

## **Effectiveness of Marketing Techniques in Recruiting International Students: Evidence from a Tertiary Institute in New Zealand**

Shaohua Yang and M. Akhtaruzzaman  
Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology, Rotorua, New Zealand

**Abstract:** This study seeks to extend knowledge of marketing techniques in recruiting international students in New Zealand context. There are limited studies on marketing techniques in recruiting international students in New Zealand. Employing a quantitative methodology on a tertiary institute (WIT) in New Zealand. The research design was based on a descriptive research model typically used for survey based research. This study uses quantitative methods, surveying 150 international students on the WIT campus in New Zealand. Analysis was completed using SPSS Software to statistical mean. Findings show that effective marketing techniques in recruiting international students for WIT are: the use of international agents, word of mouth and online recruitment. Due to the various level of satisfaction revealed in survey results, this research indicates that WIT is currently solely dependent on a single marketing technique (i.e., use of international agent). The survey findings suggest that many international students are not satisfied with the service provided by agent. The reason for it can be what the agent told them differs from what they face here in NZ. It is therefore suggested that WIT should not solely rely on agents for marketing education to international students. Other marketing techniques (e.g., online recruitment, participating in education fare in potential market) are also essential to maintain a sustainable enrolment of international students. The study also makes theoretical contributions, it contributes to a growing body of literature in marketing concepts of tertiary institutions. It adds more nuanced understanding the theoretical foundation of marketing techniques in recruiting international students. This study also makes practical contributions, it contributes better understanding of marketing techniques in recruiting international students for the marketing department of the WIT and other tertiary institutes in New Zealand. It is recommended that institutes engage with the quality international agents.

**Key words:** Marketing techniques, international students, tertiary institutions, recruitment, WIT

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Education exports is a key factor contributing to national economy in Anglophone countries. Thomas (2012) reported that export of Canadian education increased to 8 billion dollars between 2008 and 2010. In the United Kingdom (UK), international students studying in higher education spent 10.2 billion pounds including tuition fees and living expenses (HM Government, 2013). In New Zealand aside from the agriculture and horticulture industries, international education is the fifth largest exports industry and the second biggest service sector (Pherson, 2016). Education exports contribute to \$3.1 billion in 2015 calendar and support more than 30,000 job opportunities (Pherson, 2016). Government in New Zealand expects that education exports aims to contribution \$5 billion in 2025. Therefore, there is an opportunity tertiary institution need to focus on applying marketing techniques to recruiting international students.

However, at the institutional level while some tertiary institutes have shown very successful at international student's recruitment, others are still struggling to seek a significant return from their international marketing efforts (Naude and Ivy, 1991; Ross *et al.*, 2007). Thus, to establish competitive advantages and raise brand awareness in higher education, it is very important to extend and develop marketing techniques to maintain a good number of international student (Nicolescu, 2009). In New Zealand, Morrish and Lee (2011) noted that tertiary education institutes need more shrewd marketing tactics to survive in this highly competitive market. However, compared to the United States of America (USA) and the UK, the image of New Zealand universities and institutes might not be strong enough. Many international students would study in the UK and USA as their first choice because they perceive that most top universities and institutes are located in those countries. The good reputation of the education industry in Anglophone countries, combined with improving levels

of income in developing countries, means that international students are increasingly likely to study abroad, especially in the US, UK and Canada. Most families in developing countries believe that investment in education for the next generation could be valuable. In Australia, most international students study in higher education and in 2013 the country had an international tertiary student population of 231,186. This report indicated that most international students are from China, India, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia. There were 150,116 Chinese students and 492, 650 Indian students in 2013. So, Indian and Chinese international students are the major market constituents of higher education in Australia.

At present, there are eight universities, twenty institutes and several private institutes in New Zealand (New Zealand Qualifications Authority NZQA (2014), which offers a wide range of educational institutions and international students can earn internationally recognized qualifications. The country had approximately 97,283 international students enrolled in educational institutes in 2013. China was the largest market for exporting New Zealand education from 2010-2014 with around 30,179 international students receiving education in New Zealand. Auckland is New Zealand's largest city and is known as an 'international city' due to its livability, employment opportunities and range of ethnicities. The majority of tertiary education institutes are located in Auckland. Several of these have an international reputation including Auckland University, Auckland University of Technology and Massey University (NZQA, 2014). Thus, sources indicate that this city can attract the largest number of international students compared to other cities in New Zealand. Bay of Plenty is one of the smaller regions with a population of approximately 267,741 in 2013. There are two polytechnics in the Bay of Plenty: Waiariki Institute of Technology (WIT) and Bay of Plenty Polytechnic. International student numbers cannot be as great as in Auckland and Wellington, but a greater focus on exporting higher education could attract more international students and leads to a great chance of growing the local economy (EC, 2015).

This study, using one Tertiary Institute (WIT) in Bay of Plenty as the unit of analysis, seeks to examine the effective marketing techniques in recruiting international students from the international student's perspective. In the marketization of higher education literature, difficultly any studies. At least to our knowledge have focused on examining marketing techniques in recruiting international students in the particular area although there are a number of existing literatures that demonstrate different effective

marketing techniques in recruiting international students in other English speaking countries (HR, 2010; Hagedorn, 2011; Allison, 2002; Zahra, 2013). There are limited studies on marketing techniques in recruiting international students in New Zealand except for a single study on country of origin as a source of sustainable competitive advantage for international education institutions in New Zealand (Morrish and Lee, 2011). It is hard to find studies on the examining the effective marketing techniques in a particular tertiary institution in Bay of plenty region. While the gap in the exiting literature is surprising, New Zealand also offers good quality of education; some international students might choose to study here rather than other countries. The different immigration system, education system and enrolment criteria from other countries, lead to a different result in recruiting international students for New Zealand. The New Zealand government encourages international students to stay here after completing their education (Merwood, 2007). Grounded in the gap in the literature, this study will focus on the investigating effective marketing techniques in recruiting international students for WIT in Bay of plenty. This study will make both theoretical and practical contributions. Firstly the expectation of this study will contributes a growing body of literature in marketing of higher education especially for the New Zealand context. It also enrich the applied marketing concepts into higher education sectors and enhance better understanding of marketing techniques in recruiting international students. Secondly, it also provides a good foundation for future studies in marketing techniques in educational organizations. This research will contribute to tertiary organizations, education agents and international students. It will also support recruitment of international students in Bay of Plenty through the identification of effective marketing techniques, thus providing a means of increasing the nation's economic prosperity. The value of international students to the New Zealand economy was 3.1 billion dollars in 2015 (Pherson, 2016). Therefore, the Ministry of Education New Zealand would also be a significant user of this study.

The purpose of this study will discover effective marketing techniques for recruiting international students in the tertiary education industry. Furthermore, it will investigate how other marketing techniques affect enrollment choices of international students and also will investigate international student's satisfaction with the services provided by agents. Finally to provide better information on the use of international agents and alternative marketing techniques for a sustainable level of enrollment of international students at tertiary institution.

**Theoretical concept of higher education marketing:**

Following Kotler and Fox (1995), there are five concepts under which an organization conducts marketing activity, namely, the production concept, the product concept, the selling concept, the marketing concept and the societal marketing concept. Among these concepts, this research focuses on the marketing concept. “The marketing concept holds that the key to achieving organizational goals consists in determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently than competitors” (Kotler, 2002). In particular, the marketing approach focuses on the marketing orientation, such as consumer behaviour, market segmentation, positioning and marketing mix activities: product policy, pricing policy, distribution policy and promotion policy.

In the marketing of higher education, organisations should identify their consumers; the concept of market segmentation can be used for this purpose; then consumer’s needs and wants should be identified (Nicolescu, 2009; Intan, 2016; Luekveerawattana, 2016). Consumer’s behavior can be studied, including the buyer decision making process. A positioning strategy can then be developed by the organisation, in relation to what consumers require. Products that satisfy consumers are marketed using the marketing mix of product, price, distribution and promotion, also known as ‘transactional marketing’ (Hemsley and Oplatka, 2006). Product policy envisages the offering of products and services according to the consumer’s expectations. Part of product policy is branding, the creation of an attraction of image for an institution in the market place (Stensaker and Andrea, 2007). Pricing policy envisages the exchanges between take place for the ownership of and product/service. However, from the consumer’s perspective, pricing related to the value of the perceived quality received in exchange for the paid price; distribution policy related to the approach of the organization makes the product/service available to the consumers. Promotion policy deals with the means that there is a communication between the organization and its targeted markets. Such marketing methods and concepts have a significant role for organizations and for society. It is considered that at the present time, marketing, rather than production skills have become the key to creating competitive advantage (Doyle, 2008).

Most of these concepts have been persuaded in the business environment. The above mentioned marketing concepts are applied by higher education institutes to market their education service. It is significant that this research uses these marketing concepts to identify the strengths and weaknesses of commonly used marketing techniques used by WIT.

**The definition of marketing techniques:** Marketing technique means the planned actions designed to meet the needs and requirements of the customer used by the marketing department (BCS, 2015). The plan is based on clear objectives. In this study, the marketing techniques would imply what tools and planned actions are applied by the tertiary institute to achieve the desired goals of recruiting international students and to satisfy the needs and requirements of the international students.

**Research questions:**

- Question 1: What are the effective marketing techniques used by WIT to attract international students?
- Question 2: To what extent do international students use international agents compared to other enrolment options at WIT?
- Question 3: How satisfied are international students with the service provided by international agents recruiting for WIT?
- Question 4: Should WIT rely solely on international agents for a sustainable level of international student enrolments?

**Literature review**

**Immigration policy as a competitive advantage:** Although, the developing marketing techniques have a significant impact on the number of international student’s enrollment, however, there are some uncontrollable factors that determine how successful a particular institution is in terms of its international student recruitment efforts such as immigration policy. A majority international students plan to study overseas due to the quality of higher education, some international students simply have the aim of settling abroad. Such international students are less concerned about education quality overseas and will instead focus on the host country’s immigration policy.

Akbari and Donald (2014) studied an overview of recent trends in immigration policy for those countries including Canada, New Zealand, Australia and United states. The research concluded that changes in immigration policy are often based on the national economy and the demand of labour within the market, which in turn influence the economic attractiveness of international students. Labi and Birchard (2012) revealed that British education is highly desired by international students when compared against that of the United States of America. This is in despite of the United Kingdom government’s recently implemented policy that prevents all non-Euro students from undertaking part time work while studying (ICEF Monitor, 2013, 2015). Moreover,

Sherriff (2015) post that the government in UK abolished the post work visa for international students. Consequently, these studies present that immigration policy is strict in the UK and international students will find it difficult to stay there after completing their education. For those international students who are seeking to settle abroad, there are compelling reasons for them to choose a destination other than the UK. Clearly, a tertiary education industry's competitive advantage can be severely challenged by the immigration policy of the country to which it belongs.

The New Zealand government provides information that makes it easy for international students to apply for student visas, enabling easier enrolment for international students compared to other English speaking countries (INZ, 2015). Merwood (2007) concluded that 4,500 graduate job search visas were issued by the New Zealand government in 2006 to retain international students within New Zealand after the completion of their qualifications. Such favourable policies may offer New Zealand a competitive advantage in recruiting international students.

#### **Review of marketing techniques used to recruit international students**

**The use of international agents to recruit international students:** There has been much studies that have provide empirical evidence on the use of agent to recruiting internationals students. Hagedorn (2011) found international students rely heavily on agents for enquiries regarding immigration policies, student visa processes, programme information and the explanation of scholarship applications. A study reveal that more than 60% of Chinese, Indian and Malaysian students engage in study in Australia through international agents (HR, 2010). In a survey sent to international education organizations across America, 119 respondents agreed that the use of agents to recruit international students is valuable and necessary (Kirsch, 2014). Other studies also indicate support for agents as a valuable form of promotion (Edwards and Browne, 1991; Smart and Ang, 1992; Harris and Rhall, 1993). As indicated by the studies, international student's experiences with agents are crucial for enrolment and future recruitment. International agents are very valuable to international students; most international agents are experienced in communicating with tertiary institutes. The use of agents in recruiting international students is an effective marketing techniques to attract more international students for tertiary institutes in Bay of Plenty there is great value in using international agents.

However, the above studies did not discuss the shortcomings of using agents. International agents are the middle ground between educational providers and international students. It is certain that education providers are focused on academic standards and profitability. International agents, however, might focus more on profit and less on the academic needs and suitability of international students. For example, if an international student is not qualified enough for the provider, the agent could still find a way for them to become enrolled. Even worse to meet monthly revenue targets agents may provide international students invalid information and make promises that cannot be met. Agents not only get commission income from educational providers but also receive fee income from international students. Hogan *et al.* (2004) found that paid recruiters increase many problems. When recruiting agents get commission fee and income from both schools and students, this is unjustifiable, especially when involved parties do not know that agents are being double paid. Several further studies indicate that the use of agents to recruit international students has significant honesty and integrity issues because some international agents giving false information to international students and encourage them submit fake documents for an enrolment application (Darr, 2014). The universities could loss the reputation and damage academic standard. Hence, although most studies agreed that the use of agents is a good approach to recruiting international students, sometimes the use of a particular agent to recruit international students might not be best practice.

**Word of mouth in recruiting international students:** Word of mouth is another powerful marketing technique in recruiting international students (Patti and Chen, 2009). From a marketing perspective, some studies indicate that word of mouth is recognised as a practical and powerful marketing tool for consumers, from the initial stage of information generation, to the choosing of service providers, to the post-consumption stage (Murray, 1991; Gilly *et al.*, 1998). So, word of mouth could also influence student expectations, perceptions and attitudes in choosing the right school. Word of mouth is a theory from the field of communication in relation to a type of information passing that is practical advertising but unpaid and person-to-person (Arndt, 1967). For instance, someone who successfully graduates from a university and recommends the brand name to a friend, has engaged in a word of mouth strategy. Archer and Winters produced a survey of international students with the results (n = 150,000) showing 45% were affected by friends and 32% were affected by family in choosing their universities.

Mazzarol and Hosie (1996) found that graduate students who are satisfied with higher education and life experiences in Australia, become influential opinion leaders for their entire life for new overseas students. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) indicated that word of mouth is a practical promotional medium for the international educational market because potential students have a higher level of reliance on word of mouth communication compared to impersonal sources including commercial and public information. Therefore from the previous study indicate word of mouth is a powerful technique, contributing to decision making by potential international students. Ideally, tertiary institutes should provide a comprehensive and accessible message for their target audience: parents, friends and students to generate long-term and short-term benefits (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). To attract more international students for tertiary institutes in Bay of Plenty, the application of word of mouth could be a good approach to recruiting international students. Graduate students, especially high achievers would be a good resource to disseminate messages among family and friends.

On the other hand, several studies disagree that use of word of mouth is a practical method to recruit international students because it involves risk and could damage a brand and earn a negative reputation. This happens when negative comments come in from international students who are not satisfied with the tertiary institutions. To illustrate, Chen (2006) study on the word of mouth communication channel depicts it as one of uncontrolled communication in the Australian higher education market; word of mouth can sometimes contribute to reputation loss if comments are negative more than positive. Therefore, if educational institutes rely on word of mouth for marketing education, there might be a risk of both positive and negative impact.

**Online recruitment of international students:** A website is crucial to an organization; this is recognized by education industries. Fast and easy access to millions of potential customers are the main benefits of websites (Belch and Belch, 2003; Keegan and Green, 2008). Allison found that 83% potential students in universities accessed the internet from home in 2001, an increase of 50% compared to 2000. Hoyt and Brown (2003) concluded that a website is one of the most helpful sources of information influencing a student's choice. Therefore, designing and using a website is crucial for the education provider because there is a huge number of potential customers who are willing to visit the website to choose the right universities. A study reveal that an

international higher education search engine directly reviewing accredited universities and colleges in the world contained 10.000 universities and colleges ranked by web popularity around 200 countries. This search engine offers a ranking of world colleges and universities based upon the popularity of their websites (Alexa *et al.*, 2012). Establishing an online marketing campaign can help institutes to reach international students such as creating a website, actively use Facebook and Twitter and maintain a YouTube channel and appearing in Google search results (Sears, 2014). Again, Mentz and Whiteside (2003) stress information technology department should handle website development, making a website easy to use for international students and should include tuition fees, value, ranking, facilities, application forms, enrolment information and facilitating online enquiries (Mentz and Whiteside, 2003). In relation to online information in Australia, Ooi *et al.* (2010) found that educational tertiary institution maintaining a very good website could be practical for users because potential students can get school information and easily read content of programmes. Thus, studies agree that the use of online marketing to recruit international students can all be based on web pages, email and online materials. If tertiary education institutes wish to receive more potential applications, their websites need to be designed professionally to ensure potential international students can find information easily and can apply to enrol online.

A single research paper suggested that online marketing in recruiting international students might not be practical. HR (2010) expressed concern about the higher education sector's use of online marketing to recruit international students as they are accessed via websites and the internet. Some undeveloped countries have limited internet services and information downloads slowly. International students from such countries would find it difficult to search for information and to submit applications online. Despite this, there is no strong evidence to show that the use of online marketing to recruit international students is not a practical approach. Most studies agree that the use of online marketing to recruit international students has many benefits. Therefore, tertiary institutes in Bay of Plenty could focus on building more effective websites which deliver clear information online, to enable access by potential students.

**Brand promotion and brand awareness:** In higher education marketing, a study indicate that brand awareness and reputation are very important; multiple

methods are needed to establish a successful brand in universities and colleges (Zahra, 2013). Zahra (2013) state that tertiary intuitions need to work on search rankings and become involved with social marketing. Kotlter and Fox (1995) define image as: the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of an object. Kotlter and Fox (1995) stress that higher education providers must understand the image they portray and ensure this is accurate and favorable. Ivy (2001) study higher education institute image in the UK and he stressed that universities need to maintain or develop a distinct image to establish competitive advantage. The image can influence student's willingness to apply for enrolment and to become a researcher in an education institute (Ivy, 2001). Oplatka (2002) conducted a study using an issue identification method to explore messages low-stratified tertiary education institutions used to improve their organisational image and "product" status to attract potential students.

Anonymous (2013, 2015) studied marketing of Australian higher education to Thai students; he remarked that Australian higher education institutes have a good brand as a group of institutes in the Thai market. So, it is significant to maintain universitie's superior reputation, as it is the most substantial factor impacting on Thai student's choice of Australian university. Other studies illustrate that prospective students, parents, current students and alumni always choose universities by comparing brands and many university apply brand management practices to obtain competitive advantage (Hemsley and Oplatka, 2006; Hawkins and Frohoff, 2010). In the UK, Jump (2014) reported that over three-quarters of the students interviewed from 21 universities, including 11 universities in the UK, said they would like to study at a 'Top 200' university. Therefore, brand promotion and improving awareness would contribute to recruiting international students. Brand awareness may not be as effective a technique for attracting international students for polytechnics as brand awareness is not as influential a determinant as for universities. However, there is still scope to enhance the reputation of polytechnics by improving the quality of teaching and study success rates.

In summary, from previous studies, marketing techniques in recruiting international students have been widely used in the education industry in English speaking countries. Studies offer different perspectives on effective recruitment of internationals such as, the use of agents, word of mouth and online recruiting and brand awareness. (HR, 2010; Hagedorn, 2011; Kotler, 2002; Zahra,

2013). There has been debate about the use of these techniques. Hence, the researcher expects to improve understanding of marketing techniques in recruiting international students for tertiary institutes in Bay of Plenty.

New Zealand also offers good quality education; some international students might choose to study here rather than other countries. The different immigration system, education system and enrolment criteria from other countries, lead to a different result in recruiting international students for New Zealand. The New Zealand government encourages international students to stay here after completing their education (Merwood, 2007). Some international students have an objective of settling down in New Zealand, so study in New Zealand might be a good choice (New Zealand Now, 2015; New Zealand Now Education, 2015). Therefore, a good immigration policy could contribute greatly in recruiting international students. At present, the Bay of Plenty has only two tertiary institutes - the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic and Waiariki Institute of Technology. These institutes have a number of international students; they also compete with other cities that provide tertiary education such as Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Dunedin. However, this study will only focus on a tertiary institute (WIT) in Bay of Plenty to attract more international students, it is significant to understand the market techniques that are applied in higher educational industries elsewhere. While the general literature is extensive in the area of marketing techniques for international students in tertiary education, most studies were conducted in other countries. There are no existing studies and literature to demonstrate effective marketing techniques in tertiary education (polytechnics) in Bay of Plenty. To address this gap and particular to the researcher's area of interest, this study will explore the research questions.

**Conceptual framework:** Theoretical sampling was utilised in the data-collection process for gradually building concepts of interest. Using insights from the literature review and quantitative process, this derived the proposed conceptual model shown in Fig. 1. Four overall constructs emerged from the data: Effective marketing techniques related outcome variables, dimensions of the use of international agent, word of mouth, online recruiting and brand awareness and promotion. Outcome variables the dependent variable of our phenomenon under investigation is effective marketing techniques. Figure 1 show the conceptual framework of present study.

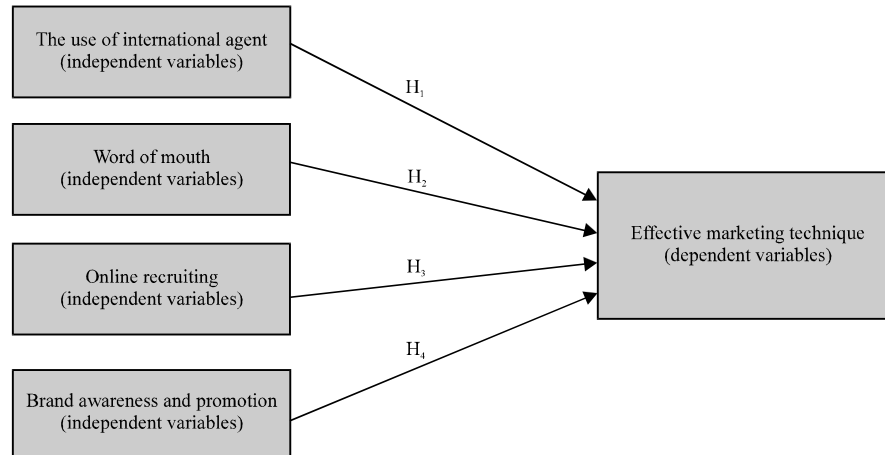


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

- H<sub>1</sub>: The use of agent is an effective marketing technique in recruiting international students
- H<sub>2</sub>: Word of mouth is an effective marketing technique in recruiting international students
- H<sub>3</sub>: Online recruiting is an effective marketing technique in recruiting international students
- H<sub>4</sub>: Brand awareness and promotion is an effective marketing technique in recruiting international students

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research design:** Quantitative research is an approach to research that is formalized and highly structured. Moreover, quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount (Rajasekar *et al.*, 2013). Through the study of particular variables on a great number of objects of an investigation, this method enables the researcher to make universal generalisations. All variables will be analysed by statistical methods, since the information is transformed into numerical data and is thus easy presented in figures. Finally, a quantitative approach is characterised by selectivity and distance between the research and the source. The researcher will use survey methods for the quantitative research (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The participants in this research will be international students; in this situation the researcher will apply quantitative methods that can target a number of international students, therefore enabling answers to be obtained from the participant's perspective.

Proper execution of the survey questionnaires and use of relevant documents published online makes this

research of quantitative design. With quantitative data instruments, it is necessary to interpret the data gathered from respondents numerically using statistics. This also can easily describe the existing phenomena in recruiting students; the researcher can generalise from the data gathered and from it make a professional interpretation. To avoid bias in the study, the quantitative method is preferred to avoid subjectivity of results collected from respondents. Subjectivity is not desirable, so this method is also vital to the research and is also more reliable.

**Survey:** To research marketing techniques in recruiting international students for tertiary organisations in Bay of Plenty, data collection inevitably is the main phase. Data collection is related to gathering opinions and views of sample respondents in order to get a structured view of what respondents think. To conduct this research, quantitative methods of data collection will be used because the aim of quantitative research is to determine the relationship between one thing, the independent variable and another which is the dependent or outcome variable. The researcher will apply quantitative methods based on surveying a number of respondents; the structural instrument of structure is a questionnaire.

**Questionnaire design:** The questionnaire is a Likert scale wherein respondents can easily select: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The survey questionnaire was used as the main data gathering procedure. It was relevant to the research questions and has two parts: information regarding respondents such as age, gender and level of education; and the 23 Likert format items answered as above, scored 1-5.

Table 1: Likert scale responses

Range	Interpretation
1	Strongly agree
2	Agree
3	Neutral
4	Disagree
5	Strongly disagree

Items refer to student's perceptions of international recruitment and marketing methods. The Likert scale responses will be computed using a weighted mean as follows Table 1.

The questionnaire was designed based on related literatures from journals, newspapers, magazines and reports on comprehensive interviews. Numerous related ideas, concepts and perspectives were examined in the design of each item in the questionnaire. A total of 150 questionnaires were administered for the first time. Then, the questionnaire was revised to suit the conditions of local residents based on the difficulties and setbacks as well as on the thoughts or suggestions expressed by the residents during the first distribution of questionnaires. The language of the questionnaire was written in a simple and clear manner to enable the respondents to understand the content without explanation.

**The reasons for the selection of surveys:** The researcher has selected surveys as the chosen research method because it is the most popular and common for research. It can be widely used to answer "who" "what" "where" and "how" questions and is mainly used in descriptive research. This method allows the researcher to collect a significant amount of data from a large population at a low cost. The data are typically quantitative and gathered by questionnaire. The data can be easily compared and analysed using various statistical techniques. This type of survey enables the respondents to answer questions in a timely and easy way. Data can be interpreted for this kind of quantitative instrument using diagrams and pie charts. Finally, the researcher will tabulate the result getting the weighted mean. The researcher will seek help from statistical experts for computing and tabulating the data if necessary.

**Data collection procedure:** Online data collection has become more attractive to researchers in international marketing (Schonlau *et al.*, 2001; Ilieva *et al.*, 2002; Bryman and Bell, 2007). Online surveys have several key advantages: the low cost of sending out email; faster responses and higher response rates over postal surveys (Bryman and Bell, 2007). This would be very convenient for responders. However, some responders answer online surveys in haste. This will create an issue of reliability in

study findings. To improve reliability and validity, the researcher will not conduct an online survey, conducting the survey mainly by attending classes (with the permission of tutors) and handing out survey questionnaires to international students. If responders are confused with any questions, the researcher will explain clearly to participants.

**Sample size:** Bryman and Bell (2007) indicated that population means: "the full set of cases from which a sample is taken" (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003). The population of this study is international students in Bay of Plenty institutes. Central to the investigation rationale for recruiting international students in Bay of Plenty is business competition. The researcher requires 150 international students to complete the questionnaire due to the Bay of Plenty region being small and having only two tertiary organisations. The two polytechnics are extremely similar and offer programmes to both international and domestic students. The researcher will select participants only from one polytechnic because the research project concerns exporting of education for Waiariki Institute Technology. WIT has a large number of international students compared to Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, so selection of participants at the WIT campus will satisfy the sample size requirement of the study. If fewer than 100 participants were selected, the margin of error will be increased. To reduce the margin of error, ideally, the researcher needs to have around 150 participants. The limited duration of this study also means that the researcher cannot invite a large number of participants; 150 participants could be enough to answer the research questions. It is estimated that approximately 20 questionnaires could be destroyed by the researcher. These questionnaires may not have been completed by the participants in full or for other reasons may not be useable. The questionnaire will be offered to international students who are currently in New Zealand because this kind of student has experience of education in New Zealand. Therefore, diploma, degree and English students are suitable candidates for the survey.

**Data analysis:** Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggestions and conclusions. The research uses quantitative methods of data collection. The study will analyse data and observe trends among respondents using statistical estimates (mean, median variance, etc.,) that are most suitable for quantitative research because they deal with quantities of data. The quantitative data will be analysed in SPSS2.1



(Statistical Product and Service Solutions). SPSS is effective for data management, features a wide range of options and allows better organisation of outputs (Daniel, 2012). Many service quality researchers use SPSS to analyse quantitative data (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Research in education sector regarding the recruitment of international students is also a part of investigating in service marketing.

**Dataset:** The dataset primarily reports introductory information about the dataset such as data profile, normality and ordinarily. For instance, introductory information will be inputted into variable view and questions will be inputted into data view in SPSS. The study received a total of 150 questionnaires from international students from different levels of education at WIT. Of these 140 were completed questionnaires. While entering the raw data into SPSS, eye screening is used to ensure the completeness and quality of questionnaires. After input, all data will be analysed by frequency using table and pie charts.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Introductory information:** As can be seen from Table 2 above there were 9 different nationalities of responders, 49.6% from India with the second largest group being Filipino (37.6%). The lowest percentage of responders were Burmese, Thai and Indonesian.

Table 3 (above) indicates that more than one third of respondents (37.6%) are postgraduate students; only 6.4% respondents are master’s degree students. The lowest percentage of respondents are foundation students. In addition, 28.4% of respondents are diploma students and only 2.1% respondents are the Bachelor’s degree students. The 21.3% responders have been in New Zealand for three months and only 1 respondent has been in New Zealand for 17 month. The duration of time in New Zealand ranges from 2-48 month over all responders. From the above tables we see that most international students are aged between 19 and 30. The majority of international students are from India and the Philippines. This suggests there is a potential market of international students in similar developing countries such as China, India, Philliping and Indonesia. Moreover, most Indian students and Filipino students would like to enroll in 1 year programmes such as graduate diploma, postgraduate diploma and diploma courses.

**Questionnaire (data analysis and discussion):** In this study, there are 23 questions where the results will be

**Table 2: Respondents nationality (N) = 140; responders of nationality**

Nationality	Frequency	Percent	Valid (%)	Cumulative (%)
<b>Valid</b>				
Chinese	7	5.0	5.0	5.0
Indian	70	49.6	50.0	55.0
Filipino	53	37.6	37.9	92.9
Bangladeshi	2	1.4	1.4	94.3
Nepalese	4	2.8	2.9	97.1
Chilean	1	0.7	0.7	97.9
Indonesian	1	0.7	0.7	98.6
Thai	1	0.7	0.7	99.3
Burmese	1	0.7	0.7	100.0
Total	140	99.3	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>				
System	1	0.7	--	--
Total	141	100.0	--	--

**Table 3: Respondent programme enrolment (N)=1 40 Program enrolment**

Nationality	Frequency	Percent	Valid (%)	Cumulative (%)
<b>Valid</b>				
English	6	4.3	4.3	4.3
Foundation	1	0.7	0.7	5.0
Diploma	40	28.4	28.6	33.6
Graduate diploma	28	19.9	20.0	53.6
Bachelor’s degree	3	2.1	2.1	55.7
Postgraduate diploma	53	37.6	37.9	93.6
Master’s degree	9	6.4	6.4	100.0
Total	140	99.3	100.0	
<b>Missing</b>				
System	1	0.7	--	--
Total	141	100.0	--	--

analyzed by using pie charts. After analyzing the data in each pie chart, the researcher will give a discussion about the in connection with the literature review. However, the aim of this study is to answer the research questions by using data analysis and discussion. In this study, not all pie charts will be presented, some conversely, only cover major questions. These are the following questions answerable by strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree (Fig. 1).

Figure 2a, b indicate that most respondents agree that the use of international agents for international students to enrol overseas is helpful. Most international students prefer to apply for polytechnic enrolment and a student visa by using international agents. Figure 2a (Question 1) shows that 44.29% of the respondents agree with the use of an agent rather than applying directly to New Zealand polytechnic or universities. Figure 2b (Question 2) more than half of the respondents agree that international agents are useful in assisting with the student’s visa application. Figure 2b-c (Question 4), 35% of the respondents agree that they would recommend using an international agent to their friends and family members. Obviously, international agents play a significant role in recruiting international students for tertiary institute and most international students come to tertiary institute using agents. In Australian a study

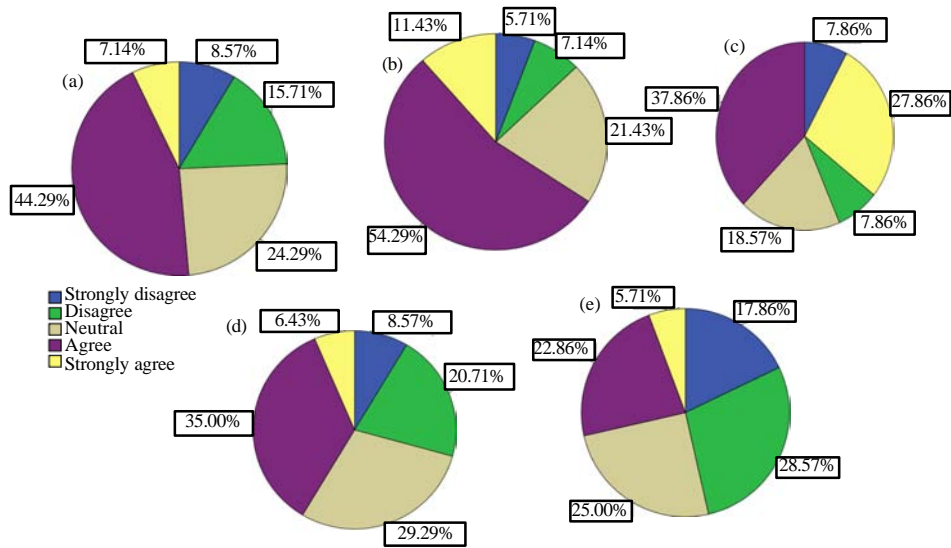


Fig. 2: The use of international agents to recruit international students: a) It is better for international students to use an agent rather than applying directly to New Zealand polytechnics or universities (Question 1); b) International agents are helpful in assisting with student visa applications (Question 2); c) Agents give misleading information and promises with regards to employment opportunities in New Zealand (Question 3); d) If you were asked by family or friends about higher study in a NZ tertiary institute, you would recommend using international agents (Question 4); e) Academic experiences in New Zealand are similar to what the agent told you before you left your home country (Question 5)

indicates that the use of international agents for international students to apply for overseas courses is very useful because potential students will be able to get assistance with visa applications, enrolment information, scholarship applications and advice regarding immigration policy.

Results for this study were similar to studies conducted in Australia and the US. Both results strongly suggest that tertiary institutes need to utilise international agents in order to attract more international students. The reactions from the respondents and literature are clear to Research Question 1 “What are the effective marketing techniques used by WIT to attract international students?” The use of international agents to attract more international students for WIT is one of the effective marketing techniques. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was substantiated.

Moreover this result also relates to research Question 2: “To what extent do international students use international agents compared to other enrolment options at WIT?” Based on the literature and survey results, most international students agree that they would like to use an agent to enrol in their programmes at WIT. Few respondents disagree with that, those are likely to have come to WIT through other channels. The use of an international agent by a student seeking overseas study

has a great deal of benefits. Nevertheless, there are still a number of international students who are not satisfied with the service provided by international agents. In Fig. 2e, the highest percentage (28.57%) of respondents disagree that academic experiences in New Zealand are similar to what the agent told them before they left their home country. Figure 2c, 37.86% agree and 27.86% strongly agree that international agents would give misleading information and promises with regard to employment opportunities in New Zealand.

From the part of literature review, previous studies in Australia and Canada showed that international students are not satisfied with the services provided by international agents because of giving the misleading and offering false information. This idea can be associated with research Question 3 “How satisfied are international students with the service provided by international agent at WIT?” a large percentage of international students were not satisfied with the services provided by international agents. Therefore, if from the international student’s point of view, hypothesis 1 was not substantiated.

Further, it is noteworthy that only 22% of respondents agree that they would recommend their friends and family use an agent and 35% of respondents agree that agents give misleading information regarding

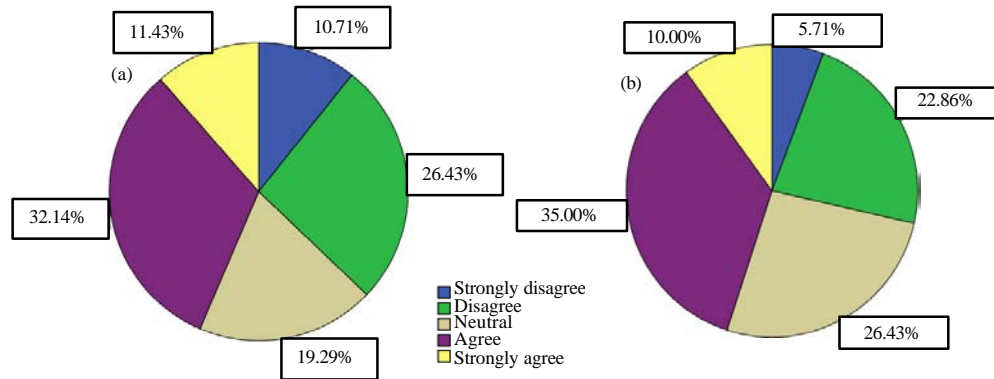


Fig. 3: Word of mouth in recruiting international students: a) I chose to study in this polytechnic because it was recommended by my family, friends, relatives, teachers and alumni (Question 6); b) Friends, relatives, teachers, and alumni recommendations about this polytechnic were more reliable than other sources (Question 7)

employment opportunities in NZ. This clearly suggests that many students are not happy with the service provided by agents. It could be that what the agent told them differs from what they face here in NZ. It is therefore suggested that tertiary institute should not solely rely on agents for marketing education to international students; the practice may not be sustainable in the future. This answers Research Question 4 “should WIT rely solely on international agents for a sustainable level of enrolment of international students?” Hence, if a tertiary institute focus on long-term sustainable development, hypothesis 1 was not substantiated.

To keep a sustainable level of enrolment of international students and to continue using international agents, the tertiary institute should implement a policy of improving their agent’s service for international students. For example before the issuance of the contract to international agents, the tertiary institute needs to strictly check the international agent’s qualifications, reputation and referees and guide international agents to deliver the right information for international students. Significantly, the tertiary institute should terminate the contract of unethical agents (Fig. 3a, b).

Figure 3a, b indicate that most respondents agreed that they chose to study at tertiary institute because of recommendations from family, friends, relative, teacher and alumni. However, although Fig. 3a shows that 32.14% of respondents agree that international students study at WIT because it was recommended by their friends, family, teachers and alumni, 26.43% of respondents disagree with the statement. Figure 3b, 35% of respondents agree that recommendations from friends, relatives and teachers about WIT were more reliable than other sources. Hence, word of mouth can be a powerful strategy in recruiting international students for WIT. This result is similar to the study that was conducted in Australia and the

US. Mazzarol and Hosie (1996) found that the students who graduated were satisfied with higher education and life experience in Australia. They would become influential opinion leaders their entire life for new overseas students. Based on the part of literature review in the US a study showed that 45% of students were influenced by friends and 32% by family in choosing their universities. Therefore, the answer to Research Question1 “What are the effective marketing techniques used by the WIT to attract international students?” is that word of mouth is an effective marketing technique contributing to the enrolment of international students at WIT. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was substantiated.

Figure 4 show that most respondents agree and strongly agree that WIT has established a good website that offers clear information online. The website of this institute is very easy to access. Obviously, WIT online marketing techniques are significantly successful. The 30% of respondents (Fig. 4a) agree that the polytechnic website is a helpful source of information about study and programmes offered. The 52.86% agree with statement. The result in Fig. 4b, indicates that 53.57% of respondents agree that it is easy to access the website of the institute and conduct an online application, suggesting that good website and online information in tertiary institutes can grow the number of applicants. Mentz and Whitesid (2003) stress that the department of Information Technology should be responsible for making the website easy to use for international students, including information on tuition fees, value, ranking, facilities, application forms and enrolment. The website should facilitate online inquiries. So, international student online recruits should be able to rely on the school’s website and online information. In Australia, the study by Ooi *et al.* (2010) found that using websites in education organizations is an effective marketing tool and brings

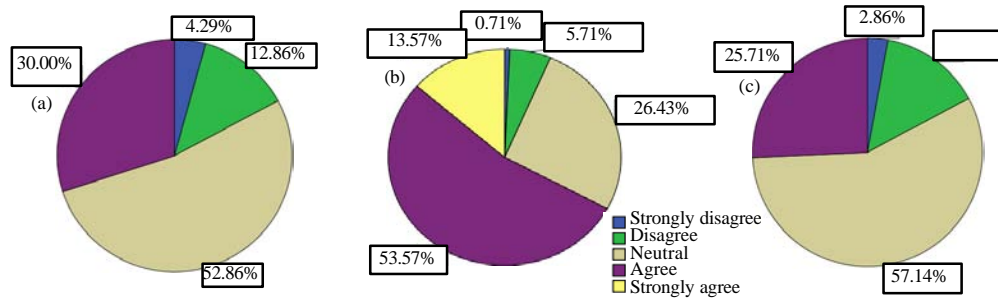


Fig. 4: Online recruiting of international students: a) The polytechnic website is a helpful source to find information about the study programmes offered (Question 8); b) It is easy to access the website of the institute and conduct an online application (Question 9); c) This polytechnic is easy to find online using search engines like Google and Bing (Question 10)

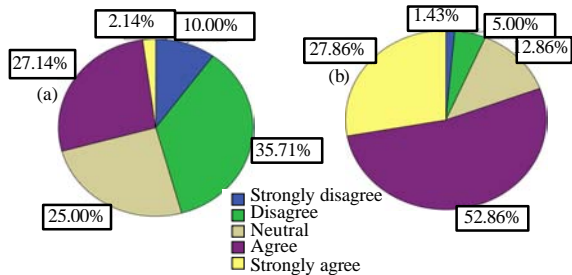


Fig. 5: Brand promotion and brand awareness: a) Most universities and polytechnics in New Zealand are well-known in my country (You heard about it even before coming to New Zealand) (Question 11); b) I want to study in a well-known institute because it is one of the top ranking schools and offers quality education (Question 12)

some value into institutes. The researchers stressed that designing a good website in educational organizations is very practical for users because potential students can get information and easy to read content of programmes. Finally, Fig.4b result is impressive because 57.14% of respondents agree that the polytechnic is easy to find online using search engines like Google and Bing. Sears considers that establishing an online marketing campaign can help institutes to reach international students such as by creating a website, active use of Facebook and Twitter, a YouTube channel and by appearing in Google search results. Hence, creating an effective website, online enquiry portal/ information, active use of Facebook and building search results in Google are important factors in recruiting international students online. These results, supported by literature, answer research Question 1: “What are the effective marketing techniques used by WIT to attract international students?” Online marketing can be one of effective marketing techniques to attract

international students for WIT. The international department of WIT should maintain this method of marketing to attract international students. Meanwhile the IT department of WIT should support further improvements to website design and online promotion facilities. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was substantiated.

Figure 5a, b above suggest that most international students would like to invest in education at good ranking universities and polytechnic. The 35.71% respondents (Fig. 5a) disagree that most universities and polytechnics in New Zealand are ‘well-known in my country’ although, 27.14% respondents agree. Figure 5b, 52.86% respondents agree that they want to study in a well-known institute because it is one of the top ranking schools and offers quality education. Therefore, brand promotion and brand awareness is crucial to attract more international students into New Zealand. However, to improve brand awareness and brand promotion, tertiary institutes need to focus on image and reputation as well, because image can influence student’s willingness to apply for enrolment and research in education institutes (Ivy, 2001). Studies conducted in the UK and Australia, show that brand promotion and brand awareness are important to attract international students. Pimpa (2005) studied marketing Australian higher education to Thai students. He stressed that maintaining the superior reputation of an education organisation is significant as it is the most substantial factor impacting on Thai student’s choice of Australian university. In the UK, Jump (2014) reported that over three-quarters of international students from 21 universities, including 11 in the UK interviewed, said that being at a top 200 university related to them. In the world, there exist numerous colleges and universities which are applying marketing and brand management practices to obtain competitive advantage. Ultimately, the results can answer research Question 1: “what are the effective marketing techniques used by WIT to attract international

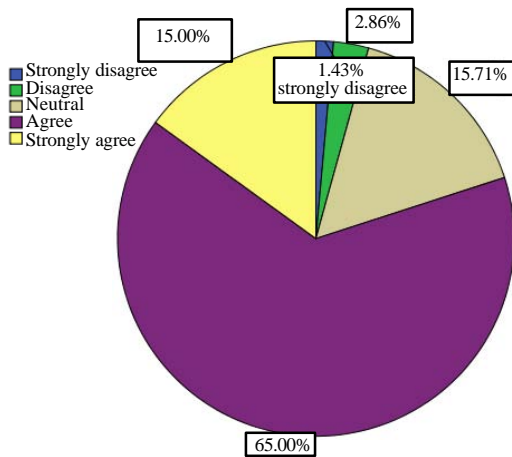


Fig. 6: New Zealand immigration policy for international students; New Zealand immigration policy for international students is better than in other English speaking countries (Question 13)

students?” Brand promotion and brand awareness are effective marketing techniques in attracting international students. So the international marketing department of WIT can work further on brand promotion and brand awareness. For example, based on international conferences/publications and the establishment of reputation, WIT would further develop its image and level of brand awareness. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was substantiated.

The 65% respondents (Fig. 6) agree that New Zealand immigration policy for international students is better than in other English speaking countries. Merwood (2007) notes that the most common pathway is from study to work and then on to permanent residence in New Zealand. The New Zealand government tries to retain international students after they gain their qualification (Merwood, 2007). It is obvious that the government strongly supports export education to attract more international students and to encourage international students to remain in New Zealand after completing qualifications. The policy has great advantages for international marketers of all tertiary institutes in New Zealand.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review and survey results, it is clear that the education market is highly competitive and the education exporters need to rely on marketing techniques to secure a sustainable level of enrolment of international students. Recruiting more international

students in Bay of Plenty grows the regional economy and increases job opportunities. In regard to effective marketing techniques in recruiting international students, results show that the most widely used marketing techniques is the use of international agents words of mouth, online/website based tools and brand promotion are less commonly used for the recruitment of international students at WIT. Although the use of international agents is a widely used technique; however, there are concerns regarding the service provided by the agent which suggest that the students are not happy with the service. In particular, the information provided by the agents is somehow misleading. This creates a challenge in international agents to recruit international students and suggests WIT requires to pay sufficient attention on the details of the recruitment process. To create a sustainable level of enrolment, WIT needs to improve other potential marketing techniques (e.g., online recruitment) and to find potential market of international students.

### LIMITATIONS

The marketing techniques for recruiting international student in New Zealand’s education sector is a significant topic in international marketing that to date has received little attend. This study has aimed to discover effective marketing techniques for recruiting international students in a tertiary education industry and investigate international student’s satisfaction with the services provided by agents in New Zealand. It is hoped that this will lead to further research in this area. However, as with any research, this study have several limitation of investigation which will provide future research in this area.

A weakness of this research is that it examines only the responses of international students. The research cannot collect sample data from multiple resource such as interviewing marketing managers in tertiary institutions and international agents. Due to the limited time, the researcher cannot cover a large geographic area; the sample is restricted to 140 international students in Bay of Plenty. In New Zealand, there are many international students, studying in other areas and regions. It has not been possible to collect relatively comprehensive data from every region and geographic area in New Zealand. An extended period of time is required to collect research data by survey. This research was completed from September 2015 to December 2015. This time period included the writing of a literature review, questionnaire design, data collection and data analysis. Therefore, the time available for primary research was limited.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

While it is not possible to generalise these findings to other tertiary institutions in other English speaking countries, this study only highlights the need for tertiary education providers to understand the use of effective marketing techniques in recruiting international students in particular country New Zealand. The study suggests several important factors which influence on the number of international students at WIT and also influence on the long term development of WIT. These are the use of different effective marketing techniques in recruiting international students such as the use of international agent, word of mouth, online recruiting and brand promotion. This research sought to determine effective marketing techniques to attract more international students for WIT. There is a controversial issue of recruiting international students by used international agents. Although, most international students provided positive feedback on using international agents for enrolment at WIT, there are still a number of international students not satisfied with use of international agents according to the survey. Ideally, WIT should continue to develop relationships with quality international agents as a major marketing technique and also maintain good relationships with trustworthy agents. Meanwhile WIT needs to check strictly agent's qualifications and pre-references, in case international agents have engaged in fraud. Admission officers should thoroughly assess international student's applications before issuing a letter of offer. If WIT receives fake documents from international agents, contracts should be terminated immediately, otherwise the institute suffers loss reputation and brand damage. Additionally, WIT should establish high-contact with international agents in order to offer ongoing suggestions to them. This would enable concerns and dissatisfaction to be addressed and improve services offered by agents. If WIT receives negative feedback from students, for example that an agent has given a promise that was not honoured or has provided misleading information for international students, WIT could organise workshops with agents and students to share details enrolment processes. Meanwhile, WIT needs to offer regular training programmes for agents to guide international agents to recruit the right students, to focus not just on the quantity of students but also on the quality of students. WIT can reward international agents who have recruited a good number of quality students.

Another important concern is that the WIT education market is overly concentrated on two countries:

India and the Philippines. It is essential to diversify by looking for students from other countries. In this case, WIT can attend education fairs in potential countries. Moreover, WIT could offer scholarship opportunities for bright international students who can compete for a limited number of scholarships. This would help WIT to attract better quality international students.

As international student enrolments increase, WIT needs to monitor agent's activity and to push them to increase the quality of students. In order to promote the enrolment of quality international students, WIT to improve other potential marketing techniques (e.g., online recruitment) and to find potential market of international students. This may be a practical way of creating a sustainable level of enrolment.

An important concern emerged from the survey in that the level of satisfaction with services provided by international agents is insufficient. In particular, the satisfaction level fails to reach the top percentile on any of the agent service related questions. This suggests that it may not be a sustainable technique for future of recruiting international students.

This study also make two significant contributions including theoretical contribution and practical contribution. At theoretical contribution, first, this study contributes to a growing body of literature in marketing concepts of tertiary institutions. This study use a quantitative design methodology to investigate the role of effective marketing techniques in recruiting international students from perspectives of international students. Second, much of prior study has focus on the use of different marketing techniques in recruiting international student in other English speaking countries. There have been no empirical studies on effective marketing techniques in recruiting international student in this particular geographic area (Bay of Plenty). To fill this gap in this area, this is the first empirical study to integrate marketing techniques in tertiary institutions in Bay of Plenty. At practical contribution, findings in this study would provide better understanding of marketing techniques in recruiting international students for the marketing department of the WIT and other tertiary institutes in Bay of Plenty and in New Zealand. International agents can make some improvement on their service provided based on this study findings. Finally, results of this research will also contribute to recommendations as to how to develop marketing techniques for tertiary institutes and imply that tertiary institutes should rely on quality international agents. Further studies might cover a larger geographic area or the whole of New Zealand.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

The suggestions of future research should also consider interviewing international agents and international marketing managers at WIT so that the research report includes all parties involved. The research can also invite sample from other tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Additionally, the future research need to examine other multiple marketing techniques such as the use of universities partnership and the use of public relationship. The finding of this study only provide a first step of understanding marketing techniques in recruiting international students for tertiary institutes in New Zealand. Finally, the future research also can includes consideration of other factors such as changes in political and economic circumstances which are other important potential determinants of flows of international students.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The suggestions of future research should also consider interviewing international agents and international marketing managers at WIT so that the research report includes all parties involved. The research can also invite sample from other tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Additionally, the future research need to examine other multiple marketing techniques such as the use of universities partnership and the use of public relationship. The finding of this study only provide a first step of understanding marketing techniques in recruiting international students for tertiary institutes in New Zealand. Finally, the future research also can includes consideration of other factors such as changes in political and economic circumstances which are other important potential determinants of flows of international students.

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