Current practices in the marketing of higher education in China and England and opportunities/obstacles for future developments in the Chinese sector

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2
Abstract 5
Declaration 7
Acknowledgements 8
1.0 Introduction 9
1.1 Background to the study 9
1.1.1 Historical and cultural background to the study 9
1.1.2 Higher education system in China: Background to the current era 15
1.1.3 Higher education system in England： Background to the current era 25
1.1.4 Background of the researcher 34
1.2 Research aims and questions 35
1.3 The main influences on the research 36
1.4 Outline of methodology used in this research 37
1.5 Rationale of this research 38
1.6 Summary 39
2.0 Literature Review 41
2.1 Introduction 41
2.2 Internal Marketing 42
2.2.1 What is Internal Marketing? 42
2.2.2 Why Internal Marketing is important for Higher Education Institutions 48
2.2.3 Application of Internal Marketing in Higher Education 56
2.3 International Marketing 57
2.3.1 The nature of international marketing 57
2.3.2 The importance of international marketing for higher education institutions 60
2.4 Online marketing 70
2.4.1 Definition of Online Marketing 70
2.4.2 Online Marketing Strategy Tools 73
2.4.3 Limitations and criticisms of online marketing strategy tools 80
2.5 Brand marketing 81
2.5.1 Definition of branding marketing 81
2.5.2 What branding means for higher education 82
2.6 Higher education marketing criticism 83
3.0 Methodology 88
3.1 Introduction 88
3.2 Research approach 88
3.3 Research design 95
3.4 The research sample 99
3.5 Research data collection 100
3.6 Data analysis 102
3.7 Ethical considerations 107
3.8 Validity and reliability and the limitations of the research 108
3.9 Summary 110

4.0 Data Presentation....112
4.1 Practices of marketing Higher Education in China....113
4.1.1 The current state of institutions in China....113
4.1.2 Why the Chinese institution should be marketing....128
4.1.3 Marketing strategies currently applied and evaluation of the Chinese institution....130
4.2 Criticism of marketization in higher education in China....134
4.3 Challenge for marketing higher education in China....135
4.4 Developing direction of the Chinese institution and higher education sector in China....138
4.5 Practices of marketing Higher Education in England....140
4.5.1 Current state of institutions in England....140
4.5.2 Why is the English institution marketing?....146
4.5.3 Marketing strategies current applied and evaluation of English institution..151
4.6 Criticism of marketization in higher education in England....157
4.7 The challenges for marketing higher education in England....161
4.8 Developing direction of the English institution....166
4.9 Conclusion....169
5.0 Data Discussion....174
5.1 Introduction....174
5.2 Location, location, location....175
5.3 National/International issues: Policy Choices....178
5.4 Scaffolding for change....183
5.5 Technology....186
5.6 Academic (and other) staff in universities....188
5.7 Word of mouth....192
6.0 Conclusion....196
6.1 Introduction....196
6.2 Main Findings....196
6.2.1 Practices of marketing strategies of higher education institutions....197
6.2.2 The role of marketing higher education and the future of higher education institutions in China....202
6.3 Professional Recommendation....202
6.3.1 Marketing strategy practices in the Chinese case university....203
6.3.2 Marketing strategy practices in the English case university....204
6.3.3 Comparing the marketing strategy practices in the Chinese and English case study universities: a new practice model....205
6.4 Reflections on the Research Process....209
6.5 Future Research....211
6.5.1 The relationship between government policy orientation and the developing direction of higher education institutions....212
6.5.2 The value of marketing strategy in higher education system....212
6.5.3 Chinese higher education system into future....213
6.6 Final conclusion....213

Reference 215
Appendix 238
Interview schedule 238
List of abbreviations: 241
Chinese university: 241
English university: 241
Interview transcription for professor in QD University - partly 242
Interview transcription for Professor in JMU - partly 255

Abstract

This study examines the current state of higher education in China through views of Chinese university staff and students. It provides insights into the current development pressures and government and social constraints faced by Chinese higher education institutions. These were developed through contrast with an English university and the contrasting English Higher Education system. With analyses of the current marketing practices and reasons behind increased education marketing engagement in the UK, new ways of survival and development can be drawn for Chinese universities, particularly in the international marketplace. The sample consisted of staff and students from Chinese and British case universities and drew on two case studies. In order to provide the necessary in-depth analysis of student and staff experiences and feedback more realistically and directly, the research approach used was qualitative, and the primary research tool was semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed through a combination of grounded theory, narrative analysis, and cross-cultural research.

The main findings of the study are threefold. Firstly, internal marketing, international marketing, brand marketing, and online marketing are four business marketing strategies that universities can draw on. Universities can integrate the other three strategies into their daily use, either individually or as needed. Secondly, while marketing strategies help universities survive in a rapidly changing environment, their role and function are influenced by socio-political trends and crises. Effective marketing strategies can often be combined and integrated with other university strategies. The unique national context and political system of China has led to a dilemma in the rapid development of Chinese higher education, which in the future will require Chinese higher education institutions to both adapt to external (international) trends and combine commercial and technological means to develop and operate their universities. At the same time, they cannot exist independently of China's unique national context and the current system and follow the operational development of Western universities.

Recommendations include: The Chinese government could help Chinese higher education institutions to integrate marketing strategies into their day-to-day management better if they could take a more open view, revise their understanding of marketing strategy, and develop a broader and more detailed guidance package. As exemplified by UK universities, there is still scope for universities to implement marketing strategies for Western higher education institutions. This can be done by improving internal management systems, designing regular internal surveys to understand internal stakeholders better, and gradually building the university's brand image.

Declaration

I declaration that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

This Ph. D takes as its starting point, the increasing awareness of and belief in the need to marketise the Higher Education system in China. Details of the drivers to this belief will be described below. In order to consider and inform how such marketing might take place, an English university is taken as a case study. Higher education in the UK has become an increasingly marketised sector and lessons will be drawn from this history to inform the study. In addition, research carried out in a case study university in China, will help to build awareness of the context of efforts to develop marketing strategies. The Ph. D will also take into account the negative effects of marketing on the education sector and will make recommendations that will aim to mitigate these effects.

1.1.1 Historical and cultural background to the study

Marketing is a concept associated with the business world, which is seen as a social and managerial process of introducing the suggested value of a particular product or service, as well as the process of exchange of that product or service (Kotler, 2009).

> 'Marketing consists of individual and organizational activities that facilitate and expedite satisfying exchange relationships in a dynamic environment through the creation, distribution, promotion and pricing of goods, services and ideas.' (Dibb, 2012, p.1).

This was a jargon of the business world, alien to higher education sector (Ramachandran, 2010). However, in recent decades, marketing has become an important aspect for higher education management, especially for English-speaking countries. Trade in education services is a fast-growing global business following the trend of other service sectors. Take the UK as an example: higher education institution is not only the main place for teaching professional knowledge and cultivating and

training talents but is also a successful 'industry' among various industries in the UK, and in the international market. Higher education in the UK has a distinctive identity and the number of international students that higher education attracts to study in the UK suggests it has a leading position in the international higher education market. It is also the case that higher education in the UK has become a major export sector with UK universities setting up campuses all over the world (e.g., The University of Liverpool opened its China campus in 2006 (The University of Liverpool, n.d.), University College London opened its Qatar campus in 2010 (UCL, n.d.), and Lancaster University opened it Ghana campus in 2013 (Lancaster University, 2019)). Hence, the income generated from international students makes a considerable contribution to the UK economy.

Through the neo-liberal discourse of marketisation and free use of promotional adjectives and phrases, for instance 'excellent education' and 'higher quality teaching', the British authorities and individual higher education institutions work intensively to build the distinctive identity brand for higher education in the UK (Gibbs, 2001; Hemsley-Brown, 2013). Marketing management, strategic marketing, competitive positioning and branding have been implicit management tools within higher education for the past few decades in some contexts, e.g. in the US, the UK, Australia and Canada (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Hemsley-Brown, 2013). However, in other contexts, like China, there is less awareness or use of marketing techniques.

As mentioned above, marketing higher education has become an important management issue for higher education institutions and has become influential in many parts of the world. Of course, there is variation in how different countries operate and how institutions adapt according to forms of government, policy structure, economy, and the structure of the higher education system, to name a few (Nicolescu, 2009). However, without a doubt, the characteristics of the higher education system, worldwide, involve complexity and multiple tasks, sometimes also with conflicting

goals (Enders, Boer and Weyer, 2013). Thus, effective adaptation by learning from other systems or sectors allows higher education institutions to respond to changing external environments, complex and multiple tasks, and potentially contradictory goals. Of course, no learning is done in a day, and likewise, change does not happen in a day. Just as individual learners - when learning – require scaffolding to assist in that process, provide learners with temporary and continuous support to learning that can be reused to support new learning processes (Meschitti, 2019). So too, does change in higher education institutions need scaffolding to support the role of existing systems and frameworks in relation to change, mitigating the risks involved and helping things to run more smoothly (Jones, 2017; Stein, 2019).

The UK was one of the first countries to follow the United Stated (US) to apply marketing strategies to the management of their universities (Locke, 2011; Stachowski, 2011). The roles that higher education institutions used to undertake in the UK system were to serve the community, engage in research activities, educate and train students, and equip them with knowledge and skills that are useful in their places of work and future life, and also as a source to develop a knowledge society in a larger context (Ramachandran, 2010; Sánchez-Barrioluengo, Uyarra and Kitagawa, 2019). The role that higher education institutions now undertake in the UK has become more complicated as a consequence of austerity of public funding, the increasingly fierce competition among universities, and the emergence of university homogeneity. For instance, Universities in the UK now have been required to solve issues like employability; the employment rate has also become an additional metric to evaluate a higher education institution. Demographic shifts in the environment, alternative forms of academic systems, life-long learning, internationalization and the fast changing world environment has shifted the higher education sector and it has begun to align itself towards a marketised framework (Ramachandran, 2010).

Undoubtedly, the UK higher education system has undergone a long procedure in

developing into a market-based system. Especially since the advent of the neo-liberal philosophy from the Conservative Government that came into power in 1979. The UK higher education institutions have become more diverse in form (e.g., further education colleges and private universities are now part of the landscape) in order to adapt to the new environment. The Thatcher government in the 1980s and the Major governments in the 1990s began to push to treat university education as a marketable product. In addition, the UK government began to insist that universities should be subject to the same output and performance assessment criteria as might be applied to the production of goods and services in a real market. This helps to explain the proliferation of tools which claim to measure 'quality' in Higher Education such as the REF, the NSS, and the TEF. These tools have been used to draw up league tables which purport to rank order all university departments in the UK according to their 'quality'. Once universities are ranked in (apparent) order of performance the notion of competition between universities can be encouraged. The notion of competition then encourages universities to expend significant resources on responding to these systems. Universities feel the need to show improvements in, for example, student satisfaction although sometimes the criteria in use for these 'improvements' is questionable (Sabri, 2013; Frankham, 2015).

Higher education institutions in the UK have also been pushed to be more diverse after the Further and Higher Education Act (HEFCE, 2017). This act required funding bodies to be amalgamated, and polytechnics and colleges began to be granted the title of 'university' and this allowed them to award their own degrees. Institutional diversification has also been officially sanctioned and supported (Filippakou, Salter and Tapper, 2012). For example, the Higher Education Funding Council for England issued a policy statement entitled "Diversity in Higher Education" in 2000 and the White Paper states "the future of higher education is ... to recognize and encourage diversity of role, with universities and colleges proud to be different and to play to their individual strengths in 2003" (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). This has been

continued to recent times, when the UK government stated they “maintain our commitment … to encouraging a diverse and flexible range of provision” in HEFCE business plan 2011-2015 (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2011). At the same time as encouraging diversity, policies that encouraged competition between institutions simultaneously encouraged homogeneity, as the institutions began to be ranked according to the same criteria (Filippakou, Salter and Tapper, 2012). Increasingly, management in Higher Education comprises ever increasing layers of bureaucracy (in terms of public relations, marketing, knowledge exchange, and so on) as they respond to trying to meet their targets in a competitive environment, while also trying to identify unique strengths to stand out in the face of competition. Thus, market-based policies have made the UK higher education much more target oriented and target focused.

With the introduction of student fees, and austerity of public funding (Hall, 2015; Johnes, 2019), the UK government continues to exhort higher education institutions to engage more with marketing principles to ‘sell’ themselves, especially in international markets. Slogans like ‘high quality, excellent in education’ which appeared lots not only in individual higher education institutions but the central government's policy statements as well. The ‘support’ basis that accompanies the slogans often comes from a variety of league tables and assessments (Troschitz, 2018) to claim that the education delivered is one of the best in the world. In addition, the fast-changing world have impacted the higher education system in the UK as well, issues like Brexit and Covid-19 have already had effects on recruitment, and other aspects.

In many developing countries, universities have not enjoyed legal and operational autonomy in return for providing a wide range of valued public and private goods. As decisions are made by their governments, so they have to choose to protect the unit of resource rather than to expand because of government policies (Brown and Carasso, 2013). In China, as the Chinese economy has developed in all sectors, there has been

an aspiration to change the higher education system, particularly because of the high level of unemployment. The issue of unemployment also leads to a series of questions for the higher education system in China including whether it would be appropriate for it to adopt a market-oriented approach in the wider society and in industry as a whole. Indeed, for many, 'marketing' is considered much more reminiscent of 'transactions of money' and can easily cause misunderstanding in Chinese society where such transactions have a specific meaning - seeking nothing but profits (Wang, 2016). For many, education is considered a kind of public welfare that should not be subject to business approaches.

However, the scholar Xie (2008) has described how the development of a globalized knowledge economy has led Chinese universities to pay more attention to how they are perceived. There is a growing recognition of the importance of international reputation which has begun to influence thinking about brand quality, the organization of distinct disciplines that might facilitate international integration and so on. For quite a long-time, people in China have had a one-sided understanding of higher education. They would prefer to regard higher education as primarily about knowledge transfer within a distinct domain, rather than treat higher education as part of wider society (Mao, 2006) and neglect its social value and utility. Nevertheless, with an increasing market orientation in society, people need to enter the labour market with knowledge and understanding that will facilitate their employment and, increasingly, their knowledge and skills are placed in the priority position. Because of the role of higher education in imparting this knowledge, it is increasingly seen as an economic investment in modern society. These changes in the characteristics of today's higher education are highlighted in what is increasingly concerned with the planning, quantity, income, output, performance, product delivery capacity and social contribution rate of higher education development (British Council, 2013).

This shift in understanding also points to another issue that developing countries like

China need to consider and take into account. This relates to beliefs and understandings about the difference between 'marketing higher education' and 'the marketization of higher education'. Is it possible to do the former, without also doing the latter? In addition, there is another important aspect of the higher education system, which must be taken into account, which is the state control of the higher education system since the Chinese government has dominant control of the whole system and structure.

1.1.2 Higher education system in China: Background to the current era

As a big country in education, education has existed since the birth of Chinese civilization. But in the early days of education, it was used as a symbol of nobility and power. Higher education in China also has a long and rich history, dating back to the late Qing Dynasty (from 1644 to 1912) (Li, 2010; SICAS, 2015) and has been developing over hundreds of years. The traditional education of the Qing Dynasty can be regarded as the beginning of modern education in China. The Beiyang University Hall (now Tianjin University), the first government-run institution of higher learning in modern China, was also established during this period. At the beginning of its establishment in 1895, Peiyang Western Study School set up related models with reference to the undergraduate education system of American universities (Wu, 2015) and later developed into Peiyang University (K12 Academics, 2020). A number of the oldest existing universities in China were also established during this period, such as Peking University, Wuhan University and Shanghai Jiaotong University. Although Higher Education in China originated more than a thousand years ago, it only entered a period of enormous development after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 (Cao, 2014). Modern Chinese Higher Education has made extraordinary growth especially after the reform and opening up over more than three decades (Li, 2010; Cao, 2014). The modern hierarchy in Chinese higher education system encompasses four levels of degree: associate higher education (Zhuan Ke), bachelor's degree (Ben Ke), master degree and doctoral degree. Developing of education in China have made a country with more than 80% illiteracy rate in 1949 become a society of popularization

of higher education and made an indelible contribution (Ministry of Education, 2019a).

After the founding of The People's Republic of China in 1949, in order to improve higher education in China, a growing number of universities were established. In history, Chinese universities used to accept foreign students to study in China, such as from Japan and Korea, but this stopped at the termination of the Qing Dynasty. Universities in China resumed accepting of international students during 1950s. The first cohort of overseas students were from Vietnam and Eastern European countries (SICAS, 2015) in the new era. The National Higher Education Entrance Examination (Gao Kao) was officially established in 1952 (Liu, 2005) and was then paused for nearly 10 years due to China's Cultural Revolution from 1967 to 1976 which devastated the higher education system in China more than any other sector (K12 Academics, 2020). In 1977, Deng Xiaoping made the decision to resumes the Gao Kao, which had a profound impact on Chinese higher education in history (British Council, 2013; K12 Academics, 2020). From the 1980s on, Chinese higher education has undergone a series of reforms that have slowly brought improvement (Ministry of Education, 2008b; British Council, 2013). There are three-stages of Chinese higher education development: elite, mass and universal. The Chinese higher education system moved very quickly from an elite stage to a mass stage since 1990 (Cai, 2013; Jiang, 2017). Since the Chinese government decided to substantially expand higher education in 1999, Chinese higher education has entered a stage of rapid expansion and has undergone tremendous and profound changes and achieved the popularization of higher education (Yuan, 2007; Li, 2010; Jiang, 2017). In 1998, the state issued the "Action Plan to Revitalize Education in the 21st Century" and announced that it would increase the total enrolment rate of universities from 9.1% in 1997 to 15% in 2010 (Han and Xu, 2019). Later in the Outline of the National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010) (The Outline) reiterated the significance of higher education expansion, requiring the gross enrolment rate to reach 40% by 2020.

At the press conference celebrating the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, the Minister of Education Chen Baosheng introduced the current situation of China's education and pointed out that the higher education system in China now is comparatively comprehensive and complete compared to the traditional education system in China. Higher education system in China is now more adapted to the needs of economic and social development and the overall development of all members of society. It is also relatively more reasonable to allocate existing educational resources, develop and utilize potential educational resources, and form a mechanism for optimal allocation and effective regeneration and expansion of educational resources than before. At present, China's higher education system and structure are relatively reasonable, including all degrees of higher education, growth education and continuing education (Ministry of Education, 2019b).

Institutions that offer higher education include universities, colleges, and professional schools of higher education. Like institutions in Europe and America, Chinese institutions of higher education mainly take responsibility for teaching, scientific research, and social responsibilities (SICAS, 2015). Like universities in the UK and other Western countries, Chinese universities have begun to take on social responsibilities with the development of the market-oriented economy (Bie and Yi, 2014; Ogunniran, 2020), such as employability. Usually, a Chinese university or college has two semesters in one academic year. Early September is the start of the first semester while the second semester normally is beginning after Chinese New Year. There are 20 weeks in each semester, with two days of rest per week. Students have one day off on New Year's Day and three days off on International Labor Day and seven days off on National Day besides the summer and winter holidays.

In 1949, there were only 205 higher education institutions in total, consisting of 123 public (state and provincial) universities, 61 private universities, and 21 church-

affiliated universities. At this point, 120 thousand students were enrolled, and the gross enrolment rate was extremely low, with barely one out of 10 thousand Chinese people enrolled in higher education (China Higher Education Academy, 2008). After the massive expansion of higher education capacity, by 2020 there were altogether more than 2,000 higher education institutions (including ordinary and adult colleges and universities) in the Chinese higher education system. There are now more than six million students enrolled in Chinese universities (K12 Academics, 2020). The number has continuously increased as a consequence of policy that the ministry of Education of Chinese government has decreed. The Ministry of Education (MoE) in China is the government authority in China for all matters pertaining to education. MoE holds the power of appointing presidents and party secretaries for universities administered by state and provincial governments and those higher education institutions are also known as elite institutions (British Council, 2013; K12 Academics, 2020), in other words MoE holds the power of public universities in China.

As described above, Chinese higher education expansion starting in the late 1990s; the Ministry of Education in China pursued the transformation from the single goal of expanding the number of students in colleges and universities to the goal of establishing a strong higher education system that not only contains a large number of students, but also guarantees the level of teaching and research (China Higher Education Academy, 2008). In order to achieve expansion, the central government put in place 'Project 985' and 'Project 211' to establish a number of universities with good infrastructure and innovation to take the lead in science and technology (Yuan, 2007; Li, 2010). Those universities received priority funding and help from central government (Jiang, 2017).

- ***Project 211***

The 'Project 211' was initiated in the mid of 1995 by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, with the intent of raising the research standards of high-level universities and cultivating around 100 universities in key disciplinary areas (Li,

2010; Cai, 2013; K12 Academics, 2020). The name for the project comes from an abbreviation of the slogan 'For the 21st century, to manage 100 universities successfully' (Ministry of Education, 2008a). Up to this point, the government had invested approximately 6 billion Chinese Yuan on those universities (Li, 2010). But, like the 'Project 985', both of these projects have now ceased (Xiaohong, 2019) and a related plan called 'Double First-Class University Plan' was announced in 2017 (Han and Xu, 2019; K12 Academics, 2020).

- ***Project 985***

The 'Project 985' was announced by Chinese central government in 1998, in order to establish world-class universities in the 21st century (Yuan, 2007; Cai, 2013). According to Li (2010) he reported that central government implemented 'Project 985' to establish a number of universities with good infrastructure and innovation base, which can play a leading role in science and technology. The original 9 founding universities formed the C9 League which is often referred to as the equivalent of Ivy League in the USA (Han and Xu, 2019; K12 Academics, 2020). A total number of 39 universities were included in the 'Project 985'. Until 2010, the central government had invested 14 billion to develop these 'Project 985' universities, and planned to invest another 14 billion to raise the level and reputation of these universities (Li, 2010). The project was closed by MoE in 2012 and no new universities were able to join in after that (K12 Academics, 2020).

However, the Ministry of Education then invalidated the two schemes in June 2016 (Han and Xu, 2019). Instead of those two projects, the Ministry of Education implemented a new strategic plan to develop the world's top class universities which is referred to as 'Double First-Class University Plan' (Jiang, 2017).

- ***Double First-Class University Plan***

The Chinese central government announced the 'Double First-Class University Plan' in

2015 (Ministry of Education, 2017) in order to develop a group of elite Chinese universities and individual university departments into world class universities and disciplines by the end of 2050 (K12 Academics, 2020). These universities and disciplines were selected based on government evaluations (Han and Xu, 2019). A full funding list was published in 2017, which stated the grants by the central government will fluctuate based on continuous evaluations on universities' performance. By introducing performance-based funding schemes, the state inevitably increased universities' dependence on the central government (Ministry of Education, 2017; Han and Xu, 2019). There are, in total, three phases of the plan. The aim of the first phase is to develop some world leading universities and disciplines in the phase of 2016-2020. Phase two involves having more universities and disciplines in the project with a significant improvement in higher education in China by 2030. Phase three is to have further quality improvement of excellent universities and disciplines to be among the best in the world, with the aim that the higher education system in China would become a powerful system among the world by 2050. Currently, there are 36 universities in Class A and 6 universities in Class B. Double first class disciplines universities included total of 95 universities (Jiang, 2017; K12 Academics, 2020).

Before finishing the background introduction of higher education in China, next three sections will introduce international works of Chinese higher education, how the National College Entrance Examination works in China and the current challenges that Chinese higher education faces.

1.1.2.1 Open gate of higher education internationally

The central government of China has decided to open the gate of the higher education market and encourages foreign universities to collaborate with local higher education universities (Ogunniran, 2020) since China became a member of the World Trade Organization and signed the General Agreement on Trade in Service (Mok and Chan, 2008). Local higher education institutions can co-launch academic programs and open a Sino campus only if they are granted approval from the central government of China

(Jiang, 2017).

Since the central government of China plans to build, so-called, World-Class Universities, they hope these will coexist and compete with elite education in other parts of the world and will attract international high school students to come to study in Chinese higher education institutions. The Outline (2010-2020) has also pointed out that it is necessary to improve the quality of higher education in a comprehensive way by 2020 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010; Xinhua News Agency, 2010). It is regarded that if China can develop a number of universities up to or close to World-Class level, that their international competitiveness will be further enhanced (Cao, 2014). In 2020, China is on track to overtake the United Kingdom as the second most popular country for international students (K12 Academics, 2020). It is in this context that there is a growing emphasis on marketisation in higher education in China.

For foreign students, getting into Chinese universities is not very difficult and highly encouraged. The Chinese ministry of education launched the 'Study in China Plan' in 2010, which aims to attract 500,000 students by 2020 which requires the strength and power from all sides to support foreign students to study for a career in China (SICAS, 2015). The challenge is to make China an attractive destination for degree-seeking international students. Several policy initiatives are in the works, including bilateral partnerships (such as the recent UK-China initiative), additional scholarships for one-year language preparation courses, more programs in English, and easier access to the job market for international students (Choudaha, 2015). On the other hand, Chinese students choosing to study abroad is another picture. Millions of Chinese students were enrolled in institutions around the world. In 2014 alone, 459,800 Chinese students left China to study abroad; this is an increase of 11% from the year before. Of those students, the vast majority - about 92% - were self-funded.

The literature review chapter will address in more detail of internationalization of Chinese higher education, as well as the opportunities and challenges brought about by internationalization. The next part of this section will briefly introduce China's college entrance examination system and its evolution.

1.1.2.2 The National College Entrance Examination (Gao Kao)

In order to ensure the quality of enrolled university students, China has established a very strict enrolment examination system called 'The National College Entrance Examination', which is called 'Gao Kao' in China. The National College Entrance Examination is an annual academic examination held in June every year for those who want to go to university to study an undergraduate degree in China; this was created in 1952 (Liu, 2005). The examination was interrupted in 1966 until it was restored in 1977. The table below shows the evolution of Gao Kao in China.

Year	Status	Comment
1952	Established	All the year three students in senior high school who wish to go to university will need to attend an exact same examination at the same time every year across the country – called 'Unified College Entrance Examination'
1966-1976	Stopped	The Gao Kao has been suspended
1977	Restored	The Gao Kao is restored, timed to be 7th to 9th in July every year
1977-2000	Unified Examination	Back to 'Unified College Entrance Examination'
2000-2004	Provincial Proposition Trial Period	The country began to trial the 'unified college entrance examination, provincial proposition' reform. Year three students in senior high school still attend examination at the same time every year, but the provinces which joined the reform could take an autonomous proposition – called 'Unified College Entrance Examination , Provincial

		Proposition'
2004-2014	Provincial Proposition Reform	More and more provinces joined the ranks of independent propositions
2015-now	Unified Examination Restoration	The State Council deepened the reform of the examination system of the implementation of the views published, and the restoration of 'Unified Examination' has become a reform trend.

Zheng, Wang and Chou (2015)

The Gao Kao aimed to select those students who have received high school graduation certificates and pass the national entrance exam. Currently, university selection is based on each student's marks in the entrance examination in China (SICAS, 2015). Thus, the performance on the examination will determine whether a student will go on to study an associate degree or a bachelor's degree. It will also determine whether the student could go to a 'Double First-Class University Plan' university (Jiang, 2017). Although the massification of higher education gives more opportunity for students, it also bring challenges; larger numbers of places does not necessarily increase equality in higher education in China (Jiang, 2017). The number of people taking the Gao Kao increased from 9.75 million in 2018 to 10.31 million in 2019 (Ministry of Education, 2019a). The speed of the development of universities in China also leads to challenges associated with the quality of higher education. The detail of further challenges in Chinese higher education will be provided in the next section.

1.1.2.3 Challenges of Chinese higher education

The state government has shifted from a centralist to a decentralized approach and opened the market of higher education to the non-state sector to meet increasing demands of higher education (Jiang, 2017). The central government also encourages foreign students to study in mainland China and, as described above, this has led to questions of how to build an elite system. Although higher education universities in China have been granted more autonomy according to the decentralized approach, they

still face many challenges. Before developments in the sector took place, higher education in China played a largely single role of passing on knowledge to the society. Now the role of higher education in China also includes great pressure to meet the needs of social development (Yuan, 2007; Li, 2010; Wu, 2010). As society's perception of higher education changes and its needs increase, Doyle and Brady (2018) indicated the higher education system would require to evolve accordingly through the reorientation of existing administrative arrangements and a rethinking of the role of academia.

Higher education development has seen numerous concerns with quantification, outcomes, rates, social contribution and so on (Mao, 2006) coming to the surface. Meanwhile, the expansion of higher education may outstrip the ability of higher institutions to maintain the quality of education (Jiang, 2017). However, most people think that because of the rapid expansion of higher education, higher education faces multiple challenges associated with funding, staff recruitment and development, and facility resource with the scale expansion. All of these issues suggest China's higher education has certain challenges in respect of its quality (Yuan, 2007).

During the massification of higher education and the global economic recession, graduate students experienced difficulties in employment. Many scholars (Yuan, 2007; Jiang, 2017; Mok and Han, 2017) have pointed out that the unemployment numbers have increased, and the overall employment rate has decreased. According to the growth trend of China's population and the current educational situation, the number of high school graduates in 2008 increased from 800,000 to 1.2 million. More and more graduate students will experience difficulties in finding a job, especially when they want to find a job that has a good 'fit' with their discipline.

As already indicated, there is inequality in respect of the resources of higher education in China. The vast majority of financial resources and support have been allocated to the top ranking universities, such as 'Project 985' and 'Project 211' universities (Jiang,

2017; Han and Xu, 2019) and, more recently, the Double first class universities. With the decentralized and marketization of higher education system, local government and higher education institutions with shortage of funds and supports will struggle to catch up with top ranking universities. Thus, the inequality of Chinese higher education has made the top ranking universities take advantage of attracting high-skilled scholars and professors (Jiang, 2017; Han and Xu, 2019) as well as those students with higher performance of Gao Kao. To enter in the Double first-class university, a university or a discipline needs to have great performance on Ministry of Education's evaluations that inevitably link resource allocation and evaluation in higher education (Han and Xu, 2019). This has led to more unequal development in disciplines between universities and may also become a huge issue in the Chinese higher education system.

1.1.3 Higher education system in England: Background to the current era

1.1.3.1 A brief introduction to the English higher education system

English higher education not only has a long history, but also enjoys a high reputation worldwide. The earliest universities in England can be traced back to the medieval period. Oxford and Cambridge universities were established during this period and the University of Oxford is the oldest university in the English-speaking world today. During this period, under the influence of various factors, no other university was successfully established in England (Collini, 2012; Sánchez-Barrioluengo, Uyarra and Kitagawa, 2019).

After entering the 19th century, authorized by the Royal Charter, Durham University, King's College London and the University of London were established during this period. This was a major expansion of higher education in England. In addition, by the latter part of the 19th century, medical, science, and engineering institutes were founded in several industrial cities in England (British Council, 2014). With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, in order to meet the needs of industrial cities, new, local, civic and practical institutional models (Collini, 2012) – university colleges - have

gradually formed. Examples include Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, and eventually they became known as 'redbrick universities'. Until the First World War, the state government hardly played much direct role in university finance. Prior to First World War, universities in the UK had the power to generate income through endowment trust funds, accumulated over generations, and donations and investment.

The First World War brought a financial crisis to many universities and university colleges and led to the establishment of the University Grants Committee (Collini, 2012; K12 Academics, 2018). Oxford University, Cambridge University and Durham University accepted government funding. Only one institution was established between the two wars - The University of Reading (1926). After the Second World War, the demand for higher education in England has grown tremendously. As a direct response to population growth and the increasing demands of the technological economy, the state government set out to expand the higher education sector (British Council, 2014; K12 Academics, 2018). Dozens of universities were established during this period. Among them, the University College at Buckingham was founded as a private non-profit university in 1973. After being granted the Royal Charter in 1983 as University of Buckingham, it became the first private university.

The major expansion was in 1992, by means of the Further and Higher Education Act. Thirty-eight former polytechnics were awarded university status, which almost doubled the number of universities overnight. The Russell Group, an association of 24 public research universities in the UK, was established in London in 1994. The association mainly represents the interests of its member universities to communicate with the government and parliament. Although controversial, the member universities of the association are sometimes perceived as representing the 'best' universities in the UK (Blackmore, 2016). As of 2017, the Russell Group members receive more than three-quarters of the UK's university research grants and contract income (Russell Group,

2019), and 20 of its university members are from England. Between 2001 and 2013, 31 more universities were created, and 10 more universities have recently applied for university status and made submissions to the Privy Council for official approval. These universities are collectively referred to as 'post 92' or 'modern' universities, but many of them have a long and prestigious history as vocational colleges (British Council, 2014). However, it is worth noting that all of these institutions have been under massive political and financial pressure to take more and more students, especially in the past two decades (Collini, 2012; Troschitz, 2018) when Tony Blair's government announced the ten year target of getting 50 per cent of young people to enter university to meet his economic and instrumentalist objectives in 1999 (Lunt, 2008). By 2020, 14 of the 35 largest universities in the UK in terms of student numbers were former polytechnics (40%).

1.1.3.2 How Higher education system in England worked and built 'reputation.'

British universities not only have a long history and world-class reputation, but also attract students from all over the world. Higher education in England normally starts at the age of 18 (Donnelly and Evans, 2019), and domestic students must pass standardized examinations to obtain qualifications for higher education. Students can study a variety of vocational and academic qualifications, including a bachelor's degree which can lead to postgraduate courses (taught or research) that can then lead to a doctorate, postgraduate diplomas, postgraduate certificates of education (PGCE) and professional degrees. For those international students who have already obtained further education qualifications, other equivalent qualifications or a foundation course from the English institutions means they are eligible to study at an English higher education institution. As an overseas student coming from countries other than the European Economic Area or Switzerland, students must obtain a student visa to study in the UK. In 2018-19, 2.38 million students studied in the UK higher education institutions, with 1.9 million from the UK, 140,000 form EU countries, and 340,000 students from non-EU countries: (HESA, 2020).

Most higher education courses in English higher education institutions have a “modular” structure, that is, you can create personalized courses by choosing modules or learning units in different subject areas. In addition, you can choose more than one subject as part of the course. You can choose “Joint”, which means that the two subjects are studied equally, and ‘major / minor’ means that the time spent is usually 75% and 25% respectively. In England, the standard academic year generally starts in September or October and runs until June or July of the following year. Universities usually follow a three-semester model each year, starting in September or October, January and April. Some universities follow the concept of two “semesters” each year, starting in September or October and January.

England’s Higher education institutions are independent and autonomous legal entities. Councils and Governing Bodies are responsible for determining the strategic direction of higher education institutions, supervising their financial status and ensuring effective management (British Council, 2014). The majority of higher education institutions receive public funding from the Government in a percentage of their total income, however there are great differences between institutions. Each institution will make its own decisions on admission requirements and be responsible for changing its admission procedures, in order to ensure that English higher education institutions can provide learners and institutions with autonomy and independence. In England, the power to award degrees is regulated by law and the national authorities only recognize institutions which have been granted degree-awarding powers by a royal charter or by Act of Parliament. Currently, the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 empowers the Privy Council to grant higher education institutions powers to award their own degrees. Further education institutions have been able to apply to the Privy Council for powers to award their own ‘Foundation Degrees’ (typically vocational degrees) since 2008 in England (British Council, 2014). Higher education institutions in England still have the right to design their own syllabi. There are, however, some exceptions to this, for example, teacher education programs overseen by the Office for Standards in Education,

Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), who set and monitor the curriculum. Nursery programs and speech therapy are the other exceptions. Even though the syllabi are set by higher education institutions, as Donnelly and Evans (2019) point out, the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) does influence admissions procedures in order to approve and monitor access agreements to safeguard and promote fair access to higher education.

In the years after the end of the Second World War, local education authorities began to pay student tuition fees and provided grants to non-mature students. In 1998, the £1,000 tuition fee for undergraduate students was introduced by the Labour Government, later increased to £3,000 per academic year in 2006 and raised again to £9,000 per academic year in 2012. In 2016, the state government raised the tuition fee cap on tuition fees to £9,250 from 2017, and tuition fees are expected to continue to increase in an incremental manner (British Council, 2014; K12 Academics, 2018). It has been argued by scholars that the increased demand for value from higher education institutions is triggered by the continuous increase in tuition fees and the pressures on public funding (Hall, 2015; Johnes, 2019; Viaene and Zilcha, 2019). Since the introduction of tuition fees, higher education institutions in England have been increasingly dependent on fees as a major source of funding and this has resulted in restructuring according to market principles. The competition between universities has also become increasingly fierce. This means that English higher education institutions have increasingly competed for students and had to invest in promotional activities. For example, to advertise themselves as in 'pursuit of excellence', and/or 'excellent in education' to attract students (Brown and Carasso, 2013; Troschitz, 2018) and in many other promotional activities and messages.

1.1.3.3 An era of competition and challenges

The Department for Business Innovation is a government department (DBIS, 2011) indicated in order to create an 'open, dynamic and affordable' higher education system, with more competition and innovation, the state government has reformed and expanded the higher education sector to encourage diversity and competition in the

sector. This has been coupled with increasing competition for UK and international students and has driven efforts among higher education institutions to differentiate themselves. Intensification of market-driven policies has strengthened the link between higher education and the economy (Gallacher and Raffe, 2011). DBIS (2011) highlighted in a White Paper in 2011:

> 'We want to ensure that the new student finance regime supports student choice, and that in turn student choice drives competition, including on price.' (DBIS, 2011, p.14).

The higher education institutions in England not only face competition locally but internationally as well; as Collini (2012) indicates, the White Paper encourages higher education institutions to 'sell' higher education in home and overseas markets.

Those policies and reforms have lead to two scenarios: first, with the increased competitive environment, homogenizing forces have pushed English higher education institutions to be entrepreneurial. It has been said that the entrepreneurial university model has now become an inevitability; universities, in a sense, do not have a choice but to compete in the marketplace (Pinheiro and Stensaker, 2014; Sánchez-Barrioluengo, Uyarra and Kitagawa, 2019). The higher education system in England operates in a global context, and in response to increasing competition, the entrepreneurial university model has become a solution for universities to build reputation to compete for students, employees, and research funding (Johnes, 2019). In addition, higher education has been given more and more social responsibilities and is an important driving force for social development and economic growth (Gallacher and Raffe, 2011; Lundgren-Resenterra and Kahn, 2020). Therefore, how to stand out in different assessment systems to better publicize and attract outstanding students has become what British universities prioritise. Assessment systems such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), league tables, and various other teaching quality rankings stimulate competition among higher education institutions and are claimed to

lead to the improvement of the quality of education (Lundgren-Resenterra and Kahn, 2020). These audit mechanisms appear to increase the choice of consumers and to consolidate the leading advantage of the English higher education institutions in the world. However, the reality is that higher education institutions will only highlight outcomes that are beneficial to their prospectus (Troschitz, 2018). For instance, if a university has been awarded a gold award in TEF but ranks poorly on the league table, that university will publish the information about the gold award and ignore the result in the league table. These assessment systems provide universities with effective propaganda content and materials to help them compete in the market (Collini, 2012), but they cannot fully represent the quality of higher education. The literature review chapter will address in detail influences of those assessments to higher education institutions.

This status quo has led to the second scenario: opinion and feedback from students has become more and more important in this increasingly competitive environment (DBIS, 2011). Students are regarded as paying 'customers', that are 'shopping' in the higher education market, and their choices ultimately steer the higher education system (Troschitz, 2018). Surveys like the National Student Survey (NSS) has catalyzed the concept of students as recipients of (as compared to participants in) education and learning. It has been argued that students become 'strategic learners', as a consequence, and increasingly focus on their results. It has also been argued that the £9,000 fee has exacerbated this tendency (British Council, 2014; Frankham, 2015). It is suggested by these authors that academics set out to please their students in order to meet the demands of the NSS. Also, students' experiences and views became one of the important selling points used to attract prospective students (Troschitz, 2018). Facing fierce competition, the public and students' expectations of higher education are constantly changing, and the competition among students is also intensifying. The universities are also increasingly regarded as an important factor in increasing the employment rate, and universities are required to attend to the employability skills of

students (Frankham, 2016). Particularly, in the past three decades, higher education has responded to calls for graduate employability (Williams, 2013; Kalfa, 2015; Frankham, 2016) in order to meet government expectations. Competition for jobs between graduates has become much more intense and also creates very negative implications for those that remain with low qualifications as they effectively become socially and economically marginalized (Kromydas, 2017). The role of higher education institutions in student employability is also controversial; it has been argued that what employers want in graduates are attributes that universities cannot (or perhaps should not) focus on (e.g., communication skills specific to the industry involved). In addition, the concept of employability is determined mainly by socio-economic phenomena – including whether there are actually jobs available, the decline in various industries and so on (Lundgren-Resenterra and Kahn, 2020). This is one of the subjects of discussion in the next chapter of the literature review.

English universities have experienced significant changes over time but are also experiencing unprecedented challenges in the present time. UK higher education is now highly internationalised: 25% of university staff are international, and 20% of students. There are 480,000 students from outside the UK currently enrolled in higher education programs (HESA, 2020). In 2019, the UK remains the second most popular destination for international students. However, the Brexit referendum in 2016 has significantly affected the internationalization of British higher education institutions. According to UCAS (McCann, 2017) statistics, the number of EU students applying for undergraduate studies in the UK dropped by 7.4% in 2017. The decline of EU students will not only affect the economy of British universities (Rowe, 2018), but also affect the learning experience of local students and the opportunities for cross-cultural exchange of ideas at university (Committee, 2017). Studies (Minocha, Hristov and Leahy-Harland, 2018) have shown that this may reduce the employability of local undergraduate students in the UK, and they will not necessary have an international perspective. At the same time, the challenge of Brexit to higher education will not only

be felt in the number of students, but international research collaboration will also be affected. In 2014 alone, 48% of research articles published by British higher education institutions have international co-authors (British Council, 2014). Evidence increasingly points to the benefits of international research collaboration on the quality of research, and the benefits of an international staff and student body for the learning environment are also increasingly clear, especially in an age of globally mobile graduates. However, the Brexit agreement between the UK and the European Union will have implications for higher education institutions, their staff and students.

To add insult to injury, the impact of the 2019 Covid-19 pandemic on higher education institutions will be acute. University UK (UUK) has predicted the severe financial challenges they will face in the future. Research estimates a potential fall in tuition fee income of between £2 billion and £3 billion in the UK next year (Ahlburg, 2020). UUK also predicts that due to Covid-19, the contribution of international students to the sector's income will also be significantly affected, although the magnitude of the loss is still uncertain (Ahlburg, 2020). At the same time, research funding from public, charity, and commercial fields may also face further compression; in all these ways, UK universities are facing huge financial challenges (Deloitte, 2020). In addition to the economic impacts, the Covid-19 pandemic has forced higher education institutions to find alternative solutions to continue to deliver learning resources and communications between academics and students (Raven, 2020; Roache, 2020). Epidemic prevention measures such as border closures, reduced aviation capacity, mandatory quarantine, restrictions on mass gatherings, and social distancing are all posing challenges to higher education institutions (Brammer and Clark, 2020). Online learning seems to be the only solution; however, it has also brought challenges to both the university and its academics (Brammer and Clark, 2020) and will, inevitably, have effects on students' knowledge, understanding, skill development and so on. Of course, the pandemic has also brought huge development opportunity and advantages, for example, to foster the development and utilisation of online learning (Roache, 2020). The researcher will also

briefly consider the impact of Brexit and Covid-19 in higher education institutions in the Literature Review chapter.

1.1.4 Background of the researcher

The researcher came from China to study in England more than five years prior to the commencement of the PhD study and the researcher noted clear differences between those two countries in terms of their higher education systems. Before the researcher applied for her Masters' course in England, she found that most universities in the UK are likely to treat students as their 'customers' in order to attract the maximum number of students, to satisfy their current students, and to gain better feedback to encourage the loyalty of students. It became clear that such approaches were adopted from the viewpoint of the business sector, including multiple marketing strategies that universities used to promote themselves. Hence, the researcher noticed the importance of marketing higher education institution and the meaning of applying marketing strategies to higher education. At the same time, the researcher was aware that there was increasing pressure in China to apply marketing strategies. Thus, the plan was made to carry out research for a thesis that related to marketing higher education in two countries with very different backgrounds and cultures.

This research study will involve two case study institutions, one is located in the UK and the other is in China and will examine the marketing criteria that both of them used in the past and will be used in future. The case study university in China is located in the city in which the researcher was born, thus providing the possibility of access to appropriate interviewees. The case study institution in China states in their official website that they have 46,000 students in total, with 35,000 being undergraduate students and 9,800 postgraduate students. The number of international students is 1,600 (QDU, 2017).

The case study university in the UK is based in Northern England in which the

researcher studied her Masters' degree and continued study for her PhD program. This also enabled access with interviewees. The case study institution in UK have 20,643 students from over 100 countries worldwide includes 17,837 undergraduate students, 2,351 postgraduate-taught students and 455 postgraduate-research students; as well as 1,117 international students (LJMU, 2016).

1.2 Research aims and questions

The aims of the study include to:

1. evaluate current practice in the marketing of higher education in the two case study universities in mainland China and England;
2. identify the main challenges for the marketing of higher education institutions;
3. describe the role marketing can play in the further development of the higher education sector internationally and especially in mainland China;
4. analyse and problematize the developing phenomenon of the marketization of higher education.

To gather relevant data for the study, the following research questions are posed:

- Question 1: What is the current state of the case study institutions, in terms of marketing? Why are the institutions marketing them? What aims do they hope to fulfil?

- Question 2: How has the marketization of higher education been a challenge in England/China? What are these challenges? What dilemmas are raised in the marketing of the institutions?

- Questions: What further opportunities might there be in marketing of higher education in China?

- Question: How might higher education in China mitigate against the problems

associated with the marketization of higher education in China?

1.3 The main influences on the research

At this point, it should be pointed out that many studies on the marketization of higher education have been carried out during this present research. The literature review chapter will be divided into two main parts: the practices of marketing higher education and the critiques of marketing in higher education. Evaluating the current practices and identifying the challenge of higher education marketing of two case study universities will lead to a better understanding of the relation between the notion of marketing and higher education institutions. With those in-depth understandings, ideology from proponents of why institutions should apply marketing elements into the higher education sector and the criticisms and worries of doing this from opponents could discuss the role marketing can play in the higher education sector in the further development. While marketing as a business concept in higher education is controversial, universities do not exist independently of society. The problems they face are not simply due to the fact that universities draw on business models; many are inter-connected with macro issues. These literatures will be examined in-depth to locate the ideology of why it is argued that institutions should apply marketing elements into the higher education sector with successful examples of what universities are currently implementing. I will go on to consider the relationships between liberalization in education and higher education developing; and whether higher education institutions need more autonomy in future to engage with marketing strategy better in future. In terms of the critique of such strategies, the analysis of those literatures will focus on the risks and unexpected challenges that higher education institutions may face, and an even broader set of questions about the value and social contribution of 'a university'.

The study contributes to both theoretical and practical developments. Theoretically, the study enriches the theoretical application of marketing concepts in higher education institutions and expresses the relationship between the two. In practical terms, (Wang, 2016) points out that Chinese universities face many challenges due to the bias against

marketing in Chinese society as well as international trends and internal pressures on higher education. This study informs the future of Chinese universities in marketing themselves and recruiting students by drawing on the English case study university practices that already have significant and substantial marketing strategies in place.

1.4 Outline of methodology used in this research

Since this research is 'real world' research, and will relate to people's live (Robson, 2011), it set out to get a better understanding of the issues related to marketing in the higher education sector. The research employed elements of grounded theory, and cross-cultural research. The methodology for this research is a qualitative approach, which is based on semi-structured interviews of participants in two case study universities. The qualitative research approach is suitable for this research because the research is focused on examining how social settings affect human beings through the surrounding milieu (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014). This approach aims to find out current practice, challenges, and issues in marketing higher education and describe the role marketing can play in the further development of the higher education sector internationally, especially in mainland China.

The main method employed will be semi-structured interviews, which will provide broad and relevant information about the marketing of higher education institutions. Thirty-two individual, audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews, each of around 60 minutes, were undertaken. Prior to the analysis, the researcher recorded all 32 interviews and converted them into interview transcripts. The 32 interviewees were chosen from different groups of people at different levels with different roles in the two institutions, including students, which thus enabled perspectives to be gained from a wide range of stakeholders. To ensure the validity and reliability, the interview questions were addressed carefully through the research and piloting using the approaches suggested by Robson (2002) and Bryman (2011). A full outline of approach, sample frame and methods of analysis will be discussed in detail in Chapter three –

methodology part in the thesis.

1.5 Rationale of this research

The reasons for this study can be summarized:

- The higher education institution is one of significant part in education systems in both China and the UK, but most of the research related to university management in the UK focuses on quality management.
- Higher education research in China are mainly focussed on external environment impact and policy influence.
- Little research has been undertaken related to marketing higher education institution in China – that is because of the cultural and general knowledge of the country.
- After conducting research on the marketing of higher education institutions in the UK, sampling usually only involves the advantages and benefits of higher education marketing but lacks practical application.
- There is emerging evidence of a link between higher education marketing and institutions standing out in the competition environment, which suggests that marketing higher education helps institutions to survive the increasingly fierce competition. However, considering the criticism of higher education marketing, it is necessary to analyse and problematize the developing phenomenon of the marketisation of higher education.
- When research has been undertaken on higher education institution developing, some studies have pointed out that the development of higher education in China and the UK are both facing huge challenges, and research is needed to determine how higher education marketing strategies can positively impact on the future development of universities.
- Correspondingly, the demand for managers in the higher education system will increase after the injection of higher education marketing strategy. Analysing the English case study university existing and substantial marketing strategies

can help Chinese universities learn from them.

- Previous research has shown that it is necessary to further summarize the practical applications of marketing in higher education institutions to deepen our understanding of this field, which will help to identify the relationship between marketing strategies and higher education institutions in the international context.

1.6 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher briefly introduced the history, cultural and social environmental background of the higher education system in China and the UK. These historical routes have created the basic principles of the higher education systems that have evolved and developed over time in response to social and industrial trends. As a Chinese student studying in the UK, the researcher has had the chance to experience and gain knowledge of higher education systems in both countries. The personal initial researcher interests were to find out why universities in the UK are more likely to treat their students as 'customers' and the reasons they engaged with business strategies. The researcher also described the picture of higher education system in China and its history and developing background. Despite the importance of marketing higher education, practices of marketing higher education institutions have rarely attracted little study in previous research. Most of all, the researcher hoped to provide guidelines for higher education institutions to engage with marketing strategy and help the university better survive in a competitive environment, especially for Chinese higher education institutions via lessons learned from the English case study university. This chapter provides the motivations and origins of this research with four research objectives and appropriate research questions, as below:The aims of the study include to:

1. evaluate current practice in the marketing of higher education in the two case study universities in mainland China and England;

2. identify the main challenges for the marketing of higher education institutions;

3. describe the role marketing can play in the further development of the higher education sector internationally and especially in mainland China;
4. analyse and problematize the developing phenomenon of the marketization of higher education.

To gather relevant data for the study, the following research questions are posed:

- Question 1: What is the current state of the case study institutions, in terms of marketing? Why are the institutions marketing them? What aims do they hope to fulfil?

- Question 2: How has the marketization of higher education been a challenge in England/China? What are these challenges? What dilemmas are raised in the marketing of the institutions?

- Question 3: What further opportunities might there be in marketing of higher education in China?

- Question 4: How might higher education in China mitigate against the problems associated with the marketization of higher education in China?

These research questions will be useful in developing semi-structured interview questions. Detailed interview questions will be included in the Methodology section. The chapter also outlined and described the research method that was used to undertake and concluded with a summary of this research. Detailed reviews of literature are given in succeeding chapters – including what marketing strategies have been applied in higher education institutions worldwide and criticisms of marketing higher education.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on literature that explores the premise that competition among higher education institutions is existing and fierce. Four marketing strategies that universities could use to establish more long-term and stable relationships will be revealed through the literature review: internal, international, online, and branding. In theory, those marketing strategies could assist universities in entering the international market, building communication channels with audiences via the Internet, and ultimately establishing an identity or brand. On the other hand, we can also observe that much of the analysis of the literature is drawn from theoretical perspectives or the experience of other business service-oriented industries and not from studies of higher education. In addition, there is little analysis of the feasibility of the practical marketing side of higher education and the obstacles and challenges that universities encounter in their day-to-day marketing activities. Thus, the researcher hopes that this thesis will provide insight on whether marketing strategies described in the literature can be utilized by universities to develop clearer and more definite marketing strategies for guiding their marketing practices by answering the questions below:

- To examine the current state of higher education marketing at the case study universities by identifying what the institution's current marketing status is; why is the institution marketing them?
- To identify the challenges associated with marketing higher education by studying: has the marketization of higher education been a challenge in England or China; and what are these challenges?
- To identify the possible future directions of marketing higher education in these two areas, as well as the possible role marketing higher education could play in the higher education sector in China.
- To find out what the main criticisms of marketization in higher education over the past 20 years have been by examining critiques of marketization in higher education in England/China.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that higher education institutions must implement marketing strategies, or the marketing strategy is the sole purpose during operations. There are also some criticisms of marketing higher education. These include the effect of managerialism on academic freedom, how the quality of teaching is evaluated, the problem of university homogeneity, and the students-as-consumers discourse. The employability discourse has also been critiqued.

This study, as discussed in the earlier chapter, falls into the category of cross-cultural research since Bryman explains that this type of study involves obtaining and/or analyzing data from two or more countries, such that the data collected in this study will come from both China and England. Differences in culture have existed and continue to exist on a variety of levels in human history (Stewart, 2008). Additionally, cultures differ within nations. Thus, cross-cultural research presents difficulties due to differences in context, language, and cultural practices. However, cross-cultural research also yields interesting results. It has been demonstrated by (Bryman, 2011) that cross-cultural research reduces the risk of failing to appreciate the cultural specificity of social science findings. For instance, the research found that despite the more advanced policies operating in England, there is still a need for guidelines to develop marketing strategies and support their marketing practices. This chapter will explore marketing strategies, in detail, but also doubts about these practices to help university leaders to think before drawing up developing direction for higher education institutions.

2.2 Internal Marketing

2.2.1 What is Internal Marketing?

When people talk about marketing strategy, the traditional thought would be to focus on the *external market* of the organization (Ferrell et al., 1998) which means the external customers of the organization. People tend to believe that if they satisfy their

customers this will make their business successful; however, there is another market called the *internal market* that the organization needs to pay attention to, especially a service organization, with the aim of making all employees aware of the need for customer satisfaction (Nigel, 1995).

With regard to this concept, it is regarded those employees are the key people to help organizations to implement their marketing strategy successfully and this also means everyone in the organization needs to know their job and understand how to deliver the strategy in a positive way.

Thus, internal marketing is a tactic that organizations employ to motivate and communicate with its own employees. There are two main activities that internal marketing focuses on, described by different names, such as employee engagement or internal communication. Internal marketing includes people, physical evidence and processes but the most important element of internal marketing is most frequently considered to be people (Robinson, 1987; Gajic, 2012). The goals of internal marketing are: firstly to help employees to understand and accept their role in the organization to implement the marketing strategy; and, secondly ensuring external customer satisfaction (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000). Recently scholars have also pointed out that internal marketing has been expanded to include marketing to all staff with the aim of achieving the acceptance of marketing ideas and plans (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2013) to align, motivate and empower employees at all functions and levels to consistently deliver positive customer experiences that are aligned with the company's organizational goals (Mulhern and Schultz, 2013).

The term of internal marketing has also involved into higher education sector, as advocators believed it will help higher education institutions to be more effective in meeting target in a competitive environment (Troschitz, 2018). However, enacting these marketing ideas and plans in the higher education sector would not be same as other

business or service industries, thus could bring several challenges. For example, academics would typically regard themselves as belonging to a 'profession'. A profession has its own norms and values in respect of their work and, traditionally, they 'managed' themselves. Those values would generally include autonomy and self-governance (Traianou, 2016; Karran, 2019). That is, academics would historically have regulated their own work amongst themselves not through being managed by other people. However, in the more recent past, and with the advent of New Public Management in higher education, academics have increasingly been managed by managers, whose priorities lie in respect of the administration of universities rather than in the core activities of teaching/learning and research. In addition, the notion of 'academic freedom' is a longstanding tradition in universities in western industrialised nations and this 'freedom' brings with it, the freedom to disagree with accepted norms in a particular field and to disagree with colleagues, to put forward new ideas and voice controversial or unpopular opinions (Traianou, 2016). This would also extend to arguments about what constitutes knowledge, pedagogical approaches, and philosophical positions more generally. Thus, the notion of managing academics and requesting academics to get involve into administration work has caused worries of threat over whether academics still get the right of academic freedom (Williams, 2016).

As academics expect to be autonomous and continue the idea of academic freedom, it is obvious that to engage in internal marketing strategies in higher education institutions will need help from management practices which will sort of lose some of the freedom for academic. For instance, marketing manager or administrative staff will hope to involve academics into the marketing processes as part of internal marketing strategy, thus universities may implement incentives to encourage those involvements from academics (Schüller and Chalupský, 2011) that would also be followed by a monitoring scheme. Those management approaches could include acting to systematise the operations in higher education institutions. It is argued, that this systems approach can limit the ability of the individual academic to perform their role, effectively reducing

their autonomy (Miller, 2014). But, as mentioned in the Introduction chapter, as the higher education sector began to align itself with a marketised framework, the role of higher education institutions has been pushed to be more diverse now. Thus, the academics as the key people of higher education system are now experiencing more sophisticated challenges than before, not only from teaching and research but the admin works. In the business jargon, to provide service, to meet targets, and to satisfy customers (Miller, 2014). It will be even more challenging for those academics who adhere to academic freedom and want to avoid managerialism especially those marketing involved management, as they will need to be very carefully balance, to adhere the freedom of academic but at the same time not to break any codes with universities to avoid the risk of losing their job.

Despite the challenges that academics noted, experts who support the engagement of marketing strategies in higher education institutions believe that internal marketing can have a positive effect on making good relationships among employees and managers (Schüller and Chalupský, 2011). Internal marketing is a key element within wider relationship marketing, which is itself one of the keys to developing good long-term relationships. Normally, in the business sector, internal marketing is there to help organizations to build deep and long-lasting relationships with the staff of the organization (Kotler and Keller, 2009), but also help the organization to understand its internal customers, i.e. its staff. Therefore, the basic definition of internal marketing can be defined as a strategic tool to help an organization achieve its business objectives. Thus, internal marketing is important for an organization because it is not only a marketing tactic since it also concerns the implementation of each marketing strategy decision.

In general business or service context, internal marketing approaches focus on two areas: the external and internal elements (Ferrell and Hartline, 2005). For example, for a supermarket manager, the external customers will mean people who visit and shop at

the store, whereas the internal customers are those employees who work in the store. In order to work effectively and provide performance efficiently, the manager needs to apply his or her management and marketing skills to satisfy both customer groups. Thus, under this circumstance, the priority for the store manager is to attract customers as much as possible and satisfy them in order them to become loyal customers. Hence, the store manager needs to communicate with his or her employees and motivate them to implement all strategies, otherwise customers will not be satisfied completely.

Scholars (Ferrell and Hartline, 2005; Kotler and Keller, 2009; Gajic, 2012; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2013) also note that the same pattern works throughout all levels of an organization. As mentioned before, internal marketing is also tacit since all marketing strategic plans necessitate substantial human input. Internal marketing is especially important for those people who make decisions for organizations because they need to gain support to achieve acceptance and to ensure implementation of the plan. Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick (2013) state a clear view that the people who fail to achieve this, in effect, become a competitor in the internal marketplace.

Besides the above conception of internal marketing, we may note the importance of internal marketing for higher education organisations, which may also include the category of service organisations. Internal marketing is generally described as training and motivating employees which indicates that the staff who work in the institution need to serve as its external customers – a notion that also applies to students by some scholars (Conway, Mackay and Yorke, 1994; Kotler and Fox, 1994; Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Ramachandran, 2010) especially after students should be charged tuition fees in the UK (Kotler and Fox, 1994; Traianou, 2016). The very first definition of education internal marketing was mentioned by Philip Kotler in the 1990s, when he noted students are clients for higher education (Kotler and Fox, 1994). Thus, measuring students' satisfaction and the quality of services are part of the work for the internal marketing of higher education (Schüller and Chalupský, 2011).

With the definition of internal marketing in the business sector, there are two target customer groups which may be seen as the external and internal marketing customers. Nevertheless, in higher education sector, experts indicate that clients include 'students' who are currently studying in the institution and 'staff' who are working in and cooperating with the institution (Conway, Mackay and Yorke, 1994; Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Ramachandran, 2010). Ramachandran (2010) and Eagle and Brennan (2007) also emphasise that students are the main target group for an institution, but the students' relations to an institution varies from any other business model.

One purpose of internal marketing for higher education institutions is to provide a better environment for the staff as well as students with the main purpose of making all of them enjoy their experiences within the institution, in order to persuade them to be positive in their views about the institution. Gajic (2012) also points out that:

> 'Internal marketing refers to management of necessary actions, in order to provide understanding of all organization members and in order for their roles to be accepted in implementation of marketing strategies. ... All employees have to recognize intentions and requests of the students, as well as specific nature of services, shaped with marketing concept' (Gajic, 2012, p.36).

However, in order to persuade customers (or students) to be positive in their views about the institution brings potentially other challenges/difficulties associated with these concepts and the notion of an autonomous professional. As mentioned earlier, academics generally believe that they have a certain degree of professionalism and autonomy, and academic freedom represents the ability of academics to perform their duties with a certain degree of academic freedom (Miller, 2014). However, the introduction of some of the marketing related mechanisms like, measuring the achievements of higher education institutions in terms of student satisfaction through the NSS, or teaching excellence via the TEF, etc., inevitably reduces the academic

freedom of academics and reduces flexibility by an emphasis on performativity (Miller, 2014). Many academics believe that higher education is not an activity that is amenable to measurement through such rubrics.

It has also been argued that behind the implementation of such measurements, higher education institutions increasingly bow down to encourage students to 'like' and 'be satisfied' with the university they attend and spend a lot of effort and financial resources to improve student satisfaction. However, academics may disagree with some (or many) of the things that universities increasingly focus on and spend money on. Academics often disagree with some practices that universities pay attention to in management applications. Some authors point to the idea that academic learning is not a simple act and should not be encouraged by 'surface' responses to 'surface' issues'(Frankham, 2015). But, in reality, various evaluation models catalyze the concept of students as consumers, reinforcing the notion that the purpose of going to university becomes get good grades, graduate, and find a job. It also ignores the exploration and cultivation of learning methods and the accumulation and absorption of knowledge. At the same time, there is a danger that once students fail to achieve their ideal results, their evaluation of university and lecturers will decline accordingly (Frankham, 2015). This also leads to the fact that even though academics know and want to adhere to the important things in higher education, they must make trade-offs and balances in teaching methods and evaluation which is a dilemma.

2.2.2 Why Internal Marketing is important for Higher Education Institutions

Over the past twenty years, the higher education sector has experienced major shifts away from central government control and towards free-market principles, especially in English-speaking countries (Stachowski, 2011). The competitive environment of the higher education sector was faced by several different issues, for example the increase of supply of similar courses, increased tuition fees, limited funding, the decrease of employment rates and the increase in international university competition. Thus, this

phenomenon of enhanced competition among institutions now influences managerial practice in educational institutions more than ever before (Foskett, 2002; Anctil, 2008; Newman and Jahdi, 2009). Thus, the market in higher education is increasingly competitive in nature and it can be argued that a successful marketing strategy will make institutions like universities more able to survive economically and also become increasingly more robust. Internal marketing is the strategy tool that may help institutions survive more easily.

However, opposites question whether the 'competition' among higher education institutions is an illusion. There is very little evidence shows that students, especially working class students, are evaluating a range of institutions and judge which one/s to apply for on the basis of the 'quality' (as measured by the NSS) of the institution before they apply (Frankham, 2016). Take Liverpool John Moores University as an example, most undergraduate students are local to the university who have local jobs and live with their families to keep the cost low for university education. As scholars point out, students' choice of university is often not based solely on the ranking of the university, the satisfaction evaluation from previous students, or the so-called 'quality' of teaching. This is often related to economic and sociological factors (Davies, Qiu and Davies, 2014), and of course it is also inseparable from the students' own performance (Bunce, Baird and Jones, 2017). In addition to this issue, what about those universities that do not do so well (for whatever reasons) – is it necessarily a good idea if they 'go bust'/fail? What about the students who have lower academic performance and might want to go to those universities? Don't they deserve a local university that serves their neighbourhood?

Despite the illusion of higher education institutional competition, with the marketized framework involved in higher education sector, and the increase of university tuition fees, the relationship of students to a university are more complex than in the business sector. Market principles tend to recommend the same thing in general, which is

persuading consumers to buy a product or service and then persuading them to repeat the action (Anctil, 2008). For higher education institutions like universities and/or colleges this is sophisticated, even if we make it a metaphor for the university itself as a product and/or a service, and put students as main consumers; however, the main role of students are as learners or even products of the education institutions. Even though they sometimes are the customer buying living space or meals or shopping at the student union shop, and using various facilities on campus (Bay and Daniel, 2001).

2.1.2.1 Staff issues

As mentioned above, it is claimed that efficiently applying internal marketing for higher education institutions needs managing necessary actions which, in turn, requires close attention to the internal marketing of institutions and relies on activities that engage with all employees of the institution as well as good communication (Gajic, 2012), for example by providing an excellent environment and an acceptable implementation of aims. However, Anctil (2008) indicated that:

> 'Institutions advertise and market themselves, but it is a highly under researched area, making it difficult to implement empirically driven changes or strategies' (Anctil, 2008, p.90).

Jugenheimer (1995) also mentioned that institutions generally do a poor job of some of these areas, such as advertising and marketing, and this leads to poor marketing practices with inexperienced administrators struggling to achieve their goals. A study of 46 colleges and universities in the United Stated found that the major factor in success of higher education marketing was top management support and involvement (Kohut, 1989). Hence, in higher education marketing, it is argued that top management, the administrative and academic members of staff not only recognize and believe in the application of marketing but actively support the activities. However, before asking academic staff to actively support marketing strategies and activities, higher education institutions need to establish good communication with their academics, share values and mission with the academic as well as listen to their opinions and suggestions as

educators, so that academics could have a clear idea of what its values are and how it chooses to define itself (Miller, 2014). Just as prior to marketing and promoting a product or service needs to understand the definition of the product or service firstly and then create common memorable images that employees could introduce to their audience and make the audience associate with the particular organization (Anctil, 2008).

Despite the involvement of academics, one of the difficulties with this sort of idea is that lecturers in higher education might want (amongst other things) to disrupt students' typical ways of thinking about things, they might want to (initially at least) *confuse* them by suggesting that issues are much more complex and multi-faceted than they had previously thought and so on (Frankham, 2015). But higher education institutions are very unlikely to be able to 'market' these ideas or ways of educating, it is unlikely that a university could say 'they hope their academics will confuse the students by questioning or disrupting how students think about things'. This will sound unsettling. However, for academics, disrupting students' typical ways of thinking may be the important thing they wish to do. Of course, this is in sharp contrast with the various marketing strategies carried out. Under normal business circumstances, the marketing strategy will emphasize 'fun', 'enjoyment' and 'easy' ways to desirable higher education. However, in reality, study and the path of gaining knowledge may not be that enjoyable or easy. It is not those academics do not want students to enjoy their lives or have fun, but at the same time, they might not think this is really the most important thing about students going to university. So, this is another dilemma of a situation that academics and university administrators need to face.

When people talk about employee engagement, they tend to refer to the term – 'motivation' – they tend to talk about the importance of motivating employees to get them engaged. This is a basic approach for internal marketing which provides benefits to both employees and to the organization (Schubert-Irastorza, 2014). Thus, it is

necessary for higher education institutions to provide motivational working conditions for their employees. In many ways this returns us to issues of academic freedom as well as issues like adequate financial compensation, etc. Successful academic systems must offer their teaching staff adequate working and compensation conditions, the possibility of career building with appropriate guarantees for long-term specialization and employment. Without these conditions, an academic institution cannot be successful nor think about developing a world-wide reputation (Gajic, 2012). However, as described above some of the values associated with these forms of motivation (e.g., academic freedom) may be in contradiction to some of the performance measurement tools in use.

Under a large organization, it is claimed that motivational tools can be one of the best practical ways of communication in internal marketing. Researchers (Schüller and Chalupský, 2011) imply that this is a positive way of an institution applying both financial and non-financial motivational incentives whether at the university or faculty level. For higher education institutions, internal communication is an important factor in promoting a positive relationship between management and staff. Therefore, staff motivation is a significant element in implementing marketing plans for higher education institutions. Current staff who work in the institution will have various needs that need to be satisfied, thus in order to satisfy staff, managers need to develop motivational methods to enable them to meet such needs (Gajic, 2012). From the practice side, institutions need to be aware that the motivational plan should be ethical and comprehensible to all staff. Management staff need to find out what employees think, feel and want through internal investigations. It is suggested that the motivation can be only targeted at individuals, using special methods, based on an individual system of values and managers can reward their employees with money, plus extra benefits, promotions, etc. or by non-monetary rewards, like training courses, helping to build career development and skills, encouraging staff to attend external activities or meetings. Where such systems are individualised, however, they run the risk of

increasing competition between staff members which may not be productive in the longer term. Some authors argue that a more collegial approach to motivation is an important factor in the long-term growth of an organisation (Day, Gu and Sammons, 2016).

Beside ways of communication, motivation, and the engagement of employees, the relationship between staff and students has a particular significance because it is at the heart of the distinctive UK higher education experience. It is influenced by a number of relevant issues including staff-student ratios (SSRs); contact hours; group sizes; methods of learning and teaching; the needs and expectations of students; learning environment; and, services available to support student learning (Brown and Carasso, 2013). Take student-staff ratio, contact hours and group size as an example - low student-staff ratios might be helpful for educational gain, provided they are appropriately exploited throughout the institution. Similarly, Gibbs and Knapp (2002) cited several studies showing how class sizes affect student achievement, as does the amount of contact between lecturers and students. Both these process variables are of course resource-related – and higher costs will have an impact on other areas of the University – for example there may be less money to spend on new buildings. It is also the case that a large resource in higher education supports an increasingly managerial culture in higher education. It has been estimated that the cost of administration of the REF in 2014 was approximately £250m (THE, 2015).

2.1.2.2 Student issues

As was mentioned earlier, people are the key element both for higher education institutions as a whole and more specifically for the internal marketing strategy of such institutions and this includes staff who work in the institution and students who study there as well. Experts (Conway, Mackay and Yorke, 1994; Eagle and Brennan, 2007) have defined that students are the main target group and the customer for higher education institutions. However, the roles of students for higher education institutions are complex, students could be both customer and product contemporaneously if under

business context. Before we talk about how to satisfy the customers (students), we need to have a basic knowledge of the roles for students because their needs and wants could be different from those desired by the institution. Studies such as that by Obermiller, Fleenor and Raven (2005) suggest that people in the institution define students in different roles; for instance faculty generally prefer to recognise graduates are (partly) 'created' by them, via an educational process, but students on the other hand prefer to be recognised as 'customers'.

New Public Management discourse suggests that higher education finds itself in a situation where it increasingly has much to learn from the outside world and will rely heavily on others to maintain its viability. One of the new lessons universities are said to need to learn from the business and commercial world today is how to develop a customer perspective (Maringe and Gibbs, 2009) in other words to satisfy their customers. Thus, according to Conway, Mackay and Yorke (1994):

> 'Successful strategies depend on an understanding of the needs and wants of customers in the market in order to deliver the right goods and services effectively and efficiently (Conway, Mackay and Yorke, 1994, p.35).

Of course, on the other side, it needs to be stated that "the customer perspective" may be in contradiction to elements of the education process and its quality.

Thus, as mentioned earlier, before marketing and satisfying customers, institutions need to clarify the role of student and the process of studying. Several writers have identified a growing trend for higher education to be valued for its 'exchange value' (especially in the labour market) rather than its 'use value' (to the student). The change can be characterised as a move from that of the 'apprentice academic' to that of the 'novice consumer', so that students increasingly see themselves as customers with needs rather than as clients or partners in an educational project. The fact that this student-as-consumer culture is stronger in the US is not surprising in this context (Brown, 2011). Higher education institutions in the US trend to recognise students as customers during

most of the time during their study in the institution, whilst students could be defined as products for the institution once at the end of their study life.

Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Grøgaard (2002) pointed that for many students,

> 'The process of studying not only represents the acquisition of certain skills and theoretical knowledge. It is also related to personal growth and social development' (Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Grøgaard, 2002, p.185)

It has been argued that success, quality and the total outcome of the university experience determines to what extent a service user is satisfied (Maringe, 2005a). Thus, it is not enough only to have a good curriculum and competitive prices, but the service user and all the interested parties need to be informed of the goals, activities, the offer of the institution and be motivated to join and become 'users'. That communication takes place in several forms. Faculties, schools and other educational institutions are always sending out a message to the public on their existence regardless of whether they formally have a communication programme or not. But, the institution must also determine and get a comprehensive insight into the information needs of the internal environment such as staff, existing students and others within the internal environment (Gajic, 2012) in order to select the right faculty. As the process of selecting a faculty is a key decision in all educational institutions.

The physical environment can also play a significant role in students' choice. Since it is one of the most important decisions in life of young people and their families, that has caused modern educational institutions to offer innovative marketing approaches such as virtual tours, with the purpose of providing future users with a closer insight into the environment before making a decision about which educational institution to enrol at. Internet technology also allows the institutions to make their service and environment more familiar to the users.

It is true that students are an important element for higher education institutions especially since the good reputation of institutions relies on customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction relies on service quality perception (Athiyaman, 1997), however it is also true that it is necessary to satisfy students and to ensure the quality of the teaching at the same time. This is because even though it is market-oriented environment, higher education institutions still have different characteristics to other commercial organizations. Therefore the institution that has a long history and is focused on enhancing student experiences and committed to quality would have more power in terms of marketing than its competitors (Ramachandran, 2010).

2.2.3 Application of Internal Marketing in Higher Education

In order to apply the internal marketing strategic tools, higher education institution could use different types of surveys to monitor staff and student satisfaction and motivation as well as to engage employees, hopefully improve student satisfaction and build the reputation of the institution.

If institutions are seeking ways to motivate employees while at the same time increasing their efficiency, internal surveys can help institutions to find ways to satisfy their employees and engage them. Hermsen and Rosser (2008) suggested that in order to satisfy employees, institutions need to have career support, good working conditions, and external relations. For the work engagement, institutions need to provide job and role fit and good working conditions. Thus, it is claimed that working conditions are the most important factor for institutions to motivate employees as well as increase efficiency.

Student satisfaction could also be monitored by surveys both from inside and outside the institution. Higher education institutions like universities could design their own surveys to collect feedback from their students and then analyse these to find the needs and wants of their students and to build a more related picture of the insights of students.

These internal surveys could be instruments that are bespoke to each institution.

Besides the internal surveys, institutions can also analyse project reports or surveys that are provided by government or other agencies in order to have a wider understanding of students. However, it is also clear that the source of information is relevant to how universities might interpret the information from these surveys. For example, the studies of UK higher education which are undertaken by King's College London and the Quality Assurance Agency suggest:

> 'Data collected from students on their expectations and perceptions of quality, standards and the student learning experience is a key part of bringing the student voice into quality assurance structures and institutional decision-making' (Kandiko and Mawer, 2012, p.15).

However, the 'quality assurance structures', such as the NSS, and the TEF, are not themselves open to question, as these are themselves supported by the Quality Assurance Agency which is a QUANGO (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation). This means it receives funding from central government, who also make senior appointments to the organisation.

2.3 International Marketing

2.3.1 The nature of international marketing

International marketing is the process of marketing a company's activities internationally and at its simplest level, international marketing involves the company in making one or more marketing mix decisions across national boundaries. At its most complex level, it involves the company in establishing manufacturing facilities overseas and coordinating marketing strategies across the globe. In their explanation, Muhlbacher and Leihs (2006) state that international marketing is about applying marketing capabilities and marketing orientation to international businesses.

It is clear that people all over the world have different needs. This means that companies

must explore the marketing of a company's products or services into another country, either individually or gaining entry through a joint venture with another company in a target market, and such organisations are required to develop a marketing mix for the target market. This process can be as straightforward as using existing marketing strategies but can involve a highly complex relationship strategy including localization, local product offerings, pricing, production and distribution with customised promotions, offers, websites, social media and specific leadership approaches. Internationalization and international marketing meet the needs of selected foreign countries where a company's value can be exported and there is inter-firm and withing-firm learning, alongside optimization and efficiency in economies of scale and scope. The firm does not need to export or enter all world markets to be considered an international marketer.

International companies, including universities, must accept that differences in values, customs, languages and currencies will mean that some products or services will only suit certain countries and that as well as there being global markets e.g., for Coca-Cola drinks, there are important regional differences. For example, advertising in China and India needs to focus on local languages. Just as the marketing environment has to be assessed at home, the overseas potential of markets has to be carefully scrutinized. Finding relevant information takes longer because of the unfamiliarity of some locations. The potential market size, degree and type of competition, price, promotional differences, product differences as well as barriers to trade have to be analyzed alongside the cost-effectiveness of various types of transport. The organisation then has to assess the scale of the investment and consider both short- and long-term targets for an adequate return. Thus, scholars have found that the international marketing goes beyond simply exporting products and services and becomes more involved in the marketing environment in the countries in which organizations are doing business (Govindarajan, 2007).

2.3.1.1 Higher education and international marketing

As mentioned above, international marketing is an activity whereby an organisation attempts to expand globally. For the higher education sector, it has become increasingly important to export education services in order to gain a global reach that meets the financial goals and other aspirations of the organisation. Nowadays, 'trade' in education services is a multidimensional phenomenon. This may, for example, be in the import and export of textbooks and international examinations such as the Graduate Management Aptitude Test (GMAT), but the cross-border migration of international students remains to date the most visible aspect of this 'trade' (OECD, 2009).

With the negative impact of the recent economic environment, competition in higher education has risen to a critical level both domestically and internationally. At the international level, competition is most intense among English-speaking countries and the higher education market is now well-established as a global phenomenon, especially in the US, the UK, Australia and Canada (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003). Thus, seeking to be acknowledged internationally has become a strategic goal of higher education institutions across the world (OECD, 2002), both in terms of the number of students studying abroad, and the import and export trading of wider educational services. Hence, higher education institutions like universities who would like to trade in education services need to find out its target market first and in order to achieve its performance the university needs to apply international marketing strategies to help to satisfy its customers and achieve its goals. This includes identifying potential international target segments and specific positioning attributes that could be implemented to achieve the objectives related to the recruitment of high-performance students and distinguished faculty. However, the characteristics for the marketing of higher education are both peculiar and specific.

The literature on higher education expansion indicates that seeking out the way to recruit more international students is the priority of many higher education institutions like universities (Hemsley-Brown, 2013). Therefore, universities are now involved

across a wide range of international marketing activities, e.g. overseas recruiting trips; attendance at international education fairs; university pathway programme development such as foundation and English as a Second Language (ESL) programmes and so on (Naidoo and Wu, 2011). In addition, dedicated members of staff are now employed to focus entirely on international recruitment.

However, developing an international marketing strategy is a complex issue, as mentioned earlier, if we see students as customers and education as an 'export' then this product is a highly intangible product with its own characteristics (Mazzarol, 1998). Not only that, but many scholars (Hawawini, 2011; Cantwell, 2015; Stein, 2017; Teichler, 2017) have also questioned the internationalization of higher education, such as the necessity of internationalization, what international mobility can bring to universities and to the higher education sector. They have also questioned whether international cooperation and mobility of higher education is a project that has political connotations associated with spreading power and influence, and whether the implementation of the internationalization strategy leads to the waste of resources for higher education institutions.

2.3.2 The importance of international marketing for higher education institutions

Scholars (Molesworth, Scullion and Nixon, 2011; Asaad, Melewar and Cohen, 2014) have indicated that the most important impact on higher education institutions is the negative effect of the financial environment, worldwide. Higher education institutions have been relying on foreign markets like China as a key source of funding (Bolsmann and Miller, 2008). With the wave of globalisation and increased liberalisation of trade in services (Verger, 2008), there has been increased competition within education worldwide. As financial pressure in home countries increases, the reliance on overseas markets has also increased.

To take the UK as an example, in 2010 the UK government stated over the next few

years, the higher education budget will be cut 40% by the government and it is the best time for university to start consideration about other financial sources, such as burgeoning international student market (Treasury, 2010).

Thus, institutions have become increasingly motivated to implement strategic marketing activities to attract international students (Pinar et al., 2011). Thus, to have a clear understanding of the characteristics of higher education becomes very important to those who will be managing and marketing higher education institutions. Perceiving higher education institutions as purely not-for-profit organizations can be misleading since universities do seek lucrative gains from international students and other ancillary services provided to different institutions (e.g. advisory services) (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003). Although universities are not for profit, they still need to be operated, so funding and on-going viability of the organizations is an inevitable concern.

It has been argued that the internationalization of higher education will help international students and permit local students to gain a much richer academic and cultural experience to prepare for a career in the future. According to a research, by 2025 the demand for international education will grow to 7.2 million students and if universities intend to play a part in this market they urgently need to implement an international strategy (Dean, 2012). International students will not only bring profit, but also their knowledge and experience as well as cultural diversity and numerous contacts that can help to create customers for local goods and services in the wider economy.

The leading English-speaking countries, such as U.S, the UK, Canada and Australia, have issued reports that forecast there will be an increase in the total number of international students over the next ten years (Ruby, 2014). However, in the current climate, with continuing pressures associated with Brexit and the Corona Virus pandemic, the situation is looking much more precarious(Brammer and Clark, 2020). Safety environment is one of the most considered factors that affect international

students' decision making of study destination (Cao, 2016); Covid-19 and prevention measures have made a massive impact on global study mobility that turn the geographic advantage of some English-speaking countries to mitigate against international students to study. New limits on funding for overseas students and restrictions on travel will inevitably have consequences for international recruitment. Similarly, restrictions on funding for UK students wishing to travel abroad may have effects on international exchange and the development of academic links across borders.

Scholars such as (Hawawini, 2011; Cantwell, 2015) have also raised concerns about the 'real' benefits of overseas recruitment. For example, whether international students can really generate money for higher education institutions, and if the resources invested by the university to enter new markets are not proportional to the income, it will inevitably affect the insufficient resources and cause waste. A study of the US higher education institutions found that only some public higher education institutions appear to have enjoyed net revenue gains from international student enrolment, which also demonstrates that the potential for financial gain does not mean that every university that recruits international students will profit (Cantwell, 2015).

2.3.2.1 An examination of national responses to the need for international marketing

Despite concerns, in recent years, there has been an exponential growth in the interest of higher education institutions in international marketing as they reach out to potential students across their national boundaries. This interest has been operant at a national level in many countries including the UK, USA, Australia, and New Zealand (Naidoo and Wu, 2011). This is why international student mobility grew by 52% over the period 1998-2004. Growth in international student mobility is both demand and supply motivated (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). On the demand side, students increasingly view international qualifications as a differentiating asset that tends to command a premium in today's competitive job market. On the supply side, higher education institutions (Hayes, 2007) faced with a decline in public funding have been increasingly compelled to offer their courses to full-fee paying overseas students (Hayes, 2007). These demand

and supply dynamics for education services have led to an increasing marketization of higher education at a global level.

Advocates (Dean, 2012; Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman, 2012; Beech, 2018) believe there are benefits for both host countries (e.g., by promoting human development) and source countries (e.g., providing institutions with a new source of income), and the forces of globalization have encouraged increased student mobility across national boundaries. In the UK, international students are defined as those students whose normal place of residence is outside the UK, that is to say, they are not the UK domiciled (Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman, 2012). Many advocates also believe that having an international marketing strategy is not only a strategy that the university could apply to promote itself or expand recruitment since such strategies also bring real profit. According to the UK Home office's record, each year, international students contribute £2.5 billion to the UK economy in tuition fees alone and when the overall expenditure is considered. While in the UK, the overall estimated contribution of such students is £8.5 billion (Dean, 2012).

Throughout the rapid developments, the British Council has worked intensively and collaboratively with most universities to promote higher education in Britain and British education as a whole. The form of collaborative partnership is now more common throughout the world, where countries are seeking to attract increasing numbers of international students to study in their countries (Hemsley-Brown, 2013). In the UK income from international students also makes a considerable contribution. UK higher education institutions are worth £45 billion annually to the UK economy and are a major export earner. The annual contribution to the UK's national income made by international students is estimated at £5.5 billion (International Unit, 2010). The intention was to 'brand' higher education in the UK and 'sell' it through the British council offices throughout the world, in other word, to 'export' higher education 'importing' international students. This marketing campaign was viewed as a critical

step in achieving the targets set to increase the numbers of international students attending UK universities. One study also indicated that after Brexit, the UK higher education sector could profit from the expected continued depreciation of the pound, bringing in almost a further 20,000 international students and a further £226.4 million (Beech, 2018). However, as stated above, this situation is currently looking rather more uncertain.

It is also noted that fees increase may limit the growth in numbers from Europe and that visa restrictions and cultural preferences may push and pull students to other destinations. As the British Council's report indicated, fees and visa regulations have been seen as constraints on international student growth (Ruby, 2014). Thus, higher education institutions in the UK need to take extra care on environmental factors and monitoring their recruitment policies regularly. Hence, in August 2017, the then UK Home Secretary commissioned the Migratory Advisory Committee to study the impact of international students and indicated in the letter that 'we understand how important students from around the world are to our higher education sector, which is a key export for our country' (Rudd, 2017). Rudd's statement shows clearly the emphasis on economic gain and the tension between policies of restricting migration and the economic benefits of attracting international students.

2.3.2.2 The recruitment of international students

Of course, there are many ways to recruit students for higher education institutions and the limitations of space mean that only a partial outline can be offered here. Crucially, universities need to build a strong image to attract students in order to build a good corporate image with the local community, agencies, and schools. They also need to focus on the internal processes of the universities such as expanding programmes to meet employment market requirements. For international recruitment, universities not only need to apply all of those approaches if the university would like to have competitive advantages, but they also need to have clear positioning in the marketplace and a clear understanding of the target market, and then combine these facets together

to attract the most suitable international students. However, there are also critics who point out that the expansion of international student recruitment and the internationalization of higher education contribute to the acceleration of the global division of labor and uneven distribution of resources (Stein, 2017). As UUK (2016) pointed out, the unemployment rate of international students after graduation in the UK is the lowest in the world. This suggests that although British higher education institutions currently have high prestige, there are also uneven resources focused on those who graduate from UK higher education institutions, and other problems such as racism, which may influence outcomes.

- ***Building an image***

Even with those criticisms, universities all over the world still compete to recruit international students and faculty in response to globalization and quality standards. This means they feel a need to build strong brands locally and globally. It is seen as vital that universities build relationships with alumni and overseas partners to generate positive publicity and ensure future loyalty (Dean, 2012). It is regarded that brand equity of a university will be enhanced by valued experience of international students while the university should invest in a series of programmes to make their academic staff aware of the enhanced skills they need to acquire and promote to engage with their students. Metrics to assess tutors triangulated through student feedback are an increasing feature of ensuring brand quality, and other systems such as internal moderation and external review, annual monitoring and review of the pedagogical practices of the university claim to ensure that there is a consistency in delivery. In addition, annual monitoring of student views on how tutors can deliver effective learning experiences are used to try to enhance the student experience.

Klassen (2002), Gomes and Murphy (2003) describe how the internet is increasingly used for higher education institutions in the US to provide marketing information. For example, those authors conclude that many variables influence students' decisions to

study abroad, and that the most critical variable is information. They found that in choosing education abroad, prospective students find it hard to investigate and verify the claims made by universities. Because educational courses are complex and long-term, and reliable information from a reputable and independent source is one of the keys to student's choice. Thus, it is clear that prospective international students will seek information from a number of sources online in addition to the universities' websites. There will be more detailed information on how universities apply online marketing strategies to promote themselves, and therefore recruit students, in the next section.

- ***Building a corporate identity***

Universities do collect their own data and compare their own data with other relevant data from higher education bodies (e.g. Higher Education Statistics Agency HESA), education partners and agents overseas, and analyse them to track the different needs of students from different countries. This is in line with building a listening orientation towards international students to learn how to serve them better, and therefore improve students' experiences (Ng and Forbes, 2008). The 'push-pull' model is the most common model that universities apply to international marketing. Push and pull factors help overseas students in making decisions about choosing a university. Push factors tend to be economic or political (such as the lack of Higher Education supply in the country and government scholarships to study abroad) and appear to play a more significant role in choice of country. On the other hand, pull factors such as institutional reputation, international recognition of qualifications, teaching quality and location of university appear to exert greater influence on institutional choice (Dean, 2012).

Within the 'push-pull' framework, McMahon (1992) has studied the decision making and motivation of international students. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) examined the most common push factors and found that they lack capacity and opportunities in the students' home countries, lower educational quality, employer preference for overseas

education, the unavailability of particular subjects, and political and economic problems in the home countries. The pull factors most often mentioned include quality of education and reputation of country/institution, rankings in league tables, improved employment prospects, opportunity to improve English language skills, and the opportunity to experiences a different culture. Personal and human factors are also important issues, such as individual attitudes to religion and safety, as well as the influence of recommendations from family and friends, teachers and agents. However, this 'push-pull' model also confirms the concerns from observers about the connection between the internationalization of higher education and politics. Observers pointed out that the uncertainty of international politics will bring an unpredictable future to the internationalization of higher education institutions (Teichler, 2017). Therefore, this author suggests that higher education institutions must make efforts more urgently in favor of international and intercultural understandings before implementing internationalization strategies.

The development of international branch campuses is one of the newest practices that higher education institutions have applied to the recruitment of international students. The benefits of establishing an international branch campus are that students can study university programmes without leaving their home country or region. This reduces costs for those students/families, raises public awareness in the locality, increases profits for universities and can have benefits on local employment rates. In several locations, globally, the demand for higher education at international branch campuses is already large, and it is still fast-growing. According to the statistics of Higher Education Statistics Agency showed that the most popular type of study for EU students were distance, flexible or distributed learning in 2019/21, whilst the collaborative provision saw the most non-EU students (HESA, 2021).

The most important reason that students make the decision to study at an international branch campus is that the cost of studying at an international branch can be significantly

less than studying at the home campus of a university based in English-speaking countries, such as the US, the UK or Australia. For example, tuition fees at the University of Nottingham's Chinese campus are approximately 60% of the fees it charges in the UK. For this reason, international branch campuses might compete for international students in the global market by implementing competitive pricing strategies (Becker, 2009; Wilkins, 2010; Wilkins and Huisman, 2011). A further good example of the attractions of building an international branch campus is that many Pakistani students are motivated by remaining in their home nation. This is especially true for female students because most Pakistani families would not be happy allowing their daughters to leave the family home for the purpose of study. The disadvantages of study at an international branch campus include: the reputation of the main branch often outshines the offshore branch; there can be a lack of campus life; some people think the degree is not equal to one awarded to those attending the main site; and cultural clashes and difficulty understanding policies and procedures (Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman, 2012).

2.3.2.3 Challenges for the international marketing of higher education institutions

With the development of globalisation and the macro environment, different voices have emerged in predicting views on the challenges of the international marketing of higher education. Some commentators think the global recession will make overseas study less affordable, and the development of domestic higher education also might reduce the number of those studying abroad. However, on the other hand, some consider that the growth of international students will continue as an important phenomenon. The middle class in India and China is growing, which increases the numbers who can afford international studies. In addition, structural changes in economies which demand more skilled labour and the continuation of strong premiums for higher education in the labour market may also drive up demand (Ruby, 2014).

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With these different views in mind, it is regarded that if universities are to claim to have a global reach they will need to introduce a strategy to internationalize their university.

Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) highlight that the higher education sector in the UK is facing some serious challenges in terms of funding, and increased competition. The challenges these students face studying abroad in university might include the divergence of approaches they experience in relation to marketing and the actual experience of study and strategies that aid students and staff to develop a global perspective and help universities create a welcoming environment (Dean, 2012). The social and academic challenges that international students face could also be part of the challenge that universities will need to meet and identifying the key social and academic challenges international students face while studying abroad could reduce these challenges.

Before starting university, the main influences on potential students can be divided into two themes. The first such theme is the attraction of the course, entry requirements, university ranking, scholarships, recognition of the course by employers, university facilities. The second theme is based on social factors such as the location of the institution, job prospects, the appeal of the national culture, the cost of living, and influences by friends and family. Cao (2016)'s research survey found that Chinese university students pay much more attention to the attractiveness of the potential international destination, compared to the conditions of their home country. During study in the foreign countries, many international students would like the university to offer career guidance services to them. Scholar additional services, in terms of language workshops, preparing for assignments, lecture, etc. were very much favoured by international students. The theme of practical application of theory is a recurring theme of concern by the international students who can feel isolated and wish to have the opportunity to attend regular social events organized by the course or the international office of the institution (Dean, 2012).

For the UK, the competition in the international market is more and more competitive, and such competition is now not only between English speaking countries since France

and Germany, amongst other nations, are now offering courses taught wholly or partly in English (Asteris, 2006). The added attraction of studying in these nations is that students have the opportunity to learn another European language and pay significantly lower tuition fees.

2.3.2.4 The developing direction of international marketing

While keep those criticisms in mind, there are three strategic factors that are likely to influence how committed international marketing managers are to strategy implementation. First, 'vision fit' is seen as an important strategic factor. Vision fit is the situation where a strategy is perceived to fit in with an organization's strategic goal, and vision fit relates to whether a given marketing strategy for recruiting international students fits in with the university's overall strategic plan. Another strategic factor emerging from the data is the perceived 'significance' of strategy, which appears to affect an international marketing manager's commitment to implementation. The last strategy factor identified is institutional 'buy-in'. Merely communicating a strategy to organizational members has serious limitations in aligning people with expected behavior (Vila and Canales, 2008). In order to accomplish its strategic goals, it is regarded that an organisation must bring key people on board so that they are committed to the project.

2.4 Online marketing

2.4.1 Definition of Online Marketing

Online marketing is one of several marketing strategies that organizations use to promote their products or services. It is a modern tactic and different from other marketing strategies and relies on electronic channels and the internet, such as websitess, email, social media etc. The Internet is a late 20th century technology and has been widely developed and used to promote product and services worldwide. In relation to this topic Andreasen and Kotler (2008) have pointed out that the key objective of online marketing is to promote brands, engage with customers and increase sales, and they

note that the Internet has become a core promotional medium for most organizations nowadays. Furthermore, researchers like Bayraktaroglu and Aykol (2008) have noted that the Internet is a primary source of information for consumers all around the world (Bayraktaroglu and Aykol, 2008).

Thus, with the growth of the use of the Internet, the World Wide Web and the other electronic channels has become a critical component for people, both on the supply and the demand sides, and no matter whether a manufacturer or a retailer, it is worthy of serious consideration. The Internet is seen as an effective way to build a brand and attract customers, and it is also an important source of information for customers when making decisions about buying any product or service (Ferrell and Hartline, 2005). There is no doubt that in the twenty-first century, the Internet is one of the most important new mediums for reaching audiences, and that it is particularly powerful with young audiences (Andreasen and Kotler, 2008; Barnes and College, 2012).

With the development of the Internet, communication became easier through those electrical mediums, which have made the world a 'global village'. Physical distance has been conquered by using constant communication through the Internet using websites, emails, Internet phones, and, lately, Social Media that provides an opportunity for two-way communications between the producer and the consumers (Constantinides and Stagno, 2012; Pringle and Fritz, 2019). Therefore, this medium has been recognized as an important medium for marketing by many researchers in their studies (Belch and Belch, 2007; Keegan and Green, 2008).

2.4.1.1 Relationship between Online Marketing and Higher Education Institutions

In contemporary circumstances, higher education institutions face many issues and challenges in the current social environment; for instance, political changes in the world, globalization and liberalization of trades have changed the scenario and commodified education as a service (Mohammedbhai, 2002). This redefinition of the services opens up the market for education services to be exported as goods. The Internet has become

a new and vitally important source of knowledge for the increasingly competitive higher education sector, since educational institutions have tended to struggle to enhance their marketing efforts and such new technologies have given their work equal status with traditional physical commodities.

The variation in cultural, societal, regulatory and economic aspects of the customers (students) of educational institutions makes it a big challenge for the market planners and managers to streamline the marketing efforts and find the right segment for the products they offer, the price they can offer and the channels they can use to develop the right promotional plan targeted towards the right segment of customers (Harrison-Walker, 2010). Hancock and McCormick (1996) gave a further explanation that higher education administrators should begin to recognize that they must market their offerings using effective strategies.

Higher education competition and the changing social environment are two important aspects that have forced higher education institutions to operate both in the public sector and the private sector, to become more proactive and more market-oriented. In this respect, institutions are

> 'being urged to provide high quality education, exist as a well-reputed university, achieve enrolment success, improve competitive positioning, provide contemporary and well-designed academic programs, and maintain financial strength' (Cetin, 2004, p.57).

As the macro-environment has rapidly changed, online marketing has thus become a key strategic weapon for higher education institutions to help them face the current 'hyper-environment' (Aladwani, 2006; Davidavičienė and Tolvaišas, 2011) especially since it offers various tactics for institutions to fulfil the different needs of their different stakeholders as well as up-to-date information and communication to their stakeholders.

The advantage of the Internet as a communication medium likewise lies in the fact that it allows institutions to target the conveyed information at a precisely specified audience segment (Phillips, 2009).

Thus, online marketing is increasingly important not only in the business sector, but also in the academic environment; especially from the perspective of their use in public relations activities and communication with various stakeholders. Watson and Noble (2007) state that public relations in an online environment are mainly about convincing the public to use this medium to make positive comments about the organization's products or services. Unlike the off-line environment, the nature of the Internet provides the possibility to quickly connect without any geographical constraints.

Despite these benefits, online marketing has critics as well. There are widely diverse opinions about what content higher education institutions should provide and what websites should accomplish (McCoy, 2011). It is no doubt that we have entered a digital world, and it has been argued that the Internet and social media will contribute to the student-as-customers paradigm (McCoy, 2011; Bélangera, Balib and Longdenc, 2013) and cause institutions to concentrate on student satisfaction rather than long-term needs (Anctil, 2008). It is also believed that social media has effects on students' decision-marking (Constantinides and Stagno, 2012; Rutter, Roper and Lettice, 2016; Motta and Barbosa, 2018). The next section will address the most common strategic tools that higher education institutions apply and how they assist higher education institutions to meet their needs. It will also address the limitations of applying online marketing strategic tools and the potentially negative aspects of each online marketing strategy tools.

2.4.2 Online Marketing Strategy Tools

As mentioned earlier in this section, marketing plays a major role in any organization. So, in order for higher education institution to survive and to succeed in the rapidly

changing environment, it has become a key aspect in their general strategy. Effective marketing requires higher education institutions to identify their consumers (target groups), understand and communicate with them as directly and interactively as possible (Laurer, 2006). The main target groups for higher education institutions include students, parents, alumni, employers and general community. Student could be divided into mature students, high-school graduates and international students.

The most two common and valuable mediums that higher education institutions applied to communicate with its consumers are Internet websites and social media. According to a recent research report from a study based on US students the younger generation are reinforcing their familiarity with mobile technologies; more than 70% of high school students visit a school's website through their mobile phone and nearly 40% defined social media as a valuable resource when making decisions (Rogers and Croke, 2012). This study also reveals that students find getting in touch with admissions counsellors via the Internet very useful.

2.4.2.1 World Wide Web

What is particularly interesting to marketers is that, aside from seeking directions to specific places, geolocation-enabled activities are often directly related to consumer-related behaviour. Data-driven geolocation notifications and incentives with alerts, along with geo-conquesting, which refers to targeting competitors' locations with their aggressive brand offers can help marketers plan and implement a concrete location-based marketing strategy (Rais, 2016). The use of Internet websites has grown and become the most popular instrument for an organization in marketing in the past two decades. The most common benefits of internet website is because it is the instrument that as flexible as efficient at the same time and the cost of this kind of strategy is much lower than others (Chen, Kleiner and Kleiner, 2011).

Those advantages of internet websites also apply to higher education institutions; it is now regarded as very important to have an official website for a university and deliver

messages from the university to all of its audiences. The website is a vital communication instrument for universities since it gives them the chance to offer a plethora of information, which can be easily accessed. At the same time, the cost of dissemination is clearly lower than the one imposed by printed materials and it can be distributed virtually to an unlimited number of persons. The interactive features of the website allow students to glimpse not only the academic program, but also the location, facilities and resources of the university (Toma, Dubrow and Hartley, 2005).

Research by Štefkoa, Fedorkob and Bačíkc (2014) revealed that students tend to prefer to access practical information such as course related information rather than events or news of the university or staff. However, the alumni or local community shows a greater preference for information relating to current events or news. As we all know, website information is important for students, but how important? Take an example of how important when students make enrolment decisions from Kincl, Novák and Štrach (2013) study, it is likely that students will drop a school from their search or may be disappointed with a school if the website does not contain adequate information.

Site organization and presentation is therefore very important to student visitors. It is crucial to make sure that the information they want the most is easy to find and access (McCoy, 2011; Lewin-Jones, 2019). Many institutions struggle with the navigation constructs of their home pages, fearing that an emphasis on one market (such as prospective students) will alienate other markets (such as alumni, faculty, or their community).

It is regarded that not only the contents of university's website are important, but the way also that students find university's official website and the accessibility is very important for prospective students as well. According to Noel-Levitz (2009)'s research 72 percent of students said that they land on a university's home page after conducting a search. These results highlight some challenges. First, it is imperative to make sure

that university's name and any associated search terms (such as programs or majors) come at the very top of the search engines such as Google searches. More challenging, though, is the lack of students using URLs from printed pieces to come to the links. This does not mean those print pieces are not generating interest or building awareness. However, it seems that even if students want to learn more about the university after reading a print piece, they are not using the URLs included on that piece.

While they may be using Google or other search engines to come to websites, once they arrive, they look for links to guide them; above all, a university website should be easy to use. 85% of students also mentioned that 'the links should take me right to the answers to my questions'; thus, have a match with the search engines and rank at the top of search engines are very important for universities as well (Noel-Levitz, 2009).

In addition to the above elements, keyword selection is another important part for website marketing (Enge et al., 2012). Website users do not read the content online in the same way as a common context (i.e., in a book or a newspaper). Only 16 % of users read the website closely word-by-word. Most of the users rather scan the website, searching for keywords (emphasized words, headlines or links). The more keywords (reflecting their interest) the users find, the surer they are that they have arrived at the right website (Nielsen, 1997; McCoy, 2011).Using the right keywords when preparing the website content is also crucial for another part of online marketing – Search Engine Optimization (Grappone and Couzin, 2008). Websites are indexed by the search engine crawler, which analyses the content of the web site. Even though there are hundreds of characteristics taken into account when the search engine decides about the results returned on a user's query, the words used on the website (keywords) are said to be one of the most important factors (Google, 2010).

Higher education today, particularly international education, has rapidly developed into a global business. Colleges, universities, and other training organizations no longer

exist solely for the altruistic purpose of edification, but are, to a certain extent, commercially viable corporations. As such, they need to build brands and market themselves through promotions. A university's Website is potentially a strong competitive weapon as it positions the school against competition and is part of the image it portrays to its stakeholders (Opoku, Hultman and Saheli-Sangari, 2008). It is considered important for the university to have the right brand personality communicated via its Internet site.

The World Wide Web has shaped university recruiting and marketing practices (Jones, 2006; Goldie, 2008; Wang and Cooper-Chen, 2009). According to previous studies, the Internet is the primary source for prospective students to research universities (Stoner, 2004; Tedeschi, 2004; Goldie, 2008). For international students who cannot make a campus visit, photos on a university's website can be their only encounter and glimpse of the campus. A visually attractive university website can influence a student's attitude toward a particular institution, boost the number of international applicants, and help build a university's brand (Jones, 2006; Opoku, Hultman and Saheli-Sangari, 2008). Thus, for example, the content used to attract and convince the prospective students about the qualities of the university might also be important for the search ability and the visibility of the university online (Kincl, Novák and Štrach, 2013).

A study showed that the British Council has worked intensively and collaboratively with most British universities to promote higher education in Britain. Frequently used phrases in the material they encouraged institutions to use included 'excellence in teaching quality' and 'reputation for excellence'. After 2005-2006 there seems to be a slight shift, towards the reality of universities rather than just the more clichéd advertising copy (Hemsley-Brown, 2013). This research also claimed that misleading information becomes part of the 'neo-liberal discourse of marketisation and commodification and globalization', where each plays their part as provider and consumer in a highly competitive international arena (Hemsley-Brown, 2013).

2.4.2.2 Social media

Social media is another avenue for organizations to communicate and collaborate with its stakeholders; it is regarded that social media provides massive value for organizations although simply having a presence does not guarantee stakeholder participation (Waters et al., 2009). The application of social media for marketing and advertising is now well established in many commercial organisations. People, especially younger people, tend to socialize and network online through those carriers rather than communicating with each other face-to-face, by letter or telephone. Internet websites and social media offer a cost-effective way for organizations to provide better value for money; however, unlike websites, social media instruments offer organizations the possibility to engage the public and to receive feedback, because in the end they facilitate a form of 'conversation' as they enable the exchange of views.

Social media use by higher education institutions is still relatively new. However, the current competitive environment of higher education means institutions cannot rely so heavily on public funding. They are under increasing pressure adopt creative ways to control costs while still maintaining a high level of service (Mandelson, 2009). Richard Taylor of the University of Leicester states that:

> "Marketing considerations are now going to align much more clearly with strategic decision making in universities. Senior management teams in universities will increasingly have to face marketing questions about the brand, the way it is projected and the way they seek to develop it." (Anyangwe, 2011).

It is claimed by some authors that 'word of mouth' is actually the most persuasive form of promotion (Gallaugher and Ransbotham, 2010) and social media can then amplify the impact (both positive and negative) of the conversation about an organisation between stakeholders (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2011). Many prospective students are using social media to gather information about universities, so universities feel they have to engage in this online environment. Social

media conversations about organisations are occurring continually, whether the organisation is 'listening' or not (Kowalik, 2011). It is increasingly regarded as important for organisations to be active participants in social media, and to monitor and manage the communication that concerns them (Hayes, Ruschman and Walker, 2009; Gallaugher and Ransbotham, 2010).

Thus, it is not surprising that higher education institutions are exploring new opportunities and methods to engage with prospective students, alumni and other stakeholders (Kowalik, 2011). Roach (2006) suggests that prospective university and students will be more open and positive to adopting social media as the method of recruitment in the future. There is also evidence that many potential students prefer to interact with university admissions departments via online means (Hayes, Ruschman and Walker, 2009), and use social media to seek out information that is not provided by traditional forms of communication from universities (Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2011). In addition to prospective students, a university's alumni may also be active on social media, and these important communication channels potentially provide a new way to connect with them and foster a relationship (Kowalik, 2011).

However, little is known about what impact social media will have on the decision making process of future students regarding their choice of study and university (Constantinides and Stagno, 2012) as, unlike other purchase decisions, a student signing up for a degree is effectively signing up for a lifelong relationship with the university. Hence, other factors, like a university's ranking, reputation, and academic achievements are also likely to continue to play a part in prospective students' decisions.

One of the other most widely used social media tools employed by organisations is Twitter (Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga, 2010). Twitter is a popular and rapidly growing 'microblogging' service where users can post quick and frequent short messages (up to 140 characters) called 'Tweets', which may contain links to other

online material such as photos and websites, to their 'Followers' who have subscribed to their Twitter account (Reuben, 2008; Kassens-Noor, 2012). Tweets can be tagged with a searchable 'hashtag' (e.g. a conference might publicize a hashtag to use so that the Tweets associated with the event can be easily collected via a tag search), and a user can 'Retweet' messages to all of their Followers (Gallaugher and Ransbotham, 2010).

It is common for universities to operate multiple Twitter accounts for specific purposes. Virtually all social media researchers note the importance of a sustained commitment to the use of social media, if that use is to be most effective. A foundation principle in attracting users is a prominent link to the university's social media accounts on the university's official Internet home page (Burkhardt, 2010; Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga, 2010; Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2011). However, it is must be born in mind that the use of social media by stakeholders is voluntary, so it is important for a university to attract a critical mass of members (followers) and facilitate their active participation in an online community (Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga, 2010). It is also the case that although the number of students who are willing to interact and share information through social media tools in increasing, it is regarded that the quality of the information they share is limited ((Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2011).

2.4.3 Limitations and criticisms of online marketing strategy tools

It is important to reiterate that education has characteristics that are quite different from products bought in shops, or online. The 'success' of educational programmes, their 'quality', their 'impact', and so on, are all complex factors to identify, define or measure. Promotion and marketing then can only communicate certain elements of the attraction of university courses – a great deal of what students 'get' from an undergraduate degree cannot be summarized in 40 characters. Besides the limitations of online marketing tools, it is also important to reiterate that higher education outcomes are complex and long-term, and reliable information from a reputable and independent source is likely to continue to be one of the keys to students' choices (Hemsley-Brown, 2013). In fact,

scholars (Anctil, 2008; Harrison-Walker, 2010) warn that if higher education institutions simply adjust their programmes to meet the demands of students, reinforce the student-as-customer paradigm and concentrate on short-term, narrow student satisfaction, then they will not achieve long-term benefits for the institution or for students and staff.

2.5 Brand marketing

2.5.1 Definition of branding marketing

The American Marketing Association provides a basic definition of branding which is a name, symbol, word, sign, design or combination that differentiates one or more offerings of a seller or group of sellers from the competition.

Branding is not only a symbol or name, however. It was conceived as a means to establish a product and/or service's name and to convey the legitimacy, prestige and stability of a company. Chapleo (2010) and Chernatony and McDonald (2003)noted that a successful brand delivers sustainable competitive advantage and invariably results in superior profitability and market performance. However the relatively simple promotional tools of the past no longer work as they once did (Pinar et al., 2011), and this is because the world has changed to a more digital and communication society (Castells, 2010). As Castells (and others) point out, the spread of networked, digital communication across the developed world has changed how we communicate and live.

It is regarded that building a strong and successful brand will capture customer preference and loyalty (Pinar et al., 2011). This is seen as an integral part of marketing strategy for a corporate identity. This is especially important for service organization because of the process nature of services with many customer touch points (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000), where each of these components could have a critical impact on service quality, and ultimately on the image of a service based brand. In the business world, it is argued that the benefits of branding are to improve financial performance

through facilitating customer identification and purchasing. Branding also aims to enhance brand loyalty which promotes repeat purchases.

2.5.2 What branding means for higher education

Comparatively recently, non-profit organizations have started using branding concepts and tools to promote organizations. It has also become popular in higher education institutions in the recent past (Chapleo, 2010; Robert, Williams and Omar, 2014). Branding is one of the marketing strategies that was the first to be used in the higher education sector and can be seen as part of brand promotion (Nicolescu, 2009). Some writers argue that branding as a concept applies as well to higher education institutions as it does to other organizations (Opoku, Abratt and Pitt, 2006). However, others argue that the notion of a 'brand' for a higher education institution is inherently more complex (Jevons, 2006). Nevertheless, in 2000, the UK government supported a worldwide re-branding exercise campaign which set out to establish a clear and competitive identity for UK universities in order to attract more international students (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007).

Maringe and Gibbs (2009) suggest that organizations like universities need to build a brand for themselves, otherwise they will end up competing on price and making themselves valueless in the process. Maringe and Gibbs (2009) also suggest educational institutions differentiate themselves from their competitors. Increased competition and decreases in government funding are some of the more pressing issues of most higher education institutions today. Thus, higher education has become a highly competitive 'industry', as described earlier in this literature review. To be successful, institutions are being challenged to recruit and retain high numbers of students. Therefore, higher education institutions like universities or colleges have turned to branding as a solution (Pinar et al., 2011). However, because of their unique service characteristics, higher education institutions' branding attempts may not always result in success, and may have unfortunate unintended consequences, and that is the reason branding has become

a controversial tool in recent research in the higher education sector (Chapleo, 2010).

There are other questions that concern the suitability of commercial branding concepts to the higher education sector (Jevons, 2006; Temple, 2006), what value branding brings to higher education (Waraas and Solbakk, 2008; Pringle and Fritz, 2019), and whether branding is rational and authentic (Waraas and Solbakk, 2008; Motta and Barbosa, 2018). It is also argued by critics of branding that it does not necessarily help to differentiate institutions and, in reality, results in more homogeneity (Waraas and Solbakk, 2008; Pringle and Fritz, 2019). It is also a costly endeavour.

2.6 Higher education marketing criticism

Although advocates believe that developing a marketing strategy can help higher education institutions stand out and thus survive in a competitive environment (Drummond, 2004) there are voices which suggest problems and issues with the current emphasis on competition, branding and marketisation (Adorno, 2001; Drummond, 2004).

Higher education systems are being liberalised, with private 'for profit' providers entering and competing with publicly funded and private 'not for profit' ones. Tuition fees have steadily risen to an average of £9,000 per year, so that students and their families are bearing an increasing share of the costs of teaching. Maintenance grants are being supplemented with, or replaced by, loans. Institutional rankings and other aids to consumer choice are proliferating, whilst universities and colleges devote increasing resources and energy to marketing and branding (Molesworth, Scullion and Nixon, 2011). Hence, it has been questioned whether the nature of higher education is changing in ways which are contrary to its primary, educational, function. Such critics also mention that marketing higher education will inevitably lead to the development of more for-profit providers in the higher education sector (Woodfield, Fielden and Middlehurst, 2011). Students are increasingly encouraged to see university as about

preparation for employment and as a value *in the future* rather than for intrinsic reasons (Gibbs, 2008; Collini, 2012). The neo-liberal trends across western industrial nations means there is an increasing emphasis on measurables (numbers of graduates, moneys raised, number of publications, number of Ph.D. completions) as evaluated by a variety of metrics (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005).

When asked if student evaluation processes encourage faculty to "water down" the content of their courses, 72% responded in the affirmative. Almost 49% of the faculty said they present less material in class than they used to, and about one third said they have lowered standards for students to get a passing grade (only 7% said they had raised standards). When disagreements occur in a student-customer orientation, the educational institution should logically look to the instructor (as a provider of an essential service) for redress. It makes sense in a customer-oriented environment for administrators to assume the instructor is wrong in any dispute with a student, unless proven otherwise. Recently, at Temple University a faculty member was fired in a dispute with students because he demanded rigor and did so apparently in an unforgiving and abrasive manner (Wilson and Gilligan, 2002).

Another concern is that power has shifted in higher education institutions. Although there are obvious and real arguments for education to be a process which is jointly engaged in and negotiated, between students and staff, there is a concern that power has shifted towards students in the form of 'customers'; in the business world, after all, it is a maxim that the 'customer is always right'. In turn, 'academics may experience anxiety and alienation over what they take students to be and what they take themselves to be' (Young, 2002). It is also argued that the consumer-media culture is encouraging universities to become 'pedagogical machines' (Kenway and Bullen, 2001). The priority becomes to consider and satisfy their consumers, and this affects the level of academic work as well as the ways in which knowledge is communicated (Miller, 2014; Traianou, 2016; Williams, 2016; Karran, 2019). Marketing higher education has also

lead to vastly increased expenditure on managers and administrators, and activities like advertising and branding. It is has also been argued that it is responsible for an unfortunate increasing focus on sponsorships and commercial research which may bring other unfortunate consequences (Bok, 2003). For example, this could lead to conflicts of interest in the production of knowledge that does not 'fit' with the priorities of a commercial organisation. In turn, this could affect the intrinsic quality of higher education in the UK (Woodfield, Fielden and Middlehurst, 2011).

As suggested above, students in the customer model may be encouraged to transfer responsibility onto service providers rather than take personal accountability (Bay and Daniel, 2001). For example, if students do not have time to do the assigned work or readings, then the professor can be seen as assigning too much work and this poor performance can become viewed as the fault of the professor. Transferring responsibility creates a dilemma when students fail to acquire knowledge by choosing not to attend class and to hold the professor accountable for failing to teach them what they need to know. By demanding the "choice" of not attending class, students have selected the consequence of less knowledge that often translates to a lower grade. Nevertheless, in too many instances, students hold the faculty accountable for this consequence when assessing a professor's performance.

The customer-oriented approach to instruction reinforces the immediate, concrete, and observable vocational goals over the educational benefits of education. Furthermore, if "education" is a product, then the customer should be able to buy it with money (and some effort). As fees increase it could be argued that the monetary exchange involved will exacerbate the tendencies described here. A degree may be seen as just another commodity to be purchased (Emery, Kramer and Tian, 2001). A student may believe that if he/she paid tuition and has gained good results, then the failure to obtain desired employment indicates a breakdown of the expected customer/provider contract. In this kind of customer model, the students' reaction to an instructor could result in denial of

tenure, advancement, or merit pay for reasons that could conflict with current notions of academic and civil rights (Young, 1993; Clayson, 1994; Hugstad, 1997).

Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that whilst a lot can be learned from commercial practice, the particular nature of higher education institutions as large, complex, quasi-commercial organisations, founded on the principle of academic freedom, means that marketisation raises many unresolved issues in this field.

2.7 Summary

Due to recent economic conditions, diversification, decentralization, internationalization, and fierce competition, the higher education environment has changed radically. Additionally, these changes have had a significant impact on the way higher education organizations operate and are managed, and marketisation has unavoidably become a controversial way to sustain higher education. In this chapter, four marketing strategies are presented and analysed for higher education institutions to engage in: internal marketing, international marketing, online marketing, and brand marketing. In implementing the above four marketing strategies, it is suggested that higher education will be able to strengthen internal and external relationships, access targeted international markets, establish communication channels with relevant audiences through the Internet, and in turn, build its brand, allowing it to survive and expand in a highly competitive environment. In spite of this, it is not implied that higher education institutions must adopt marketing strategies or that marketing strategies are their sole purpose. According to the literature, it is clear that some of the concerns and criticisms of marketing in higher education relate to the impact of regulation on academic freedom, how quality is measured, the homogenisation of universities, and the discourse of students as consumers. Additionally, an in-depth review of the literature reveals a gap between theory and practice in higher education marketing. Due to the relatively limited amount of research conducted for practices of higher education marketing, the state of the evaluation of higher education marketing is becoming

increasingly polarized. The researcher hopes that a supportive and critical look at the literature on marketing strategies will enlighten universities regarding the need to think before setting the direction for their higher education institutions and to explore and establish appropriate practices according to their own particular contexts.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In chapter one it was stated that this study is a 'real world' research which focuses on real issues related to people's live (Robson, 2011) and the purpose of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the issues related to marketing in the higher education sector in two case study institutions and find out best practices of marketing higher education in those two countries. This chapter will address the research approach and the rationale of the research. Appropriate research methods are essential to addressing the research problem (Jankowicz, 1991). Qualitative research methods are more suitable for social research of human beings' day-to-day living (Robson, 2011), when the objectives of the study demand in-depth insight into a phenomenon (Ghauri, Gronhaug and Kristianslund, 1995). Moreover, this chapter will also contain explanation of research design, and the choice and implementation of data collection methods. Sampling aspect of the study, discussions of ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also included in this chapter.

3.2 Research approach and theoretical framework

According to Bryman (2011) the nature of the relationship between theory and research can be divided into whether it is the theory that guides the research or the theory is an *outcome* of the research. The term 'theory', Bryman (2011) pointed out, finds its most common meaning 'as an explanation of observed regularities', in other words it refers to the means by which the researcher carries out the research and guides how the researcher addresses the research questions posed by theoretical considerations. There are three basic research approaches of social science research which are: inductive theory, deductive theory and combined inductive-deductive theory.

Deductive theory refers to the nature of the relationship between theory and research (Bryman, 2011) which also means that the researcher normally deduces a hypothesis

regarding an existing theory and then designs a research strategy to test the hypothesis. Thus, deductive theory is usually associated with a quantitative research approach, and it is following a clear and logical sequence. Deductive theory focuses on scientific principles and transformation of theories into an adequate data size in order to generalize the conclusions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009).

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) the inductive approach provides a more flexible structure for adjusting the focus of research as we gain more insight into the meanings humans attach to events. Inductive theory is based on human perception and thus generalization is less important since the data is mainly qualitative, and more open-ended (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). Normally, inductive theory starts with observations, and there are no theories or hypotheses at the beginning of the research. Thus, the researcher is free in terms of altering the direction for the study after the research process had commenced. Inductive theory tends to be associated with a qualitative research approach (Bryman, 2011).

The primary purposes for the inductive approach are to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format. The approach aims to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and to develop a theory explaining the underlying structure of the raw data. Inductive approaches are frequently used to analyze qualitative data (Thomas, 2003). This is an appropriate approach given the objectives of the thesis (i.e. to evaluate the current practice of marketing higher education in the two case study universities, identify the challenges of marketisation of higher education, and determine what possible future roles marketing may play). In addition, an inductive approach will assist in the analysis of the problematisation of the issue of marketization of higher education. The majority of research on higher education marketing has focused on analyses of the pros and cons of marketing, whereas few have provided guidance on how universities may establish

appropriate marketing practices according to their particular contexts. This would include understanding the options in terms of a marketing strategy, what should be prioritized and what might the negative consequences be before embarking on the process. Using an inductive approach will enable the researcher to identify research findings from frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without being restricted by structured methodologies, thereby helping universities to build a better understanding of how to market higher education and develop effective marketing techniques.

According to (Yin, 2009), case studies can be used to explain, describe or explore events or phenomena in the everyday contexts in which they occur, that will reflect in many different ways. It also has been observed by other researchers that findings from a case study may not be suitable for generalization, as case study involves only a few participants and their actions be atypical and not representative of a larger group of people or population. Nevertheless, generalizability is not limited to quantitative methods that produce reliable findings from a sample that can be applied to a larger population or in different circumstances. Various types of generalizability may be of use in qualitative research. One type of generalization that qualitative researchers might seek is naturalistic generalizability (Stake, 1978). A generalizability conclusion is drawn through recognition of similarities and differences to the results with which the reader is familiar. That is, naturalistic generalizability occurs when the research resonates with the reader's involvement in life's affairs or his or her vicarious, often tacit, experiences. The case study, on the other hand, is often the preferred method of research for social science because it is often in harmony with the reader's experience, providing a natural basis for generalization for that individual. As Stake (1978) mentioned:

> "Naturalistic generalizations develop within a person as a product of experience. They derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be later or in other

places with which this person is familiar." (Stake, 1978, p.6).

That is, case studies provide material of sufficient detail that readers can consider parallels and connections with their own situation and draw conclusions from those comparisons. Case study is not a method for research but a means of using many methods and sources of data to look at relationships and processes; it provides an in-depth understanding of a particular and complex project in a real world context (Thomas, 2011). The case study approach will be based on two universities, one in the Northeast of China, which is government funded, and the other a public university in North West England.

A benefit of grounded theory method was that it aligned with an inductive/qualitative approach. The grounded theory helped the researcher to develop theories that were grounded in the actual data and it also provided flexible guidelines for gathering and analyzing data (Charmaz, 2006). Data gathering and analysis were gathered simultaneously, therefore the researcher could interact with their data consistently but at the same time stay 'involved with their emerging analyses' (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). The theoretical framework that brings these elements together is interpretivist.
As Bryman and Bell (2007) state, interpretivists take the view that:
'…the subject matter of the social sciences—people and their institutions—is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences. The study of the social world therefore requires a different logic of research procedure.' (Bryman and Bell, 2007).
Taking its origins from the notion of the social construction of reality (Berger Peter and Luckmann, 1967), an interpretivist approach foregrounds the meaning of events for the participants, rather than the collection of so-called 'facts'. These interpretations of the research participants 'truths' are, further, interpreted by the researcher who sets out to see patterns, trends and underlying themes in what they have been told. In this way, generalisations are possible through the analysis of multiple realities that are 'read' in the context of the research and the individual circumstances of the research participants.

This interpretivist stance allows for the particularity of human beings' experiences to be taken into account rather than being "reduced to the interaction of variables" (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997, p.102). The onto-epistemological stance that is taken up is tightly tied to the notion of social constructivism, given that the research participants are regarded as being in active relation with the world (their ontological position) and that their perceptions while 'in the world' are regarded as their 'truths' (their epistemological position). The researcher, likewise, is focussed on the specifics of participants' versions of the world and develops their version of the world through systematic consideration of these views. Thus, the researcher's onto-epistemology echoes that of the research participants. The axiological position (or the underlying value system) of the researcher and the research also relates to the foregrounding of research participants' realities, i.e. it is regarded that respecting the meanings of others' lives is an ethical stance, not simply a procedural one.

It is commonly held that research can be classified into two categories, namely qualitative and quantitative, and according to Robson (2011) and Berg and Lune (2012) these are the traditional and basic choice for carrying out a piece of social research. Bryman (2011) addressed the differences between quantitative and qualitative research:

> '…quantitative research can be construed as a research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data… by contrast, qualitative research can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data.' (Bryman, 2011, p.27).

Robson (2011) gives further explanation that quantitative research is more commonly chosen for 'natural' science research, for example chemistry, biology or physics, whilst, on the other hand, qualitative research is regarded as more suitable to human beings in social situations. Besides just being a research method, qualitative research has some

very important features as a methodology, as outlined above in terms of the theoretical framework that underpins it. Advocates of qualitative approaches note that qualitative methods are more suited to gathering rich and in-depth data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Advocates of a qualitative approach also consider that since social science research is related to human experience, numbers and statistics are perhaps not suited to gaining an understanding of people and their real-life problems. However, commentators with the polar opposite view suggest that quantitative approach is the only way to conduct serious research. Thus, the third and combined approach, mixed method, have been proposed. For instance, Creswell (2009) claims that qualitative and quantitative approaches should not 'fight' each other and that the mixed methods research, in the middle of this continuum, is a sensible approach since it incorporates elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Qualitative data are almost invariably collected for a case study strategy, although quantitative approaches are also sometimes included. Qualitative research approaches deals with data that is theoretical and descriptive in form and it is focus on human beings in social lives (Berg and Lune, 2012). The data gathered by qualitative research is rich in information.

The type of research methods to be used entirely depends on the nature of the research and also on the field of study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2013). To find out the most suitable approach to any specific piece of research, the researcher must take into account the nature of the study which relates to the nature of the inquiry, the research population, and research questions. The main aim of this research was to explore the current practice in marketing higher education in two case study universities, identify the challenges, and find out the role marketing can play in the future and analyse and problematization of marketization of higher education.

The researcher was interested in exploring and understanding the current practices of

marketing for each university, the researcher also wished to gain in-depth views on a range of issues concerned with marketing higher education. The qualitative research approach was deemed suitable for this research because the research is focused on examining how social settings affect human beings in and through the surrounding milieu. Furthermore, a qualitative research approach can also offer rich interpretations and insights that can have important implications for development and change (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014). Like any other research methodology, qualitative research can have both advantages and disadvantages. Focus groups and interviews are typical tools used in qualitative research, given that the sample size is often smaller to accommodate in-depth inquiries. In contrast, because the sample size of the research method is relatively small, it may be argued that the results may not be generalizable. Nevertheless, as Stake has discussed, methods of studying human affairs must rely on people's natural abilities to experience and understand (Stake, 1978). As a means of generalizing, naturalistic generalisations permit readers to gain insight by reflecting on the details and descriptions presented in a case study.

The researcher used grounded theory for this study because of the flexible guidelines for gathering and analysis of the data. The constructivist nature of grounded theory allowed the researcher to combine one element of grounded theory with a narrative analysis. A case study and grounded theory generalization is similar in that the findings of the study may be applied to a similar context and situation. The goal of case studies to describe a contemporary situation within its real-life context (Stake, 1978; Yin, 2009). An objective of grounded theory is to develop theories and concepts that can be generalized and applied to other situations. In the same way, the researcher hopes that the analysis of the English case study university's existing and substantial marketing strategies will enable Chinese universities to learn from them.

In this study qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews will be analyzed and interpreted to find the answer of the research questions and to meet the

research objectives (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002). The reasons that this approach have been chosen are: first, it is driven by 'behaviour and experiences of life' (Newby, 2010); second, the approach provides rich data which also gives the researcher flexibility and freedom in following threads of exploration and analysis as the research is undertaken; and third, such qualitative research will help the researcher to seek answers to research questions while taking into account social and individual settings (Berg and Lune, 2012). Details regarding ethical conduct will be provided in the ethical consideration section.

3.3 Research design

As mentioned before, the qualitative research approach will be used and the instrument that will be used to collect the primary data from two higher education institutions is semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews gives the researcher the opportunity to gain a direct response from respondents to an interview schedule which relates to each of the research themes, while maintaining flexibility in terms of unpredictable ideas that might occur. Each interview was conducted by face to face means and lasted from 30 to 60 minutes.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) the semi-structured interview is the type of interview which requires questions prepared in advance following in a certain order and all interviewees must be asked the same questions in the same order. However, this type of interview permits the researcher the flexibility to ask probe and prompt questions during the process. Therefore, the researcher needs to prepare an interview schedule prior to the interviews that involves translating the research objectives into questions. As noted earlier, there are four main objectives in this research:

1. to evaluate current practice in the marketing of higher education in mainland China and England;
2. to identify the main challenges for the marketing of higher education institutions;

3. to establish the role marketing can play in the further development of the higher education sector internationally and especially in mainland China;
4. to analyse and problematize the developing phenomenon of the marketization of higher education.

Thus, the interview schedule was devised using five themes including introductory questions (background information on each interviewee) and employing the four research objectives. Besides of the main question, each theme contained a number of probes and prompt questions. Probes and prompts questions are a very important research skill for qualitative research interview, and it permit research to gain a deep understanding of the interviewee's experience and perspective (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) have also pointed out that researchers can enrich their data by probing interviewee responses and better understanding the phenomenon that they are studying.

Consistent with the aims of the study, the following research questions are posed for interview:

- Aim one: The current practices in marketing of higher education in your areas
  - Main question: what do you think about the current state of your institution? Why is your institution marketing them?
    - Probe questions: Were there any marketing strategies that your institution applied in the past, can you give more examples of those strategies? How do you evaluate these strategies, were those all working wel

- Aim two: Main criticism of marketization in higher education in past twenty years
  - Main question: Any criticism of marketization of higher education in your country?
    - Probe questions: could you give some example of criticism of marketing higher education. Why do you think these happen?

- Prompt question: Do you think those failed strategies happened because of government or the university itself or even the whole society?

❖ Aim three: The challenges for the marketing higher education

➢ Main question: Could you think any other challenge for the marketization of higher education in UK/China?

▪ Probe questions: Why do you think those could be challenge for the whole higher education system? Can you give more detail that why you have this thought?

❖ Aim four: The possible developing directions of marketing higher education in future in both areas and the role that marketing higher education could play in higher education sector in China

➢ Main questions: Any strategic plan of marketing? Can you give more detail of those strategies?

▪ Probe questions: What do you see the developing direction of the whole higher education sector in China/UK? What do you think the role that marketing would play in higher education in mainland China?

The researcher sent the interview schedule to the interviewees in the two case study institutions before each interview and a suitable date and time for the interview was the arranged with the researcher. The researcher sought the permission of the interviewees to take notes from their answers and to record responses on an electronic device. This interview procedure enabled the researcher to explore the responses in detail where additional information was required.

All of the interviews were undertaken individually during the period March 2014 to June 2015. Since one of the institutions is based in China, the interviews were carried out in Chinese and translated into English for further analysis. After collecting the data

for the research study, the researcher compared and contrasted the themes in the data with the literature review (Chapter two) that were outlined in the literature and the initial findings from this work will be outlined in the next chapter.

- ***The pilot study:***

The interview schedule had been piloted, and refined, the interviewees chosen were all from one case study university and included a senior lecturer, one marketing administration manager, two administration officers, and one student. The reasons for the selection of those participants were: firstly, all of the participants are working and studying in one institution, and they were able to give general information to the researcher which is based on their day by day lived experiences of marketing. Secondly, since interviewees held differing roles, this helped the researcher to find out commonalities and differences in perspectives on marketing in the institution involved. Thirdly, this also helped to work through problems in the interview schedule and helped the interviewer to modify her research tools for future study.

The interview topics were discussed with supervisors and together we considered the questions that would hopefully generate data that would address the questions and be useful for the research. The interviews that the researcher carried out for the pilot study were conducted in October 2013 with students and staff from the case study institution in England. The data collected in the pilot study were used to inform the content of the final interview schedule and the process was invaluable and informed the main study in terms of research tools and methods adopted, the sequencing of questions and strategies for data analysis. The interviewer asked each question in a clear, straightforward and non-threatening way to encourage the respondents to be confident and to enjoy the interview (Robson, 2011). The participants were interviewed depending on their availability and the length of interviews varied from 30 minutes to 45 minutes.

3.4 The research sample

A sample involves the selection of a small of group people that could be representative the whole of population that related to the research study. Thus, the sample should focus on those people with characteristics like the whole research group (Gray, 2004) who share the same characteristics (Burton, Brundrett and Jones, 2008). Hence, the sample for this research study was selected carefully according to key criteria, and those participants were deemed to represent all aspects that related to the marketing of the higher education sector. Respondents of the research were thus those people managing, working or studying at the two case study institutions.

The participants that selected for this research study were 32 in total from different roles in each university, such as students, lecturing staff relating to marketing sector and managers. There are two categories of sampling: probability and non-probability sampling; and several different methods of non-probability sampling (Burton, Brundrett and Jones, 2008), and the method that this research study applied was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was employed because there were only two case study institutions, and all of the interviews were derived from those two institutions, with an equal number of interviewees. The respondents were divided into two groups, the first group included leaders and managers of each university; and the second included staff and students at the university.

The reasons for dividing the sampling into two groups were: Firstly, the first group were representative of those members of the population who make directions about the development of the university and they were deemed capable of providing the 'big picture' in terms of marketing strategy and intent,; and the second part of population were those who worked and studied in the institution, in other words people who abide by the rules in the university. They were deemed suitable to give general information to the researcher based on their day by day lived experiences of marketing.

The university that was chosen is based in Northwest England that gained university status in 1992 and now has more than 25,000 students and became one of the largest universities in UK; it organised into six faculties. The mission statement of the University is stated as:

> 'Our mission is to serve and enrich our students, clients and communities by providing opportunities for advancement through education, training, research and the transfer of knowledge' (Jones, 2011).

The other university that was researched is based in Northern east of China and is under the direct administration of the State Ministry of Education. The university is a comprehensive university which is located in the coastal city of Qingdao and the university now has more than 46,000 students. The university was founded in 1909 as a Higher specialized school, and then with a hundred years of development became a university in 1993.

3.5 Research data collection

As mentioned earlier, there a numbers of methods that could be applied to collecting data; for instance surveys, questionnaires, interviews, tests and scales, observational methods, using documents and data archives (Robson, 2002). Each method has its own features and there is no certain prescription of which technique is better than others. Researchers need to employ a 'fitness for purpose' criteria and use the instrument that is feasible in terms of access when gathering data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Interviewing is a method that useful for obtaining and evaluating facts, identifying feelings and motives, commenting on the options for action (what should be done in a given situation), considering present and past behavior, eliciting reasons and explanations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Additionally, rather than focusing on the surface elements of what is happening, an interview gives the researcher greater insight into the meaning and significance of what is happening.

There are several different ways to define types of interview, Berg and Lune (2012) and Babbie (2013) identified interview into three categories; the standardized (formal or structured) interview, the unstandardized (informal or nondirective) interview and the semi standardized (guided-semi structured or focused) interview. The key difference between those type of interview is how rigidity they are structured (Berg and Lune, 2012) and the semi-structured interview 'mid-way' between structured interviews and unstructured interviews.

The structured interview tends to be much associated with quantitative research which is more focused on measurement and the researcher needs to have more specified research questions and responses are usually demanded in the form of short answers. Structured interview are a more easy to code and can be processed more quickly when compared with semi-structured and unstructured interview (Bryman, 2011). The unstructured interview tends to be more similar to a conversation (Burgess, 1984) and can be very informal. The researcher may only need to design a single question and can allow freedom in responses. The semi-structured interview, by contrast gives:

> '…a more flexible style which can be used to collect equivalent information'(Burton, Brundrett and Jones, 2008, p.18).

The researcher needs to design interview questions in advance following a specific order to meet the research objectives. However, the researcher does not need to ask the questions in the same order during interviews and will have the opportunity to ask further questions to gain rich and detailed answers (Bryman, 2011). Therefore, it is more likely to employ semi-structured interview if the researcher is a more specific focus is better than a very general notion of wanting to carry out research on a topic the semi-structure interview will allow the more specific issues to be addressed.

The researcher thus designed a semi-structured interview to collect particular information that relates to marketing education in the two universities using predetermined themes relating to the research questions. The semi-structured interview allows freedom to change order of the questions and ask further questions even digress from the themes (Berg and Lune, 2012). The reasons for the choice of semi-structured interviews for this research are: first, the process of interview is flexible (Bryman, 2011); second, the semi-structured interview will provide rich and detailed answers which will be susceptible to content analysis (Robson, 2011).

Since the two case study institutions have different cultural backgrounds, languages of speaking and awareness of marketing higher education. In other words, the respondents from those institutions have different relationships with the institutions, studying, working or managing the institution. Hence, they will have different perspectives of the reality of marketing the institutions. Thus, it is the best to apply a method of collect data that:

> '…increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational.' (Johnson, 2011, p.200).

16 respondents were selected in each case study institution with a total number of 32 interviewees. The researcher built a good relationship with the participants through respect in order to communicate with them in a collaborative atmosphere.

3.6 Data analysis

The researcher considered several different ways of selecting and presenting data with the aim of providing clear outcomes. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) note that there are many ways to analyse and present qualitative data and there is no single or

correct way to carry out the process. Crucially, qualitative data analysis tends to be rich and detailed and is more often focus on interpretation.

Before starting the analysis of data, the researcher needs to have efficient storage and retrieval of the data gathered (Berg and Lune, 2012). Further as Miles and Huberman (1994) addressed that the management of data is based on how data are stored and retrieved.

Thus, how to access data, how to document any analysis, and how to protect the data and retention of any analysis after completion of the research are the main concerns (Berg and Lune, 2012). To meet those issues, data analysis can be defined by two concurrent strategies: data reduction, and data display (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Data reduction refers to reducing and transforming data in to order to make data simpler to understand and access, which means organizing raw data through the use of thematic questions by focusing, sampling, and transforming the material. After data reduction, the researcher needs to present the data according to the patterns or themes and thus, allows researchers to draw conclusions. Berg and Lune (2012) claimed that data display could can be by graphs, tables, sheets or phrases.

The qualitative data analysis tools such as NUD*IST and NVivo, hold the advantages of systematic storage and retrieval of data and save time when handling data for researchers (Silverman, 2004). However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) have argued that the use of qualitative software cannot replace the need and capability of the researcher to assign meaning, identify similarities and differences, and establish relations among factors.

Therefore, for qualitative research, coding is one of the most common ways used to identify data in order to allocate material to categories and develop themes (Burton et al., 2008). Moreover, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) maintained that the process

of coding allows the researcher to identify similar information. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to search and retrieve the data according to items with the same code. A code can be viewed as a coding or categorizing system, much like an index in a book.

The organisation of a significant quantity of qualitative data gathered has been important in the process of data analysis. Since the research is considered as qualitative research and data were collected by qualitative methods, initially the data was analysed to extract major themes and more subtle differentiated concepts. With the permission of the interviewees, digital recordings were made of the interviews, which were then transcribed. Following the interview, the researcher returned the transcripts to the interviewees to review and make any necessary changes in response to their feedback. As soon as the researcher finished each interview, she wrote memos about key thoughts and ideas. This process was continued while she transcribed them, as recommended by (Charmaz, 2006). She advises this approach as such memos can capture the thought, capture the comparisons and connections, and crystalize questions and directions the researcher needs to pursue. The researcher then refers back to the memo writing when she codes, categorises, and analyses the data. Following the collection of data, and the initial notetaking, the researcher read and analyzed each transcript to determine the most important, essential, or unusual things people repeated or said according to the research themes. The raw data was then divided into different categories, followed by coding for within each theme, with abbreviations for each category (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014). All data was read, and commonalities and differences were annotated. For example, when the researcher asked a question about criticisms of marketization, two striking quotations were as follows:

> ‘I think I am struggling to talk about the over marketization. There is a completely different area when we look management of universities which I will describe to which suggest the in-fact university about become very managerial and suffering what we called managerialism. I well really subscribe to that I will say absolutely

yes, but if you are talking about marketing, then I think we have to understand and be aware of that we now in a global world, we are in the global business environment, we have to market.' (EL_1.)

'So, I would say that the marketization of higher education in this country, a criticism of them is all direct to teacher training and the government shifted in the recruit training of teach trainings into schools without any a full thought of systems of process that the schools don't have in order to market. So that's the only thing I can say.' (ERM_1.)

Notably, the lecturer and the staff believed that this issue was a matter that was in the hands of the institution itself whereas the marketing manager felt that this issue related closely to the policy of the government. Thus, in relation to the two quotations the researcher 'cut' and 'pasted' this raw data in the category of 'criticism of marketization for higher education' under theme three. The whole process continued until all the raw data from all interviews have been categorized. During the coding process, some important information that was provided by participants did not form part of either main theme nor sub-themes, but still required coding. For instance, one difference that was clear from the data was that a recruitment manager believed that tutors do not like to teach students who come from overseas. They stated:

'If you are a Chinese tutor in China, it would be much easier to teach Chinese students than it would to an international who have difficulty of Chinese language, so you know it got difficult, but now we are grab our international students to market cause this is the only area or one of the main areas where we can bring in more money and therefore establish ourselves…obviously money talks… of much more modern university buy modern equipment, don't forget, we are not charity, we can't make money, we are non-profit making organization but we need to make money to insure everybody pay their fees that's the kind of service and experience

that kind of fee to exist.' (ERM_1.)

However, a lecturer stated that he preferred to teach international students and he encouraged the institution to attract more students from overseas even though staff needed travel long distances in order to attract potential students.

> 'It is difficult for international students when they come, but to be honest we like them, yes we like international students and they are very respectful, hardworking and that what you want to students, you know you want students to be hard working and do the best as they can. So, it's good.' (EL_1.)

The researcher assigned codes to themes and grouped the abbreviations into a matrix, which could then be searched to find items that share the same code. By identifying themes and patterns, raw data was divided into categories and presented in a specific order. This will be outlined in detail in the next chapter – Data presentation. The researcher worked on analysis of the data in following chapter with discussion and analysis the particularly relationship between literature reviewed and the data presentation chapter. As Yin (2009) pointed out as part of social science research, the analysis should consider all relevant evidence, consider all major competing interpretations, and emphasize the most significant findings.

Below is an example of the way the data analysis chapter was constructed: the commonalities that emerged from the transcripts included the fact that some respondents stated that education is part of business that sits within a competitive market; and, believed that marketing is very important, and university has to be involved in marketing. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents mentioned that they believed the case study university in England did a good job in marketing. However, they did not know the exact strategy of the university, which contrasts with the notion of best practice in the literature review of how an internal marketing process

should work.

For instance, we may note that Kotler and Keller believed everyone in the organization should know the agreed strategy (Kotler and Keller, 2009) and Yin also pointed out that a clear customer-orientation strategy needs to be applied by an overall marketing approach and clear and agreed strategic planning (Yin and White, 1994). These tentative findings are clearly worthy of further exploration, but future research will need to explore in more detail the actual processes and practices in marketing as well as examine further the ways in which activities in the case study institutions compare and contrast with best practice as outlined in previous research publications.

3.7 Ethical considerations

To have awareness of ethical consideration in educational research is an integral part and the major issue is to strike balance between pursuit truth and individual satisfaction (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Similarly, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) pointed out that ethical consideration in research is referring to the appropriateness of your behavior when it comes to the rights of those who are affected by or the subject of your work.

For this particular research, before the research start, the researcher gained approval from Research Ethics Committee of Liverpool John Moores University regarding research preparation, data collecting procedure, and data presentation and analysis period. Since there is no such regulation in China, the research only adheres to ethical practice of Liverpool John Moores University.

Risk management is not necessary for this research and it is would not be a factor since there would not be any particular risks during the research process. The research does not present any direct benefit to the participants. However, the research does provide an opportunity to gain a better understanding of best practices of marketing higher

education.

Participants who were interviewed in both universities were asked to agree to take part by introductory email or telephone call and all of participants were voluntary to involved with the researcher. Prior to each interview, the researcher informed respondents about the work by a short introduction to the research and again emphasized that interviewees had the right to withdraw at any time. Personal identifiable information or sensitive information relating to participants was not transferred in or out of the EEA without the explicit consent of participants. Such information was handled with great care and only used in the way described in the written information sheet.

Any hard copies of personal date (e.g., printed data sheets, signed consent forms) were store in locked cupboards or filing cabinets and any electronic data containing personal information was stored securely on Liverpool John Moores University password protected computers. Personal data was not stored on USB drives or other portable media or stored on home or personal computers.

3.8 Validity and reliability and the limitations of the research

In an ethnographic study it is not only the participants who take part in research: the data gathering consists of social interactions within which the researcher participates. Thus, considerations of reflexivity become crucial. Reflexivity is broadly defined as a process of self-examination (Davies, 2007). In this case, the researcher turns back on herself, reflecting on how she engages and communicate with her participants, and subsequent analysis. In this context the researcher found the process of transcribing interview recordings crucially important.

Validity, reliability and generalizability constitute the criteria of quality for the research (Burton, Brundrett and Jones, 2008) and are important as well as difficult to address.

There are many different types of validity that could divide into two categories: internal and external; and no matter which kind of approach that is applied validity is an important factor. Validity and reliability mean the tools that 'measure what it was intended to measure' and 'consistently measure what it set out to measure' (Gray, 2004), therefore, to engage more than one method will lead the research study to be more valid, reliable and a diverse construction of realities (Golafshani, 2003). Reliability and generalizability are thus more difficult to address in qualitative research. As such, the research method used will apply a framework of case study research using semi-structured interviews; such constructs can be problematic, therefore testing and demonstrating the research is crucial. According to (Guba, 1981), four criteria should be considered by qualitative researchers to conduct a reliable study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility is the first aspect that must be established. Accordingly, it is regarded as the most important attribute of trustworthiness (Guba, 1981; Korstjens and Moser, 2018). This is because credibility requires the researcher to demonstrate the validity of the research study's findings by clearly linking the study's findings to reality. Credibility has also the largest number of techniques available for establishing it, compared to the other three aspects of trustworthiness.

There are three common threats to the credibility of qualitative research, namely researcher bias, reactivity, and respondent bias (Lincoln and Guba, 1984). Researcher bias refers to any type of negative influence a researcher might have due to his or her knowledge of or assumptions about a particular study, including assumptions about the study design, analysis, and, perhaps, sampling strategy. The notion of reactivity refers to the possibility that the researcher may be able to influence the condition and individuals being studied. Bias among respondents occurs when they are not honest in their responses, whether they perceive a given topic as a threat, or if they feel compelled to please the researcher by providing responses they deem desirable. Thus, it seems that when the researcher speaks of research validity and reliability, they are usually referring

to research that is credible and the credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher. Consequently, to ensure credibility, the researcher employed the appropriate research method, in conjunction with an element of triangulation, to ensure authenticity. One of form of triangulation refers involve the use of a wide range of informants (Shenton, 2004). Sometimes this was possible within a single interview as the researcher probed the interviewee with further questions for clarification/expansion. Through interviewing a variety of respondents at various levels of each case study university, the researcher applied an additional element of triangulation to enhance the validity of the data. It was also believed that better triangulation would occur if some observations were made, but due to the fact that the researcher was an insider of one case study university and an outsider of the other, this procedure did not seem appropriate.

Part of the challenge in this project for the researcher, has related to her personal experience and knowledge of the discipline. From the outset the researcher was open about the background to the study and found this helpful, however during the interviews, some of problems were revealed. For example, several respondents answered that they were unable to answer the question and they suggested the researcher should ask someone whose work was more related to the topic. That means that the researcher needed to modify the interview schedule by developing it into two or three sub-schedules to make it more relatable to each of the sub-groups which interviewees may fit into.

3.9 Summary

As her study is a socio-educational study that deals with social perceptions of things, the researcher used a qualitative approach to combine grounded theory, cross-cultural research. Theory, cross-cultural research, and narrative analysis were combined, and the primary research tool was the semi-structured interview. Through this approach, the researcher adopted the most appropriate research methodology. In this way, the

researcher adopted the most appropriate research methods, tools, sample, data collection, and analysis methods for her study. She proposed a model for conducting marketing that Chinese higher education institutions could learn from based on her understanding of the Chinese social contexts. As such, she needed to adopt an element of grounded theory. In order to support this grounded theory approach in her data analysis, she also adopted some elements of the narrative. She also adopted some elements of narrative analysis. In addition, this study was conducted in two countries. In addition, as this study was conducted in two countries, it was a cross-cultural study in nature.

Interviews were the primary research tool used to collect data, and the qualitative data collected from the interviews could be analysed and interpreted to find answers to the research questions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002). The researcher chose the semi-structured interview because it was flexible and allowed the researcher to adapt the questions during each interview and explore them in-depth. Also, the interviewees were closely related people chosen by the researcher according to the research aims.

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from Liverpool John Moores University, and the researchers carefully followed the University's ethical procedures. The researcher also conducted a pilot study to test the research method before the main study. In each interview, the researcher recorded each interview with the participant's permission. As the researcher's mother tongue is Chinese, the researcher chose to communicate with the interviewees in their mother tongue to facilitate better communication during the Chinese case study university interviews. At the end of the interviews, the transcripts were collated and appropriately translated into English to analyse them.

4.0 Data Presentation

In this chapter, the data will be presented theme by theme relating to the questions in the interview schedule that was set up prior to data gathering. All the relevant data from interview respondents were collected to provide a collective answer to each research question. The chapter begins by looking at the responses of current practices in the marketing of higher education in Chinese institutions and then goes on to sub-themes of evaluation of past marketing strategies of the institution. This includes interview data from students who have come to study in China from overseas as well as staff in a Chinese institution. The next section will begin with the main theme of the criticism of marketization in higher education in the past twenty years in China. The interview responses for the first two themes will provide a general picture of the current practices in the case study university's marketing in China and answer the first research question regarding the Chinese case university part. The next section will look at the challenges for marketing higher education in China and then be followed by the sub-theme in detail. The last section on Chinese institutions for this chapter will focus on the developing direction of marketing higher education and the role that marketing higher education could play in the higher education sector in China. The researcher will discuss data collected related to those two themes in the next chapter to answer the third and fourth research questions.

After that, the chapter will look at the English institution in the same order and address the first and second questions of the research, the current practice in marketing in the English case study universities, and the main challenges for the marketing of the marketing higher education institutions via the collected data.

4.1 Practices of marketing Higher Education in China

4.1.1 The current state of institutions in China

4.1.1.1 Student recruitment

According to interviewees' responses in the Chinese institution, the current recruitment differs considerably, according to programme. 10 staff and 2 students believed the institution was working very well in undergraduate degree recruitment mainly due to the institution's great location and attractive surroundings.

> 'for undergraduates, there is no problem for recruitment. From the university point of view, in recent years, our enrolment requirements are rising year after year; mainly related to the geographical location of the city; mainly related to the geographical location of the city. For example, Xiamen University has not recruited enough students in Shandong province in last year. A similar issue appears at Shandong University as well when they recruited in Qingdao, and that is why they determined to reduce their enrollment requirement in Qingdao. Both universities are very good universities in China, and they would not have this kind of problem in other provinces or cities, but did happened in Qingdao, as local students tend to go to higher ranking university if they could reach a higher result in their Gaokao. If not, they tend to stay in Qingdao rather than other cities. So, the geographical location has a certain advantage in recruitment.' (CP_1)

> 'I was born in here, I love this city and I do not want to leave here, so it was my first choice when I need to apply for a university. I have talked to lots of my classmate, especially those came from other cities, and they all knew this is a beautiful city and this became the first or second choice for their application. After they had studied here for two years, they all loved here and would like to work and live here after they graduate.' (CNS_1)

By contrast, 1 student and 3 staff mentioned that postgraduate degree recruitment is not as good as for undergraduate degrees. A lack of financial support is considered one of the main reasons that negatively affects postgraduate degree recruitment:

> ‘but we have problem with postgraduate recruitment which is that the first-class students are more willing to go to the university which has similar ranking but could offer more scholarships. Normally, we could only recruit students with lower results who would like to do a postgraduate degree and do not care about the scholarship, same problem happened for Ph.D. recruitment. Take our faculty as an example, we could only support a few hundred RMB to a master student, and one thousand RMB to a PhD student every month. However, in other universities like the Chinese Academy of Sciences, they give at least one thousand for a master student and two to three thousand for a Ph.D. student every month. Students prefer to go to a university who provide more financial support, especially important for those with a poor economic situation.’(CP_1)

> ‘I think there were a lot of public fellowships for post-graduate and post-doctoral students in China before. Of course, you have to exceed a certain result in your examination. Many students who came from poor economic family got the chance to do a master’s degree under this support. However, two or three years ago, the funding has been canceled for postgraduates and they changed postgraduate education system. To be honest, it is quite a lot of money for a three-year master degree course, approximately 10 thousands each year. I have asked some of my classmates, whether they will apply for a master course as we won't have the support. They said they won't for now. So, I think it is a kind of market-oriented phenomenon. …the public fellowship for undergraduate has been canceled in the 90s, and now the one for master… I think it will affect students’ life in future.’(CNS_2)

Three respondents also noted that tutors are under increasing pressure relating to the need to carry out their research and teaching work; that there is not enough time to support them in supervising the students allocated to them; and, that they prefer to prioritise research, applying for funding for their own research and applying for lucrative patents related to their discoveries.

> '…two reasons, first of all, the support: financial support and other support, like university support, faculty support, and departmental support. In our university, tutors have to do a good job of teaching and do a good job of their own research. We all have our own research targets, and no matter how many students you supervise or teach, the targets are still there. You would not be able to get your annual bonus if you did not reach your research target. So, the pressure is relatively large for us.' (CP_1)

One interviewee (CP_1) explained why they have not got enough financial support to supervise students:

> '…the current method of postgraduate recruitment in our university is that the tutor needs to find the money to pay half of each student's scholarship. In other words, tutors without funding will not afford to supervise students.' (CP_1)

On the other hand, two respondents also mentioned the university's lack of desirable characteristics in their postgraduate courses, which means:

> '…because we are all relatively practical, everyone who would like to do further study will develop their own favorite direction. With the same courses and less scholarships, why should I come to your university to study a Master's course? Unless you have more novel and special characteristics in the course.'

(CS_1)

Three students and one staff member mentioned the number of international students has been increasing recently and noted:

> 'compared with when I was just started work and now, the number of European and American students are significantly more than before. This is a more obvious change, with the increasing of European and American students, the number of Japanese and South Korea students has been reduced… however, I do not have the authorized information, and it is all my personal feeling. Because we have no right to go to the admissions office to ask for the numbers, and they will not give them to us even if we could ask. So, it is my feeling, and I feel we have more international students in total.' (CL_1)

However, the recruitment of international students still causes some problematic issues. For instance, three students and five staff mentioned that the institution needs to build an international image in order to recruit more international students.

> 'The reason I studied here is because one of my friends has already studied a language course here and she introduced me to come while I decided to study a language course…but I do not think the university has built an international image or promote itself internationally… for example, while I decided to come here to study, I tried to Google this university and the course I will go to study, but there was not any related and valuable information online, even on its website pages. During my application period, I was still in Germany; the only way I could get an answer for my application was to search the university's website, so when I entered the English keyword for my questions, normally I couldn't get the answer. My Chinese at that moment was not good enough to read and understand every website page, and all I could do was asking my

friend to help me.' (CIS_1)

'the international recruitment marketing for this institution is changing right now, we did not have too much promotional material several years before, because Qingdao is in a great geographical environment and people come naturally, but recently, we began to promote and establish an international image…the university has set up a department which is called the "international student admission department". There are two main tasks for staff who work in this department, one is the admission part and the other is management. So, they will coordinate all of the related works to international recruitment, whether more or less.' (CVC_1)

One student and six staff also mentioned effective and long-term cooperation will affect its international recruitment as well.

'I am an exchange student; I came from Australia, and the university I studied in Australia has an exchange programme with this university, and we could decide whether to come here to study or not in the second year. I was the only student to come here to study this year; all of my class friends in Australia did not like to come here because they feel more comfortable there, and we did not have enough information about this university while back in Australia. I came here because I would like to do business with Chinese people after I graduate, so I decided to come here for half a year to study.' (CIS_3)

'The department I worked in has four main contents. Firstly, is the university's international cooperation with foreign universities, for example building a 'sister university' with European or American universities. Secondly, is the international exchange programme for students. Thirdly is the international exchange programme for researchers and scholars, and the last one is

cooperative courses, such as a '2+2 course', '3+1 course' etc.' (CVC_1)

'in fact, the university has a team to deal with international affairs. The part of their work is to look after student exchanges and international cooperation, in other words they should work with foreign universities, like building relationship with foreign universities, exchange students, university visiting and so on…. but the specific work content of this team is not what we could know, for example, does our student need to pay tuition fees if they to go to exchange study, will they get a commission if they introduce the student to here? All of those questions will be considered as gray areas or could not be discuss clearly' (CL_2)

Five respondents indicated the importance of a university website and online information and suggested that this can have serious effects on international student recruitment. Examples of this are noted below:

'However, it would be much better and easier for me if our university could promote itself more widely, such as has a useful website. I told some of my friends about this university, and they were all interested and searched online to find some information about the courses, like starting date, tuition fees, etc. They would like to send an email or make a telephone call to ask, but there is no contact information online. So, they asked me to find out information and get back to them. They might have no way to find out the answers if I was not a student here.' (CIS_2)

'Online publicity and promoting become more and more critical for the university, especially when we have a lot of scholarship programmes, such as a national government scholarship, the Confucius Institute Scholarship, as well as some special one, such as the China-US Exchange Foundation, the

Shandong provincial government scholarships. We need to let overseas students know about all of those scholarships and encourage them to apply. Through internet promotion, overseas students will be easier to attract to our different types of scholarships and get interested in our university.' (CD_2)

'Many of us came here because we have a friend who studied here, we would not be able to come here if we did not have friends, since we could not find information online. Before we came here, we all searched on the Internet regarding the course we will study and the university; however, there is too little information that could be found online. The university's website has an English version; however, it does not work very well and does not have all the related information. There will be more international students if the university could provide more information online with an English version, and make sure the websites are working all the time' (CIS_1)

4.1.1.2 Teaching and learning situation

A total of eight respondents mentioned the current teaching and learning situation at the Chinese institution. One member of staff referred to the main strength as being the fact that the institution has a clear division of departments, and each department has its special job, content and function:

'I think this university has a well-designed structure, we currently have 11 disciplines, composed of Literature, Art, History, Philosophy, Science, Engineering, Medicine, Economics, Management, Law, and Education. We also have more than 30 departments to ensure, and to support daily based on the operation of our university. For instance, we have a financial department who are dealing with the financial budget, fund management, student tuition fee payment etc. We also have a student recruitment department who will be charged with all things related to recruiting students; information and publicity, preparing annual enrollment material and so on.' (CD_2)

However, two of the respondents considered that even though the university has a department corresponding to their work and to recruitment in their area, they are not meticulous enough and there is not enough manpower.

> '…just in our school take cell biology as an example, it is a repetition of biochemistry and the physical science course; psychophysiology and phytobiology also have some repetition; and protein synthesis and biochemistry also have an overlap. Therefore, many of the lectures are superficial; students are confused at the end of semester. It is better to make sure one subject covers all related information and increases class hours, then the lecturers are only needed to ask questions to check whether students get the ideas or not…'(CP_1)

> 'The question now we have is because we do not have enough staff. We only got two people working in the international recruitment department and managed the enrollment, and they are responsible for all international students' affairs. So, they put all attention to management and enrollment procedures rather than recruitment. We hoped we could have at least one team who could focus on recruiting international students in the future.' (CVC_1)

After the large expansion of the university's enrolment number, there is another issue that interviewees mentioned which seems apposite:

> 'With the increasing number of enrolments, teaching resources is not enough as well. For example, if I want to give students an innovative experiment, students need to go to a laboratory to do the experiments, but we cannot let students go alone without teachers accompanying. There is no laboratory assistant that could look after students who are doing an experiment. If we had

> enough resources as well as staff, we do not need to bother with this kind of issue again and students could have more chance to practice.' (CS_2)

Two of the respondents mentioned that they never have any clearly defined regulation or incentive method for market-based management:

> 'Do you mean, for instance, in order to expand enrolment, to set up some market-oriented encouragement or incentive method for staff? As far as I know, no, the university has never had an obvious policy...the Dean has mentioned it before, he thinks we should engage in some kind of mechanism or corporate initiative with a company and let them do the promotion for the international recruitment. But this has never been implemented so far.' (CL_1)

The priority of lecturers and professors in the institution is clearly to develop their own research, applying for patents and getting promotion. Three interviewees mentioned this, two of the most succinct are outlined below:

> '…with the growing demand for research achievements, including the application of subjects, publishing in journals, and patent applications, these have now become very important assessment indicators. It is also an important index for lecturers who would like to get a promotion. Thus, lecturers do not have that much incentive to invest in teaching.' (CP_1)

> 'There is no need to doubt that the number of teachers is growing; however, we have been led to focus on research…all the assessments are about how many research journals have you published, there is no assessment related to teaching.' (CS_2)

Not only the teaching issues cause problems, however. Four respondents also referred

to the fact that even the university has set up an employment contract system for their staff. However, in fact the operant approach is still life tenure.

> 'Even though, the employment contract system has been implemented for several years, we have three consecutive year examinations which means unqualified employees will be sent to the talent exchange center and if he/she failed again, then they will be fired. But until now, we have not fired anyone in our department.' (CS_1)

> 'Yes, we have had contact and assessment to do for all employees in our university. Anyone who failed the assessment will be downgraded, but we have not downgraded anyone in our university.' (CVC_1)

The learning issues for the institution were noted as well. Two students and two staff mentioned that students say that it will be even harder to find a job after the expansion of university enrolment numbers:

> 'Nowadays, it is very often not unusual to see a newspaper reporting that more than 50 students from one class are going to university. This situation is not a news any more, unless the entire class of students is going to a higher ranked university. So, the requirements for going to a university have been reduced. However, that also mean we are facing a more competitive employment environment. Because the competitiveness has increased a lot since the enrolment expansion, everyone who graduated from a master's degree could go to a university to be a teacher several years ago, but now even with a doctoral degree it is not a guarantee.' (CNS_2)

> 'It has been more difficult to find a job after graduation, I have been to some job fairs and tried to find an internship for this summer holiday and I noticed

> that some of companies announced that they do not recruit students who graduate from lower ranked universities or private universities for a full-time job.' (CNS_1)

Three staff mentioned that the priority for current students, it seems, is to find a job after graduation. Thus, students are not paying enough attention to studying:

> 'We all know most of the students are basically the only child in their family and the degree of hardship and hard work is declining compared with the past. The students also want to have some fun, to relax, especially after they have started their university life…and even more important is the employment related issue. It has been difficult to find a job, lots of students are confused, and they worked hard to learn and get better results but still find it difficult to get a job. So, the motivation to learn for students are getting less and less. Take biology as an example, they used to be a lot of students who are stopping you and asking you questions no matter whether it's in a class time or after. But now, the students are rather happy to copy your lecture notes and check by themselves, the only thing they would like to make sure is to pass examination.' (CVC_1)

The most mentioned factors that respondents thought influenced an institution's recruitment are league tables and governmental policy. Three students and seven staff referred to how important league tables are for an institution from different perspective; indeed, two students and four staff noticed the league table is very important for undergraduate students. The most recognized league table is Wu Shulian's Chinese university ranking which is similar to the Academic Ranking of World Universities:

> 'The most authoritative assessment system of universities is now Wu Shulian… and our university has constantly increased its rank recently, from

100 to 80 in the last year. Although there are lots of different ranking systems in China, the most recognized one is this assessment system. For Chinese students, it is a very important indicator. Students and their parents will check the ranking of universities before applying.'(CVC_1)

However, four of the respondents who mentioned how important the league table is for Chinese students also noticed that there is a restriction even though all applicants would like to go to higher ranking university, but they need to reach certain results of their Gaokao.

'The final results of my Gaokao are the key limitation for my application. I checked my results and the league table and then filled in an application form.'(CNS_1)

'But Chinese students subject to great restriction… their results. They could apply to a higher-ranking university as possible only if they reach the requirements. Because it is very clear in China, what kind of university you could go to depends on how many scores you could get in your examination.' (CD_2)

The students who go to study a postgraduate degree will have different evaluation criteria; students tend to go to the highest-ranking university with higher scholarships. One student and two staff mentioned students prefer to go to university with higher scholarship rather than higher ranking.

'Students trend to go to university with the higher scholarship for their postgraduate study, since there is no longer has the national government scholarships for postgraduate students. We will check their ranking, but we prefer to go to the university with higher ranking as well as more scholarships.

Because master course is another three-year study, most of us do not want to spend more money from our parents especially those with poor financial situation.' (CNS_2)

Three students and five staff mentioned that the league table has another different meaning for international students, it is very important for those international students who want to study a particular major and would go to top ranking universities. However, it is less important for others who only study a language course or Chinese culture.

'International students will take league table more seriously if they want to study a particular major; however, I believe more than half of international students come to China come for cultural learning. It is different from Chinese student who go to United States to study are looking for real knowledge, but foreign students are kind looking for understanding; the cultural, the developing country and the condition of China. For those foreign students, they will check league table of a university, but it is not too important, mainly to check which city the university in and characteristics of the city. For example, Qingdao is one of the cities where foreign student prefers to study rather than other universities in same ranking, or even a little higher.' (CVC_1)

'I came here to learn the Chinese language and the culture; mainly I would like to come to a university with a nice environment such as this university. This is a nice city with red tiling, green trees, blue sea and clear sky as well as its famous beer. I like this city that I could swim in summer and the seafood as well, so I did not check the league table but the city before I came. However, I have a German friend, he is doing project in China and doing a Ph.D. at the same time. I know he has been checking the ranking before starting his doctoral studies and hoping to go to the best university.' (CIS_1)

The league table has a huge influence when recruiting academic staff from abroad, three staff referred it during interviews.

> '…but foreign lecturers and professors are taking league table very seriously, they will not only check overall ranking but the subject ranking as well. University ranking is very important to attract high-end foreign lecturers and professors, take our university as an example, in recent years with the improvement of our university's rankings; we have introduced a large number of high-end scholars, estimated around 100 people. Not to mention the foreign scholars, returned overseas Chinese scholars are checking the ranking of your university as well. The city environment is also important for them because they are coming back from abroad, but the university must have a certain ranking otherwise you are not able to recruit them. Thus, ranking is very important for recruit scholars from abroad.' (CVC_1)

The other most mentioned influential factor is government policy; there were a total of nine interviewees who noted the huge effect of state government policy on the Chinese higher education system including from management, operation and developing orientation of a university. Two students and three staff mentioned how important the Gaokao is for Chinese students and how difficult it is for the Chinese students to go to a top university in China.

> 'In China, most of the universities belonging to the state, to the government. They have better quality than private universities. Still, it is very challenging, very difficult to go to a state university to study…very competitive and even some of my classmates were good students at the high school. Still, somehow they failed the Gaokao and then lost the chance to go to top universities.' (CNS_1)

‘The top universities like Beijing University - they do not need to promote themselves, because every year they have lots of students who take the entrance examination and apply. Actually, the students find top universities rather than they have to look for the students.’ (CHR_1)

Six staff described how the Chinese education system is a top-down system which means all decisions are made by the government:

‘This is the case; in our country, basically, the Ministry of Education proposes any plan and changes, and the universities will follow those plans and changes. If the government does not require change, no one will take any initiative to modify anything… for instance, a teaching programme. We will not spontaneously adjust our teaching programme, the faculty or university will rarely propose to modify the teaching programme and contents unless the Ministry of Education issued a document and required adjustment or modification of teaching content and plan.’ (CP_1)

‘…will be constrained, as I mentioned before why we have issues on different aspects is because we are constrained. We have limited human resources in the international department, and it leads to less preparation and affects the recruitment. So, if there is no such system or policy, and without these constraints, then we could have more staff in this department, specifically people for marketing, communication, networking etc.’ (CVC_1)

‘…continuing education is a complement to the whole education system… it is an excellent benefit to the society. However, because the government never pays enough attention to continuing education, the community is not aware of it, and people don’t take the certification of it seriously In China, people with a continuing education certificate cannot take examinations for doctoral study,

nor can they take a test to become civil servants. There is a clear differentiation. The recruitment of students for full-time ordinary colleges and universities and adult higher education enrolment is being divided.' (CD_1)

4.1.2 Why the Chinese institution should be marketing

There are five most noted reasons that respondents believed why the Chinese institution should engage in further marketing: to expand enrolment, to improve competitiveness, to establish cooperation, to improve mobility and raise funds. Three international students and four staff all believed that marketing would help the institution to recruit more international students and that it is good for institutions to get extra funds.

'…because there is a main reason which I said just, for example, if our university expanded its international student enrolment, there might be indirect benefit for lecturers but direct economic benefits for the whole university. So it is good to do more marketing and promoting the university, it helps expand enrolment and brings financial benefits to university.' (CL_2)

'I think it is good for the university to promote itself, after that will be more easily to recruit international students. Like I said, I was the only exchange student this year from Australia, and I believed some of students will come here to study if they knew this university and city in advance. So, it is kind of a pity.' (CIS_3)

'For example, the University of International Business and Economics, we have had two days working visit last week. They have three thousand international students. The reason they could reach that amount of number is because they have a special enrolment team. The only purpose of this team is to promote the university and recruit international students from all over the world. This definitely will have certainly helped the university, because the

number of international students is not granted from any restrictions.' (CHR_1)

The other most mentioned reason of institution apply marketing strategy is to improve university's competitiveness. A total of five respondents noted this:

> 'I think to apply marketing strategy for university is a good thing, for instance, from university's development point of view with a market-oriented operation will help university to improve its social influence and awareness, I think it will improve university's competitiveness. So, I think it is also very effective to improve and increase the number of students… so I think from my perspective I believe it is pretty good to apply marketing strategies.' (CL_1)

Three respondents also noted that marketing is also an appropriate way for a university to build relationship with others and establish cooperation.

> 'I went to the Provincial Department of Education and talked with the Director-General of Education Department recently, it is good timing to establish an international school in our university. The reasons are because Qingdao is an open city and our GDP is the first in Shandong Province; and now it is lacking international population including people who have ability of bilingual teaching, and people who have enough knowledge of internationalization structure. The Director-General accepted my explanation and approved my application. Then I started to build the international school, and then through the operation of marketing approach to establish relations with foreign universities and establish cooperation…our university is one of advanced university to build international cooperation under the market-oriented operation.' (CD_1)

One student and two staff mentioned that they believed marketing will help institution

to improve mobility of their students and staff, and also break the original balance of the whole higher education system of China.

> 'I think it plays a very good role in recruiting more students and it gives more opportunities to all students to have a place to get a degree because not all of the students who failed at their Gaokao are bad, somehow they have some reasons to fail it, and because it is a very competitive situation. Yes, so that it's good to increase the intellectual standard of the whole population that every student has a chance to have the university degree and shows that if you fail in the examination, it's not the end of your life, you can have many different choice.' (CNS_1)

4.1.3 Marketing strategies currently applied and evaluation of the Chinese institution

This section will focus on current and past marketing strategies that the Chinese institutions have applied and the evaluation of those strategies. It has been found that the majority of respondents believed the institution did not have any formal implementation of marketing strategies. Two students and seven staff responded about this and gave examples:

> 'Some of them market, but most of them don't do marketing. Because every year they have lots of students to take the Gaokao and actually the students find state universities rather than they have to look for the students. Just private universities, they are marketing and advertising a lot in the street, on the television, on the newspapers but state universities don't do that. Our university is one of the state universities in this city and I never saw any advertising of our university.' (CNS_1)

> '…in fact, there has been some kind of promotion to let people know what kind of course or major we have, but there is no further promotion such as

communicate and cooperate with others or seek further helps to expand its influence. I think this is not exactly the same marketing strategy of what you mentioned…this is not a normal operation of marketing and is not only the promotion part, but this also happened in other areas as well. For example, if the university wants to build cooperation with an American university. In that case, they will find someone who is Chinese and working in that university and rely on this individual person to establish the cooperation rather than through normal operational way. We did apply this operating model before and established a cooperation with the University of Mississippi. However, after two years, the Chinese person who worked at the University of Mississippi has left the university and has later been replaced by a Taiwanese. The project then moved to one of Taiwan's universities. This is similar to what I said. I think our university is still using this model to build a relationship with foreign universes and rely heavily on personal relationships and resources. I don't think it is a proper way to build cooperation.' (CL_1)

'I understand what you said, as a profit-making organization or company, there is no problem pursuing profit and apply marketing strategies to achieve its objectives. However, it will be a huge issue if a university applied the same model or strategy because the perception of the university will be more sensitive than others from whole communication. For instance, student recruitment no matter native or international students, there is no document for incentive policy. I think it is a default or a word from leaders, and the university will never put it as documents. This is what I understand of our current marketing strategies.' (CS_2)

Respondents noted that there is not clear communication about this area of work in universities in China:

‘mainly is because in China universities are actually an executive-led rather than teaching-led and managed by administration. So, there is not too much motivation to promote the university or set priority to complete the task from the administration management side. Such as the foreign affairs division if they enroll a few international students, it shows the meaning of the existence; however, in fact, they could do better. But probably no one will pay all attention to this matter. Indeed, there is not enough incentive mechanism, and it also could not be forced.’ (CD_1)

‘Yes, this is a kind of problem. Because it is not saying that no one can apply this strategy in China, but it is a kind of thing that they could not talk about on the table. So, it may be even more difficult to theorize it…. because it may be considered as a grey area. So, it might be difficult for you to understand and get feedback.’ (CHR_1)

Interestingly, there were also three staff who said this question is too difficult for them to respond to, and they are not the right person to respond this kind of question:

‘…uh… I don’t know…I think the question you asked is too big to answer, and I do not think I have enough knowledge to give the right answer for it. You might need to find someone who is at management level for the answer.’ (CS_3)

However, the Vice-chancellor gave a different opinion about the current marketing strategies that the institution applied and noted the institution did very good work on international marketing with examples:

‘We are now doing some international marketing, we did not do any marketing in the past is because the geographical environment of Qingdao is so good, and students are all come naturally. Recently we began to promote our university

in the international market with some marketing strategies and it is part of work for all of our employment. There is a mechanism at university level, such as lecturers and professors who go out as visitors and students who go out as short-term exchange students and they are all required as an additional task to promote our university, besides their own academic research and study. They will need to improve recognition of our university abroad as well as answer questions from those people who are interested in our university but do not understand very well.' (CVC_1)

The vice-chancellor also gave four current strategies that the institution applied that he believed worked very well:

'…the marketing strategies we currently applied for the promotion of our university internationally is, first of all, the most basic method which is through our existing students. We will give all of those international students some promotion materials before they finish their studies and go back to their home country to promote our university by word of mouth with their own experiences here. The second one is each year we will have a lot of exchange programmes with our partner universities, and we will ask those exchange students to promote our university abroad, no matter which countries they are in. The third one is our brochure; we have printed a straightforward understanding brochure, which is very useful. As long as a visitor comes to our university, we will give one of our brochures to him/her. The brochure has included introduction of our university, current programmes we have, and the scholarship we provided. The last one is online promotion, especially for our scholarship programmes, it is an excellent way to let people know what kind of scholarship we have for international students.' (CVC_1)

4.2 Criticism of marketization in higher education in China

This section will focus on the criticism of the marketization of higher education in China in the past twenty years. Only two respondents, however, gave examples of such criticism of marketing in the institution. One student noted that there is no clear model of supervising and applying a marketing strategy in the higher education system in China. He suggested a kind of vicious circle:

> 'Yes, I think it is a kind of vicious circle because of the quality of students who enrolled in the private universities is not good, because they failed the Gaokao and could not go to state universities and then they enroled in the private universities. The private universities are those who applied marketing strategies lots to attract students. However, there is no standardization and supervision of the marketing strategies they applied, and students did not have enough valuable information before they made decision. Hence, people don't really value the degree of the private universities.' (CNS_2)

One lecturer noted that after their institution applied marketing strategies with expanded international students, the lecturer had more pressure on teaching and there was still no reward mechanism for lecturers. The lecturer believed this might affect the quality of teaching as well:

> '…for criticism, I think after we expand the number of international students with some marketing strategies, we might have even more pressure on teaching. On the other hand, it might decrease the time we could do our own research and I think this might affect the quality of teaching. Another part is, it might still not have any reward mechanism for lecturers and so we do not have enough motivation.' (CL_1)

However, this lecturer also believed most of the problematic issues that the institution

already had were not coming from marketing:

> '…and I also think the other drawbacks are not caused by marketing strategy. Because there are lots of shortcomings with higher education even right before starting to apply marketing strategies. For example, our teaching task is already very heavy right now, but the requirement for research is no differentiation with other faculty, we still have very high standard on research. I know some other universities, they will have some special policy for those lecturers who have heavy tasks on teaching, such as reduce their research requirement, but we don't have any. So, I believe it is not coming from marketing strategies.' (CL_1)

Five more staff also mentioned that the issues that higher education in China has are not because of the engagement with marketing strategies, because there is no full implementation, and the government-oriented and management approach is the main challenge:

> '…Chinese education is a top-down system which means everything comes from government to individual. No matter how big or small it is, all decisions should be issued by a document from the government. Reform of teaching is one example, and it would not be changed if the education ministry did not force it. The university won't change it by itself' (CP_1)

4.3 Challenge for marketing higher education in China

This section will look at the challenge for marketing higher education in China, there only two staff answer it directly. One lecturer noted that higher education institution has to find your special characteristic firstly and then effectively highlight your own characteristics. Secondly, the lecturer believed how to apply incentive mechanism is another challenge for higher education institution.

> ‘First of all, I think every university should be able to find out its characteristics before marketing, such as its geographic location, courses, or facility etc. how to find out those characteristics, let the public know and recognize those strengths and advantages is very challenging. Another challenge I think might be for university is to apply incentive approach, like what I said before, we all know it is an effective way to apply. However, how to apply it without any objection is kind of a challenge. Because I think the incentives approach will help the university to implement marketing strategy more efficient.’ (CL_1)

The Vice-chancellor indicated particular challenges that marketing higher education in international marketing presented with an explanation and examples of the issues. The Vice-chancellor believed international student recruitment will increase over the next five to ten years, and the number of international students has already become a ‘soft evaluation’ of the institution:

> ‘In terms of long-term development of China, the economic development will bring big attraction and then certainly will bring great developments to policy. It definitely will become a trend for foreigners to come to China to study the Chinese language and culture. I think this trend will last at least five years or might be ten years. So, in this big framework, all universities who can grasp this opportunity as early as possible and start their work will have more good results…in addition, the number of international students has become an important indicator for a university’s development. It has not come from the Ministry of Education but the public and society. You could easily hear the question: “How many international students are in your university?”. And suppose the answer of your institution is one hundred and the other universities got five hundred. In that case, people will conclude that the other university’s international marketing is much better than yours. So, the number of

international students has become a soft sign for university success.' (CVC_1)

In addition to the challenge for international marketing that the Vice-chancellor mentioned, the Vice-chancellor also gave possible solutions which the institution is currently undertaking to face this challenge:

> '…so many universities are now taking major steps of two things to face the challenge. First are the facilities of the university, lots of universities have been putting money to build new buildings or refurbish the old ones. The second one is to improve the quality of academic staff. The foreign students will not only study language courses, but there will also be more students come to study Chinese history, politics and economy, so we will need a particular number of professional staff who could teach in English, and this is a weakness for current higher education institutions. Recently, various universities have been developing this area and hope to face the challenge in future. Our university has just refurbished our international buildings; the originals were not very good. University has put more than 10 million to refurbish those buildings to make them as convenient as possible, including canteen, gym, and other facilities. We try to make international students feel more comfortable to stay here and willing to live here and have good experience in here.' (CVC_1)

However, six more staff mentioned that the challenge that higher education in China will face is not coming from marketing strategies because there is no full implementation at this stage and the government-oriented and management approach is the main challenge at this time.

> 'For example, we are facing the challenge of how to connect Chinese higher education to international practice. This kind of issue and challenge is not confronted by an individual university, but on a national level. From the

national point of view to consider, it will cause a big problem sooner or later if our higher education system does not change. That kind of problem is not simply coming from what marketing strategy that university applied. However, I think this kind of problem certainly needs to be changed, and how to change that will need from the national management level to issue guidance or something like it.' (CS_3)

4.4 Developing direction of the Chinese institution and higher education sector in China

This section will go on to look at interviewees' reports of the future plans of the Chinese institution regarding how to market and manage the university. Two students and three staff gave responses about developing the direction related to international marketing and managing. Two international students mentioned that if the institution could be more internationalized such as employing staff who could speak English or offer English instruction then this would be more attractive.

'…for the future plan or suggestion… I think if the university could have administrator who can communicate in English, it will be a lot simpler. For example, my door locker problem, the problem with my door locker troubled me for almost two months. As long as there is an administrator who could communicate in English, many of our problems could be solved in a better way. As I know, most of the international students could communicate in English, at least for basic communication. So, if they could manage and change later, it will be much better for international students.' (CIS_2)

Three staff also mentioned future plans of the institution about how to attract more international students:

'…so now every university could recruit international students, no matter if

you are a private university or college. So, we could say that international student recruitment will be more and more expanded, and the competitiveness will get higher and higher. So, our university has made decision with a diverse development way. We would like to differentiate our university in the way of recruiting and managing international students. We are looking for some characteristics that only we have and developing some special project, and this will be continued in our future plan as well.' (CHR_1)

'…we will train a large number of professional teachers who can teach in English, this is the next standard of the biggest competitiveness. We plan to integrate our academic staff and figure out how many staff could teach their major in English and give them further training with foreign academic staff. Because the number of academic staff who could be teaching in English is still not enough and international students would like to have those academic staff who could communicate in English and teach in English. They are learning Chinese, but they will, even more, prefer to come if the university has English courses. So, I believe it will be the breaking point of our further developing direction.' (CVC_1)

The Vice-Chancellor also noted the overall development plan of the institution; however, it is not very related to marketing of university.

'The five year development plan of our university is to build a high-level comprehensive university with certain influence in the society. Firstly, high level and then have certain influence no matter in domestic or internationally. The third is to be a more comprehensive university. Those three goals are relating to lots of areas, such as academic staff, research, international etc. but it has not reached the publicity stage yet, so you could not find it yet.'(CVC_1)

Two staff also mentioned that the directions of development of the whole higher education sector in China are campus expansion and the development of internationalization of higher education:

> 'I think the possibility of more marketing of higher education will not happen, because China's policies are always derived from top-down, or if any leader prefers or pays attention to any particular industry, then this industry will have chance to develop. But if not, then there will be no change or development. So as the present situation, I have not seen any change of our higher education system, from 1980s until now, the development of Chinese universities is the expansion of the campuses. Because of rebuilding, enlarging, and reconstructing of university campus are ongoing constantly to fit for the rapidly progress of the society, economy and cultural career, and a university will also lead to a regional development, so I believe all universities will keep this model of operation in future.' (CL_1)

> 'I think higher education institutions will be more focused on the development of internationalization. In fact, there is a news related to that and from 2017 onwards, the state will begin to develop the internationalization of education. However, it is not clear about the specific implementation until now, so it is hard to say.' (CD_1)

4.5 Practices of marketing Higher Education in England

4.5.1 Current state of institutions in England

In seeking to define the current state of the English institution, the majority of interviewees (11 interviewees) believe the institution focusses considerable energy on marketing in several different respects, for students, staff, and stakeholders etc. Four staff mentioned that the institution now has a department called 'Corporate communications and stakeholder relations' which will be developing and producing

integrated corporate communications to convey detail of the experiences that the institution will provide for students, staff and stakeholders:

> ‘we are looking at, um, uh, more marketing and corporate communications are up actually, at the moment, in terms of the university that it’s something that, um, I think over the years has grown and grown and grown in importance as well. And, and that it's ever more important to have a very strong marketing and communications strategy for students, for potential staff or stakeholders, et cetera, et cetera. And that we, you know, we, we've predominantly probably been very press relations, newspaper related, whereas now, you know, digital technologies and social, social media and things. So, we're having to build up digital teams, we're, we're in the midway through a new website development and things. (…) So, you know, we do have a strong corporate communications team, but a lot of what they do in terms of communication is, is external communication. One of the things we're trying to do is, is do much more internal communications to our staff and our students as well. So, we're very good on outward facing.’ (EEDfVC)

> ‘It's only in the last two years that we have started to advertise the university. And it's a very competitive environment, higher education. And we do very well, and we haven't necessarily increased our student numbers. It's just raised our profile. Um, and that's been really good. I mean, it's been really good for the university because it's very professional and it professionalizes the university. And what, when we now are able to do is, we have a baseline of, uh, kind of promotional and marketing knowledge and we're able to then target that into segmented areas.’ (ECD_1)

> ‘I think we do a fabulous job at marketing; marketing is split. We have a central corporate team in town. Um, you've got your student recruitment and (…) and

you've got your corporate communications side. This one is marketing in terms of branding and materials and adverts of bands and umbrellas are matching days. This one goes out to schools, they're physically out there marketing. Then we have four faculties surrounding that. And we look after the courses that fall a little bit outside of the central corp.' (ERM_1)

Four students and five staff mentioned that the institution enjoys a good identity in the local area and has partnerships with many local cultural departments that they are proud of:

'…before I came here, I didn't know this university in my country and actually the most popular university in Liverpool that people used to say about is the University of Liverpool, not ours. But when I came here, I can see lots of advertising of our university at the train stations, on the buses, at some lifestyle centers which make me a bit of proud of it.' (EIS_1)

'the other thing I think we're doing well is working with arts and cultural partners in the city or beyond. So, uh, we have partnerships here in the city of Liverpool with, with the Tate Art Gallery, with the Everyman Theater, with, um, uh, music festivals like Sound City. And these are not just cash sponsorships… here's an example of the way in which we worked with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. And we're recognized nationally for, um, for a partnership working. This is not just about providing an enhanced student experience. I mean, through these partnerships, our students get free or heavily discounted access to the theater, to the concert, but it's about our academic staff also working with the curators and the exhibits and the, um, the arts professionals within these organizations to co-create and to co-produce information for public audiences. So, the Tate, there was an exhibition last year called Art, Turning Left, looking at the major twins in art history since the

French revolution. And that originated as a PhD in the art design Academy, and it turned into a major exhibition at the Tate Liverpool. So that was an example of how we're, co-creating, um, an exhibition for public audiences. And I think we're doing that very well. And we're therefore becoming known as an engaged university that we see our role, not just as educating students who have enrolled in their courses, but also being a responsible, um, institution within a broader community.' ($EPVC_1$)

In relation to online marketing, five staff mentioned that this has become one of the main marketing tools for the institution and it helps with student recruitment as well:

'Yeah, I think it's stronger than it was. Um, certainly a number of years ago. Um, I was a student at the university, um, over 10 years ago now I graduated in 2002. Um, when I was a student here, internet marketing was, was very much in its infancy. It was a new, the website was, was not really seen as the main marketing tool. Um, so in the space of, even since I've worked here, the focus is very much switched on the internet, being the key marketing tool, um, particularly with the likes of, uh, recruitments or research programs. Um, very often, you know, it's the first port of call that people will look at it. They will research the university's websites to see what a professor's background is and you can't get that from a leaflet. So, the website's very much become a main focus. And I think even now they're still looking to develop that, um, in the future. So, I think it's certainly stronger than it was. Um, but I think they're still working on, on that in the future as well.' (ERS_1)

'So, for instance, if there is a particular area that the numbers of students are not looking good, then we can go out, and target in a particular way, particularly through social media, social media is one that's, it's really targeted

on Facebook, students' room or any number of these things. But we test that out with the students. So, we're able to track how effective our marketing is. And in the days gone by, it used to be - put advertising on the newspaper - and see how many people come - very, very difficult, because it's very hit and miss. But with social media, you know immediately that if you put an advert in for pharmacy, or if you put something out there directly related to pharmacy, you can see the spike immediately. So, it works really well. So, we don't have a massive marketing budget, but we use it very, very precisely' (ECD_1)

Four students (two international and two domestic students) also believed the institution's website and social media are very important and useful for them to gather information about the institution and make decisions:

'Yeah. That's the most important – the web - because like for someone, for someone that lives away from Liverpool or whatever, it's not easy for them to just come and look around the university because it could be a waste of journey, they could get in and don't like. So that's that website where they'd go first because there's no evidence they go and get a booklet or whatever.' (ENS_1)

'Yes. I know that, uh, as you know, uh, UK or, I mean, this country is one of the developed countries in the, in the world and the most powerful, I mean, overseas students, I mean, they, they are efficient or they like, or they want to study in this country because the education is very good in this country. But as for me, I discovered it at this university. I mean, John Moores University before I applied, uh, I look at the websites, I mean, or the list of the universities in the UK and I found this university, you know. Uh, and when I read about it, I think they encouraged me to, uh, to, uh, to apply in this university.' (EIS_2)

One student and four staff noted that it is very important to have open days for local

students since these not only give chances for students and their parents to get to know the institution and the programmes, but also helps the institution to make clear some of its policies:

> ‘we have three open days per year. Um, there's actually different kinds of events. The open day is for, um, applicants who are considering us as a university. We hold, um, one in July and two in October. Um, obviously university starts in September throughout the UK. Um, so the one in July, um, is for people considering us for, for the following year. So, for example, this July, we will be entertaining people who are considering coming in 2015. Um, and that's just a generic open day. The main open day is in Liverpool city center, but we organize coach trips on the day. So, they'll go there, establish where they're interested in and then bring them to this campus. Um, we then also hold, what's known as applicant days, which are much more course specific. They are for people who have received an offer on a course, which doesn't interview. (…) Um, um, we organized both of those, the applicant days organized here more specifically the open days organize more centrally for the entire university, the applicant days and more for our students. Whereas the open day, it's more of an event for the entire university.’ (ERS_1)

> ‘Yeah, because like, I went on open day because I didn't come here straight from sixth form. I went on a loop course before then. But I was going to come straight from sixth form to do another course. I was going to do media. Yeah. And I went to the open day on that and just changed my mind. I didn't want to do it. So, like it can make you decide whether you're going to go ahead and do it or not instead of like coming here and then just drop out to know before if you want to do it…Yeah, like the applicants’ workshops and where they surely explain the modules that you could be doing and stuff, then if you want to ask any questions, about like, what get to done. Like the stuff that they tell you,

> what you're going to do.' (ENS_1)

However, two local students and one Reader believed that the institution should not focus on recruiting students and should instead focus on the quality of teaching:

> 'I think we should focus more on like the way like the quality of teaching instead of how many people they can teach because of too many people like could come to it, they're not going to be able to like be very good.' (ENS_1)

> 'I think if they focus on the teaching, and they get really good results that will itself attract more people. If you know what I mean rather than having as you say lots of people come in, but like really, really low marks.' (ENS_2)

Here, the Reader describes how the emphasis on metrics, like the NSS, puts enormous pressure on staff and makes her concerned that energies are put into the wrong things in universities:

> And some people are, yeah, they are, they are made very stressed, and they feel very - under an enormous amount of pressure - and they leave higher education as a consequence of it, some of them, um, and some of them, you know, they are made ill by it… And I do think that there's a very interesting question over why it is so many academics don't argue back more than they do. You know, at the end of the day, we are not working in a factory. We are not working in a business…I will say I am sometimes puzzled by why people are so acquiescent and passive. Um, I think that's, that's that makes me feel sad. Um, and worried about the future of higher education in our country.' (ERF)

4.5.2 Why is the English institution marketing?

Two international students, two domestic students and six staff mentioned that the main

reason they think the institution is marketing is primarily because of recruitment issues. The institution has to attract students and marketing of the institution is one of the ways that has been applied. Respondents believed more students will help the institution to gain extra funding as well:

> 'I mean, their money at that point, they have to attract the students to study here. And also, they want to build a new building or something like that or create new students. I mean, they expand the university, for example, this year, a university courses of 10 or 15 and five faculty, maybe after five years, it will consist of 20 or 35 faculty. Yeah. And these things need a lot of money.' (EIS_2)

> 'Well, because we have to recruit students, we're in the market. So therefore, we have to recruit students and it's a competitive market, so therefore we have very stringent recruitment targets. So therefore, if we don't tell the market about our university, how are they going to find out?' (EL_1)

> 'Definitely. Definitely because we do, we do the corporates, the corporate marketing, and that's always good corporate marketing, as long as you've got a very good base, but then you do need these particular areas of specialism, particularly where you've got kind of hard to recruit areas. Teaching is a very difficult area to recruit students to, and you need to go specific. You need to go a specific way of marketing for those students.' (ECD_1)

However, the director of the Corporate Communications and Stakeholder Relations department and a lecturer also mentioned that to market the institution is not only about bringing in students, but also about bringing the right kind of students to the institution:

> 'It's not just about bringing in a number of students. It's about bringing in the right students, because we want people to, we want people to come in here and

flourish. We don't want people just to come in because they get in. Yeah. That's, that's not what we're about. We're about bringing people in and giving them the experience and getting them to appreciate the experience. Because if you bring people in and they're not the right people they'll fall out after one year and you don't want people to just come into university and then think it's not for me, just because you brought in the wrong type of students. So, we make an enormous amount of effort to tell people what this university experience is going to be. And that's as much about the course as it is about what the environment is going to be. (…) So, this is a town, this is about being in the city and it's about being able to experience the city. So, it's about improving the, um, the understanding of students as to what they're going to get.' (ECD_1)

'Uh, to be honest, I think the evaluation uh, is based on whether we recruit the right number of students each year. Because basically, what is our objective? Our objective here is to recruit students, teaching them, that's what we have to do if we recruit the right number of students and teach them well, and then good. If we recruit the right number of students and don't teach them well, and then we've got a problem. If we don't recruit the right number of students and don't teach them well, we have a big problem. So, we have to make sure we recruit the right number of students and teach them well.' (EL_1)

Four other respondents (including the Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor) noted that the institution has to market because of the macro-environment since it is a competitive environment for higher education in the UK:

'Yes. Well, I think there are three big trends driving higher education globally today. There's the internationalization of higher education. There's the growth of the private sector within education and the, is the marketization of education. And I would say, we are at the outset of probably a century or more of change

in each of those three domains that internationalization, just to touch on that briefly. I mean, that's reality.' ($EPVC_1$)

'I think it's almost a consumer culture that, um, you see, you see it in the UK in particular in schools here that in the schools have their prospectuses and it's about league tables and it's about, you know, what they're good at and all these sorts of things. And I think there's an expectation from the consumer if you want from the student or the parent or the business partner. So, some of it, it generates an industry in itself, but also, I think, you know, we need to do that to be able to demonstrate to people what, you know, what we do very, very well. And, and part of being a university is about dissemination of knowledge as well. So, communication and marketing and all those sorts of things that we're doing.' (EEDfVC)

'uh… well here, in the faculty, we have a marketing department, and they work with us to try to ensure that we recruit enough students on the courses and there isn't a great deal of marketing money, spent for the specific initiatives because there isn't much money around. We have to rely on things like websites and things like that, but we work with those departments that departments, um, to try and ensure that we recruit the right number of students that we need to our programs, because recruitment is very, very, very important to hit those recruitment targets, and therefore we meet with them at certain points during the year and we look at the statistics and we see at a certain point of the year a prospective figure we are looking for for September, and how it was looking last year, the year before, so we'll have a comparator whether we are ahead or behind in terms of our potential recruitment for each September and we go through that process about every three months, something like that (…) [the branding strategy] It's done more in the center, we are in the faculty. So, the actual terms of branding or the core marketing messages, they are done in the

center by the institution. Interesting enough, see that (the university logo on the interview schedule) it just changed. It might be interesting to see that if you could get an interview with someone in center.' (EL_1)

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor also mentioned that because of the macro-environment every institution is marketing strongly, even major universities such as Oxford or Cambridge:

'I mean, I think every university has it, I mean, some people may well live on their history and their tradition, you know, see if you mentioned Oxford or Cambridge, well, do they have to market anything? Well, maybe not, but they still do. Um, that, you know, they may well market in a very specific way around philanthropic giving. So, they may well have very, very big benefactors that, and that's where they do their marketing. We do it in a different way. So, I, I do think it's very, very important. Um, it's also important though, that you're honest in your marketing and that you're not, you know, being economical with the truth or you're not overriding things also not underplaying things as well. So yes, I think it's an important professional service.' (EEDfVC)

However, one reader believed it is bad that all institutions have to market because of the macro-environment:

'Well, I mean, I think in the world that we live in, it's inevitable that universities get sucked into these, uh, ways of operating because if there's a league table yeah. And you know, how difficult is it for an institution to say I'm not participating? Um, but the irony of that, and I can give you some reading on this, if you're interested, the irony of it is that, um, actually, uh, there are many other dynamics at work in relation to why people choose to study where they study and the freedom that they have, or not, to make particular choices. Um, and many of these league tables are actually empty in relation to what they tell

you about the quality, the real quality of an institution. And, um, I think you can have a very poor experience doing a degree in an institution, which is regarded as one of the top two or three institutions in our country.' (ERF_1)

4.5.3 Marketing strategies current applied and evaluation of English institution

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor and five more staff mentioned the institution has a big, clear and easy to understand strategy which is made in the center of the institution and followed with sub-strategies made in departments.

> 'I mean, we've still got it now, but the, I think it was in the year 2000, we have the dream-plan-achieve strategy, um, which was part of a bigger strategy. We've still got the words, dream-plan-achieve there, but I, what I like liked about that strategy was in, in quite a simplistic way, we're actually articulating quite a complex issue of, you know, people dreaming, whether that's through marketing about their career aspirations, the planning of how they get there and the achieving and graduating and the alumni and jobs. So, I think that that sort of dream-plan-achieve worked very, very well… So, I can't think of anything we've done in the past, that we've stopped, but certainly things like the dream-plan-achieve, um, very, very simple message, but that, that can be, you know, that's important for students it's quite important for staff or our stakeholders, et cetera.' (EEDfVC)

Besides delivering a clear and simple strategy message, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and six more staff and two domestic students also mentioned that each department is working very closely with each other which is quite a good thing for reaching targets.

> 'So, it's not just to reign everything in deliberately, but, you know, there were certain messages like one university, that's something else we talk about. Well,

one university where we all support each other together when the student walks across the stage is not just the academic member of staff, it's the marketing team, is the careers, the library that made that happen. So, by, by centralizing things, I think things have got a lot better. So historically having things in local sort of areas probably didn't work as well. There is a need for that because they need it, but to bring it back in and have that sort of set, that corporate message is much clearer.' (EEDfVC)

'So, the strategy we use, which works very well, is we have academic experts. Yeah. They in return have academic connections and connections with businesses. Okay. Where people, where the population who enjoy doing outdoor events. So, for instance, it's, the climb wall is one awesome wall is where people who enjoy outdoor adventure go and train. So, the marketing campaign was to put together and deliver, um, marketing materials, works, pens, posters, and business cards. And the academic stuff here went round to all the businesses as they normally would. I put the posters up, put the cards out, gave merchandise, branded merchandise. And we did reach targets, but that's battery lease in the day. So that was one strategy that we certainly injected in to come to about this year, we're starting there at the opening of the cycle now.' (ERM_1)

Four students and two staff also mentioned how the institution gives a lot of extra help for its students, and not only in the academic area, and that this is a very good 'selling point':

'I think if they like advertised more about the help that they can give, it would be more appealing to people because a lot of people do for a lot of people, I think a lot of people choose the universities based on how much help they get. Like what scholarships and stuff like that.' (ENS_1)

‘Yes, uh… it has better facilities, and especially the supervision that is my most satisfied thing in here in the UK, that is the reason. In our university I have more support from the staff, from the university, from the help from the MRes classes, and even the assistances from the library.’ (EIS_1)

‘Well, it's about bringing people in, making sure that they're interested because it's about making sure that we've got the right courses, making sure that the students that are looking at the information, understand the information that they're getting, and then encouraging them to come to the university for an open day, then encouraging them to come back for a conversion day. So, once they've decided that, they'll put us down as a choice, making sure that when they come back for those days after they've applied, they actually understand what they're getting because it's, we really don't want people to make the wrong choice. Um, and getting, um, a standard of student that will really, really benefit from the university education that we have here.’ (ECD_1)

‘I mean, we're learning a lot from other institutions. I wouldn't point to anything that we're doing in particular, except actually I think we are doing very well at working with non-university programs. John Moores has done exceptionally well, working with employers, um, to understand what the labor requirements are. So, we've got the world of work program that we developed with employers that provides our students with an opportunity to develop softer skills or to think about what, what soft skills they need to be enhancing while they're studying with us. And it's our employer partners who assess the element of a degree. And, um, we've developed a reputation around world of work. And we are seeing, I think we have positioned ourselves as a very employee-focused university and that's been a very, very useful, uh, marketing. Um, it's been useful to us in marketing courses that’s one thing I think was

done quite well' ($EPVC_1$)

One student and two staff noted that to promote the institution through noting its geographic advantage is a good strategy:

> 'Now the other thing that obviously will be stressed in terms of Liverpool will be the actual place itself. So that is all stressed or seems to be all stressed in any marketing strategies I've ever seen. So, the, the fact is that Liverpool is perceived as a city that's vibrant. So, these days ever since there's the, uh, the capital of culture in 2008, it's perceived, or there's been a fairly vibrant, active lively city. And it probably always has been since, since the sixties, but it obviously went through, uh, an industrial decline, like most ports, most big ports, and went down that, that way declined where it's gone up again in the last 20 years, based on tourism, based on education, education is still one of the most important, uh, contributors to, to, uh, the economy and on Merseyside. And it's perceived that way. Students perceive it, perceive it that way. And it's based on clearly, it's based on music in the past, it's based on football and sport. So, I guess we probably market, the brand of Liverpool. So, people appreciate it. Now, whether that's the case or not, you know, Liverpool is a small city, even in British terms, it's a small city, but probably relative to what the city is in Britain. There's a lot going on in Liverpool compared with smaller towns in the UK. I mean, initially when I went to university, I went to Reading university. That was pretty good for what I did, uh, my subject area. But the town itself would, you would never market Reading University on the basis of the town.' (EP_1)

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor and a student also mentioned providing modern buildings and facilities are essential:

‘It was one of the things we've, um, we have a university strategy 2012 to 2017 that we've seen that. Um, and there's four pillars. Um, but the overarching, um, strapline is about what we call the relentless pursuit of excellence. And part of excellence is about having high quality buildings. Um, we've got a university estate that is quite fragmented. We're not a campus-based university. (…) So, we're trying to move from 43 buildings down to smaller numbers of buildings so that all students get a high-quality experience, because if you're in the city centre, that could be an argument that you get a better experience here than you might be dealing with the IM Marsh campus, there's a smaller library and things. So, that's why we're doing what we're doing is about the relentless pursuit of excellence, um, which is buildings. It's also about having high quality buildings for, for our civic engagement and the university and the Vice Chancellor talks about a modern civic university. So, that building is very high profile right next to Liverpool lime street. Um, the first thing a lot of people see when they come off, the train is Liverpool John Moores University. We want that building to be used by our civic partners, as well as a place for learning. And people feel that a university is for them rather than something that happens behind the walls or closed doors. So that's, that's why we're, we're moving the strategy and the way that we are. Um, and also the need to be, you know, there's quite a lot of buildings that needed to be either released or refurbished.’ (EEDfVC)

The Vice-Chancellor and three more staff as well as an international student mentioned that the institution needs to improve its identity in order to develop branding of the institution outside the Northwest of England.

‘Yeah, I would say we’re not one of the leaders that we've got a very dependable and a successful undergraduate marketing and recruitment operation within the UK. Um, and particularly within the Northwest, but we

face a large number of challenges - that we are not particularly successful marketing broadly across the UK. We're not particularly successful at marketing at the post-graduate level, um, where we've not been that successful, uh, marketing courses and our services overseas. Um, and we're now taking steps to improve, uh, uh, capability and to increase the results, the marketing budget that's available to us to promote ourselves overseas.' ($EPVC_1$)

Three high-level managers (the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Corporate Communications and Stakeholder Relations) in the institution mentioned that the institution needs more professional people in marketing the institution.

'Well, I think one of the things that we've learned over the last year is that we need these marketing specialists. We need proper marketing people who understand the market that they're working in and have that kind of professional overview of that. And that goes for international as well. We haven't had an international department particularly, um, and we haven't had marketing and international marketing person, um, as we've just recently in the last two or three months taken on, um, an international marketing person. And she has experience in, um, working in different countries and knows what works overseas. We don't, we really know what works here, but you do need those particular marketing professionals. And I think that there will be an increase in student applications. Um, and that's always what you want. You want, you know, you want more and more students to apply, want to come here so that you can pick the right people.' (ECD_1)

'So, I do think we need, um, in terms of our professional and support services, people with very, very clear dedicated skills, but also people understand what universities are, because if you got someone from a very, very hard commercial

marketing, it's very different because universities are the, some of its public money. Some of it is we have a social responsibility to people. And so, it's a different type of message that's coming out, but also, we do have to be quite commercial as well. So, you need people with those sorts of skills very much so.' (EEDfVC)

'Yeah, absolutely. And, um, that does often sit uncomfortably alongside its academic mission and, um, uh, you know, typically, um, or more commonly universities have chosen people like me, you know, academics who become managers to take a look at marketing, but increasingly you're seeing people come in from other sectors, um, from, for the real commercial sector. And there is a need for universities to transfer those skills into our professional services in order to, to market effectively, and to learn from the commercial sector as to how we can develop the brand identity of the institution and, um, and market through appropriate channels of communication.' ($EPVC_1$)

4.6 Criticism of marketization in higher education in England

Two domestic students, one international student and four more staff mentioned that higher education institutions should focus on educating rather than marketing, and sometimes marketing is a waste of resources.

'It's like no one's going to look at the back of the bus [at an advert] and say oh, I think I might go there. It just says 'Open day' and stuff…Yeah, true. Or you get them in the train station, yeah, I've seen them. You get them like on the notice boards. There's too many of them, I think, like they're fine but like. They really don't make any, there's not one thing exciting about any of them.' (ENS_1 &ENS_2)

'I think, uh, yeah, I mean, there, there are, I'm just trying to think about some

specific examples, but I think some, some universities over promise, over market, they offer what I would call gimmicks where, you know, come to this university and you'll get a free laptop or a free iPod, or, but sometimes for, for a student at 17, 18, you know, those things are great. Uh, great. Um, or it may well be if you come to our university, we'll reduce your fees by a thousand pounds or what, um, you know, they're important things, but what's important about coming to university? And, you know, you'd be thinking about this when you're doing your PhD or whatever, you know, all the things you you've done in your, um, in your studying, it's about the quality of the course, the degree, you know, how is it going to help you in your career and, you know, your personal wellbeing and fulfilment. So, I would say that there's been a lot more marketing if you want, whether that's television campaigns quite aggressive campaigning actually into people's homes.' (EEDfVC)

'So, I think, I think the mission statement is very important. (…) I haven't got a great deal of distinction between the vision statements, but how do you do that when you're actually all in the same business, we're all in the same business of giving students a good time or a good way to say good time. I don't mean a good time as in party time. I mean a good experience of learning. So, it is quite hard, I think, to be distinct. So, I think that's the whole part is too. And I think that's where it comes back to reputation and that reputation isn't built up on your marketing material, that reputation is built up on your, on the way in which you, um, are visible in communities, the way that you impact on national agendas, the way in which your research influences, you know, everything that a country's looking to do with sort of the economic viability and the well-being of a country. And that takes a long time to set up, you know, that's why the Oxbridge are so far ahead of that because they've been in the game for such a long time.' (ED_1)

Four staff also mentioned that higher education institutions should not treat themselves as a product:

> ‘I wouldn't like to say university education is a product that you buy like a consumer, and you have that relationship, but it is becoming more consumerized. Um, and, and people are starting to potentially put more complaints in if they're not happy with. So, having that consistent message, that brand message, um, saying what we do I think is, is very, very important. You could, you could, you could spend the whole university budget on communication and marketing in there if you want. And I know there are benchmarks in terms of what others spend.’ (EEDfVC)

Moreover, two staff believed that people going to university is more like an investment rather than seeking knowledge.

> ‘I think it's all the wrong sort of trend, you know, transaction is being encouraged here… you know, increasingly, lecturers experience students as people who say, “tell me what to do, tell me how to get a first”. Yeah. Don't talk to me about anything that isn't going to be necessary for my assignments. Why are you expecting us to do this? That's got nothing to do with my degree that I can understand. It's all about delivery. I'm here to deliver something to you that you are going to soak up and then have that you can use in direct ways. And, uh, the introduction of, um, the 9,000-pound fee for undergraduates in our country, many lecturers tell me has massively exacerbated this tendency and undergraduate students believe that they're buying something. And the real sadness about that is that, um, you can't buy an education, whether you paid 10,000 or a hundred thousand pounds for it, that's not what an education is. And yes, it's, it's the wrong dynamic because, um, (…) a conversation depends on two people, not on one person transmitting…’ (ERF_1)

There were also three more staff mentioned that governmental or policy control is another criticism of the marketization for higher education in England:

> ‘And I think this is very much connected to the fact that central government has decided that universities should all operate more like businesses. Um, and there's a lack of, um, trust in relation to the notion of professionals in general as a whole. So, there’s a whole rhetoric around accountability in terms of where public money is being spent and what the public is getting from that money. And all these things have come together to dramatically change how universities are organized and run. And yes, you see that being played out now in our daily lives. Um, and the expectations on us and an element of that definitely is that, um, they want to, um, uh, sell the product of university as if it was a product, um, uh, to international students and of course, to home students, (…) and lots of systems have been put in place now that they think, um, show evidence of what is a high-quality institution and what is a less high quality institution. And all of those structures have also played out, are also playing out in terms of how we are managed and what the priorities of the institutions are and so on.’ (ERF_1)

However, there were also three respondents (one student and two staff) who mentioned that they did not want to get involved in criticizing marketing.

> ‘I think that we just have to accept that's the world as the world, as it is, as therefore, uh, it depends on your definition of marketization. What is your, what is the definition of marketization of higher education? [over marketing for the whole higher education system？] Mm, not too sure about.’ (EL_1)

4.7 The challenges for marketing higher education in England

The Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and six more staff mentioned the challenge for marketing higher education in England is how to face the rapidly changing environment and stand out in the market environment:

> 'So, we, we do have a very strong marketing and events team, um, corporate communication team, but they're being challenged, I would say to move away from the traditional ways of communication, much more into, you know, the social media, as you said in the digital. Um, but also getting much more sophisticated and, and bespoke and understanding people's needs and aspirations. Um, whether that is students or whether that's, you know, our stakeholder, partners, but we, we do have very big events, things like the Roscoe lectures, if you've heard of those and the corporate communications team do those sorts of things, they're running the graduation ceremonies this week. Um, so there's a lot around branding and refreshing our branding, um, in terms of our logos and things. So yeah, they do a good job, but I think the challenge is moving forward is, is this changing way of communicating in a very, in a global way really to people. I mean, the fact that we're, um, webcasting our graduation ceremonies, you know, a family could be sat home in China watching that family, they don't physically necessarily have to come and things like that, so that that's all very different. It's positive. And it's a challenge.' (EEDfVC)

> 'Yeah. I mean, I think it's, it's an absolutely central challenge. Yes, I do. Um, in terms of the way higher education has changed over the last two decades and the direction of travel, you know, if we continue to allow, um, things like the research excellence framework and the national student survey and the league tables, which are used for marketing purposes, to dominate what we do, um, and how will we do it, then we will ultimately have nothing left of

educational value.' (ERF_1)

'Yeah. I mean, when the next year the student cap will come off. So, at the moment we can bring in, um, a certain number of students and then we can't really exceed that. But there is, um, there is, uh, a thing that the government's brought in that you can bring in students who have very high grades. You can bring them in as many as you want. I mean, obviously it's sort of constrained by space, but it means that all universities will be going after the very high-grade students and offering them all sorts of things. And that that's one it's sort of going after students and trying to entice them to, to come to you when they might not really fit. Um, and I think that is a bit of a challenge because it's sort of opens the markets up a bit. Um, but you know, as I say, places are constrained by space, you know, it's, it's about how many people you can sit in a lecture theatre. Yeah. Yeah. So, yeah, I think that will be a bit of a challenge and you don't know how, how other universities are going to behave, you know, it's nobody really reveals what they're going to be doing.' (ECD_1)

The Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and one more member of staff also mentioned how to continue marketing the institution with an appropriate marketing strategy is also a challenge:

'I think my, well, the biggest challenge I suppose, is, is around for me, is around why are we marketing? And, um, for what purpose that, you know, I say before, you can spend so much money on marketing and, and sponsorship, you know, you could sponsor a football team, Liverpool John Moores University on Liverpool football kits, or . . . I think the challenge is where do you sort of draw the line if you want, um, in terms of marketing and recruitment. But I think the, the other challenges in terms of the time I've been in this university, but it, I would say nationally and internationally is, is, is

marketing is getting much more sophisticated. It really is a science almost in itself. And, you know, the challenge is marketing to that one individual. So, when my daughter got the Valentine's card that said, dear Hannah, on that, her name, oh yeah, that, that was to her personally. Now there may well have been 50,000 students apply to that university. She got a personal, that was very, very clever, but I think that's a big challenge for people that you don't, when you're applying or looking, you don't want to be seen as a number you want to be seen as an individual and how we do that and how we make every single person feel connected, I think is the big challenge.' (EEDfVC)

The Vice-Chancellor also noted that to build brand identity of an institution is another challenge:

'Um, and then the other challenge I think is around brand and, you know, brand is not a comfortable thing to people in the university, but it's a reality here. I think brand is a real thing. It's the personality of the institution that you try and capture in a, in a logo or with a strapline in a narrative or with an image. And, you know, we've been doing quite a lot of thinking about brand, about defining our brand and what it is, and then, you know, informing all of our, um, uh, marketing with that brand identity. And I think, I think that we are highly complex and highly devolved institutions, and it's quite challenging to define statements about what we are. We've done that quite well. (…) I think I'll hope it's inclusive of all who work within the institution. Um, and it was quite a difficult thing to come up with, but, but I think that that's quite a challenging thing for many universities too.' ($EPVC_1$)

One student and five staff noted in relation to the development of global higher education, how to continue to attract international students is a challenge for British institutions:

‘I think to have more good points in comparison with other universities, and our university should have a very long-term strategy to attract more students in the world to come here. So that it would be good if the university could do something to attract international students from the assistance of the paperwork, I mean the Visa. It is quite hard to apply for a Visa and in my case, I have to do the report every six weeks which make me not happy at all. I think again the fees are very important to attract students from developing countries like me and my friends.’ (EIS_1)

‘So yes, in terms of marketing international, and this is very interesting international five years ago, international recruitment was hard because it was bringing in 12/11,000 pounds per student always, because the government never paid a subsidy then the government withdrew that subsidy it's become 9,000. So, it's easier for us to recruit the national now because we're getting, if you're talking just based on finance. Yeah. An international student to recruit is much more difficult. There is a lot more in the admissions cycle. The CAS record, the visa, the language barrier at times. I'm not saying always, but at times the distance, the agents that you need to buy in to recruit.’ (ERM_1)

‘The challenges are really down to recruiting students, that’s the biggest challenge. It’s like your customers, if you don’t get your customers then you haven’t got your income come in and your business can’t survive. So therefore, you need your marketing department to bring those customers in. So that’s the challenge, the challenge is actually hitting your targets for your number of students that you need for your course.’ (EL_1)

Moreover, two students and three staff mentioned that increased tuition fees are the most challenging issue for the higher education institution:

‘I think like the rising fees that keep going up and stuff like that, probably not for us, but next year they’re taking away maintenance and so that will put people off more because like, I like my loan, if I wrapped up my main maintenance loan that comes to like 6,000, but I'd say about half of that is a grant. So, I don't even pay that back. So, for me, that, that means less for me to pay back, but for people who are coming in they've got to pay every penny back now. So, it's less help, even less help. So, if you're from, like a poor background, it will kind of you put you off even more, especially because they don't explain it to you.’ (ENS_1)

‘It's always cost 9,000 pounds for your heat, your lights, your tutors, your maintenance. Yeah. The difference, says the government, is that they aren’t subsidizing 6,000 pounds of that anymore, they don't pay it. So, while you pay 3000 pounds, the government used to pay 6 and so on and so forth. They took that away. It's not us it's, it's not the universities are moving. (...) It's always cost that much money to educate someone for a year at university, external examiners, computers, everything. Yeah. The difference is the government's not giving us 6,000 anymore. So, while you use to pay three. You're now paying the whole works. That's the problem. (...) But it has been very, very challenging with the 9,000 pounds that a challenging, although I have to say for this faculty, we've still recruited.’ (ERM_1)

One student and one member of staff also mentioned the employment rate after graduation, and they believed it is a key challenge for higher education institutions:

‘Maybe like to do with like in the type of jobs that are available? Like, because like unemployment like keeps getting bigger. Like we're getting rid of like certain jobs, like it's hard, but like I'm interested in like youth work and stuff,

but then I'm getting told, I would have been told recently that (...) so, like if there's so many jobs, it probably depends on the course. Like if this says like that career - that like the unemployment say – is high in it. People won't bother going to do that course. And they might attend some courses and it's getting canceled or they, because nobody goes on them. So, I think it depends on like the type of career that are like given, but then there'll be other things that are getting more popular.' (ENS_1)

'I completely agree with that when we talk about competition now, we're often thinking about the Americans and the Australians, perhaps less than the local. That's because they do have more favourable visa regimes, particularly in places like Canada, it's much easier to stay and work after graduating, lots of things like that. So, I think you're right. That's the first challenge. And then once the students decided they want to come to the UK that's when we need to obviously prove that we're as attractive if not more than our competitors.' (EMS_2)

4.8 Developing direction of the English institution

Two students and two staff believed the institution should continue in developing its website:

'One of the key ones, which I know is being looked at anyway is the website. Um, last year from July until December, I was working as a marketing officer, um, dealing with the merger of our faculty with the faculty of health. (...) So, I actually worked on developing the website for our faculty because there's a faculty of education, community and leisure and the faculty of health. So, I built the website for the faculty of education, health and community, um, the current system that we use is quite restrictive. And if the truth be known, the website doesn't look as good as the university's websites. For example, it's a

money issue, but if you look at some of the US universities' websites, they've put millions into their websites, but I do think it's the number one marketing tool that any institution has not just university, any organization. The internet is the first port of call for most people's research. (...) I think many people, I could look at it as a customer. If I was buying a new PC and I went to a website, one looked more professional than the other. I would choose that one, even if it cost slightly more, I think it's a key marketing tool. And I do know that they are looking at using a new platform to build a website on and that would be if I have a say that will be something that I would focus on.' (ERS_1)

Two international students and one lecturer mentioned that to make international students more satisfied should be the key to developing the direction of the institution:

'We teach the same classes, but we need to offer more support in certain areas for the international students, you know, things like, um, language and also in terms of culture. Because our courses here are more geared to students to reading and finding out, whilst overseas predominantly is examinations and passing examinations. So, there is a different culture here, you'll notice that when you did your master's particularly, you'll find when you did your master's, there wasn't that many examinations. It was a lot of assignments and essays and things like that. So therefore, we have to recognize that with the international students and helping offer support for them, um, you know, when they're here.' (EL_1)

'Yes, as I said before, the university should assist students in asking for a Visa, to have competitive fees and, for example, my husband, his IELTS was not as high as the university requires for a PhD course and instead of coming here to take a part in an English class, he has to wait until June and if he misses that, he has to wait until next year. So, in that year, he could make a decision to

choose a different university which has more frequent English courses because PhD students don't have to enrol in fixed terms like other students, so I think that is one of the big faults that the university should overcome to have more students to come here.' (EIS_1)

Another two staff and one domestic student noted that the institution should pay attention to brand identity:

'Higher education sector is quite a competitive sector. And there are lots of people that are way ahead of us, I guess it does matter. Um, and I guess an awful lot of it is about the brand and the quality of the brand. You can spend money on advertising or for marketing, whatever, but if you don't actually have a good quality brand and a consistent message around what it is that you will do for people, what it is that you're delivering, um, and other universities have very much more aggressively targetted certain areas of the world for international activities than we are.' (EFD_1)

The central management team of the institution like the Vice-chancellor, Pro-Vice-chancellor and director of the corporate team all mentioned that in the future the institution should make sure to have the right portfolio for marketing:

'I think that the big strategy is about being very clear what some of our key messages are as a university. Um, and what messages do we want to get out to people? Um, so if that is, if we decide that student success is a very important strategy, then how are we going to market that if we think our relationships with the Philharmonic or the Tate are very important, you know, how are we going to market those? Um, should we be helping fund, the Tate or the Philharmonic, for example, should a university be doing those sorts of things?' (EEDfVC)

There were also two staff who mentioned that they did not know the future plans of the institution and they believed the researcher should find someone at higher level to respond to such questions.

Only the Director of Corporate Communications and Stakeholder Relations department mentioned the developing direction of the whole of the higher education sector in England. These respondents noted that the system might become increasingly diversified but that this is dependent on central government strategy. Whatever that strategy, the respondents felt that there will continue to be a challenging environment:

> 'I think it's well, it's the, um, over the last two, three years, there's been a lot of talk about the different type of universities that people want, um, where the two-year degrees would be the thing and whether private colleges would be the thing. And actually, none of it has come to anything. What people want is a traditional university education. They want a traditional experience, and they want a traditional university education and to come out of it with a degree, that means something. And that I think is our job, is to make sure that that's exactly what they get. Um, you know, in the, in the future, the fees may come off. It maybe, you know, the, the fee cap may come off and then other universities might charge more. But at the moment it's sort of holding steady. Um, but I mean, you know, it depends on the government. It's a, it's a strange, I wouldn't want to be a vice chancellor in this environment.' (ECD_1)

4.9 Conclusion

This section will conclude by focusing on the similarities and differences between the two institutions under scrutiny. First, it will address the similarities between those two institutions employing the respondents' comments from each institution, and then elucidate differences that were referred to.

Although these two institutions are located in two different countries with different backgrounds, the respondents from the two institutions all confirmed that the institutions faced huge effects from the state government policy on the higher education system, whether it be positive or negative:

> 'Yeah. It's because of, because of the way higher education is funded, um, it is the government that will impose, um, a particular set of parameters in which you can operate. So, when the fee was raised and there was a limit of 9,000 pounds, and it went from 3,000 pounds to 9,000 pounds and lots, no, nobody was sort of declaring how much they were going to charge. And we were one of the first to say, we'll charge 9,000 pounds because we're worth 9,000 pounds. (…) Um, but that was a government imposition about the cost of higher education and how the, um, how the, how the UK was to pay for higher education so that the government could decide that actually they take the cap off it altogether, then it becomes a kind of, so, but that's, you know, that's what vice chancellors lobby the government for.'(ECD_1)

> 'The operation and developing way of Chinese universities are all depends on the state policy and planning; what the central state says will become a top priority for university. So, the developing direction of Chinese university has to follow the direction of government's policy.' (CD_1)

Both of the institutions are considered to be located in an advantageous geographic location since both cities are very famous, which helps the two institutions to promote themselves internationally.

> 'Yes, I think it is important. It is said that Liverpool is cheaper than London and other big cities, but actually Liverpool is famous in Vietnam because it has

a longer story with famous ship building and football.' (EIS_1)

'From the university point of view, in recent years, our enrolment requirements are rising year after year; mainly related to the geographical location of the city... We benefit from our location; Qingdao is a famous city in Shandong Province, the city brings new perspectives into our university. Nowadays, students tend to study in big cities with great location and great environment.' (CP1)'

Both institutions are indicating that they centralize all information and decisions in relation to marketing and the institutions are operating with a top-down hierarchical system:

'We used to have one of the things that, that has started to work much better since the Vice Chancellor, our new, our current Vice Chancellor came in 2011. Mr X said we should use local marketing teams and local corporate communications. And now we've, we centralized that. And I think the consistency of message now is much better because in the past there was an inconsistent message that was getting out there, different people were promoting things in different ways.' (EEDfVC)

'All of the policies are always derived from top-down, from our supervisor or even higher level such as the President. I think it is similar to the whole higher education system in China. Centralized processes across the university.' (CL_1)

Both institutions have set up methods of developing a direction which is to increase brand/image identity internationally:

'Um, a second project that I'm leading on is around the development of a

reputation internationally. So how do we, define and develop the brand of Liverpool John Moores University outside of the UK and in particular in the major higher education economies in China, in India and in the United States.' ($EPVC_1$)

'Recently, we began to promote and establish an international image…the university has set up a department which is called the "international student admission department" … We hope it will help us to build our international reputation and recruit more international students in the future.' (CVC_1)

However, there are also some differences between the two institutions; the biggest difference is the attitude and approach to applied marketing strategies. The English institution finds that it is important to have marketing specialists and to work with academic staff to set up clear targets to be achieved:

'I think that there's a big difference between corporate communications and marketing and event management and digital. That's one of the, one of our challenges going forward. I think we've; you know, we've had a press team. Um, they, they've done very, very well and they're moving into different areas, but you know, these are, um, subject areas or disciplines within the staff and marketing, you know, is, is very, very different. Maybe from event management and organization marketing is, can be very different from communication strategies. So, I do think we need, um, in terms of our professional and support services, people with very, very clear dedicated skills, but also people who understand what universities are.' (EEDfVC)

'Yeah. And you know, I mean our academic staff, I think are really good. They, they're not, you know, they're not sort of distant, but they're absolutely there. And, you know, with open days we don't have to twist their arm to come along

> and talk to students that, just that, because I think it's one of the things about this university is that everybody understands about student recruitment. Everybody understands the importance of getting the right students and getting the students that will really flourish here.' (ECD_1)

Moreover, the Chinese institution finds that it is only an interim situation to have marketing strategies and it only works within international students' recruitment:

> 'We have to apply some tactics of marketing because it is an interim, if we don't, we will not recruit international students; like the agencies will introduce students to those universities who will give them commissions. But I think it is only a transition, with the development it will disappear in the future.' (CVC_1)

There will be much more detailed analysis of the collected data in next chapter. The next chapter will focus on the process of evaluating data with logical reasoning to examine each component of the data collected which will analyse the similarities and differences between the data collected and the literature review followed by the four research themes.

5.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses and provides analysis about the responses that have been presented in the data presentation chapter and then addresses the third and fourth aims of this thesis that are listed in the introduction chapter:

- Describe the role marketing can play in the further development of the higher education sector internationally and especially in mainland China.
- Analyse and problematize the developing phenomenon of the marketization of higher education.

To answer the following research questions:

- Is there a marketing strategy for the case study universities? What are the specifics?
- Any criticism of marketization in higher education in England/ China? What are these criticisms?

A review of studies has shown that 'push-pull' factors are relevant to students' *choice* of education destination when they are considering studying abroad (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). They describe how

> '…economic and social forces within the home country serve to 'push' students abroad. However, the decision as to which host country they will select is dependent on a variety of 'pull' factors.' (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002, p.1)

McMahon (1992) has also studied the decision-making and motivation of international students under the 'push-pull' framework. This chapter will be organized around the notion of the 'push-pull' factors in the marketization of higher education drawing on both the Chinese and the English data.

This research contends that some 'pull' factors are already in place and that the Chinese

higher education institutions could learn from these to marketise itself more comprehensively and effectively; meanwhile, the 'push' factors are also in place that mitigate against students studying in Chinese universities. Hence, unless these 'push' factors are also considered, the Chinese higher education system will continue to fail to market itself and recruit students, particularly from abroad. This chapter will draw on the data from the English case study university to enhance and develop the arguments as English HE already has significant and substantial marketisation strategies in place.

The discussion chapter will begin from macro issues around the higher education sector and university and end with the more micro/individual issues involved. In several instances, the issues are inter-connected, and micro-issues are linked to macro issues. Where possible, the researcher will make this clear to the reader below.

5.2 Location, location, location

There is no doubt that location is a 'pull' factor that plays an effective influence when students make their decision for education destination. If a university is located in a well-known city or region, it will naturally have an inherent advantage. Like a country's capital, historical city, or a city famous for a place of interest, music, art, or sports, it enjoys unique advantages, as well as benefitting from the fact that people know something about these places, and this reduces the time for recognition. Sometimes, it will attract people to come automatically, because of its famous reputation. The importance of location for choosing a university is the same as when people buy a new home; one of the critical words that people often hear is 'location'. The location of a prospective new home is often an overriding factor in people's choices to identify that new home, which is noted by many property agencies in the UK.

My data indicate that the location of a university is also an important factor in selecting a university to study at. The professor in the Chinese case study university as well as an international student from the English case study university (Page 169-170) indicate

that the location of a university is an important factor in choosing a university to study at. The majority of respondents interviewed during this study considered that the university is working very well with the advantage of the city brand of the university located. Mainly because both of the universities were located in famous cities in those two countries and had attractive surroundings around the universities.

Both of the institutions are considered to be located in an advantageous geographic location since both cities are very famous, which is one of the 'pull' factors already in place, with very specific locations attracting students.

Data indicated that when a Chinese university is seen as being in an attractive location, this has a significant influence on whether people want to apply to study there. Use of the university's geographic advantage is a good focus for marketing the university, for instance, to tag with the city's brand name. It is a popular marketing strategy that higher education institutions in English-speaking countries have applied recently (Chapleo, 2010; Robert, Williams and Omar, 2014). Of course, many universities in the world are not located in attractive places, nor can they enjoy this geographical advantage. But at the same time, geographic location is not the only factor that influences the student's decision of where to study. For instance, on the individual level: the economic condition of each family, interests of particular subjects; on the institutional level: quality of education and reputation of the institution, financial and non-financial aids that provided; and on the national level: safety and climate environment, and future career prospect all could be 'pull' factors to sway students' decision.

Hence, one of the ways that universities in England have become adept at marketing is to consider '*what* are the attractions to this location?'. They have become clever at marketing themselves according to location (as well as according to the quality of the programs, staff interests, expertise, etc.), combined with geographic advantages to promote themselves and to associate with the brand name of the city (Chapleo, 2010;

Robert, Williams and Omar, 2014). Consistently, the case study university in England planned to develop into a modern civic university with an 'outreach' image – an image that stresses its connections to the city. The university plans to move as many departments as possible to the city centre, near the city's train station, to help achieve this strategy. This strategy will help the university become a city university and promote it with the city's existing popularity, as the city is a very well-known and popular travel destination in the UK. With the expansion of social responsibilities of higher education institutions, there is increasing acknowledgment (worldwide) that when a student goes to university, the course of study, and academic issues, are only one part of the university 'experience' for that student. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) examined opportunities to experience the city, region, area, culture, attractions, and even opportunity to develop social skills, etc, are all now common pull factors and play an important role when people make the decision about higher education destinations.

One of the factors related to studying at the University of Manchester is that some students are there because they like Manchester's Premier League football teams. Similarly, some students apply to the University of Liverpool because they are fans of Liverpool Football Club. The English case university maximizes the university's marketing by analyzing its own geographical and other advantages, analyzing and understanding the ideas of students, and introducing the benefits of the university's location, such as attractions, culture, celebrities, and sports. This marketing strategy is especially reflected in the recruitment of international students represented by Chinese students. Cao (2016) confirmed in his exploratory survey that Chinese students will pay more attention to and compare other pull factors in host countries when choosing a country to study abroad.

Even though the 'pull and push' model that is noted above concentrates on the choice criteria of students who come from non-English speaking countries to study in English speaking countries (Maringe and Carter, 2007), little is known about the factors that

affect the flow of students from the rest of the world to the non-English speaking countries, particular English speaking students to China. But as mentioned above, still some strategies that are used at the English case study university could be adopted in China to contribute to the 'pull' effect of university there, not only domestically but also internationally. For example, the University Pro-Vice Chancellor (Page 141) discussed collaborating and partnering with external stakeholders to build awareness for the university nationally, the Faculty Representative discussed marketing and what makes the city famous (Page 153), while the Director of Communications discussed connecting the university with the city so that students do not only study at the university but also have the chance to experience the city (Page 147).

Interviewees (Page 116 and 135) from the Chinese case study university agreed that the university should take the benefits of geographic location into account and make it an influential 'pull' factor. Otherwise, the university will continue to find it challenging to market itself and recruit students, especially international students. According to the research data (Page 131), the incomplete and ineffective marketing method of the Chinese university is also related to national and international policy.

5.3 National/International issues: Policy Choices

China's political system is very different from Western countries, predominantly English-speaking countries. The Communist Party exercises power and decisions in China in the central government and its provincial and local representatives. A series of national public affairs management models in China also reflect this political system. Higher education is also directed and managed "from the top down" in terms of its decision-making, which is repeatedly stated in the chapter on data presentation (Page 117,125, 126, 130 and 134) from different interviewees.

It can be seen from the data expression that the reform and adjustment decisions should come from what is seen as the 'superior', which is also a consensus in Chinese society.

This simple cognition and China's management system are also reflected in China's higher education development and reform history. The initiation and decisions of several major educational reforms in China's modern history came from the central government. For example, in the course of China's higher education transition from elite stage to mass stage in the past three decades, reform initiatives and implementation plans have also come from the central government (Li, 2010; Jiang, 2017). As the scholar Jiang (2017) mentioned, the central government in China still has a massive influence on the higher education sector in China, and people still believe the central government retains that power (Wang, 2010; Mok and Han, 2017), even though there is now a discourse of decentralization. It may be that this is seen as propaganda.

Of course, this 'top-down' culture and of higher education in China is deeply embedded (as is true worldwide). However, the Chinese context is slightly different. The Chinese society still feels uncomfortable talking about and applying marketing strategies into a university's daily operation and management (Gibbs and Knapp, 2002). The Chinese cultural background knowledge and context are not adapted to regard higher education as a commercial business. Even though scholars have reminded us that perceiving higher education as a purely non-profit organization could be misleading as universities do seek funds from services they provide (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003). But when it comes to profit, most people still try to avoid talking about it, which is clearly confirmed in the Chinese data.

Therefore, if we want to see changes happening at every level of each higher education institution and individual, we first need to adjust via the national/central level. Of course, there is no doubt that this change will not happen overnight, and it will take many years for changes to translate into action. Often, any changes that do take place at this level will need to be multi-faceted, as many of the issues raised are interconnected at different levels. As what Enders, Boer and Weyer (2013) noted:

'Higher education systems are characterized by task complexity, multiple and

possibly conflicting goals.' (Enders, Boer and Weyer, 2013, p.19)

Therefore, any changes made at this level require multiple considerations. Doyle and Brady (2018) also indicated in their research that systemic changes in higher education would require a significant reorientation of existing administrative arrangements and a rethinking of the role of academia in organizational development, which may take time and considerable effort. Several factors will also drive the process. As far as the context and culture of China and higher education in China, policy from central government still has a huge effect on the management, operation, and orientation for a university, and people believe the government makes all the 'right' decisions. As non-profit organizations in China, higher education institutions have always been given a high hope and expectation of what they could *give back* to society. Thus, it is even harder to change the system under this environment and context. It would also be unfortunate if this motivation to 'give back' was diminished.

Even in this case, Chinese higher education institutions face the same issue as many other educational institutions in other countries in the world. League tables (in many different contexts, including China) are like a double-edged sword, which can serve as a pull factor for those universities who appear to be 'highly ranked' and maybe bring benefits to those well-ranked universities. But at the same time, it will also bring harm to the poorly ranked universities and become a 'push' factor away from recruitment to those universities. As both the faculty Dean (Page 123) and the Vice Chancellor (Page 123) indicated in the case of the Chinese university, the university ranking in China is already having an adverse effect on some of the universities, the student's Gaokao results being the sole measurement for Chinese students, who can only apply to higher ranked universities once they meet the requirements. On the other hand, students and their families will check the ranking before applying to universities. Consequently, top ranked universities can easily recruit students with better academic results.

It was clear from the above data that the league table is one of the important factors that affect Chinese higher education institutions in recruiting students, especially for undergraduate degrees. Students tend to go to the highest-ranking university with their National Higher Education Entrance Examination (Gaokao) result (Zheng, Wang and Chou, 2015). The league table is not the sole factor (Davies, Qiu and Davies, 2014) for students to make a decision but, obviously, according to the student (Page 123) it is an important factor to consider.

Rankings and other marketing and branding aids are certainly proliferating across the world; more and more rankings and measures make universities shift focus in order to achieve 'good results'. Any league table, however, has to have winners *and* losers. For universities that have a lower ranking, it may be difficult for them to recruit students with great results. In the long term this probably means some universities will cease to exist (Bunce, Baird and Jones, 2017). Others in the rankings will then become those in the lower quartile.

Hence, in any context, league tables always act as 'pull' as well as 'push' factors at the same time. Although some universities perform well, others appear to suffer as a consequence. Thus, weighing up the pros and cons of these rankings is something that all national governments need to do. It clearly appears from the data that rankings and other measures are likely to grow in scale and scope in China (as is the trend worldwide). Therefore, it will be even more difficult for China to resist the pressure that is exerted to participate in such rankings unless some changes come from the central government to prevent the measurements influencing the higher education system.

Meanwhile, the Chinese higher education system trend is that the weight of ranking increases day by day, as the Vice-Chancellor (Page 135) reveals in the Chinese case study university. Within the known fields and the unknown fields, it also plays an increasingly important role as an indicator. The number of overseas students that a

university in China recruits is already being seen as a ‘soft measure’ of success.

Therefore, in the future, with the policy guidance of the central government (as Cao (2014) and Choudaha (2015) describe) China plans to build a World-Class University sector in China to attract international high school students to come to study in Chinese higher education institutions. With the ‘assistance’ of ‘soft measures’, Chinese higher education institutions hope to further increase the number of international students. It seems the weighting of league tables will also increase among the Chinese universities. As the number of students grows, it will be important to stress the different characteristics and strengths of all institutions. In this way, the higher education sector as a whole can hopefully benefit from this increase in numbers coming to study in China, and not just a small number of ‘elite’ institutions. In this way, the whole sector could become more internationalized and also sustainable.

Nevertheless, this will not reduce the impact of rankings as a ‘push’ factor on poorly performing universities. How to turn things around and turn push factors into pull factors? Even in those relatively low-ranking institutions in the UK, many individual members of staff have a great deal of expertise, enthusiasm, and an important contribution to make to students. Still, their characteristics have not been sufficiently visible in the overall ranking. Ideally, of course, any league tables (or equivalent) offer prospective students a much more nuanced picture of the ‘qualities' of an institution than one overall ranking. This suggests that, wherever possible, an institution finds ways of promoting the multiple and varied strengths of individuals and individual departments within an institution to act as ‘pull’ factors.

Of course, this also points to investments in universities’ intangible infrastructure such as web pages, social media, and other technology to use as platforms to promote the multi-talents of its employees as a powerful and long-term ‘pull’ factor. For more detailed information about the importance of IT, we will focus on discussion in

subsequent sections.

5.4 Scaffolding for change

As mentioned above, if we want to change to be effective, it needs to happen at different levels, not just through the existence of a form or a slogan. It is through concrete, continuous, subtle actions at many different levels that drives change. Change does not happen overnight, nor does it occur from a single force or individual will. It may also need to take many different forms to achieve results. Usually, opportunities and risks will come along simultaneously while change happens, so how to maximize the opportunities brought about by changes and reduce risks at the same time will be a critical way of thinking. A notion related to changes is particularly worth mentioning - scaffolding. The notion of scaffolding in education is to provide learners with temporary and continuous support. The essence is to help learners learn a skill that can be reused to support new learning processes (Meschitti, 2019); this concept can also be applied to organizational change.

Scaffolding to support change can help understand the role of the existing system and framework in the transition while helping to reduce the risk of the change, and it can support the change process and make it more smoothly implemented (Jones, 2017; Stein, 2019). Scaffolding can be used as the 'adhesive' to 'stick' the originally 'fragmented', 'scattered' approaches and incoherent measures, and form a systematic and orderly reform plan and implementation method. Of course, scaffolding also makes the original individual and independent measurement more meaningful and powerful, and more sustainable. Obviously, scaffolding can only play a supporting role in changes, and scaffolding itself cannot have a massive impact on the ability of Chinese universities to recruit more international students. However, without scaffolding, changes may not 'take root' or 'stick' as mentioned, nor become influential 'pull' factors.

The issues mentioned above relate to this scaffolding notion including, for example, the

importance of Chinese universities providing opportunities for Chinese as a foreign language course for international students who come to study abroad. In an interview with one international student (Page 124) she stated that she came to study Chinese language and culture, so she preferred a university with a pleasant environment. In addition, the other student (Page 116) pointed out that he was the only one in the exchange program who had chosen to study at the Chinese university in order to learn Chinese as well as conduct business with Chinese people upon graduation.

Universities in China could offer Chinese language courses to international students to help those international students who come to study other subjects build confidence that they will have the right tools to learn effectively. This scaffolding support would enable international students to reduce the obstacles and anxiety caused by differences in language and culture. Establishing this kind of trust also allows international students to build up a sort of confidence in universities, which is very important for universities to recruit and retain students who may experience a huge cultural shock and come to Chinese universities to study. Anything that can make students feel welcomed and supported is a good idea to establish a benign relationship between students and the university.

Hence, the vice-chancellor (Page 138) of the case study university in China revealed that it is difficult for international students who would like to study degree courses with Chinese classmates. They must have excellent Chinese to understand the course material. If not, it then requires the university to provide bilingual teaching or at least an English teaching environment to fulfill the target of recruiting international students. The Vice-chancellor also mentioned that "this is a weakness for current higher education institutions" who tend to have only a low number of staff who can teach in English. It may be an important part of scaffolding change to focus on investing in a greater number of academic staff who can teach in English. Such an investment would then become a 'pull' factor, as the VC of the Chinese university acknowledged in

interview.

If international students can receive the Chinese language classes and study other classes in English at the same time in a Chinese university, it will help those overseas students to build confidence in their studies and feel more comfortable studying in China. As a result, it makes them feel welcomed and supported. Again, changes will not happen overnight - Rome was not built in a day – and training more teachers to teach in English is not going to be quick. Some English universities have established long-term relationships and cooperation with local and international partners to fit those into their long-term strategies and plans (Vila and Canales, 2008). However, those long-term strategic plans will not 'bear fruit' or 'pull' students directly in the short term. Like the example that the English case study university gives, building a reputation by making the university visible in local communities took a long time to set up. If higher education institutions ignore those long-term plans, and focus on short-term 'profit', international recruitment will continue to be poor and patchy.

Another vital issue related to the scaffolding to support recruitment that needs to be attended to is the administrators who manage and oversee this practice. The Chinese data (Page 119 and 131) clearly revealed that the Chinese case study university is currently investing little in those administrators' roles. In other words, even though the university has an international student admission department corresponding to their work and recruitment in those areas, they are not focussed enough, for instance, or maybe have an unclear notion of their role. The recruitment office may also be understaffed, which will not add to their sense of motivation or commitment to the task.

This lack of staff and energy may also stem from the lack of professionals in this field. That also means that it is necessary for universities to provide additional training and preparations to supplement the shortage of workforce issues.

Combined with China's political structure and context mentioned earlier, if an initiative does not come from 'top management' or a 'high-level', the implementation of this initiative may be significantly compromised. Under this premise, these admission staff need to feel that the motivation for recruiting more international students is 'coming from the top'. If this does not happen, the chances are that they will not be motivated to do this and will feel hesitant or concerned to spend a lot of time and energy in these areas of work. The staff may also think that recruiting more international students is a 'risk'. If those students arrive without receiving the appropriate support, they might not be happy and have a negative impression of the university and their future learning. Admission staff may worry about dealing with the difficult 'emotional work' that unhappy, dissatisfied international students might cause. Dissatisfied students may also have a substantial negative impact on international recruitment for the university, and the admission staff could then be blamed. This will also deter admissions staff from trying to recruit more international students.

Students' evaluations and satisfaction levels with universities are becoming more and more central to ever-increasing evaluation systems. Under these circumstances, if universities simply recruit international students into the university and the students for various reasons are dissatisfied and unhappy, the 'pull' factor may act as a 'push' factor and produce negative results. This underlines what has been mentioned in the previous section, that any positive increase in the international recruitment process requires the support of 'scaffolded' change.

5.5 Technology

With mobile Internet becoming widely accessible and the giants of social networking sites investing, there is a lot to expect in Internet and online social media platform in the coming years (Rais, 2016). Thus, a university's website structure, and ways to present and engage with all kinds of social media platforms are fundamental to student visitors. As one of the Deans (Page 117) mentioned, it is crucial to communicate

effectively via the web, with prospective students, particularly international students.

It is crucial to ensure that the information students want is easy to find and access. University staff need to have confidence in respect of the web presence of a university in the global marketplace. Two students from the Chinese case study university discussed how the website could be improved by offering information about tuition fees, start dates, contact information, etc. (Page 117) and enhancing the search engine to empower prospective students to find related and valuable information (Page 115).

It can be seen that if a Chinese university could provide a comprehensive, attractive, and easy-to-access official website of the university, then this website is likely to act as a 'pull' factor towards prospective students to study at that university. Conversely, if people go online to search for information and find that it is poor, not in English, not accessible, and so on, those are very off-putting for prospective students and turn to act as a 'push' factor. A few of the strategies used at the English university, including the use of good information as a "pull" factor, include building a digital team to create online awareness via website and social media platforms (Page 140), improving the university website to ensure that that technology supports student recruitment and/or research programs (Page 142), and allowing prospective students who reside outside the area to still contact the university (Page 143).

Lack of information and difficulty of accessibility of information for prospective international students are definitely huge barriers to communication between international students and higher education institutions. As Noel-Levitz (2009)'s research found, 72 percent of students said they land on a university's home page after searching. Another study showed that 88 percent of respondents said they would drop a university from their search or be disappointed with an institution if that institution did not provide the content students needed through their online medium (Kincl, Novák and Štrach, 2013). The use of internet websites has grown in the past one or two decades.

Searching on the official website becomes the most popular and efficient way for people to look for valuable and crucial information (Chen, Kleiner and Kleiner, 2011). In the absence of such information, prospective students rely on other sources, such as the advice of friends, as one of the international students mentioned during the interview (page 118).

Without such 'insider' knowledge it is likely that students will not apply to go to a particular university. Conversely, as mentioned earlier, good quality information and a professional image on a website can act as an effective 'pull' factor for the university, which is clearly shown from the English case study university (Page 165-166).

5.6 Academic (and other) staff in universities

Clearly, staff quality is one of the key elements for an organization and will affect how the organization works. Works of literature reveal factors that higher education institutions should monitor carefully to get good results, while also managing their staff, both academic and administrative. Rafiq and Ahmed (2000) and Gajic (2012) indicated in their research that higher education institutions should make sure all employees understand their role, not only as a staff in an academic organization but also in implementing their role as representatives of the university fully and effectively.

Of course, this will not be as simple as described above. For example, in the case study university in China, due to a series of factors, the participation of individual employees acting as a 'pull' factor has been limited. Obviously, the academic staff of the English case study university are widely participating in the recruitment activities for students and have made contributions to the 'pull' of the university (Page 171 and d156). Various scholars have revealed that it works better to get academic staff involved with recruitment (Ferrell and Hartline, 2005; Kotler and Keller, 2009; Gajic, 2012; Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2013) and clearly there are many advantages in doing so.

Involving academic staff in recruitment activities for students, particularly international

students, is something that the Chinese case study university wishes/plans to do. However, one of the most noted factors that mitigate against that involvement is that academic staff in Chinese universities are under extreme pressure in their existing roles. Obviously, all academic staff in the higher education sector worldwide would agree that they are under terrific pressure from research and teaching. However, if higher education institutions want to understand and deal with the pressure that academic staff in the Chinese case university experience, it is worth examining the specific stresses that they describe.

The result-oriented and target-based cultural context makes Chinese universities pay great attention to the research results of academic staff. Failure to meet the standards will affect the evaluation and may even affect the income of academic staff. This mode of management and supervision makes academic staff focus on carrying out research and raising funds, and it has also become the priority task besides teaching. Of course, in this case, the emphasis on a very time-consuming activity means that the time and energy of academic staff is limited for other activities. One professor in the Chinese case study university (Page 114) believed that most academic staff prefer to spend time doing their research rather than teaching students in response to the increasing demand for research achievement.

The other issue related to the pressure for academic staff is if academic staff are generating research funds, then it is apparent that they will have to carry out this work to high standards. Otherwise, they will not be able to continue generating research funds. This is one of the pressures that focusing on research adds to academic staff. Raising research funds may require academic staff to constantly carry out new bids until the research funds that need to be raised are obtained. This is a time-consuming and laborious task. Although it is possible to bid and be successful the first time, this is a rare case. As an academic institution, certainly the university's ongoing research projects can usually be used as a 'pull' factor to attract relevant students in a particular

field to study. But if academic staff do not recognize this is rewarded or regarded as important, they will not use the research to promote or advertise the university.

Similarly, suppose that a Chinese university wants to promote one of its academic staff members. In this case, both a professor and a lecturer revealed (Page 120) that they must have a certain amount of research achievements, and that obtaining research funding is indispensable.

On the other hand, recruiting Ph.D. students has also become an additional cost for academic staff, since they are required to pay half of the funds for these students (Page 114). The costs issue not only means that there will be fewer resources to research to a high standard, but it will also add pressure on academic staff in respect of the research work.

In addition to those issues mentioned above, academic staff are affected by the lack of transparency and non-disclosure of information within the university. Lack of transparency and non-disclosure of information makes academic staff in the Chinese case study university feel somewhat 'in the dark' and excluded regarding student recruitment activities. Academic staff in the Chinese university described and addressed (e.g. Page 115) a few times that they as academic staff in the university would not be able to know the detailed data statistics of international students nor even what the actual figures for recruitment are.

Not only that, but academic staff in the Chinese case study university would also not be able to know whether there was robust and active recruitment of international students taking place. This was in sharp contrast to the level of information and knowledge available to academic staff in English universities (Page 142-143 and 147). Furthermore, it appears that discussing matters related to recruitment has increased the tension for interviewees in the Chinese case study university, as one of the staff

members in the Chinese case study university stated during the interview (Page 131).

Obviously, if the university wants to change this status quo and enable academic staff to be more involved in active recruitment-related activities, the university will have to change. For example, it will need to provide more opportunities for open dialogue for academic staff, make information more transparent and open so that academic staff can talk about their pressures openly and freely, and give universities a chance to understand their academic staff better. Otherwise, it is difficult for academic staff to develop enthusiasm about recruitment.

Moreover, Gajic (2012) and Schüller and Chalupský (2011) indicated the importance of incentive management with financial and non-financial motivational incentives for staff in the organization. Gajic (2012) also suggests that non-financial incentives are another way that a university can meet the higher level of needs of academic staff. Non-financial incentives should be ethical and understandable, which requires the management level to find out what employees think, feel, and want via internal investigations. It is even possible for motivations to be individualized, using special methods based on an individual's system of values. Connected to this theme, some staff (Page 120, 130 and 135) in the Chinese case study university also mentioned the lack of extrinsic incentives to attract more students:

As described by staff (Page 152) in the English case study university, it would be vital for staff who work in Chinese universities to experience the intrinsic motivation for recruiting students over time, even though it is not easy to achieve in a short time and there are a series of 'balancing acts' that need to go on in relation to getting more students into the university, while keeping an eye on the appropriateness of the courses to those young people.

However, if the staff of Chinese universities do not feel valued and recognized, it will

be difficult for them to consider the recruitment of students as an intrinsic motivation to work alongside other work. If they do not feel they are an important member of the institution, they are less likely to try to recruit new members to the institution. In addition, if there is no corresponding scaffolding as described above and the staff face tremendous pressure, they will not feel prepared or assisted in recruitment activities.

5.7 Word of mouth

This final section concerns the most 'micro' issue I have described. The Chinese case study university data (Page 116 and 118) suggests that the Chinese institution did apply some of the strategies outlined here to build their reputation to help recruitment. For example, to promote the university through existing stakeholders (Dean, 2012) such as to ask current students and academic staff to promote the university while they have inbound delegation visit or go to visit/study abroad. Clearly, from the data 'word of mouth', in other words the recommendations from people who you know and trust, could be considered as an effective factor.

Those 'words of mouth' recommendations from current or past experienced students can clearly act as a powerful 'pull' factor for prospective students.

Of course, as mentioned earlier, this applies not only to students traveling abroad and talking about their 'home' universities but also to staff who work abroad temporarily or more permanently. This issue underlines many of the other issues mentioned above; that is, when people's experience of their 'home' university is less positive, they are unlikely to promote their home institution. It was clear from the data of the Chinese case study university (Page 132) that senior staff may ask staff to 'advertise' the university when they go abroad or receive inbound delegations.

However, there has to be a question over the probability of such requirements being fulfilled. As mentioned in the previous section, staff may not have the intrinsic

motivation or the commitment or loyalty to the institution to carry out this informal activity.

Certainly, there were examples when this sort of activity significantly helped the Chinese university to establish contacts with universities in other countries. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, if this connection is contingent upon a particular member of staff, then it will disappear when that person leaves the university, as one lecturer mentioned (page 130) in the interview with the Chinese case study university.

It is not difficult to see that such an approach – on its own - is unlikely to help the Chinese case study university establish a truly effective long-term partnership. This underlines the point that individuals who link two universities and engage in such 'promotion' will have to be part of a wider network of associations and links and a range of 'pull' factors. The Chinese universities may benefit from those who work or study abroad as potential 'hubs' in a nexus of connections, investing in them if they are encouraged to develop academic and social networks (through conferences, seminars, social events, hosting meetings, and so on). This investment may then 'pay off' in the longer term.

In such a case, there is hope that the effect of an individual can be multiplied into a network of favourable advocates and 'friends'. Therefore, establishing a long-term and effective partnership without relying on a single person is an issue. Just like the other issues mentioned earlier, this needs to be regarded as a long-term goal, and it will not simply 'bear fruit' or 'attract' students in a straightforward and guaranteed way. Similarly, it is undeniable that individuals may also play a substantial effect over time, just as each of the above-mentioned broader issues may have an impact.

5.8 Summary

As a summary, this study analyzes the marketization of higher education from both a Chinese and an English point of view using the push-pull concept. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and discuss the data presented in the last chapter in order to answer research questions three and four. The researcher began the chapter by discussing macro-scale issues relating to higher education and universities, such as the geographical location of the institution, national, and international issues, especially those relating to the politics of higher education. This was followed by a descrtiption of the more micro/individualized issues, which include, for instance, university strategies and tactics to help with changes, the implementation of new technologies, challenges and opportunities faced by universities. This ended with what could be described as the most micro (personalised, individualised) issue of 'word of mouth' for the university. There are several instances in which the issues are interrelated, and micro-issues are interconnected with macro-issues.

It is argued in this chapter that certain 'pull' factors are already in place and that Chinese higher education institutions may choose to use these as starting points to market themselves more comprehensively and effectively, for example by using their geographic location, 'word of mouth' to attract international students, and others. In addition, there are 'push' factors that mitigate against students studying at Chinese universities, such as a lack of engagement with technology, and tools and pressures facing academic staff. Thus, unless these 'push' factors are also taken into consideration, the Chinese higher education system will continue to struggle to market itself and recruit students, particularly from abroad. As part of this chapter, the data from the English case study university is used to enhance and develop the arguments, since English higher education has already implemented some significant and robust marketisation strategies.

In the following chapter, the researcher presents the conclusion of this research through

the four common marketing strategies in order to formulate a potential marketing model for higher education to assist university management, some suggestions for the future research in marketing higher education, and some reflections on this research.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the four common marketing strategies applied for best practices of marketing higher education institution followed by a new potential model for higher education marketing as well as some suggested areas of possible future research in the area of marketing higher education. I end with some reflections on the research process.

6.2 Main Findings

The one-party dictatorship, centralized power political system coupled with the usual 'obedience' attributes and social perceptions have allowed China's economy, military, healthcare, and education to grow by leaps and bounds over the past three decades. It has also made China an emerging economic power in the world. Of course, higher education has also developed and expanded during this period, allowing a largely illiterate country to move towards having the world's largest mass-educated population in the world within thirty years (Watkins, 2019). All citizens must attend school for a minimum of nine years (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010).

Higher education in China has not removed China from the growing competition in global higher education but instead they have joined the fray. Learning from Western education systems borrowed from the business world's modus operandi is one-way Chinese universities have adapted to what the international and domestic context has become. The literature review study of marketing strategies found four common basic strategies that the English universities used. Through literature analysis, the advantages and benefits of each strategy are clearly stated, which suggests that they would be convenient for universities to apply. It is further claimed that strategies of marketing higher education can be used alone or combined with other marketing strategies to get better results. It is also likely that these practical marketing strategies will help those universities that have the same background, development stage, and similar goals to

better engage with marketing strategies to achieve the university's targets and improve their own competitive advantages (Cetin, 2004; Drummond, 2004; Vik and Terry, 2011). Obviously, the data discussion also noted that to marketise a higher education institution more comprehensively and effectively, the university should consider those 'push' factors that mitigate against recruiting students while thinking of using the 'pull' factors that are already in place to marketise themselves.

The table below presents the marketing strategies practices that higher education institutions can implement based on feedback from the two case universities and literature research.

6.2.1 Practices of marketing strategies of higher education institutions

➢ ***Individual marketing strategies:***

Marketing strategies	Practice in higher education institutions
International Marketing	1. To build relationship with international agency and establish cooperation • to help university to entry new market • to build international image abroad • to build communication channel with its prospective international students • to help university to recruit more international students • to grow international student mobility
Brand Marketing	1. To use of the university's geographic advantage • build university brand equity based on its own advantages • to help university to build its own brand image 2. To build university's prestige and identity • to help university to secure number of desired students and

	staff • to help students to secure a job after graduate
Internal Marketing	1. To create and build a clear division department structure with job description • to help internal staff (both academic and administrate) to understand and maintain their daily activities • to help and support university to meet and deliver targets • to help to involve academic staff in marketing activates 2. To apply market-related management schemes to internal staff • to incentivise and motivate staff to engage with marketing related activities and events • to allocate resources to make the best guarantee of values for money 3. To meet up regularly with broad committee and external public stakeholders • to keep regular communication to help university stay on track • to help university to follow up and change ways of work in the right time 4. To create better tangible working environment with intangible atmosphere (invest on university facilities to improve working/teaching environment) • to motivate and empower employees • to incentivise staff in different hierarchies • to help university to create a supportive environment that employees be able to support each other 5. To offer scholarship/bursary and sponsorship to their students • to keep as many as loyalty students • to attract new students

Online Marketing	1. To publicise and share information via their official website and other social medias • to increase utilization of network resources • to help university's offline activities to be well-known • to build closer bonding with stakeholders • to help university to communicate with international students 2. To use Internet technology to build online image and identity for university (Wisely apply with internet and social media platform) • to marketing across university's service overseas • to offer primary sources for prospective students to search information of university

➢ ***Combined marketing strategies:***

Marketing strategies	Practice in higher education institutions
Internal + International Marketing	1. To appoint specific senior management team/people to respond to external engagement (institutional partnerships, international relations, marketing, recruitment, and alumni relations etc.) • to export education service to gain a global reputation and meets financial goals • to recruit more international students • to help university to attract extra financial support

Internal + Brand Marketing	1. To identify/review university's internal stakeholder (both current students and staff) with a deep understanding of their needs and requirements • to find the best way to encourage staff to participant in marketing related activities • to help university to deliver marketing strategy better • to help university to understand and satisfy their students and so to build a better reputation • to build university's prestige to attract right students and staff
Internal + Online Marketing	1. To combine offline activities/events with online information publication (university open days with online information publicity; broadcasting graduation ceremony online) • to expand influence and maximize participation • to free activities/events from geographical restrictions 2. To set up a specific department to charge and run online related issues • to create a better communication channel with internal and external stakeholders • to engage better with exist stakeholders to promote university • to provide a mutually supportive working environment
International + Brand Marketing	1. To build relationships with alumni and overseas partners to generate positive publicity and ensure future loyalty • to build an international reputation for university in target markets • to help university to entry target overseas markets

International + Online Marketing	2. To wisely apply with internet and international social media platform • to open online gateway for university to its international students • to gain better understanding of its international target markets and audiences • to help university to build international reputation
Brand + Online Marketing	1. To re-branding university's digital assets such as logo, website structure and contents and social media platform • to build online image for the university • to differentiates from rivals in the market and to enhance awareness of existence

This Ph.D. set out to explore what the realities of marketing in two very different contexts looks like and to consider whether and how such advice from textbooks would easily fit into specific contexts. In recent years, massive environmental changes such as economic recession, diversification, decentralization, internationalization and rival competition of higher education have taken place and bring huge effects to higher education institutions all over the world. Those changes also affect the way higher education institutions operate and manage and marketization has become one way to survive in the competitive environment (Maringe, 2005b). It is clear that the higher education sector has experienced major shifts away from central government control and towards free-market principles, especially in English-speaking countries. In this context marketing has become a key focus of activity and has itself changed the nature of higher education institutions (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Stachowski, 2011). The notion of marketing higher education attracts criticism and the two common critical views of marketization of higher education are that higher education is either overly controlled or excessively liberalized by government, or sometimes both criticisms are levelled.

6.2.2 The role of marketing higher education and the future of higher education institutions in China

The future development of Chinese higher education institutions may be caught in a dilemma, as they have to adapt to external (international) trends and combine some commercial and technological means to develop and operate their universities. At the same time, they cannot exist independently from the current Chinese unique national conditions and political system. Part of this context is the unique trait of 'obedience' that is central to the functioning of the Chinese population. This trait can be viewed in (at least) two ways in respect of the growth of higher education and the inclusion of marketing strategies into the Chinese system. Managers of Chinese universities may try to take advantage of the unique attitude of 'obedience' to integrate marketing strategies into future development; they may require academics to become more involved. At the same time, the trait of 'obedience' can be seen as at the root of the problems that Chinese higher education, and society, face. Even though several education experts and Chancellors of Chinese universities have stated that their aim is the development of 'Higher education with no walls/boundaries', including reconstructing the university curriculum, and optimising the structure of talents, disciplines and academic staff in universities (CACIE, 2020; China Youth Daily, 2020; Ke, 2020). But how to avoid 'sloganisation' and over-administration of universities, and to really implement optimisation and reform of existing models will require universities to closely analyse the general environment and their current situation with the help of scaffolding to support the continuous adjustment and change. This will need to include an acknowledgement that 'obedience' is not necessarily the same thing as enthusiasm for change.

6.3 Professional Recommendation

It was found that the roles and functions of marketing in the two case study universities were subject to socio-political trends and crises, and it would be difficult to offer

sustainable and consecutive marketing practical solutions that could apply without revision. However, what is clear is that marketing strategies help universities survive in a rapidly changing environment. Nonetheless, through research on the two case study universities, it can be determined that the marketing strategy does not exist independently. Effective strategies could often be combined and merged with university's other strategies. First, however, a very brief summative overview of each of the two sites.

6.3.1 Marketing strategy practices in the Chinese case university

The power for decision making of higher education system in China still remains in central government, although the central government has reformed the structure of higher education, and released a series of measures to begin to decentralise power and autonomy (Yin and White, 1994; Wang, 2016). The public also maintains a non-profit awareness of higher education. It is generally believed that higher education institutions should reduce profit-driven development of purpose or orientation (Gibbs and Knapp, 2002; Wang, 2010; Mok and Han, 2017). The developing direction of higher education institutions are reliant and dependent on top-level planning and guidance, the university lacks the creativity and willingness to try new strategies (Li, 2010), even though several Chancellors of Chinese universities and education experts suggested that higher education institutions in China should optimise discipline and academic staff structures. However, it would be hard to work on the changes under the unique Chinese social perception without an official central government's ‘order’. Hence, in order to better integrate marketing strategies into the daily operations of Chinese colleges and universities, the central government should adjust its marketing philosophy and provide more open and comprehensive guidance. Thereby, higher education institutions can gradually improve their structure under detailed guidance, expand the dimensions and details, and develop marketing related activities that meet the challenges and that are suitable for the developing direction.

If central government decides to modify the understanding of marketing strategy and could adopt a more open, more extensive and detailed guidelines, the Chinese case study university then could better integrate marketing strategies into daily management of the current weak aspects. They could also engage with those marketing strategies that are now recognized but not yet applied and these could have a positive effect for the university (Cetin, 2004; Drummond, 2004; Naidoo and Wu, 2011). For example, learning from UK case universities, with help and support of scaffolding for change, to fit marketing strategies into the university's future development vision, gradually establishing a brand, clarifying the internal structure and the incentive mechanism of the university, re-examining Internet resources and rationally developing and utilizing them.

6.3.2 Marketing strategy practices in the English case university

In contrast, the English higher education system has more autonomy (Stachowski, 2011), and the understandings and cognitions of higher education institutions engaging with marketing strategy is relatively open, and the feedback provided is relatively comprehensive and detailed. The public no longer perceive higher education as a purely non-profit organization because universities seek funding for the services provided (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003). However, central government still retains power over policy, and marketing strategies are highly influenced by these policies. Although the powers are not completely decentralised, there is still scope for the UK higher education institutions to implement marketing strategies.

The English case study university could improve the deficiencies and problems in existing marketing strategies. For instance, how to engage with the international marketing strategy to help the university to be more internationalized (Molesworth, Scullion and Nixon, 2011; Hemsley-Brown, 2013; Asaad, Melewar and Cohen, 2014); how to better use international marketing strategies to help universities to enter the international market and attract more students that are international (Brown, 2011). To

modify the university website to be more practical for the user, as the Internet is the primary source for prospective students to search for information. Similarly, in view of the marketing strategies that the English case university is aware of but have not yet adopted, the existing university management space is sufficient for universities to implement. There are ways in which they could improve the internal management system (Hay and Gensen, 2008; Gajic, 2012). They could also design a regular internal survey to get to understand staff requirements and worries and this would assist the management team to motivate and engage with internal stakeholders. They could also further gradually build a brand by analysis of its essential and unique strengths (Waraas and Solbakk, 2008) to differentiate themselves sufficiently (Maringe and Gibbs, 2009) from other institutions.

6.3.3 Comparing the marketing strategy practices in the Chinese and English case study universities: a new practice model

With the analysis of marketing strategies for both the Chinese and English case study universities analysed individually, the deficits of each become apparent offering potentially a new model of applying a marketing strategy. Under the consideration of 'push-pull' factors that could build on the tradition and success of each system into the future. The new model would begin by summarising the common issues of both paradigms as in the table below.

Comparative overview of the Chinese and English case study universities marketing practice		
Chinese case university	**Common issues**	**English case university**
University vision and strategic plan exclude marketing strategy	Macro environment influences, modify vision to fit government guidance	University vision and strategic plan include marketing strategy
Unclear marketing	Poor quality control, with	Clear marketing strategy

strategy related structure	little or no regular review	related structure
Claimed international marketing strategy is the key developing direction	Current circumstance: lack of connection with international stakeholder, poor international reputation	International marketing strategy is one of developing direction
Brand marketing strategy is a controversial concept to apply	Lack of standards for measuring brand strategy implementation	Brand marketing strategy is a controversial concept to apply
Claimed engaged with internal marketing strategies	Lack of regular review to understand internal stakeholder requirements	Claimed engaged with internal marketing strategies
Insufficient awareness of online marketing strategies	Lack of more extensive use of network resources	Sufficient awareness of online marketing strategies

This comparison suggests that higher education institutions in China and England are affected by changes in the macro environment and national government decisions, which is the primary common core factors that affect the implementation of marketing strategies in higher education institutions, especially for Chinese higher education institutions. To address this, the institution would need to rationally apply the accepted marketing strategies and combine them with the unimplemented strategies and use the actual results as evidence to improve the structure and application of marketing strategies in higher education institutions. They would then need to pay more attention to the actual results of these implementations, evaluate them and learn from those results.

The proposed new model is based on four marketing strategies, according to the implementation of the marketing strategy of the Chinese and English case universities.

Each marketing strategy is closely related to the university's daily operation. It can be implemented separately, or it can be combined with the other three strategies when the higher education institution needs it.

To briefly recap:

➢ ***International marketing strategy***

The international marketing strategy aims to help universities to enter international markets, to export education, and to increase the mobility of international students. More specifically, for higher education institutions, how to enter a new market with a different culture and political background and how to recruit the right local students to come to study. First, the university needs to establish contact with the target market, such as through local universities with the same goals, looking for local alumni who graduated from the university, or cooperating with formal agencies. Afterwards the

university can set out to establish connections and cooperation in overseas markets through the above methods. Then they could gradually combine with other marketing strategies to build the university's image and reputation in the overseas market, thereby consolidating the university's overseas market and cooperation.

- ***Internal marketing strategy***

People are the key element of any internal marketing strategy, and the two core groups of people in higher education institutions are staff and students. Therefore, the university should create a more harmonious working environment by improving the structure of employees and rationalizing the work content, so as to better implement internal marketing strategies through current employees. For example, create regular internal surveys to understand employee requirements and worries. At the same time, on the premise of not affecting the quality of education, to better meet the needs of students, so as to get better feedback, so that students become a new force to promote the university. Internal marketing strategies can become the cornerstone of the other marketing strategies, such as recruiting professional Internet staff to develop online resources for universities through a reasonable employee structure.

- ***Online marketing strategy***

In the past 20 years, the value and role played by the Internet in the organization has been self-evident. For a university to develop Internet value, improve the university's online assets and establish online presence has become an essential part of a university's development plan. Universities can establish an online presence through online marketing strategies, such as helping universities promote offline activities, and improving the university's existing official website to make it an easy-to-use online portal. Through the intervention of professionals, the online presence of the university will be enhanced to gradually establish an online brand. At the same time, this will help universities to expand overseas markets and help to communicate with prospective students in order to recruit the right students.

- **Brand marketing strategy**

Although brand marketing strategy is a controversial tool for university, establishing and maintaining a good brand image is also a relatively difficult thing to do. The establishment of a brand is inseparable from the combination of other marketing strategies, good reputation is also undoubtedly a favorable condition for the university to survive in a competitive environment. Through research on the university's own developed history, it can help the university to find differentiated and unique brand assets; and work closely with internal and external stakeholders of the university to establish and communicate the brand image. Universities should review the brand position regularly and reshape the brand in order to effectively build a dynamic brand.

6.4 Reflections on the Research Process

Conducting a PhD study in a non-native language was not without its challenges but is also a precious learning experience (Liu, 2013). As an international student, barriers of culture, language and physical and emotional dislocation have increased the challenge somewhat. Finding the appropriate voice is particularly demanding for students whose research is conducted at long distance (Brown, 2014).

Some of the research interview questions were perceived to be on sensitive topics, for instance what do you think the role of marketing could play in higher education in mainland China? The researcher did not get many replies regarding this question or people gave only brief replies. The political structure of the Chinese government and the social background/understanding of the term of 'marketing higher education' made the majority of interviewees believe it is not appropriate to discuss marketing related topics in higher education in China. Also, the majority of respondents claimed that the university has not even started to engage with a marketing strategy yet, so it is hard for them to see any role that marketing higher education could play in future in China. The sensitivity of the topic made me understand more about the challenges of marketing in

higher education in China as this sensitivity will need to be addressed in order to make progress.

When interviewing UK academics about the situation of marketing higher education in China interviewees mentioned they had limited understanding about the Chinese higher education system and thus would not be able to provide a related assumption or suggestion of the role of marketing in China. Therefore, in order to get as much effective feedback as possible during limited conversation times, the design of the interviews becomes particularly important and needed to be adapted.

Despite the journey of the PhD study being a long and lonely one, both physically and mentally, and facing various intercultural challenges, the researcher has managed to adapt to various difficulties of learning and living environment, and develop (Gu and Maley, 2008). This is parallel to the marketing strategy of higher education institutions, although the application of marketing strategies in higher education institutions is relatively thin compared to other sectors and shorter in time. It can be seen from the feedback of some interviewees that people's acknowledgement of marketing is gradually changing, and the value of marketing strategies has also been recognized at different levels.

It is still hard to convince myself that I am a good researcher, but I do believe I have improved compared with when I started the research. Obviously, during this research journey, I have learned a lot, not only in terms of knowledge, but also in a more general and broader field, and I have also learned about myself and my mindset. Identifying appropriate literature to read and reference is time-consuming work. Worrying about not learning enough knowledge and subjects related to the research is another fear. With the help of my supervisor, I found a good popular book to read which related to my research topic and that helped me a lot. It helped me to gain more broad knowledge, understand more focused arguments in other literature, and connect ideas or add new

ideas. Take mindset and perception as another concrete example, there were so many times that the researcher felt ‘academic research is not for me’ specially when experiencing difficulties, which then influenced the motivation, lack of focus, procrastination etc. After years of struggling with these mindsets, instead of spending time and energy worrying and denigrating myself, it was better to change the perception to 'live in the moment' - divide the project into small and doable tasks and set a deadline for myself to focus on.

These personal reflections actually apply to the academic research journey and to the management of personal/organizational growth and improvement. Like the higher education institution in China, even though the concept of marketing higher education may not seem to 'fit' with the Chinese perception, universities can still broadly research to understand marketing higher education better. At the same time, changing the mindset and perceptions, can turn concerns into motivation, and into a driving force for improvement rather than a constraint on development.

6.5 Future Research

Compared to areas such as business management or other fields, marketing strategies are rarely studied in higher education, which may indicate its status and value in the minds of society, as well as the controversy that still surrounds the subject. Nevertheless, this does not mean that marketing is not worth further study. With the passage of time, the development of science and technology, and the influence of external factors such as international integration, the competition faced by higher education institutions is becoming more and more intense. This competition not only comes from the domestic, local arena, but has also evolved into global higher education competition between institutions. Adoption of marketing strategies from commercial operations has become one of the strategies for the survival of higher education institutions to stand against the pressure of such a competitive environment.

It is clear that there is more work to be done in relation to the questions addressed here: How to enhance the value and role of marketing strategies in higher education institutions? What role does the central government play? Should the government push more of the application of marketing strategies in terms of policy orientation? How can we ensure quality assurance for higher education institutions while also engaging with marketing strategies? Further ideas are suggested below.

6.5.1 The relationship between government policy orientation and the developing direction of higher education institutions

The government's policy orientation occupies a dominant position regardless of whether it is in developing or developed countries. Even if higher education institutions in developed countries have relatively autonomous rights, they cannot escape the guidance of government policies. Higher education marketing guidelines will need to provide beneficial contributions to the future survival and development of higher education institutions. This guidance needs to make higher education institutions more clear about the role of marketing strategies, while also avoiding counterproductive competition. Blindly adopting the business operation model to run universities will influence the quality of higher education and therefore the educational implications of marketing strategies will need always to be taken into account.

6.5.2 The value of marketing strategy in higher education system

How to manage and operate a large organization with hundreds of employees is a continuing challenge for all large-scale sectors. For large organizations, even large charities, such as the Red Cross, need to stand out and grow from thousands of charitable organizations. How to make everyone understand, remember and participate in the voluntary work involved in internal marketing strategies cannot be achieved without the efforts of the organization itself. If the marketing and promotion of charity organizations can be recognized, then the value and role of marketing in higher education should not be ignored.

6.5.3 Chinese higher education system into future

With the advancement of China's reform, opening up and the development of higher education, under the direction of the massification of higher education by the Ministry of Education, private higher education institutions are gradually increasing. Although China's higher education is constantly reforming, the lifelong nature of the Gaokao examination (National College Entrance Examination) has not changed. Therefore, in order to prevent higher education institutions, especially private universities, from over-relying on and applying marketing strategies to meet the needs of enrolment etc. the timely introduction of the university marketing strategy guideline will assist the Ministry of Education to regulate and promote the expansion and promotion of higher education in China. Research in this area could inform this expansion and promotion.

6.6 Final conclusion

Although marketing strategy is a controversial strategy for higher education institutions, it does not mean that marketing strategy cannot bring positive significance to universities. This study of case universities in China and England showed that marketing strategies are indeed one of the effective ways for higher education institutions to stand out, improve internal management, establish long-term cooperation, build a brand, and attract the right students. However, compared with the autonomy and scale of the English case university, the Chinese case university needs more guidance from the central government and a more open attitude. Otherwise, it will be difficult for Chinese higher education institutions to truly implement marketing strategies within universities.

However, even if the English case study university has, relatively, more autonomy, the university is still cautious in implementing marketing strategies. This is related to the voices of opposition and the criticism of excessive marketization of higher education institutions. However, with the advancement of science and technology and the increase

in global information exchange, the competition faced by higher education institutions is also growing. This means higher education institutions increasingly feel required to learn from certain business operation models to maintain their competitive advantages. Staff will need to be recruited and included in strategies so that management can effectively reduce excessive worries and help universities to rationally apply marketing strategies according to the challenges they face.

The main purpose of engaging with marketing strategies is to help higher education institutions better improve their internal structure and respond to rapid changes of the outside world. If the application of marketing strategies can be improved as much as possible, the best practice of marketing strategies of higher education institutions can be better judged in the future.

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Appendix

Interview schedule

Current practices in the marketing of higher education in China and England and opportunities/obstacles for future developments in the Chinese sector

Name:_____

Date:_____

Place:_____

Introduction:

Thank you to agree to take this interview and you might know that I am doing the PhD in Liverpool John Moores University and the topic of the research is to find out best practice of marketing in higher education through compares studies in mainland China and England. The interview might take approximate 30-45 minutes, and I will take notes while you speaking and record as well in case I miss anything. The interview will not divulge to any third party according to ethical requirements and will store security. Before I start the interview, is there any question that you want to ask?

Theme one: Introducing questions (background information)

Can you tell me that what is your role in your institution? Could you describe in as much detail as possible about your work?

Probe: What is the main responsibility of your role? How many people are you managing and who is your supervisor?

Theme two: The current practices in marketing of higher education in your areas

Some literatures (Molesworth and Veloutsou) were point out that marketing higher education happens because universities need survive in the rival

market and the power increase of media as well as its influence for young people.

Therefore, could you tell me that what do you think about the current state of your institution? Why is your institution marketing them?

Probe: Were there any marketing strategies that your institution applied in the past, can you give more examples of those strategies? How do you evaluate these strategies, were those all working good?

Theme three: Main criticism of marketization in higher education in past twenty years

There might have some strategies that not working very well. Thus, have you see any criticism of marketization of higher education in your country?

Probe: could you give some example of criticism of marketing higher education. What do you think these happen?

Prompt: Do you think those failed strategies happened because of government or the university itself or even the whole society?

Theme four: The challenges for the marketing higher education

Since the practice of marketing higher education happened, expert like Nicolescu noticed that it is very hard to differentiate each university and create unique images for themselves. So, could you think any other challenge for the marketization of higher education in UK/China?

Probe: Why do you think those could be challenge for the whole higher education system? Can you give more detail that why you have this thought?

Theme five: The possible developing directions of marketing higher education in future in both area and the role that marketing higher education would play in higher education sector in China

You mentioned that there were some strategies that the institution applied in the past, such as XXXX, XXX, and XXX; and you also pointed out that some of them are working well; thus, could introducing the future plan of your institution about how to marketing and managing the university? Can you give more detail of those strategies?
Probe: What do you see the developing direction of the whole higher education sector in China/UK? What do you think the role that marketing would play in higher education in mainland China?

List of abbreviations:

Chinese university:

Domestic student	CNS
International student	CIS
Lecturer	CL
Professor	CP
Vice Chancellor	CVC
Dean	CD
Admin staff	CS
Head of recruitment	CHR

English university:

Domestic student	ENS
International student	EIS
Lecturer	EL
Reader	ERF
Professor	EP
Dean	ED
Recruitment manager	ERM
Recruitment staff	ERS
Finance director	EFD
Director of Communications	ECD
Marketing staff	EMS
Pro-Vice-Chancellor	EPVC
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Initiatives)	EEDfVC

Interview transcription for professor in QD University - partly

Interviewer: Qianwen Zhang

Interviewee: Professor

Place of interview: Interviewee's office

Date of interview: 1st April 2015

Time of interview: 45.34

研究员：那么咱现在的高校体系，您有什么见解或者感受么？02.29

被采访者：呵呵，你这个问题太大了。02.32

研究员：就是随便聊一聊，因为这个采访只是收集一些信息，没有姓名啊，学校啊，这些相关信息。所以您也可以放心。02.44

被采访者：因为这个问题，我的看法是咱的教学体系有它的优点，也有它的缺点。国内这一块从我个人的看法，从打基础来看，国内还是非常好的，但是从教学形式包括教学内容方面，进一步挖掘方面，可能会稍微弱一些。上课主要就是老师在课堂上讲，学生就听，实验课上就是几个小时做完实验，但是如果学生不是爱思考，课下不下很多功夫、动脑经的话，可能他学的东西对启发或者创新性的思路就很少。但是从打基础这一块来看，国内还是很不错的。因为国外的教育其实是比较活的，而且呢国外很多搞教学的老师很多就是专心搞教学，可能时间上比较整，所以很好下功夫，因此来讲他们的课程比较多元化，上课讲一些内容，再布置一些作业让学生自由开发，发动学生去自己查资料、去调研，那种开拓式、启发式的作业比较多，所以说国外他们学的东西比较活，学的东西也能启发学生怎么样去应用。国内整个来讲跟国外相比，还是相对比较僵化一些。教学方式也比较单一，虽然这些年也喊着要开一些创新式的实验，但是真正创新的实验很少，主要是把一些小实验弄成大实验，实验量原来是 2，3 节课能做完的，把它变成

长一些的，但是正真创新式的很少，主要可能还是国内的体制关系。因为国内这一块，随着大家对科研成果的要求越来越高，包括申请课题、发表多少文章、专利、成功这一块，而且这些现在已经成为考核教师的一个非常重要的指标，也是教师上岗、晋职非常重要的一个指标，所以说大家没有那么大的积极性去投入在教学上。 你是搞教育的，应该明白，教育是个无底洞，下多少功夫都不算少，那老师没有把精力放在上面，只是应付得来讲个课，那你想想怎么能保证教学质量，而且更主要的问题是，现在因为你要求他要有论文之类的东西来提副教授，那他没有，他就提不了。这就是非常现实的一个问题，所以说国内的教学真正安心去教学下功夫的少，不是说没有，但是少。确确实实想在教学上做点儿事儿的或者自己课题比较少，或者是也不追求去评职称或者晋升的少。因为教学这个东西投入是很大的，投入不了那么多，那肯定成果也不会很明显，这是毫无疑问的。因为现在的学生，怎么说呢，吃苦和勤奋的程度与以往相比也是逐渐下降，你也知道，现在这个时代基本上都是独生子女，枯燥学习的时代基本上已经过去了，学生也希望去玩一玩、去放松放松，特别是考上大学觉得送了一口气，原来上高中很拼，上了大学休息休息。 主要是从整个体制上来讲，就是说国内这一块的教学方式，教学多样性上确实需要去改进，有很多欠缺。因为国内学生的自主性远不如国外。因为我们学理科的特别有感受，有些学生在国内晃晃悠悠的，但是到了国外就拼了，因为在国外如果不拼就过不了关，毕不了业，因此来讲国内大学生吃苦耐劳的程度还是不行，而且更主要的是现在有涉及到大学生就业难得这个问题，很多学生也比较迷茫，就是我辛辛苦苦的学了，我成绩好一点又怎么样？我找工作照样不好找，可以也变成一个打击。所以说 大家的积极性，尤其是主动性不是特强，像是刨根问底就更少了。因为通过叫细胞生物学就能感觉得出来，

原来呢教课的时候，包括课间休息和下课的时候，有好多学生都拦着你问问题，现在没有问问题的。现在的学生都是讲完要拷你的课件，他认为把你的课件拷回去自己看看就 ok 了，所以现在很少有提问题的。 你看现在上了好几个周了，提问题的也就那么四五个人，问题也少，思考的东西也少。最终那个‘大’东西咱不好讲，整个来讲还是咱们国家的教育体制以及政策导向有问题。 比如，大学里首先要考核的是教学，你是个教授、副教授或者讲师，你不是研究员或者助研，你最根本的工作就是搞好教学工作，把这个导向引导这儿来，包括评职称、上岗啊、年度考核啊都集中在这一块就好了。大家都是注重舆论导向的。比如今天上午，跟教务处的处长聊了聊，现在要是能做到：第一，年度津贴需要教学不少于百分之 50 至 60，科研发表再高，成果即使是国家级的奖，教学也不能少于百分之 50 至 60，这就是个导向。再一个概念，评职称的时候不是说有教学工作就行，还要看教学工作怎么样，学生的反应和打分，组织学生给老师打分，考试和评分内容脱节。现在学生不敢给老师打分，打了之后老师给我不及格怎么办。老师提前出考试题，一出出三年的题，今年考什么题，学院里抽选或者决定。把学生的顾虑打消，学生就能给打分了，学生打的分数就是老师的系数，举个例子，一个工龄就是 30 块钱，你被打了 70 分，那就乘以 0.7，被打了 90 分就乘以 0.9，给你挂钩。而且现在整个津贴来讲，教学比例不大，作为一个大学还是导向有问题。像我们这个级别就不涉及职称的问题了，津贴多一点或少一点，我们也不太在乎这个事情，但年轻人就不一样了。11.01

研究员：对对，尤其是刚刚开始教学工作的。11.03

被采访者：对啊，他要提职称，而且别人都提职称了我没提，我光下功夫在教学上，最后也没有提升，别人谁说你好，顶多说你傻，对不对？11.10

研究员：恩，而且教学成果有可能没有那么快的体现出来。11.17

被采访者：一个是没有那么快，再一个它是个无底洞，没个标准。另外还有一个，大学招生人数现在很多，教学资源不是太充足也有关系。举个例子，我想给学生开个创新实验，我给学生任务，学生可能没课有时间的时候就要到实验室去做实验，但做实验你能去吗？就算给你门禁卡，你也没有钥匙，也进不去。你开开了，老师不陪着你还不行，不放心。 再一个，咱们很多同学也没有养成好习惯，不按规则来，那万一要是出了事，谁负责，对吧？那要是教学资源丰富了，就拿出一个或两个实验室来，甚至可以叫学生当中学习比较好的同学来负责，比如同一个时间点 5 个人做实验，找出一个负责人来就可以了。还是教学资源不够丰富。再一个，现在的教学经费卡的也很严，学生做一个创新实验，一花好几万，谁来负责？学院肯定不敢，因为教学经费有限。所以，一个是导向问题，再一个是教育资源、教师投入有关系。13.47

研究员：那以前上大学的比例可能是 10 个人里有 1 个大学生，现在可能 7 个 8 个。14.01

被采访者：现在 10 个人里 10 个都能上大学，关键看上哪一类的大学。14.05

研究员：那咱的师资力量反而不一定能跟得上。14.08

被采访者：师资力量也在增加，但是导向都把它导到科研上去了。老师肯定比原来多了，但是都被导到科研上去了。 比如说海大，引进个人就是‘中分工程’、‘英才计划’，考核啥？你的论文，首先把你的代表论文送到外校，送审，认为你符合水平，没有一个说教学上达到什么程度，顶多来一个试讲，讲十几分钟，那能听出什么来？而且这种东西说不好听的，肯定是拿最拿手的出来讲。也就是说考核也是有一定问题的。另外一个概念就是教学要做但是说的不算，比如我们学院的

实验中学和本科的教学是由两个副院长分管的，原来我负责的时候是两个统管的，后来我不管了就给分开了，一个人管理论课，一个人管实验课，这个交接和思路有的时候都不在一块，所以说增多了很多无谓的扯皮的过程。15.32

研究员：对对，反而耽误了时间。15.35

被采访者：对，原来我负责的时候，到了年底，经费不够但又为了多开一些综合性、创新型的教学实验，我就打报告给学校申请，一般学校也会给。但现在也没人去申请了。没有一个真心实意的，把学生看做自己孩子的，真心实意去把教学搞好的状态，这可能也是最主要的问题。16.10

研究员：那也就是说学生如果想资源自发的学习，那就只能靠他自己了，没有什么别的比较好的途径。16.17

被采访者：只能靠他自己。就是之前我当实验培训室主任的时候，提出了一个思路，学生对那个老师的实验感兴趣，就可以去找这个老师去做实验，相当于借鸡下蛋，学生给老师做课题，借机得到训练。16.38

研究员：恩，要不然没有机会去锻炼。13.40

被采访者：对，而且更重要的我刚刚也提到了，学生的积极主动性也差。16.52

研究员：恩，反正毕业是最重要的，多做或少做一个实验也不重要。就业也不取决于这一个实验。16.56

被采访者：对，没错。所以说整个的体制上，不光大学内部整个社会也有一定的问题。并没有说把学生在大学里的各个情况综合评估，企业招聘也就是看看专业，另外就是几个专家面试一下，那几个专家面试 5 分钟能得到多少东西。也可能有些人做的不是特别理想，但说得好。17.28

研究员：对对，有的人不善言辞。17.31

被采访者：有的人做得很好，但说的不行。就造成大家一种学或不学没有什么明显的差异。和就业什么的都不挂钩。和我们上大学的时候不一样，因为我们那个时候是计划分配，你不好好学习就没法工作，都是学习好的先被分配。但是现在不是，所以我们那个时候还是有一种正气，你表现不好，就业的时候只能看着别人被挑走，什么优秀学生、干部，别人挑完了才能轮着你，所以这就是一种挂钩。现在就没有这种挂钩，完全是学生自己找工作。18.18

研究员：对，怎么体现是个问题。还是要体现出来。18.59

被采访者：对，你要有个体现形式。比如说，你上研究生发了好几篇论文，不用说求职，出国也有好多人抢着要你。你如果一篇文章都没有，毕业都勉勉强强，你想找好工作哪那么容易。我常开的一句玩笑，到答辩的时候，你跟人家专家说，我熬了几百个通宵，谁会同情你？你结果都说不过去就是说不过去，结果不充足就是不充足。19.30

研究员：我在英国的朋友，也有读生物化学专业的，他们本科的授课也是会有一段时间的评估，然后有一个变动、调整，方向上会有所调整，那咱们也是会这样操作吗？19.53

被采访者：国内是这样的，国内是基本上教育部或者学校提出来学科教学计划上的修改，如果没有提出修改，没有人会主动提出来去修改这个东西，那么像这种评估的事情，作为老师，你可能一辈子就需要评估一次，就是你评估没有达到良好，以前是良好以上，现在是合格以上，不让你评职称，教育局不给你通过，哪怕你评上了副教授这个评估不合格也不给你。 20.34

研究员：那教学计划修改？22.12

被采访者：教学计划修改涉及的面比较多，阻力比较大。阻力大在体制问题上，

举个例子，你负责上什么课，你的课已经做成课件了，现在我要把你的课时给你调了，你的课件就要重新做，你比如你涉及的是 48 个学时的，现在我给你调成 36 了，你是不是要重新调？要不然你讲不完，对不对？所以说要重新调整，老师不愿意干，因为什么不愿意干，可能还是没动力。第二个概念呢是大家都不愿意动这个麻烦，就是因为大家都没有积极性，所以说你哪怕是分管的副院长也没有用，因为你手里没权。不是说像国外，你老板说你干的不行，我就辞了你了。但国内就不行，他不害怕，你也辞退不了他。加上中国的社会，你也知道，几千年的封建思想，谁也不好拉下脸来把谁开除了。包括有些老师，好几年都不来上班，都不开。中国人没办法。23.32

研究员：恩，我也没必要一个人出头去做这个事情。23.35

被采访者：对，所以说都没有把这个事情当成自己的事情去办，因此这个教学改革如果学校里不统一要求，教育部不统一逼着，基本上不会去做的，就是哪怕被逼着调整，大家也是换汤不换药，反正大家也都教学那么多年了，如果要是改的大，肯定大家都有意见，而且更重要的是包括海大在内，很多大学的教授都不上课，这是个很严重的现象。达到一定科研声望的就渐渐的不搞教学了，国家教育部原来下了个 14 号文件，就是规定教授必须要上课，这怎么办呢，人家就出主意了，出一个‘前沿进展’，你讲两节课，我讲两节课，就把自己领域的讲了，也不费劲，就算讲了，学生不会他不管，你弄这个‘前沿进展’一人讲一次。24.48

研究员：但没有实质性的内容。24.51

被采访者：对，所以说中国弄个东西就是，除非从根上去动它，光这种换汤不换药的去弄它，改也不可能就行真枪实弹的改革，教学计划着一块，原来我也想动，为什么想动呢，就是考虑到现在学生的课时和学分、课程门数都太多了，多到什

么程度，周末晚上都有实验课，白天的课排不下了怎么办，就排到晚上，一直排到周末。所以说你让学生哪有时间去做实验？这边喊着要大家多做实验，实验学科，叫大家不要光开经典型的实验，还要创新性的，综合性的，学生哪有时间，所以大家都疲于奔命去选课修学分去了，现在生物科学都要 160 多分才能毕业，那你实验课两节课才算一个学分，那理论课一般来讲一周学时才几个学分，那你想想这 160 学分最后要去掉半年多的做毕业论文的时间，你分析分析一个学期要 10 基本课加上实验课，十几门课那不是排的满满地，你叫他创新，还要查资料，根本不可能。原来我们上学的时候，老是在课余的时间查资料，去图书馆，老师用这个教材讲的，我们再看看别的教材怎么讲的，或者加深一些印象，现在这个根本不可能。所以课时太多，学生都疲于奔命上课选学分去了，所以这也是矛盾的东西，你要想大家去实验科学，多做些创新实验，综合实验，提高实验能力，你理论课这边就不能太多，你应该把时间往实验课这边去调整。那实际上咱们这个课程开的很多，实际上真的有必要开这么多么？我记得我们上大学的时候，连政治、体育、实验什么一起都算上，我记得我那四年才上了 47 门课，现在两年就上 40 多门课，比原来加了一倍都不止。27.03

研究员：那像咱学校这种的属于‘985’、‘211’的高校，招生是不是没有什么问题？就不需要特别去强调学校的氛围啊、教学啊等等。31.00

被采访者：本科这一块到没问题，因为从海大的角度来讲，这几年招生的分数是年年往上涨。‘211’、‘985’可能是一个方面，还有可能是青岛的地理位置也有一定的关心，你像去年，厦门大学在山东省第一志愿都没录满，前面山大是过了一本线就录了，所以为什么山大要在青岛下决心减分数，所以地理位置还是一有一定的地理优势在的里面的。海大的本科招生到不存在什么问题，研究生还是有

一定的问题的，就是说，同样的都是一流‘211’、‘985‘的学生愿意考这边的还是少，像二流、三流学校的考来的比较多。因为现在也是体制问题，你像中科院博士生一个月至少能发个 2、3 千，研究生一个月能发个 1、2 千，海大呢？一个硕士生一个月才发几百块钱，一个博士生一个月才能达到一千多，发的少。那么两个概念，一个就是说和科研经费的量有一定的有一定的关系，另外这些人又要搞好的教学还要搞好科研，压力也比较大。而且以目前的招生方法，我们招研究生一年就需要好几万，他现在又分成两块，一个是统筹分，招一个硕士多少钱赵第二个就加码了，招到第三个以后就更贵，博士也是这样。那除了这一块，学生发的奖学金，老师要掏一半。 32.54

研究员： 嗯，反而这样岂不是不鼓励教授去招收研究生，除非这个学生很优秀。33.59

被采访者： 就是没有经费你就带不起学生。33.02

研究员： 是啊。33.04

被采访者：就是，咱这个学科需要做实验，他跟文科还不一样，这样弄这大家的压力都很大，所以研究生招生这块吸引力就弱一些。因为大家还是比较实惠的，我上研究生我要发展我喜欢的方向，因为他不光你这儿有，别的地方也有，那你发的钱少，人家就不想来，我多拿一点哪怕给家里减轻点负担也好，对不对。所以研究生这块稍微弱一些，本科生还是没问题的，本科生每年招的粉还是挺高。33.47

研究员：那您觉得未来咱们高考的发展是继续延续现在的这十年二十年的策略，继续走下去还是会有一些改变，或者是改变的方向？34.03

被采访者：反正这个东西吧，反正是大家心里都很明白，不过谁去挑头做这个事情就是了，那么现在可能主要还是寄希望在国家这个导向方面，国家大导向如果

不动，哪个校长也不会那么大魄力来做这个事儿，因为他要得罪很多很多人的。尤其是这些科研大碗，都是有头有脸的人，要不这个人大代表，那个政协委员，他们不敢得罪，除非国家大政策，你包括国家下 14 号文件要就教授都去上课，他们都能应付，其他的有什么应付不了的！而且中国人是聪明，但没用在正地方，都用在怎么样行对策了。所以这个局势要是不改的话，我估计麻烦，现在这个状态，早晚一天会出事儿的，这样弄怎么跟国际接轨，接不上。但是你说要改吧，怎么样改，就要触动一些根本利益的东西才行，触动不了这个是改不了的。也就是看看国家教育部有没有这个魄力，下不下这个决心来去做这一块，那么教育部没有政策，让学校领导人去得罪人，他们不会为了学校的事情去得罪人的，说得不好听的，大家低头不见抬头见的，犯不着为了工作去得罪人，这是中国滑头的处事原则。但是真要去改的话，谁先开这个头，那就把现在大家形成的小平衡打破了，重新洗牌式的做法阻力也不会小，但是不做大手术，想改的话基本上是不可能。但是如果不改的话，反正怎么说呢，从国家的角度去考虑，这个教育如果不改，一直这个样早晚会出问题的，等出了问题再去改还不如提前准备，极力去做这个事情，但这个事情我认为改是肯定需要去改，但怎么个改法，不是我们自己去考虑的问题。不从国家大导向去做的话，肯定不可能。 36.42

研究员：嗯，体质也制约了，所有的人还要考虑仕途的问题，不是只有教育这个层面的。36.48

被采访者：对啊，家里过日子有个懒汉，谁都不干，但学校养个懒汉，谁管！在一个说不好听的，赤脚的不怕穿鞋的，他最后耍流氓，在你门口闹，怎么办！原来海大实施好几年了，对连续三年考核不合格的，叫他去人才交流中心，然后开除。但是现在一个也没开除，为什么，就是大体制的问题。 37.40

研究员：嗯，谁也不愿意去做这个事情。37.44

被采访者：关键还有可能挨骂，还有另外一个问题，你没有权利，看起来一个校长权利很大，但是要开除个教职工他也要掂量掂量，他也不是随便看考核不合格就开除的，就辞退的。再说从 08 年就施行聘任制，但是你看他把那一个开了？38.17

研究员：现在咱们学校已经实行聘任制了？38.21

被采访者：对，已经是聘任制了。包括考核不合格，给降级，但是没有一个降级的起码我们院里没有一个降级的 。38.30

研究员：名义上的一种改变，但是实质上没有改变。38.35

被采访者：对，没用。那么从现在的情况来看，教学上有个指标，研究上一个考核指标，经费上一个考核指标，人才培养上一个考核指标。但什么用，那个院长会给降级。再说中国人的观念，我没有功劳还有苦劳呢，我天天上班。现在国内分为四大级，教授一等、副高一等、讲师一等、助教一等，然后教授又分为四级：一级、二级、三级、四级教授；副教授分三级；讲师分三级；助教分两级。39.30

研究员：既然已经上去了，谁也不愿意再下来。39.35

被采访者：所以中国所谓的改革都是喊得响，实际的推进很少。包括原来喊双语教学，很多课就开始讲双语，我们学院就有这种情况，讲双语，学生都哭天喊地的，学了半天就学了几句英语，专业知识记不住，那到底是让他学基础知识，打基础，还是学英语！那还不如开个专业英语，加大专业英语的教学。所以说中国就是一阵风一阵风的，没办法。原来还弄国家教学名师、国家精品课程、教学团队，又是特色课程，这两年袁部长上任了，又不动了，也不提了，不说有，也不说没有。原来周记，周部长在任的时候，极力地推进这个东西，现在又换了，不

提了。40.38

研究员：每个人有每个人的侧重点，然后这个东西没有办法延续、传承下来。40.48

被采访者：但他原来这个思路还是对的，总要有个带头的，你要是国家带头人，那你总要把团队组织好，把教学搞好，你有这个‘精品课程’你敢乱来吗？‘精品课程’都是上网的，要是不好，让人看见，不丢死人了！人的面子还是很重要的，什么时候你能触动他的面子了，他才有可能动起来，否则的话动不起来。‘特色专业’你特色在哪里，监制了没有，现在海大动不动就海洋特色，海洋特色应用在那个地方了？就是加了一门海洋方面的课，就算海洋特色了吗？我认为完全不是这个概念，那么说谁都可以了。特色要应用到各个领域，包括科研、教学。但现在都是喊，有’显著的海洋特色‘，应用就没了，大家心里也都清楚。41。54

研究员：口号形式。41.55

被采访者：对，所以说真正实质性的东西很少。42.01

研究员：还是体制性的问题。42.04

被采访者：这个导向就是指挥棒，和切身利益息息相关。刚才我也提到了，一个是职称、一个是津贴这两个是切身的，这两个触动不了的，谁听你的，对吧！像古代农民造反一样，不是活不下去了，谁会造反，奴性是很大的，活不下去才会造反的。这个也是一样，不触动根本是不行的，没有积极性去做。42.44

研究员：而且现在已经是一个所谓的平衡状态，谁也不想去把它改变。42.51

被采访者：对，所以说要想改革就要打破原有平衡，建立新的平衡。不破不立，旧的体制、旧的平衡打破不了，大家都要惯性、惰性，在应付，怎么能改，改也改不了。所以说中国的教育。。。咱也不知道中国的领导人在想啥，咱作为一个普通的老师都着急，他们不着急。也不能说他们不着急，可能是高度不一样。43.30

研究员：也可能这个不是一朝一夕就可以做到的，这个已经变成潜移默化，根深蒂固的东西，把这个排除，建立一个新的理念，这个是很难得。43.42

被采访者：我就给他们想了一个词，积重难反。要打破这个平衡需要很大很大的勇气，要下很大的功夫才行。43.54

Interview transcription for Professor in JMU - partly

Interviewer: Qianwen Zhang

Interviewee: Professor (EP)

Place of interview: Interviewee's office

Date of interview: 13th March 2014

Time of interview: 1'12''

Researcher 13:46

And so, move to the next, I reviewed a lot of literatures and some of them, they pointed out that marketing of higher education happens because university needs to survive in the competitive environment because with the, uh, economic and other external factors, uh, the university, the higher education sector become more and more competitive environment. So, universities need to apply some strategies to manage themselves and to be stronger, to be competitive in this environment. So, um, could you tell me that, what do you think about the current state of this university? So, if they, the university marketing themselves or do you think it goes well? Um, anything like that?

EP 14:55

Um, yeah, I mean, undoubtedly, uh, the market in higher education it's changed, um, over my career. I mean, a long time ago, students used to apply to university and, uh, the choice was relatively limited because, uh, certainly when I went to university, so they might have 5% of the population at 18 went to the university. Now, you know, for this country, for example, has tried to get almost 45-50% of the 18-year-old population going to university. Now that meant A, a long time ago. It was, it was much, it was in a way, much more competitive because there were fewer, fewer people going to university and there were fewer universities offering degree programs, but, uh, what's changed is that the, that the number of universities is expanded dramatically. Uh, and the number of courses, the number of programs, the number of people going to university has obviously expanded dramatically. Uh, and therefore you might think

there's more, there's more competition, uh, between universities, but I don't think particularly there is that much more competition because when I went to university, if only 5% were going to university, um, it was relatively difficult to get in. You had to have fairly high qualifications to get in. And, uh, today I don't think that's the case, to be honest. Um, and in many ways, if I was to be entirely truthful, there are many students who go to university today. Really certainly when I went to university would never, ever have got anywhere near a university and perhaps shouldn't be in university. So, there is a, there is a perception that, that may maybe we're taking in too many students, that there is a big, long tale of students who shouldn't be here, etc. etc. Now that's quite interested, but all universities have to, as you say, survive in a competitive marketplace, but whether it really is any more competitive than it was 30, 40 years ago, I, I don't think, I don't think it particularly is. I think in many ways, uh, students from the students' perception, it must be easy to get into university today, but because there's been a big expansion in the number of universities and the number of students, universities are bigger, an individual university must be a lot bigger these days, and it was 30, 40 years ago. Probably the perceived idea is that it needs to be more, a university needs to be a much more competitive, but I don't, I don't think particularly it is. So, um, clearly though universities have to have to survive and there are various strategies for, to try and to survive. Um, now some universities maybe go down the route of try to survive on the basis of their research. So, I mean, uh, in, in Britain, the Russell group universities, uh, Oxford and Cambridge and 18 other the universities or so, uh, are marketing themselves on the basis of the high-quality research. And because of the high-quality research, the perception is that they've attracted high quality staff, but clearly there is no correlation between high quality research staff and high-quality teaching for the students. So, um, some universities, some British universities clearly have gone down that route and, you know, they tend to attract the best qualified students. Yeah. So, the people with the highest A-level grades, etc. etc. whereas there are lots of others, the export techniques which this one is issued, this university is one of them, uh, would tend to attract, uh, people with lower A-level grades, etc. So therefore, they

would need a different strategy for stressing what's important in that university. Now some obviously would just say, well, you know, the teaching is so good here that it's, it's almost a teaching only university. And there are some universities where there's not that much research done. Now, I wouldn't argue that the case that that's a viable case because the teaching the good quality teaching should be based on good quality research. So, the two go hand in hand in universities, that's what universities are all about. Really. So therefore, um, I wouldn't argue people, universities in Britain that didn't have it. Don't have a high, a good research record. I don't think it can be a good university and therefore they can't market themselves on very easily on, on that sort of basic, uh, this university though is actually quite good in terms of a combination of, uh, relatively high-quality research in certain areas. It's excellent. All universities, most universities actually have pockets of excellence in terms of research. And therefore, I've got a very highly qualified staff who are publishing a lot, therefore, hopefully that translates into high quality teaching, research, informed teaching. Um, so we, for example, uh, very good in certain areas, like astrophysics or sports science areas like that, um, we’re very good in niche markets. So, for example, the courses I was involved with for many, many years, the outdoor education courses, there are very few outdoor education degrees in the country. And we are always going with, certainly if not the best, one of the very few who are really good. So, anybody wants to do outdoor education in the country would come here as one of the two or three choices and probably here in, in reality. So, there are always pockets of excellence in most universities, but certainly from this, this university's point of view, because this is the one we're interested in, there would be these research pockets that would attract good quality staff. And obviously the degree programs associated with that good quality, those good quality staff and those research areas. Um, so, so we in outdoor education would attract students because of, because of the programs, but also the staff are good. And therefore, it's a combination of the two. Um, but in fact, um, to develop this slightly further, um, that's two sides of it. So, we would stress in this university that we're really doing quite well in terms of research and, and the figures would back up that research grants, research income, um,

successful in the research excellence framework or that, or the RA in the past, uh, would always back up that that we're doing quite well. But at the same time, we always have, um, we would claim that, that we have a very good teaching and learning environment. So, all our staff for example, would have to do this. This probably applies in most universities. These days we'd have to do the post-graduate diploma in teaching and learning. So, they have to do that when they come with, if they haven't got teaching experience before they have to do that. So, they're trained up in the first year, first couple of years. Uh, and so that will be important, uh, but we would always stress the two sides of, uh, of a student's education, good quality staff equals good quality research. And that translates into good quality teaching. It doesn't always, but I think in this university, it would do now, likewise, this university has gone down the line of stress in other things like the world of work, for example. Now, whether you believe in, in, in that, uh, this, this university does provide undergraduates with the opportunity to develop all sorts of other skills and, um, qualifications related to, uh, their development outside the academic subject area. Now that could be looked upon as being defining a particular brand for this university. And I think many people in the past certainly would stress that whether that is, is real or not, whether, whether students, because they've come to this university and I've got this extra world of work experience, uh, means that they can get jobs more easily is debatable. I don't think the figures actually backup that.

Researcher 25:37

Yeah. Um, but actually this is a point to attract students.

EP 25:42

Well, initially, at least it's a perceived attraction, whether in reality, it's, it's, it's true. It's doubtful because, you know, well, you know, if you're in higher education, you know that if you go to a good university, when I say a good university, one of the top 20 universities in the world, for example, of which there are a few in Britain. I mean, my son went to Oxford and he got a good degree in Oxford. Therefore, he went on to do a

masters and a PhD in his PhD was, was supported by the arts and higher education group, and then he got jobs in higher education because of that background. So, you know that if you go to a perceived good university where the Russell group universities, for example, your chances of getting, uh, a graduate job, graduate type job, people talk about graduate jobs, especially with the economic climate, uh, in the last few years, um, that the chances of getting jobs are higher. So, it doesn't always follow that just because there's a world of work program here. People are going to get jobs because if they've got a choice of a graduate from Oxford or a graduate from Liverpool John Moores, um, depending on the job, of course. But if there were comparable degree programs, you would go for the person from Oxford because they probably got a better academic track record initially. Anyhow, so, these are the sorts of things that we would stress, I guess, in this university. Um, good research, certainly in some areas, especially in some niche areas, good teaching, world work for graduates. Um, so they get extra kind of get extra qualifications. Now the other thing that obviously will be stressed in terms of Liverpool will be the actual place itself. So that is all stressed or seems to be all stressed in any marketing strategies I've ever seen. So, the, the fact is that Liverpool is perceived as a city that's. So, these days ever since there's the, uh, the capital of culture in 2008, it's perceived, or there's been a fairly vibrant, active lively city. And it probably always has been since, since the sixties, but it’s obviously went through, uh, an industrial decline, like most ports, most big ports, and went down that, that way declined where it's gone up again in the last 20 years, based on tourism, based on education, education is still one of the most important, uh, contributors to, to, uh, the economy and on Merseyside. And it perceived that way. Students perceive it, perceive it that way. And it's based on clearly, it's based on music in the past, it's based on football and sport. So, I guess we probably market, the brand of Liverpool. So, people appreciate it. Now, whether that's the case or not, you know, Liverpool is a small city, even in British terms, it's a small city, but probably relative to what the city is in Britain. There's a lot going on in Liverpool compare with smaller town in the UK. I mean, initially when I went to university, I went to Reading university. That was pretty good for what I did, uh, my

subject area. But the town itself would, you would never market Reading University on the basis of the town. Yeah, no way. Reading was a horrible little town. Well, not, not horrible, but you know, there's not, there was nothing really to recommend Reading. The only reason I went to Redding was the fact that it was in, I lived, I came from Northwest England and I moved to see how the other half of the country lived. And also, it was close, close to London. So, it's really easy to move in down the Thames Valley to, to London. Um, so those are the reasons I'm going. I stayed there six years, did my PhD there. So, can’t be that bad, but you would never market itself on the basis of the place, whereas Liverpool can do.

Researcher 30:28

Yeah, that's true.

EP 30:30

So, uh, so from that point of view, I guess that's one of their area that Liverpool would draw on its background. Uh, I don't know. I don't think that that's happened. I mean, I've seen major changes in Liverpool over the last or, or my career here and it's better, a lot better than it was. Uh, so I think we do quite well because of that in terms of student numbers and who wants to come to Liverpool, um, you know, I mean, it is possible to go to several universities in Britain. If you want to Lupton, for example, it's a little Wales town with very small numbers of students. Here it's a relatively big university for Britain. Uh, not, not in other parts of the world, obviously it's a small university, but in Britain, it's a relatively big university and therefore there's a lot going on in terms of students. And there are, there's at least three universities in, in this city. Yeah. And therefore, there's a relatively big number of students. And therefore, a lot of student facilities, a lot of student activities and, uh, all these things must help in terms of marketing, uh, marketing the place. So I don't know whether that helps.

Researcher 31:52

Yeah, it is.

EP 31:53

I mean, we can talk about, I mean, some of these things probably. It was useful having this before and to make me think, because to be honest, I mean, as you've realized from my job description, I've got nothing to do with marketing, nothing at all to me, but what we've talked about, what would make this university, I think, uh, a good competitive compare with others, uh, in the marketplace. I mean, I would argue that maybe the competition isn't, that isn't that difference to what it was years and years ago. Um, now in terms of, I thought it was useful just to say what we do or what I think we do, because in reality, what I think we do and what we do maybe very different, but clearly, I will be in, I would be more interested in that, in the postgraduate side of it than the undergraduate side of it. Yeah. I mean, in the undergraduate side of that, because of what I did before, I mean, I run the outdoor education programs. We, we obviously had done the routine things where, and we still have these sorts of things. Students come to the universities on open days and you lay on the program for open days, uh, you visit schools. So, there were, there were visits to schools and there probably still are visits to schools or schools visit universities, you know, uh, one school visits, John Moores University and there was a program laid on for them. So, these are undergraduate level, and clearly there would be a post-graduate level thing like we have, but all universities have prospectuses, and the prospectuses is, would stress some of the things that I'm talking about. Prospectuses sit down some more appear to be prospectuses, uh, you know, and we have all these thoughts. We have all these sorts of things and we have all these marvelous logos and stuff like that. Uh, but they would try and stress. So, some of the things, what we think we can offer now that's fine, that's fine. At post-graduate level, we would have individual postgraduate fact files for different faculty, different programs, uh, as well as the prospectuses. Uh, we have, uh, as you realize, we have, uh, agents in various parts of the world, particularly in Southeast Asia. And I guess their role is to recruit students for John Moores, whether in reality, that's a, that's a very

successful policy is debatable. I don't know whether it is, or it isn't because I don't know. I mean, clearly somebody perceives it has been an important role because they must be being paid. Every, every student they recruit for John Moores, they must get some payment from that. So, we have agents, uh, there are staff who go to various universities in various parts of the world, but areas that, where we perceive there being a market for, for John Moores like, again, like Southeast Asia. So, there's always little groups of staff going off to, uh, to Thailand, to Malaysia, to Singapore, to China, places like this. Uh, so we have individual visits from groups and staff. Again, I don't know whether that's very successful. I wouldn't be able to answer that. You sometimes think, well, is it really necessary? But I mean, there's people going to India as well. Uh, because India is obviously perceived as being a potential growth area. Um, so these are some sorts of things that we do these days, we're trying to attract, uh, graduate students, maybe by dual award PhD. So, in other words, they would come here for part of the time and there'll be remaining their home institution a part of the time. And there would be an agreement that I guess they pay fees while they're in Liverpool, and it's a dual system. These are extra types of qualifications than normal PhD, but we have to have a very detailed agreement with a particular country, uh, our particular university for these dual awarded PhDs. And it seems very complicated and very difficult to set up these agreements, memorandums of understanding they're called between different universities. And sometimes they're only within specific, for specific subject areas, because one of the problems with regard to the recruitment of international students is some governments. And some universities saying Southeast Asia will only pay for their students to come to a university that they perceive as being a good university. So, uh, we've had, we've had a lot of Libyan students in through this university, through this faculty in education, but you've already got to get somebody new to the job in the Libyan embassy. And they suddenly say, Oh, we can't support this particular PhD application because your university is not in the top 10 or whatever the figure. Uh, it's, it's all about perception. So, all these league tables and things like that are important because somebody in an embassy is looking at these league tables and saying, and

judging the university, but for us, and so far within every university, there are pockets of excellence in, in certain areas, not everywhere. So, really the people who are supporting the students to come and study here should be looking in much more detail at the subject areas and the departments themselves. So, uh, we've had this problem with Saudi Arabia. They're quite happy to support students to go do sports science because sports science is perceived and probably rightly so. It's one of the pinnacle research excellence parts of this university. Uh, but there's no reason why they shouldn't be supported in education because education in this university is relatively good compared with other parts of this university, you know, we're in, we've always been in the research excellence framework or the RAE beforehand. We've always been there. Um, whilst we're not the top of the very top in terms of research in this university, cause that's astrophysics and sport science. We are in the second category, second tier of, of, um, uh, at least being perceived as being good. Um, so there's no reason why a university or a government or an embassy should be critical because very often they don't know. It's just a perception, just a perception. A university is tarred with one view and that's maybe a figure on a world league table and that is just wrong. It's wrong. Anyhow. Um, we always do things like, uh, certainly when I was running outdoor education, we used to go to, um, undergraduate affairs. So, they used to be, uh, maybe some, uh, an outdoor education fair in the national exhibition center in Birmingham or something. And there were, there was recruitment at these fairs, uh, so, you went along and you talked about your area, um, etc. etc. Now there are general higher education ones. There are specialist ones like the outdoor education one, I clearly, these days we have postgraduate affairs. There's one on the 27th of March in Liverpool. It's a general post graduate fair where anybody who is interested in doing postgraduate working in John Moores can go along and find out information. So there are all sorts of things now, uh, because you're talking about the current state of this institution and we've talked about what they will be, what this institution will be marketing. And we've talked a little bit about that. And then you say, well, were there any marketing strategies that your institution applied in the past? Well, all the standard ones, like, like fairs, like going to

schools and all that sort of stuff, but that seems to be perhaps that's every everywhere. And it's probably a thing of the past to be honest. Um, because, uh, these days there must be, there must be, I'm saying there must be, there's probably a, which more student friendly if you like, or potential student friendly ways of, uh, attracting students. So, things like prospectuses and all that sort of stuff. I mean, some of these are fairly sort of mundane and not very, very attractive. They've got to be very, very attractive for perspective, but the use of social media must be, must be a way ahead. And I guess probably in the States, and you probably realize this probably in the States, there's this all sorts of different ways that a university might, might attract, trying to attract students through websites. You've got to have a decent website. Now this faculty's website is bloody awful, excuse my friend. Um, not very good, uh, but there could be the use of video clips that could be, uh, blogs. They could be some of these video clips and blogs could include interviews with students, interviews with researchers, interviews with faculty members, with all old students or alumni of students and all these sorts of things perhaps would give a better feel for what and what a place is really like or what a specific subject area is really like because often students, some will be attracted to the place i.e. Liverpool, others will be attracted specifically to a course like outdoor educational or sports science. And you've got to be careful if you try and use the best marketing technique, I guess, for individual programs, rather than just a blanket, a blanket sort of marketing technique, which is like a perspective as, I mean, they're all useful. I think, uh, there must be the, the use of email must be, must be a way of, uh, marketing, particularly when students have applied or thinking of applying. There are pretending information about the place, if you, um, rather than doing it all by post, or I'm sure for by post is not the way ahead because it costs so much for a start, but nevertheless, uh, students, these days will be using their phones, will be using their iPads, will be using their computers. All that sort of stuff must be the way ahead. And I believe that there are companies who specialize in all this sort of stuff.

Researcher 44:37

Yeah.

EP 44:38

For marketing education, in higher education. Now, I don't know positions where I, I, uh, I'm not involved with it. I don't know how far this university has gone down, uh, social media approach to marketing now. It's like everything else, probably that, that is the way it should have been probably five years ago. And as developing now, it should be, if it isn't then probably will we're missing out here in terms of marketing, I guess. Yeah. Uh, so I think things have changed probably the student market might have changed. Students might have changed. I would never, ever think of considering a university on the basis of, uh, what the student nightlife was like when I was applying to university, I was going for what I thought was the best course in that particular area that I wanted to study. I wasn't interested in how many nightclubs the city has, obviously how cheap the beer was in the, in the student bar. Now, I think probably the things have changed quite dramatically because if, obviously I was, I was an academic child, whereas most of the students that come to university these days, that's probably the last consideration.

Researcher 46:10

Yeah.

EP 46:12

It's probably changed dramatically the type of student. I mean, obviously, hopefully we still get in with the people who are able to think for themselves and want to do a good work, but, you know, especially in the post-graduate level, you talked, that was the case, but undergraduate wise, well, I think he's probably changed. So, uh, so I think things probably have changed and some of the strategies that were used in the past, like the simple perspectives of the school visit and all this sort of stuff, I don't think there's any, it depends, I guess this is probably not very much evidence. I don't know. There might

be not very much evidence about the use of a particular marketing technique and how beneficial it is. Uh, there might be a lot of evidence, but I don't, I don't think there probably is. It's probably an under-researched area. Isn't it?