) *BMRB (British Market Research Bureau)*: is the longest established market research agency in Britain, commenced in the year, 1933. The company conducts the following types of research: media, social and public policy, customer, employee and omnibus. (www.bmrb.co.uk)

1.8 Summary

This chapter provides an introduction to the chapters that are relevant for this study. It highlights the introduction to the study with statistical information, research objectives, methods and justification of the research methods. The conferred chapters in the study discuss the relevant findings and analysis of factors affecting student choices of UK universities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

While the number of international graduates increase year on year so too are the number of international education providers. The competition between traditional universities, independent and private universities, is increasing with a variety of joint ventures and franchise operations fragmenting this highly competitive market (Cubillo et al., 2006). As the number of degree choices grows and prospective students have a wider variety of universities from which to choose, the need for universities to differentiate themselves from their competition is self evident, resulting in the role of marketing in student recruitment increasing in importance (Taylor and Darling, 1991; Canterbury, 1999; Nicholls et al., 1995; Coates, 1998). To compound the problem, numerous higher education institutions (MacGregor, 2000; Merten, 2000) and some business schools have seen declines in their enrolments, further emphasizing the importance of marketing for student recruitment (Taylor and Darling, 1991; Smith *et al.*, 1995; Tagwireyi, 2000).

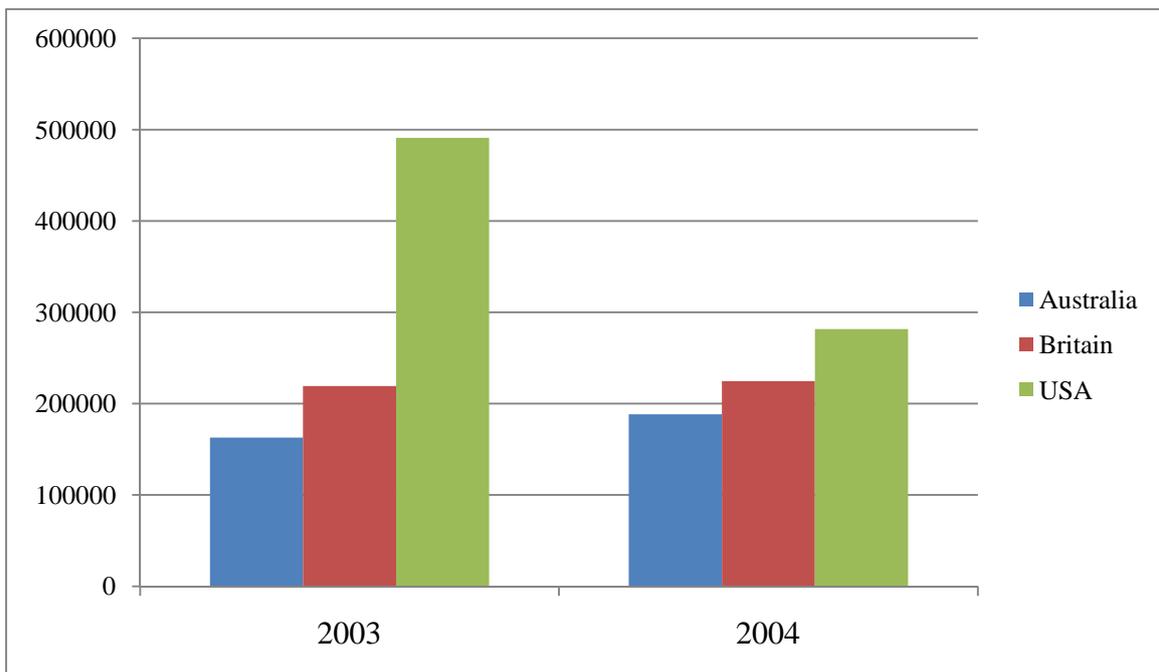
As course choices available to students grow, life changing decisions about where they study are becoming more complex, with the decision-making process becoming longer while prospective students assess alternative offerings of competing universities. Perceptions of universities' offerings and the image that a university conveys need to be managed (Ivy, 2001). While the collection and evaluation of the information on universities is being critically evaluated, universities are providing only some of the information that prospective students are using to develop the image they have of that university. Publicity and league tables in the mass media also play an important role in student choice. At a time when many UK universities are facing increasing financial pressures and competition, it has become imperative for them to market themselves.

The factors influencing international students' choice of a host country and institution have been discussed in the domain of internationalization (Bruch & Barty, 1998; Davis, 1997; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002a) as well as in the domain of marketing (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002b; Soutar & Turner, 2002; Waters, 1992; Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986). However, in a close examination, the influential factors related to marketing are sometimes factors resulting from internationalization, such as faculty and/or student exchange programs, research collaborations, and twinning programs. On the other hand, the discussion of factors influencing international

students' choice under the domain of internationalization literature often reflects similar terminologies that were used in the marketing literature, such as cost/price, program, location/place, and process. Therefore, when examining international students' choice of a country and an institution and their decision-making process, it is important to review the literature in an integrated manner.

The UK is the second leading exporter of international education after USA as researched by Binsardi & Ekwulugo (2003). In 2003, 219,285 international students were enrolled in UK universities and colleges, then increasing up to 224,660 students in the year 2004. Australia is the third exporter of international education with 162,865 foreign students in 2003 and 188,227 in 2004, while the USA is the market leader in the markets for international education. In 2003, there were 490,933 international students learning in the USA, increasing to 547,867 students in the year 2004 (Figure 1).

Figure 1- International students' enrolment in Australia, Britain and USA universities, 2003-2004



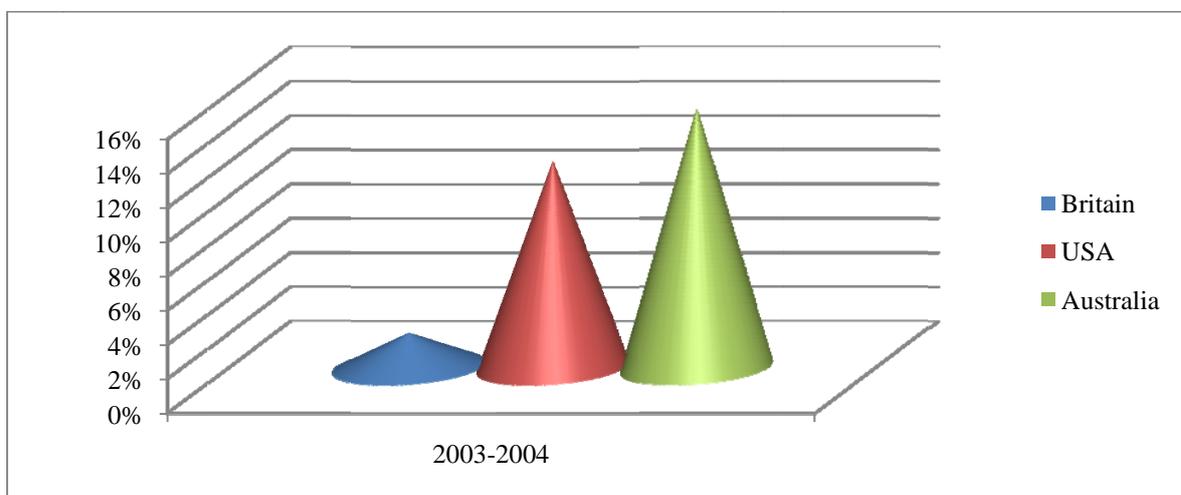
Source: HESA (2007), the USA and Australian Statistical Offices (2006)

The research by HESA (Figure 2) indicates however that the UK is lagging behind that of its rival competitors such as the USA and Australia. In the year 2004, Australia achieved the highest growth of 15 percent, followed by the USA with 12 percent, while the UK achieved only 2 percent growth of its international students' enrolment. The

USA and Australia have been attracting more international students than the UK. This continuing strong growth in overseas student numbers in the USA and Australia is due to the sustained pro-active and aggressive marketing strategies of the USA and Australia in the international markets for education (Smith 2001; IDP 2002; Mazzarol and Hosie 1996; Michael, 1990) while the UK is behind in terms of its strategic marketing policies.

Figure 2

The growth of International students' enrolments, comparison between Britain, USA, and Australia, 2003-2004



Source: HESA (2007), the USA and Australian Statistical Offices (2006)

The UK Government, British Council and the UK universities nowadays face fiercer competition in the world markets of international education (www.guardian.co.uk). It is imperative that the UK should equip themselves with the necessary marketing intelligence and information that would enable the country to face the challenges. This is the main theme of the study. By examining international students' perceptions and factors determined in making decision to study abroad, the study functions as an input for academic marketing planners and the Government for formulating their strategic marketing policies.

2.2 Marketing Concept in Higher Education

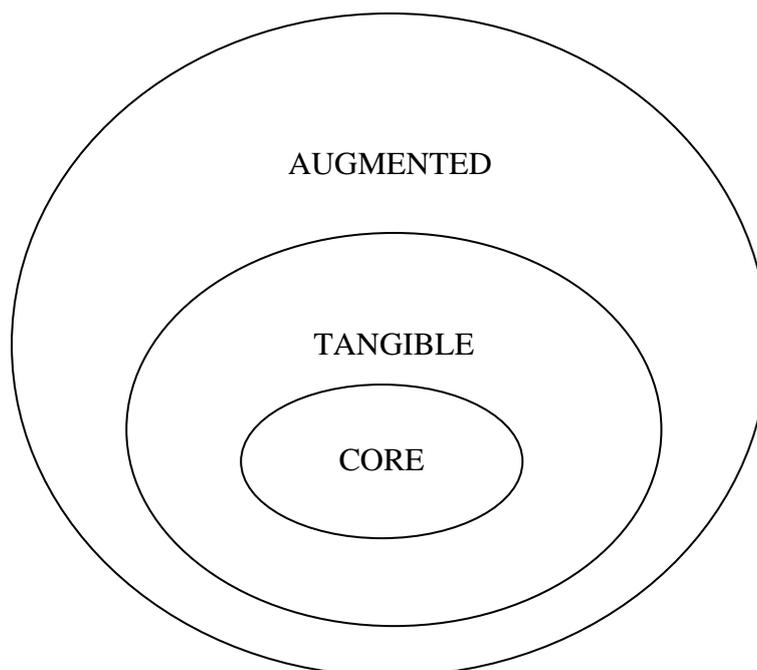
Marketing in the higher education sector is not new. Many authors have recognised the increasingly important role that marketing is playing in student recruitment (Cubillo *et al.*, 2006; Ivy, 2001; Maringe and Foskett, 2002; Fisk and Allen, 1993; Carlson, 1992;

Wonders and Gyure, 1991; Murphy and McGarrity, 1978). When universities offer qualifications that satisfy student needs, distribute the tuition using methods that match student expectations, provide the data on which they can make informed decisions about qualification choices and price those programs at a level that students see as providing value, courses are more likely to be filled. The tools alluded to here are the most basic elements of the marketing mix, that of product, price, place and promotion, which are used by institutions to increase, not only inquiries regarding programs, but also applications, and indeed enrolment.

2.2.i The ‘Product’ in Education Marketing

In education, the nature of the product varies, and there has been a debate as to whether students are the real products. Kotler and Fox (1985) argue that students are raw materials, graduates the product, and prospective employers the customer. Kotler and Fox (1985) have put forward a different view of marketing in education by bringing in the stakeholder concept. This concept emphasizes the importance of government, parents, and students’ employers, etc., all of whom have a “stake” in the education process.

Figure 3: Three levels of ‘Product’



Source: Principle of marketing, Kotler *et al.* (2008)

Kotler, Armstrong and Saunders (2008) suggested that a product should be viewed in three levels. Levitt (1980) in his earlier work sees the universities' offerings as being made up of different products that can be regarded as existing on three separate and distinct levels:

- the core;
- tangible; and
- augmented product.

If core benefit is considered, it can be said that the students are not buying degrees; they are buying the benefits that a degree can provide in terms of employment, status, lifestyle, etc. At the second level, tangible attributes might include the physical layout of the campus, the library, laboratories and sporting facilities. Finally, the augmented level is made up of intangible attributes such as library membership for graduates, student loans and finance, an employment or placement service, etc. If these factors are not achieved, students will not be satisfied. International students' requirements fit very well with Levitt's work, and the work of Kinnell (1985).

2.3 Stakeholder Concept

Marketing concept is a corporate orientation to business that starts with consumers and integrates marketing into every other corporate function. The traditional view of marketing orientation is that "the keys to achieving organisational goals reside in determining the needs and wants of ... customers" (Kotler and Anderson, 1987). In the past, the universities have determined what students want. Recently, however, the customers are being more vocal, thus indicating their dissatisfaction with the provision of the education sector. Market orientation is presented as a convergence of marketing and strategic management thinking. Education establishments are currently converging marketing with their strategic management thinking. Most market orientation literature focuses primarily on external stakeholders such as customers and competitors.

For universities to succeed, they need to develop relationships between stakeholders and the institution. Relationship marketing is seen as relationship networks and interaction between an organisation and its customers (Gummesson, 1994). Relationships require at

least two parties who are in contact with each other; in service marketing this is the customer and the service provider. Networks emerge when these relationships become many and complex. The core interaction at the heart of relationship marketing is the exchange of values and supporting activities. Halal (1996) proposed a stakeholder model of the corporation, which views the corporation as a socio-economic system composed of various equally important constituencies:

- Employees;
- Customers;
- Suppliers;
- the public and its government representatives; and
- Investors.

Each stakeholder has an obligation to the corporation as well as rights Halal (1996). The nature of educational products has made it difficult for long-term customer retention. “The percentage of students that remain loyal to an institution and stay on to pursue post-graduate programs is certainly too small to be a focus of any institution’s marketing strategy at the undergraduate level” (Ivy, 2001). Hence, marketing efforts should not only be directed to students but to the entire range of stakeholders. According to this view, students should be regarded as consumers and not just customers. This fact was also recognised by others such as Nicholls et al. (1995).

For years UK universities have been described as being product-oriented by virtue of their subject offerings in the past. Recently, however, the universities have evolved by recognising the importance of marketing in this sector. The education sector in the UK is facing rigorous changes in its operating environment (Cubillo *et al.*, 2006). These changes will affect several dimensions; first, through the supply of funding; second, through the increase or decrease in demand for their offerings and global challenges from other competitors. Students are tending increasingly to be extremely critical and analytical when choosing their educational institutions (Ivy, 2001). Universities must, therefore, be very self-critical. For an organisation to thrive it has to balance internal capabilities and resources with the opportunities offered externally while coping with the obvious threats of the environment (Maringe and Foskett, 2002). The nature of the UK educational environment is unique (Cubillo *et al.*). British education has for a long time been considered to be the best in the world, enjoying the branding of “made in the United Kingdom”. For many years, large numbers of UK universities have enjoyed this

status and have benefited in building their image worldwide. Recently though, the trend has changed as a result of global competition. Many other countries are strongly emerging and coming up with quality education (Cubillo *et al.*, 2006).

Technological innovation and technological improvement have had a profound effect in all aspects of educational marketing (Ivy, 2001). Computer technology, for instance, has revolutionised the way programs are increasingly being offered; for example, some students are engaged in distance learning, and courses being offered through the Internet. Against this background, UK universities need to expand globally in order to maintain their existence. Consequently, a well co-ordinated marketing effort will be needed if the UK is to maintain a competitive position in the provision of international education.

2.3. (i) Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI2):

UK education can gain a higher position by getting people's (students') perceptions, asking institutions about the performance and inputting suggestions from them. This would facilitate to know the weaknesses in the UK education system. Initiatives for improvement are taken by the UK Government like PMI2.

Launched in April 2006, the Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI2) is a five-year strategy which aims to secure the UK's position as a leader in international education and sustain the growth of UK international education delivered in the UK and overseas.

The PM's Initiative (PMI2) aims to: (www.britishcouncil.org)

- Promote the benefits of a UK education to international students
- Ensure international students have a positive UK experience
- Help UK and international education providers to build strategic alliances and partnerships, and demonstrate the value of the UK as a partner in education policy and delivery
- Diversify and consolidate markets.

2.4. Why Market?

Education has very complex programs and products. Defining the role of an institution is not just a simple matter of identifying and attributing value- producing activity. In applying marketing concepts to education, Kotler and Fox (1985) defined marketing as

"the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets, to achieve institutional objectives. Marketing involves designing the institution's offerings to meet the target market's needs and desires, and using effective pricing, communication, distribution to inform, motivate, and service the markets". Earlier applications of marketing in higher education were intended mainly to address the decreasing number of prospective students (Brooker & Noble, 1985; College Entrance Examination Board, 1976; Krampf & Heinlein, 1981).

A marketing model applies marketing principles, such as marketing mix, segmentation, positioning, and marketing research, to higher educational institutions. It helps institutions identify students' college choice factors and examine their decision-making process so that institutions can adequately respond to the potential students' needs, wants, and interests. In the marketing model, college choice is a continuous interactive process between students and colleges. The ultimate college choice decision made by students will depend on the match between the characteristics of the students (e.g. their needs, perceptions, and preferences) and the characteristics of the institutions (e.g. products/programs, price/tuition and financial aid, place/distribution or location/urban or rural, and communications), and the information exchanged between the two parties. Market research will allow a university to discover the preferences of a particular market, however without the desire and ability to mould its products or services to satisfy those preferences, the efforts taken will incur wastage of valuable resources.

2.4 (i) The Marketing Mix

The marketing mix is a set of controllable marketing tools that an institution uses to produce the response it wants from its various target markets (Ivy, 2008). It consists of everything that the university can do to influence the demand for the services that it offers. Tangible products have traditionally used a 4Ps model; the services sector on the other hand uses a 7P approach in order to satisfy the needs of the service provider's customers: product, price, place, promotion, people, physical facilities and processes (Maringe and Foskett, 2002).

2.4. (i) Product

The product is what is being sold. It is more than a simple set of tangible features, it is a complex bundle of benefits that satisfy customer/students' needs (Ivy, 2008). In the case

of a university, what is being sold can be widely debated. Kotler and Fox (1985) argue that students registering for degrees are the raw materials of education and that the graduates are the products, with employers being the customers. While there is merit in this argument, employers seldom pay universities for their graduates, it is far more common to have students pay universities for the services that they receive and ultimately the degrees that they are awarded (Cubillo *et al.* 2006). For this reason, students will be seen as the customers and the academic degree, the product. Design of the degree is central to the product element of the marketing mix. The curriculum must be appropriately developed and adapted to meet the needs of the students. Program duration is also expected to influence the course choice, for example, MBA degree.

2.4. (ii) Price

The price element of the services marketing mix is dominated by what is being charged for the degree or tuition fees that are required to enrol at the university Cubillo *et al.* (2006). The pricing element not only affects the revenues that a university derives from its enrolment, but also affects student perceptions of the quality. With most universities charging tuition fees for post graduate education, tuition fees can have an impact on a student's ability to afford to register for a degree, with some researchers finding a direct link between demand for a degree and tuition fees (Little *et al.*, 1997; Ratshinga, 1998). Some universities have established their departments as separate cost centres and are expected to be entirely self funding without support from the university's central budget. Many universities also established that this way can be expected to make a contribution to the university's central funds and cross subsidise other areas of university's activities, such as research. Hence, the pricing element is critical to the day to day operation of many universities. BMRB (as cited Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003) found that course fees were the second most highly rated item.

2.4. (iii) Place

Place is the distribution method that the university adopts to provide the tuition to its market in a manner that meets, if not exceeds, student expectations Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003). The development of alternative modes of tuition have grown significantly; no longer are students confined to the classroom and their lecturer to get the input they need to meet the requirements of the program. Access to lecture and support materials are increasing becoming available through virtual learning media, like Blackboard and Moodle. Distance learning opportunities have also developed through

the post, email, the web, video and teleconferencing, block release options and more recently pod-casts.

2.4. (iv) Promotion

Promotion encompasses all the tools that universities can use to provide the market with information on its offerings: advertising, publicity, public relations and sales promotional efforts (Ivy, 2001). When one considers the wide variety of people with which a university needs to communicate, the use of just the prospectus or the university's website is unlikely to be effective. Different elements are used for different people. Personal contact with graduates and open days, while having a somewhat more promotions focus, did however suggest that getting advice from experts and/or alumni assisted in their decision making process. This was supported by findings of Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) and Cubillo et al. (2006). Indeed some public, like prospective students, are so important that a number of promotional tools will be targeted at them for recruitment purposes. Open days, international higher education exhibitions, conventions, direct mail and advertising are but a few of the tools the universities employ to inform, remind and persuade prospective students to select their institution.

2.4. (v) People

The intangible nature of services resulted in the addition of a further element – people. The people element of the marketing mix includes all the staff of the university that interacts with prospective students and indeed once they are enrolled as students of the university. These could be both academic, administrative and support staff. The role of the image and status of academic staff in recruitment of undergraduate students is open for debate; however at a graduate level student perceptions of teaching staff reputations can play an important role in the choice process (Cubillo et al., 2006; Ivy, 2001). Some students, for example, may be influenced by the number of academic staff who are PhD holders or have a Professorial title, others by academics' public profiles (as experts for television interviews or other publicity). On the administrative and academic support front, significant input to the provision of higher education services both at the front line and what might be considered behind the scenes is provided, which does impact on student perceptions of service quality. Lin (1999, p. 190) argues that “there is no more important element than selecting people for positions at a college or university”. The simple process of how a telephone inquiry is handled may have a greater impact on whether or not a prospective student is going to keep that university in their range of

options than an eminent Professor's publications or research record.

2.4. (vi) Physical Evidence

Physical evidence and processes are the newest additions to the services mix. Physical evidence is the tangible component of the service offering (Ivy, 2001). A variety of tangible aspects are evaluated by a university's target markets, ranging from the teaching materials to the appearance of the buildings and lecture facilities at the university.

2.4. (vii) Processes

While processes are all the administrative and bureaucratic functions of the university: from the handling of enquiries to registration, from course evaluation to examinations, from result dissemination to graduation, to name but a few. Unlike tangible products that a customer purchases, takes ownership of and then takes home to consume, a university education requires payment prior to "consumption", an ownership exchange does not take place and a long and closer face-to-face the relationship often results. Students attend classes for at least a year (on post-graduate programs) and much longer for undergraduate degrees. (Cubillo et al., 2006; Price et al. 2003; Maringe and Foskett, 2002; Ivy, 2001; BMRB as cited Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003) highlighted that the level of importance of the program element is self evident – not offering the right degree programs, with appropriate curricula to prospective students is unlikely to attract students to register. During the period that the student is registered, processes need to be set in motion to ensure that the student registers for the correct programs, has marks or grades correctly calculated and entered against the student's name and is ultimately awarded the correct qualification. While this might seem quite straight forward, there are numerous other processes that need to be implemented concurrently (with the finance system, accommodation, time tabling and the library) to ensure the highest level of student satisfaction.

2.5. Conceptual Model and Framework

Relatively little has been written on the marketing of education within international markets (Mazzarol, 1998). There is scarce literature analysing the decision-making process of prospective international students in general.

Existing literature tends to focus on the study of those factors related to the institution itself, disregarding the influence of the country choice. Thus, from an international

perspective, dimensions in the decision process are not considered. Nevertheless, there are some interesting theoretical (Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002) and empirical (Mazzarol and Hosie, 1996; Peng *et al.*, 2000; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003) studies on this subject.

The decision to study overseas is one of the most significant and expensive initiatives that students may ever undertake (Mazzarol, 1998). Therefore, the high costs of studying abroad make it a complex decision. Most complex and expensive decisions are more likely to involve deeper buyer deliberation (Assael, 1981, cited in Nicholls *et al.*, 1995).

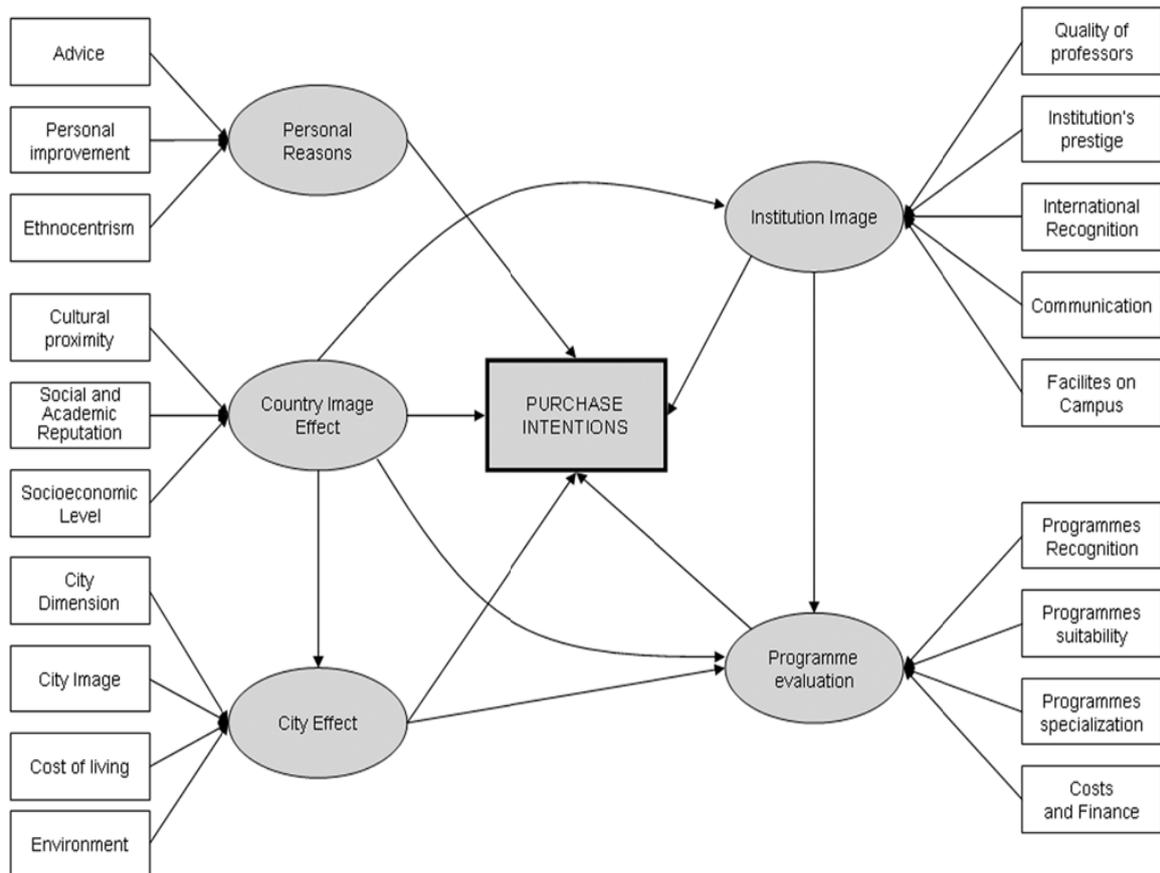
In this way, the decision to study abroad increases the complexity of the selection process. Thus, when the prospective student chooses a country in which to study, he is not only buying the education service but he is also acquiring an important pack of services jointly provided with the core service.

The international education is not a frequent purchase and demands a high level of involvement from customers (Nicholls *et al.*, 1995). In order to determine their preferences, prospective students consider what is important for them, and then make a conscious/unconscious trade-off among the attributes (Soutar and Turner, 2002).

The model presented in this work aims to explain the factors influencing the purchase intention of international students. The purchase intention is used as a predictor for the preferential choices of consumers, and is defined as the intention of the student regarding the destination country as provider of the education service (Peng *et al.*, 2000; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002).

The theoretical model (Figure 4) comprises the purchase intention, as a dependent and not observable variable, and four factors with a total of 19 independent variables identified in existing literature. The factors identified are ***personal reason*** (Binsardi and Ekwulugo *et al.*, 2003); ***country image*** (Srikatanyoo and Gnoth *et al.*, 2002); ***institution image*** (Gutman and Miaoulis *et al.* 2003); and ***program evaluation*** Peng *et al.*, 2000.

Figure 4: Model of International Student Preferences



Source: 'International Students' Decision Making Process, Cubillo (2006)

2.5. (i) Personal reasons

Personal improvement: Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) point out that when considering core benefits, students are not buying degrees; they are buying the benefits that a degree can provide in terms of employment, status and lifestyle, among others. In this way, employment prospects play an important role in personal motivation.

Thus, among the main personal factors influencing the choice, Bourke (2000) found enhanced career prospects and higher status implied in studying abroad. Other works with similar findings are those from Qureshi (1995) and Lin (1997). However, Oosterbeck *et al.* (1992) found that for school leavers this is not an important factor in the choice of university.

Future employers are true customers (Kotler and Fox, 1995) because they will “buy” the

product (trained students). They are the ones who judge the validity of the studies according to their perception about the program quality, the institution's prestige, and the country image. Thus, recognition of the institution and programs by future employers are two very interesting variables to be introduced into the model (Mazzarol and Hosie, 1996).

Gronroos (1994) states that the creation of service expectations is made up of personal needs, previous experience, and institution image. Thus, the advice represents an important factor included in personal reasons. Recommendation from family, friends, or acquaintances who have already selected the services is one of the most important factors included in the choice (Krampf and Heinlein, 1981; Turner, 1998; Bourke, 2000).

Results published by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) show that 52 percent of the students sample think that the best promotion strategies are those based on students networks. This indicates that the advice among students is a good channel for communicating a positive institutional and program image. Education involves a lengthy relationship with the client and a continuous delivery of the service. This offers the service provider an opportunity to develop strong client loyalty (Mazzarol, 1998).

Other reasons included in this factor are the attraction of the experience of living in a different culture, meeting new people, making international contacts, and improving language skills (Bourke, 2000) for those non-English speaking students who choose an English speaking country to study (or English speaking students who choose a non-English speaking country).

2.5. (ii) Country image effect

The decision of acquiring a product or a service can be positively influenced by the country image (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Javalgi *et al.*, 2001). This is a potentially powerful variable for differentiating a product or a service (Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002). This factor has great influence on the purchase intention and the quality perception (Peterson and Jolibert, 1995), and even more so when the consumer must evaluate an unfamiliar brand (Ofir and Lehman, 1986, cited in Javalgi *et al.*, 2001; Lin and Kao, 2004).

In fact, the country image is assumed to be the first source that consumers consider in product evaluation since the attitude of consumers towards the products or services are related to their stereotypes about the country of origin (Peng *et al.*, 2000). Some studies

show that the country image influences the evaluation of a product or service much more than other variables (Wall *et al.*, 1991).

Country image effect (country-of-origin) refers to the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that consumers attach to products or services of a specific country (Nagashima, 1970), and it is directly linked to the brand image (Nebenzahl and Lampert, 1997). Till date, most publications related to country image focus on products (Phau and Prendergast, 1999). There are few studies analyzing the effects of the country image on services (Javalgi *et al.*, 2001).

Associations comprising the core of image may have special importance for services (Woodward, 1996 (cited in Peng *et al.*, 2000)). Available literature shows that the relationship between country image and services seems to be similar to the one between country image and goods. In this way, Harrison-Walker (1995) found that the country image plays an important role in the choice of a service provider. Consumers prefer service providers from developed countries to those from developing countries, except when lower prices are considered (Lascu and Giese, 1995).

Effects of Country image on education services. Some good first attempts to introduce the country image effect on the international students choice model were made by Lawley (1998), Peng *et al.* (2000), and Srikatanyoo and Gnoth (2002).

Results show that the country image seems to play an important role in the selection of students for international education (Lawley, 1998, cited in Peng *et al.*, 2000; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002). Thus, prospective students tend to choose first the country and then the institution (Bourke, 2000; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002). Nevertheless, Peng *et al.* (2000) conclude that there is no relationship among country, corporate, and brand image in their model, since brand image is stronger than the others.

Due to the prestige image of certain countries in higher education, students tend to believe that higher education offered in these countries is high quality (Bourke, 2000). Thus, one of the factors considered by prospective students is the status implied in studying in these countries.

2.5. (iii) City image effect

The city represents the environment in which the service will be produced and consumed. Since the education service is a complex service jointly produced with a wide group of services, the physical environment will be made up of the institution facilities and the city as a whole. In this way, the students' perception about the

destination city will influence the decision process as well as the country image.

For instance, the city of Chester in UK has developed a cultural image, a city with an international heritage. It has UK's largest zoo, splendid cathedral and prime roman amphitheatre thus being one of the best tourists' destination in the UK. The city centre, market place, shops and stores are just a 10 minute walk away from the University of Chester. In a complementary way, the dimension of the city, its beauty, the historic background, and the monuments contribute to an excellent environment for interacting with other students and networking.

The work of Mori (2001) cited in Price *et al.*, (2003) identifies location and social facilities in a town/city as the most important factor related to environmental conditions which influence the students' choice. In the same way, Hooley and Lynch (1981) include in their work items related to the dimension of the city.

2.5. (iv) Institution image

A positive image can strongly influence the decision to attend an educational institution (Krampf and Heinlein, 1981; Qureshi, 1995; Mazzarol, 1998; Bourke, 2000; Gutman and Miaoulis, 2003).

The particular characteristics of services make the consumer analyse indirect elements when evaluating the service. The institution selection is determined by several factors such as the academic reputation of the institution, the quality and expertise of its teaching faculty, attractiveness and campus atmosphere (Krampf and Heinlein, 1981; Lin, 1997; Mazzarol, 1998; Soutar and Turner, 2002).

The institution image is the sum of opinions, ideas, and impressions that prospective students have of the institution (Kotler and Fox, 1995). Their opinion about the image of the institution is formed from word of mouth, past experience, and marketing activities of the institution (Ivy, 2001). Thus, very often the perception of the institution's excellence goes beyond its actual quality (Kotler and Fox, 1995).

Increasingly, Students are becoming extremely critical and analytical when choosing their educational institutions (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003). Due to the growing competence in international education, institutions need to maintain and develop a distinctive image in order to reach a competitive advantage (Paramewaran and Glowacka, 1995). In this way, the quality of reputation and branding are two important sources for this purpose (Hall, 1993; Qureshi, 1995; Mazzarol, 1998; Bourke, 2000).

According to Anderson and Sullivan (1993), the satisfaction of the customer is affected by expectations and perceived quality. For higher education, quality perception is a core and strategic element (Peters, 1992). Thus, some higher education institutions have changed their quality management systems to convey a stronger quality image (Ford *et al.*, 1999).

The physical environment of the service production constitutes an important element in the decision-making process. Price *et al.* (2003) have found that, when provided with a high standard, facilities are considered as a relevant factor in influencing the students' selection of the institution where they will pursue their studies. The research of Price *et al.* (2003) analyzes the degree to which facilities and location factors influence the decision of a group of customers. The most important factor related to facilities is social life at the university and its surroundings. Results show that factors such as safety, security, and sports facilities are considered less significant.

Other factors influencing the institution image through auxiliary services are: library facilities (Qureshi, 1995), availability of computers, quality of library facilities, availability of quiet areas (i.e. study rooms), availability of areas for self-study (Price *et al.*, 2003).

2.5. (v) Program evaluation

Program evaluation is conceptualized as the attitude of consumers toward targeted programs (Peng *et al.*, 2000). Hooley and Lynch (1981) observe that the suitability of the program is the most important factor, since students will accept any level of the other factors. In this sense, Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) show that product and promotion variables have increasing importance in the choice.

Prospective students will compare programs offered with those being promoted by competing institutions in order to check their suitability (Krampf and Heinlein, 1981). The elements that influence the program evaluation are a wide selection of courses (Qureshi, 1995), their quality (Turner, 1998), international recognition of the degree (Turner, 1998), availability of courses, entry requirements (Bourke, 2000), costs and availability of financial support (Qureshi, 1995).

2.6 Research Propositions and Limitations– Conceptual Model

The above theoretical framework allows setting forth the following research propositions. Personal reasons, advice from family members, friends and teacher

positively influence the decision to study abroad. Ethnocentrism negatively influences the decision to study abroad. Country image has a direct and positive relationship with the purchase intention. Country image positively affects program evaluation. Country image positively affects institution image. Country image positively affects city image. City of destination plays an important role in the configuration of the purchase intention. The institution's image positively influences the evaluation of the program to be studied.

The limitations of this study stem from the nature of the study itself. As a theoretical model, it aims to integrate the factors identified in the existing literature. Thus, future research must try to examine the existing relationships among the aforementioned factors. In particular, it must analyze the weight of each factor on the purchase intention, and the relative importance of each element for the factor it belongs to. Therefore, determining the relative importance of each element and factor would constitute an important source of information for future work in international marketing.

On the other hand, there should be more in-depth study on the effect that country image has on the decision making process of the prospective student. In particular, studies should analyze in which situations country image can contribute to choosing the country as an educational destination. In the same line, future work should analyze to what degree cultural distances and ethnocentrism influence the choice of country as a destination (Hofstede, 1983).

Another interesting area would be a comparative analysis between prospective students (purchase intention) and international students (purchase decision). This would establish whether there are significant differences between purchase intention and actual purchase.

Further analysis of consumer behaviour and determining factors in the decision making process of the international student would allow educational institutions, as well as national, regional and local governments interested in attracting international students, to strengthen their image, try to eliminate weaknesses and thus increase their possibilities of being chosen as a destination for consumption of higher education services.

2.7 Summary

Until now, research on the choice of higher education has centred on partial aspects of the process. Existing literature has concentrated on identifying those elements which

play a part in the decision of the prospective student and establishing priorities within.

These studies analyze the influence of the elements related to either the image of the institution, the evaluation of the programs, personal reasons or, to a lesser degree, the image of the country. Thus, there are few studies which try to tackle the decision making process of the prospective international student from an integrated point of view.

The study illustrated how different marketing concepts (specific to the marketing approach that emphasizes on satisfying the consumer) are used in higher education. To summarize, it can be stated that many marketing concepts are applicable to the higher education sector, if we consider their main meaning. However, the practical ways in which they are applied to the higher education sector present a number of peculiarities, as discussed in the paper, that rather make us state that for most of them, there are limitations in their application to the higher education sector.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section of the study provides a clear background and statement of the research question and provides information about the objectives of the research. Included in this section would be a research review about previous studies with the same or similar problem. There are hypotheses to be tested, population parameters to be estimated, theories to be considered, and all of it was tried to incorporate into this section of the study. The phenomenological study reported was designed to investigate the factors determining overseas students' perceptions concerning factors that were considered whilst making their decisions to study at a UK university.

In the view of Mark Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2003), there are three main factors that make management research distinctive.

First, despite the progress towards creating distinct disciplines within management is largely eclectic: researchers need to be able to work across technical, cultural and functional boundaries; they need to be able to draw on knowledge developed by other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, economics, statistics and mathematics. The dilemma for the researcher, then, is whether to examine university or the international students from the perspective of one discipline, or whether to adopt a trans-disciplinary approach (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998).

Second, managers in the universities tend to be powerful and busy people. They are unlikely to allow research access to their universities unless they can see some commercial or personal advantage to be derived from it (Sheila Cameron, 2008). This means that access from field work can be very difficult and may be hedged with many conditions about confidentiality and publication rights; feasible research questions may be determined more by access possibilities than by theoretical considerations.

Third, management requires both thought and action. Not only do most researchers feel that research should lead to practical consequences, they are also quite capable of taking actions themselves in the light of research results (Andy Lowe, 2003). Thus research methods either need to incorporate within them the potential for taking actions, or they need to take account of the practical consequences that may ensue with or without the guidance of the researcher.

Admittedly each of these factors is not unique to management research. The problem of multiple disciplines exists in educational research, and the access problem is very evident in organisational sociology and in this case, university sociology. But the possible combination of all three suggests to us that some of the traditional assumptions and practices in social research may well need rethinking.

3.2 Research Method and Philosophies:

There are many alternative methodologies, which can be used within the field of research. The most appropriate type to use the methodology depends on the research being undertaken.

Ghauri and Gronhaug(2002), Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill(2003) define research as something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic way, thereby increasing their knowledge. A research methodology depends on the way they think about the development of knowledge; this in turn affects the way in which research is undertaken. Saunders *et al* (2003) state that three views about research process dominate the literature, those are:

3.2. (i) Positivism: research undertaken will be dominant in the natural science, having an emphasis on a highly structured methodology to facilitate replication and on quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis.

3.2. (ii) Interpretive (phenomenological): The researcher's embarking on this method are critical of the positivist tradition and argue that the social world of business and management is far too complex to lend itself to theorizing by definite laws in the same way as the physical sciences.

3.2. (iii) Realism: This research is based on the belief that a reality exists that is independent of human thoughts and beliefs.

From the research carried out with the international students and educational consultant in India, both qualitative and quantitative approach has been taken. This takes into consideration epistemological and ontological assumptions. The study is dealing with the humanistic aspects of research as the researcher interacts with the students taking part in the study during the survey questionnaire and a telephonic- interview conducted with an educational consultant in India.

A qualitative and quantitative approach was chosen as the most appropriate method in order to answer the research question for various reasons. Initially it was necessary to carry out interviews with both the enterprises. The findings from these interviews then developed a need to design a questionnaire to evaluate the supervisor or the employer.

3.3 Types of Research and their Outcomes:

Main classifications of research are pure, applied and action research. These are distinguished primarily by the outcomes that are assumed to emerge – although, as ever, the distinctions do not hold clearly in practice.

3.3. (i) Pure Research: the key feature of pure research is that it is intended to lead to theoretical development—there may, or may not, be any practical implications. There are at least three forms that theoretical developments may take:

A. First, there is the popular view that scientific research is about discovery. This is when a totally new idea or explanation emerges from empirical research, which may revolutionise thinking on that particular topic.

B. A more common outcome from research is what we call an invention, where a new technique, method or idea is created to deal with a particular kind of problem.

C. The third type of outcome from the pure research is reflection. This is where an existing theory, technique or group of ideas is re-examined, possibly in a different organisational or social context. For example, one could examine to what extent Herzberg's theory of motivation (Herzberg *et al.*1959), which was developed in the USA, could be applied in UK or German companies. Results from the comparison could lead to revision and modification of the theory or no to further ideas about cultural differences.

3.3. (ii) Applied Research: Applied research is intended to lead to the solution of specific problems, and usually involves working with clients who identify the problems and who may pay for their solution. Although theory may have a part to play in applied research, it is the application of theory that is important in this case.

The results of applied research always need to be reported to the client, who is likely to evaluate the quality of the research in terms of its usability.

3.3. (iii) Action Research: Rapp port (1970:499): ‘action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually accepted ethical framework.’

Because of the collaborative features of action research, participants (the researcher and the researched factor) are likely to learn a lot from the process itself, and their interest may be on what happens next rather than on any formal account of research findings.

3.4 Research Strategy – *The Research Approach*

The researcher has applied the concept of action research within the study. The study predominantly employed quantitative method, particularly self-administered questionnaire survey amongst the international students, to investigate the antecedents and consequences of educational market orientation in universities and a small attempt of qualitative method which allowed conducting a telephonic interview with a UK educational consultant based in India.

3.4. (i) Research Paradigm:

The methods available are usually classified as qualitative (phenomenological) or quantitative (positivistic). Although these are not mutually exclusive and both methodologies can use the same data gathering such as interviews, surveys and observation.

There has been longstanding debate about the merits of either method which seems to focus on the extent to which either method can claim to be the truly scientific approach.

Yin (1993) suggests this debate has become “a caricature in social sciences with qualitative research being characterised as ‘soft’ social science interested in mushy processes and dealing with inadequate evidence and quantitative research being considered hard-nosed, data driven, outcome oriented and truly scientific”.

Mitchell and Bernauer (1998) give a more detailed analysis of this, explaining that those researchers using quantitative methodologies try to gain understanding of casual relationships through measuring and analysing information by using numerical data representing defined variables.

Qualitative methodologists interested in evaluating and generalizing casual inferences pursue the same goal. They also rely on explicitly defined variable but capture the value

of these variables in words and analyse the data through other techniques, instead of isolating casual relationships through large number of cases and statistical procedures, qualitative methodologists evaluate such relationships by holding other variable constant through careful case selection.”

Advocates of qualitative research methodologies argue their superiority on the basis that statistical research methods are not scientific because they can only produce probabilistic generalizations, not universal laws. Gummerson (1991) argues that quantitative methodologies take a reductionist approach such that “the object of study is broken down into small, well defined parts which lead to a large number of fragmented, well defined studies of parts in the belief that they can be fitted together, like a jigsaw puzzle, to form a whole picture.”

Abrahamson (1983) identified concerns over research becoming method bound and taking this view into account, the classification of research methodology into qualitative or quantitative can be confining. Classifying or categorizing the methodology to be used too tightly can ignore the central question-what is the purpose of the research and how will it be attempted? Once these two questions are answered satisfactorily, the issue of selecting a methodology becomes a matter of finding the most appropriate means to this end, without much concern about whether it fits neatly into either category. Using this framework, the researcher is now open to consider traditionally qualitative methods such as interviews and observations.

3.4. (ii) Justification for the selected paradigm:

Peters and Howard (2001) define research as adding to knowledge and understanding. Saunders et.al (2003), in the glossary of their text, describe it as finding things out, or in longer terms about the purposeful collection and interpretation of data. Research can be either applied or basic. Referring to Saunders *et al* (2003) it can be seen that the former is about research that is of direct interest to the practitioners as oppose to the latter which is generally for the academic community and is about understanding what the processes are.

There are two extremes to how research can be undertaken, either quantitative or qualitative. Texts such as Creswell (2003) tell us that quantitative research is about theory testing rather than exploring the issue in depth. It uses broader methods to measure and establish the extent of the theory. It is often described as a positivist

approach. It would be difficult to positively identify the recruitment strategies followed in the small-medium enterprises. Thus it is doubted whether a quantitative based approach would successfully satisfy the aims of the project. Strauss & Corbin (1998) in their text suggest that in such circumstances where the process is non mathematical and about interpretations, the research is qualitative rather than quantitative.

The method adopted in this study is that of surveying and interviewing. Quantitative method (i.e. questionnaire surveyed) was primarily used to validate measurement scales. In the first stage of the research, the study will use an online self administered questionnaire to collect data for the main survey from the international students enrolled on post graduate programs. Multimode approach (Schaefer and Dillman, 1998) combining the advantages of both e-mail and web surveys is thereby suggested (Ilieva *et al.*, 2002). In this case, the e-mail addresses of overseas students of the sample universities were not easily available, hence the selective participants were asked to forward the questionnaire email to their friends and university mates who would be interested in helping the researcher in concluding the study. Subsequently, an e-mail with a word document was sent to make it less time consuming and expensive leading to a feature-moderately rich survey tool that is directive and powerful (Dommeyer and Moriarty, 1999; Ilieva *et al.*, 2002; Mullarkey, 2004). Therefore, online, or questionnaire sent via email is a practical, costless and suitable data collection method as this study involves a high geographical dispersion of respondents.

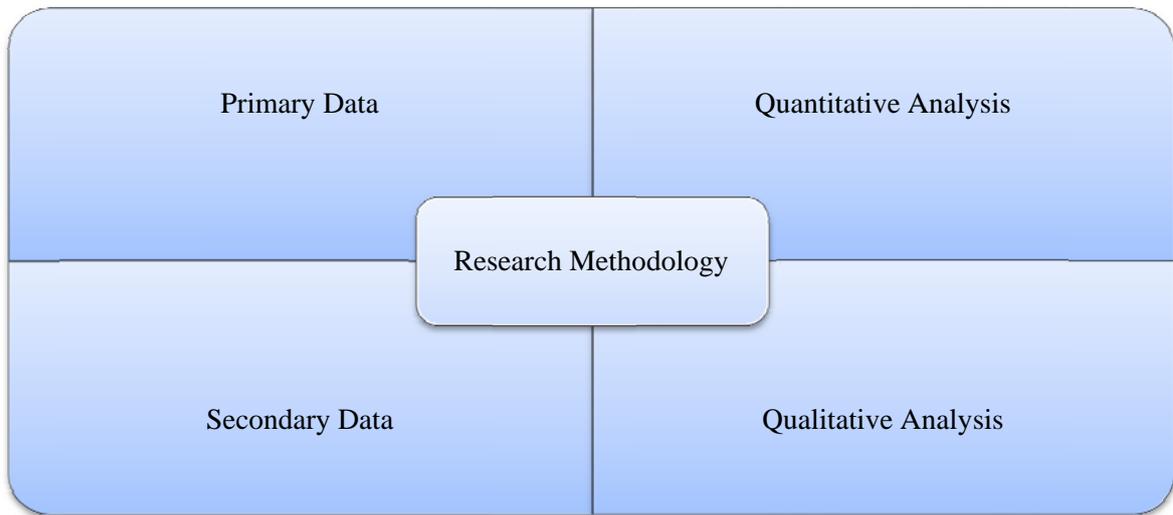
Interviewing, as Kumar (2005) describes, is a method of obtaining information from people. In the second stage, an approach to conduct personal interview was chosen, an email was sent across to four educational consultants in India, out of which only one responded and agreed for a telephonic interview. However open-ended or unstructured interviews can, as text such as Sekaran (2003) and Fisher (2004), be time consuming, particularly for an MBA research project. Conversely pre-structured or scripted interviews, although providing, like a questionnaire, consistent information, can be relatively quicker. Further texts, such as Sekaran (2003), Saunders *et al* (2003) and Kumar (2005), does point out that structured interviews tend to be rigid by their nature and used in areas where an understanding of the factor exists.

3.5. Research Design

Research design is about the putting together a process that allows the questions or aims of the study to be answered by the work being undertaken by the research study. The

study employed primary, secondary, qualitative and quantitative methodology (Figure 5).

Figure 5- Research Design



3.5. (i) Primary Data Collection

In primary data collection, the data is collected by the researcher using methods such as interviews, focus groups, self-administered surveys and questionnaires. The key point here is that the data collected is a unique piece of research, where no one else has access to it, until it is published.

3.5. (ii) Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data are data that were previously collected for some other project. This type of data is easily accessible, relatively inexpensive, quickly obtained and is useful when it is not feasible for the firm to collect primary data, for example a population census. Therefore the examination of secondary data is a prerequisite to the collection of primary data. However, due to the fact that secondary data was collected for some other purpose, their usefulness to the problem at hand may be limited. The research undertaken abide by mainly primary and secondary data collection (collected from various articles, journals, university library collection, electronic and online databases) using thesaurus search terms were carried out and tracked during the search process.

3.5 (iii) Quantitative Research

This type of research is concerned with counting and measuring things, producing in particular estimates of averages and differences between groups. The quantitative approach is considered for the electronic survey considered for the survey. The study predominantly employed quantitative method, particularly self-administered questionnaire survey amongst the international students, to investigate the antecedents and consequences of educational market orientation in universities.

3.5. (iv) Qualitative research has its roots in social science and is more concerned with understanding why people behave as they do: their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, fears, etc. A qualitative method (i.e. semi-structured interview) was primarily used to validate measurement scales after the main survey was undertaken. An approach to conduct personal interviews was chosen, an email was sent across to four educational consultants in India, out of which only one respondent agreed for a telephonic interview.

Research Paradigm highlighted by Mitchell and Bernauer (1998) added that

‘The methods available are usually classified as Qualitative (phenomenological) and Quantitative (positivistic). Although these are not mutually exclusive and both methodologies can use the same data gathering such as interviews, surveys and observation- internal and external databases.’

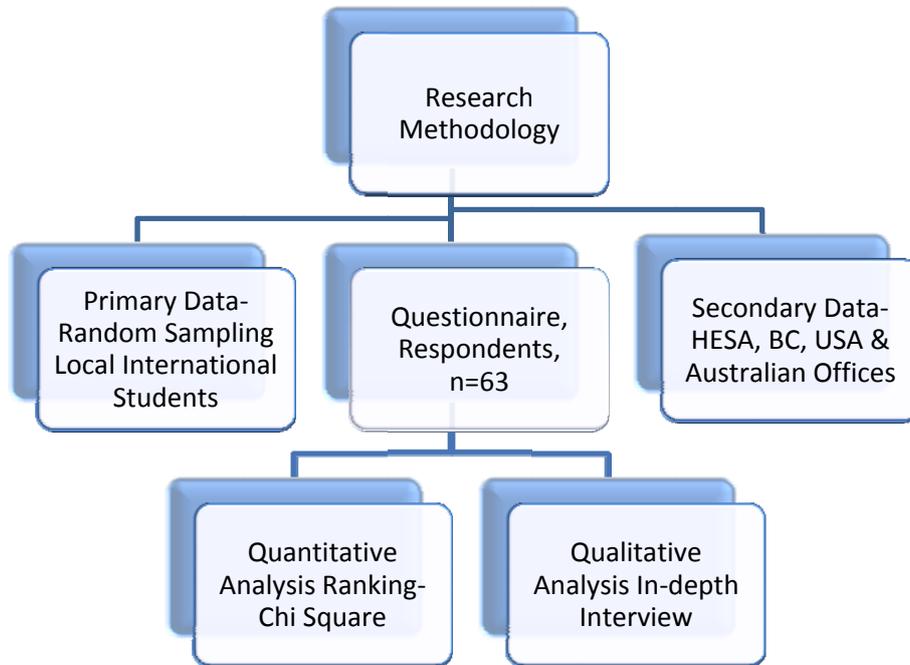
Formally, the research design adopted for this study is termed a sequential exploratory design (Creswell *et al.*, 2003). This design is characterised by an initial phase of qualitative data collection and analysis followed by a phase of quantitative data collection and analysis. The findings of these two phases are then integrated during the interpretation phase. The adoption of a sequential exploratory design will enable the researcher to explore the concept of educational market orientation; qualitative results will then form the scales framework for the explanatory phase of the study aiming to test the different.

3.6. Application of Methodology

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methodology (Figure 6). First, the survey was undertaken to investigate international students' perceptions of the UK education system related to price, product, place and promotion variables. Primary data

via survey were obtained by questioning/interviewing overseas students using a structured questionnaire and 63 international students responded for participation from three different universities, University of Chester, University of Wales- Lampeter and Glyndwr University- Wrexham.

Figure 6 - Research Methodology



Source: International Marketing of British Education, Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003)

The questionnaire was then analyzed by using ranking – independence analysis of Chi-square statistics. Second, the qualitative approach of “in-depth interview” was employed to complement the Chi-square analysis for probing more detailed issues. Thirdly, the secondary data from the Offices of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), British Council, Department for Education (DfE), the USA and Australian Statistical Offices) were employed estimating a trend regression.

3.7 Reliability, Validity and Generalisibility of the Research

These are terms originated within the quantitative paradigm of social sciences which arises many debates and difficulties when trying to apply these criteria to qualitative research in general.

As far as reliability of the research is concerned, if the same set of questions administered to the same individual on two different occasions the question is, will it yield the same result? The main problem with the reliability test is that it cannot be assured that the individual, and other factors, have not changed between the two occasions.

Therefore, for reliability of research, similar observations made by different researchers on different occasions as different sectors might practice different conclusive activities, have different priorities of skills and qualities and rate them differently.

In terms of qualitative research, generalisibility is based on the assumption that it is useful to begin to understand similar situations or people (Maxwell, 1997). Some researchers refer to reliability, validity and generalisibility as concepts unbound from any ontological and epistemological assumptions and therefore conceive them as equally applicable to any type of social research.

3.8. Rejected Methods:

Fisher (2004) distinguishes the difference between methods and methodologies as methodologies being the study of a whole academic field and methods being the way in which data is collected and analyzed. Research methods differ according to their ontological assumptions and epistemological assumptions. Some methods are associated with a particular paradigm; however it is useful to think of these paradigms as being on a continuum. No one method is better than another, but merely a more appropriate approach depending on the research being undertaken.

In gathering data for this study, data collection methods have included interview, survey, observations and secondary data.

The method of recording the interview data was not taken. Tape recording of conversations has been rejected for the following reasons identified by Saunders *et al* (2003):

- May inhibit some students and interviewee responses
- Time and cost involved in paper questionnaire
- Face-to-Face interviews, due to distance and shortage of time
- Other rejected methods include use of surveys with larger number of students from various universities due to lack of time

3.9 Research limitations

Getting more time for the research and more appropriate feedback from relevant people would definitely generate more convincing results for this challenging research study and leaves some loop holes in getting complete information required for the study, they are as mentioned below:

3.9. (i) Educational Agents - Consultancies

It would have been interesting to find out the view of the various educational agents who market such university programs in India as to what are the attributes they stress on most when they present it to their potential clients/students and what are the attributes on which the clients stress the most. An email was sent to a number of agents asking whether they would assist me in my study however there was just one response from Ms. Nazia Siddique (working as an Education Consultant at Edwise International, Mumbai) who agreed for a telephonic interview. As an interview was conducted with only one educational agent, only a view point of one consultant was not enough to measure the marketing strategies followed by various education consultants in India and other countries.

3.9. (ii) Practical Experience and Age Factor

Most of the responses generated were from students of the age group between twenty-one and thirty, who hardly have any practical experiences in the business management world. So for a few of them, it was a big achievement just to get an admission in a UK university to pursue their post graduate programs. Therefore it is difficult to generalize the findings from the study owing to the low response rate from mature and experienced students who form a serviceable portion of the MBA recruitment market.

3.9. (iii) Responses

As only sixty three responses were generated, therefore the results of the study cannot be generalized owing to small sample size but it definitely is indicative of the trend in post graduate degree recruitment market in India. Moreover since the research study involves students only from three to four regions of the world i.e. India, Pakistan, Nigeria, and just three students from China on other master courses it is difficult to extend the findings to the rest of the international student recruitment markets.

3.9. (iv) Electronic Questionnaire

As the survey was conducted with the help of a self filling questionnaire distributed via electronic mail, there was no option of generating more satisfying follow up questions to justify the responses generated to the questions which would have been supported in a face-to-face interview. Also there was a threat of not much people responding to the questionnaire, if it would have been lengthier and having more of open-ended questions than closed ones.

3.10 Ethical Considerations:

In the context of research, ethics refers to the appropriateness of the researchers' behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subjects of work, or are affected by it. Saunders *et.al* (2003). Ethical considerations need to be thought out throughout all aspects of the research, not just at the data collection stage, but at the reporting stage as well. It is very important to respect the rights of the respondents used in the study considering below code of ethics to ensure that the researcher does not transgress behavioural norms of the society:

- Recognition that the participation was voluntary
- Recognition that participants have control over the right to record any of their responses.
- Recognition that the participants have the right to decline to answer a question or a set of questions.
- Recognition that participants may withdraw at any time.
- Assurance was provided about participant anonymity and data confidentiality.
- Explanation of who will have access to the data collected was provided to the participants.

The international students from the sample universities were concerned about maintaining the anonymity and few confidential data as well. Similarly, this is one of the reasons why only one educational consultant responded out of the four asked to give a telephonic interview. An assurance was given that identification information would not be included in the typed transcript or printed in the dissertation.

3.11 Summary:

This chapter has offered an explanation of the various research philosophies and principles. The methodology and process used in the research have been discussed together with the identification of ethical issues impacting on the case study. The researcher has investigated the limitations to the study and has also provided an explanation of rejected methods.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The research sample comprised sixty- three completed questionnaires returned from a research population of one hundred and two participants. This amounted to a sample size of 61%. Champion (1981) recommended a sample size of 10% where the population size is 'non gigantic'. This sample size did bear on the statistical test used for data analysis. This chapter also analyses telephonic- interview answers. It highlights the questions and a complete analysis of the interview answers. This chapter will also highlight UK education market penetration related to international students and higher education.

4.2 Application of Methodology

First, the survey was undertaken to investigate international students' perceptions of the UK education system related to price, product, place and promotion variables. Primary data via survey were obtained by foreign students using a structured questionnaire and 63 international students responded for participation out of the 102 selected in the survey from three different universities, i.e. University of Chester, University of Wales- Lampeter and Glyndwr University- Wrexham, of which all were suitable for analysis. This constituted a response rate of 61%, which is considered acceptable for a survey of this nature. Questionnaires were sent out to individuals than to the universities.

Secondly, a telephonic- interview was conducted with an educational consultant in India. Questions interviewed were related to their strategies in attracting more students to apply for UK universities and help students to take the correct decision for the course, country of education and pre and post arrival information to UK, visas etc. A brief information was gathered by the researcher after the interview was conducted, which helped to understand more precisely as to what helps international students to make their decisions to study abroad. A request was sent to four different consultants in India, however only one consultant responded and agreed for a semi-structured telephonic interview. This enabled to 'get the feel' of the context under study (i.e. higher education).

The instructions accompanying the questionnaire stressed the relatively high demand that completing the questionnaire would depend upon the respondents. The instructions also indicated the purpose of the survey and any suggestions that the international students would like to add as an opportunity to share their experience and the major factors considered by them whilst making a decision to study in the UK. Respondents were provided with the questionnaire and email-address for the return of the completed questionnaire. The covering letter, sent via email, requested that the completed questionnaire be returned within two weeks of the despatch of the survey. It was envisaged that the survey would be completed by various international students from different countries and on different programs from the three sample universities.

4.3 Analysis of Research

4.3. (i) Survey

The survey students were asked to provide their perceptions related to particular aspects of provision of the UK education in terms of ranking and order of importance. Several statements related to the 4Ps concepts were emphasized in the questionnaire as follows:

- Why did the respondents choose to study in the UK and what were the important factors to consider?
- Where did the respondents learn about the UK education?
- Who are the UK's main competitors and where or in which country respondents would like to study if not in the UK?
- What is a preferable or the best way to attract more international students to come to the UK and what are the other aspects to consider?
- Promotional strategies that attract international students to pursue higher education from the UK?

4.3. (ii) Pragmatic Results

The survey was conducted between August 2009 and September 2009. The sampling respondents were 63 international students out of which 61% of respondents came from developing countries and 37% came from developed countries. The respondents' profile is described in Table I. Of the respondents, 68% are under 31 years old and 32% are 31 years old and above. Most of the respondents are post-graduates and doctoral degree students (66% of the total) and the rest of the remaining 34% of respondents are

pursuing undergraduate and non-degree courses, such as diplomas and intensive English programs.

Table I- Respondents Profile

Respondents' Characteristics	Percentage of Total
From developing countries	61
From developed countries	37
Age: Under 31	68
Age: 31 and Above	32
Undergraduate Degrees and others	34
Postgraduate Degrees and Doctoral Degrees	66

The results indicate that students ranked four leading reasons in choosing a country to study abroad and in considering the important factors.

- Of the respondents, 44% choose international recognition as the first reason.
- The second reason was the ease of university entrance and immigration procedures (as mentioned by about 31% of the respondents).
- The third reason was the ease of working during and after the course (16% of the respondents), and
- The fourth was the cost of living and other reasons (9%) such as shorter degree duration of the UK education and other personal reasons.

Figure 7- International Students’ perception, comparative results

<p>Survey done with sample students from three universities- 2009</p>	<p>BMRB 1998</p>
<p>Why did the respondents chose to study in the UK and what were the important factors to consider?</p> <p>Rank 1: educational standard/ recognised qualifications worldwide</p> <p>Rank 2: ease of university admissions and immigration procedures</p> <p>Rank 3: ease of finding employment during and after study</p> <p>Rank 4: cost of living, accommodation, safety and culture</p> <p>According to the telephonic- interview, what was the best way to attract more international students and what are the other aspects to observe?</p> <p>Rank 1: Low tuition fees</p> <p>Rank 2: Bursary/Scholarships</p> <p>Rank 3: Better Services</p> <p>Rank 4: Others such as Computers, Alumni Networks, and Promotion etc.</p>	<p>What is important when choosing an institution?</p> <p>Rank 1: Courses on offer</p> <p>Rank 2: Course Fee</p> <p>Rank 3: Quality Teaching</p> <p>Rank 4: Reputation</p> <p>Rank 5: Accommodation provided/costs</p> <p>Rank 6: Entry Requirements</p> <p>Rank 7: Scholarship Available</p> <p>Rank 8: Research Rating</p> <p>Rank 9: Facilities</p> <p>Rank 10: Location –UK</p>

4.3. (iii) Comparison of Results

Compared with the previous studies (BMRB, 1998; British Council, 2002) the results are almost similar with regard to the importance of controllable variables. Although there are some differences of ranking, in terms of the order of importance and in terms of different-structured questionnaires (Figure 7), the study reaches the same conclusion that price and product variables are the dominant factors for formulating UK market penetration strategies in the international markets. Overall, surveyed students reported a similar ranking and perception considering several statements related to the widely accepted 4Ps classification of the marketing mix that offer a useful frame for academic marketing policy makers. According Levitt (1980) products have three layers, core, tangible and augmented products. The research shows that most of the foreign students' needs are clustered around the core and the tangible characteristics of products such as academic recognition, quality, follow-up services, etc., and price such as fee, scholarships, students' perception of value etc.

4.3. (iv) Telephonic Interview

As discussed earlier in the study, four requests for a telephonic interview were sent via email to different educational consultants in India. However, only one agreed for a telephonic interview, Ms. Nazia Siddique, who is an educational consultant in Edwise International, India, majorly provides consultation to students who would like to pursue higher education from the UK.

Q1. What are the major factors considered by applicants before making their decision to study in the UK?

Ans. As pointed by Ms. Nazia Siddique, an educational consultant in India, stated that various students have different priorities however they all fall around 4 major factors, they are:

- Which universities to prefer and why?
- Fees and funding
- Employment during and after graduation
- Ease of University Admissions, Visas and immigration

As UK universities are not ranked (www.guardian.co.uk), students who search university and Google websites for more information universities are puzzled as to which universities to consider. Universities are initially filtered, among the universities

from which the consultation has a tie up with and then according to the type of course the student wishes to pursue. Students are normally asked to apply at least to 3-4 universities of their choice and once the offer letters are received, they normally make their choices on the basis of fees, university reputation and so on.

When asking about fees, most of the students focus on possible bursary or scholarship from the universities and funding from financial institutions. Approximate figures are given on tuition fees and living costs of an average city in the UK.

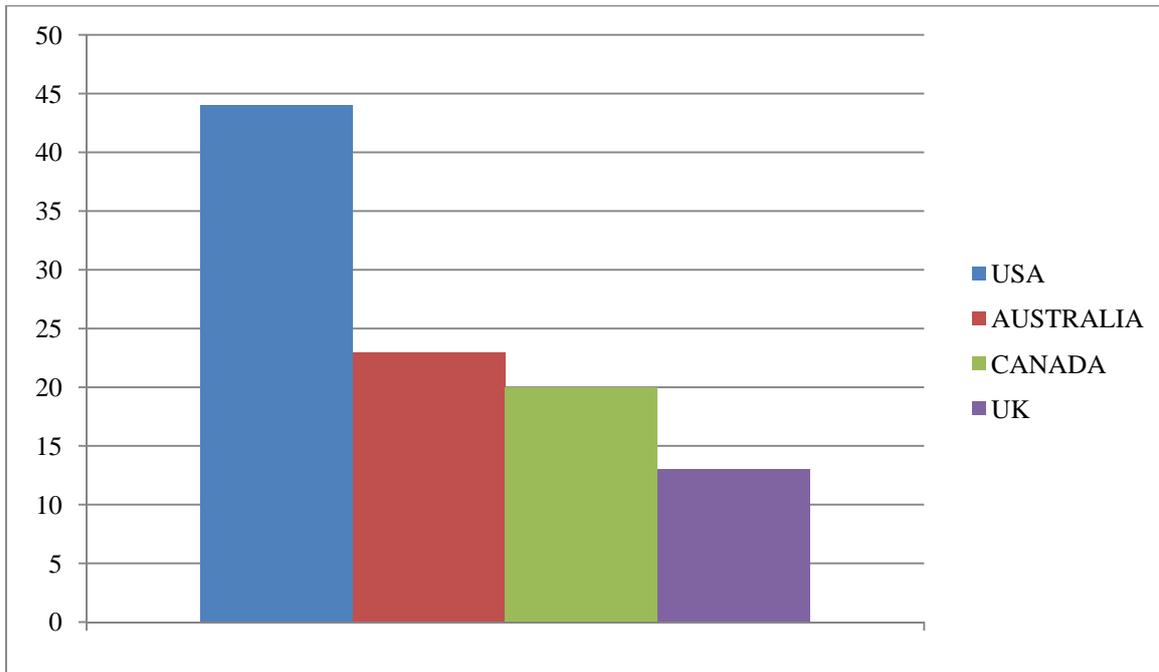
Students and their guardians are made aware of employment options and possibilities in the UK and that should not completely rely on income from a part-time job during the course. Most universities do not have campus recruitments and students have to make efforts in searching for jobs post graduation. There are many opportunities available after graduation by getting, Post Study Work permit (PSW), HSMP (Highly Skilled Migrant Programme), Fresh Talent, etc.

Visas and immigration are the biggest concern points for students as well as for educational consultants from past two years, as it is their responsibility to make sure that all the relevant documents are available whilst applying for the student visas. If the consultants are registered and recommended by British Council and representing any students, they have to make sure that all the documents to be provided for the visas are correct.

Q2. Which countries are the main competitors in international markets for education?

Ans: Students who wish to settle in a particular country and are sure to get a Permanent Residency (PR) after graduation, would consider countries like Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and for those who were keen on going to the USA, however the visa was rejected, will wish to enter through Canada. Students who wish to pursue higher education from a reputed university from a particular country, but have no preference in staying back after the course would prefer countries like the USA and the UK.

Figure 8- The UK's main competitors in international markets in 2004. Rank according to number of respondents' perceptions, in percentages.



Source: British Council (2007)

The USA was listed by 44% of respondents as the UK's main competitor and as their first choice of country to study, followed by Australia (23 percent), Canada (20 percent), and UK (13 percent), such as European nations, Singapore etc. This finding is in line with the previous studies (BMRB, 1998). BMRB studies indicate that 60 percent of respondents consider the USA as the first place to take into account when making the decision to study abroad, followed by Australia (21 percent), Canada (16 percent), New Zealand (2 percent) and others (18 percent) (Figure 6).

Q3. What strategies do overseas education consultation firm follow to attract more students to study in the UK?

Ans: When students come for consultation to express their ideas and views of studying abroad, they are openly asked questions with regards to the course they would wish to pursue and from which country. Once a consultant is aware of these two major but basic things, they can guide the students according to their needs and demands.

In case of UK, students are informed about the

- low tuition fees,
- Scholarships/ Bursaries

- permit to work part- time with the course,
- Duration of the program,
- Work permit for at least two years post- graduation,
- Easy admission and visa procedures

To start with, these factors are mostly enough, to help students make their decision in which country they would like to study and the procedures for admission. On an average, four months are expected for the decision to be made, process of application, offer letters and visas.

4.4 Findings of the Research Objectives:

The research objectives considered for the study and their analysis show an imperative result, as follows:

Q1. By applying the concept of marketing mix, what were the major factors that were considered by international students, whilst making a decision to acquire higher education in the UK?

Whilst making a decision to acquire higher education in the UK, the survey found that students' perceptions about the UK education could be considered in four main headings of marketing mix:

a. Pricing Variable

This survey studied strongly suggests that the best way to attract more international students is to concentrate on the price factors such as lowering the tuition fees (37 percent of the respondents), followed by giving more scholarships to international students (31 percent). The results seem consistent with previous surveys that emphasize the importance of product and pricing aspects of the marketing variables in international education.

b. Product Variable

In case of university, what is being sold as a product is widely debated. The product in this study for the international students relates to the course offered. As argued by Kotler and Fox (1985), students registering for degrees are the raw materials of education and that the graduates are the products, with employers being the customers. It also highlights factors like range of electives and modules in the degree and the choice of majors. The factor considered after pricing variable in the product variable is

to provide better care and services to present students (21 percent), followed by other reasons (11 percent), such as giving more facilities i.e. computer, library, alumni networks, etc.

Figure 9- Marketing mix applied in Higher Education



Source: www.quickmba.com

c. Place Variable

One of the major findings in relation to place was stated that due to the power of Internet, e-mail, library, and other facilities etc., it was quite obvious that it didn't always matter where the university was. International students believed that the service level could be provided in an effective way and it wouldn't concern them where the university was located. Though, place variable in this study also focuses of the country image, city image and the image of the institution. Place is the distribution method that the university adopts to provide the tuition to its market in a manner that meets, if not exceeds, student expectations Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003). A positive image can strongly influence the decision to attend an educational institution (Krampf and

Heinlein, 1981; Qureshi, 1995; Mazzarol, 1998; Bourke, 2000; Gutman and Miaoulis, 2003). The respondents (23 %) believe that they considered the place of study one of the major factors in making their decision of studying in any UK university.

d. Promotion Variable

In total, 52 percent of the sampling students state that the best promotional strategy in their countries is to involve alumni networks and contacts, as most respondents learn about the UK education via alumni, friends and relatives. Then an approach to local universities and colleges in the respondents' home countries was the next important media strategy (24 percent). The third element is to promote UK education via its channels of distribution worldwide such as British Council's offices, consulates and websites (17 percent of the respondents). Promoting UK education via newspaper, TV, and other media (7 percent) was fourth.

Q2. What, according to international students, is the best promotional strategy to attract more international students into the UK?

In case of the best promotional strategy, the ranking is dependent on the respondents' gender (male or female). Male respondents consider local universities, colleges and websites to be the important factors in the promotion strategies of others; while female respondents believed that alumni and friends are the most important factors in the media strategy. Overall, male and female respondents agree on the best promotional ranking as follows; 33 percent of respondents consider the most efficient media strategy is to promote via alumni. 31 percent of respondents consider that it is desirable to co-operate with local universities and colleges and; 29 percent favour Websites, British Council; and 7percent suggest media such as TV, newspapers, government contacts etc.

The following stakeholders were ranked highly as promotional channels: alumni, friends, relatives, local universities, colleges and governments. The implication of this is that Higher Education institutions should pay great attention to their stakeholders by building relationships that would generate positive impressions. They should also build relationships with the host country's education. Many writers acknowledge the concept of relationship marketing such as Gummesson (1994), Halal (1996) and Payne *et al.* (1995). Making the decision to study abroad is a high involvement process, and is high risk. The decision-making process is sequential with high information search. The use

of stakeholder could reduce the level of risk, hence creating confidence for the prospective student through source credibility.

The survey and the in-depth interview strongly confirmed that of these variables, price and promotion variables are the most important in attracting international students. A Chi-square test of independence was undertaken to investigate whether or not the ranking is independent of the respondents' psychographic characteristics such as respondents' age, gender and country of origin. The results indicate that the ranking is independent, except in the case of promotional ranking related to respondents' gender. All other ranking indicates the null hypothesis of independence, as the Chi-square statistics are less than the Chi-square value of 5.99.

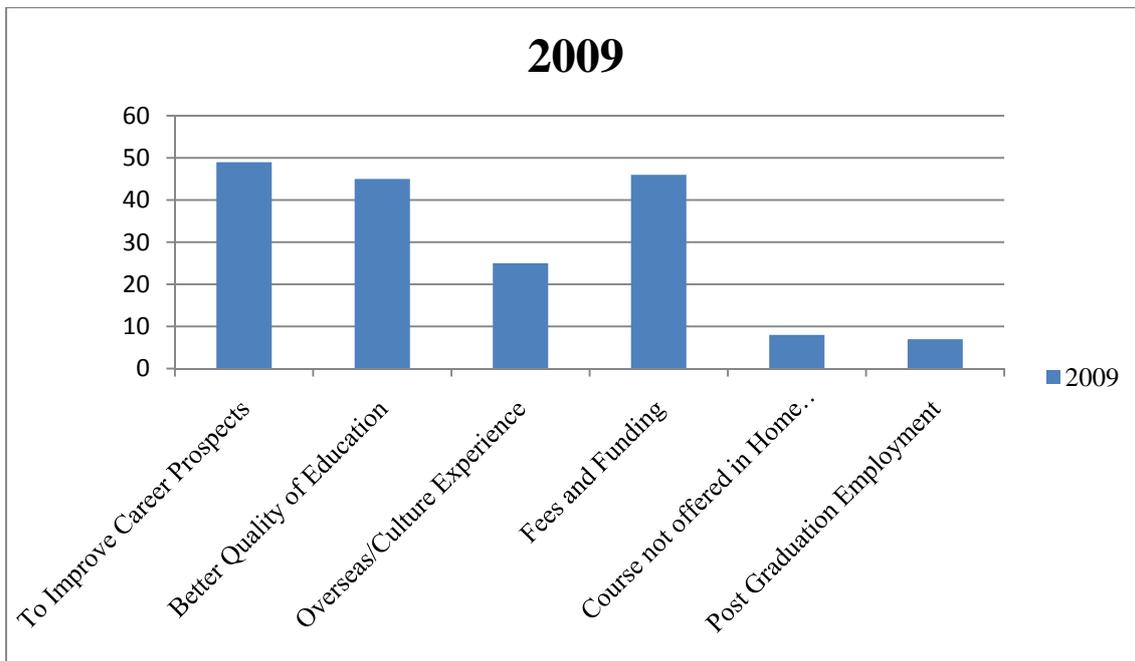
Q3. The factors influencing the purchase intention/preferences of international students

There were six major purchase factors considered by the international students, they are as follows:

- 1. To improve career prospects:** Almost all students are aware that an international degree definitely adds to their career profile. Therefore, 49% of the students highlighted that the first major reason of their purchase decision in an economical hub like the UK was to improve their career prospects, so that when the program is completed and the degree awarded, they can apply for the Post –Graduate Work (PSW) visa, which is for 2 years. Whether they take the degree back home, or decide to work in the UK, they have better career prospectus. Ms. Nazia Siddique (educational consultant), too highlighted, that Indian students believe that an international degree will help them to earn more and provide a better position in an organisation, once they get an international degree.
- 2. Better Quality of Education:** Students believe the quality of education in developed countries like the UK, USA and Australia have more practical knowledge to share instead of a theoretical study. Especially, students from Asian countries, like India believe that education is increasingly becoming competitive and expensive in India. The courses in their home countries does not provide much opportunities to interact with the real business world, hence 45% of the students decided to select the UK instead of their home countries, looking forward to a better quality of Education. Duration of a master's degree or a post graduation degree in a

particular program in the UK is only one year, which consumes almost 50% less time when compared with most of the competitive and home countries.

Figure 10: Purchase intentions/preferences of International Students



3. **Overseas Culture and Experience:** Students from developing countries are more attracted towards the UK culture and experiences. More than 20% of students want to adapt themselves completely to the English culture by adapting their climate, food, language, dressing styles, social roles and values. Most of them were even aware before arrival about the ‘culture shock’ they might experience once they have reached the UK.
4. **Fees and Funding:** Although the fee of the course impacts every international student, 46% of the students surveyed had a brief point to comment on. For example, if a MBA full time course is pursued from a good university in India, an average fee charged for a two year course would be same as one year MBA degree in the UK (www.timesofindia.com). Scholarships and bursary offered by the universities supports students to some level and funding are now made easy with education loans provided by different financial institutions.
5. **Course not offered in Home country:** There are a couple of courses not available in many countries. Around 8% of the respondents were from cardio vascular post–

graduate degree course which was not available in their home countries, which is why the decision was made to pursue the degree from a UK university.

6. Post – Graduation Employment: The post-study worker category allows UK to retain the most able international graduates who have studied in the United Kingdom (www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk). It also enhances the UK's overall offer to international students. Students are aware about the two year post-graduation work permit and want to make complete use of it. About 8% of the respondents prefer to stay back in the UK post graduation, as they believe they have better employment options in an economical hub like the UK. The value of currency provided in the home country also makes a big difference for those international especially who have a big amount of loan to pay back in their home countries.

4.5 Summary

Based on all the respondents; perceptions, the study found the importance of product and pricing variables in formulating market penetration strategies to attract more international students into the UK. However, the relatively small sample size (n=63) used in the Chi- square analysis could be seen as a limitation of the findings, but in order to overcome limitations, the study has employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis (in-depth telephonic interview) and statistical analysis of secondary data as a background to formulate the UK marketing opportunities- threats audit facing the declining British market penetration. The chapter has also provided answers to the research questions supporting with primary as well as secondary data.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction:

This chapter concentrates on the views and analysis obtained from the research done for the study, the analysis of responses highlighted in the findings and by interfacing the study done by different authors in the literature review chapter marketing (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002b; Soutar & Turner, 2002; Waters, 1992; Zikopoulos & Barber, 1986). This chapter also includes recommendations to overcome weaknesses in marketing education sector. Conclusion is derived considering all the data obtained from primary and secondary research. All the theoretical knowledge obtained from the Literature Review and Research Methods combine with the analysis and findings leads to arrive at conclusion (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003).

5.2 Critical Evaluation of Adopted Methodology:

An exploratory research was helpful to understand the main objective and aim of research process. Education as a part of service sector involves different opinions of customers (international students) as to how they utilise the services of this sector to make their final decision of studying in the UK (Nicholls *et al.* 1995). A survey was conducted and the number of respondents expressed their views about making their decision to study in the UK. The questionnaire was emailed i.e. sent electronically to all the participants. Though sixty three students responded from the three selected universities, the results of the survey might vary from a larger sample of international students from more UK universities. A web based survey can be considered for further research instead. An online survey (i.e. web based survey) to the students of different universities and colleges might have been useful for an in-depth research process as suggested by (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003). This may also increase the number of responses, may be in comparatively less time. Secondly, a telephonic-interview was conducted only with one educational consultant due to time and response limit. Interview from several consultants from different consultation agencies might have produced different results on their views and might be able to provide added imperative outcome. Using quantitative method might have made the analysis easy to interpret, however a detailed interview with UK universities and other educational consultants can be determined with quantitative method to get a clearer picture for future research.

5.3 Conclusion about the Research Objectives

The following three objectives were proposed by the researcher for the research process and the conclusion for each research objectives are determined in brief.

5.3.1 By applying the concept of marketing mix, what were the major factors that were considered by international students, whilst making a decision to acquire higher education in the UK?

The findings from the questionnaire and the interview conducted highlighted that the elements of marketing mix were related with marketing strategies of the universities in attracting more international students to UK universities. Marketing education is focused on satisfying students' needs and demands (Kotler, 1995). By considering the elements of marketing mix in the literature review, research methodology and findings, it reflects the significance of major factors students consider whilst making their decisions to study in the UK. Levitt (1980) and Kinnell, (1989) in agreement stated that marketing education is a customer satisfying business process.

In answering this question it can also be concluded that price and product elements of marketing mix plays a vital role in decision making process of pursuing higher education from a developed country like UK. Even the decision of the university and course plays a signification role in selection process (Binsardi, 2003). First, the students decide which country they wish to pursue higher education from, and then which institution they would consider out of some that were selected for applying, at the same time the focus is maintained on the quality of education from different UK universities. From the research of the study, it can be concluded that the marketing mix can be applied to the education sector considering the 4P's or the 7P's of marketing. Judd (1987) as cited by (Srinivasan, 2004) consider people to be internal marketing aspects. Considering the price factor, students also prefer universities that have low tuition fees and provide enough scholarship/ bursary to support their finances further. As the universities are not ranked in the UK, focus is on recognised universities by the Government, so if a university is a recognised body of the Government, has low tuition fees and has a quality course to offer, students will prefer to land up in that particular university.

5.3.2 What is the best promotional strategy to attract more international students into the UK in respondents' home countries?

Apart from the survey, a qualitative approach was engaged; a telephonic interview was conducted with an educational consultant in India. The interview put more focus on the choices students have a preference from their home countries, and what parameters they consider before making their final decision (Brooker & Noble, 1985). In a research done by (Binsardi, 2003), the study highlighted that most of the international students primarily focus on reputation of the universities. After the results generated from the survey, it can be resolute that international students focus on reputation of the universities, for example, recognition by UK government, alumni, faculties, fees, location, and opportunities and availability for part-time and post-graduate full-time jobs. The male respondents considered local universities, colleges and websites to be the important factors in the promotion strategies of others; while female respondents believed that alumni and friends are the most important factors in the media strategy. Online information and information from British Council Education Fair, from other medias like, TV, newspapers, government contacts and educational consultants are also majorly considered by all the students.

The response obtained from the interview and answers from the questionnaire, it can be suggested that success factors of a university moves around the reputation of the university and the support and facilities provided to the students in the university. This is in agreement with (Mazzoral, 1998) who has highlighted that the best promotional strategy for any organisation to attract more prospective candidates lies in the reputation on that organisation which is also one of the major success factors for any organisation/ university.

Another plan was embarked by the UK government and launched Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI2) in 2006, which was a five-year plan and considered many promotional strategies to increase enrolment of international students by the end of the year 2011. (PMI2, 2006) focuses majorly in promoting the benefits of UK education to international students, ensuring that international students have a positive UK experience, help UK and international education providers to build strategic alliances and partnerships, and demonstrate the value of the UK as a partner in education policy and delivery.

5.3.3. The factors influencing the purchase intention of international students

The conceptual model in the literature review chapter (Cubillo, 2006) and the findings from the research done has concluded that there are many factors considered by international students that influence their purchase intentions. However, the six major factors were highlighted by the researcher in the findings and analysis chapter. International students not only purchased a degree, but also purchased an improvement and hierarchy in their career prospects, better quality of education, an opportunity to experience overseas culture, an opportunity to fund their living expenses and a pathway to post-graduation employment with 2 years' post-study work visas. While there is merit in this argument, employers seldom pay universities for their graduates, it is far more common to have students pay universities for the services that they receive and ultimately the degrees that they are awarded (Cubillo *et al.* 2006).

There are limitations for some students as the course they wish to pursue are not available in their home countries, hence they decide to study in a country and university that offers the course or degree they wish to pursue. Design of the degree is central to the product element of the marketing mix (Maringe and Foskett, 2002). The curriculum must be appropriately developed and adapted to meet the needs of the students Krampf & Heinlein, 1981). Program duration is also expected to influence the course choice, for example, MBA degree.

5.4 Conclusion about the Research Question:

The UK education develops an influential and consistent way to motivate the students planning to study in UK (Taylor and Darling, 1991). British Council is Britain's international cultural relations body which promotes high quality education and diverse cultural experience to international students. UK education is trailing its hand on its competitors (USA, Australia, and Canada etc), (British Council, 2005).

Most of the UK institutions are following marketing strategies and business plans however these marketing strategies are still not adequate according to the present situation (Canterbury, 1999). With recession and market running slow due to recession and less opportunities of employment, the UK government needs to be more precise on the challenges that the universities might face. Marketing strategies and business plans should be primed by analysing the whole market research and the business trends

available in the market (Cubillo *et al.*, 2006). In- depth market research is not carried out and most of them rely on government or semi-government bodies working for this sector.

The findings for the research objectives are analysed relating to the researches already done by different authors that helped the researcher of this study to focus further on the above mentioned objectives with the help of primary and secondary data collection like, survey- questionnaire, interview, electronically, books, journals and articles from the university library, online journals and books, newspaper, articles, previous dissertations etc.

Using all above mentioned sources and the study involved in literature review, research methodology and findings, it can be concluded that the marketing mix elements can be applied to the education sector and how it supported international students to make their decision to study abroad. Pricing and product variables were considered the major priority of all the students. Every respondents had their own view in the study and different purchase intentions, the only major difference was that they ranked elements according to their decision making process.

The entire study also draws attention to the rejected methods, challenges that were faced in completing the study and the limitations that could not help to bring the desired solution to the study. Keeping this in mind, the researcher also emphasized on further opportunities to the research. International students were the main focus of the study; however marketing strategies followed by the universities to attract more international students can also be focused on to fetch more imperative results, however information was still gathered on universities through secondary data. Marketing is about achieving organisation benefits through customer satisfaction (Mazzarol, 1998). The objective of marketing education is to attract and retain students (Ivy, 2001). Though, there is an increase trend experienced in the number of international students enrolled in the UK, the reports from HESA still concludes that UK lags quite behind than the USA.

5.5 Limitations of Study:

The limitations of this research study are listed below which can be considered to provide better analysis in future research:

a. The data analysis techniques were limited by the sample size and the level of measurement of the data. This played an important role in only partially answering the

research aims to any degree of significance. Due to time limitations, survey could not be conducted on a larger scale nor could more consultants be contacted in home countries due to geographical constraints. The questionnaire for the interview fences boundary for answers to the questions. It was also challenging to look at marketing plans used by the institutions as they are considered confidential by the institutions.

b. Limited quantitative measurement is carried out which makes the analysis complex. This research is limited to three institutions; results might vary with a bigger sample size from several universities. The research methods were, with hindsight, not ideal for the type and range of data that the researcher sought. Direct comparative (or explanatory) case studies may have provided a greater depth of understanding about the research subject. Whilst the limiting affects of these (focusing on perhaps are aspects of barriers/ opportunities) could have been countermanded by the in-depth analysis such studies convey (Naoum, 2003).

d. Another important limitation of this research is the limitation of this study is the low response rate. As a result of the low response rate, interpretation of results must be made with extreme caution. Results of the various hypotheses analyses, including the logistic regression modelling may not be valid. Another limitation of this research is that it considered the marketing mix problems from the perspective of service providers, but did not include input from universities.

Further research is required, to deepen the understanding of the research topic, this could take the form of an analytical questionnaire, or for more detailed information, explanatory case studies. Such a study would allow for causality and would examine the relationship between the variables in greater depth, for example, UK universities and international students.

5.6 Opportunities for Further Research:

As the demand for globalisation is mounting dynamically in the world, the new models and strategies would be developed by institutions. This research moves around the views of three universities in UK, so the opportunities for further research is available. More number of institutions within UK can be approached for determining the marketing strategies followed by them. Moreover, further research can look at how the decision to study in the UK affects the international students and the major factors they consider before making their decision of studying in the UK. Restricting this research to

UK institution is a short-coming which could be overcome by doing the research, though care should be taken whilst performing the research as the data might be too immense to consider. Finally research can be initiated in the area of service organisation strategy, i.e. UK universities' strategy in terms of Higher Education.

Further research should investigate at least the following areas,

1. The development of a framework of commonly cited services marketing strategies suggested to overcome the marketing problems stemming from the special characteristics of the services offered to the international students by UK universities;
2. Identifying the strategies employed by UK universities to overcome the marketing problems they face,
3. Determining whether different types use different service strategies as implied, but not tested, by Silvestro *et al* (1992) and Lovelock (1983) and;
4. Systematic assessment of the impact of service marketing strategies on universities' profitability, student retention and the level of student's satisfaction as expressed by the students themselves.

5.7 Recommendations

5.7. (i) Recommendations- 7Ps of Marketing

Firstly, marketing strategy should aim to define goals and develop the activities to achieve them. While assembling strategies, the 7P's of marketing mix should be covered in depth. All the 7P's of marketing have their own significance in marketing UK education overseas. Along with this, other considerations mentioned below should be measured while developing an appropriate marketing strategy for attracting international students to study in the UK.

1. **Product**: Product is an important tool of marketing mix. According to the analysis done course should contain efficient information to satisfy the needs and demands of the international students. The product can also considered as a support facility gained from the academic tutors during the time of the course. Levitt (1980) focused on universities' offerings, made up of different products on three distinct levels. The core product, after the findings, was the course offered; the tangible product included the physical layout of the university campus, library, laboratories, other

facilities etc, as suggested by the students. Finally the augmented products were the intangible assets considered by the international students like finance for higher education, library and other university membership services, graduate placements etc.

2. **Place:** The place of study helps the students to make their decision process to study. The geographical location of the institution and its infrastructure are considered by students while making their decision to study in the UK. Along with the geographical location, reputation of the college or university influences the student's decision making process. So the institution should promote the brand image of their institution by developing good business relations with other countries. Some students complained about not enough accommodation available for international students when they arrive to their respective universities. Though Glyndwr University offered accommodation to all the international students, and it was offered for free with the tuition fees for the course. However, some students from the other two universities were not provided with accommodation as the university did not have enough.
3. **Price:** Price here refers to the tuition fees, the cost of studying and living in the UK. The fee for the course offered should be affordable enough to attract international students for studying. Available scholarships/bursaries and payment policies are offered by the universities to maintain financial flexibility to the students. Some universities also provided free text-books with the course and some provide free accommodation. Different universities have different strategies to attract international students; universities should consider trying other institutions policies, to monitor if it attracts more international students to their respective universities.
4. **Promotion:** This element plays an important role in marketing strategies of UK universities. Promotional methods should be applied after analysing the shortcomings of marketing process. For example, providing good facilities and services are also a part of promotional techniques used for attracting international students. Advertising, maintaining good business relations with the educational consultants so that they offer these universities initially to students by highlighting its importance, factors that would benefit the students such as the course fees and accommodation, city benefits etc. Other means of promoting universities is word of mouth; mostly students have their own friends from home country who wishes to

pursue higher education from a foreign university, so the main stakeholder should be kept satisfied.

Other 3P's; Process, People and Physical evidence complete the whole process of marketing education overseas. Without these 3P's, the marketing of higher education is incomplete.

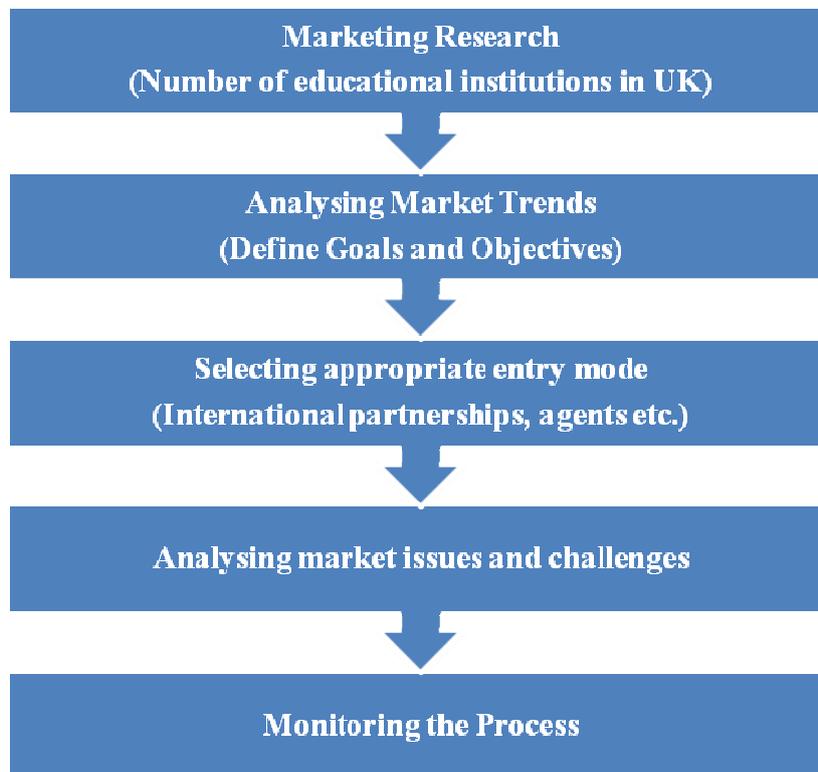
5. **Process** starts from the enquiry the student makes and expresses his view of studying abroad from his home country to the selection process of the student and arrival in the institution. During this whole process of marketing the course, recruitment and admission processes are followed. Recruitment and selection of the student should be done with detailed examining and effective input given by the student. Systematic recruitment procedures should be updated on the data base to select the student in to the institution. Appropriate offer should be made as per the course applied for; any scholarship or bursary offered should be highlighted at the very initial stage. Policy and deadlines for admissions should be provided in time, once a required amount of fees is received by the university, they should not take much time in sending the unconditional offer so that the students can provide for students visa as soon as possible. Once the visas are arrived, other parameters should be considered, as to when is the student arriving to the UK, where is the student accommodation and help them in settling in a foreign country and culture.
6. **People:** refer to all the stakeholders who directly or indirectly have some form of interest in the institution. Also the people who support in the decision making process for the students to take admission which can be family, academic and support staff. It also adds the British people who the international students can be friends with, and be friends with other international students from different countries. This can help them to know the culture and people around and set themselves in the current atmosphere of the country.
7. **Physical evidence:** refers to tangible and intangible elements provided with the facilities and services offered. This includes quality services offered by the universities to the students. Facilities like, the library, computing, English language lectures specially for students facing difficulties with the language.

5.7. (ii) Recommendations- *Marketing Strategy*

An adequate marketing strategy model should be developed for marketing education overseas. Various steps should be considered to develop marketing strategy. Developing marketing strategy to attract international students require deep understanding of 7P's of marketing. The literal meaning of each P of marketing should be examined and considered for strategy.

Marketing Mix Model should be realistic to implement and be followed at all levels of marketing management.

Figure 11: Marketing Strategy Model



Source: adapted from ‘Developing and Testing a Model of Knowledge Utilisation through Marketing Research’, Miller (2001)

Firstly, a complete market research for UK education should be considered. This research gives the information about the current statistics of number of colleges and universities in the UK.

Then the trends available in the market and above statistics should be analysed. Goals and objectives related to the expansion needs to be defined in the education marketing segment. Appropriate entry models should be selected for expansion for the education. These can be organising links with international partnerships or contacting reputed agents for recruitment of students or open universities' franchises.

The next step is to look at market issues and challenges which vary according to the course and the institution available. The whole process should be controlled and monitored by revising and refining the process. A regular feedback should be taken from the international students and other stakeholders of UK universities.

Thus an effective marketing strategy developed by institutions will help institutions to attract maximum number of international students. This requires a solemn commitment by the UK universities to target international markets and UK education would have a ubiquitous presence all over the world.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Covering letter to the Participants of the Survey:

Dear (Name),

Ref: International Marketing of UK Education

I, Pooja Shah, an MBA student at the University of Chester, am currently working on my dissertation on the above specified topic. As a part of my research; I would request you to complete the attached questionnaire to understand the international students' perceptions of UK education and the factors considered whilst making a decision to study in the UK.

The questionnaire is based on the marketing disciplines and international education decision making process.

I would be extremely obliged if you would complete the questionnaire and would appreciate if you send it back to the same email-id by the end of September 2009.

Thanks for your time and participation in advance.

Yours Sincerely,

Pooja Shah.

Appendix II

Proposed Questions for the Telephonic Interview

Name:

Country:

Question1: What are the major factors considered by applicants before making their decision to study in the UK?

Q2. Which countries are the main competitors in international markets for education?

Q3. What strategies do overseas education consultation firm follows to attract more students to study in the UK?

Appendix III

Questionnaire for the Survey

Name (Optional): _____

Home Country: _____

Course (Optional): _____

University Name: _____

1. Please rank the following countries as per your consideration to pursue Higher Education?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| a. United States of America | c. Australia |
| b. Great Britain | d. Canada |

Ans: _____

2. How many universities in total did you apply in the UK?

Ans:

3. What were major factors to consider whilst making your decision to study in the UK?

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. Fees and funding | c. Better Career Prospects |
| b. International Degree | d. Course Duration |
| e. Other, Please Specify | |

Ans: _____

4. You applied via:

- a. A Consultancy
- b. Self Application to the university
- c. British Council
- d. Other, Please Specify

Ans. _____

5. Which country would you like to study if not UK and why?

Ans:

6. What variable of marketing mix do you think is more important as a student to take the decision to study in the UK?

- a. Price Variable
- b. Product Variable
- c. Promotion Variable
- d. Place Variable
- e. 3 other Ps: physical evidence, people and process variable

Ans: _____

7. What is the best promotional strategy that attracted you as an international student to study into the UK?

Ans: _____

8. What were your purchase intentions in pursuing the course from the UK?

Ans: _____

9. Any advice/suggestions that you would like to make to the Universities in UK that will help them to attract more international students
