Exploitation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) for Strategic Marketing in Higher Education

Creating a Knowledge-based CRM Framework for Swedish Universities

Master Thesis within Business Informatics

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"There's a great big river of data out there. Rather than building dams to try and bottle it all up into discrete little entities, we just give people canoes and compasses"

(Dragoon, 1995, p.52)
Abstract

Swedish universities have always received greater attention from international students thanks to their well-quality and tuition-free programs. However, due to the introduction of tuition fee for non-EU/EEA students from fall 2011, it is predictable that by raising the threat of losing a rather large portion of international students, Swedish universities may experience a critical period over the early years after this change. This is occurring in an environment in which universities attempt to leverage their tangible and intangible resources for maintaining their competitive niche in the worldwide market. Besides, many universities have moved towards establishing student-centric strategies as a means to achieve a high level of students’ satisfaction and long-lasting relationships. The issue has become so substantial in the recent years that, as Pausits (2007) has also suggested, universities need to transform into “relation-based organizations”.

To solve this possible problem and in order to help Swedish universities to pass this critical situation safely, this study has conducted a qualitative research on the basis of analysis of the empirical data gathered from a series of semi-structured phone and personal interviews with five Swedish universities that have the most number of international students (Lund, Uppsala, Linköping, Jönköping and Blekinge Universities) with the intense support of previous literature and the theoretical body of the study under investigation which has lead to the creation of a knowledge-based CRM model.

The main aim of this conceptual CRM model is to systematically organize the operations of building, managing and retaining relationships between Swedish universities and international students. This model has been formed by combination of two theories of CRM, as a business strategy which has been proved to be one the most efficient customer-oriented business approaches within the past decades, and Knowledge Management (KM) as the pivot for effective operation of the proposed CRM framework by providing a constant learning environment.
Acknowledgement

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- Mr. Richard Stenelo, Director of Lund University Commissioned Education
- Mr. Einar Lauritzen, Head of Students Affairs and Academic Registry Division, Uppsala University

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter readers will be provided with a background and problem discussion of the study at hand. Further, the defined research questions and the purpose of this research as well as delimitation and definition of key terms will be presented respectively.

1.1 Background

The history of universities as Fernández (2008) mentioned, referred back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when such institutions were firstly emerged from the spirit of monastic study and cathedral schools and their linkage to social society. Scott (2000) believes that universities historically used to be segregated special-purpose institutions, however, as Fernández (2008) stated, with more than 10,000 universities and university-like institutions in recent years, these institutions have been so integrated into the societies that one could easily consider them as the main representative of a society’s culture of knowledge.

Meanwhile, globalization has grown impacts on higher education just like on any other sectors. According to Marginson and Wende (2006), higher education has always been more internationally open to globalization than other sectors since it is the immersion in knowledge. Scott (2000) has addressed globalization as the most important challenge faced by universities in their history which has brought a fundamental shift in the organizational character of modern universities. This shift has been metaphorically addressed by Carlson (1975) as a transition from “domesticated environment” before 1990s to a “wild environment” after this time (cited in Preedy, Glatter & Wise, 2003).

Besides the growing trends of globalization, informationization – the development and expansion of information technology (Okuno-Fujiwara & Nakaizumi, 2001) – resulted from the current information age, has created a highly competitive and global environment for universities. A consequence of this phenomenon is the increasing amount of free and on-the-spot information about programs description, college amenities and schools’ ranking available to potential students which have made them to be choosy about their studies (King, 2008).

Hence, as the result of the increasing globalization and informationization and some other factors including population demographics, work force requirements and new methods of delivering education (King, 2008), it is of little surprise if universities’ managers and policy makers have started to think of a strategic planning in order to develop and maintain a smart balance between the institutions’ capabilities and objectives and its changing external environment. As a part of this strategic planning, marketing policy of a university can be considered as an important conveyor of the university’s missions to the society by attracting talented and qualified students from all around the world. Kotler and Fox (1995) argued that over the past decade, the vocabulary of marketing, particularly marketing research, market segmentation and strategic marketing planning, has become widely used in the realm of higher education. This has been even progressed to the point that in recent years, the trends
towards establishing market-oriented or customer-oriented strategies have been increased among those universities willing to focus on satisfying the needs and preferences of their target markets/students to enhance their competitive positions. Nicolescu (2009) has referred to the adoption of more market-oriented and business-like operations in higher education as the strategy by which universities can improve their competitive edge in their market. While Yeni and Herington (2009) believe that marketing plans and market-oriented perspective in a university are positively correlated, a market-oriented mode cannot be achieved by merely adding a marketing position or office in a university. According to Preedy, Glatter and Wise (2003) the concept of marketing for most educationists is an imported, even an alien concept and there is a wide range of interpretation of marketing among education experts (p. 126). Most educational institutions, as Kotler and Fox (1995) stated, have specific offices regarding marketing activities such as admissions, alumni or international offices and they even may employ some advertising and public relations efforts. However, while it is true that they are doing some marketing activities, it does not mean that they are necessarily market-oriented (Kotler & Fox, 1995)

Generally, a market-oriented (sometimes referred to as customer-oriented) organization is an organization in which all operations are customer-centric and the emphasis is on satisfying customers’ needs and requirements (Preedy, Glatter & Wise, 2003). In the area of higher education, according to Kotler and Fox (1995), market-orientation implies that all employees understand that providing high quality programs and services are all means of satisfying target markets. “Without satisfied target markets [students], universities would soon find themselves adrift and would sink into oblivion” (Kotler & Fox, 1995, p. 9).

On the other hand, customer-centric approach helps universities to specifically meet their students’ needs and preferences in order to build long-term relationships with them. Achieving students’ satisfaction will take such institutions to the point that a long-standing relationship can be established in which, both sides, students and universities, can take advantages from it. According to Pausits and Pellert (2007), “relationships take on the character of companions for life”, given that life-long learning approach in the current world has made students to not only studying at universities once, but also to have recourse to these institutions again and again over time. To underline the importance of relationship in higher education, Pausits (2007) has also stated that higher education institutions should no longer hold the attitude of being “ivory towers” and have to transform into “relationship-based organizations.” Figure 1.1 outlines the evolution of universities from their originated point until their status in recent years as reviewed in this section.
1.2 Problem Discussion

The growing importance of relationships in higher education has encouraged these institutions to start thinking of a systematic way of managing their relationships. In business, managing relationships with stakeholders can be challenging for many organizations since they are involving in different operations and their customers’ needs and wishes can significantly vary (Klein altenkamp & Ehret, 2006). Similarly, in the area of higher education in which, the primary stakeholders are students (Nicolescu, 2009), the need for an organized system for managing and monitoring the relationships between universities and students is obvious. Pausits (2007) believes that universities must identify their stakeholders clearly and engage into activities that reinforce their relationships with these stakeholders by proper integration of strategy, processes and people.

In the meanwhile, the pervasiveness of new advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) has positively contributed to managing such relationships in universities by enabling them to systematically identify, collect, analyze and satisfy their students’ needs and preferences. An example of this utilization can be the “Student Lifetime Management” (SLM) model that has been introduced by Pausits and Pellert (2007) in order to plan, form and analyze the relationship cycles of students.
1.3 Problem Statement

Universities and colleges in Sweden offer a wide range of programs and courses to the national and international students. According to Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, the number of free-movers (full program international students) who applied for studying in Swedish universities has had a significant increase recently to the extent that in 2008, there were 11680 free-movers applied to Swedish bachelor and Master programs. Swedish universities have been so far tuition-free institutions while for the first time, tuition fees will be introduced to the universities and colleges from the beginning of the autumn semester 2011 for students from outside the EU/EEA (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education).

This event is happening in a circumstance in which, universities and colleges are competing in a tremendously globalized and high competitive environment in offering educational programs and services as stated earlier. Previously, with free education offering, Swedish universities were mostly one of the top priorities for many non-European students in selecting their future study destination. However, with the introduction of tuition fee, non-European students will no longer select Swedish universities based on their offering free education, and that brings the threat of losing a rather huge part of their international students for these universities. Consequently, this event will cause Swedish universities to enter to the competition ground of the higher education market in which they must be able to compete with the market leaders such as the United States, United Kingdom and Australia.

As a result, the demand to meet the world standards as well as the threat of losing a part of their international students are two major forces that will cause Swedish universities facing a critical situation within the first early years after this event. Thus, it is imperative for Swedish universities to take strategic steps and preparations to meet these forces safely. According to what has been reviewed in background section, the authors believe that Swedish universities will be able to survive in this critical situation by embracing a market-oriented strategy with focus on establishing effective and long-term relationships with their international students. Not astonishingly, information and communications technology (ICT) can play a facilitating role in this regard. Therefore, having been studied the major in information technology and management as well as the novelty of this situation motivated the authors to scrutinize this problem from the ICT point of view within the context of business.

1.4 Research Question

Considering the critical situation explained in problem statement as well as what has been discussed in background regarding the role of the market-oriented strategy in improving relationships between universities and students and the role of ICT in this regard, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has been selected as the main pivot of this study. The authors’ rationales will be for singling CRM out later discussed in section 2.3.1.1.

Therefore, the main research question of the study at hand has been defined as:
“What is a proper CRM model which can contribute well to the marketing efforts of Swedish universities for the purpose of establishing effective and long-term relationships with their international students?”

However, in order to ensure the appropriateness of this model, the authors have to identify the involved elements of this model based on the opinions of the most probable users of this model who are the persons in charge of international marketing of each university. Therefore, finding the answer to the following sub-research question is also imperative:

“What are the available and required elements such as people, channels and ICT-based tools in creating such model?”

1.5 Purpose

Considering the discussion presented so far, the initial purpose of this research is to investigate the international marketing efforts of Swedish universities in order to identify the practical elements that play a significant role in establishing relationships with their international students. Further, and as the main purpose of this study, the authors intend to combine all these identified elements together in an integrated framework and describe the process flow between them in order to come up with the proposed CRM model. This framework can be used for the following purposes:

- To identify, collect, store, manage and disseminate right knowledge about and from students’ behaviors, needs, preferences, values, desires, problems and complaints in a systematic way
- To create a collaborative student-centric environment inside Swedish universities which will lead them to engage in satisfying students’ needs
- An interface between Swedish universities and their international students as a tool of building effective communications with the aim of establishing, managing and retaining relationships with these students

This framework therefore brings two benefits for Swedish universities.

- Firstly, it increases the awareness of all parts of the universities which are directly or indirectly interacting with international students about their needs, preferences, values and problems in a systematic way.
- Secondly, it enhances their abilities to establish, manage and retain effective relationships with their international students by satisfying their needs, preferences and values as well as by solving their problems and complaints.

The authors thus expect that utilizing such strategic student-oriented CRM framework in international marketing strategies of Swedish universities can contribute well in decreasing the threat of losing fee payers students to some extent.
However, it is notable that having a business point of view to higher education does not imply underestimating the first and foremost academic task of these institutions which is providing high quality education for students. Rather, applying tools and techniques that are commonly employed in business to the realm of higher education can produce valuable insights for universities (Collis, 1999). Kotler and Fox (1995) have stated that “American universities have learned much from business, including improved budgeting systems, endowment investing, financial management procedures and increased professionalization of human resource management functions which have made them borrow relevant business concepts and adapt them to their roles in attracting resources to their institutions” (p. 5). That is why most educationalists nowadays have been learning to be more mindful of their operations in a businesslike manner.

Besides, many scholars have encouraged educational institutions to have a customer-view to their students. Pithers and Holland (2007) believe that one of the aspects of empowering students at a university is to take the current view that they are now regarded as “clients” or “customers” rather than recipients of education. Meanwhile, Seeman and O’Hara (2006) believe that considering students as customers provides a competitive advantage for educational institutions and improves their capabilities to attract, retain and serve their customers more. Bejou (2005) also affirmed that students are buyers who register for courses, apply for graduation, and make donations as alumni. Therefore, the more these ongoing transactions are satisfactory to both parties, the longer the relationship will endure, to the benefit of everyone.

1.6 Interested Parties
Although this research has targeted few Swedish universities for its empirical study, it can be beneficial for all universities in Sweden, who are seeking more market shares through establishing effective relation-oriented marketing strategies. The results of the research might be also handy for the Swedish government as the main political authority which makes fundamental educational decisions. In addition, this research may be worthwhile for those researchers and scholars interested in studying within the fields of higher education leadership and management, education and technology and educational marketing. Moreover, apart from these agencies which play as servers in the educational area, the research might be useful for international students (applicants) who are the main clients within this scope and look for the attractive features of the universities when applying for studying abroad.

1.7 Delimitations
Concerning the problem statement explained earlier, since the described critical situation will be only associated with non-EU/EEA students, the study at hand has delimited itself to consider these students in its scope. In addition, as stated earlier, the main aim of this research is to propose a conceptual framework of a student-oriented CRM to Swedish
universities. Thus this study does not aim to provide readers with any actual implemented framework. Yet, with the aid of further complementary studies, the obtained results of this research can be later designed and implemented either as a tool or software for marketing activities of Swedish universities.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Higher Education

According to Microsoft Encarta (2007), higher education is “education generally begun after high school, usually carried out at a university or college, and usually involving study for a degree or diploma” (cited in Sen, 2010, p. 8). It is normally divided into two levels of “undergraduate” and “postgraduate” levels usually through lecture-based classes or distant learning. In this study, higher education entails all Swedish universities and colleges which offer programs to international students. Higher education has sometimes been abbreviated as HE in this research.

Marketing

Marketing basically refers to the way in which organizations design their offerings to satisfy the demands and desires of target markets by using effective pricing, communications and delivery strategies within these markets (Kotler & Fox, 1995).

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Rodgers and Howlett (2000) have defined Customer relationship management (CRM) as “a business strategy which places the customer at the heart of an organization’s processes, activities and culture. In this regard, IT applications are the tools which allow organizations to implement that strategy.”

Knowledge Management (KM)

“Knowledge management includes various processes such as acquisition, creation, renewal, archival, dissemination and application (conversion of new knowledge into action or behavior modification) of knowledge across an organization” (Malhotra, 2000).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

“ICT concerns any device or system that allows the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission and receipt of digital information” (Doyle, 2008, p. 41). According to Doyle (2008), ICT is not only about computers (hardware such as PCs, scanners and digital cameras or software such as databases, systems software and spreadsheets) and can cover all the technologies used for communication purposes including digital TV, internet, phones and faxes, wired and wireless networks, videoconferencing, etc.
Learning organization

Learning organizations are those enterprises in which people are continually participating to the process of expanding their capacity to create the innovative results (Senge, 1994).

Students

In the study at hand, “students” refer to all those non-EU/EEA free-movers who can be considered as:

- **current students**: who are currently studying a full time bachelor or master program in one of the Swedish universities
- **prospective students**: who can be potential applicants for Swedish universities
- **alumni**: who already have graduated from one of the Swedish universities
2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the choice of research approach and study design that have been conducted to the study at hand. In addition, a discussion of the selected method for extracting empirical data will be presented and justified.

2.1 Research Approach

In any sound scientific research, describing what research approach the study has to be processed through is an initial step of the study. Generally one of the issues that researchers often face at the beginning of a research is whether to choose qualitative or quantitative research methodology. Although both types of research share many similarities they differ from each other in data collection procedures and further in data analysis. Thus the main distinction between these two types of research method is the procedures rather than the quality.

2.1.1 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research Methods

Kumar (2005) has distinguished qualitative and quantitative research methods based on the purpose of the research, data collection process and analysis of data. According to this classification, the purpose of a quantitative study is to quantify the extent of variation in a phenomenon or situation through the use of a structured and predetermined methodology and analyzes them with some statistical procedures. On the other hand, a qualitative research seeks to collected data in order to describe variation in a situation, phenomenon or problem by the use of an unstructured and flexible methodology and analyzes them in a rather descriptive and non-quantifiable way.

According to Bazeley (2004), qualitative and quantitative approaches can be classified based on aspects such as types of data used (textual or numeric and structured or unstructured), the logic utilized in the research (inductive or deductive) and methods of analysis (interpretive or statistical) as well. Reichardt and Cook (1979) made a comprehensive comparison between two approaches and described their difference as displayed in table 2.1 (cited in Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005):
Table 2.1 - Comparison of qualitative and quantitative method (Reichardt & Cook, 1979, cited in Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005)

Thus, according to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005), qualitative and quantitative research methods can be both proper at different stage of a research. At initial stage and when the research problem is unstructured, quantitative research methods are suitable while at next stage and when researchers need to test different hypotheses, quantitative research methods are appropriate.

Kotler and Fox (1995) suggested that qualitative research method can be used to identify customers’ underlying needs and level of satisfaction in order to get better familiarized with the existing market and marketing problems and to develop ideas that can be later investigated through quantitative research. However, they characterized quantitative research method as a process that researchers search for producing statistically reliable estimates of particular market or customers’ characteristics.

Therefore, considering the characteristics of both approaches and by reviewing the research questions of the study at hand, qualitative research method has been selected since the desired outcomes of this research will be achieved by focus on the understanding from respondents’ points of view which is more subjective and less hypothesis-based. Moreover, what are expected to be eventually found out will be new pieces of information rather than some quantifiable results. Besides, the stated research questions are rather structured with focus on discovering experiences and attitudes of specific people. Hence, the qualitative approach is more likely to be applicable to this research.
2.1.2 Inductive vs. deductive reasoning

Academic studies have always been established on the basis of two methods of reasoning identified as inductive or deductive reasoning. According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005), both approaches provide the researchers with two alternative ways of building theories. Inductive reasoning refers to building a general theory from empirical evidences or observations and is usually associated with qualitative studies, while deductive reasoning touches on drawing conclusions from existing knowledge and is often used in quantitative research. In other words, induction starts with a specific observation and ends up with a general theory, whereas deduction moves from generalizations to a specified theory or theories. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) have compared two types of reasoning summarized in table 2.2.

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<td>observation → findings</td>
<td>existing knowledge/theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>theory building</td>
<td>hypothesis building →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hypothesis testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>tested hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research approach</td>
<td>qualitative</td>
<td>quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning</td>
<td>systematic</td>
<td>logical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2- Comparison of inductive and deductive reasoning (a summary of Ghauri’s and Gronhaug’s (2005) discussion)

Given that both research questions of the study at hand seek to manifest new knowledge or some general propositions through observations, inductive reasoning is obviously more appropriate. In addition, this method is associated with the qualitative type of research which is exactly compatible with the research methodology of this study. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) believe that most researchers in business studies go through this method that contains observing facts which leads them to propositions and later to theories.

2.2 Study Design

Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) described that strategic choice of research design will help researchers come up with the best answers to any research questions. Thus, to start an empirical study, researchers should select an effective study design considering inevitable constraints such as time or budget in order to obtain the best possible answer. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) and Wrenn, Stevens and Loudon (2002) have categorized different types of research design based on the structure of each research problem into exploratory, descriptive and causal research design. However, in the study at hand, except the later, both former research designs are applicable.
2.2.1 Exploratory Research Design

This type of research design deals with unstructured research problem(s) in which researchers look for new pieces of information to solve the problem(s). Such research design is a proper choice for conducting medical research as an example. Based on Kumar (2005) discussion, exploratory studies are conducted when the purpose of research is either to explore an area about where little is known or to investigate the possibilities of undertaking a specific research study. According to Kumar (2005), this type of study is usually conducted to develop, refine and/or test measurement tools and procedures.

Regarding the fact that exploratory studies are undertaken to develop knowledge about a particular issue where fewer studies have done so far on the area, and since the first (main) research question of this study is planned to create a new CRM framework which fits well into the current and future situation of Swedish universities, this question therefore has an explorative nature.

Besides, since the second research question (sub-question) is partly intended to identify required elements of the proposed framework, it is partially considered as an explorative research question.

2.2.2 Descriptive Research Design

Unlike the exploratory research design, in a descriptive research, the research problem is structured and well-understood; however the relevant data is not available to the researcher. Thus, through a carefully planned research procedure, researchers can achieve a precise answer to the research problem. According to Kumar (2005), descriptive studies attempt to describe a situation, problem or phenomenon or to describe a particular attitude towards an issue. The main purpose of such studies is to describe what is prevalent with respect to the issue or problem under study (Kumar, 2005).

In the study at hand, the second research question in one aspect is intended to identify and list some available factors which already exist in marketing activities of selected universities and the authors’ task here is to describe them. Therefore, this question has to some extent a descriptive nature and the use of descriptive research design seems to be appropriate for this question as well.

2.3 Data Collection

Basically, there are two main sources, known as primary and secondary, for gathering data about a particular problem, situation or phenomenon. Accordingly, Data obtained from these sources are called primary and secondary data.
2.3.1 Secondary Data

According to Kotler and Fox (1995) secondary data are relevant data that already exist somewhere but have been collected for another purpose. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) suggested that secondary data are useful sources of data collection helping researchers to better understand and solve research problems. Thus, some research questions can only be answered with this type of data collection and no further primary data is needed. Secondary data can be obtained through several sources including catalogues, websites, magazines and newspapers. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) classified two types of external and internal secondary data. Accordingly, data can be collected through internal sources such as information on consumers, suppliers and employees, internal reports and complaints or brochures and catalogues of a specific firm. On the other hand, external sources can be either published sources including books and articles, research reports or general statistics or commercial sources such as in-shop research or scanner research.

For this research, however, sources of acquiring secondary data are both external and internal sources including:

- **External published data**
  Such as existing literature, articles and published materials relevant to the research problem and research questions

- **External governmental source**
  Such as Swedish Institute, Swedish National Agency for Higher Education

- **Internal data**
  Such as Swedish universities’ internal archives and reports and the universities’ websites

Reviewing secondary data is quick and easy to be gathered and will give researchers a starting point on the research problem. However, unless the relevance, validity and reliability of these data have not been proved, the use of such data will be inefficient.

2.3.1.1 Argumentation of Selected literature (secondary data)

As promised earlier, in this section, the authors will present the reason why CRM has been selected as the main area of focus in this research. Considering the stated problem of the study at hand, key concepts and ideas that were relevant to the research problem and would help authors to come up with the desired outcomes have been identified, argued and outlined.

As a result of this reasoning, the authors believe that the proposed solution to the problem should embody the following characteristics:

- **It must be Strategic:**
  Introduction of tuition fee to the Swedish universities is going to be happened for the first time. Therefore, knowing that they will be graduated with a mountain of debts, a lot of international students will take more considerations on selecting their future educational destination. Thus the proposed solution to the stated problem must be
further than only a tool or application. Rather it must be a strategic approach that embraces a set of business processes from the initial step of planning to adopting and implementing.

- **It must be Customer-centric:**
  Regarding the fact that in today’s economy, organizations have moved from product orientation towards customer orientation and are continually seeking new ways to forge close relationship with their customers (Finnegan & Willcocks, 2007, p. 1), therefore, the proposed solution must be a customer-centric approach that has the appropriate compatibility and flexibility with this competitive market.

- **It must be communicative:**
  The proposed framework also needs to be a communication-based approach in order to supports Swedish universities in effectively building, retaining and managing their relationships with their students.

- **It must be marketing-related:**
  Reviewing the research problem and since two main communities engaged in this study are universities and international students, the proposed solution must fall in the area between these two communities and bridge them together. In this regard, the authors believe that the most relevant area is associated with international marketing department or marketing efforts of the universities. Therefore, this solution must be utilized in favor of international marketing strategies of Swedish Universities as well.

- **It must be ICT-based:**
  In addition, considering what has been discussed earlier about the role of ICT in handling the stated problem and with regard to the background of the authors, the proposed solution needs to have capability of obtaining advantages from information and communication technology within the context of business as well as its tools and applications.

To sum up, the proposed framework must be a technology-based marketing strategy that can help Swedish universities, as one of the proactive members of this ever growing customer-oriented economy, to create, manage and retain their relationships with their so-called customers, students. Hence, with tracking the mentioned aspects and characteristics, the authors have found Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as the most proper approach to study this problem. Under the umbrella of CRM, corporations are being urged to integrate customer data from different departments and channels, use the information to learn which customers have the greatest potential profit, and to tailor their communications and offerings to accommodate and serve these customers (Finnegan & Willcocks, 2007, p. 1). Thus the reviewed literatures and selected theories will be based on these five criteria with specific focus on CRM.
2.3.2 Primary Data

Primary data are a substitute to secondary data when they are not available or are not able to help finding answer to the research question(s). The main advantage of primary data is that they are obtained for a specific research thus it assures researchers of the relevance of data. However, collecting primary data is usually time-consuming and costly. Finding right sources of gathering such original data is also another difficulty researchers sometimes face. Besides, since in gathering such data, researchers are fully dependent on the willingness of respondents, the quality of the information is in some way vulnerable.

Subsequently, since this research has also aimed to have a profound focus on the marketing activities of Swedish universities, a series of primary data is also required in order to help researchers to address the problem at hand.

In the study at hand, primary data has been gathered through survey and by the means of interviews with selected sample unites.

2.3.2.1 Survey

According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005), Surveys are methods of primary data collection that employ questionnaires or interviews for recording the verbal behavior of respondents. It is an effective tool of getting ideas, attitudes and perceptions of the respondents towards a specific phenomenon. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) argued that surveys are the most popular data collection methods in business studies.

According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005), surveys can be either analytical or descriptive. Analytical surveys refer to the study in which independent, dependent and extraneous variables are controlled through statistical techniques. As a result, the questions and variables included in this type of survey required careful conceptualization and measurement scales (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). That is, analytical surveys start with testing a theory and later investigating the accuracy of the findings if they can be generalized. However, descriptive surveys deal with specific characteristics of a particular population of subjects, at or within a particular point of time. Thus this type of survey is suitable for comparative studies in which a representative sample of a significant population is rather focused. In business studies, descriptive surveys are usually used to illustrate customers’ attitudes towards a particular product or service for instance.

2.3.2.1.1 Interview

Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) specified that interviews facilitate a real interaction between both respondents and researchers. However, in order to establish an efficient interview, researchers need to know about the respondents’ backgrounds, values and expectations. According to Wrenn et al. (2002) an interview can be conducted through different ways such as personal interviews, mail interviews or phone interviews. Personal interview is the most
flexible method among others since it gives interviewers the chance of asking more questions and making supplementary notes and comments during the interview session. However, mail interviews could be a good alternative when selected respondents are not willing to give a phone or personal interview. When a mail questionnaire is planned to be distributed, the questions need to be simple, clear and straightforward. As another interview option, Kotler and Fox (1995) emphasized on the importance of telephone interview since it is a quick way of gathering information. According to their point of view, in educational environment, utilizing a phone interview can be very effective due to the reason that it is much more personal than a mail interview. In addition, Kotler and Fox (1995) advised a well-designed and pre-tested interview script which guides the wording and sequence of the questions to be asked.

Interviews can be categorized based on the contents of questions into structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). Structured interviews refer to patterned interviews containing a standard set of questions which are intended to be asked from a specific number of respondents. They provide a clear path to conduct a survey by enabling interviewers to evaluate the respondents in a fair manner. However, a disadvantage of such interviews is a relatively low chance of creating an open discussion.

Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, provide respondents with almost full freedom to discuss their opinions towards a specific issue. Thus, the role of interviewers is to lead questions and to record their responses for further analysis. In this type of interview, the questions are usually unstructured and are appropriate when the aim of a research is to discover a certain issue.

To be more precise, there is another type of interview called semi-structured interviews which relevantly differ from both mentioned interview types yet share some similarities with them. In semi-structured interviews, the topics and subjects that are going to be discussed, respondents and the sample size are determined beforehand. However, unlike structured interviews, in semi-structured interviews, interviewers are expected to be more skillful since the aim of such interviews is usually to gain information about opinions and specific behaviors of interviewees in certain circumstances.

As a consequence and considering the nature of this research, a semi-structured phone interview has decided to be conducted. It is mostly because of the reason that phone interviews are relatively cheap and quick as mentioned earlier. A phone interview can be a proper alternative to a personal interview when due to reasons such as long geographical distance or time limitation, a rather cheaper and quicker method of interview is demanded. However it can cause irritation to those who are not willing to be on phone for a fairly longer time. In addition, apart from some inevitable phone disruptions, the respondent cannot use visual supports including documents, graphs and websites. However phone interviews are still preferred to mail interviews in which usually restricted space of discussion is available to respondents and it makes respondents fell bored. Moreover, it is always easier to talk than to
write. It is notable that due to the availability of the invited persons from Jönköping University to the authors, personal interviews have been conducted with them.

Therefore, after reviewing the research questions and by clearly understanding of what information are required to be collected through the interviews, an interview draft with twelve questions were prepared and discussed to the supervisor to make sure that questions are aligned with the research problem and to check the consistency between questions. In addition and in order to assure the understandability and appropriateness of the questions, a pilot interview with the prepared draft was conducted with director of student recruitment of Jönköping International Business School who was later one of the selected interviewees. The main reason of this pilot study was to check the understanding of respondents concerning the research problems as well as the interview’s questions. The respondent to this pilot study was requested to suggest his idea about the questions or compose necessary corrections or modifications. As a result of this modification, one question was deleted.

The interview guide along with a brief explanation of the purpose of research and a short note of researchers’ backgrounds has been mailed to the nominated respondents in the selected universities. This email thus basically could help respondents to manage their time and provide them with a pre-interview opportunity in which they were able to prepare any extra information or documents that were required in the actual interview with no anxiety of time limitation. In addition, the respondents were suggested to plan their time for either a phone interview or a Skype call, approximately for one hour. As the last part of the interview guide, respondents were promised to have the final version of the released research after completion. By support of the supervisor, a specific room at Jönköping International Business School was arranged for conducting the phone interviews.

Overall, figure 2.1 demonstrates the research design that has been applied to this study.
Figure 2.1 - Methodology map
2.4 Sampling

Sampling procedure is basically associated with a statistical generalization and mainly concerns with the selection of a specific subset of individuals from a large population intending to come up with some knowledge about the main population. Therefore, a sample has to be a representative of a population in order to assure validity. Wrenn et al. (2002) believe that in any marketing study the goal is to assess target segments efficiently and effectively by designing and implementing representative sample plans. Kotler and Fox (1995) defined three decisions required for a sampling process:

1. **Sampling unit**, which answers the question: who is to be surveyed?
2. **Sample size**, which answers the question: how many units should be surveyed?
3. **Sample procedure**, which answers the question: how should the respondents be chosen?

In the study at hand, according to the problem description, since the problem is associated with marketing efforts of Swedish universities, the sample unit has been planned to target those universities’ staff in charge of international marketing activities who might be associated with student recruitment’s department, marketing department or international office depending on the organizational division of each university.

Meanwhile, the sample size was decided to include ten top Swedish universities with the most international students based on the statistics provided in the webpage of Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. These universities are listed respectively as following:

- Lund University
- KTH Royal Institute of Technology
- Uppsala University
- Linköping University
- Stockholm University
- Göteborg University
- Jönköping International Business School
- Chalmers University of Technology
- Umeå University
- Blekinge Institute of Technology

The reason behind choosing this sample size is based on Pareto principle which generally states that for many events, approximately 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes (Wikipedia). According to the official website for applying to higher education in Sweden (www.studera.nu), there are around 50 Swedish universities which offer higher education to international applicants and thus the sample size of 10 universities covers 20% of the whole population. Therefore, since these nominated universities were among top international Swedish universities, the findings obtained from them could sound reasonable to be resulted in proper outcomes.
However, among all these ten selected universities which were firstly desired, only five of them actually participated in this research and the rest, in spite of several follow-up contacts (either via phone or email), did not reply the interview request or rejected any cooperation. This unwanted downsizing could have negatively influenced the total result of the research, however, as it will be discussed in section 2.6.1, its negative impacts seems less likely.

Another issue that is notable regarding sampling process is that after the interview with representative of Jönköping International Business School (Director of Student Recruitment), authors were recommended to conduct another interview with Director of University Service of Jönköping University who had got to have more information regarding technical issues of the university’s marketing activities.

Finally, the sample procedure in this study is associated with the level of internationalization of the selected universities and thereby, top Swedish universities which have been more successful in attracting international students are nominated for the study at hand. This is mainly due to the fact that these universities have proven to be more experienced and successful in attracting international students and can provide the authors with useful and full amount of appropriate required data.

From what have been stated as the sampling design for this study, it can be inferred that the type of selected samples is deliberate or non-probability sampling in which, the researchers’ judgment is also involved in selections of the items. According to Kumar (2008), deliberate or non-probability sampling is a method in which a particular unit for constituting a sample has been selected purposively or deliberately. More precisely, deliberate or non-probability can be either convenience sampling, where population’s elements are selected based on the ease of access, or judgment sampling, where the researcher’s judgment is used in items selection as a representative of a population which is the case for this study.

### 2.5 Analysis of data

In the study at hand, in order to analyze data, the empirical findings collected from interviews have been analyzed with the support of selected theories for this study. The authors have classified and interpreted the knowledge gathered out of interview questions in a way to illuminate the key elements of the proposed CRM model. The analysis of data has been carried out in a way that all CRM processes applicable to this study have been identified firstly and then, all engaging elements of the desired model including people, channels and ICT-based tools associated with each process have been categorized. Later, the researchers have prepared a comprehensive summary of the results derived from empirical findings.

### 2.6 Research Quality

So far, different methods of data collection have been outlined and argued. As discussed earlier, data are obtained through various sources from a selected sample size, processed and
analyzed and finally reported. However, each stage in which data pass through, can affect the accuracy and quality of the results.

In qualitative studies, in particular, it is vitally important to gather trustworthy data which guarantee the quality of the achieved findings in high level. Generally in academic studies, researchers often attempt to increase the quality of the studies by establishing validity and reliability of the procedures that have been adopted during the research.

2.6.1 Validity

According to Kumar (2005), since inaccuracies can happen in any stages of a study, the concept of validity can be applied to the research process as a whole or to any of its steps. Generally researchers attempt to establish a logical link between the questions and the objectives of the research, asserted Kumar (2005). However it is always easier to establish validity when a study is undertaken to find some tangible variables such as age, income or weight of a particular sample size. On the other hand, it is rather difficult to ascertain validity in studies seeking for intangible results such as people’s attitudes or behaviors towards a particular issue (Kumar, 2005).

In the study under investigation, the authors have put very much effort to achieve the highest quality of the results in order to increase the validity of the study as much as possible. For this purpose, the authors have conducted the interviews with the most relevant and knowledgeable person responsible for the international marketing activities of selected universities. Besides, during the interview sessions, the authors have provided extra information or explanation where needed for the respondents in order to make sure that they have not misunderstood any question and thus, the answers are accurate. Additionally, the whole interview sessions have been recorded and collected for not losing the important pieces of information obtained within these interviews.

Another aspect of the research validity refers to the extent of which results of a particular research can be generalized to other similar studies under the same situations. In this research, samples were chosen based on a specific criterion and from a credible source (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) as stated earlier. Besides, respondents were from diverse backgrounds including small and big universities, private and public universities, new-established and old universities, etc that made the authors believe that other universities which did not participate in this research share many similarities with these participants to some extent. Therefore, the results of this study can be applicable to other similar Swedish universities under the same circumstances to a certain extent. However, as a qualitative research study, the authors are fully aware of non-generalizibility nature of such studies and understand that the findings from a qualitative research study are not generalizable to other cases.
2.6.2 Reliability

Basically reliability demonstrates the extent of consistency and stability of a study and that how a particular operation of a study such as the data collection is replicable. According to Kumar (2005), reliability is the degree of accuracy or precision in the measurements made by a study instrument. Thus the lower the degree of “error” in an instrument, the higher is the reliability.

In the current study, several phone interviews have been undertaken to obtain appropriate data about educational marketing strategies of five Swedish universities. Since the same interview questions have been asked from the people in charge of international marketing affairs, it is anticipated that another survey utilizing the same methods on the same sample size and under the same circumstances would obtain the same results and less variances in findings will be occurred.
3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter the readers will be provided with the theoretical body of the study. The purpose of this chapter is thus to clarify some specific terms and concepts which will be touched upon in this paper later. These theories will be later employed in the data collection and the analysis section.

3.1 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Organizations seeking sustainable development in the current high-competitive business environment need to transfer their business strategies from product-oriented to customer-oriented. Muther (2002) has encouraged organizations to not only look at the quality and price differentiation, but also to identify their customers’ requirements and offer innovative market services in order to stand their ground against competitors. Park and Kim (2003) believed that organizations which focus on obtaining and retaining more customer share rather than market share, will be more capable in cost reduction since as Kotler, Wong, Saunders and Armstrong (2005) stated, the cost of attracting a new customer is five times more maintaining an existing one. This transformation towards the customer-orientation has been interpreted by Romano and Fjermestad (2003) as a shift from “transaction-based economy” to a “relationship-based economy”, implying a movement from economies of scale to “economies of interactions” or “economies of relations” which are the key value drivers for customer-centric economy.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as one of the most efficient customer-oriented business approaches can be utilized by organization to facilitate their transition from product-oriented to a customer-centric strategy. CRM is literally concerned with establishing customer relationships. The relationships here can be emerged in different shapes such as business-to-business relationships, customer lifecycles, different customer segments, customer life time value and customer profitability (Rollins & Halinen, 2005). Williams and Curtis (2006) have defined CRM as a subset of relationship marketing indicating that, while relationship marketing encompasses all relationships with customers, suppliers and intermediaries, CRM focused on the management of customer relations only.

According to Saren (2006), there is still nonconformity among experts about the exact definition of CRM. However, while some specialists view it as a pure information technology solution for data collection and analysis, and some consider it as a marketing philosophy planned to achieve long-term business gains, an integration of two perspectives can generate better outcomes for organizations (Saren, 2006).

Saren (2006) further put a moderate interpretation on CRM definition by calling it as an “IT-enabled organizational process that places the customer at the heart of the firm’s strategy and operations” which is illustrated in figure 3.1.
Meanwhile, Buttle (2009) also believe that it is difficult to settle on a single definition of CRM. He defined it as “the core business strategy that integrates internal processes and functions, and external networks to create and deliver value to targeted customers at a profit.” He affirmed that CRM is based on high quality customer related data and enabled by information technology.

### 3.1.1 CRM Components

Many scholars (Goldenberg, 2003; Anton & Petouhoff, 2002; Shanmugasundaram & Munusamy, 2008; Gupta, Sharma & Rashid, 2009) have characterized CRM as the integration of mainly three crucial components of *people, process* and *technology* to satisfy customers’ needs as displayed in figure 3.2 Goldenberg (2003) has asserted that successful implementation of CRM relies on the right combination of these aspects to touch the targeted customers from any point in an organization.

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**Figure 3.1** The CRM continuum (Saren, 2006)

**Figure 3.2** Components of CRM
3.1.1.1 CRM People
Within this classification, people refer to the staff members of an organization since CRM is designed and implemented by this people. The extent to which people in an organization are sharing the same vision and willing to actively participate in CRM operations, has a positive relation with CRM success. Besides, innovative ideas and solutions that can turn the wheels of CRM better, come from the minds of an organization’s staff members. According to Fuglsang (2008), innovation is not something that can take place in laboratory or can be planned by management, rather, it is an activity that involves many interacting people. Thus in a collaborative operation, CRM enables its users to build up interactive relationships with their customers in order to discover their present needs and requirements and on the other side, innovative users can predict and satisfy the future desires and behaviors of their customers accordingly. Kotter, (2002) has also mentioned another issue about the people aspect in CRM stating that since CRM deals with a lot of change management processes in an organization, it is imperative to not only get personnel to see the need for change, but also to feel so emotionally engaged that they want to change (cited in Buttle, 2009).

3.1.1.2 CRM Processes
CRM processes encompass all processes that help organizations to manage customer relationships in consistent, efficient and effective ways, stated Bailey (2008). While it seems that different authors (Kalakota & Robinson, 2001; Buttle, 2009; Payne, 2005; Saren, 2006) have classified CRM processes in different forms, all these classifications share many similarities in nature. As one of the comprehensive study in this case, Saren (2006) has clearly classified CRM processes into four interrelated sub processes as “strategic planning process”, “information process”, “customer value process” and “performance measurement process”. In this classification, strategic planning process is the cornerstone for all customer-centric operations in an organization by paving the path for development, implementation and monitor of all customer-oriented activities in the organization (Saren, 2006).

As a part of this strategy, organizations most often try to develop a customer segmentation strategy in order to improve their interactions by focusing on a particular market segment or a customer segment. Payne (2005) believes that market segmentation (or customer segmentation) is a key aspect in CRM and it involves dividing a potential market up into a series of sub-markets based on customer characteristics. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2009) also have defined a market segment as “a group of customers who have similar needs that are different from customers’ needs in other parts of the market” (p. 46). They believe that it helps organizations to identify their strategic customers who have the most influence on the organizations’ revenue.

As another category of CRM processes, Saren (2006) pointed to the information processes. These processes encompass the generation of customer knowledge based on a series of information processes including “information acquisition”, “information dissemination” and “information use” (Saren, 2006). All these efforts emphasize on the processes of collecting, storing, managing and utilizing key customer information from different sources for further
usage including customer segmentation, developing customer strategies and identifying and satisfying customers’ needs. In addition, it is imperative to gain a customer insight in an organized way since it will help organizations to, as Payne (2005) has stated, recognize what the best channels for reaching individual customers are and what channels individual customer prefer to use for different tasks and how they use them currently and how their future expectation may change.

As another process in CRM, Saren (2006) has put forth the customer value process. According to Saren (2006), this process can demonstrate the level of organizations’ commitment in listening to customers’ needs and that how they respond to these needs by producing high-quality and innovative products and services. In other words, Saren (2006) emphasized on how organization can create value out of their customers’ perceptions about a particular product or service by incorporating their voice into the design and delivery of a product or service in a way that addresses their needs. Saren (2006) later has called this operation a “value co-production”.

Buttle (2009) has called this process customization indicating that it is a fundamental approach to customize the value proposition in order to attract and maintain targeted customers. According to Buttle (2009), customization implies that organizations must be attentive and responsive to their customers’ differing needs. In this regard, Croteau and Li (2003) also described CRM as “a customer-focused business strategy that aims to increase customer satisfaction and customer loyalty by offering a more responsive and customized service to each customer” (cited in Seeman & O’Hara, 2006, p 2).

Last but not least is the process of performance measurement of CRM which embodies the abilities of organizations to measure and improve their corporate performance based on the feedbacks obtained from their customers across different channels and sources of interaction (Saren, 2006).

3.1.1.3 CRM Technology

According to Khurana (2010), CRM is often mistakenly assumed as mainly software. It can be, though, the idea behind it is that CRM is basically an approach that organizations take to initiate and retain their relationships with customers (Khurana, 2010). Such approach then can be driven by technology and data that organizations set out in order to manage their relationships, continued Khurana (2010). Williams and Curtis (2006) have asserted that 55 to 75 percent of CRM projects fail since, organization often confuse CRM strategy with technology implementation. They then defined CRM as a broad business concept in which technologies act as enablers.

Many authors have pointed to the role of technology as an enabler in CRM mainly for the purpose of systematically handling information about customers for further use such as needs’ satisfaction, product or services customization or even for finding different channels and sources for establishing relationships with customers. However, technology tools in CRM do not necessarily refer to software, but can be any tools to store and manage customer
information. Payne (2005) implicated that since CRM processes demand analysis of a considerable amount of customer data, the existence of data repositories or data warehouses which has significant implications regarding the collection and organization of these data, seems to be necessary.

To sum up, a successful CRM is an outcome of an effective and proactive management of the right integration between three components of people, process and technology with a particular aim of satisfying segmented customers’ needs.

3.2 CRM in Higher Education

The emergence of CRM applications in colleges and universities refers back to mid 1980s and the late 1990s when educational institutions started to restructure and reengineer their operating processes to reduce costs while raising efficiency (Grant & Anderson, 2002). The efforts made such universities turned to the use of enterprise resource planning (ERP) applications in automating business processes in areas including finance, enrollment and human resources. However, since ERP could only serve internal customers’ needs (faculty staff members), there was a need for satisfying external customers’ demands (students). This need, therefore led to introduction of CRM into higher education.

CRM in higher education mainly focuses on automation and improvement of institutional processes associated with managing student relationships in areas such as recruitment, marketing, communication management and service and support (Grant & Anderson, 2002, p. 24). Thus adoption of the CRM in universities and colleges mainly improve the interactions between the admission, registration, financial aid and accommodation offices and students. Further, Grant and Anderson (2002) posited that the use of CRM applications can lead to improved customer responsiveness by increasing effective practices of the universities’ staff members who directly deal with students and provide an actual “cradle-to-grave” customer life cycle. According to Buttle (2009), nowadays, universities employ CRM to manage relationships with their students and alumni. He supports his idea by giving an example that, if a student enjoys his or her experiences at a university, he or she might recommend it to his/her personal networks afterwards.

Nonetheless, as stated earlier, the purpose of the study at hand is to depict a knowledge-based CRM framework that can be contributed into the marketing efforts of Swedish universities as a means for managing relationships with international students. Based on a comprehensive discussion presenting in the coming section, one critical aspect in building up effective relationships with students rests on the extent to which universities possess students’ knowledge. It is however notable that since “students” have been assumed as main “customers” of universities, this discussion has been put forward on the basis of the importance of customer knowledge in CRM. As Seeman and O’Hara (2006) have stated, having a customer-view about students provides a competitive advantage for educational institutions and improve their capabilities to attract, retain and serve these customers more.
3.3 Customer Knowledge

As stated earlier, a great number of previous studies have signified the shift from the product-oriented towards the customer-oriented strategy in today’s business world. This trend indeed implies the fact that organizations are no longer relying merely on the quality of their products and services but on the quality of the relationships they establish with their customers as well. According to Khalilabad, Mazandarani, Sentosa and Piaralal, (2006), the impact of the transformation from a product-centric to a customer-centric economy has made organizations precisely monitor their customers’ behaviors. Shanks and Tay (2001) also believe that the business environment was previously driven by organizations’ products offerings while it is now dominated by customer needs and preferences. Hence obtaining knowledge of customers can provide organizations with a valuable asset which can bring competitive advantage to organizations and help them to build a strong client-centric business strategy (cited in Khalilabad, Mazandarani, Sentosa, & Piaralal, 2006).

This is mainly because as Buuren et al. (2004) argued, focusing on customers’ processes requires a considerable extent of knowledge and customer-focused companies have to reach this level of knowledge possession. Mithas et al. (2005) have also acknowledged the importance of in-depth customer knowledge and the way it equips organizations in focusing on their target customers based on their growing needs and experiences (cited in Khalilabad, Mazandarani, Sentosa, & Piaralal, 2006).

Rollins and Halinen (2005) believe that customer knowledge is a key strategic resource in any corporation’s success particularly in application of intelligent marketing practices. Thus, as Khalilabad et al. (2006) et al. have stated, customer knowledge can be defined as the knowledge acquired from customers’ preferences, desires, needs, buying behaviors and their insight on companies’ products and services. Further, they as well as number of other authors (Buuren, Schierholz, Kolbe & Brenner, 2004; Dous, Salomann, Kolbe & Brenner, 2005; Lei & Tang, 2005) have distinguished three types of knowledge flows that play a vital role in interaction between an organization and its customers: knowledge “for”, “from” and “about” customers.

According to Dous et al. (2005) knowledge *for* customer involves a continuous knowledge flow directed from a particular company to its customers which generally comprises information about products or services offered by the company.

Another type of customer knowledge is knowledge *from* customers. Gibbert, Leibold and Probst (2002) have recognized this type of knowledge as knowledge resides in customers. Buuren et al. (2004) has defined it as knowledge that is obtained from customers’ feedback on particular products or services offered by an organization. In their point of view, this knowledge is particularly valuable since it leads to product and service innovation and improvement, and thus efforts need to be made to channel this knowledge back to the inside of the organization.

Finally, organizations need to have knowledge *about* their customers. It includes customers’ demographic information such as identification information, gender, contact information, etc.
and in broader sense, contains customers’ tendencies and backgrounds (Lei & Tang, 2005). Besides, knowledge about customers mainly encompasses the customer’s present needs and requirements, future desires, connections, purchasing behaviors and financial capabilities (Dous, Kolbe, Salomann & Brenner, 2005).

On the other hand, CRM as a customer-oriented business approach embraces effective management of relationships with customers. Building a sustainable relationship with customers requires a dynamic knowledge repository of both current and potential customers’ specific characteristics, behaviors, needs, expectations and preferences. Meanwhile, CRM applications can contribute well with customers’ satisfaction and retention only if they are fed with right knowledge about customers’ actual needs. In this regard, CRM has been defined as a management approach that organizations undertake to identify and develop in-depth knowledge about their customers’ behaviors and preferences by use of state-of-the-art information technologies which results in developing long-term beneficial relationships with them and achieving higher customer loyalty and profitability (Khalilabad, Mazandarani, Sentosa & Piaralal, 2006). Thus successful utilization of CRM approach is tightly interrelated with the quality of the customer knowledge injected to it.

Similarly, when CRM is employed in educational marketing, the desired result would not be accomplished without obtaining comprehensive student knowledge. Therefore, universities need to take serious steps in continuously gathering and updating knowledge about, for and from their students through different channels. King (2005) discussed that the future success of educational institutions in building meaningful relationships with students relies on the way they pull together “disseminated pieces of information from all types of databases and sources” (cited in Seeman & O’Hara, 2006).

However, considerations must be taken to the challenges that reaching to this level of knowledge ownership can bring for organizations. This challenge indeed relates to the nature of knowledge which is always changing and the fact that, once an enterprise thinks that it has identified a particular pattern of knowledge, a new one is appeared. Thus, such knowledge must be captured and circulated in organizational operations in a systematic way, and that is why many organizations have been directed towards implementation of knowledge management systems.

### 3.4 Knowledge Management

The need for systematizing customer knowledge flow in organizations has made them moving towards the application of knowledge management practices. Knowledge management (KM) has been touched upon in many earlier studies of different sectors. Rowley (2000) for instance argued that knowledge management efforts entail processes and activities associated with knowledge identification, creation and dissemination. Kidwell, Vander Linde and Johnson (2000) as another example, have a more business oriented view towards KM and defined it as the process of transforming information and intellectual resources into sustainable value. In their point of view, it connects knowledge-bearing people
who need to take action when they need it. In the corporate sector, managing knowledge is considered as a key point in achieving breakthrough competitive advantage.

Davenport and Prusak (1998) have viewed organizations’ intention in utilizing KM efforts from a broader perspective and identified four main objectives that enterprises consider in using organizational knowledge management:

- **To create knowledge repositories**
  That is to store and document knowledge and information as an added value. Repositories can then fall into three types which include external knowledge (such as competitive advantage), structured internal knowledge (such as product oriented marketing material as techniques and methods) and internal informal or tacit knowledge (such as personal experience or know how).

- **To improve knowledge access**
  That is to facilitate knowledge access and transfer with emphasis on connectivity.

- **To enhance knowledge environment**
  That is about tackling organizational norms and values to increase awareness embedded in customer relationships which further leads to increasing organizational performance.

- **To manage knowledge as an asset**
  That is to recognize the value of knowledge as an organizational intangible resource along with other tangible resources.

Thus, knowledge management is a complex process and can be understood differently in different context (Rowley, 2000). Different parts of organizations can serve in different ways and with different purposes. Emergence of a variety of organizational KM tools and applications in various sectors is an evidence of this fact. Worasinchai and Bechina (2006) have studied the role of KM systems particularly in the last decades. They indicated that business world has invested heavily on knowledge management efforts by acquiring, organizing, sharing, transferring and categorizing the corporate knowledge.

### 3.5 KM in Higher Education

While according to Dyson (2007), the idea of employing KM efforts in corporate sector has been touted since mid 1990s, yet little attention has been paid to its implementation in the area of higher education. Worasinchai and Bechina (2006) also remarked that knowledge management has not touched a high priority in higher education in the past decades. Lyman (2000) addressed KM as a method that can enhance institutional innovation in the realm of higher education (cited in Metcalf, 2006). Rowley (2000) stated that universities should consciously and explicitly manage their knowledge flow and as a matter of fact, knowledge management as an evolutionary process can help universities and colleges to reach a high level of knowledge ownership. According to Rowley (2000), here the term university is
indeed referred to all staff and students in the university and is not merely embraced the managerial community of universities.

Implementation of KM practices in universities and colleges can also bring another advantage to the universities by transforming them into “learning organizations” as well. Friehs (2002) has an interesting discussion of the idea of learning organizations in higher education by stating that “schools are no longer considered as organizations for learning, but learning organizations.” Friehs (2002) then argued that the concept of learning organizations refers to the extent of willingness and ability of organizations’ staff members to learn. The concept of “Learning organization” which had been firstly introduced by Senge (1994), is predicated to those organizations in which people are continually expanding their capacity to create the innovative results they truly desire (Senge, 1994). According to Friehs (2002) in such organization, new knowledge is created and integrated into the existing system in two ways:

- Every single piece of knowledge is gathered through individual’s continuous learning process and contributed to the overall organizational knowledge repository,
- Constant interactions with the environment along with the integration into a cultural network and individual experiences are established as well.

Reece (2004) conducted a profound study about how Australian universities can turn into learning organizations and identified a number of factors such as leadership, organizational vision and culture, information technology and society which play essential roles in successfully transforming Australian universities to learning organizations. In addition, Reece (2004) have emphasized on the role of a number of paradigms including knowledge management capabilities as a prerequisite for any organization in becoming a learning organization.

So far, the background of knowledge management as a tool for managing organizational knowledge asset in both businesses and higher education has been briefly reviewed. However, KM can also contribute in CRM success by providing CRM engine of an organization with right knowledge specifically customer knowledge.

### 3.6 Collaboration of KM in CRM

In a study, Khalilabad et al. (2006) recognized customer knowledge as an integral element of the relation between Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Knowledge Management (KM) which can assist organizations in tailoring their products, services and even interactions with their customers resulted in further tangible and intangible achievements. Therefore, as Dous et al. (2005) have also acknowledged, CRM and KM initiatives share the same goal in which both are directed towards the delivery of continuous improvement in managing relationship with customers. Indeed an organization’s KM capability plays a key role in the success of CRM processes by nourishing them with relevant knowledge and that is why in recent years many companies have integrated their CRM practices with KM efforts. In addition, according to Croteau and Li (2003), recent studies
have demonstrated that organizational KM capabilities are the most significant critical success factor in CRM processes (cited in Dous, Kolbe, Salomann & Brenner, 2005). Meanwhile, Harris, Kolsky and Lundy (2003) have brought a number of various case studies of the collaborative usage of CRM and KM asserting that there is no shortage of success stories of enterprises using KM and CRM innovative applications and thus such enterprises can cross all global and industrial boundaries.

Besides, customer knowledge as an essential component of CRM can be obtained from different channels and sources or during the CRM different operations. Organizations that have successfully practiced CRM, according to Saren (2006), own the skills for acquiring, disseminating and using customer knowledge to respond to customer needs and thus, have modified their behavior in the market in a way that reflect new customer insights gained through learning and the CRM processes. This implies that such organizations have turned to the characteristics of learning organization as discussed earlier.

Therefore, from what has been discussed in this chapter, it can be concluded that customer-centric organizations (including universities) employ CRM practice in order to enhance their efficiency of relationships with their customers (students). However, CRM efforts embrace a great number of transactions within organizations or between organizations and their customers. Handling such complex transactions can result in gaining a great amount of customers’ information and smart CRM players would take advantage of better customizing their offerings by collecting, managing and analyzing such information accumulated from right channels. However, due to the messiness and volatile nature of such knowledge, organizations have to think of a systematic way for better organizing their knowledge-based operations and thus KM efforts can play a fundamental role in handling such knowledge. Thus, in a broader view, KM plays as a prerequisite for CRM success. On the other hand, KM efforts can contribute better to CRM practices when they are operated within a learning environment in which all participants are willing to innovatively take part in continuous learning processes.
4 Empirical Findings

This chapter will present a sketchy summary of the empirical studies conducted for this research through a series of semi-structured interviews on the basis of established theories. Following with each question, a table of the response of each university to the proposed questions along with a few lines of the ideas behind asking each question is provided for readers. The full transcript of each interview has been enclosed as appendix.\(^1\)

4.1 Global Market

The first question has been planned to discover to what extent the interviewees believe that higher education has been entered into a global market. The answers have been displayed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1 University</th>
<th>Do you support or reject that higher education can be viewed as business in current global market?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blekinge University</strong></td>
<td>Yes it is, more or less. However, simultaneously we should consider academic part of HE. Students are getting demanding more and more and only by quality we can compete in this business area! So, I believe HE has both academic and business parts, but they are both intertwined closely to each other, i.e. in order to be successful in business part, you need to be good academically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jönköping University</strong></td>
<td>Yes, it is in a way! Higher education has both side and these are interrelated to each other because if you want to get money from it, you need to offer high quality education. In addition, having business view to education makes Swedish universities to offer more international programs in bachelor level. But it has a bad side as well, that is many universities charge students high fees and of course they have to spend lots of money for marketing activities. However, Sweden is only academic-oriented, but in the future it will be more business-oriented. Though, the focus should not be only on money, rather on content of courses and programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linköping University</strong></td>
<td>Not purely, but partly it is. There are some beneficial schools, but I believe in half business and half educational perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lund University</strong></td>
<td>I totally agree that this is a global market since we are competing with other universities to get the best students. However how much it is viewed from business-perspective or academic perspective depends on each university or country. For us the most important thing is to care more about academic part. The quality of students is much more important that their quantity. But I do agree that higher education nowadays is not only education, it also can be considered as business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) It is notable that the findings from the interviews with two staff members of Jönköping University have been merged and presented together.
Of course there are elements of business and global market in higher education in some countries such as Australia and UK which are exporting education, however in my point of view; it is not good to just be sold! And actually the market of higher education is not like a business market where you can go and buy something.

Table 4.1- Interviewees’ opinions regarding viewing higher education as a business area

4.2 Competitive advantages and/or Strengths

The second question is intended to identify the positive and outstanding characteristics of selected universities which thereby international students can be attracted. Being aware of their core competences and strengths can help universities sustain their existing competitive edges and can be considered as the factors which contribute in satisfying international students. The interviewees mentioned their specific advantages and strengths in the market as listed in the following table which involve both academic (content-related) and non-academic factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Comparing to your competitors, what is/are your competitive advantage(s) or strength(s) in attracting international students?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blekinge University</td>
<td>• offering good and high-quality educational opportunities with good connection to research part,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• high security and safe life in Sweden,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• we have local admission office,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• focus on having strong research, sustainability, good connections with surrounded society such as municipality and companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>• good relation with our partner universities,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a strong foundation of family business and entrepreneurship,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• flexibility in admission procedure since we have our local admission office,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• being one of top international schools in Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linköping University</td>
<td>• strong position,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• content of courses,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• special courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• huge investment on our alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lund University</td>
<td>• internationally: Swedish higher education system is quite unique and is focusing on acquiring knowledge not only passing the exams,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• huge varieties of master (75) and bachelor (500) programs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• trans-faculty or interdisciplinary programs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• having “RQ-08” system to improve the quality of our researches,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• strong position in field of research,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• an appropriate city for student life,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• having the biggest students town in Sweden,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• having high quality and international ranking,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38
### Table 4.2: Competitive advantages and/or Strengths of the interviewed universities in attracting international students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Uppsala University | - having the most number of applications among Swedish Universities,  
- good collaboration with China for more than 20 years  
- the university and its departments and offices, the city and everything which are in interaction with students are interactively working as a full package to attract international students |

### 4.3 Goals of international marketing strategy

Question number 3 has been planned to identify what specific goals and objectives the universities are following in their international marketing strategy. Table 4.3 listed number of their future goals towards international students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>How would you describe the overall goals of your international marketing strategy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3          | Blekinge University | - building long-term relationship with our partner universities which we have good connections with them currently,  
- building effective relationships with our alumni |
| 3          | Jönköping University | - filling the programs with high quality European and non-European students,  
- selling JIBS to other countries,  
- building an “Alumni Network” where we can benefit from our alumni,  
- mobilizing the university’s administrative (non-academic) parts (university services such as accommodation office, student health care and career center) in favor of marketing objectives |
| 3          | Linköping University | - attracting talented students who can bring quality to our educational level |
| 3          | Lund University | - attracting more international students,  
- staying among the top international universities in Europe,  
- attracting international students in a way which guarantees the quality improvement of our programs,  
- targeting the most talented and best students,  
- considering internationalization as a very important strategic issue,  
- building strong relation with students and keep them satisfied |
| 3          | Uppsala University | - attracting as much possible as applicants and of course the qualified ones,  
- make a balance between all programs in terms of number of students |

Table 4.3- Goals of international marketing strategies of the interviewed universities
4.4 Marketing efforts regarding attracting international students

Question number 4 is proposed to discover which efforts the selected universities have carried out so far in order to attract their desired international students. By this question, the authors have planned to identify the available and possible channels by which Swedish universities communicate with their international students. These channels will be used in the proposed CRM framework indicating the possible ways through which universities can get into the global market in order to not only identify the right knowledge about and from their international students (their needs, values, wishes, desires and problems), but also to provide the right knowledge for them (customized programs, services, solutions and decisions).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 4 University</th>
<th>What specific marketing effort has your university had so far to attract international students?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blekinge University</td>
<td>• focus on our biggest recruiting countries which are China and India</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Jönköping University | • focus on specific research areas which are entrepreneurship, family business and media management,  
                       | • joint master program with Moscow University,                                               |
|                       | • being partner with other universities and having branches in other countries,                |
|                       | • attending in many educational fairs abroad,                                                  |
|                       | • commercial in other websites,                                                                |
|                       | • and later on improving our services for students such as accommodation, Swedish language courses, internship and so on |
| Linköping University | • publishing the courses and programs on the web                                              |
| Lund University       | • diversify the range of master and bachelor programs,                                        |
|                       | • providing an office in China,                                                                |
|                       | • visiting our target countries and attending in their educational fairs,                      |
| Uppsala University   | • contacting with other countries and their universities and visiting their faculties,          |
|                       | • arranging educational fairs abroad                                                           |

Table 4.4- Marketing efforts of the interviewed universities regarding attracting international students

4.5 Market segmentation /customized marketing efforts

Question number 5 has been planned to elucidate whether the nominated universities have special marketing efforts towards a specific market segment (if any). The answers to this question provides the authors with knowledge about how much the chosen universities are aware of the importance of market segmentation and if they have such consideration, which criteria (such as age, gender, nationality, etc) they use to segment their market.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Do you have any specific market segmentation or customized marketing activities? If yes, which criteria do you use to segment the market?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blekinge University</td>
<td>yes, we do have and it is based on nationality and towards specific countries such as China and India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>yes, we have and our customized marketing plans are regarding different nationalities and our market segments are specifically China, Pakistan and Middle East and Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linköping University</td>
<td>not so far, but it is in our future plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lund University</td>
<td>yes, we have, our customized marketing plans are based on nationality and focuses mainly on China, India, North America, the Middle East and some countries in Africa as well as Russia, Turkey, South Korea, Japan and perhaps Brazil, we also conduct specific investigation about students’ actual needs and preferences, In addition, we organize “focus group” project in order to get better knowledge about needs of different students from different regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uppsala University</td>
<td>not so far, since sometimes it is not the best way to follow everybody in order to attract him/her, however it can be done through organizing international fairs in target countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5- Market segmentation /customized marketing efforts of the interviewed universities

4.6 Relationships with international students

Question number 6 has been designed to address the main issue of the study which is establishing effective relationships and can demonstrate to what extent selected universities are concerned about it. It is also planned to discover the efforts that they have done so far or they will perform in the future in order to improve such relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>To what extent establishing strong relationships with your international students is important for you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blekinge University</td>
<td>making relationships with our alumni is one our main goals here which is essential for companies in the region as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>to be responsive to potential applicants such as to reply their emails, making good relationships with applicants and make them satisfied, I believe in intangible benefits of our alumni and we must keep in relation with them,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linköping University</td>
<td>we do have a huge investment on our alumni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
our marketing policy is to build strong relation with students and keep them satisfied,
possibility of taking a new student relationship management system which focuses on both current students and alumni,
necessity of a proper CRM system to manage all student-related issues,
creating “student portal” where future, current and students can write about their needs, expectations and future desires,
assigning a specific person in charge of alumni issues

making relationship with our students is very important for us in order to make the university’s life longer

Table 4.6- Importance of establishing relationships with international students among the interviewed universities

4.7 Systematic way to manage student knowledge

By question number 7, the authors planned to discover the systematic methods of collecting, storing, managing and disseminating knowledge about international students’ needs, preferences, values, desires and problems existing in the universities under the study. This question has been planned to help the authors identify the available channels and sources required to manage such knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 7</th>
<th>Do you have any systematic way to collect and manage the information about your students’ needs, preferences and problems (such as knowledge repository or databases, complain management systems, etc)? If yes, how does it work?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blekinge University</td>
<td>No! There is no systematic way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>No! There is kind of student knowledge gathering through annual survey, however not in a systematic way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linköping University</td>
<td>Not so far. We do survey to investigate about our international students’ need and problems, but not in a systematic way. However, in near future, I-graduate company will help us to implement such a system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lund University</td>
<td>No! There is no systematic and documented way for it. Students only verbalize their complain and wishes to the relevant staff such as program directors or student union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7- Systematic way to manage student knowledge within the interviewed universities
### 4.8 Marketing plans, strategic initiatives and preparations concerning introduction of tuition fee

Question number 8 was supposed to provide the authors with deep insight about the marketing plans, initiatives and preparations which the universities under study are going to take regarding the upcoming critical situation. It can also help the authors to discover new channels involved in these marketing efforts. Moreover, the answer to this question can reveal which offices, sections and departments of each university will be included in the future marketing plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Do you have any specific marketing plan(s) after imposing tuition fees to Swedish Higher Education System? If yes, what strategic initiatives or preparations have you done so far?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Blekinge University | • Started from 2006,  
• Improving relationships with our partner universities,  
• participating in educational fairs abroad especially in China and India, |
| Jönköping University | • new team of 5 persons working on different market segments with a full support from the Dean of university,  
• providing local admission office to make this process more flexible,  
• improving career center in order to match as much students as possible to companies,  
• facilitating the process of fee paying through our website,  
• expanding and improving the University website,  
• improving the student services efforts in order to enable students to communicate with national agencies more easily |
| Linköping University | • having plan to expand online marketing,  
• more systematic way of marketing,  
• collaboration with agencies abroad |
| Lund University     | • new team of 7 persons working on this for about 6 months with financial support of 10 million SEK,  
• building different customized relationships with students,  
• focusing more on making strong relations with students,  
• focusing more on satisfying students by improving our services such as providing accommodation for all students or offering Swedish language course to all international free movers since by paying fee they will be more demanding,  
• working more on our agencies abroad especially in Russia, China and India |
| Uppsala University | • assigning different tuition fee based on different faculties,  
• offering 3 or 4 kind of scholarships |

*Table 4.8* Marketing plans, strategic initiatives and preparations of the interviewed universities concerning introduction of tuition fee
## 4.9 Contribution of IT tools in marketing efforts

By designing Question number 9 the authors thought out to identify the available and potential IT tools which can be used as channels or any technological part in the final proposed framework. During the interviews, the authors also suggested some concepts in relation to such tools and technologies such as a multi-language website, distance courses and email or on-line marketing and the interviewees were asked to give their opinion about them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>How IT can contribute to your marketing plans? In this regard, what kind of IT tools/features (if any) do you use or decide to use?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Blekinge University | • so far: only the university website,  
• later: web-based application through where students can easily apply,  
• Distance courses: just 1 course, but it is not a useful way,  
• Email marketing: to track applicants, communicate with them, make connection with them and keep them interested and satisfied |
| Jönköping University | • the university website,  
• consultant agents who help us to improve JIBS brand with use of technology,  
• equipping the library with iPad to enable students read e-books  
• Distance courses: no,  
• Multilanguage website: no, however we have several fliers in different languages, |
| Linköping University | • the university website,  
• commercial marketing on the web,  
• smart use of social media to communicate with students such as facebook,  
• Distance courses: just few courses,  
• Multilanguage website: not implemented so far but will come next year,  
• Email or Online marketing: not so far, but will be next year, |
| Lund University     | • investment of 2 million SEK for launching our new website,  
• special consideration to social media and internet as useful channels for marketing such as facebook,  
• Distance courses: yes, we have quite many,  
• Email or On-line marketing: yes, especially we look through the social media and on-line tools to get more knowledge about students’ needs |
| Uppsala University | • the university website,  
• Distance courses: yes, few courses,  
• generally I do not believe technology can play an effective role in attracting more applicants |

Table 4.9- Contribution of IT tools in marketing efforts of the interviewed universities
4.10 The most important factor in employing an IT-based marketing strategy

In Question number 10, the authors searched for identifying the level of readiness of the participated universities in employing an IT/technology-based marketing strategy. Besides, the authors desired to find out which level is the most important and critical one for interviewees, then the final framework should be focused more on that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Question 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blekinge University</td>
<td>In an IT-based marketing strategy, which one of these factors has the highest priority in your opinion: infrastructure, implementation, hardware or personnel training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I believe hardware is the easiest one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>• IT infrastructure and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linköping University</td>
<td>• implementation and personnel training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lund University</td>
<td>• hardware, and then implementation and personal training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uppsala University</td>
<td>• personal training,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I believe more in communication between staff rather than other factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10- Interviewees’ opinion about the most important factor in employing an IT-based marketing strategy

4.11 Weaknesses and negative factors affecting international marketing efforts

Question number 11 which was an optional question, was intended to explore the weaknesses of selected universities or factors which might affect their marketing efforts towards international students negatively. It can provide the authors with knowledge about such problems inside Swedish universities, thus, the proposed framework is expected to be designed in a way to cover, remove and solve these problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Question 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blekinge University</td>
<td>What is/are the main weakness(es) of your marketing efforts which you would like to improve? Which factors do negatively affect these efforts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• not popular city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>• unknown city,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We do not have many choices of student accommodation to offer based on students’ preferences,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• so far the career center has not met international students well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Linköping University| **not popular city,**  
|                     | **not as international as big cities in Sweden**                       |
| Lund University     | **Internationally: Sweden is not considered as a study destination a lot,**  
|                     | **weakness: we have not done international marketing so far, so it’s something new** |
| Uppsala University | **not able to provide accommodation for all students,**  
|                     | **language barrier (most of documents are in Swedish)**                  |

**Table 4.11 - Weaknesses and negative factors affecting international marketing efforts of the interviewed universities**
5 Analysis and Implications

In this chapter, the empirical findings will be scrutinized based on what has been discussed in the theoretical framework in order to help the authors come up with a proper answer for the proposed research questions. The chapter starts with a concise discussion of some preliminary findings and then will be continued with a particularized argument of the theoretical analysis for answering the research questions.

5.1 Interviews’ Initial Implication

The overall analysis of empirical findings reveals that all five interviewed universities are certainly aware that higher education is no longer a pure educational area, rather it has been becoming a global market (table 4.1). In particular, by introduction of tuition fee to Swedish higher education after 2011, they will enter into the global higher education where they need to compete with the existing market leaders in order to attract their desired students. “We will no longer compete based on the price” Maria Engelmark, Head of International Office of Blekinge University, avouched.

According to Johnson et al. (2009), Swedish universities thus need to shift their competitive strategies from a “low price” or “hybrid” strategy to a “differentiation” or “focused differentiation” strategy in order to survive in the new competitive area. In this regard, as an appropriate strategy, the authors suggested a market-oriented (student-oriented) strategy with focus on satisfying students’ needs in order to establish effective relationships with them. The obtained findings clearly demonstrate that all participated universities have emphasized on the importance of “improving relationships with international students” as a critical issue in their future marketing plans. However, when it comes to systematically employing a method to control such relationships, they were all conceding that either they have not done much or have just started to take some serious steps about it. In this regard, most of the interviewees have put their fingers on the factor of implementation among other aspects of infrastructure, hardware and personnel training as the main critical aspect in success of such method. This implies that they already have the required resources to improve relationships with their students, however, they are looking for a tool to practically implement it.

5.2 Theoretical Analysis

As it was discussed in the theoretical framework section, CRM embodies the integration of three crucial components of people, process and technology for the purpose of satisfying customers’ needs. Therefore, in order to come up with a student-based CRM framework as the main purpose of this study, it is imperative for the authors to identify these aspects with the information and insight gained from the empirical studies. However, since these elements are tightly interconnected, the authors could hardly draw a separating border between each aspect and distinguish them. Instead, the authors preferred to pillar the analysis of findings based on the four processes introduced in the theoretical framework chapter and provide a
blended discussion of the whole procedures in a series of interrelated processes that involves two other components of people and technology as well. The outcomes of these findings will be later illustrated in a form of a student-oriented CRM based on the Swedish universities desires.

5.2.1 Strategic Planning: Market Segmentation

One of the preliminary processes in successfully establishing any CRM effort, as defined in theoretical framework, is market segmentation. In order to identify the strategic students who are hugely influential on universities’ strategic goals, it is highly recommended to Swedish universities to engage in segmentation of their students market carefully.

According to the empirical findings, most of the interviewed universities have explicitly mentioned to their country-wised customized marketing as the main strategy of their market segmentation efforts. However, by the analysis of whole interviews, the authors have identified two more criteria to which Swedish universities can consider while engaging in market segmentation. Overall, the identified criteria are presented as following:

- **Nationality**
  Most of the interviewed universities have expanded their market segmentation efforts towards some specific countries. In this case, China and India seem to be the most popular target countries for Swedish universities.

- **Qualification of students**
  Some of them also mentioned that they concern the quality level of their applicants. “Attracting the most talented and qualified students” is what they have emphasized on. In this case, they need to focus only on students who achieved high grades in their previous courses.

- **Partner universities**
  The interviewed universities also are collaborating with several partner universities around the world with which they exchange students. Among them, Blekinge and Jönköping universities in particular, consider their partner universities as their main market segments and have highly emphasized on improving these partnership activities.

Swedish universities, can segment their student market based on the any of the above criteria with regard to their preferences. It can thus help them to better optimize their efforts in customizing their programs and services.

5.2.2 Information Processes: Students’ knowledge identification

After determining the market targets, now is time to capture knowledge about and from students’ needs, preferences, desires, values, problems and complaints. This process is associated with the information process as discussed in theoretical framework. In order to
make the analysis of identification process as easier and understandable as possible, it will be presented in three separate parts: channels, people and knowledge repository. In addition, KM theory will support this analysis since the identification process deals with discovering, accumulating and storing the knowledge about and from students.

5.2.2.1 Channels in knowledge identification

Based on three types of students which have been defined earlier as prospective, current and alumni, and with regards to the findings from the empirical study, students’ knowledge can be collected through different channels which are classified into two main categories:

1. Internal channels

Knowledge about and from current students can be captured through the interactions of different parts of a university which directly or indirectly are dealing with them.

According to the results obtained from the empirical data collection, the following offices and sections inside the participant universities are in direct interactions with the current students:

- admission office
- recruitment office
- accommodation office
- student health care
- career center
- student union

The above list, however, does not cover all parts of a university which are interacting with students and only covers what interviewees mentioned and thus, it can be modified (expanded of limited) based on each university’s organizational chart.

Apart from the above channels, Lund University also suggested the “focus group” project where the university selected different students from different nationalities and studied about them through a survey in order to get better knowledge about their needs. In addition, Lund University pointed out to an innovative solution for acquiring students’ knowledge, called “student portal” where not only their current, also future students can write about their needs, expectations and future desires.

However, all above sections are administrative or non-academic parts of a university and it seems that they missed to address the academic parts of their universities such as different faculties and departments which are interacting with students regarding their academic issues.

2. External channels

Knowledge about and from prospective and alumni can be captured from various external channels in universities. From the empirical findings, external channels can be listed as following:

- partner universities
• websites
• national social media and on-line tools
• web-based communicative tools such as facebook
• internet
• municipality
• their offices, agencies and branches abroad
• educational fairs

In addition, Jönköping University suggested an “alumni network” wherein the university can communicate and keep in touch with its alumni and consequently, build long-term relationships with them. This proposed channel can be considered as one of main sources of gaining knowledge about and from alumni helping universities be updated about their alumni status.

Moreover, Blekinge University believed in “email marketing” as a useful way to track applicants (prospective students) and make connections with them. Email marketing can help universities communicate with their prospective students in order to be aware of their actual needs.

Apart from all mentioned above and based on personal experiences, the authors suggest “national admission institutes” as one of the useful sources for collecting prospective students’ knowledge. In some countries such as Iran, these institutes deal with national applicants who wish to get admission and study abroad. Therefore, in this case they are well-experienced and can be taken into account by Swedish universities to identify what potential students in a specific region are looking for, what kind of problems they have, what they expect from their desired universities and so on.

5.2.2.2 People in knowledge identification

So far, the potential sources and channels for identifying the student knowledge have been discovered with regards to the empirical findings. The question remains that, who will be responsible to identify this knowledge? Or in other words, who are the main players in identification process? Here players imply “people” as one of the components of CRM discussed earlier and can be categorized based on the type of students.

For current students, all mentioned offices and sections that play as internal channels are responsible to separately capture knowledge about and from their current students with regard to their job. However, for prospective students and alumni, having a specific office is inevitable to identify the required knowledge. Empirical findings show that all selected universities have allocated a specific position with different names in charge of their marketing and commercializing efforts via channels such as websites and educational fairs for potential students. For instance in Jönköping University, international office is responsible for such affairs. In addition, the universities’ offices or agencies abroad which have been mentioned by interviewees can contribute in process of knowledge identification.
regarding alumni and prospective students. Richard Stenelo, Director of Lund University Commissioned Education as another example, has inferred to appointing a new person specifically in charge of direct interaction with the alumni and managing all issues related to them.

Therefore, for identifying required knowledge about and from prospective students as well as alumni, it is imperative for Swedish universities assign a specific section or person in charge of this issue. From now on, “Marketing Office” will be used for this.

5.2.2.3 Knowledge Repository

According to what has been discussed in theoretical framework, the collected student knowledge needs to be stored and documented in a specific database or data warehouse. As a part of CRM technology, organizations need knowledge repositories to accumulate, store, document, classify and organize the collected knowledge. However, the empirical findings reveal that there is a lack of such knowledge repository or any other systematic way for organizing students’ knowledge in all participated universities (table 4.7). In this regard, the need for establishing a repository for storing students’ knowledge in form of a database for example, seems to be imperative for Swedish universities. In this case, as stated before, KM capabilities of universities can contribute a lot not only in identification and dissemination of student knowledge, but also in capturing and storing such knowledge in a proper repository.

5.2.3 Customer Value Process

5.2.3.1 Customization

As it has been discussed in theoretical framework, providing customized services to customers (here are students) is another key process in successfully implementing a CRM system in an organization. To present customization process, both main theories of CRM and KM as well as the concept of learning organization play parallel and collaborative roles as displayed in table 5.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory / Concept</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRM</td>
<td>Customization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KM</td>
<td>Managing knowledge from knowledge repository to solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>repository</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Organization</td>
<td>To create a collaborative and interactive environment inside the universities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1- The role of CRM, KM and Learning Organization in customization process
Students’ knowledge can be identified and stored within universities KM efforts. This knowledge then will be analyzed and customized based on the students’ requirements, preferences and wishes within the university CRM system. However, since gaining students’ insight is a complex task since it contain dealing with a wide range of academic (requirements relating to the quality of education) and non-academic (requirements referring to the life of students) demands, various parts of a university need to actively contribute to this process. Thus, it is not a matter of one specific person or one specific department. Rather as Richard Stenelo, Director of Lund University Commissioned Education has also stressed on, it is about the vital role of collaborative environment inside universities: “I believe that not only the university and all its departments and offices which are in interactions with students, but also the city and everything in relation to students should work in a collaborative environment and create a full package to attract international students.”

Therefore, the actual success of KM and consequently CRM, is highly relies on the how cooperation and interaction inside a university has been defined and supported. It simply implies that to what extent, employees are willing to share their vision in operating in a full student-centric environment which demands lots of collaboration, effective interactions as well as innovations. Swedish universities can create a collaborative environment internally which encourages each staff member, section, office, faculty and department to offer their services based on their students’ needs and innovatively participate in problem-solving activities for their students. This implies that each internal part of a university with direct or indirect interactions with students should be concerned about those specific students’ needs, preferences and problems in relation to its job and then attempt to modify their operations and services in a way that maximize students’ satisfaction. This is what has been defined as the basic characteristics of a learning organization. Thus, each Swedish university needs to transform into a learning organization.

Similarly to what was suggested as knowledge repository in identification process, here, as another part of CRM technology, the authors suggest a “Solution Repository” as well in which all created solutions, confirmed decisions and information about customized services are collected, stored and classified as the outcomes of customization process. The reason behind this idea is that with regard to definition of learning organization, the solution repository can create a unique database to which all parts of a university can have access and by reviewing the others’ innovative solutions, they can learn from each other.

The solution repository can be used by marketing office as the main source of referring when it needs to launch new customized ideas and activities in its various operations. However, the marketing office as mentioned before is intended to focus only on prospective students and alumni. Thus, for current students, similarly to what was stated in identification process, all internal parts, section, faculties and departments which are in direct or indirect interactions with students, are in charge of not only identifying the current students’ needs and problems, but also responsible to keep them satisfied by offering them customized programs and services. As a matter of fact, CRM people in this process are identified the same as identification process.
In addition, since a main part of customization process deals with knowledge flowing from the knowledge repository to the solution repository in a learning environment, similar to the previous process, here KM capabilities of a university can play a highlighted role with assisting the university in transferring, managing and disseminating students’ knowledge.

5.2.3.2 Interaction

As it has been stated earlier, interaction with customers is a part of customization process referring to the actual delivery of customized services and solutions to the customers. Based on what has been explained about different types of customer knowledge, interaction is a process of delivering knowledge for customers (here students). In this research, empirical studies demonstrate that the players (people or sections in charge of interacting with alumni, current and prospective students) and channels (ways to interact with them) can be considered exactly the same as in identification process. Therefore, these identified channels play a two-way role in transferring knowledge meaning that universities can use these channels to not only identify the knowledge about and from their students including their actual needs, values, preferences and problems, but also to convey their voice in form of “knowledge for students” through informing and serving them with customized solutions.

However, interaction with students can be done through a more computerized way like a software, as Richard Stenelo, Director of Lund University Commissioned Education proposed. According to him, utilizing a student relationship management software can be designed and utilized that will enable universities to build a strong relationship management with their students in a more systematic way. Therefore, another technology feature of a CRM strategy can be in a form of software that acts as an interface between Swedish universities and their students in which both identified knowledge about, from and for students can be stored in a systematic way. In addition, it can be used as a strong tool in favor of Swedish universities in order to achieve their students’ satisfaction and loyalty through establishing long-term relationships.

5.2.4 Performance Measurement

This process as introduced in the theoretical framework is mainly concerned with obtaining feedbacks after the actual implementation of CRM, and thus, since this research has not proceeded up to that level, it is not applicable to this study.
6 Conclusion and Reflections

This chapter will present a summary of this thesis by providing the answers to the stated research questions. Reflections and limitations as well as future areas of research will be also discussed thereafter.

6.1 Conclusion

Customer relationship management (CRM) can play a remarkable role in optimizing relation-based operations in organizations. Successful implementation of CRM involves satisfying customers’ needs which consequently results in building, managing and retaining effective and long-term relationships with the customers.

In area of higher education, CRM can be utilized in order to build and manage relationships between educational institutions and their students who play the role as customers. As a part of higher educational area, Swedish universities can take advantage of CRM capabilities as well in building, managing and retaining long-term relationships with their students. In particular, by introduction of tuition fee to Swedish higher education, they will definitely face a critical situation regarding a threat of losing international students. However, by smart use of a proper student-oriented marketing strategy with a support of a CRM system they still will be able to keep a reasonable market share of international students.

In the study at hand, as stated in the previous chapter, the authors have come up with a number of available as well as required elements that contribute in the designing of the intended CRM model. Identifying these elements therefore, allow the authors to find the answers to the stated sub-question of this research which is:

“What are the available and required elements such as people, channels and ICT-based tools in creating such model?”

By scrutinizing the current marketing activities and goals of selected Swedish universities, a certain number of elements including people, channels and ICT-based tools that play crucial roles in designing the proposed CRM framework along with other factors such as the required processes and technologies have been identified in chapter 5. Table 6.1 presents all available and required elements such as people, channels and ICT-based tools identified in analysis chapter which is considered as answer to the sub research question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of CRM</th>
<th>Identified Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Strategic Planning (Market Segmentation) | • nationality  
• qualification of students  
• partner universities |
| Process | **channels**  
• internal  
  ✓ admission office  
  ✓ recruitment office  
  ✓ accommodation office  
  ✓ student health care  
  ✓ career center  
  ✓ student union  
  ✓ focus group  
  ✓ student portal  
  • external  
  ✓ partner universities  
  ✓ websites  
  ✓ national social media and on-line tools  
  ✓ web-based communicative tools such as facebook  
  ✓ internet  
  ✓ municipality  
  ✓ their offices, agencies and branches abroad  
  ✓ educational fairs  
  ✓ alumni network  
  ✓ email marketing  
  ✓ national admission institutes |
| Information Processes (Students’ knowledge Identification) | **people**  
• current students  
  ✓ similarly to internal channels  
  • prospective students & alumni  
  ✓ marketing office  
**knowledge repository**  
  a storage of knowledge about and from students’:  
  ✓ needs  
  ✓ preferences  
  ✓ wishes  
  ✓ desires  
  ✓ values  
  ✓ problems  
  ✓ complaints |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Value Process</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ customizing services and solving problems based on knowledge repository</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ collaborative environment (learning organization)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ solution repository</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ customized services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ innovated solutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ confirmed decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ channels similarly to identification process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ people similarly to identification process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ software</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge repository</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution repository</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Software</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology/ICT-based channels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ web-based communicative tools such as facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ social media &amp; on-line tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universities’ staff members who are working in following sections or offices and are considered as servers in CRM system:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ admission office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ recruitment office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ accommodation office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ student health care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ career center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ student union</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ universities’ offices, agencies and branches abroad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ marketing office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.1- Answer to the sub research question*
Additionally combining all the findings from the analysis chapter together enables the authors to draw a conceptual student-oriented CRM model with the aim of creating a student-centric environment inside Swedish universities in order to help them establish, manage and retain effective relationships with their international students. This model is indeed the answer to the main research question of this study which is:

“What is a proper CRM model which can contribute well to the marketing efforts of Swedish universities for the purpose of establishing effective and long-term relationships with their international students?”

These effective relationships can be established through satisfying the needs, preferences, values and future desires of international students as well as solving their problems and complaints. Meanwhile, as it was discovered in analysis chapter, knowledge management plays a critical role in identifying, managing and disseminating knowledge, particularly in identification, customization and interaction processes. In addition, based on the concept of learning organization, all operations and activities from the process of transforming student knowledge (stored in the knowledge repository) to the process of customizing services and programs and offering innovative solutions and decisions (stored in the solution repository) need to be performed in a collaborative environment inside the universities.

Based on this logic, the authors have structured all the identified factors and elements presented in table 6.1 in a conceptual framework as visualized in figure 6.1. The authors call this conceptual framework “a knowledge-based Student Relationship Management (SRM)” model and define it as a student-centric management system which provides Swedish universities with in-depth knowledge about their alumni, current and potential international students’ needs, preferences, values, desires, expectations and problems, and consequently enables them to customize their programs and services in order to achieve high level of students’ satisfaction and loyalty as well as effective and long-term relationships with them.

This student-oriented CRM framework aims to support the marketing activities of Swedish universities through improving their relationships with their current and prospective students as well as alumni. It can guide Swedish universities how to systematically capture knowledge about their students’ needs and preferences in order to customize their programs and services based on this knowledge which consequently leads to achievement of students’ satisfaction and long-term relationships with them.
Figure 6.1- A knowledge-based SRM model with focus on improving the relationships between Swedish universities and their international students.
6.1.1 A practical example of the proposed SRM model

Here the authors suggest an example of the practicality of the proposed SRM model in order to provide an image of its eventual operation for the readers.

Assume that a Swedish university has identified Iran as its growing market and decided to attract more Iranian students. Since this issue is associated with prospective students, the marketing office as defined earlier is responsible to identify the needs, preferences, values and/or problems of Iranian students who are seeking to study abroad through available channels. As one of the most proper channels relevant to this issue, the university might need to collaborate with national admission institutes in Iran in order to obtain reliable knowledge about and from Iranian students. As an outcome of this knowledge identification process, the marketing office might recognize that most of Iranian potential students do not have any qualified English language certification such as IELTS or TOEFL and therefore language proficiency is one of the main barriers for them while applying for Swedish universities. This problem later should be stored in the knowledge repository and classified in the section associated to the university’s recruitment office which decides about the programs’ requirements. According to the concept of learning organization, this office is responsible to innovatively provides solution for the identified problem and later send it as a customized decision to the solution repository. The marketing office therefore can propose an alternative for Iranian applicants that the university offers English courses to candidates without language qualification, and their final admission to a program is conditioned to the result of the language courses. Finally, the marketing office will utilize this decision in the university’s advertisements while targeting Iran’s segment. This can be considered as one of the competitive advantage of this university since it has customized its program’s requirements based on a specific market’s need which consequently results in Iranian students’ attraction, satisfaction as well as effective relationship with them.

6.2 Reflections and Limitations

During writing this research, the authors faced some limitations that could have an impact on the final result. As stated earlier, the study at hand pursued the ambition to conduct the interviews with a larger number of universities and contribute their ideas in this research in order to get the maximum validity of the obtained results. However, due to the lack of cooperation from some selected universities, the study had to limit itself to a number of five Swedish universities and therefore, the results may be circumscribed to some extent.

6.3 Future Studies

Since application of CRM in the area of higher education and particularly, as a tool for educational marketing activities, is a trailblazing concept that has not been scrutinized by many scholars, the scope is very new and untouched. Reviewing all the references and
citations used in this research which are all within the twentieth and twenty first centuries can prove the novelty and freshness of this area. Thus, there is a broad area to be explored for scholars and professionals interested in topics like “relationship management in higher education”, “application of CRM in educational marketing of universities”, etc. In addition, as another area of further research, the authors suggest a pilot implementation of the proposed framework after a series of complementary studies.
References


Official Website for Applying to Higher Education in Sweden: www.studera.nu

Official Website of Swedish National Agency for Higher Education: http://www.hsv.se/


Appendix

Appendix 1- Interview Questions

Interviewee Information:

University:

Interviewee: (Optional)*

Position:

1. Do you support or reject that higher education can be viewed as business in current global market?
2. Comparing to your competitors, what is/are your competitive advantage(s) or strength(s) in attracting international students?
3. How would you describe the overall goals of your international marketing strategy?
4. What specific marketing effort has your university had so far to attract international students?
5. Do you have any specific market segmentation or customized marketing activities? If yes, which criteria do you use to segment the market?
6. To what extent establishing strong relationships with your international students is important for you?
7. Do you have any systematic way to collect and manage the information about your students' needs, preferences and problems (such as knowledge repository or databases, complain management systems, etc)? If yes, how does it work?
8. Do you have any specific marketing plan(s) after imposing tuition fees to Swedish Higher Education System? If yes, what strategic initiatives or preparations have you done so far? How are you going to take advantages from it?
9. According to previous question, how IT can contribute to these marketing plans? In this regard, what kind of IT tools/features (if any) do you use or decide to use?
10. In an IT-based marketing strategy, which factor has the highest priority in your opinion? Infrastructure, implementation, hardware or personnel training?
11. What is/are the main weakness(es) of your marketing efforts which you would like to improve? Which factors do negatively affect these efforts?

Please feel free to suggest any ideas which can help us to improve the survey.

* In case of necessity, the interviewee will be definitely kept anonymous!
Appendix 2- Interviews’ transcripts

University: Blekinge University

Interviewee: Maria Engelmark

Position: Head of International Office

1. Do you support or reject that higher education can be viewed as business in current global market?

Yes it is, more or less. Specifically US and UK and Australia have business perspective towards higher education. However, simultaneously we should consider academic part of HE. Students are getting demanding more and more and only by quality we can compete in this business area! So, I believe HE has both academic and business parts, but they are both intertwined closely to each other, i.e. in order to be successful in business part, you need to be good academically.

2. Comparing to your competitors, what is/are your competitive advantage(s) or strength(s) in attracting international students?

By offering good and high-quality educational opportunities with good connection to research part, also Sweden generally has high security and thus it can guarantee a safe and easy student life. Moreover, Bleking University has its own local admission office which is responsible for recruiting students.

Our strength can be our focus area which is on research, sustainability, strong in research, very good connection with surrounded society such as Bleking municipality which helps us with students’ accommodation and so we can guarantee accommodation for them, very good and close connection with companies in the region.

3. How would you describe the overall goals of your international marketing strategy?

To build long-term relationship with our partner universities as well as our alumni! We have good connections in India and partners universities there. We try to create good relationships with our partner universities, so relationship is really important for us to keep.

4. What specific marketing effort has your university had so far to attract international students?

One of our main marketing efforts is to focus on our biggest recruiting countries which are China and India, therefore we have kind of customized marketing and market segmentation.
5. Do you have any specific market segmentation or customized marketing activities? If yes, which criteria do you use to segment the market?

We have customized marketing regarding specific countries such as China and India.

6. To what extent establishing strong relationships with your international students is important for you?

As I said, making relationships with our alumni is one our main goals here. So, it is really important for us. They are important for us and surrounded companies as well.

7. Do you have any systematic way to collect and manage the information about your students' needs, preferences and problems (such as knowledge repository or databases, complain management systems, etc)? If yes, how does it work?

It was missed to be answered.

8. Do you have any specific marketing plan(s) after imposing tuition fees to Swedish Higher Education System? If yes, what strategic initiatives or preparations have you done so far? How are you going to take advantages from it?

We already started working on this issue from 2006 and came up with some solutions such as improving our partnership with other universities, participating in educational fairs abroad specially in China and India and we have tried to be accredited there and offering more distance courses (only for Swedish language in order to recruit more Swedish students).

Benefit: I guess the benefit of this new situation is that we will no longer compete based on price; therefore, we can expect to get good and high-quality students.

9. According to previous question, how IT can contribute to these marketing plans? In this regard, what kind of IT tools/features (if any) do you use or decide to use?

So far is mostly our website; however we are going to provide applicants with web-based application where they can easily apply.

Distance course? Just one program, but it is in Swedish language and we do not believe it can help us to recruit international students.

Email marketing? We have kind of email marketing in order to track applicants and provide connection with them and also to communicate with them and keep them interested and satisfied.
10. In an IT-based marketing strategy, which factor has the highest priority in your opinion? Infrastructure, implementation, hardware or personnel training?

Implementation is the main one. I believe hardware is the easiest one.

11. What is/are the main weakness(es) of your marketing efforts which you would like to improve? What factors do negatively affect these efforts?

Weakness: not popular city! Of course we are not as popular as other universities in big cities such as Stockholm; however we are working hard to keep our campus environment as good as possible.

Please feel free to suggest any ideas which can help us to improve the survey.

No comment.
1. Do you support or reject that higher education can be viewed as business in current global market?

Yes, it is in a way! Having business view to education makes Swedish universities to offer more international programs in bachelor level. But it has a bad side, that is many universities charge students high fees and of course they have to put lots of money for marketing such as UK, and therefore it’s like wheel: high tuition fee needs high investment in marketing and vice versa!

In Sweden, by the way, is only academic-oriented, but in the future it will be more business-oriented. However, the focus should not be only on money, rather on content of courses and programs.

Some Swedish universities even do not look at the qualification of applicants. They just accept international students to fill the vacancies in order to get money from government. Hopefully we are not going in this direction; otherwise we will lose our partner universities.

2. Comparing to your competitors, what is/are your competitive advantage(s) or strength(s) in attracting international students?

Probably our main advantage is strong and good relation with our partner universities. Also we are a strong foundation of family business and entrepreneurship.

3. How would you describe the overall goals of your international marketing strategy?

Goal: having 100 fee paid students by 2011 and 150 by 2012 and also filling the programs with high quality European and non-European students. And also as we discussed with sponsored companies, how and in which way we can sell JIBS to other countries.

Last not the least is to build up an “Alumni Network” where we can benefit from our alumni. I believe if they can be our agencies abroad.

4. What specific marketing effort has your university had so far to attract international students?

We focus on specific research areas which are entrepreneurship and family business and also media management. Also we have joint master program with Moscow University. In addition being partner with other universities and having branches in other countries. So one of our best ways to expand our market is to move JIBS to other countries instead of attracting
students here! To attract more, we have focused on our best market segment which China, Pakistan, Middle East and Russia (our target areas).

In addition, attending in many educational fairs, talking a lot with our partner universities, commercial in other websites are another examples of our marketing efforts.

Also, we are improving our services which we offer to students such as accommodation, Swedish language courses, internship and so on.

5. **Do you have any specific market segmentation or customized marketing activities?**
   **If yes, which criteria do you use to segment the market?**

We do not have any customized marketing regarding level of the programs. Our focus is more on master programs since for bachelor programs is not hard to get applicants. However we have kind of customized marketing plans regarding different nationalities. As I said we focus on different market segments specifically China, Pakistan and Middle East and Europe.

6. **To what extent establishing strong relationships with your international students is important for you?**

It is really important to be responsive to potential applicants such as to reply their emails. Actually, this is our policy to make good relationships with applicants and make them satisfied. Also I believe in intangible benefits of our alumni, so we must provide them with good relation in order to keep them.

7. **Do you have any systematic way to collect and manage the information about your students' needs, preferences and problems (such as knowledge repository or databases, complain management systems, etc)? If yes, how does it work?**

Not such a system, the only thing we use is Excel data bases.

8. **Do you have any specific marketing plan(s) after imposing tuition fees to Swedish Higher Education System? If yes, what strategic initiatives or preparations have you done so far? How are you going to take advantages from it?**

As I said we already built up a new team of 5 persons working on different market segments. And especially for this case, the dean of JIBS is totally behind us and we have his total support in our activities.

And of course we can get benefit from it. By money which we receive from students, we can improve the quality of our research and we can compete with other countries like UK.

9. **According to previous question, how IT can contribute to these marketing plans? In this regard, what kind of IT tools/features (if any) do you use or decide to use?**
So far we just use JIBS website, however we have some consultant agents who are working on improving JIBS brand with use of technology and also we are going to have more specific IT tools in our marketing activities later on.

We do not offer distance courses and not have plan to make the whole website Multilanguage since applicants can use some IT tools such as Google translator, however we have some fliers in different languages and it is going to be more.

10. In an IT-based marketing strategy, which factor has the highest priority in your opinion? Infrastructure, implementation, hardware or personnel training?

I think the most important one especially after tuition fee is a good IT system where applicants are able to pay and do their administrative tasks easily which is associated with IT infrastructure.

11. What is/are the main weakness(es) of your marketing efforts which you would like to improve? What factors do negatively affect these efforts?

Weakness: probably the Jönköping City itself, which is kind of unknown city comparing to other big cities such as Stockholm and Göteborg. However I believe we can overcome it by local admission office which is much flexible and applicants do not need to wait too much for results and in this case we are kind of independent and also by scholarships which we are going to offer which is supported financially by both government and sponsored companies.

Please feel free to suggest any ideas which can help us to improve the survey.

I think it’s quite good and interesting topic.

You also can get good information from Per Hallerstig who is more familiar with IT-based preparation.
1. Do you support or reject that higher education can be viewed as business in current global market?

Yes, of course it is a global market. And I believe higher education has both side and these are interrelated to each other because if you want to get money from it, you need to offer high quality education.

2. Comparing to your competitors, what is/are your competitive advantage(s) or strength(s) in attracting international students?

Since we are private university, our advantage is to be more flexible in admission procedure. Also one our strength is our effort to create an international environment rather than Swedish.

3. How would you describe the overall goals of your international marketing strategy?

JIBS mission: 1st year: 100 fee paid students, 2nd year: 200 paid students, 3rd year: 250 fee paid students

Therefore, we as coordinator of all non-academic (administrative) parts of university such as accommodation office, student health service, IT help service, admission office, career center and so on are responsible to support JIBS to achieve this mission. We can support them either through technological effort such as creating Multilanguage website or through creating a satisfactory environment for students in order to make and keep them interested in JIBS. For example to offer them free and fast health service, to match them with companies to find part time job, to offer them proper accommodation and so on.

4. What specific marketing effort has your university had so far to attract international students?

It was already mentioned in previous question!

5. Do you have any specific market segmentation or customized marketing activities?

If yes, which criteria do you use to segment the market?

Not relevant to his position.

6. To what extent establishing strong relationships with your international students is important for you?
It was already mentioned in question 3.

7. **Do you have any systematic way to collect and manage the information about your students' needs, preferences and problems (such as knowledge repository or databases, complain management systems, etc)? If yes, how does it work?**

This question was skipped since Tomas Bengtsson already answered it.

8. **Do you have any specific marketing plan(s) after imposing tuition fees to Swedish Higher Education System? If yes, what strategic initiatives or preparations have you done so far? How are you going to take advantages from it?**

We have done some preparation for this new situation. First one is regarding admission process, how can we have *more flexible admission*? This is why we have our own local admission office.

Another one is putting too much attention to *career center* in order to match as much students as possible to companies.

We also think about *how to facilitate the process of paying fee* for instance paying with credit card. So, we need to implement its required facilities in our website.

Moreover, we have another plan to improve our website. We would like to provide all information about Jönköping City and JIBS at one place.

And the last project is to work on *student service*, how it can help students to communicate with national agencies such as migration office, tax office and so on.

9. **According to previous question, how IT can contribute to these marketing plans? In this regard, what kind of IT tools/features (if any) do you use or decide to use?**

I do believe in role of IT and technology in making students satisfied and this is why we do use technology in education, for example we are going to equip our library with iPad in order to enable students have better access to e-books.

10. **In an IT-based marketing strategy, which factor has the highest priority in your opinion? Infrastructure, implementation, hardware or personnel training?**

I guess JIBS is really good in infrastructure, but I believe *implementation* is the main one.

11. **What is/are the main weakness(es) of your marketing efforts which you would like to improve? What factors do negatively affect these efforts?**

Weakness: *accommodation!* Although we guarantee all students accommodation, there are not varieties of places and then we cannot offer several options to students based on their preferences. Also I think *career center* has not been established so far to meet international students and we need to improve it.
Please feel free to suggest any ideas which can help us to improve the survey.

It is interesting topic and good luck with that.
1. Do you support or reject that higher education can be viewed as business in current global market?

Not purely, but partly it is. There are some beneficial schools, but I believe in half business and half educational perspective.

2. Comparing to your competitors, what is/are your competitive advantage(s) or strength(s) in attracting international students?

Strong position, content of courses and special courses are our main advantages. But the main one is huge investment on our alumni. Our alumni are really important for us, or I mean we focus more on relation marketing.

3. How would you describe the overall goals of your international marketing strategy?

The overall mission is to attract talented students who can bring quality to our educational level.

4. What specific marketing effort has your university had so far to attract international students?

So far our marketing efforts are based on publishing our courses and programs on the web.

5. Do you have any specific market segmentation or customized marketing activities? If yes, which criteria do you use to segment the market?

Not so far any customized marketing, however it will be in our future plan.

6. To what extent establishing strong relationships with your international students is important for you?

Yes, of course it is important. We have a huge investment on our alumni. We believe our alumni are really important for us, or I mean we focus more on relation marketing.

7. Do you have any systematic way to collect and manage the information about your students' needs, preferences and problems (such as knowledge repository or databases, complain management systems, etc)? If yes, how does it work?
We do survey every year to get knowledge about students; however, we do not have such a systematic way to manage it.

8. **Do you have any specific marketing plan(s) after imposing tuition fees to Swedish Higher Education System? If yes, what strategic initiatives or preparations have you done so far? How are you going to take advantages from it?**

Firstly, I do not support the new tuition fee imposing since I believe international students bring very much to campus. I suggest them to introduce tuition fee in much more generous way to universities or allow them to offer scholarships and etc.

However, we have planned to expand online marketing too much, have a systematic way of marketing such as collaboration with agencies abroad. However, still is too early and I cannot give you a proper answer since we are discussing about it.

We also believe that focus on recruiting more talented students might reduce the negative effects of this situation.

And also how much we are going to charge students, depends on global market and global economy and of course we consider our close competitors in the market such as how Denmark, Netherland or UK have set up their tuition fee.

9. **According to previous question, how IT can contribute to these marketing plans? In this regard, what kind of IT tools/features (if any) do you use or decide to use?**

IT absolutely contributes well in our marketing efforts such as presentation of our website and commercial marketing on the web.

Distance courses? Just few courses.

Multilanguage website? It is in on our plan, not implemented so far but will come next year.

On-line or email-marketing marketing? Not so far, will be next year.

I believe the most effective tool is smart use of social media platforms in marketing, I mean communication-based tools such as facebook or tweeter, tools which can connect the students to us.

10. **In an IT-based marketing strategy, which factor has the highest priority in your opinion? Infrastructure, implementation, hardware or personnel training?**

I would say implementation and personnel training the most critical ones, the others are not so much important and can be solved later.

11. **What is/are the main weakness(es) of your marketing efforts which you would like to improve? What factors do negatively affect these efforts?**
Weakness: we do have some weaknesses comparing to our competitors, especially those located in big cities such as Stockholm or Göteborg. We are not as popular and famous as them, and not many people know about Linköping University. If people have heard about Sweden, they might hear about Stockholm or perhaps Göteborg! So Linköping is not as international as these cities in Sweden.

However we can overcome our these weaknesses by improving our profile, focus on brand marketing and focus on our competitive advantages in the market such as content of our courses, therefore, make students choose Linköping University not because of the exciting city life, rather because of the best content and best teachers. So, this is part of our market segmentation.

Please feel free to suggest any ideas which can help us to improve the survey.

The questions are good and clear enough.
**University:** Lund University

**Interviewee:** Richard Stenelo

**Position:** Director of Lund University Commissioned Education

1. **Do you support or reject that higher education can be viewed as business in current global market?**

I totally agree that this is a global market since we are competing with other universities to get the best students. However how much it is viewed from business-perspective or academic perspective depends on each university or country. For us the most important thing is to care more about academic part. The quality of students is much more important that their quantity. But I do agree that higher education nowadays is not only education, it also can be considered as business.

2. **Comparing to your competitors, what is/are your competitive advantage(s) or strength(s) in attracting international students?**

Internationally, the Swedish higher education comparing to US or UK, is quite unique. For example we do not offer lots of courses in each semester and we focus more on quality of learning rather than quantity! So we can compete in market based on this and say that our higher education system is focusing on acquiring knowledge not passing the exams because we have more home exam, participatory lectures and more problem-based learning.

When it comes to Lund University, I cannot tell you about our competitive advantages since they are confidential. However, I can tell you about how we attract them. We offer 75 master programs as well as 500 single courses in English and several of them are unique meaning that they are offered by trans-faculty or interdisciplinary system, i.e. several subjects are integrated into one master program. Also another advantage of our university is we use “RQ-08” system where several panels of external researchers evaluate the quality of all research at Lund University and judge them based on international perspective in order to improve the quality level of the researches, so we are really strong in field of research. Also our programs are so close to research part. Moreover, the Lund city itself is quite unique and popular as appropriate place for student and student life in Lund is one of the best among Europe. So I believe that not only the university and all its departments and offices which are in interactions with students, but also the city and everything in relation to students should work in a collaborative environment and create a full package to attract international students.

Strength: we are a comprehensive university, we are unique in terms of students life city (the biggest students town in Sweden), the high quality and international ranking, strategically working with several regions for example we have collaboration with China more than 20 years and we have our own offices there and also in India in near future and this is why among all Swedish universities, we have the most number of applications.
3. **How would you describe the overall goals of your international marketing strategy?**

General goal: to *attract more international students* no matter where they are come from, so we have a great commitment to *stay among the top international universities in Europe* and by doing so, we need to attract more international students. We look at international students as *quality improvement* of our programs. So if we are lucky, introduction of tuition fee is quality reform for our university. However, we target *the most talented and best students*. So we are not looking necessarily on number, rather on quality of our students.

Short-term goal: to keep two third of international students that we have at Lund University by 2011 and within 3 years we should have the same number of students as we have today and in 5 years we should even increase it. So, we see *internationalization* as a very important strategic issue.

Generally I can say our main marketing policy is to build strong relation with students and keep them satisfied.

4. **What specific marketing effort has your university had so far to attract international students?**

I already answered this question. As I said, we have provided *varieties of programs* in both bachelor and master levels. Also we have focused on our *target countries* a lot. We attend in educational fairs abroad especially in target areas and as I mentioned we have a good and long collaboration with China.

5. **Do you have any specific market segmentation or customized marketing activities?**

If yes, which criteria do you use to segment the market?

Yes! We have started to look at students in different ways and build our *customized marketing* based on nationality. Although use of internet makes everything accessible and global, we have decided to focus on certain number of areas which at first phase involves China, India, North America, the Middle East and some countries in Africa and secondly will dominate Russia, Turkey, South Korea, Japan and perhaps Brazil and it includes visiting them and attending in their educational fairs. These customized efforts also include investigating about their *actual needs and preferences* such as what is important for students from a specific country when they chose a university, what kind of program are they interested and so on. Actually we have done a “*focus group*” project in Lund University and so we interviewed 5 students from each region to see what they are looking for and it will be more extensive.

6. **To what extent establishing strong relationships with your international students is important for you?**

As I said, our main *marketing policy* is to make strong relation with students and keep them satisfied. Next Friday we are going to discuss about taking a new *student relationship*
management system, a software which any staff in university can use it and it enables us to follow students from its first show as well as when they apply, during application, after they are selected, how to communicate with them before applying, when they are studying and after they become alumni. I believe we should implement a proper CRM system to help us manage all student-related issues such as to answer their emails quickly.

Also we are going to create “student portal” where future, current and students can write about their needs, expectations and future desires.

In addition, we have a person responsible for alumni issues who is in charge of feeding them with whatever they need and keep track of them to keep long-term relationships with them.

7. Do you have any systematic way to collect and manage the information about your students' needs, preferences and problems (such as knowledge repository or databases, complain management systems, etc)? If yes, how does it work?

Every year, we do survey about our international students and ask them about their needs and problems, but not in a systematic way. However, in the near future we are going to collaborate with “I-graduate” Company which is a consultant in area of higher education. Basically, in one aspect, the company helps us to implement such a systematic way to manage our student knowledge.

8. Do you have any specific marketing plan(s) after imposing tuition fees to Swedish Higher Education System? If yes, what strategic initiatives or preparations have you done so far? How are you going to take advantages from it?

We have been working with it for about 6 months. A specific team has been assigned to prepare Lund University for this new situation with financial support of 10 million SEK and we employed 7 new persons for this team. This new situation will affect many areas in university and it forces us to do many things that we haven’t done so far. We need to look at students in different ways. We have to build different customized relationships with students. We need to satisfy them, because when you pay for something, you demand more! So, are main focus is on making strong relations with students in order to keep them satisfied. For example, we will guarantee accommodation for all students since they are going to pay us. Therefore we need to offer them services that we did not do before. Also so far we just offer Swedish language course only to exchange students, but with introduction of tuition fee, we will be able to offer it to international free movers as well.

Also we have decided to work with our agencies abroad especially in Russia, China and India and gradually we will extend it.

I believe the introduction of tuition fee in short term might affect us badly, but in long term we can even benefit from it. Because it appeals us to do more marketing which we haven’t done before much and by doing more marketing, Lund University will be more well-known as well.
9. According to previous question, how IT can contribute to these marketing plans? In this regard, what kind of IT tools/features (if any) do you use or decide to use?

We have specific plan to use IT in our marketing activities. We have invested 2 million SEK for our new website which will be launched in September, first in English but other languages will be added later which will focus much more on recruiting new students. Also we consider social media and internet as our best ways to market the university and we have assigned a person in this area and Lund University group on facebook is one our main channels to connect to our students, get knowledge about and from them, provide useful information for them as well as keep relations with our alumni.

Distance course? Yes, we have quite many.

On-line or email marketing? Yes, definitely we use them; especially we look through the social media and on-line tools which they use in order to get new information about their future needs and desires.

10. In an IT-based marketing strategy, which factor has the highest priority in your opinion? Infrastructure, implementation, hardware or personnel training?

Regarding to employing a new student relationship management system in Lund University, I guess first of all hardware to get everything together, and then implementation and personal training is really important for us.

11. What is/are the main weakness(es) of your marketing efforts which you would like to improve? What factors do negatively affect these efforts?

Weakness: I don’t think universities in Sweden are competing to each other; rather we are complementary for each other. However, comparing to other universities in other countries like UK, I think Sweden is not considered as a study destination.

Also I think one of our problems is that we have not done international marketing so far, so it’s something new.

Please feel free to suggest any ideas which can help us to improve the survey.

It is pretty interesting and I hope that you come up with handy results later.
1. **Do you support or reject that higher education can be viewed as business in current global market?**

Of course there are elements of business and global market in higher education in some countries such as Australia and UK which are exporting education, however in my point of view; it is not good to just be sold! And actually the market of higher education is not like a business market where you can go and buy something.

2. **Comparing to your competitors, what is/are your competitive advantage(s) or strength(s) in attracting international students?**

This can be categorized in two sides. Firstly, our advantages are regarding the university itself such as university reputation, ranking, environment (Uppsala is called student town!) and age (one of the oldest Swedish universities). Second side is that each program that we offer has a specialty of its own! For example we have some unique programs in area of peace and conflict research which you cannot find in any other Swedish universities, at least not in English.

However, I think this is a question of quality and diversity. We should try to attract students from different genders, ages, Sweden and countries including Nordic, European and non-European. By quality I mean the quality of university which brings the high level of competition for applicants while applying for our university.

3. **How would you describe the overall goals of your international marketing strategy?**

We are disseminating our information in a strategic way. In some programs such as civil engineering, there are few students studying comparing to our other programs like medical programs. Therefore, one of our main goals regarding recruitment is to get as much possible as applicants and of course the qualified ones and also to make a balance between all programs in terms of number of students. Also another reason is to get more applicants to get higher grade of competition.

4. **What specific marketing effort has your university had so far to attract international students?**

So far, our marketing efforts have been focused more on national applicants, except for science programs. Actually, these programs attract less national applicants than international! However, for attracting international applicants, we use some ways such as contacting with
other countries and their universities, visiting their faculties, arranging educational fairs abroad and etc.

5. Do you have any specific market segmentation or customized marketing activities? If yes, which criteria do you use to segment the market?

We do not have so far, but we are discussing about how to define it. Sometimes it is not the best way to follow everybody in order to attract him/her. However, it can be done in some way such as arranging international fairs in countries from which we have more international students.

6. To what extent establishing strong relationships with your international students is important for you?

Making relationships with our students is really important for us since a university cannot continue without its students. So we need to keep them for long time in order to make the university's life longer.

7. Do you have any systematic way to collect and manage the information about your students' needs, preferences and problems (such as knowledge repository or databases, complain management systems, etc)? If yes, how does it work?

No, we have no such systematic effort implemented. Our students are supposed to verbalize their complaints and wishes in relation to their Program Directors or in relation to the Student Union.

8. Do you have any specific marketing plan(s) after imposing tuition fees to Swedish Higher Education System? If yes, what strategic initiatives or preparations have you done so far? How are you going to take advantages from it?

Since this is a new situation, we do not have any specific plan; however we are discussing quite a lot about this issue. The primary goal that we have come up with is to get back the half of current students in three years and we believe it is enough.

We also are planning to assign different tuition fee based on different faculties. We also we have plan to offer 3 or 4 kind of scholarships which can be financed either by our sponsors such as firms or by the government.

9. According to previous question, how IT can contribute to these marketing plans? In this regard, what kind of IT tools/features (if any) do you use or decide to use?

The main one which we use is probably the National Swedish Website for Higher Education which is www.studera.nu. After making this website in English, the number of applicants expanded dramatically, even nearly impossible to be handled! Therefore, I certainly believe
that the idea of creating Multilanguage website can be effective in attracting more students. However, it might cause some further problems in terms of overloaded number of applicants. Because always the volume of applicants do not matter, rather their qualification! Also I can point out the Uppsala university website in which we have provided useful information for applicants.

Also, we have some few distance courses, but it has not been a policy for us to invest on this area. In addition, our policy is to offer more Swedish language programs in bachelor level, but our focus to attract international applicants is on master programs and research level.

However, I believe technology is the next step, and we need some preparation before it. We firstly should provides applicants with accurate information about programs and prepare some channels to be able to communicate with them in a mutual way, then technology might support this process. Generally, I do not believe technology can play an effective role in attracting more applicants since technology like distance course is not a good way to attract more students.

10. In an IT-based marketing strategy, which factor has the highest priority in your opinion? Infrastructure, implementation, hardware or personnel training?

For Uppsala University personal training is the main factor of success. I believe more in communication between staff rather than other factors.

11. What is/are the main weakness(es) of your marketing efforts which you would like to improve? What factors do negatively affect these efforts?

I can say our real weakness is to provide accommodation for students. Also, another one can be language barrier. I believe that the experience of teachers and staff here to do their job in English language comparing to Swedish is not enough and it takes time to solve it which I believe it is not only for our university (most of documents in Swedish,…)

Please feel free to suggest any ideas which can help us to improve the survey.

Actually this is really interesting research, particularly compatible with current situation of Swedish higher education.