Chapter 7
Optimal Motivation and Governance of Education Agents:
International Student Recruitment

Nadia O'Connell
Stenden University, Indonesia

Ho Yin Wong
Deakin University, Australia

ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the issue of marketing higher education institutions through education agents, focusing on ways to gain a competitive advantage over other institutions in the context of increasing global competition while maintaining close management and governance of this distribution channel. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 31 Australian university international marketing managers and staff, and 16 education agents based in Australia and overseas. The findings show seven main themes, namely, service and support, joint promotion, incentives, training, gifts, social activities, and relationship enhancement. The contributions of this chapter are the provision of experiences, ideas, attitudes, and perspectives of how Australian universities work in partnership with education agents throughout the world to recruit international students in an increasingly competitive marketplace, whilst ensuring obligations are met under Australian international education legislation. This chapter provides marketing specialists, educational administrators, and policy makers with practical real life examples of motivational and management techniques.

INTRODUCTION

In Australia, education agents are an important recruitment channel (DeLuca 2008; Cathcart and Colaso 2009; Dunstan 2009). They provide a conduit between the potential student and institutions

across all educational sectors. They are a valuable source of information and support to both students and institutions. In these challenging economic times, competition between education agents to recruit students is increasing. There are an increasing number of agents setting up operation, all competing to recruit more students through their agency. The aim of this chapter is to explore

strategies institutions can implement to motivate and manage their education agent network. This chapter will commence with a background discussion of education agents including their importance in the Australian international education industry and their main roles. It will highlight the existing literature available on education agents and agent motivation. This chapter will present findings of what motivational strategies are utilised by Australian universities to successfully recruit international students through education agents. Perspectives have been obtained through in-depth interviews with 31 Australian University international marketing managers and staff members, who work directly with education agents, and 16 education agents from various countries around the world. The chapter will conclude with a discussion suggested future research opportunities within the domain of the topic.

BACKGROUND

Education Agents

Education agents have developed as private businesses or in some cases quasi government organisations, through which students can be recruited to educational institutions. By 2005, it was estimated than an excess of 10,000 education agents operated around the world and this has now increased to an unknown figure (Jobson 2005). Education agents form an integral distribution channel through which Australian education providers recruit international students (DeLuca 2008; Dunstan 2009).

Differing from the USA and the UK, most Australian education providers use education agents to recruit international students. In Australia over 60% of students coming to Australia to study are recruited by education agents as compared to 19% in the UK and only 3% in the USA (ICEF 2007; 2008). In 2009 Australia had the highest proportion

intake of international students amongst OECD countries (AUIDF 2009). Given, that Australia has only 38 Universities, it outperforms these two strong competitors in terms of number of international students recruited versus number of institutions. It has been reasonably argued that education agents are a fundamental component of Australia's success (Dunstan 2009). It has been found that agents perceive Australia as having a more businesslike approach to the service they provide to education agents, with faster turn-around times of student application processing and payment of commissions (Krasocki 2002).

Role of Education Agents

Education agents have been described as 'an individual, company, or organization that provides educational advice, support, and placement to students in a local market who are interested in studying abroad' (IIE 2007, p.1). In addition to this description, education agents are also established within destination countries to recruit international students to that country (O'Connell 2012). Education agents provide students with an array of advice. This can include providing information about various institutions, providing assistance submitting enrolment applications and obtaining visas, booking travel arrangements, pre-departure information and various other services (IIE 2007).

In some cases agents are utilised as a liaison point between parents and institutions whilst the student is studying abroad and for other areas of pastoral care and guidance, such as finding guardians and emergency support (Krasocki 2002). Some agents also assist in arranging airfares, insurance, private student health insurance, setting up bank accounts; arranging accommodation and providing various other pre and post departure information. In return, agents who recruit students to Australian institutions receive a commission from institutions for enrolling students. Commission is typically based on a percentage of fees (negotiated

Related Content

Digital Badge Use in Specific Learner Groups
Jacob H. Askerothand Timothy J. Newby (2020). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/digital-badge-use-in-specific-learner-groups/245769

Entrepreneurial Development for Students in HE in the Context of the Digital Era
Hossein Shokri (2023). *Perspectives on Enhancing Learning Experience Through Digital Strategy in Higher Education (pp. 262-274).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/entrepreneurial-development-for-students-in-he-in-the-context-of-the-digital-era/327214

Teaching and Learning Professional Development for International Graduate Students: The Role of Teaching and Learning Centres
Lianne Fisher (2021). *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on International Student Experience in Canadian Higher Education (pp. 221-239).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/teaching-and-learning-professional-development-for-international-graduate-students/262381

Hardware-Free Network Internals Exploration: A Simulation-Based Approach for Online Computer Networking Course
Qian Liu (2024). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 1-16).*
www.irma-international.org/article/hardware-free-network-internals-exploration/339002

Developing and Supporting the Internationalisation of Research Capacity
Christopher Hill (2014). *Handbook of Research on Transnational Higher Education (pp. 232-246).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/developing-supporting-internationalisation-research-capacity/78123