

STUDENT SELECTION OF UNIVERSITIES: AN EXPLORATORY SERVICES PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies and analyzes factors that influence international student selection of universities and the role that education marketing plays in the process. The research for the paper was inspired by work done by Canterbury (1999) on education marketing, published in the Journal of Marketing Higher Education. The research environments selected for this study are two Australian based universities: one on the West Coast, the other on the East Coast. The study empirically tests key constructs in service marketing. According to Canterbury (1999) it is time that higher education marketing theoreticians and practitioners alike looked beyond our similarities to other applications of service marketing to understand how some of our markets and our services might differ. To this end, the current study examines the views of international students undertaking their studies in two universities (one on the east coast and the other on the west coast, hereafter referred to as 'east' and 'west' to maintain anonymity of the universities). It seeks to gauge an understanding of higher education marketing, student choice factors, and other aspects of student behavior.

The education market has become a dynamic and global-oriented environment. Flexibility is built into the marketing of education in the new millennium via open and flexible systems, direct and easy access to every learner, new knowledge with a personal touch as well as need and utility oriented teaching (Popli 2002). It is self-evident, the world over, that

education is becoming more important in securing and retaining employment. Canterbury (1999) approaches the higher education marketing debate from a conceptual overview looking, among other things, at human development, family matters, competence to choose wisely in a higher education market, and the different choice constructs involved at the graduate and high school levels.

The paper's main aim is to provide an understanding of overseas students' interests, behaviour, and attitude in choice of foreign educational institution. The more specific objectives can be summarized as:

1. To investigate overseas students' preference, behaviour, attitude and satisfaction when choosing a country and/or state for their study;
2. To investigate overseas students' preference, behaviour, attitude and satisfaction when choosing a university for their studies;
3. To understand the overall factors that influence their decisions

To this end, a conceptual literature is posited, survey of both universities were conducted in 2004-5, analysis of students responses, the results and implication to the marketing of service discussed and future research directions suggested.

References Available on Request