Factors Affecting International Student Recruitment

(Admissions and Enrollment Management Services)

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Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Business Administration (Management)

Universiti Tun Abdul Razak

July 2022

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the case study is based on my original work except for quotations and citations that have been duly acknowledged. I also declare it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNIRAZAK) or other institution.

Signature   :

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Date   :

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and Most Merciful. Praise Allah for His mercy and for giving me perseverance, energy, strength, and love to overcome all difficulties. I have experienced your guidance day by day. You are the one that let me finish my master's degree, and to you, I will keep trusting my future.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor, Professor Dr. Siri Roland Xavier, for taking me under his supervision, valuable time, and constructive advice. His excellent guidance and humor carried me through all the stages of writing my project. Secondly, special thanks to all the lecturers who taught and shared their knowledge with me. I had fun in all the courses and learned much from your wisdom. On top of that, I thank my coursemates who made this short but intense journey memorable and wonderful. I am glad that we got to know each other. I would also like to thank the administrative staff of the Graduate School of Business (GSB) for their assistance.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Zulkiflee and Norazlinda. Without your support, encouragement, and patience, I would not have pursued my MBA and been able to do this for the last 12 months. Not to forget, my siblings, Syafeee, Haqeem, Anis, and Luqman, who have been there and accompanied me on days I need a shoulder to talk about the classes and homework. They also kept reminding me that I was going to university on Saturday morning, not going to school.

I want to acknowledge everyone who, in one way or another, has played a vital part in my career development and this dissertation. Thank you, Haley, for patiently hearing my constant rambling and always being positive. Last but not least, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather, Allahyarham Amir Hamzah, for being there for me from day one. This one is for you, Atok. I hope I have made you proud.

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ABSTRACT

Abstract of the project paper submitted to the Senate of Universiti Tun Abdul Razak in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Business Administration.

Factors Affecting International Student Recruitment

(Admissions and Enrollment Management Service)

By

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July 2022

International student recruitment (ISR) is an essential aspect of higher education. This paper investigates ISR from a higher education institution (HEI) perspective and considers admissions and enrolment management factors that may affect the recruitment process. Additionally, the study included the institution's reputation, ranking, tuition fees, and location impact on the relationship between the services and ISR. A qualitative study is used in which the researcher interviewed decision-makers regarding their institutions' admissions and enrolment management services aspects of ISR. The interview data are processed, analyzed, and categorized by Nvivo to get the results and findings. The findings presented are from a sample of HEIs in the United Kingdom.

This study finds that admissions and enrolment management services are essential to an effective and strategic ISR plan. It further suggests that the institution's reputation, which is the ranking, affects the admissions, enrolment management, and ISR the most compared to the tuition fees and location. Moreover, the findings show that integrating admissions and enrolment management services would tremendously boost the ISR through clear communication between services, an effective leadership team, and a standardized online platform or system. One common similarity between all the participating HEIs is that they outsource these services to an external provider, QS Enrollment Solution (QSES); thus, they have solid admissions and enrolment management services, eventually an excellent ISR plan.

Further research is required to determine the applicability of the findings to other education sectors. Implications are considered from the viewpoint of the ISR decision-makers and managers. This study's significance will help HEIs understand the importance of these services and how they should embrace, enhance, and integrate them to improve their ISR. This paper fulfills an identified research and practitioner gap by investigating ISR from an institutional perspective.

Keywords: international student recruitment, higher education, international students, higher education institutions, admissions, enrolment management, services, globalization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

It is famously known and documented that students worldwide dream and desire to experience higher education in countries other than their home countries (Soutar & Turner, 2002) (Briggs, 2006) (Tatar & Oktay, 2006) (Szekeres, 2010). These students aim to achieve qualifications from highly-recognized universities worldwide, particularly in English-speaking countries (Zinn & Johansson, 2015). It was also estimated that the global demand for international higher education grew from nearly 4.1 million students in 2010 to 7.2 million in 2025 (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015). As the competition to acquire the best student talent intensifies, higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide proactively develop rigorous strategies and policies to increase the international student enrolment rate at their respective institutions.

The availability and options for international students to pursue higher education have significantly increased over the years. With the intense competition to recruit the best international students, choosing the best education institution and qualification has become much easier and more critical for prospective students. Due to that, attracting prospective students, especially international students, became a concern and priority for HEIs. While gaining local students to join the university is effortless, the recruitment of international students to universities in the United Kingdom has become a central issue in an era of globalization for university administrators, senior managers, international offices, and heads of schools and faculties (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008). HEIs require proper planning, essential services, and effective strategies to attract, engage, and enchant prospective international students.

International student recruitment (ISR) management is not new in higher education. It is essential for many HEIs worldwide, especially in countries with high ISR rates, such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Despite the importance of recruiting international students, there is a lack of research and study on business aspects affecting the recruitment process. Most of the available ISR studies focus on student choice (Lawley, 1998) (Joseph & Joseph, 2020) (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) (AEI, 2003) (Pimpa, 2003) (Shah & Laino), student perceptions (Gatfield, Barker, & Graham, 1999) (AEI, 2002) (Ham & Hayduk, 2003), globalization and internalization (Crowther, et al., 2000) (Altbach, 2004) (Harman, 2004) (Marginson, 2004) (Sanderson, 2004).

This study's motivation comes from understanding how the primary two services provided by the HEIs, admissions and enrolment management services, would influence ISR efficiency. Many institutions offer and incorporate these services in their ISR plan but do not use them efficiently and effectively. The study applies the responses and perspectives of decision-makers from HEIs in the United Kingdom that shape ISR practice at the respective institutions to help the industry understand and use these services to boost ISR. This problem is also related to an external provider in the industry in which the name is confidential due to business purposes.

1.2 Problem Statement

ISR has evolved and significantly expanded over the last few decades. It may have started in hopes of diversifying higher education institutions, developing global partnerships, and advancing scholarships for domestic and international students. Still, the pressure of competition among countries has made recruiting international students "a profit-driven activity" (Viggiano, D, Vázquez, & Levin, 2018). HEIs are getting more proactive in their recruitment strategy by either in-house or outsourcing the process to 3rd party education service providers such as QS Enrolment Solutions (QSES). While many institutions have taken the next step, some still do not understand the importance of having reliable services in recruiting international students.

In this study, the researcher address lack of understanding of the importance of admissions and enrolment management services in recruiting international students. The research also includes how adopting these services together would improve and strengthen the recruitment process instead of employing them independently.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this research is as below:

- To investigate the impact of admissions and enrolment management services on international students' recruitment efficiency.
- To determine how admissions and enrolment management services can work together to improve international students' recruitment efficiency.

1.4 Research Questions

There are a total of four research questions for this study, and they are as below:

- How does the admissions service affect international student recruitment efficiency?
- How does the enrolment management service affect international student recruitment efficiency?
- How does the institution's reputation affect the relationship between the admissions service and international student recruitment efficiency?

- How does an institution's reputation affect the relationship between the enrolment management service and international student recruitment efficiency?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as a reference for HEIs actively recruiting international students and would like to improve their ISR efficiency while increasing their enrolment rate. At the same time, decision-makers at HEIs could understand the importance of admissions and enrolment management services through this study, eventually helping HEIs to decide how to adopt and incorporate these services in their ISR process.

Furthermore, this study aims to fill the gaps in academic research on ISR. One of the gaps is the lack of study on business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) aspects of ISR. Secondly, many studies focus on ISR from the consumer's (international students) point of view. Last but not least, despite the field approaching maturity, the standard is low, and the study aims to increase the standard ISR's strategic planning.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study's main limitation is that the findings result from a qualitative method in which several higher education decision-makers from the United Kingdom are interviewed. Due to that, the discovery may not be generalizable and applicable to other education sectors or systems in other countries (Ross, Heaney, & Cooper, 2007). A more extensive empirical study is required to develop generalized results.

Besides that, the limitation of this study is biased. Bias is commonly understood to be any influence that distorts the result of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014) - it is a term drawn from the quantitative research paradigm. Two types of bias could be present in qualitative research: participant and researcher bias (Shah S. , 2019). Firstly for participant bias, most of the respondents are decision-makers working in the respective departments: admissions and enrolment management services. There could exist bias in perspective either the response is too general and lacks interest or too in-depth with extreme favoritism. As this is quite complicated to avoid, what the researcher can do would be to analyze and reevaluate the responses critically.

As for research bias, a confirmation bias, the most common and highly recognized bias, could occur when a researcher interprets the data to support the hypothesis and may also omit data that does not favor their hypothesis. To avoid this, the researcher must consider all the data obtained and analyze it with a clear and unbiased mind. At the same time, the researcher must

continually reevaluate the impressions and responses and ensure that pre-existing assumptions are kept at bay.

1.7 The Organisation of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 covers the background of the study, the problem statement, the research objectives, the research questions, the significance, and the limitation of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature of other research in ISR to help develop and design this study. Next, Chapter 3 illustrates the research methods and the procedures used to perform this research; the chapter discusses research design, study population and sampling procedures, data collection method, operationalization and measurement, and data analysis techniques. Chapter 4 focuses on the results and discussions obtained from the finding, understanding the relationships shown between the variables. Last but not least, chapter 5 covers the conclusion and recommendations for the study, including some best implications and practices that HEI can adopt in their ISR plan.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presented a literature review concerning a critical look at the existing research that has significance to the study. The researcher completed the literature review by consulting other researchers' works to understand and investigate the problem of the study. This review is essential and critical to suggest and provide more ideas and knowledge established in this study.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

a) *International Student Recruitment (ISR)*

International student recruitment is the search and recruitment process of the best-qualified international students, from within or outside an institution or country, in a timely and cost-effective manner. Hence, it involves a set of marketing and communication actions by HEIs to attract, engage and convert individuals into new and consistent enrollments. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have attracted students using international student recruiters, various marketing materials, websites, and educational agents (Wit, 2010). In Layman's terms, ISR is searching for prospective international students and encouraging them to apply at HEIs abroad to meet the institution's goals and targets.

For HEIs willing to adopt ISR models, internal expertise still lags relative to external provider recruitment. Unlike for HEIs in Australia and the United Kingdom, where recruitment is firmly lodged in the International Office and where revenue generated provides the resources to engage in other non-revenue generating international activity, in the United States, there is no agreed locus for international recruitment (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012). In some institutions, the ISR function rests with the admissions office, under the authority of the provost or vice president for student services.

ISR is a broad and complex field with many processes. Some processes are defining and analyzing the academic requirements, planning marketing and communication actions to attract students, and working with marketing, accounting, and academic coordination departments. On top of that, some ISR services are managed by the admissions, enrolment management, and visa processing departments.

First and foremost, the admission service offers to screen and select the best applicants by processing and assessing students' applications. Secondly, the enrolment management service takes care of the enrollment process, integrates the prospective international students into the

HEIs, and follows up with them until they have successfully enrolled. Lastly, the visa department assists students with the visa application process. With these services available, HEI could choose which services it would like to emphasize more or most in improving its ISR.

b) Admissions Service

The admissions process plays a central role in ISR efficiency. HEIs need to recognize that the admissions function is an integral part of the recruitment function; slow and unresponsive admissions practices will undo even the best marketing and recruitment practices (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012). This service starts from receiving students' applications, processing and assessing the applications, making a decision, and issuing an offer. The process includes the admissions officer ensuring that they follow the minimum entry requirements set by the HEI, critically assessing the applications if they do or do not meet the criteria, and processing the applications within the turnaround time. Some basic admissions principles include HEIs must provide admission criteria for as many countries as possible and should accept all major international English proficiency tests (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge, Pearson). (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012)

In 1990, admissions officers in most HEIs were responsible for filing the class to keep together an institution's body and soul, lionized when the enrolment management hit the target. Due to this responsibility, the admissions officers have become marketing experts and have drawn to institutional works instead of conventional ones (Swann, 1998). In each instance, the admissions officers are expected to know the communities that send the students, help predict students' choices and preferences in courses, and work as part of the team that designs the institution for the next year or decade.

c) Enrolment Management Service

Enrolment management services include enquiry management, offer conversion, and engagement and retention services (QS Enrolment Solution, 2022). All in one, they are known as enrolment management services and play a significant and critical role in ISR efficiency. Firstly, enquiry management targets the growing issues recruitment teams face with top-of-the-funnel enquiries – increasing volumes, unmanageable inboxes, and long call queues. With artificial intelligence, HEI can identify and prioritize one-on-one conversion activity with quality leads while nurturing and warming up all other leads through automation and nurture programs.

Next, the offer conversion maximizes enrolments through proactive and personalized communications to all offer holders, prioritizing offer holders with a higher propensity to enroll. Student advisors then proactively engage with these offer holders, while sophisticated nurture

programs keep the remaining students warm and engaged with relevant content and call-to-action. Lastly, engagement and retention identify disengaged students and flag barriers to their success. Experience student advisors connect with students directly to provide the proper support at the right time.

2.3 Empirical Research

The researcher has yet to find any research on a similar topic of admissions and student enrollment services affecting the ISR. However, the researcher found some literature, ideas, and concepts on how to approach and design the study based on other studies.

In a book section titled, Synergizing Admissions and Advising to Improve International Recruitment, the writer mentioned how it is common to find three distinct and separate groups working within international education: international admissions, international student and scholar services, and education abroad (McKown II, 2009). However, many HEIs do not have strong connections between these different departments, which affects the common goal of assisting international students and eventually increasing the enrollment rate. This review is a basis for the research paper to understand the importance of admissions and enrollment management (student services) and how to leverage them to improve ISR.

Secondly, a study titled, Institutional and Managerial Factors Affecting International Student Recruitment Management helped the researcher understand, find, and establish the study's purpose, theoretical foundation, conceptual framework, design, methodology, approach, variables, and limitations (Ross, Heaney, & Cooper, 2007). The study by Ross, Heaney, and Cooper was qualitative research, and this study will follow suit in terms of the methodology.

Besides that, the researcher refers to a study titled, International Student Recruitment During the Pandemic: The Unique Perspective of Recruiters from Small to Medium-Sized Higher Education Institutions, which provides different perspectives of ISR from before (traditional method), during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic (James, 2022). This research paper also provides insight into the abbreviation of some terms such as international student recruitment (ISR) and higher education institutions (HEIs).
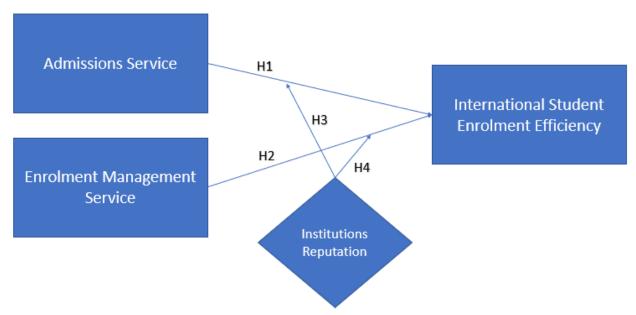
2.4 Proposed Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: The proposed conceptual framework for this study.

This study aims to understand how the admissions and student enrollment service influence the international student enrollment efficiency concerning the institution's reputation. The conceptual framework must be presented and followed to ensure that the study does not stray from the original proposal. **Figure 1** above shows the relationships between the admissions and enrolment management services with the influence of institutions' ranking in creating ISR efficiency.

2.5 Hypothesis Development

Based on the proposed conceptual framework, there are a total of four hypotheses identified for this study which are:

H1. The better the admissions service offered, the higher the international student recruitment efficiency.

H2. The better the enrolment management service offered, the higher the international student recruitment efficiency.

H3. The institutions' reputations influence the relationship between admissions services and international student recruitment efficiency.

H4. The institutions' reputations influence the relationship between enrolment management services and international student recruitment efficiency.

2.6 Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter focuses on getting ideas and inspiration on how to approach and design the study, as no similar research on the topic was found. This chapter presented a literature review of the other researchers' approaches in planning their studies related to ISR.

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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology designed to investigate the efficiency of ISR based on the provided admissions and enrolment management services. The process of selecting the research design, study population and sampling procedures, data collection method, operationalization and measurement, and data analysis techniques are proposed in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

The researcher conducted this study qualitatively to understand the importance and effects of admissions and enrolment management on ISR efficiency. Qualitative research further expands on the data analysis steps and the methods used for presenting the data, interpreting it, validating it, and indicating the potential outcomes of the study (Creswell & Creswell, Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches, 2013). The main reason for conducting a qualitative case study was to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. On top of that, it enables a complex phenomenon to be explored by identifying different factors interacting with each other (Debout, 2016). This research design helped analyze the data to determine how the various services affect the ISR and how the HEIs leverage these services to improve their ISR.

The goal of conducting a case study is to collect, present, and objectively evaluate the data. In other words, a research design is a 'blueprint' for the research. The researcher could approach the phenomena from the participants' perspectives through this research design. To conduct a more substantial case study and to maintain a case study's focus, the researcher conducted a single-case study research design. This required careful investigation to "minimize the chances of misrepresentation and to maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence" (Yin, 2017).

The unique demand to conduct case study research resulted from the longing to understand intricate social phenomena. Overall, case study research recognizes the need to focus in-depth and maintain a holistic and practical perspective on the case (Yin, 2017). Researchers can use research methods for descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory case studies. Understanding when to use a particular method depends on three factors: how the research question is presented, the control a researcher has over events, and the degree of focus on modern events compared to past events. For this research design, the preferred research method was an explanatory case study. Explanatory case studies answer "how" and "why" questions. These

questions lead the researcher to use the case study research method since such questions deal with tracing operational developments over time (Yin, 2017).

For this study, conducting a case study research design was ideal since the researcher desired to study some current events and work with unmanipulated data (Yin, 2017). Case studies rely heavily on direct observations and interviews. The observations are based on the events studied, and interviews are conducted with the people involved in the events. For this study, the researcher worked exclusively with evidence from the interviews. The participants are given a set of modified and customized questions to align with the study. The data analysis collected from interviews is done via qualitative analysis. Besides that, the study sought to determine the participants' perception of how these services could work hand-in-hand to improve the recruitment process. In addition, the researcher is disinterested in the recruitment process's improvement before and after this study; thus, an experimental design was not applied. **Figure 2** below shows the proposed research design for this study.
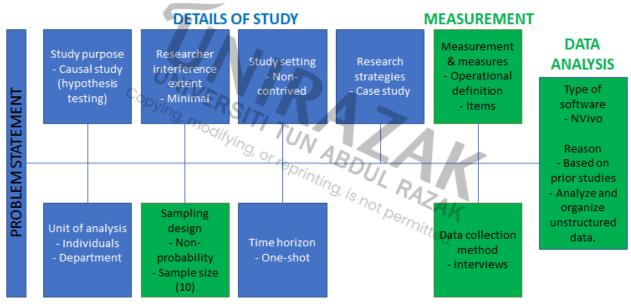
Figure 2: The proposed research design for this study.

3.3 Study Population and Sampling Procedures

This study is conducted among decision-makers involved in ISR from HEIs in the United Kingdom who are invited to participate in in-depth interviews. The participants are selected using a judgment sampling approach as they are chosen based on their expertise and experience in this field. Judgment sampling (a type of purposive sampling) occurs when units are selected for inclusion in a study based on the researcher's professional judgment (Maul, 2018). This sampling approach is the only meaningful way best suited to investigate and gather data on this study and enable the researcher to address the research questions. The researcher chose a total of 10 participants for this study.

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The researcher purposely selected the settings and the participants for the proposed study. In judgment sampling, the researcher deliberately selected participants and settings to provide relevant information regarding the research question: How does the enrolment management service affect international student recruitment efficiency? (Maxwell, 2013) This study focused on ten different HEIs in the United Kingdom that ranked top 800th based on QS World University Rankings by TopUniversities (QS World University Ranking, 2023). Additionally, each HEIs has an overall score of 4.0 stars, according to student reviews on Studyportals, the best place to find out how students rate their study and living experience at universities from all over the world (Studyportals, 2022). Moreover, one of the best similarities is that all these institutions have or are working with an external provider, QS Enrolment Solution, to manage the admissions, enrollment management, or both services.

The institutions selected for the study have an average of 21 – 45% international students enrolled from the total number of students representing approximately 130 countries worldwide. The institutions were selected to be a part of the study to learn how each institution manages its admissions and enrollment management services. The participants who participated in the study are from HEIs located in England and Scotland. The HEIs in England are divided based on their location in London and outside of London. In London, the four HEIs are London South Bank University (LSBU), Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), Regent's University London (Regent's), and Royal College of Art (RCA). In contrast, the four outside of London institutions are Aston University (Aston) in Birmingham, Bournemouth University (BU) in Poole, University of York (York) in York, and Oxford Brookes University (OBU) in Oxford. From Scotland, the two representing HEIs are Robert Gordon's University (RGU) in Aberdeen and the University of Stirling (Stirling) in Stirling.

The researcher interviewed ten decision-makers one-on-one from 16th to 24th August 2022, within two weeks. The participants are from four various departments: admissions, enrollment management, regional recruitment, and client delivery. **Table 1** below shows the list of participants and their demographic information. The interview lasted for about 15 – 30 minutes, semi-structured, open-ended question interviews intended to gather opinions and views from the participants. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Once completed, the transcriptions were checked by the participants to ensure accuracy in the transcriptions.

Table 1: All ten participants from ten different HEIs in the UK with their pseudonyms and demographic information.

Participant Pseudonym	Institution	Department	Years in Current Role	Years in Current Institution	Years Associated with ISR	Highest Degree Level
A	LSBU	Enrollment Management	1.5	1.5	1.5	Bachelor's
B	RGU	Admissions	1.5	3.0	3.0	Bachelor's
C	QMUL	Enrollment Management	3.5	3.5	3.5	Bachelor's
D	Aston	Enrollment Management	3.5	3.5	3.5	Bachelor's
E	BU	Admissions	1.5	1.5	3.0	Bachelor's
F	Stirling	Admissions	5.5	0.75	5.5	Bachelor's
G	Regent's	Enrollment Management	2.5	2.5	2.5	Master's
H	RCA	Regional Recruitment	0.75	0.75	14.0	Master's
I	York	Client Delivery	1.5	1.5	5.0	Bachelor's
J	OBU	Admissions	5.0	2.0	7.0	Master's

3.4 Data Collection Method

The data is collected to address the research objective. The researcher approaches ISR decision-makers with whom the researcher had experience working before or acquaintances through an invitation letter. The cover letter entails the purpose and significance of this study, including why the researcher personally chose the participants, which is available in **Appendix A**. The researcher interviews the participants in an in-depth interview session expected to take 30 to 45 minutes.

3.5 Operationalization and Measurement

The variables; independent, dependent, and moderating variables, with their measurements respectively, are presented in **Table 2** below:

Table 2: The variables and their measurements in investigating international enrolment management efficiency.
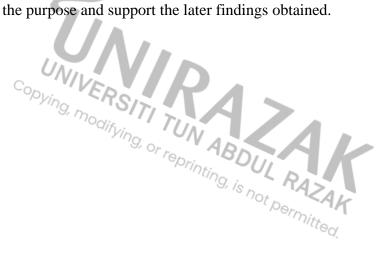
Type of Variables	The Variables	The Measurements
Independent	International Student Enrolment	Enrolment Rate
Dependent	Admissions Service	Admissions Process
		Admissions Turnaround Time
		Application Result
	Enrolment management Service	Engagement
		Customer Service
		Information Capture & Responses
		Conversion Focused Activity
Moderating	Institution's Reputation	Ranking
		Fees
		Location

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained is analyzed using a specific qualitative data analysis computer software, NVivo. NVivo helps organize, analyze and find insights in unstructured or qualitative data from interviews, journal articles, and web content, where deep levels of analysis are required on small or large volumes of data. The data is processed using the content analysis technique, categorizing verbal or behavioral data to classify, summarize, and tabulate the data (Business Research Methodology, n.d.). Besides that, this analysis would help investigate and evaluate the effect of admissions and enrolment management services on ISR efficiency more effectively.

3.7 Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter discusses only the research methodology used in this study. In addition to that, this chapter is essential to answer all the research questions. The data collected must be valid and reliable to prove the efficiency and success of the research. Consequently, the study's implementation is carried out according to established procedures, and the data obtained were required to reach the purpose and support the later findings obtained.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

Education is one of the United Kingdoms's most successful unsung exports. Its estimated contribution to the economy is £19.9 billion, with more than two-thirds of that value coming from higher education, often through the sector's support for international students (GOV.UK, 2019). The country's educational exports are an "international success story – a jewel in their economic crown,". Recently the government set out two ambitious goals through International Education Strategy to achieve by 2030: to increase education exports to £35 billion yearly and increase the number of international students studying in HEIs in the United Kingdom to 600,000 yearly (GOV.UK, 2022). With this data and new goals, it is no doubt that HEIs compete to create a strategic and effective ISR plan to recruit the best prospective international students yearly.

To better understand the type of services that support the ISR strategy, the researcher conducted a research study focusing on two essential services in ISR: admissions and enrolment management services offered by HEIs. Overall, the data collected provided the decision makers understanding of these services and how collaboration and integration between them could improve the ISR plan of an institution, thus improving the enrolment rate. Furthermore, the data collected significantly contributed to the limited research involving services that build the ISR at HEIs in the United Kingdom. This study enhances and strengthens HEIs' recruitment plan by implementing and integrating admissions and enrolment management services.

4.2 Result & Discussion

The remaining part of this chapter will discuss the study's findings based on the following research questions:

- How does the admissions service affect international student recruitment efficiency?
- How does the enrolment management service affect international student recruitment efficiency?
- How does the institution's reputation affect the relationship between the admissions service and international student recruitment efficiency?
- How does an institution's reputation affect the relationship between the enrolment management service and international student recruitment efficiency?

It is imperative to understand the admissions and enrolment services implemented by HEIs across the United Kingdom and how these services lead to the identification of themes to understand the research question fully.

The interviews started on 16th August 2022 and ended on 24th August 2022, with ten interviews conducted. In the first part of the interview, the author asked some demographic questions about the participants' highest level of education status, the department where they work, their period of employment with the current department, institution, and the industry. The demographic questions intend to be able to group and analyze the data more effectively and understand each participant's view and perspective more constructively.

a) Admissions Service

From the perspective of the admissions officers (respondents B, E, F, and J), the Admissions department's function is to process students' applications at the respective institutions for a given cycle or intake. The officer's role does not stop at processing international students' applications but includes assessing if the students meet the entry requirements and issuing an offer accordingly. An admissions officer is also responsible for offering an alternative course if the student does not meet the requirements of the preferred courses. Additionally, respondent B commented, "… so basically, we have to satisfy the client by providing all the like quality service also with efficiency". This indicates how the admissions service includes meeting and satisfying the client's service-level agreement (SLA) by providing good quality service as the service focuses on serving the clients or institutions.

All four respondents believe that the admissions service is essential to an institution. Respondent B shared, "… since admission team, either one will be, make the decision, whether the student entitled to get the offer letter to continue to further their study to the respective university or institutions". This show how the service is critical in deciding if the students are eligible and qualified to receive an offer for the course they apply for with the implementation of the proper guidelines. Eventually, institutions get good quality students; respondent F stated,

> " I think admission service is essential for ISR because it helps the institution get qualified students that meet all the requirements within the university's standard."

On top of that, respondent E mentioned, "I suppose because there's a high demand for international education, which will continue to grow. So with that, admissions will continue to grow and access various resources and platforms to reach out to students". Generally, the admissions officers have the same idea and perspectives of the admissions service, based on the keywords "assessment," "decision," and "requirements."

While the respondents have the same general perspectives of the admissions service, they show contradicting opinions on the effect of the institution's reputation: ranking, fees, and location of the admissions service. Respondent B shared,

"It does not really depend on the institution's reputation because admission service, our responsibility is to provide a better service to the client to make sure the service they are providing satisfied the clients what we call client satisfaction. Yeah. So we have to make sure we are providing the best service. So it not really depends on the reputation of the institution."

The statement provides insight into how an institution's reputation does not affect the admissions service and how the institution's satisfaction is more critical than the students' satisfaction. On the other hand, respondent E discussed, "students are more likely to apply or submit an application to an institution that they feel is more prestigious than a less prestigious one." Moreover, respondent F remarked,

" I think the institution's reputation might affect the admission services. For example, if the institution's ranking is more to certain programs such as more to medical programs, it will boost the application for the student that is interested in a medical program."

This finding shows that the institution's ranking would affect the admissions service the most as students are more likely to apply to prestigious or higher-ranking institutions – the higher the institution's ranking, the higher the number of applications. This is followed by lower tuition fees and strategic institution location. Respondent J stated, "I feel like most about the fees as most of the international students are from developing countries. So they always look forward to affordable fees. So I feel like it plays like significant role." Most international students come from developing countries and are scholarship-dependent; thus, they would choose to apply to institutions with lower tuition fees. This is supported by data in which the largest flow of international students is from developing countries: 67% of all international students in the OECD area come from developing countries. Of this, 3% are from low-income countries (LICs), 26% are from lower-middle-income countries (LMICs), and 38% are from upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2021).

The four respondents (respondents A, C, D, and G) from the Enrollment Management department provide a similar understanding of admissions jobs. Additionally, the admissions service includes data entry in which the officer would have to update the application status on the portal or platform. Respondent C commented, "In some situations, they will also update the application status via portal or platform," while respondent D shared,

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"You know, checking into last-minute changes or editing student information, ensuring the data's all right. Maybe they would be the middle person to help the student before they even start enrollment. So it's like they would be more into paperwork and data and more often offer issuing person."

While all the respondents believe that the admissions service is important, they provide a different perspective on this matter. Respondent A thought that

"… admission service it's really important in terms of like to mitigate the risk of fraudulent students and also to ensure that the students that are being made offered it is actually a good fit to the chosen cost that the student is interested in".

Secondly, respondents D and G believe that admissions are essential as they are experts in assessing international students' applications. They describe this role based on "many different qualifications" and "know how to assess all of these different qualifications." Besides that, respondent C stated,

"… admission is essential to ensure that international students have an equal opportunity also to join the institution. They must have a good standardized list of documents for reference because international students come from different backgrounds and qualifications. So it would be good for admission in this part to ensure that they have a good list for reference to ensure that these international students get a fair opportunity to be enrolled if they are qualified."

Respondents from the Enrollment Management department have similar opinions on the effect of an institution's reputation on the admissions service. They agree that the tuition fees and location do not affect the admissions service, but the ranking does. Respondent A mentioned,

"… the ranking of the institution is high, maybe this will lead to the admission service to be, I mean, like the task of them to doing that service will be tougher because the requirements, of course, when the ranking is high, I believe that the entry requirements, everything will be higher too, so this will actually for my understanding, it will actually make it like the process to be tougher. I would say that locations won't affect the admission service there much as similar to fees."

The statement aligns with respondents C and G's opinions on how essential it is to have a big team with enough admissions officers to process the applications faster and within the turnaround time. Respondent C remarked,

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"… that is very important for us to get the right size or number of admissions team members in the department so that if we have more applications, the admission team can also process the application according to their timeline. And it will also indirectly make sure that we are providing good customer service to international students."

Next, respondent G noted, "Institutions with higher rankings tend to have a big team to handle the application processes. They tend to be a lot faster and with shorter turnaround time. However, lower or average-ranking universities have fewer people working in admissions, leading to a longer turnaround time."

This is agreed by a previous study such that issuing offers should be on a rolling basis, with target turnaround times (e.g., a maximum of 5 working days to generate offers from receipt of a complete application) (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012). Indirectly this ensures that both the institution and international students receive good customer service.

Respondents H and I from Regional Recruitment and Client Delivery departments shared a similar idea about the admissions services. In addition, they shared additional views as they worked closely with the clients. Respondent H commented that the admissions function is "to collect market and feed in the information about the kind of student coming into the system to the institution." Besides that, respondent I claimed,

"I think a university wouldn't function appropriately without an admissions service. Institutions wouldn't be able to effectively manage their student pipeline if they're getting a front load of inquiries; if they can't process and manage them through until the next stage, they will have a backlog. In terms of essential, it's probably highly essential. Whether obviously, some universities keep that in-house and do it themselves, but some of our partners work with us in regards to admission services. The ones I know about wouldn't operate or be able to function without our resources and what QSES offers those students. The ones I know about would not be able to get through and impact their intake. Be able to drive strategies for international student recruitment as well; without that, you know, you wouldn't have such a global reach if you don't have an effective and efficient kind of admission service. It's highly essential. It's a short answer without it. I don't think a university could function appropriately without an admissions service."

This is in sync with a study that shows application backlog grows daily and can cause widespread service issues and delays, hindering nurtured applicants from priority markets. However, with the assistance of external providers, they are quietly bridging this resource gap (Cuthbert, 2022).

Overall, all respondents provided the same general idea of the admissions service and agreed that the service is critical for ISR. Yet, they show a contradiction in the effect of the institution's reputation on the admissions service. Most of them acknowledge that institutions' ranking affects the admission service the most; the higher the ranking, the higher the number of applications received. The institution's tuition fees come second, while the location does not affect the service. Nonetheless, due to the higher demand, HEIs must process and pay the operational cost of processing tens of thousands of applications that are inevitably unsuccessful. The bottom line is that admissions processing is an expensive operation, and the workload is increasing faster than the capacity to admit more students or hire more staff. To fill the resources gap, HEIs outsource the admissions service to external providers operating under the university brand and alongside existing admissions teams to increase capacity (Cuthbert, 2022).

b) Enrollment Management Service

The enrollment management officers (respondents A, C, D, and G) share their opinion on the Enrollment Management job, which is to be the key contact person – contact, engage, and provide sufficient information and assistance to the international students. This is in sync with a previous study by which state-of-the-art inquiry management is essential in these days of immediate real-time inquiry and response for all services, including international education (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012). This assistance starts from the enquiry stage until the students are enrolled at the institution. Respondent A insisted, "So one of the main important things, of course, is to boost the conversion of the student from an inquiry student to an enroll student." All four of them provided similar understandings of enrollment management responsibilities, describing the roles based on "engagement," "contact person," and "provide information."

The respondents agree that the enrollment management service is vital for many reasons. Firstly, respondent A quoted how the service "… helps to improve the relationships between institutions and students," eventually smoothens the ISR process and increases the institution's revenue. Secondly, as previously mentioned how the service is essential to provide sufficient information for the students to ensure they are on track and well informed; respondent C commented,

> "… when we are dealing with international students, the main important info the main important thing is to provide a good amount of information to them because they are already going out of their comfort zone in applying for international going outside of their home country. So the enrollment management service needs to provide a good amount of

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info to the international student. So they can be on the right track to submit applications and get an offer. That's why I think it's essential."

Lastly, respondent G added, "If you have students coming in from a different country, you may have different expectations. Some students may not be aware that there is such a thing called this enrollment because in their country, maybe education doesn't involve any enrollment process. So it's the job of the enrollment management officer to explain and make it clear to the students exactly what they need to do and expect. Due to the language barrier, sometimes things may get lost in translation. So the enrollment management officer's job is to ensure that before the students travel to the country, they have everything they need and require to be able to enter and be allowed entry into the country."

This view further strengthens the fact that the enrollment management officer is the key contact person for students to get information and be aware and updated on all the expectations and knowledge required before entering the country and joining the institution.

Regarding the institution's reputation, all four respondents commented on how ranking and tuition fees affected the enrollment management service but not the location. The respondents did not provide further explanation on the location factor. Respondent A shared that a higher ranking would ease the service as getting a pool of prospective students is much easier. Respondent C further convinced the statement by stating how "… ranking is a good criterion of a good institution, especially perceived by the international students and parents in the Asia Pacific (APAC) market." Next, students prefer and choose higher tuition fees institutions compared to lower ones due to the high quality and frequent communication and engagement. Respondent G stated,

"For the most part, universities with higher tuition fees offer good quality services and frequent communication and engagement with the students compared to institutions with lower tuition fees. There may be exceptions, but from what I've seen and worked with, that's almost always the case."

From the standpoint of admissions officers (respondents B, E, F, and J), their view of the enrollment management service is very brief. They all mentioned how an enrollment management officer is the first person the students will reach out to for any confirmation and clarification, besides providing updates and information to ensure the students' smooth sailing. They also believe that the service is essential to give the first glimpse and impressions of the

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institution's service and quality, which ultimately affects attraction to prospective students. Last but not least, quoted respondent J,

> "… the students will look into the three factors online, but some parents prefer to ask about the institutions themselves. Some parents will look for a ranking, while some for fees and locations. So I think these three play equal roles for enrollment."

Based on the admissions perspective, the institution's reputation: ranking, tuition fees, and location play an equally important role and balance in affecting the enrolment management service. The concise feedback on the enrollment management service from the admissions officer might be because they are unfamiliar and have no experience working with anyone from the department; thus, their answers are their rough idea and personal opinion of the department's job.

From the other department, respondent I shared how enrolment management "oversees other aspects of the enrollment process, including admissions." As an account manager, the respondent I view aligns with account managers who manage the prospect from the initial inquiry to the application stage for client institutions (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012). In addition, respondent H discussed enrolment management's importance in ensuring students arrived on campus and enrolled in the institution.

> "We have also seen as the university, students who actually arrive in the country where they're going to stay, the numbers start dropping. Maybe the students don't end up with enrollment after getting the visas and completing the entire process. This is the time when it is very critical. The entire hard work is paid for at the time of enrollment because, finally, once the student is enrolled, we know the number of students who will study with us. So very important part."

McKwon II informed how students today will go where they are offered the best deal, and they change institutions multiple times to reach their level of attention (McKwon II, 2009). This could have caused the students not to complete their enrolment process, and enrolment management can help to overcome this problem by ensuring continuous engagement with the students until they have enrolled and arrived at the campus.

Altogether, the respondents believe enrolment management is a vital service and is the contact person for whom international students can reach out at any stage, from the enquiry stage to enrolment. Many HEIs could not control prospective international students' journeys without an enrolment management service. Nonetheless, the respondents again show the conflict from the view that the institution's reputation impacts the enrolment management service. The enrolment

management officer shared how higher institutions' ranking and tuition fees influence the enrolment management service. This is due to the high ranking perceived the institution's quality, and higher tuition fees allow institutions to provide high-quality service and communication, leading to the students choosing the institution. On the other hand, the admissions officer stated how the institution's ranking, tuition fees, and location play an equally important role. The main idea is that enrolment management has a profound effect on boosting ISR at any HEIs.

a) International Student Recruitment (ISR)

The respondents have the same view of ISR, which is "recruiting prospective international students" to study abroad in a particular institution by "planning a marketing mix and strategy" to "meet the institution's enrollment target." Respondent J commented that "the team will focus on international students worldwide by having, for example, online fair or education fair in the respective countries to promote their institutions and recruit the students." While the respondents may have a similar overall idea, the depth of their understanding of ISR differs, especially from respondent I working as an account manager in the Client Delivery department. He shared,

"I know with one client; obviously, we're working within the UK, their international student recruitment is probably near enough between 80 to 85% of their intake. You can imagine without that volume of students, the institution's income would be affected badly. Nothing will work if institutions do not have a key strategy and the right people to drive it. The strategy has to align obviously with what you want to achieve at the university, but it's gotta align to the goals and ambitions of the student as well. It's thinking on both sides of the box. It's gotta be, it's gotta be a clear message and a key designation point to attract the right students to ensure that you keep that engagement. You keep the numbers, you know, at least to same as they were before, but obviously, you wanna see incremental increases. Universities must do as much as possible to keep their market themselves right. And to be able to work with a partner such as QSES, I suppose to be able to drive that recruitment strategy and see an increase in other ways they could stagnate and obviously have issues for future intakes."

This signifies how ISR is critical for institutions from many key countries as they would not function without an ISR team because domestic students do not provide enough revenue. This finding is interesting as it supported previous studies that indicate the significant demand among international students, primarily in Asia, as the HEIs were able to use the revenue gained from international students in a discretionary manner (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012).

Furthermore, respondent I have been emphasizing on how HEIs should be working with an external provider to manage the recruitment process,

"Having these services with an external provider allows the university to not worry about that and focus on other areas. Still, working collaboratively with a company such as QSES allows them to pass that on to us, provide us all the insight and knowledge, and for us manage that process."

This agrees with the data that sixteen Australian universities are outsourcing inquiry management to Hobsons Asia Pacific (currently known as QS Enrollment Solution), which uses a system originally developed by the Good Guides Group, an Australian company (Adams T. , 2009). Although this data is not in the context of the United Kingdom education market, outsourcing the enrolment management process to external providers is not a new act in the higher education market and by institutions in the United Kingdom. Currently, QSES is working with more than 20 HEIs, including specialist colleges, comprehensive modern institutions, and 30% of the Russell Group in the UK using its enrolment management services (Cuthbert, 2022).

As the ISR comprises many services, the respondents agree that the two essential services are the admissions and enrollment management services. Aside from that, regional recruitment is the other essential service for the ISR plan. Respondent A added,

"So aside from that, of course, I would say that the regional recruitment service is one of the essential services, known as RRS. They are the kind of person who helps get the target market and also give the exposure of this university to the markets and everything."

While regional recruitment roles are not only limited to conducting physical and online events for agents and students to provide exposure and information to get a pool of prospective students, they also provide intel from the target markets back to the university. As a regional recruitment manager, respondent H can confirm this by sharing,

"I am in charge of collecting market intel. Last month, one of our markets, which I'm recruiting from Sri Lanka, was in a deep economic crisis. And the VFS office was closed, and students could not get the visa appointment because the country had no fuel. So the students could not travel to meet the visa appointments or do their biometrics on time. So this kind of information is sometimes very critical because I was able to actually communicate this feedback to my admission officers so that we could extend the deadlines of students coming from Sri Lanka, right?"

This perspective is valid because respondent H is from the regional recruitment team, and respondent A actively works with an officer from the same department.

One of the research objectives is to determine how admissions and enrolment management services can work together to improve ISR. For example, respondent B raised that,

"I can see the international student recruitment service currently are growing as I can see through the numbers of applications that we receive every day. Yeah. So it mainly depends on the quality of the enrollment management services."

This indicates that the number of daily applications the admissions team receives is highly affected by the quality, delivery method, and student satisfaction of the enrolment management service - the better quality of the enrolment management service provided, the higher number of applications submitted. Additionally, respondent C shared that the "efficiency and alignment of the admission and enrollment management in the student journey significantly improve the ISR process"; thus, "…they should be working together as an integrated service, not individually," commented respondent E. This view is agreed by the previous study as the best marketing and recruitment practices will be undone by slow and unresponsive admissions practices (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012).

How can these two essential services work together? Respondent F mentioned that "communication between the departments because they will help and need each other assistance," while respondent I stated that "an effective leadership team to lead both teams." Adams shared that admissions and enrolment staff need to work closely together, and both will normally be within the international office and often in the same organizational unit (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012). While enrollment management is the key contact person that engages and conveys information to students, the admissions are more experienced, familiar, and knowledgeable regarding the academic and non-academic requirements to study at the institutions. Thus a strong leadership team must provide the right directions for both teams. On top of that, both departments must have "…an integrated or standardized online platform or system to ensure they have access to the same information," as informed by respondent J, to avoid miscommunication and misinformation.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study attempted to answer the research questions: How does the admissions and enrolment management service affect ISR efficiency? How does the institution's reputation affect the relationship between the two services and ISR efficiency? Additionally, the study explored how the decision-makers at the respective institutions view the significance of the admissions and enrolment management services toward ISR.

The ten participants of the study are decision-makers at higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom, and **Table 1** provides the list of participants by pseudonyms. Each participant offered invaluable insight into the international student recruitment efforts set in place by their HEIs based on their experience working with international students. Although the respondents provided many similarities of perspectives in their answers, the research also identified some differences. Overall, the data collected indicates the importance of admissions and enrolment management services in international student recruitment to meet the institutions' enrolment target. However, the data also revealed the challenges the decision makers experienced in their respective departments in recruiting international students.

The research question: How do the admissions and enrolment management services affect ISR efficiency? was answered by asking each participant a protocol of 12 research guidelines provided in **Appendix B** to obtain pertinent information for this qualitative study. To answer this question, the admissions service affects ISR by delivering a quality service to process international students' applications within the turnaround time and to ensure that the students are eligible to enter the university with their qualifications.

The interviewer asked 12 questions from the research guidelines and then collected and analyzed the responses. The first until fourth questions tried to determine the respondents' view of the admissions service's effects on ISR and the institution's reputation effects on the admissions service. Although the questions produced a variety of responses, the admissions service was proven an essential service for ISR. A contradicting view of the institution's reputation can be seen between respondents from the admissions and enrollment management department. The admissions officer agrees that low tuition fees and strategic location affect the admissions service, while the enrolment management officers concur that only high ranking affects.

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The fifth until eighth questions tried to dig into the participants' perspectives on the importance of enrollment management service toward ISR and the institution's reputation effects on enrollment management service. The data collected revealed that the enrollment management service is instrumental to the ISR as the enrollment officer acts as a key contact person for students to get any information or update while ensuring they are on track in their student journey. Furthermore, the data revealed how the enrollment management officer would have to cater to and work with international students from different backgrounds and language capabilities, making this role very significant to ISR. Lastly, the enrollment officer agrees that the institution's ranking and tuition fees affect the enrollment service. In contrast, the admissions officer acknowledges that the institution's ranking, tuition fees, and locations play an equal role in influencing the enrollment management service.

The ninth until twelfth questions focus on the ISR to understand the respondents' views and challenges experienced while working in the industry. Besides that, the questions inquired about the type of services needed to make ISR a success. The data collected from these questions and questions one until eight served as a foundation for the factors affecting International Student Recruitment explained in Chapter 4.

5.2 Implications & Recommendations

The following section reviews the implications and recommendations for research regarding the data collected from this study. Some of the implications derived from the research include the possibility of obtaining biased responses and views from the respondents and researcher, inaccurate information due to setting and participant articulation, a shift in process, and selectivity of the study. Furthermore, some of the recommendations developed for research include the need to create more vital admissions and enrolment management services related to international students' recruitment process.

a) Research

The researcher noted some implications while conducting the study from data collection. Implications in this form of data collection include the possibility of obtaining biased responses from the participants due to the researcher's presence. In addition, the researcher may have collected incorrect information during the interview because the information has been filtered through the researcher's and participants' biases and views. Additionally, interviews, which were conducted in a designated place instead of the natural field setting, offered "indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees" (Creswell & Creswell, The Qualitative Research

Paradigm, 2017). Moreover, not all participants were equally articulate, insightful, or comfortable with the researcher's presence. This may have led to conveying inaccurate information during the interview process.

Another implication that may have arisen once the researcher entered the field and began collecting the data was a possible shift in the process. In addition, some anticipated ethical issues in the study revolved around selectivity. The findings were based on the self-reported perceptions of ten decision-makers at ten higher education institutions across the United Kingdom. The respondents who work in different departments at different higher education institutions may differ in perspectives.

b) Best Practices for Development of International Student Recruitment Plan

Policymakers in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom must consider developing an international student recruitment (ISR) plan that includes admissions and enrolment management services. This planning ensures their institution continues becoming the primary choice for international students looking for tertiary education abroad. Due to the moderating variable, the institution's reputation affects these services, eventually the recruitment plan. Thus, HEIs must consider the institution's ranking, tuition fees, and location factors when planning and evaluating their international student recruitment plan.

International student recruitment in higher education is a term used to examine an institution's enrolment policy. According to Baker, ISR is an institutional response to the challenges and opportunities of recruiting and retaining the right student body for a school's financial health, image, and quality. It's a research-based process that creates a synergy among recruitment, pricing and financial aid, academic affairs, student life, and constituent relations. Although some believe success depends solely on the efforts and activities of the admission office, others think the entire school shares responsibility for ISR (Baker, 2012). Additionally, ISR is a deliberate process of achieving an institution's preferred enrollment profile, starting by identifying the strategic purposes and mission of the institution and then orchestrating the marketing, recruitment, admissions, pricing and aid, retention programs, academic support services, and program development required to achieve those outcomes (Kalsbeek & Hossler, 2009). In other words, ISR is an institution's road map to attain specific goals.

As such, the researcher recommends that decision-makers in each HEIs come up with best practices for ISR plan that includes both admissions and enrolment management services. As shared with respondent I, HEIs must consider working with an external provider such as QS

Enrollment Solution (QSES) to manage the international student recruitment process. QSES is the leading global provider of outsourced international and domestic student recruitment, conversion, and retention services (QS, 2022). As an extension of the university, QSES seamlessly integrates with the institution's teams and platforms while providing additional scale, expertise, and capacity expansion to recruit, convert and retain. This collaboration allows the institution to focus on other areas besides improving its enrolment rate.

5.3 Conclusions

In conclusion, the study findings present opportunities for HEIs in the United Kingdom and worldwide to improve their ISR plan. Based on the results, the decision-makers who work in different departments of different HEIs in the United Kingdom shared similarities in their understanding of admissions and enrolment management services, including the ISR. They have shown how essential is the admissions and enrolment management service in affecting the ISR plan for any institution. While the depth of knowledge of each respondent differs, each offers the same general idea of the services and industry. The study also revealed opportunities to improve ISR by integrating the admissions and enrolment management services in the recruitment plan, not considering them individually, and outsourcing these services to a qualified external provider such as QS Enrolment Solutions.

Qualitative research has limitations on generalisability. As such, this study's findings provide implications rather than generalizations and suggest further research is conducted to validate the findings as they relate to HEIs strategy and ISR plan. This research did not specifically explore the academic perspective on ISR. This decision was deliberately based on the research questions and the lack of existing research on the professional services aspects of ISR. Nonetheless, further exploration and observation of the academics' perspectives of ISR would be worthwhile and provide greater insight into the research and practice of ISR at HEIs worldwide.

Besides that, this study contributes to the underexplored area of ISR practice in HEIs as it fills the gap in ISR studies. As mentioned initially at the beginning of this paper, there is a lack of study on business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) aspects of ISR and this study fullfill those gaps. Market perspectives, student decision-making, and marketing methods dominate much of the literature on international recruitment (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) (Rindfleish, 2003) (Briggs, 2006) (Eder, Smith, & Pitts, 2010). This research expands the literature by demonstrating how these essential services, which are admissions and enrolment management that build the ISR, impact the process and identify how the HEIs can integrate these services into their ISR plan.

Last but not least, this study has many practical implications for the different levels at the institutions. For decision-makers, it can help examine interactions occurring within other departments and how respondents viewed the shared activity of ISR. For the institution's leadership team, the study's findings can assist in developing strategies and policies by improving integration between departments and the institution, addressing potential commodification and differentiation of the services, and enabling flexibility within services to respond to changing environmental forces. Finally, this research provides a greater understanding of ISR that can assist professional staff in allocating resources, creating ISR strategies, and perhaps, developing a longer-term view of institutional goals related to recruitment.
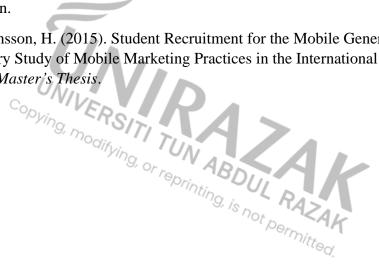
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW INVITATION

Would you like an opportunity to share your experiences as a decision-maker at the higher education institution (HEI) for international student recruitment?

Dear participants,

I am a postgraduate student in Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Graduate Business School (GBS) of Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNIRAZAK), Malaysia. As part of a research study, I am interviewing to increase my understanding of how the admissions and enrolment management services influence international student recruitment (ISR) efficiency, as perceived by those working in the respective department and other departments. I am writing to request your participation in my study as an experienced officer in this field, and you are ideal for giving valuable first-hand information from your perspective.

The interview should take around 30-45 minutes and be semi-formal. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a decision maker in your department. The interview will be relaxed and conversational. Interviews will take via Zoom or over a phone, depending on your preferences and availability.

Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that the personal identifiers and institution's information are classified and to protect privacy during the analysis and write-up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research in which the findings could lead to a greater public understanding of international student recruitment and the people in this field.

If you are willing to participate, please suggest a day and time that suits you, and I'll do my best to be available. If you have any further questions, please get in touch with me via email at putri.zulkiflee@unirazak.edu.my or WhatsApp at +60 11-2827 6527. I thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

Best regards,

Putri Balqis binti Zulkiflee

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND GUIDELINES

Participants will be composed of higher education institutions (HEIs) decision-makers tasked with international student recruitment (ISR). In sum, decision-makers that may influence the HEI's mission, policies, governance, strategies, and organizational changes will participate in the study.

Date	
Researcher Name	
Participant Name	
Institution Name	

Introduction: The researcher will greet the participant and introduce herself.

Purpose: The researcher will then explain that the purpose of the current study is to learn more about the admissions and enrolment management services affecting international student recruitment (ISR) at higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom.

Procedures: The researcher will also explain that she will ask open-ended questions in the individual interviews. Interviews will last approximately 45 minutes, depending on how much information the participant wishes to share. Conversations will be recorded on a digital recording device and later transcribed. After the data are collected, names will be removed, and the data will be analyzed.

Dialogue: A series of interviews will be conducted with decision-makers from eight HEIs across the United Kingdom. Before any interview, each participant will complete a five-question demographic questionnaire. Ultimately, each participant will be asked a protocol of ten questions to obtain pertinent information for this qualitative case study.

Consent: Participants will be encouraged to share only information they are comfortable sharing. In addition, participants will be reminded that their privacy will be protected through the use of pseudonyms and that they may choose to disengage at any point. If they choose not to provide a pseudonym, the researcher will select one for the participant.

Interview Questions

Section A: Demographic Questions

Education Status: Diploma [   ] Degree [   ] Master [   ] PhD [   ] Others: _____

Department: Admissions [   ] Enrolment Management [   ] Others: _____

Years in Current Role: Less than 1 year [   ] 1-5 years [   ] 6-10 years [   ] 10 years and more [   ]

Years with Current Higher Education Institution: Less than 1 year [   ] 1-5 years [   ] 6-10 years [   ] 10 years and more [   ]

Years of Experience in ISR: Less than 1 year [   ] 1-5 years [   ] 6-10 years [   ]
10 years and more [   ]

Section B: Research Guidelines

1. Perception towards Admissions Service

- What do you understand about the job scope of the admissions department?
- What do you know about an admissions officer role?
- Why do you think the admissions service is essential for ISR?
- How do you think institutions' reputations (ranking, fees, locations) affect the admissions service?

2. Perception of Enrolment Management Service

- What do you understand about the job scope of the enrolment management department?
- What do you know about the enrolment management officer role?
- Why do you think the enrolment management service is essential for ISR?
- How do you think institutions' reputations (ranking, fees, locations) affect the enrolment management service?

3. Perception towards International Student Recruitment (ISR)

- What do you understand about international student recruitment?
- What services are required to make international student recruitment a success?
- How would these services work together to boost ISR efficiency?
- What are your opinions on institutions' reputations (ranking, fees, locations) that affect international student recruitment?

Conclusion:

- Turn off the audio-recording device.
- Thank participant for participating.
- Answer any questions the participant may have about the study.
- Give the participant a business card and encourage them to contact the researcher with any questions or additional information they think may be relevant to the study.

APPROVAL PAGE

TITLE OF PROJECT PAPER: **FACTORS AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT (ADMISSIONS AND ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES)**

NAME OF AUTHOR: **PUTRI BALQIS BINTI ZULKIFLEE**

The undersigned certifies that the above candidate has fulfilled the condition of the project paper prepared in partial fulfillment for the Master of Business Administration (Management) degree.

SUPERVISOR

Signature   : _____

Name   :

Date   :

ENDORSED BY:

_____

Associate Professor Dr Benjamin Chan Yin Fah

Dean

Graduate School of Business

Universiti Tun Abdul Razak

Date: