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International Student Recruitment Marketing in Finnish UAS

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ABSTRACT

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The government of Finland have been allocating huge amount of budget to provide free and quality education for their citizens. Due to non-tuition fee policy, Finland was one of the selective destination for higher education from international student's view point. However, the government of Finland implemented a new regulation regarding tuition fees and 2017 onwards, the higher education institutions will no longer receive the funds which were previously provided by the government. As a result, international students have to pay certain amount of money as tuition fees to pursue higher education.

This thesis has been assigned by Finnish Network for International Programmes or also known as FINNIPS. FINNIPS is a cooperation network of more than 17 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). These UAS offers over 40 bachelor's degree programme which are taught in English. The main task of FINNIPS is to organize entrance exams outside Finland. Apart from that, FINNIPS also promotes Finnish education and UAS by participating in study fairs and exhibitions.

Since the implementation of tuition fee regulation came into effect, there has been a serious discussion on how to attract international student in Finnish UAS. This thesis is prepared to highlight the significance of marketing in higher education institutions. Moreover, the purpose of the thesis is to figure out the marketing strategies of Finnish UAS, to find out the challenges in recruitment marketing and to suggest the possible ways to compete in global education market.

Both qualitative and quantitative research are included as part of research methodology. Various reports, books, journals, e sources were accessed as qualitative research. On the other hand, a questionnaire was constructed as quantitative research. The questions were related with recruitment marketing and it was designed with the cooperation of FINNIPS. The respondents were the employees from marketing department of Finnish UAS.

The findings from the research indicates that Finnish UAS needs to improvise the marketing efforts because the number of applicants outside Finland have been slightly decreased in spring 2017. Moreover, insufficient budget for marketing, lack of knowledge on adopting effective marketing channels and lack of internal and regional collaboration were found as the key challenges in recruitment marketing of UAS.

Keywords: International Student Recruitment, Marketing Higher Education, Tuition Fee, Finnish University of Applied Sciences.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATION

HEI - Higher Education Institution

UAS - University of Applied Sciences

KELA-Kansaneläkelaitos (Social Insurance Institution)

CIMO- Centre for International Mobility

EU- European Union

FINNIPS- Finnish Network for International Programmes

SEM-Strategic enrolment management

OPH- Ophetushallitus (Finnish National Agency for Education)

ECTS- European credit transfer system

MOOC-Massive Open Online Courses

CMS-Content Management System

CRM-Customer Relation Management

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a natural phenomenon. Certainly, globalization is transforming the world economic system. The effects of globalization can be observed in industries, technological fields, private and public institutions as well as in education market. Around the globe, the growth in internationalization of tertiary education from 1975 to 2012 has been 0.8 million to 4.5 million students respectively (Hearps 2016, cited 20.05.2017). Furthermore, in 2014, Merrill Lynch-Bank of America estimated the value of the global education sector is 4.3 trillion (USD) and GSV-advisors believed that the market size of the education is expected to grow 17 percent in the next five years (Verger, A., Lubienski, C. & Steiner-Khamsi, G., 2016, cited 24.05.2017).

Education is fundamental right of every human which plays an important role to minimize poverty, to build self-awareness and to lead the world towards sustainable development (UNESCO, n.d., cited 22.04.2017). Pursuing higher education is increasing instantly both in national and international level. But the internationalization of higher education market has grown rapidly in recent years. Due to globalization, a huge number of international students are migrating from developing countries to developed ones. Undoubtedly, students and their parents are seeking individual advantage through education and tuition payment is taken as their vested interest.

The evolution of internet has created a one-world communicative and cultural environment. Due to advance technology and globalization, the emergence of higher education institutions is increasing. However, HEIs throughout the world does not have comfortable situations due to rapidly changing environment. Globally, there is huge competition between Higher education institutions (HEIs) for providing quality education as well as gaining excellent reputation. Concerning the institutional profile, HEIs should be able to present themselves as an excellent and diversified organization. (Frølich, N. & Stensaker, B., 2010)

Nowadays, Education is considered as business and HEIs are focusing on branding and effective marketing. Especially in developed countries, students from developing countries are considered as customer for HEIs. Countries like; United Kingdom, United States, Australia are one of the selective destination for international students. English is also one of the key factor to attract

students in those countries. Therefore, in Finland, information about language, culture, study scopes and tuition fees needs to be promoted in order to attract international students.

1.1   Research Background

This chapter attempts to clarify the history of tertiary education in Finland as well as the upcoming plans and policies of Finnish government regarding internationalization.

After joining EU in January 1st 1995, Finland has been following the legislations and regulations drafted by EU. As EU plays role of guardian to its member countries, it brings several plans and policies in order to develop its member states. In higher education sector, EU mainly focuses on quality and relevance, university and business co-operation, innovations and steady mobility with co-operation. One of the major plan of EU is higher education and student mobility (CIMO 2013, cited 10.04.2017).

Education is free to all of the citizens in Finland. Government of Finland plays the key role in decision making for education policy, legislation and funding. According to decree on the Development Plan for Education and University Research (987/1998), Government designate plan and policy in order to improve and develop the education and university research every four years. The outcome and implementation of the plan is evaluated after every five calendar years. In 2012, Ministry of Education and Culture published a report – "Education and Research 2011-2016 (A development plan). The government adopted the plan on 15th December 2011. The main objective of the plan was to highlight Finland as one of the most competent country in terms of education, economy, equality and qualitative life in near future (by 2020). (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2012, cited 23.04.2017)

The contents of the report were focused on different level of education and competencies. i.e. basic school, upper secondary school, vocational education and training, higher education and research, adult education and training, student financial aid etc. However, the purpose of the thesis is to focus on higher education therefore, the development plan of Finnish government concerning the HEIs are as follows: -

1. Structural development of HEIs should be improved and the impact of their operations and mutual division of work should be emphasized.
2. Quality education should be provided to the students so that they can integrate in the labor market.
3. Quality research and innovation is needed for competitiveness.
4. Stronger research infrastructures should be built.
5. Information should be published in the public domain and the National digital library.
6. Strong internationalization safeguards quality should be maintained. (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2012, cited 23.04.2017)

In every developed country, the role of the government is to expand labor market and create job opportunities. Due to the growing global education market, governments are viewing education as major contributor to national wealth and economic development. Likewise, the above-mentioned report suggests that Finnish government are also focusing on promoting higher education and establishing multicultural environment. Furthermore, there are other non-profit organizations as well who are actively participating in promotion of Finnish higher education.

Tertiary education in Finland

The Finnish tertiary education system pursues dual system: Universities and UAS (previously known as polytechnics). Today, there are 14 Universities and 24 UAS in Finland. The primary language required for the studies are Finnish and Swedish. Due to the globalization of education market, almost all of the universities are providing degree programme courses in English as well. (Study in Finland, n.d. cited 28.04.2017)

In June 1999 (Bologna, Italy), Finland took part in ministerial meetings where European members signed a joint agreement to ensure the higher standard of quality education. The agreement is known as Bologna process. (THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA 1999, cited 10.04.2017). Implementing the new ECTS system, comfortable student mobility around the Europe, promoting European system of education world-wide and unifying the structural issues of the third cycle degrees were the main objective of the agreement. Time and again the declaration process is being modified. As an outcome, it has brought drastic changes to the structure, approach and conduct of HEI in Europe. Finland has been active member of this declaration and exchanging

degree students with other European nations. (CIMO 2013, cited10.04.2017).In Finland, the concept of University of Applied Sciences is not the newest as they were introduced around 1990's. Previously, UAS were known as polytechnics and the concept came into existence after former post-secondary schools merged into 25 multidisciplinary higher education institutions. Soon after, internationalization was apprehended and education in foreign languages were prioritize in Finnish UAS. Until today, there are 24 Finnish UAS who are providing over 100 bachelor's degree programmes conducted in English. (Vanhanen R., Kitinoja H. & Holappa J., 2013)

According to the report in 2015 (CIMO) and as illustrated in table 1, the highest number of students in Finnish Universities were from China (1215) whereas the lowest were from Bangladesh (307). Respectively, the highest number of international students in Finnish UAS were from Russia (2112) and Bangladesh (205) was listed as the lowest. In comparison to Europe, most of the foreign students were from Asia. Other mentioned countries in the report are: - India, Pakistan, Iran, Vietnam, Nepal, Nigeria, Estonia, Kenya, Germany, Sweden, Ethiopia, and Ghana. The report shows that there were few hundreds of students coming from United States and United Kingdom in 2005 however the data of those countries were not included in 2015 (Irma Garam 2016, cited13.04.2017).

Universities				UAS's			
2015		2005		2015		2005	
China	1215	China	696	Russia	2112	China	748
Russia	933	Russia	556	Vietnam	1498	Russia	558
India	625	Estonia	352	Nepal	896	Estonia	277
Pakistan	574	Sweden	314	China	591	Sweden	253
Iran	548	Germany	241	Estonia	418	Kenya	252
Vietnam	418	India	146	Nigeria	307	Nigeria	119
Germany	392	United States	146	Kenya	279	Ghana	110
Estonia	316	United Kingdom	135	Germany	253	Germany	82
Nepal	308	Spain	108	Sweden	217	Vietnam	79
Bangladesh	307	Italy	107	Bangladesh	205	Ethiopia	77

Table 1.1 Countries of origin of international degree students in universities and UAS's (Irma Garam, 2016)

Moreover, the number of selected students in 2016 were almost 7,800 students (38% of applicants) however, around 5,600 students (27% of applicants) joined the institutions and continued their studies. The report states that there has been reduction in the quantity of international students in 2016 comparing to previous year (2015). (Irma Garam, 2016 cited 13.04.2017)

1.2 Thesis Objectives and Research Questions

The government of Finland has brought new regulation regarding tuition fees, all of the higher education institutions are obliged to collect minimum of 1,500 euros from Non-EU/EEA students. However, the regulation is implemented only for degree programme which are taught in English. The regulation came into effect from 1.1.2016 and it does not affect the students who were admitted before 2016.

The main objective of this thesis is to focus on the issues concerning recruitment marketing for International students in Finnish UAS. Introduction of the tuition fee in Finland is the new practice and universities' personnel are unknown as well as curious about the outcomes. The purpose of the thesis is to determine the marketing activities of Finnish UAS after the introduction of tuition fees, to highlight the effective marketing channels, to understand the hierarchical structure and work division, to distinguish Foreign and Finnish degree student recruitment, to figure out the marketing strategies of Finnish UAS and to find out the possible ways to compete in global education market for Finnish UAS. The final goal of this thesis is to evaluate the marketing strategies of Finnish UAS and to find out the ways to overcome this challenge.

This thesis has been commissioned by FINNIPS. Till date, FINNIPS network has published two books regarding international education. The books are free to read and can be downloaded from their website. The first publication "Joint Efforts for Internationalization" was published in 2013 which clarifies the role of FINNIPS as an intermediary between Finnish UAS and international students. In addition, the publication illuminates the objective of arranging entrance examinations outside of Finland and describes the development and activities of FINNIPS network. The publication also highlights the importance of international degree programmes in Finnish UASs. The publication was completed by several authors and their articles provides various perspective and togetherness for the joint efforts to enhance internalization. (Vanhanen R., Kitinoja H. & Holappa J., 2013). In 2015, the network published second article and the given title was "Exploring

the Impact and Full potential of International Education". The publication was a cross section of different subjects and under way discussions that affects the functions of international degree programmes in Finnish UASs. Moreover, the issues regarding higher education policies, quality enhancement of international degree programmes, as well as the international student's employability and integration to Finnish societies are addressed in the publication. Overall, the publication exhibit the topical questions and related challenges concerning Finnish higher education for international students and simultaneously, various tools and best practices are included for the further improvement. (Vanhanen R., Kitinoja H. & Pääskylä M. (Eds.)., 2015)

The commissioner provided the preliminary questions and brief idea about the research. The key questions are as follows: -

1. *How do Finnish UASs recruit foreign students?*
2. *What kind of marketing (activities) do they use?*
3. *How has the introduction of tuition fees to non-EU/EEA students influenced the current marketing activities?*

Furthermore, these key questions were divided in several sub questions. The research questions were formulated to inspect the challenges and actual ways of recruitment process. The questions are related with organizational structure of Finnish UAS, effective channels in marketing, introduction of tuition fee influence, upcoming trends, development and support needs for international marketing.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical part develops with the brief introduction about strategic enrolment management followed by the components and roles of marketing. The objective of thesis is related with the recruitment marketing therefore; the author has included common elements of marketing which is significant in day to day business. Firstly, the concept of marketing is shortly described. Secondly, marketing mix with 7p's are outlined. Then, the customer centric strategy and integrated communication are included.

Furthermore, the empirical research part includes a questionnaire which is one of the important part of the thesis. The results of the survey with the participant's answers are analyzed in this thesis. The ending part includes data analysis, findings, conclusion and discussion. More details of the questionnaire can be found in appendix section.

1.4   Research Methodology

In the book of research methodology by Kothari, C.R (2004), definition of research is explained as" A scientific and systematic search for pertinent information of a specific topic. Research is an academic activity and as such the term should be used in a technical sense." (Kothari, 2004)

Furthermore, research is carried out to minimize the uncertainties in the managerial decision making. Research methodology consists of different actions such as: - planning, obtaining, analyzing and implementing the collected data and information. Research leads the organization in right path with right decision which helps in profitability and smoothness of the business. (Sachdeva, 2008). In this thesis, the author has adopted quantitative and qualitative types of research method. In short, quantitative research is a rigid research tool that requires predefined answers from selected groups. The author has constructed a questionnaire as quantitative research. The questionnaire has been designed in cooperation with the commissioner. The target group of the questionnaire were marketing department's staff/services of Finnish's UAS. In addition, this questionnaire is primary source for research methodology and hence, it is a significant part of the thesis.

Moreover, qualitative research is performed to examine process (how) and meaning (why) of the selected topic. (Sachdeva, 2008). Qualitative research reveals new attitudes or perspectives that may exist toward a topic or product category. As part of qualitative research, the author has retrieved theoretical information from journals, e-sources, reports, publications, books and good practices. The thesis includes the results of the questionnaire and theoretical information. Figure 1.1 defines the division and formulation of research in this thesis.

Figure 1.1 Research Methodology structure

2 STRATEGIC ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT

This chapter considers the brief information about strategic enrolment management and the units of SEM. In this chapter, the author aims to provide the role of SEM in higher education institutions. The idea of this concept is that successful HEIs must cooperate with all of its offices/departments to reach its objectives. The objective of the thesis is to focus on the marketing perspective however, this chapter is included in order to provide general idea of the organizational structure in higher education institutions.

It is very essential to understand the concept of "Enrolment" before figuring out the Strategic enrolment management (SEM). In the book of Marketing higher education by Paul Gibbs and Felix Maringe (2008), Enrolment is defined as "a broad concept that lies at the heart of the marketing effort and orientation of the university" (Gibbs, P. & Maringe, F., 2008). In other words, Enrolment is a process offered by educational institutions which ensures that the students will register on programmes provided to them. In general, students are the indispensable part of the educational institutions and their enrolment is very crucial for existence of educational institutions in the society. (Gibbs, P. & Maringe, F., 2008)

In a broader prospect, a well-organized Strategic enrolment management (SEM) upgrades the performance of HEIs by increasing enrolment numbers and stabilizing institutional revenue figures. Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal (1991) described Strategic Enrolment Management "as a structural framework that can be simultaneously considered as an organizational structure, as a set of processes, and as organizational policies." (Deal, 1991) as cited in (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014). This definition of SEM indicates that SEM is combination of several processes and policies related with recruitment, retention, academic success as well as the graduation of the enroled students in post-secondary education. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

It is believed that SEM was emerged from United States. In 1970's, the number of high school graduates were decreasing and the admission office started to practice new marketing techniques. For instance, improved publication materials, targeted mailing strategies and telemarketing techniques were used to engage huge number of students. Furthermore, practicing the new marketing techniques helped them to interact with potential students. Declining of state funding

was major issue for public institutions and tuition fee was the only aspect they could depend on. Most of the institutions acknowledged that SEM is the best organizational structure for functions such as admissions, financial aid, student retention, and the office of the register. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

2.1   Units of SEM Organization and their functions

SEM organizations consist of various departments/offices. Some of the significant components of SEM are shown in figure 2.1

Figure 2.1 Units of Strategic enrolment management (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

In most of the SEM organization, enrolment management is combined with set of function and multiple units. The primary units of SEM organization are Admissions, Financial Aid and Registration and Records. Furthermore, a brief introduction and functions are described below: -

Office of Admission

Admission office is one of the vital part of SEM organizations and it has a complex role. Since attracting students to apply and recruiting them is the main objective of any HEIs, the responsibility of admission office is to identify, recruit and enrol new students in a comfortable manner. The working culture of admission office should be flexible during the enrolment process. Furthermore, the task of admission office is to meet the goals associated with academic quality, to maintain the gender balance and to manage the racial diversity. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

Office of Financial Aid

Financial Aid offices plays important role in enrolment management and institutional finance in achieving enrolment goals. The task of financial aid professionals is to retain the institutions from legal complications. Nowadays, financial aid offices are adopting technology to develop software in order to manage the state financial aid regulations, student receiving financial aid and processes governmental bodies employ. Student persistence can be influenced by financial aid awards thus the character of financial aid offices is necessary in campus retention efforts. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

Office of Registration and Records

In SEM organizations, registration and record offices is considered as the bridge between management and academic affairs administration. Registration is only possible when the student's interest and institution's offerings meet together. One of the main function of registrar's office is to make sure that the student has sign up for classes and there are sufficient courses offered at the right time. In addition, registrar office should formulate plan related to adequacy of classroom space to address enrolment demand. Office of registration and records holds valuable information regarding student enrolment patterns, statistics and outcomes. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

2.2 Technological trends in higher education

With the help of internet, numerous HEIs are utilizing various systems and technologies as online marketing tools. Some of the tools are briefly described below and the significance of these tools

are asked in questionnaire as well. Hence, it will provide general idea to the readers of this research.

1. Use of web analytics: Web analytics is an effective tool to monitor the efficiency of online campaigns. It will provide the statistical number of visitors on the website and information on page views. Furthermore, web analytics can detect the behavior of the visitors. In addition, the users can optimize the marketing campaigns based on the data of web analytics. (Hanover research 2014, cited 20.06.2017)

2. Responsive website design: Responsive website design is the approach that allows users to visit the page in any device. This system will automatically adjust the screen size, resolution, platform and orientation which makes the navigation of websites easier. For instance, a responsive website can be accessed in both laptop and mobile phones. (Hanover research 2014, cited 20.06.2017)

3. MOOC platforms: MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) platforms are new practices and many HEIs have not follow this technology. However, Institutions like Harvard University, Stanford University, Swiss federal institute of technology, University of Munich have already introduced MOOC/open courses. It offers lower costs and increases revenue. (Hanover research 2014 cited 20.06.2017)

4. CMS and CRM systems: Content Management System (CMS) is a software that enables to create, edit, organize and publish contents. CMS allows multiple users to manage content and analyze data of internet / intranet application. This system enhances the quality of content, quality of services, marketing and many other factors. On the other hand, Customer relation management (CRM) system helps to track the history of customers. CRM provides full history of all communications, meetings and shared documents. CRM helps marketers to understand the channel of prospective sales. CRM systems can be effective tools for office of admission and office of records in educational institutions. (Hanover research 2014, cited 20.06.2017)

3 COMPONENTS AND ROLES OF MARKETING

This chapter relates with the significance of marketing elements in profit organizations. Additionally, this chapter includes basic marketing elements and their roles in the market. Since monetary activities is involved in higher education it would be a genuine attempt to analyze the education service with marketing theories. Nowadays, higher education institutions are borrowing marketing planning techniques from businesses to understand the customer's behavior and to place the institution in better position relative to competitors.

3.1 Concept of Marketing

American Marketing Association (AMA, 2013) defined marketing as "an activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (American Marketing Association, 2013 cited 19.05.2017). In other words, marketing is the way of communicating and delivering the right information of products or services to the customers and other possible groups. In addition, marketing is a management function to plan, operate, promote and a path to reach the clients. The aim of marketing is to identify the customer on the target market and deliver the goods/services with customer satisfaction. (Sherlekar S.A. & Sharad Sherlekar, V., 2009)

Selling and promoting is not the one and only idea of marketing. In contrary to that, it is about managing customer's value and the long-term relationship with them. Furthermore, marketing helps to boost the sales and builds a position in the target market. Market planning, segmentation and research should be analyzed.

3.2 Marketing planning process

Marketing is matching process by which a producer provides a marketing mix (product, price, promotion and physical distribution) that meets consumer demand of a target market within the limits of society. Marketing process is fully based on corporate goals and corporate capabilities. The process is combination of producers and consumers who are the main participants in exchange. (Sherlekar S.A., Nirmala Prasad K. & Salvadore Victor S.J., 2009)

As shown in figure 3.1, the first step of the process begins with producer who sets some certain goals and capabilities in producing and marketing their products. Then, marketing research tool is needed to anticipate demand. Furthermore, the producer provides a marketing mix product, services, promotion, advertising, pricing, distribution etc. in order to capitalize the market opportunity. As consumer role, they purchase the product according to their demands where a transaction takes place. Therefore, the marketing process includes both producer and consumer where the give up something and gain something. (Sherlekar S.A., Nirmala Prasad K. & Salvadore Victor S.J., 2009)

Where are we now?	Where do we want to go?	How do we get there?
Market opportunity anlysis	Marketing objectives	Marketing strategy
Developing and implementing marketing	Controliing the marketing plans	Results(customer satisfaction, profitability, market share, survival, company image.
How do we get there?		Accomplishment of obiectives

Figure 3.1 marketing planning process (Sherlekar S.A., Nirmala Prasad K. & Salvadore Victor S.J., 2009)

3.3   Marketing mix

In the book, Principles of Marketing (2009), marketing mix is defined as "an effective coordination of several marketing functions such as, market research, product development and planning, creation of demand and distribution". (Sherlekar S.A., Nirmala Prasad K. & Salvadore Victor S.J., 2009). In general, traditional marketing mix includes four P's. i.e. product, price, place and promotion. However, education is viewed as service rather than product. Hence, in service marketing three more P's can be connected to marketing mix: physical evidence, process, and

people. Furthermore, marketing mix is combination of several elements that are essential and inter-dependent. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

Product

Education is the core product of higher education institutions. However, academic majors and institutional brand are considered as the components of university product. A close insight and recommendations of academic majors are handled by enrolment staff whereas marketing division or university relation department are responsible for branding. In general, branding is considered as the good and bad impressions of institution to the target market/customer. A successful institution holds a strong brand hence, it is important to maintain it. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

Price

Price is the cost of the offerings. In other words, every product or service has its own values and the offeror decides about the valuation. (Sherlekar S.A., Nirmala Prasad K. & Salvadore Victor S.J., 2009). The university/college should be able to clarify the benefits before the students decide to enrol in that specific institution. Furthermore, a price-value relationship can guide a student's mind towards the universities. i.e. Value = Benefits – Costs. Based on this mechanism, the institution can increase their value in three ways: 1) Increase benefits and hold costs constant, 2) hold benefits constant and decrease costs, and 3) increase benefits and reduce costs. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

Place

In marketing, place is considered as the location of the target market. Similarly, in the situation of university, place notifies the physical location and points of access. Being in the right location can be asset for the university in context of marketing perspective. For instance, if the university is located near to urban area, highlighting social opportunities, jobs and access to internships can be done. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

Promotion

Promotion is the persuasive communication about the product/service by the offeror to the prospect. (Sherlekar S.A., Nirmala Prasad K. & Salvadore Victor S.J., 2009). In other words, promotion is not the whole concept of marketing rather it is dependent on integrated marketing communication. Promotion is a medium to provide message from the sender to the receiver. The promotional mix consists of various tools, however, the basic tools in university's communications mix are: - advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotions and direct marketing. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

Physical evidence

For the most part, the product of service sector is intangible. Likewise, a potential student cannot see or touch education thus, education is also intangible. However, a student's decision making might have impact on the facility exterior, interior, and other tangible objects. Furthermore, the interior and exterior should be well regulated and well functionalized to circulate positive message. The structure of the buildings, library, classrooms, university websites, business cards, furnishings are some of the list of physical appearance in universities. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

Process

Usually, in business sector, consumer wants to complete their transaction as soon as possible. They do not appreciate delay and unnecessary expenditures. Correspondingly, a well-planned process should be designed and executed to leave an excellent footprint in student decision making. For instance, admissions process should be easy by removing unnecessary interviews and implementing online application system. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

People

In this marketing mix, people are recognized as potential students as well as the employed staffs in an institution. Both parties are dependent to each other. In marketing, customer always wants new experiences and more service. Therefore, the staffs should be more accountable in order to address the demands of the students. As a customer responsibility, students should be able to clarify their issues and healthy communication should be maintained with university's employees. (Hossler, D. & Bontrager, B., 2014)

3.4   Segmentation, targeting and positioning

Modern marketing is based on three pillars. i.e. segmentation, targeting and positioning. The demands in the market place is different depending on the consumer buying behavior. Segmentation helps to identify and locate different buying groups. The next step is to target the specific segmented market to achieve the returns on investment. The final step is to place the organization in a competitive position where the customers trust the product/service. (Proctor, 2000)

Market segmentation

Market segmentation is a marketing strategy of classifying target markets into subsets of consumers. After the classification, marketers have to do the further planning and ways to implement those strategies. Market segmentation helps marketers to analyze the market situation and improve the errors. Market segmentation is essential in order to figure out the consumer preferences and to operate effectively. However, international marketing segmentation appears to be more complex because the demands of customers are different due to variation in culture, habits, language, lifestyles etc. (Sherlekar S.A. & Sharad Sherlekar, V., 2009)

Market segments are divided in two bases: -

i.   **Customer personal characteristic (People-oriented approach)**
   1. Geographic characteristics: In this kind of segment, marketer focuses on the place of residence, region, urban/suburban rural, size of town/city, Climatic zone etc.
   2. Demographic characteristics: The basic classification in this segment are sex, age, marital status, family size etc.
   3. Socio-economic characteristics: Consumers with income, occupation, education, religion, culture, social class are segmented in these characteristics.
   4. Psychographic characteristics: Personality and lifestyles are categorized in this segment.

ii.   **Customer Responsible Behavior (Product-oriented approach)**
   Generally, use of buyers, attitudes, motivations, perceptions, preferences towards the brand/ product etc. are categorized in this base approach. (Sherlekar S.A. & Sharad Sherlekar, V., 2009)

Target marketing

After the completion of market segmentation, the next strategy is market targeting. The organization has to focus on certain market segments where the target market is labeled. Market segment varies according to priorities, acknowledgement and profit margin. Allocating the resources and efforts to the segments should be done on the basis of competitive advantage. (Ramachandra K., Chandrashekara B. & Shivakumar S., 2009)

Furthermore, target marketing is the evaluation of various segments and decision of selecting specific target. Usually, a target market focuses on selected group of customers who has common requirements and characteristics towards the product/service provided by the organization. (Karunakaran, 2007). The selection criteria of the segment should be determined in corresponding to the profitable financial outcome which an organization can achieve. (Proctor, 2000)

Positioning

Completing the market segment selection, company has to occupy its position level in those segments. In the book, marketing management, Karunakaran, K. (2007) has defined product positioning "as the complex set of perceptions, impressions, and feelings that consumers have for the product compared with competing products". (Karunakaran, 2007).

Consumers are offered several products/services in the market. Meanwhile, the buying decision is influenced by the categories of different products. For the company, it is essential to know where their position is reserved by customers. In most of the cases, product positioning is set by customers however, they are guided by marketers as well. The positioning strategies are mostly related with attributes and benefits of products/services. Moreover, classification of customers, competitors, category of products etc. affects the positioning strategies. (Ramachandra K., Chandrashekara B. & Shivakumar S., 2009)

3.5   Integrated marketing communication

Promotion is essential in modern day marketing and it is widely used marketing method to reach customers effectively. Traditional marketing communication includes advertising, sales promotion, direct selling and public relation. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is the combination of traditional tools and modern media tools to create brand and to deliver a clear message about the

products. Karunakaran, K (2007) has defined IMC as "the concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines- advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotion and public relation - and combines these to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact". (Karunakaran, 2007)

In the book, Problems in marketing (2007), IMC is defined as "a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects and other targeted, relevant, external and internal audiences." (Moutinho., Luiz A M & Chien, Charles S, 2007). Nowadays, social media marketing has bigger role as marketing communication tool. Due to the advance technology, traditional marketing is not so impressionable to consumers and the audience size are decreasing gradually. Through IMC, customers can provide instant feedbacks to the companies or service providers. As a result, the strength of public relations will increase which certainly brings positive impact in brand identity and equity. (Karunakaran, 2007). Some of the essential tools of integrated marketing communication are shown below in figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Tools of integrated marketing communication (Karunakaran, 2007)

4   RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The author designed the questionnaire in co-operation with FINNIPS. The target group were marketing department's staff/services of 17 different UAS. Before forwarding the questionnaire, pilot survey was conducted to test the weaknesses and to acknowledge the improvements. Participants were informed that one respondent from each UAS is sufficient for the answer. The time period for the questionnaire was three weeks and it was completed with the participation of eleven UAS out of seventeen. The questionnaire itself consists four sections and twenty-three questions. Each section includes a title and the question were constructed with an aim to collect answer from the specific title. The data are analyzed on the basis of each section.

Section I: Organization and planning of marketing

At the beginning of the questionnaire, the participants were given the option to choose the UAS they represent. Second question relates with the information of the participants (name and position in the marketing departments), however the author and the commissioner already informed about the confidentiality, therefore the collected answers are not included in the thesis. The following question relates with the work division and international recruitment marketing. 3 options were given in that particular question. Out of 11 participants, 8 UAS (73%) chose centralized and 2 respondents (18%) chose decentralized organizational structure. Participants could select the third option if the organizational structure was different than the first two options and 1 respondent (9%) answered that the marketing activities are planned with marketing department and international service department, however they mentioned that the student service affairs is responsible for the Finnips co-operation and joint application.

Participants were asked whether they have set any target for the recruitment of foreign degree student in their UAS. Out of 11 respondents, 5 UAS (45%) answered that they have not set any targets whereas the response from 6 UAS (55%) was different from others. Some UAS answered that the targets are geographical locations, motivated students, contacts, marketing areas and measures. Other answered that the target may vary according to degree programmes and the availability of seats for foreign degree students.

When asked whether the budget allocation on international marketing has met their objectives, out of 10 respondents, 5 UAS (50%) answered that they somewhat agree, 2 UAS (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed and 3 UAS (30%) answered that they somewhat disagree. Figure 4.1 illustrates the collected data.
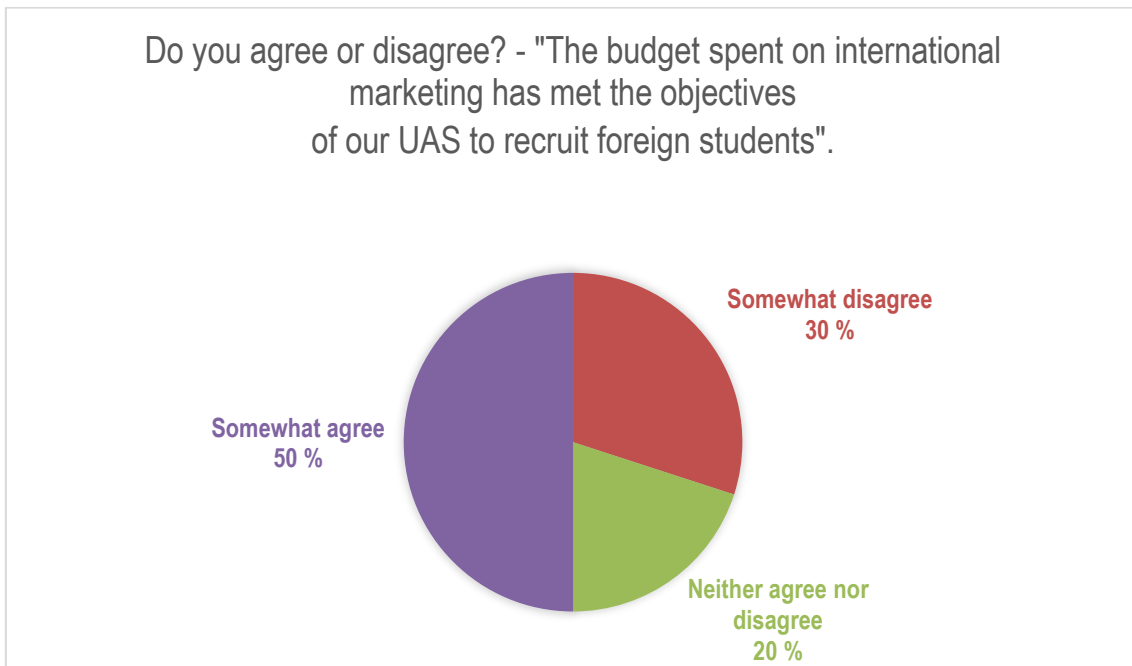

Figure 4.1 Participant's viewpoint on budget allocation regarding recruitment marketing

The collected data suggests that 30% of the participants needs a concrete budget allocation plan to achieve their objective. The discussion can be done in two parts. Either the budget allocation was not sufficient or the budget was not allocated at right place. Overall, a proper budget allocation planning is required.

Section II: Contents, Channels and Challenges of International Marketing

An open-ended question was asked regarding the difference between Finnish and foreign students' recruitment marketing. 11 respondents took part in that particular question and all of the UAS provided their own opinion. Based on the collected answers, the UAS were approaching to Finnish students through education fairs, school visits, open doors, peer to peer marketing, participation in networks and general information about the student benefits. In the situation of foreign degree students, the factors such as, accommodation, working culture, image of Finland, weather, tuition fees, study career, Finnish culture etc. were utilized as recruitment marketing. Some of the UAS were mainly focused on web-based marketing (webinars) to communicate with foreign students. In

some institutions marketing department focuses on Finnish students where as teachers were active in recruiting foreign students. Among the other challenges, UAS were facing the difficulty to perceive the right channels because the marketing channels may vary according to geographical location. In addition, UAS are lacking budget and resources (equipment and advance applications).

When asked, which continents will be focused by Finnish UAS in the future, the collected data suggests that Asia, Europe and Russia were the primary regions where the marketing activities will be focused based on the marketing strategies of UAS. Based on figure 4.2, out of 10 respondents, 7 UAS (70%) chose Asia and 6 UAS (60%) choose Europe as highly focused regions. In addition, 4(40%) UAS gave the opinion of Russia as one of the focused regions. The option of Russia was not included in the question but the participants provided the answer in the free text field.
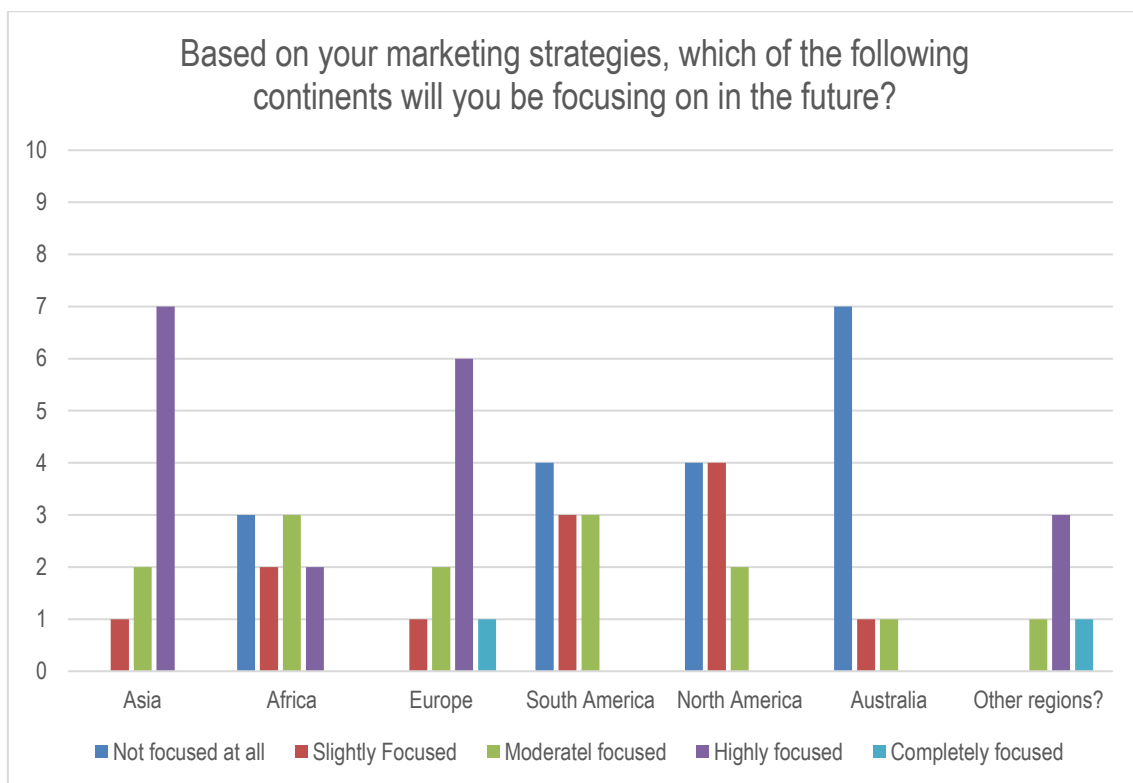

Figure 4.2 Focused regions for recruitment marketing

This section included question concerning the effective channels/actors that are preferred for international marketing activities by Finnish UAS. Figure 4.3 illustrates that out of 10 respondents, 6 (60%) UAS selected social media, 5 (50%) UAS selected study in Finland/OPH, 4 (40%) UAS selected Finnips, study fairs/seminars, scholarships and UAS's printed material as capable and effective channels. Web marketing was selected as very effective channels/actors by 4 (40%) participants.
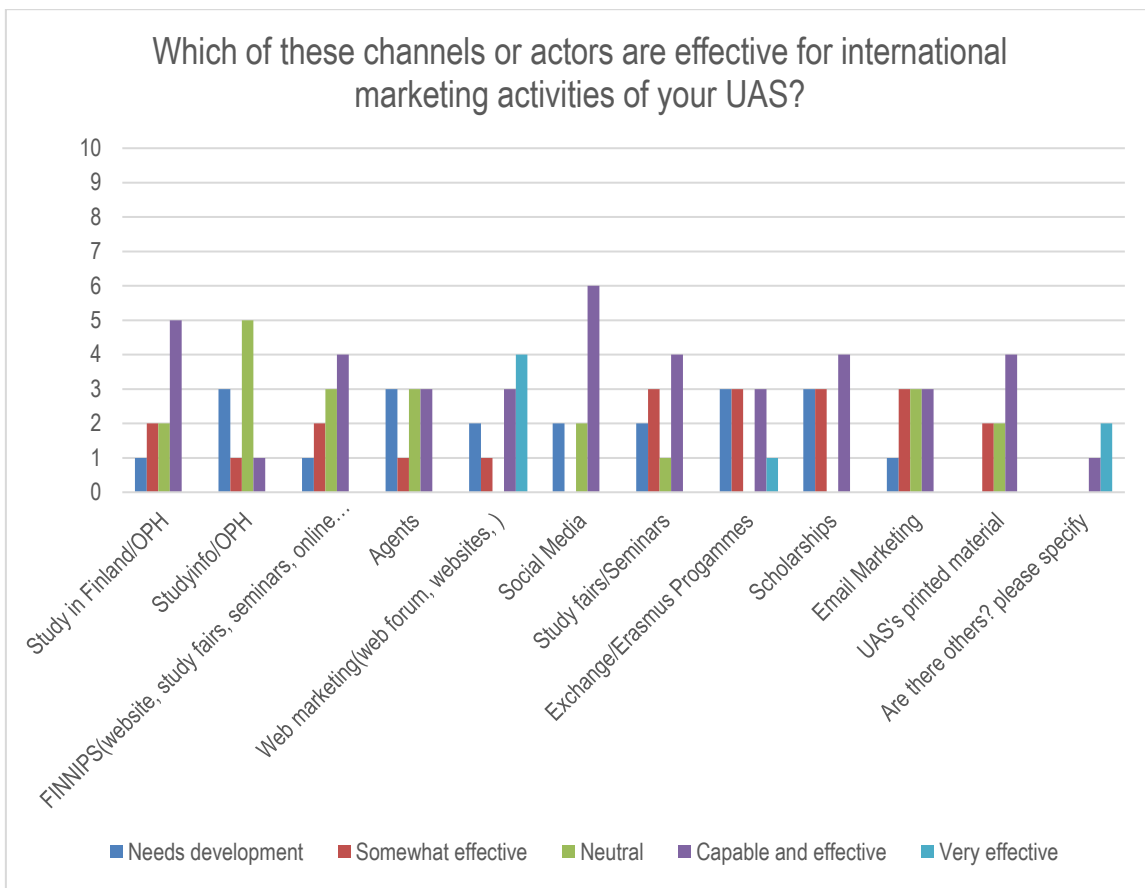
Figure 4.3 Effective channels/actors for international marketing activities

Furthermore, an open-ended question was asked if the participants could suggest the reason for selecting "needs development" or very "effective option". Most of the UAS mentioned that they have not hired any agents and the data shows that the respondents have not prioritize agents as effective channel. This can be understood as utilizing agents is rather unpopular in Finnish UAS. Based on participant's answer, tuition fee and scholarship is new practice; therefore, it is too early to determine. According to participants, study info and national OPH is very unclear and complicated as the sites includes more information which overlaps the UAS own information. Participants recommended that search engine optimization, own web sites, virtual webinars, should be develop in the future.

Participants were asked what kind of contents are important in marketing activities of foreign applicants. As shown in figure 4.4, out of 11 respondents, 9 UAS (90%) selected recommendations from students already studying in Finland, 8 UAS (73%) answered quality of education, 7 UAS (64%) selected Finland as country and safety, 6 UAS (55%) selected city, degree programme and clean nature/environment, 5 UAS (45%) selected university of applied sciences as very important.
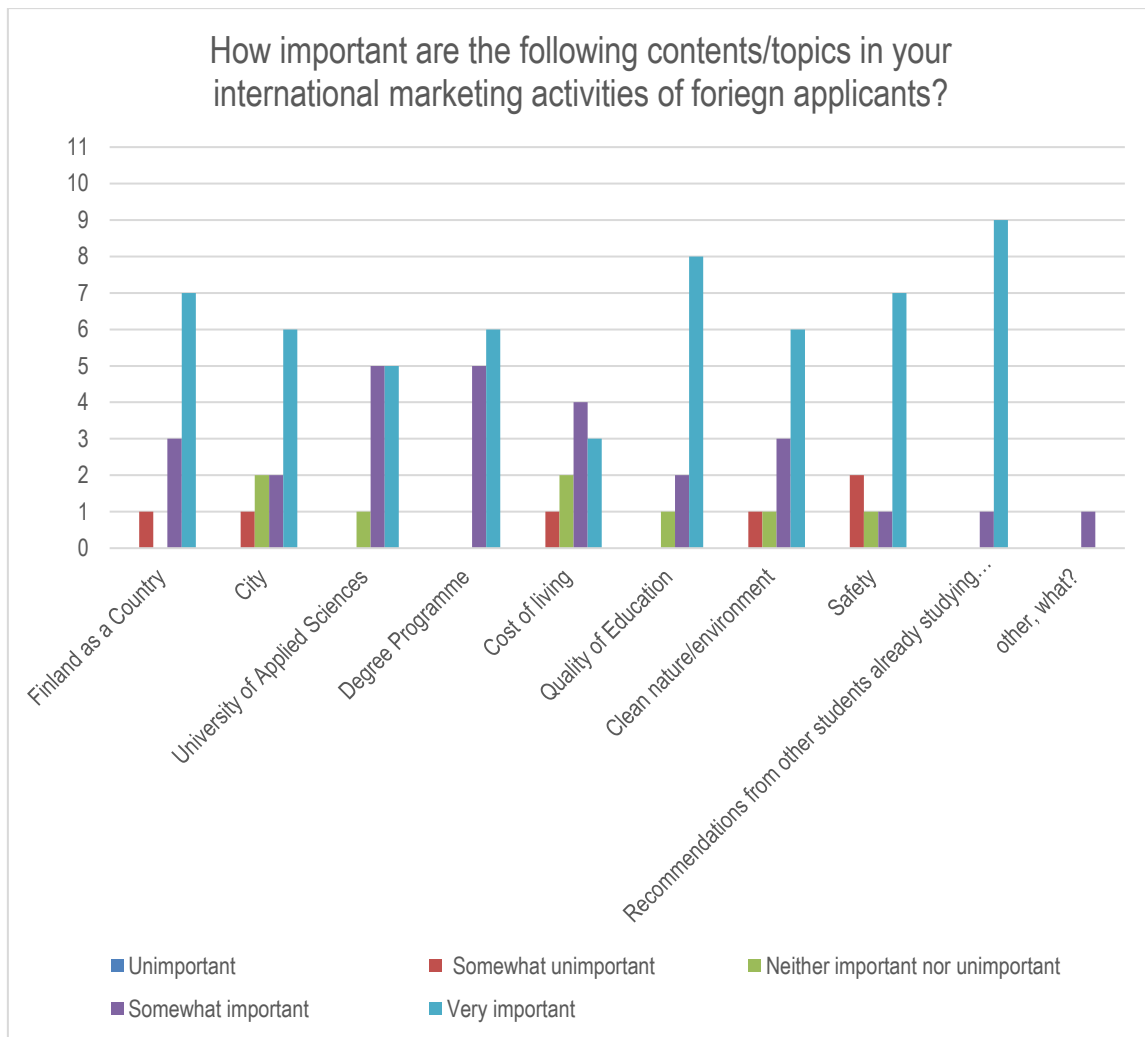
How important are the following contents/topics in your international marketing activities of foriegn applicants?

Figure 4.4 Marketing contents targeted for foreign applicants

Participants were asked what kind of challenges they face in the marketing and recruitment of international students. Figure 4.5 illustrates that out of 11 respondents, 7 UAS (64%) selected budget allocation as highly challenging and cultural differences as somewhat challenging. 6 UAS (55%) selected insufficient information of target countries. 4 UAS (36%) selected marketing strategies and marketing channels as highly challenging.
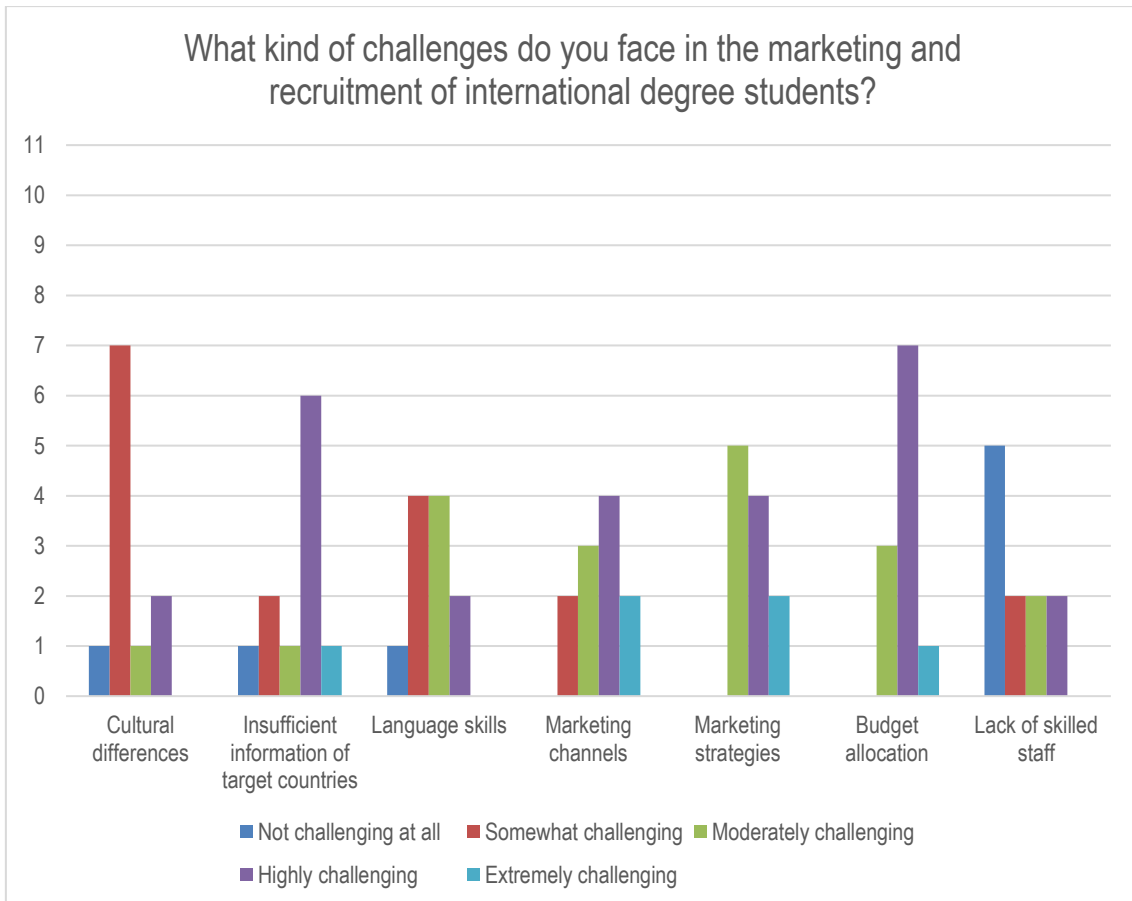
What kind of challenges do you face in the marketing and recruitment of international degree students?

Legend:
- Not challenging at all
- Somewhat challenging
- Moderately challenging
- Highly challenging
- Extremely challenging

Figure 4.5 Difficulties in international marketing for Finnish UAS

Furthermore, an open-ended question was asked if there were any other challenges related to international marketing. Lack of internal cooperation in the institution and regional collaboration were highlighted as other challenges. Respondents outlined that national agency should create national visibility in student recruitment events and national ethical guidelines and strategies for hiring the best agencies. Due to the small number of intake groups, UAS are facing difficulty to market to all target areas. Respondents answered that maintaining multicultural groups is their priority but it is not wise to target all the areas without any specific strategy. Therefore, the marketing efforts should be cost effective and applicable.

Section III: Effects of tuition fee on International marketing.

When asked how has the introduction of tuition fee has influenced the international marketing activities of their UAS, out of 10 respondents, 4 respondents (40%) answered moderately influential, 2 respondents (20%) selected very influential and other 2 participants (20%) selected extremely influential. UAS were asked an open-ended question regarding in what areas the tuition fee has influenced. Participants answered that due to the very limited resources, UAS needs to

identify the potential market and execute the resources by focusing on specific country/regions. Participants were lacking new marketing channels in order to emphasize marketing activities. Through the whole questionnaire, insufficient budget has been one of the key factor for international marketing. Obviously, competition will be tough now and all of the departments and personnel should be active for marketing. For instance, teachers of English degree programmes. Besides, the UAS's website needs to update with more digital contents. Even though the introduction of tuition fee affected the marketing activities of UAS, customer service and web marketing is developing and improving which is considered as positive influence.

The question regarding changes in number of applicants in spring 2017 was included in the questionnaire. The figure 4.6 exhibit that out of 11 respondents, 7 UAS (64%) selected slightly less applicants than previous year and 3 UAS (27 %) selected much less applicants than previous year.
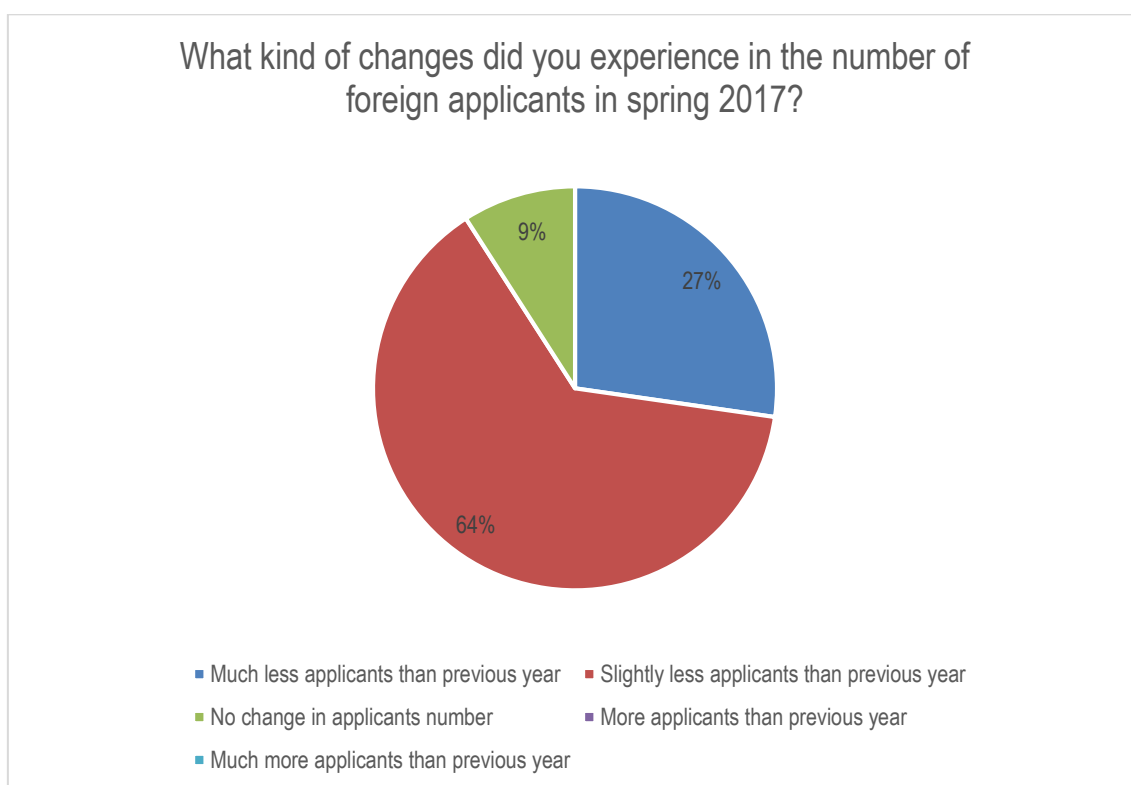

Figure 4.6 Changes in number of foreign applicants in spring 2017

An open-ended question was asked that how do they inspect the possible changes. Participants acknowledged that the introduction of tuition fee has bring some negative impact because the application of international students from Vietnam and Russia has declined. In some UAS, foreign students from African countries like; Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria has applied for the degree programme however, the economic condition of those students are yet unknown. The respondents

are curious about their ability to pay for the studies. Participants answered that even though some new international students apply for the degree programme, it is yet known about the commitment of the registering and starting their studies.

Section IV: Trends, development and support needs in international marketing

Participants were asked how relevant are the following upcoming trends in higher education considered from the marketing perspective. Figure 4.7 illustrates that out of 10 respondents, 8 (80%) UAS chose use of web analytics and responsive website design as very useful trends in higher education institutions. Likewise, 6 (60%) UAS selected CRM as very useful trends in higher education. 5 (50%) UAS selected online classroom and content management system very useful trends in higher education. 5 (50%) UAS selected MOOC platforms.
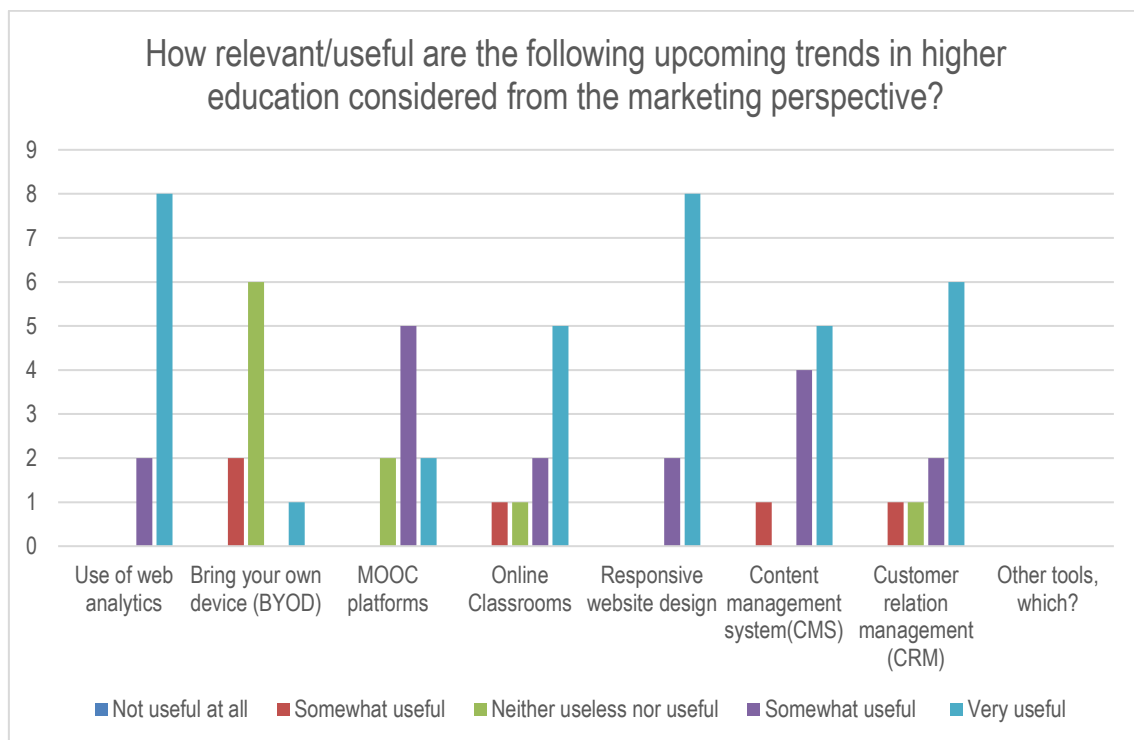

Figure 4.7 Upcoming trends in higher education

An open-ended question was asked to the participants – "In what areas of international marketing and student recruitment the Finnish UASs could/should do cooperation? What kind of things your UASs want to take care on its own? Generally, promoting Finnish education system and Finland as a study destination was the key suggestion of the respondents. Furthermore, they insisted that all of the UAS should work in a team and follow the common guidelines/procedures. Some of the UAS have already started to co-operate with other UAS for international marketing. Participants

were looking forward for the assistance from OPH and national agencies. Furthermore, international fair participation and digital advertising were suggested by the respondents to reach the target destination. Organizations like: - study in Finland, study info, Finnips are playing positive role but they should have a defined role and clear messages. Promoting own institution, degree programmes, web pages can be taken care by UAS independently. When asked how they would evaluate the performance and results of the international marketing activities of their UAS, out of 11 respondents, 8 (73%) respondents selected fair option which is understood as the marketing department of participant's UAS are operating in a well manner.

At the end of the questionnaire, an open-ended question was included - "What kind of support would you need in the planning and implementation of your international activities?" 10 respondents took part in this particular question. Participants are looking for clear vision and co-operation with other universities and colleagues for recruitment marketing. Furthermore, workshops and sharing best practices with other UAS is needed. They need effective channels, resources and strong international network to develop in marketing sector. Obviously, financial support is needed from government. Respondents indicated that skillful marketing experts is essential. Various research such as: - market analysis, customer analysis, competitor analysis is required to understand the customer' choice. All and all, the key messages should be well planned and delivered efficiently.

5 FINDINGS

The collected data were observed and analyzed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the author has included the findings. Furthermore, recommendation is also included what could be improved.

Brand management

Branding is an essential aspect of business. A brand reveals a unique identity of an organization to its customers. The revenue of the profit organization directly relates with its brand. One of the most important part of branding is to build brand equity. The product/service provider has to be loyal and they should focus on maximizing the trust of customers. Through quality, product perceived value and its attributes, brand equity can be achieved.

The global rankings of universities and different schools proves that HEIs are also engaged in brand management. An effective branding leads to high number of enrolment and competitive position in the education market. In the context of Finnish UAS, branding needs to be done in two ways. At first, Finland and Finnish higher education system should be promoted. Before gathering information about the universities, the students might want to observe the Finland as a study destination. Factors such as accommodation, weather, infrastructure development, safety, environment, culture should be highlighted in the marketing activities. On the other hand, the marketing of study career, success stories, web-based marketing, study curriculum, multicultural environment could be done independently by UAS. Furthermore, publishing the experience and feedbacks from international graduated students can be done.

Budget planning

In every organization, budget is essential because it is a financial plan which contributes in future operation, performance and results. Due to the reduction of government funding, Finnish UAS are somehow under pressure regarding financial support. Throughout, the questionnaire, participants were indicating that budget is one of the major challenge in recruitment methods. The purpose of the thesis was to focus on the marketing sector however; the budget of an institution focuses on every area and aspect of an institution rather than only marketing.

In general, budget planning is formulated by the top-level management focusing on every units/departments of an organization. The responsibility of senior marketing personnel is to submit the realistic operational plan to meet the mission and objectives of an institution. There can be several of costs and expenditure in recruitment marketing therefore the marketing heads should calculate the real costs and minimize the expense. Marketing department should do research regarding market analysis, cost effective communication tools analysis and competitor analysis. Throughout the operation, the performance measures should be carried out in order to develop performance targets.

Specific target market

The aforementioned marketing theories suggest that business/organization should identify the target market. The research background indicates that the majority of students are from Asia. Likewise, results of the questionnaire show that Asia is mostly focused region for international student recruitment. In Finland and in the globe, there is numerous number of international student mobility from Asian countries like; China, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Nepal etc. In addition, participants answered that the budget and resources are not enough to market to all target areas. Therefore, UAS could utilize its resources towards Asia to discover potential students. Furthermore, Russia also could one of the target market for Finnish UAS.

Recruitment of Agents

Hiring of agencies is taken as an effective part of an institution's overall recruitment strategy but the commitment regarding support and resource should be fulfilled by UAS. The institution should facilitate agents with sufficient resource such as support from leadership, dedicated staff and financial resource. The top management level is responsible for the decision on recruiting agents. Similarly, the institutional investment is needed for staff trainings. In general, the financial resource is required in traveling cost, agency fees, overseas advertisements, training workshops and so on. Additionally, institutional engagement is also another important factor which creates healthy relationship. (American International Recruitment Council, cited 11.06.2017)

Participants answered that agents can be one of the effective tools for recruiting international students however this method is not well exercised in Finnish UAS. The collected data suggests that the intake for international students are not very high (20 students per year) therefore it can be

understood that recruiting agents is not a common practice in Finnish UAS. However, the hiring of agents could be done in a team of multiple UAS. Perhaps, the ideology of marketing would be same even though the involvement of different UAS. In that way, marketing can be effective and the cost can be lower.

Inter departmental coordination

An educational institution is constructed under various department and faculties. Each department has their own responsibility and working areas. In order to meet the objectives of the institution all of the departments should work together as team. The units of organization should be inter connected with each other and the message circulation must be transparent. The departments of UAS should cooperate with each other in terms research oriented collaboration, formal department visits, fund support, admission and registering affairs. Overall, a healthy and friendly environment will be created which supports in the promotion of institutions gradually.

Assistance from national agencies and other organizations

Ministry of education and culture is the head organization who is responsible to promote and upgrade to Finnish education system. The primary task of ministry is to formulate guidelines for Finnish HEIs. Some of the guidelines is included in the introduction part of the thesis. Participants were looking for national visibility and ethical guidelines in international student recruitment. Participants need practical implications rather than theories. The implementation of those guidelines should be effective and operable. In 2017, OPH and CIMO were merged as Finnish national agency for international education affairs. The organization is responsible for distributing customers as different grants, subsidies and scholarship (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016 cited 10.06.2017). Research on international student mobility, international student working life, and international student barometer should be done more and shared with UAS.

According to participants, the performance of FINNIPS is appreciable in international student recruitment however, they mentioned that the website of FINNIPS should be updated with more information and the details of entrance exams should be posted early.

Online marketing

Due to modern day technology, traditional tools such as television, radio and newspaper has slightly lost their effectiveness. Nowadays, marketers and audiences are mostly engaged in online marketing. Basically, online marketing includes content and email marketing, web marketing, social media, search engine optimization etc. Universities' marketers could use integrated marketing communication tools which is the combination of traditional and modern tools.

Social media is one the effective tools of online marketing. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram allows marketers and audiences communicate through comment, share and like buttons. Moreover, content marketing is possible in social media platforms. A potential student can be discovered through university's website. The collected suggested that 60% of participants selected social media as effective channels for marketing. Respondents were suggesting that search engine optimization, own web sites and virtual webinars should be developed in the future. For instance, marketers can publish blogs, student's stories and experiences, review of universities, frequently asked questions (FAQ) and video contents in their own websites. In addition, virtual campus tours and hangouts provides a real-life experience about the universities.

Other recruitment marketing methods (Education fairs, seminars,)

Education fairs and conferences regarding higher education is beneficial platform for universities' marketers. During these kinds of events, higher education marketers, content strategists, potential students, consultancies, and communication professionals are engaged. It is a good opportunity for marketing representative to network with other universities' employees.

Participants of the questionnaire were suggesting that education fairs could improve their marketing efforts to reach the target audiences. National agency should create national visibility in student recruitment events. For instance, FINNIPS could participate in seminars and inform the UAS about the upcoming seminars.

6 CONCLUSION

The Finnish higher education system has good reputation in the Nordic regions. The non-tuition fee policy attracted many international students for different degree programmes however the situation has changed now. Finland is one of the developed country and the infrastructure of education institutions is well managed. In contrary to that, the introduction of tuition fee seems to be challenging in terms of international student recruitment.

Undoubtedly, the tuition fee regulation will escalate the revenue of Finland. But the curiosity remains about the new international students being in the Finnish universities. If we look through the table presented in introduction part, most of the international students are from Asian countries such as Vietnam, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. Personnel of Finnish UAS are in confusion whether the students from these developing countries will be able to pay their studies. With that matter, some of the UAS are providing scholarship schemes but the messages should be delivered to target audience.

Internationalization is not a new practice of Finnish HEIs. In order to make it successful, government, private sector, and education institutions should cooperate with each other. The role of the government would be to create national guidelines on how the HEIs should be operating in the future. Respondents from the questionnaire were suggesting that the theoretical guidelines from the government should be practical. Moreover, the government should assist HEIs to build research infrastructure. Similarly, the role of the private sector would be to expand international student's employability. For instance, international students should get opportunity to do part time jobs and after graduation they should be able to integrate in the labor market. Likewise, the education institutions should provide quality education in order to compete in the employment sector. As a result, the graduated students' skills are used in Finnish employment sector which will generate skillful manpower and contribute in national revenue.

Based on the collected answers from the questionnaire, the competition will be slightly tougher after the introduction of tuition fee. Participants mentioned that the tuition fee regulation has decreased the number of new applicants for 2017. The contents of recruitment marketing should be reviewed and improvised. The major problem for marketing department's employees was having insufficient budget and resources. The management team of a UAS should provide enough

resources and budgets to marketing department's personnel. Marketers should be updated with the latest tools and technologies to work efficiently and for the better outcome. Furthermore, they should be provided with effective channels, resources, and strong international network to develop in marketing sector. In addition, Organization like CIMO, FINNIPS, study info, should be more active and bring effective road maps.

From 2017 onwards, the service of the universities should be changed as the new students are customers for Finnish UAS. The infrastructure of the campus, classroom materials, teacher's behaviors, as well as service of the employees must be improvised. There should not be issues regarding inequality and discrimination based on gender, race, nationality and other factors. Moreover, support services, guidance to work related matters, emotional attention of international students' needs to be taken into account.

To conclude, marketing the Finnish higher education and recruiting international students will be difficult without the help from government and other related organizations. A marketing department and universities marketers might not be capable enough to promote Finnish higher education however, the role of the marketing department and marketers should be effective and the efforts should be maximized. Despite the challenges, there should be inter departmental and regional collaboration for information sharing. It is yet unknown about the positive and negative outcomes of tuition policy however, if the policy is successful then it would certainly upgrade the entire Finnish higher education and if it turns out to be opposite then the efforts for internalization can be affected.

7   DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this research was to determine the marketing activities of Finnish UAS after the introduction of tuition fees, to highlight the effective marketing channels, to understand the hierarchical structure and work division, to distinguish Foreign and Finnish degree student recruitment, to figure out the marketing strategies of Finnish UAS, to find out the challenges and possible ways to compete in global education market for Finnish UAS. The main characters of this research are students as customers and Finnish HEIs as service provider. The theoretical information involves different marketing principles and ideology defined by several authors. Before starting the thesis, the commissioner provided preliminary question which are listed below.

1. How do Finnish UASs recruit foreign students?
2. What kind of marketing (activities) do they use?
3. How has the introduction of tuition fees to non- EU/EEA students influenced the current marketing activities?

In order to get the answers of these questions, we decided to create a questionnaire. With the cooperation of commissioner, a questionnaire was designed through Webropol (online survey tool) in around 1 month period. The questionnaire was edited and formulated many times and discussed with supervisor and commissioner. Before sending out the questionnaire, a pilot survey was conducted in order to inspect the errors and to improvise it. After 3 weeks of given time, the final results were collected.

The actual process of the thesis began after the opening seminar where the author presented his brief plan regarding the thesis. At the same time, research methods and schedules were discussed with supervisor and opponent. Gradually, the author started to collect the theoretical information and the progress of the thesis continued. At the direction seminar, the author presented the table of contents, revised questionnaire, list of relevant sources and schedules. The feedbacks from supervisor and opponent were also collected during the direction seminar. After collecting results from the questionnaire, the data was analyzed thoroughly and assembled with the theoretical part.

As a primary source of quantitative research, the questionnaire was important part of this research. The questionnaire was designed with instructions in order to eliminate the errors. For instance, in

some questions, extra text field were added and we informed participants about the limitation of words in the text field. In our opinion, participants were provided sufficient time to response the questionnaire which was three weeks. We do not think that the participants were in any pressure or influence while answering the questionnaire. We assume that the collected answers are genuine thoughts and facts. The instrument used in this research and the results shows the validity factor for too some extent. However, the consistency of the results might not be same in the future. After couple of years, the scenario will be totally different as the tuition fee regulation still needs to be implemented. The collected answers are authentic and genuine however, the results might be different after couple of years if the same research questions are asked. It can be understood that this research is somehow a pilot testing. Therefore, this research is reliable for short time period.

This research was based on the recruitment marketing of international students. The findings of the research indicates that Finnish UAS needs to improvise the marketing efforts because the number of applicants outside Finland have been slightly decreased in spring 2017. Moreover, insufficient budget, adopting right marketing channels and lack of regional collaboration were found as the key challenges in recruitment marketing of UAS. Additionally, the UAS and the marketing personnel needs to do further research on the issues related to pros and cons of tuition fee policy. Feedbacks from international students should be collected and actively followed in order to provide quality service.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT- Questionnaire   APPENDIX 1

1. From drop down option, please select the UAS you represent.
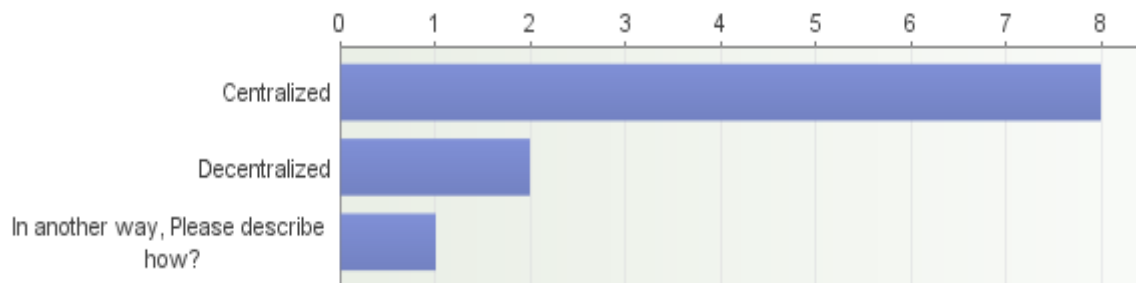
Number of respondents: 11

2. Omitted for anonymity reasons.

## 3. How is the international marketing and recruitment organized within your UAS?

Number of respondents: 11

| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

Centralized — 8

Decentralized — 2

In another way, Please describe how? — 1

Open text answers omitted for anonymity reasons

4. Have you set targets for the recruitment of foreign degree students in your UAS?

Number of respondents: 11

| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

No — 5

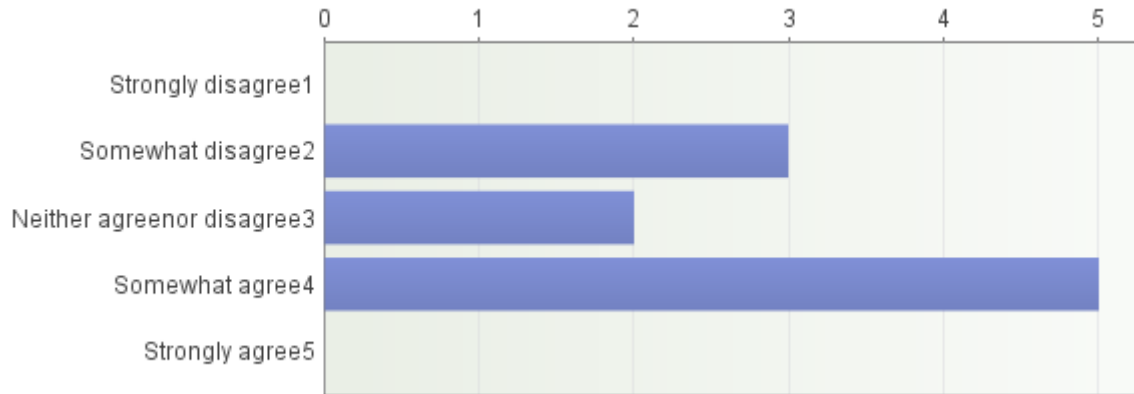Yes.If so,please describe what kind of targets are set? — 6
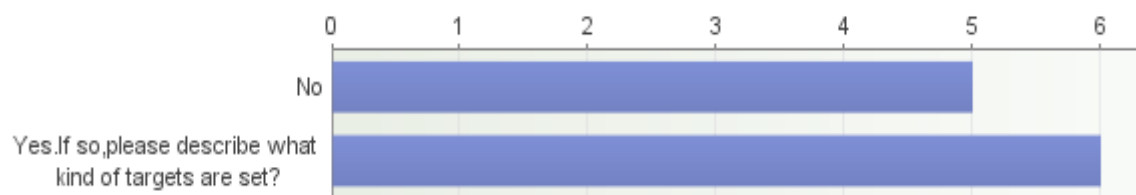
Open text answers omitted for anonymity reasons

5. Omitted for anonymity reasons

6. Do you agree or disagree? - "The budget spent on international marketing has met the objectives of our UAS to recruit foreign students".

Number of respondents: 10

7. Please describe the reasons for selecting "Strongly disagree" and "Strongly agree" scales for budget allocation in international marketing.

No answers.

8. How does the recruitment marketing of foreign degree students differ that from Finnish students?

Number of respondents:11

Answers omitted for anonymity reasons

9. Based on your marketing strategies, which of the following continents will you be focusing on in the future?

Number of respondents: 10

	Not Focused at all1	Slightly Focused2	Moderately Focused3	HighlyFocused4	Completely Focused5	Total	Average
Asia	0	1	2	7	0	10	3.6
Africa	3	2	3	2	0	10	2.4
Europe	0	1	2	6	1	10	3.7
South America	4	3	3	0	0	10	1.9
North America	4	4	2	0	0	10	1.8
Australia	7	1	1	0	0	9	1.33
Are there other regions? please specify	0	0	1	3	1	5	4
Total	18	12	14	18	2	64	2.68

Open text answers: ModeratelyFocused3
- Russia, as a neighboring country

Open text answers: HighlyFocused4
- Russia
- Gulf region
- Russia

Open text answers: CompletelyFocused5
- Russia

10. Which of these channels/actors are effective for international marketing activities of your UAS?

Number of respondents: 11

	Needs development1	Somewhat effective 2	Neutral 3	Capable and effective4	Very effective5	Total	Average
Study in Finland/OPH	1	2	2	5	0	10	3.1
Studyinfo/OPH	3	1	5	1	0	10	2.4
FINNIPS(website, study fairs, seminars, online portals)	1	2	3	4	0	10	3
Agents	3	1	3	3	0	10	2.6
Web marketing(web forum, websites,)	2	1	0	3	4	10	3.6
Social Media	2	0	2	6	0	10	3.2
Study fairs/Seminars	2	3	1	4	0	10	2.7
Exchange/Erasmus Progammes	3	3	0	3	1	10	2.6
Scholarships	3	3	0	4	0	10	2.5
Email Marketing	1	3	3	3	0	10	2.8
UAS's printed material	0	2	2	4	0	8	3.25
Are there others? please specify	0	0	0	1	2	3	4.67
Total	21	21	21	41	7	111	3.03

11. Please describe the reasons for selecting "Needs development" or "Very effective" scales for marketing channels/actors.

Number of respondents: 8

Answers omitted for anonymity reasons

12. How important are the following contents/topics in your international marketing activities of foreign applicants?

Number of respondents: 11

	Unimportant1	Somewhatunimportant 2	Neither importantnorunimportant3	Somewhatimportant4	Veryimportant5	Total	Average
Finland as a Country	0	1	0	3	7	11	4.45
City	0	1	2	2	6	11	4.18
University of Applied Sciences	0	0	1	5	5	11	4.36
Degree Programme	0	0	0	5	6	11	4.55
Cost of living	0	1	2	4	3	10	3.9
Quality of Education	0	0	1	2	8	11	4.64
Clean nature/environment	0	1	1	3	6	11	4.27
Safety	0	2	1	1	7	11	4.18
Recommendations from other students already studying in Finland	0	0	0	1	9	10	4.9
other, what?	0	0	0	1	0	1	4
Total	0	6	8	27	57	98	4.34

13. What kind of challenges do you face in the marketing and recruitment of international degree students?

Number of respondents: 11

|	Not challenging at all1	Somewhat challenging2	Moderately challenging3	Highly challenging4	Extremely challenging5	Total	Average
Cultural differences	1	7	1	2	0	11	2.36
Insufficient information of target countries	1	2	1	6	1	11	3.36
Language skills	1	4	4	2	0	11	2.64
Marketing channels	0	2	3	4	2	11	3.55
Marketing strategies	0	0	5	4	2	11	3.73
Budget allocation	0	0	3	7	1	11	3.82
lack of skilled staff	5	2	2	2	0	11	2.09
Total	8	17	19	27	6	77	3.08

14. Are there are any other challenges related to international marketing of your UAS?

Number of respondents: 5

Answers omitted for anonymity reasons

15. How has the introduction of tuition fee influenced the international marketing activities of your UAS?
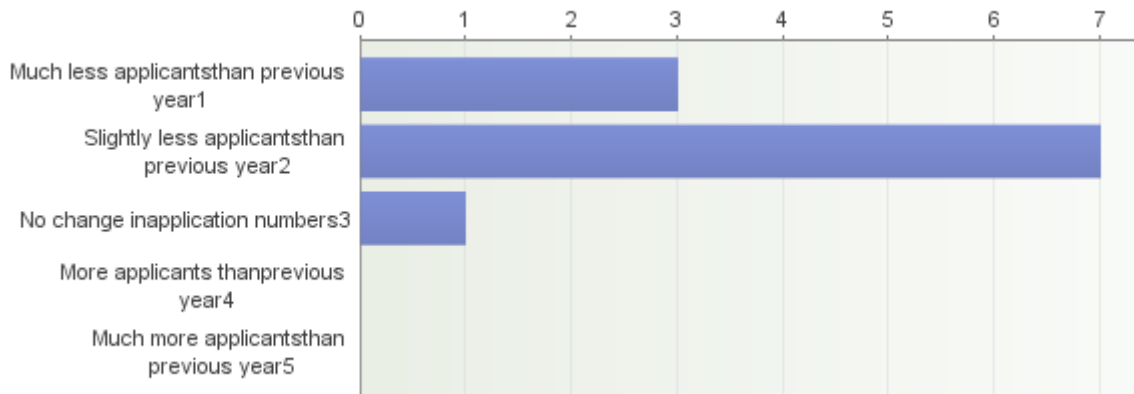
Number of respondents: 10
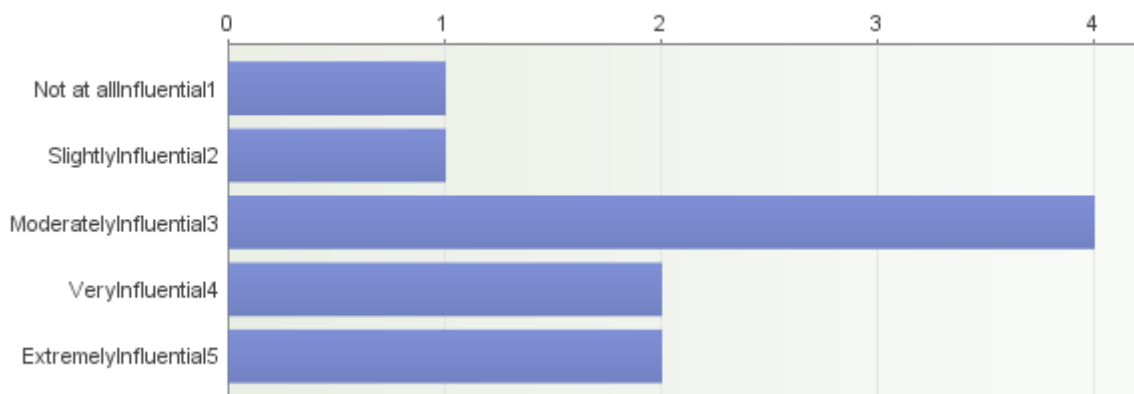
16. In what areas the introduction of tuition fee influenced the international marketing activities?

Number of respondents: 8

17. What kind of changes did you experience in the number of foreign applicants in spring 2017?

Number of respondents: 11

18. How do you analyze the possible changes in the number of applicants e.g. in the light of tuition fees and the applicants' countries of origin?

Number of respondents: 8

19. How relevant/useful are the following upcoming trends in higher education considered from the marketing perspective?

Number of respondents: 10

|	Not useful at all1	Somewhatuseless2	Neither useless nor useful3	Somewhatuseful4	Veryuseful5	Total	Average
Use of Web analytics	0	0	0	2	8	10	4.8
Bring your own device(BYOD)	0	2	6	0	1	9	3
MOOC platforms	0	0	2	5	2	9	4
Online Classrooms	0	1	1	2	5	9	4.22
Responsive website design	0	0	0	2	8	10	4.8
Content Management System(CMS)	0	1	0	4	5	10	4.3
Customer Relation Management(CRM)	0	1	1	2	6	10	4.3
Other methods/tools which?	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	0	5	10	17	35	67	4.2

20. In what areas of international marketing and student recruitment the Finnish UASs could/should do cooperation? What kind of things your UASs want to take care on its own?

Number of respondents: 9

Answers omitted for anonymity reasons

21. How would you evaluate the performance and results of the international marketing activities in your UAS?

Number of respondents: 11
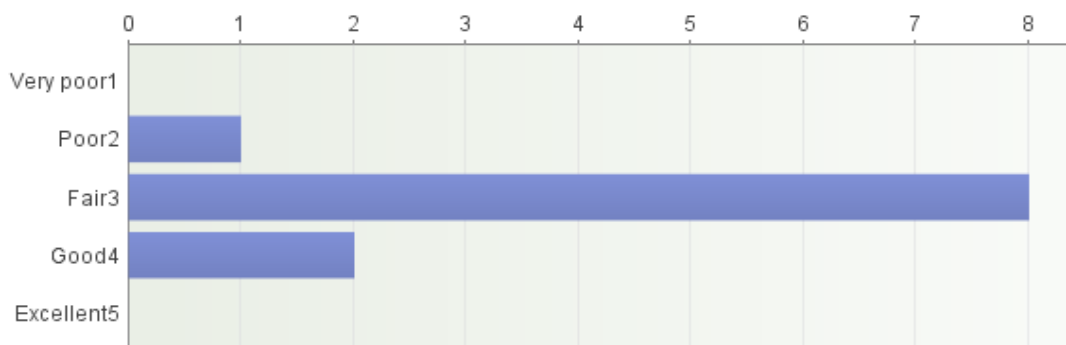
22. Please describe the reasons for selecting "Very poor" and "Excellent" scales for evaluation.

Number of respondents: 1

Answers omitted for anonymity reasons

23. What kind of support would you need in the planning and implementation of your international marketing activities?

Number of respondents: 10

Answers omitted for anonymity reasons