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Rethinking the Marketing of Higher Education

A Case Study of Chalmers University of Technology

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Abstract

Background and Problem: In Sweden in 2011 a new fee-system was adopted for third country nationals wishing to study at Swedish universities. Students from outside the EU, EES and Switzerland now have to pay on their own or apply for scholarships. Applications from third country nationals have dropped significantly, and Swedish universities have to find new means of attracting this group. Suggestion by theorists are a more market oriented approach and to use marketing. However, since research about higher education marketing is limited, it is uncertain what this means for universities.

Purpose: To examine the implications for international student recruitment at Swedish universities when adopting a customer view. The study aims to create an understanding of consequences of implementing new ways of working with student recruitment since this could help other universities in their recruitment efforts.

Delimitations: These were made due to regional and time constraints. The focus is on international student recruitment rather than domestic, and focuses on the recruitment to Masters' programmes. One university in Sweden has been examined and the focus has been on the situation in Sweden.

Method: A holistic single-case study was conducted on the Chalmers University of Technology. Means of data collection for the case study were four interviews with university staff, as well as an analysis of documents concerning international student recruitment.

Empirical Findings and Conclusions: Different implications of more customer focus for the international student recruitment at Chalmers university of Technology were found. Some of the main implications were a shift away from one-way information to two-way communication, an emphasis on relationships in marketing, greater responsiveness to students needs and wants, creating understanding of the marketing idea within the university, the question of how marketing techniques such as branding should be used and ethical aspects concerning this.

Recommendations and suggestions for future research: Other universities in Sweden could benefit from looking at service marketing as well as exploring the idea of branding further. There could be a greater focus on customer satisfaction and an emphasis on collaboration between the staff and the marketing function which could give a more attractive product. For future research, universities in different countries could be examined. Also, the student perspective could be looked into.

Keywords: International student recruitment, customer, marketing, case study, HE-marketing

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Chapter 1

This chapter will give a background of how higher education marketing has emerged as a subject within the marketing field, and why there has been an increased focus on marketing of Swedish universities in the last few years. Thereafter, the research question will be presented and discussed, and the purpose of the study will be made clear. The chapter ends with a discussion of delimitations and informational need.

1.1 Background

In the last decades, the forces of globalisation have changed the environment in which people live and work. It has enabled movement across borders and allowed new actors on markets not reached before. Due to this, people are now to a larger extent choosing to study and work in countries other than their native one. One implication of this is that universities have to shift their focus away from only operating on domestic markets, and adapt to competition in an international marketplace.

An example of the increasing globalisation is that policies within the European Union have been implemented, which work to encourage students to study abroad. A report from the European Union explains that increased harmonisation between universities has been achieved through for example the Erasmus programme and the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer system (ECTS) (European Union, 2012). Another report says that one of the objectives of the European Commission is that by 2020, 20 per cent of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad. Also, the introduction of Bachelor's and Master's degrees has led to a new kind of mobility where students do their Bachelor in one country and their Master in another. (European Union, 2010) It seems as if studying abroad is a trend that is both encouraged and increasing.

For a country such as Sweden there is a strong wish to attract international students to universities. According to a proposition from the Swedish government, international students are an asset since they contribute to strengthening the international environment and diversity at Swedish universities. These are also considered valuable for the development of the teaching and research environment, as well as the trade and industry sector. (Krantz, 2010) Before 2011, there was no difficulty in attracting international students. In 2010, every fourth student beginning an education in Sweden was from another country (Migrationsinfo, 2012). However, in the fall of 2011 a fee-system was introduced for students outside the EU, EES and Switzerland, and these students needed to start paying for themselves (Krantz, 2010). Applications of this group of students dropped dramatically and according to SCB only 0.4 % of all students in Sweden are today international fee-paying students. In addition to the number of applications from non-EU students decreasing, only 29 % of the non-EU students who are offered a place at a Swedish university accept the offer. This can be compared to the corresponding number for Swedish students, where 79 % accept their place. (Kahlroth, 2012)

Due to the introduction of the new fee-system it is difficult to attract this group of students. The Swedish government has stated that through active work with information, recruitment and admission of third country nationals this decrease in applications can be reduced, and it is also possible to give new strategic possibilities to Swedish universities and education in Sweden (Krantz, 2010).

1.2 Problem Discussion

In order to attract students to Swedish universities there are different schools of thought. For instance Nilsson et al. (2013) argue in an article in Svenska Dagbladet that the only way of increasing the number of international students coming to Sweden again would be to abolish the fee policy. Others, such as Göransson (2013), in turn argue that there must be other ways of attracting international students, such as with a more market-oriented approach. In addition, Krantz (2010) suggests that now when education is no longer free, another basis for competitiveness must be developed.

It has been suggested that marketing can have a key role in developing this new basis for competitiveness. For instance, in a paper Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) state that higher education institutions have come to the realisation that they must market themselves due to international competition. Additionally, Maringe (2005) says that as a consequence of the globalisation of higher education, new institutions are created to meet growing demand, university programmes are becoming more heterogeneous and students are given more choices. Institutions become competitors and due to this the higher education sector must embrace the marketing idea (Maringe, 2005). Furthermore, Nicholls et al. (1995) argue that if universities do not improve their marketing, they could ”*stand accused of not practising what* *they preach"* (p. 31), especially those offering management and marketing courses. However, there still seems to be resistance amongst some when it comes to seeing education as a service or product, and students as consumers or customers. Nicholls et al. (1995) suggest that this may be due to the fact that marketing and commercialism is seen as closely linked together, which makes many of those in the academic world uncomfortable.

Despite resistance, an increased customer focus could be of vital importance if Swedish universities want to be competitive in a global marketplace. Binsardi & Ekwulugo (2003) studied higher education marketing in the UK, and claim that "*A centrally important principle of marketing is that all marketing activities should be geared towards what the customers want*." (p. 319) To be successful, it is no longer a viable strategy for the universities to determine what the students want. There needs to be a shift from a production focus to a customer focus.

Since it seems as though fees are not going to be abolished, the marketing idea and a marketing approach could be an alternative way to increase applications. However, as research suggest, this idea may meet resistance in the academic world (Molesworth et al 2011, Anderson 2008). Additionally, the research is still limited within the higher education marketing sector. Some models have been developed especially for higher education marketing, whereas others have tried to establish theories from the business and economics sector. One of the main questions in this is however what it means for universities to have a greater customer focus, and therefore the research question for this study has been posed as follows:

What are the marketing implications for international student recruitment at Swedish universities when seeing students as customers?

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the implications for international student recruitment at Swedish universities when adopting a customer view. This study will examine what changes the fee-system has led to when it comes to international student recruitment through a case study of Chalmers University of Technology. The aim is that this study will contribute to an understanding of what happens when implementing new theories and ways of working with student recruitment. This could help universities in their recruitment efforts.

1.4 Delimitations

Some delimitations had to be made for this study. Most delimitations were made due to regional and time constraints. This study focuses on Sweden and the situation for Swedish universities, since looking at several countries would have become too extensive for this type of research.

The study has been designed as a single-case study. Even though an extensive multi-case study could have benefited the research, the time-span only allowed for examining one university. In this case study, four interviews were made. More interviews could have been made if there had been more time. This could have given more alternative views and more substance to the claims made. The Chalmers University of Technology was chosen for this case study due to its regional location, but also because this is a university which actively work with international student recruitment.

It was also decided that this particular study would focus on international student recruitment. This was mainly due to international student recruitment becoming more difficult since 2011, but also because the time would not have allowed for looking at national student recruitment as well. Furthermore, the focus was on the recruitment for Master's programmes, as Bachelor's programmes are traditionally taught in Swedish, and thus not attractive for international students. Despite this, some of the findings may very well be transferable to the marketing of basic degrees.

1.5 Informational need

In order to be able to answer the research question, a number of different sources of information were considered necessary. First, an analysis of the existing literature on the subject was carried out. This was done with the purpose of finding what implications different authors see when switching to a customer view.

Second, in order to be able to perform a case study on Chalmers University of Technology, it was recognised that several ways of actually accessing information were needed. From this it was decided that interviews will be carried out with key people working with student recruitment and in the marketing office at the Chalmers University of Technology, as this will provide information about how they view students and what the implications have been.

Additionally, it was decided that documents would be analysed. Some of these documents would be the current marketing plan and documents concerning student recruitment. Also, to see if the vision of the university and its employees corresponds to what meets prospective students, information online such as pamphlets and other media were also considered to be important for the analysis. This would be done in order to see whether the opinions of those at the university on student recruitment and seeing students as customer could be made visible in the way they are treated.

Chapter 2

In this chapter the theoretical framework used to analyse the results of the study is presented. Relevant articles and books are introduced to the reader, to create a wider understanding of the topic of higher education marketing. A summary of the theoretical framework is offered at the end of the chapter.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theories that will be used to look at marketing of higher education institutes come from a number of different fields of marketing, as well as non-marketisation advocates. There are a couple of theories and models which have been developed especially for higher education marketing. Maringe's (2005) CORD-model, Naidoo and Wu's (2011) higher education conceptual framework and Kotler and Fox’s (1995) evolution of enrolment marketing are some of the examples of these. In addition, some mean that general marketing theories can be applied to the higher education marketing field.

As the higher education marketing field is relatively unexplored, general marketing theories will be used to discuss marketing of higher education from a traditional marketing standpoint. In addition, the marketing theories especially adapted for higher education marketing will offer new perspectives of working with marketing. Branding theories will be used to study how universities can package their products. Some writers do not agree with the fact that marketing can be applied to the higher education sector, and these contribute to a discussion on the direction of higher education marketing.

2.1.1 The marketing concept and general marketing theories

Looking at general marketing theories, Kotler wrote an article in 1972, called “A Generic Concept of Marketing”, where he states that all corporations, not only those with a traditional buyer and seller perspective, can benefit from using marketing theories. He explains that there are three levels of marketing consciousness; those at the first level simply see marketing as a business subject, where only companies involved in transferring ownership of a physical product as a result of a payment can gain from using marketing. At the consciousness level two, payment is not seen as a necessary condition to define a transaction that could be helped by marketing. “Free” products or services such as museums and political candidates can be marketed. At the consciousness three stage, the general view is that marketing should not be confined only to a company’s customers. All stakeholders, not just those consuming the good, can be positively influenced by using marketing ideas. The generic marketing theory Kotler mentions implies that marketing activities can be classified according to target markets, the product or service, and the marketer. Kotler claims that generic marketing is available to all organisations, as the major tasks are similar. Public and private sector, as well as non-profit organisations all have to consider market and product analysis, pricing, motivation, cost measurements etc.

Suggestions that general marketing theories can be used when it comes to marketing higher education are found in a research paper by Nicholls et al. (1995) which concerns marketing of MBA degrees. For example, when having a customer perspective in the marketing it is important to understand buyer behaviour, segmentation of the market, the development of a marketing strategy and the marketing mix. He suggests that the nature of the MBA is a people-based service and marketing will have to be adapted according to this. The information acquisition pattern distinct for service customers, and personal sources of information thus become very important. Nicholls et al. also suggest that consumers go through a complex buying behaviour when choosing an MBA degree. An adapted marketing mix for MBA degrees is suggested consisting of the traditional four Ps but also “People and Process”. Nicholls et al. also highlight the concept of branding in connection to marketing MBA degrees. It is suggested that brand image can be an important factor in the decision. It is suggested that job applicants are no longer asked “Do you have an MBA?”, but rather “Where did you get your MBA?”. Branding could therefore be an important aspect for universities.

2.1.2 Branding

Another study by Durkin et al. (2012) further elaborates the concept of branding and marketing of higher education. The study found that an emotionally driven branding concept had a positive impact on business development and brand likeability at a UK-university. The article recognises that the field of higher education marketing is quite new, but that traditional “university-customer” marketing communications have focused on influencing the rational decision processes. Rather than emphasising numbers, University of Ulster adopted a new emotionally oriented approach for its marketing in order to connect to potential future students. In this way the university became differentiated from competitors and the number of applications increased.

Instead of looking at emotional branding, Brown (2011:a) looked into other ways of branding higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. One conclusion he drew from the research was that many of the issues with branding were related to the political and economic situation in the United Kingdom at the time of his study. He connects a newfound interest in branding with the increasing marketisation in the country, and backs it up by pointing to USA which is traditionally seen as more marketised, and the success of the Ivy League institution with their branding. In the study he found that many leaders of UK universities saw branding as important, but despite that there was not a clear link between branding programmes and overall university strategic objectives. The question about whether generic marketing theories can be applied to branding of higher education institutions was brought up as well. However, Brown is of the opinion that a clear model on which to build a brand in a university is lacking, and that a *"simplistic application of commercial approaches is not helpfu*l" (p. 111).

Although a universal model may be missing, Ali-Choudhury et al. (2009) have researched branding in universities further. They have talked to British university decision makers, to see exactly what they think of as being part of a university brand. Ten different themes emerged, and they were ambience, location convenience, physical attractiveness, association with London, safety and security, employability, career prospects in general, vocational training, courses offered, diversity of the student body, inclusiveness, ease of entry, level of difficulty of courses, community links and visual imagery. Different parts of the brand were important to different categories of schools. The older, perhaps more prestigious universities, were more concerned about the courses of the school and the more academic parts, whilst newer universities targeted non-traditional students, i.e. mature students, or those from ethnic minorities. A problem Ali-Choudhury et al. (2009) saw with this however was that in targeting these groups, other groups were discouraged from applying. This shows that branding of universities can be both necessary and problematic.

2.1.3 Applying general marketing theories to the higher education sector

Since higher education marketing is a fairly new subject, and there is no consensus regarding which models to use, general marketing theories are often used. When applying these general marketing theories to the marketing of higher education, there are some things one should keep in mind. Gibbs & Knapp (2002) highlight the importance of working with focus, segmentation and customer satisfaction, suggesting that these will become increasingly more important as the physical location of institutions matter less and less in the future. They want to apply general marketing theories, to establish a unique selling point for the institutions, and to convince the public that they offer added value. To be able to adapt the marketing concept, Gibbs & Knapp suggest the institutions start with a marketing audit, to "*decide who you are, where you are, and how you fit in (or do not fit in)*" (p. 3) However, they do see differences between the general market, and that for education, which they see as, in some ways, centres for service and social responsibility. Unlike those companies working in the general market, higher education institutions have not traditionally had a profit motive, although Gibbs & Knapp are of the opinion that this might change in the near future, with government and market pressure. This could mean that students are thought of as customers to a greater extent than they are today.

If students are seen as customers, the question is what they are buying. Many of those who are against using marketing in the higher education sector claim that since students are not buying a physical product, they cannot be seen as customers. However, education seems to have more similarities to a service than a product. Service marketing has emerged as its own branch of marketing, and it could be possible to look at theories and research from this field and to later apply these to the marketing of higher education institutes. Vargo & Lusch (2004) explain that co-creation is an important part of service marketing. Whereas products can be produced, stored and then sold to customers, services necessarily involve some degree of co-creation. The customer co-creates value, and is not just a passive entity. Ordanini & Pasini (2008) express it by saying that *"it is not possible to deliver a service without the active participation of the customer*" (p.2). They also explain that the quality of the service depends on the customer, as the customer participates in the service process. This could be compared to a student having to actively work to get his or her degree. The amount of work the person puts in will affect the final grade.

2.1.4 Applying the marketing concept to the public sector

Higher education is not the only part of the public sector to have experienced increased marketisation in the last decades. Several articles have been written about how the public sector can benefit from using marketing ideas. Rowley (2000) wrote an article called "From users to customers?" where she discusses the possible marketing strategies libraries can use, in a time where information can be obtained from the Internet, and the traditional role of libraries might have to change. She suggests that, since in the public sector there are a number of different stakeholders, a more sophisticated perspective of the nature of a customer is required. She goes on to state that customers seek benefits, not products, and this is something that the public sector must consider when designing the marketing and communication to potential customers. She says that in the public sector, as in the business world, segmentation is important. Even a library will have different customer segments, with different needs. The general opinion in Rowley's article is that marketing theories can be used in the public sector, without a need to adapt them.

Berry (1981) is not as enthusiastic about the marketisation of public institutions such as libraries, saying that "*It is not a simple matter of applying a technique called "marketing" to an institution called the "library""* (p. 5). Berry explains that libraries have a long tradition of offering free access to information to the public, and that information is a resource that cannot be depleted through use. He feels that this is not compatible with the marketing concept. Instead he suggests that there are new theories, which claim that the world is already fully marketised, and we will move towards a society where we do not rely on commodities, but more do-it-yourself projects. He believes libraries could be a part of this "third wave" society, and build on individual self-reliance.

2.1.5 Higher education marketing models and theories

Some theories have been developed especially for higher education marketing. They take into consideration all of the special circumstances surrounding higher education marketing. With the increasing variety and heterogeneity of institutions, as well as increasing competition, there has been further marketisation of the higher education sector (Maringe 2005, Naidoo & Wu 2011, Nicolae & Marinescu 2010). Currently, many of the marketing theories used come from the business sector, something that Maringe sees as a problem. To combat this, he has developed his own method for marketing higher education. Maringe’s CORD-model is based on four principles: Contextualisation, Organisation and co-ordination, Researching the customer interface and Developing the curriculum. It is important to look at the current situation, as well as the goals, before doing the necessary changes. Competition should be analysed, and the mission of the organisation should be clear. This is all part of the contextualisation part. To be able to succeed with the marketing effort, a well-functioning structure must be worked out, where those working with marketing can all collaborate. This is the organisation and co-ordination step. Next comes the research part, where students' wants and needs should be made clear, in order to go on to develop a competitive curriculum. According to Maringe the problems facing higher education marketing include that universities choose to see themselves as either research centres or teaching academies, and therefore do not have the students in mind when designing the curriculum. He means that by using marketing strategies especially formulated for higher education marketing, and using team-building activities to ensure that professors and other employees are part of the marketing effort, the problems of higher education institutes can be handled.

However, developing strategies for marketing of higher education is not the only difficulty. Once strategies and plans are formulated, they must be implemented successfully. Naidoo & Wu (2011) have looked at strategy implementation in higher education marketing, and developed a conceptual framework for strategy implementation based on seven hypotheses. The hypotheses were built up around different themes, such as vision fit, strategy commitment and role performance. Under these categories were a number of different questions that Naidoo & Wu asked the HE-marketers being interviewed. The findings from the study include that for higher education institutes to be successful in attracting international students, they must have a strategic marketing plan. Vision fit also turned out to be of great importance; the marketing strategy must align with the overall strategy of the university. The communication between the senior management and the marketing managers must be good, to avoid misconceptions. In the study, one of the institutions had the problem of being told one thing by senior management, but reading another thing in strategic documents. Good communication can solve problems like these. Designing a marketing plan more suited to the students’ needs is another important conclusion. Naidoo & Wu (2011) give an example of how academic staff members give credibility to the institutions when they are a part of the marketing effort, but since there are no incentives for them to do so, and they are of the opinion that they have more important things to do, the entire institution suffers. Here, Maringe's (2005) ideas of team-building activities in order to involve the academic staff may be helpful.

To be competitive in the international marketplace, successful strategy formulation and implementation is not always enough. Nicolae & Marinescu (2010) give additional things to consider when designing the marketing process. They explain that due to the increasing competition in the educational sector, universities must be able to offer proof of their accomplishments to prospective students and possibly their parents. A way of doing this is university rankings, where independent actors judge universities based on several different factors. Nicolae & Marinescu state that by using these forms of unbiased evaluations, it is possible to reduce the uncertainty for prospective students. In addition, they point out the importance of looking at the university's public image, and using new marketing tools to be able to communicate in a better way with all the different stakeholders. In their opinion, it is important to create a coherent message to send out to a predetermined target group. University rankings can be of help when it comes to designing this message.

Unlike Maringe (2005) and Naidoo & Wu (2011) who talk about higher education marketing in terms of strategies and current problems facing the HE-sector, Kotler & Fox (1995) describe the evolution of higher education marketing as a step-by-step process. The more marketised a university is, the further it has moved through the steps. Each of the six consecutive stages are:

1. **Marketing is unnecessary.** Prospective students will find the university, and the course catalogue need not change to attract students.
2. **Marketing is promotion.** Not enough students are applying, so higher education institutes set up a "sales department" for the school.
3. **Marketing is segmentation and marketing research.** Resources can be used more efficiently if they can be targeted right, so a better understanding of the market is needed.
4. **Marketing is positioning.** With increasing competition, the higher education institutes must distinguish itself from the competition, and build on their strengths. Universities can no longer be everything to everyone.

5. **Marketing is strategic planning.** External trends in the market affect the school's ability to recruit students, so analysis of the external environment must be part of the marketing effort.
6. **Marketing is enrolment management.** Students are treated as partners in a relationship, and the importance of responding to students needs is highlighted. All faculty members realise that they are part of the enrolment effort.

2.1.6. Differences between private sector marketing and higher education marketing

Higher education marketing differs from marketing in the private sector in some ways. In the private sector, all companies are expected to have a marketing department, and to work actively with marketing, even those companies that are doing well at the time. However, Wonders & Gyure (1991) explain that as long as there is a fairly even stream of students applying to the school, most people in the higher education world do not see a problem. In Wonders & Gyure's researched case the total number of students was satisfactory, but some programmes had problems getting enough students, whilst other programmes were over capacity. Although students were coming in, they were perhaps not the students the school wanted. Better students and more diversity were requested. Their solution was to use marketing, not as a desperate last resort when admission goes down, but as a strategic tool. A problem they faced though was that marketing was often confused with advertising and public relations, and many people saw it as a necessary evil. Until senior leadership is in favour of the idea of marketing, little can be done, but they may not be interested unless there is a real enrolment crisis. Wonders' & Gyure's (1991) solution was opportunistic marketing. Opportunistic marketing is based on the idea that when working together, a group of administrators can introduce marketing to an environment which has not used marketing ideas previously. By pointing to existing problems, and educating people in marketing and market research, these problems can be solved together after being analysed and researched. If this gives the hoped for results, it will lead to institutional acceptance. Wonders & Gyure go on to present some characteristics of opportunistic marketing: the opportunistic marketer is an entrepreneur, looking to introduce a new way of success, and they look for 'marketing windows of opportunity'. To be able to succeed with the project, they must use proper marketing techniques, such as good research methods and setting of realistic goals. It is also common for opportunistic marketers to start with ‘pilot projects’, i.e. that they promote the introduction of marketing by taking an active part, to allow people to see what it is all about. If all of these things are done correctly, when people start to see results, it should win over those who see marketing as a necessary evil.

Even if higher education institutes see the benefit of marketing, it is often handled in a different way than one might expect a private company to handle it. The marketing is not always as sophisticated; Goldgehn (1990) found that universities often use at least some marketing techniques in the student recruitment effort, but that a marketing point of view is often lacking when it comes to strategic planning and decision making. The ‘visible’ techniques are used, but not internal marketing techniques, targeted towards the current students. Since an institution’s reputation is built on the current students to a large extent, having satisfied students can influence other peoples’ choice. Furthermore, she found that when marketing techniques were used, a proper follow-up was often missing, and some techniques that would be more helpful when used in combination with other techniques were used alone. In the article she gives the example of trying to use target markets, without firstly segmenting the market, or looking at the offers of competitors. To create a successful marketing strategy, Goldgehn suggests that the higher education institutes should start with market research to find the needs of the marketplace, and then go on to programme development. According to Goldgehn, it is important to offer courses in touch with the needs of the marketplace.

2.1.7 Seeing students as customers

It has recently become more popular to see students as customers. Mark (2013) gives some reasons why in the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management; with the increasing competition, students are making sure they get the best value for money, and universities are therefore adopting a customer focus to be able to give them what they want. However, the old saying of the customer always being right is outdated according to Mark, and the notion of a co-producer is the new way of looking at customers. In the service marketing sector, co-production means that the customer is required to participate in the service transaction. Mark suggests that it is helpful to see students as customers, when designing the education and marketing of higher education institutions. By having a customer focus, he claims that universities can live on in a time of increased competition, and that students can receive an education which meets their and the labour market's expectations.

Agreeing with Mark (2013) that it is indeed possible to see students as customers, Nordensvärd (2011) suggests that students can also be seen as managers. According to Nordensvärd, whereas students as customers focus on consumption, students as managers look at the utility of education. Education can be seen as an investment by students, in themselves. *"The students are therefore not just consumers, but also managers of their life, future and their CV"* (p. 161) If one chooses to see students as managers, the most important skill acquired in university is perhaps not the facts and knowledge needed to pass exams, but the skill to learn. Some say that knowledge quickly becomes outdated, and the ability to be able to learn new things is what really matters. Students become educated in self-management.

If one would choose to see student as customers, as it is still far more common than seeing them as managers, Helgesen (2008) discusses what kind of marketing will work best. With the increasing competition, and the need to both retain students and attract new students, he proposes that higher education institutes should use a relationship based model. According to Helgesen, a relationship model will be able to create greater satisfaction and loyalty, as well as hopefully improving the school's reputation. It could also create students that are committed to the school, and these could attract new students. Helgesen suggests that creating student value is very important, and that surveys should be carried out to see what creates student value. The higher education institutes can then use this in their marketing campaigns. Helgesen does however point out the importance of honesty here, and for the schools to give a true picture in their marketing, to avoid dissatisfied students later on.

When working with relationship marketing as Helgesen (2008) suggests, using printed advertisement or other bought media is not enough. The university must be in contact with the prospective students to build a rewarding relationship. Constantinides & Zinck Stagno (2011) explain that social media is a good way of reaching out to prospective students. They claim that there are gaps between the information prospective students want, and what can be found in universities' traditional communication channels. Past research has shown that, at least in the business sector, using social media led to improved communications and customer engagement, as well as increased brand loyalty. In a study, students still valued open days and more traditional methods highly, so social media should not replace traditional channels, but compliment them. In their case study of universities in the Netherlands, Constantinides & Zinck Stagno found that a number of schools were using social media, but that they are not always used as recruitment tools, but rather a way of communicating with current students. They suggest that universities should try to get influential individuals and brand advocates to speak out in social media, which should help universities to see the benefits of using these new channels.

2.1.8 Criticism of the marketisation of higher education

Sharrock (2000) does not agree with the above authors in that marketing, and the marketisation of the public sector is necessarily the best way forward. He argues that the public sector works differently, and explains that what works in the private sector does not always work in the public sector. 'Customer focus' does not work in the public sector, as the objective of the public sector is to balance competing interests. Universities are not only service providers, but also standard setters, and this would be an argument against looking at students as customers according to Sharrock. Although he is not completely at ease with the marketisation of higher education, he accepts that it can sometimes be beneficial to see students in a new way. He describes four roles a student can have. They can be seen as customers, clients, citizens with certain rights and subjects with certain obligations. The students can take on all of these roles during a single day.

Molesworth et al. (2011) offers an even more negative view of marketing, and the marketisation of higher education. They claim that "*Students view the opportunity to gain a degree as a right, and a service which they have paid for, demanding a greater choice and a return on their investment*" (p. I). In addition, they are of the opinion that it is hard to view higher education institutes as operating in a market, as it is not always clear what is bought and sold. The academic world is seen as an intellectual community, whose members need to collaborate with one another. By adopting the marketing view, members of this community would compete against each other, and thus sabotage the greater good. A further problem with seeing students as customers that Molesworth et al. see is that according to the logic of marketisation "*the customer is always right*" (p. 3). They fear that marketisation will lead to a form of defensive education, where students are flattered into not complaining, and where academics do not get to give negative feedback. Furthermore, Molesworth et al. claim that marketisation is, to a large extent, a political and ideological process, and that *"from a cultural perspective the project of marketisation represents the attempt to commodify academic education*" (p. 2).

Another author who has a more dualistic reasoning regarding marketisation of higher education is Brown (2011:b). Marketisation is here defined as the application of economic theory on the market of higher education. Brown (2011:b) notes that there are both benefits and limitations of having a market system for higher education. For instance, a market system could increase efficiency and responsiveness, whereas a non-market system would be more considerate of the public good. He says that there is desirability and a reality to some degree of market competition in higher education, but outlines blended policies which would be a compromise of the benefits of both private and public interests.

Barnett (2011) in turn argues that marketisation of the higher education institutes is an ideological question. The ideologies would be neo-liberalism, or academic capitalism, against those who think that universities are a public good, independent of market constraints. On one hand there are those who think that marketisation of universities can increase efficiency and quality just like Brown (2011:b) suggests , and on the other hand there are those who think that the pedagogical relationship and the student experience will suffer. Brown claims that "*The positive and the hostile positions are taken up first and the evidence is found to support the decision taken*." (p. 39) This would mean that empirical evidence cannot always be trusted, as biased conclusions are made. Barnett goes on to explain the non-marketisation argument by saying that students who have had to pay for their education, and are seen as customers, will expect a good experience as well as a good degree, and this may impair the pedagogic relationship. He means that there is a chance that teachers will focus more on students' expectation than on what actually needs to be done, and that students, having paid for their degree, will feel like they do not have to do the work.

Looking specifically at the academics, Anderson (2008) explains that many in the academic world are against 'managerialism', and the introduction of corporate strategies in to the public sector. She claims that since academics are trained in analytical thinking, and used to handing out critique, they are unlikely to sit back and watch as these changes are made. Instead, resistance is likely. A study of Australian universities confirmed this view; there were many different ways of resistance, including refusal to comply with the new guidelines, avoiding or ignoring requests and qualified compliance, where the academics only did the bare minimum, whilst expressing the view that what they were doing was wrong. Much of the resistance was everyday-things, such as feigned ignorance and 'forgetting' to do things. It shows that even if the higher education institute is adopting a new, more market-oriented view, things might not work out, if the academics are not behind this idea.

2.2 Summary of theoretical framework

There are some models and theories that are developed especially for higher education marketing. Those that are discussed in this paper are Maringe's (2005) CORD-model, which recommends working together as an organisation to meet customers' demands, Naidoo & Wu's (2011) theoretical framework which looks at strategy implementation and highlights the importance of having a strategic marketing plan and Kotler & Fox's (1995) evolution of higher education marketing, which implies that universities move towards a more marketing oriented way of working in six different steps.

In addition, there are some researchers who have written about higher education marketing in general. Nicolae & Marinescu (2010) point out that with increasing competition it is important to be able to offer proof of the institution's accomplishments. They suggest that university rankings can be used to do this. Wonders & Gyure (1991) show that by using opportunistic marketing, it is possible to introduce marketing ideas to an organisation that is new to marketing. Goldgehn (1990) highlights the importance of customer satisfaction, and the need for market research.

Seeing students as customers has become more accepted lately. Mark (2013) explains that this is due to the fact that increasing competition has urged universities to keep customers happy. According to Nordensvärd (2011), it is also possible to see students as managers who make an investment in themselves. Helgesen (2008) says that if students are seen as customers, a relationship marketing approach should be used to create satisfaction and loyalty. Constantinides & Zinck Stagno (2011) claim that using social media can be a part of the marketing of higher education, and that it offers a way of sharing more information with prospective students.

It is also possible to apply general marketing theories to the marketing of higher education. Kotler (1972) explains that all organisations, not only those with a traditional buyer and seller perspective can benefit from marketing ideas. Nicholls et al. (1995) suggest that it is important to understand buyer behaviour, segmentation of the market, the development of a marketing strategy and the marketing mix. They suggest an altered marketing mix, where people and process are added.

Branding is a topic that many higher education marketing researchers have touched upon. Durkin et al. (2012) found that an emotionally driven branding concept had a positive impact on business development and brand likeability at the UK university they were studying. Brown (2011:a) claims that the newfound interest in branding is a result of the increased marketisation in the UK. However, he is of the opinion that general branding theories should not be applied to the higher education sector. Ali-Choudhury et al. (2009) studied what British university decision makers think of as being part of a brand. Some of these things include ambience, physical attractiveness and courses offered.

Gibbs & Knapp (2002) are of the opinion that universities should use general marketing theories, such as segmentation and customer satisfaction, but they realise that there are differences between the general market and the public sector. They mention that universities have not traditionally had a profit motive, but claim that this will change in the near future.

If one chooses to see education as a service, it will in some respect change the design of the marketing. Vargo & Lusch (2004) and Ordanini & Pasini (2008) argue that services show a high degree of co-production and that the quality of the service depends on the customer, as the customer participates in the service process. This idea can be applied to the higher education sector.

When it comes to applying marketing theories to the public sector, Rowley (2000) wrote a paper titled “From users to customers?” where the marketisation of libraries was discussed. She points out that customers seek benefits, not products, and that segmentation and other marketing concepts can and should be used in the public sector. However, Berry (1981) is afraid that marketisation of the public sector will damage the greater good.

There are others criticising the marketisation of higher education as well. Sharrock (2000) argues that the public sector works differently, and that customer focus does not work in the public sector where the objective is to balance competing interests. Molesworth et al. (2011) fear that marketisation will lead to students being flattered into not complaining, at the expense of a good education. They also fear that members of the intellectual community will compete against each other instead of collaborating. Brown (2011:b) sees benefits of both sides in the conflict. He suggests using blended policies as a compromise.

Barnett (2011) argues that marketisation of higher education is an ideological question. A problem with marketisation that he highlights is that the pedagogic relationship can be damaged when students are seen as customers. Anderson (2008) claims that academics are not likely to sit back and watch changes take place, that they do not improve of. Instead, she argues that they will resist in more or less sophisticated ways.

Chapter 3

The methodology chapter starts with a presentation of the two major research methods, and reasons why one method should be chosen over the other in this particular study. After that follows a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of using a case study as a research method. The case is presented, and the research procedures are explained. In addition, there is a discussion regarding validity and reliability.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Quantitative and qualitative research

When designing this study, a choice had to be made about whether to use a quantitative or a qualitative research method. This was done by examining reference literature describing both types of research. Hammersley (2012) explains that the main focus of quantitative studies is on using numerical data, and differences in amounts, to be able to make generalisations about an event or an occurrence. Since quantitative studies often rely on being able to control variables and use numerical data, it is not always the right choice when studying attitudes and human behaviours. In comparison, qualitative studies usually focus more on what happens in the real world, and use verbal rather than statistical analysis of data. The logic behind this is that there is a fear of important bits of information being lost if all results are analysed according to pre-determined categories. (Hammersley, 2012)

Furthermore, Stake (2010) says that there are several characteristics of qualitative research. Amongst other things qualitative research is interpretative, experiential, situational, and is based on strategic choices. This means that it is empirical knowledge, based on observations. The observers do not try to influence or change the situation, but analyse what actually happens. The analysis is based on on-site observation as well as other forms of information, to create a well triangulated conclusion. This conclusion usually builds on the current literature and theories available. (Stake, 2010)

This study aims to examine the implications for international student recruitment at a Swedish university when seeing students as customers. In order to explore this it was decided that there was no need to change or influence a current situation. Nor was numerical data considered necessary. Since the study rather concerns itself with an examination of human behaviour and of reaching a verbal analysis, a qualitative approach was chosen over a quantitative one.

3.1.2 Choice of Method

Within the qualitative research field there are a number of ways to gather information. Yin (2009) gives examples of some of these, including action research, case studies, participant-observer studies and phenomenological studies. He suggests that the proper method to use will be dependent upon three conditions: "*a) the type of research question posed, b) the extent of control the investigator has over actual behavioural event and c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events*" (p. 8) . How these conditions are fulfilled will determine which research method to use. (Yin, 2009) For this study the case study method was decided to be the appropriate way to gather information. Furthermore, Yin (2009) proposes that case studies are good for answering "how and why" questions. It is proper to use when there is no control over behavioural events and the study focuses on contemporary events.

Dul & Hak (2008) define a case study as *"a study in which (a) one case (single case study) or a small number of cases (comparative case study) in their real life context are selected, and (b) scores obtained from these cases are analysed in a qualitative manner.*" (p. 4) Dul & Hak suggest that case studies are useful when the aim of the study is exploratory, which is often the case when it comes to business and marketing research.

3.1.3 Criticism of the Case Study method

The case study method has received some criticism. According to Yin (2009) much of it is based around the fact that due to the lack of methodological texts about case study research, some investigators have not followed systematic procedures, and have thus produced biased results. Another common criticism is that findings from case studies are not appropriate for scientific generalisation. However, just like single experiments are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to universes, so are case studies. Case studies rely on analytic generalisation as opposed to statistical generalisation. Whereas statistical generalisation deals with quantitative formulas to make generalisations for a population, analytical generalisation builds on previously developed theory (Yin, 2009).

Another issue which arises due to the lack of methodological texts about case study research is how terms of reliability and validity should be applied to case studies. These are important terms to incorporate in the research design in order to avoid the type of criticism mentioned above. Golafshani (2003) points out that whereas the credibility of quantitative research depends of how an instrument is constructed; the credibility of qualitative research heavily depends on the researcher. Furthermore, Riege (2003) highlights that tests of validity and reliability in case study research is of great importance since these ensure the quality and stability of the case study. For instance the reliability of some case studies has been questioned due to lack of documentation (Yin, 2009).

Although tests of reliability and validity are important in case study research, the issue is as Riege (2003) explains that *"there is no single, coherent set of validity and reliability tests for each research phase in case study research available in the literature.*" (p. 75) Since there is no standard set of tests for these terms, a decision was made to follow the guidelines of Yin (2009).

3.1.4 Validity and Reliability

According to Yin (2009), "*The goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study"* (p.45). He describes the objective of reliability as making sure that if a later investigator conducted the same case study all over again, the findings would be the same. Therefore, it is very important to document all stages of the case study, both as a help for the analysis, and as proof of the reliability of the study. Yin says that one should "*conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder*" (p. 45). Bloor & Wood (2006) point out that some say that reliability is impossible to achieve in case study research since different researchers will always produce different versions of the social world. However, by using some of the techniques outlined above, at least it is possible to improve reliability.

The other important issue to consider when doing case studies is its validity. Bloor & Wood (2006) define validity as how well the research produces an accurate version of the world. According to them, there are two types of validity; internal and external validity. The internal validity concerns how well inferences made by the researcher correspond to the data collected. External validity means how well conclusions are generalisable. As mentioned above this generalization concerns analytical generalisation rather than statistical generalisation. To increase internal validity Yin (2009) proposes several techniques. For instance, one technique is to provide alternative explanations in the data analysis phase in order to be critical of one's own inferences. To increase the external validity, one technique could be to use theory in single-case studies. Since analytical generalisation concerns the generalisation of results to theory, applying theory to the data analysis of the case study will improve external validity (Yin, 2009).

Bloor & Wood (2006) only propose two types of validity, internal and external, but Yin (2009) proposes a third type called construct validity. Construct validity aims to reduce the subjectivity in measures and judgments when collecting data, and to make sure that the measures are properly operationalised. In order to increase construct validity multiple sources of evidence can be used, with this being especially important when using single-case studies. By triangulation, information from multiple sources can be used to support the same claim or theory. This can be compared to quantitative research, where repeated experiments may be carried out to guarantee that the results are indeed reliable, and scientifically proven.

Yin (2009) explains that there are many ways of collecting evidence in a case study. Some of these different sources of evidence available are documentation, interviews, archival records and direct observations. With each of these methods, both strengths and weaknesses can be found. Whilst documentation is stable, and it is possible to go back to view it repeatedly, the reporting can be biased, and it can be hard to retrieve. Interviews focus directly on the case study topics, and it is possible to get good explanations from them, but there is a risk of reflexivity, where the interviewee answers the questions in a specific way, to make the interviewer happy. There is also the risk of bias due to faulty questions. Observation covers events in real time, and it is possible to target the exact event or phenomena being studied, but reflexivity is a problem here as well, as people may act differently when they know they are being observed. In addition, doing observations is very time-consuming.

3.1.5 Ethical aspects of research

Taking an ethical approach to research has become increasingly common in the 21st century, and especially so in the qualitative research field. According to Wiles (2013), some debaters claim that the research does not pose a great risk to participants, and that concerning oneself with ethics is unnecessary and detrimental to qualitative research. However, she argues that although ethical dilemmas can be situational and contextual, they are an important part of qualitative research. As case studies are often based on personal interviews and observations to a large extent, as opposed to studying of lifeless objects, the ethical aspects can be more important when it comes to this form of research. Some of the key things to think about are to gain consent from those who will be involved in the case study, protecting them from harm and deception in the study, and protecting their privacy and confidentiality (Yin, 2009).
Certain ethical considerations were taken in this study. These include anonymity of participants as well as gaining consent before recording interviews.

3.1.6 Design of the case study

This study was conducted as a holistic single-case study. Due to the time-span there was no opportunity to conduct a multiple-case study, even though these in general are considered stronger and more robust in their evidence (Yin, 2009). There are however several advantages of single-case studies. Yin (2009) suggests that single-case study research can be used to extend, test or confirm a theory. It can also contribute to knowledge and theory building and even shift focus for an entire field of study. A single-case study can either be holistic or embedded. The holistic case study concerns one unit of analysis while the embedded consists of several subunits. Yin (2009) suggests that one should choose a holistic case study is when there is difficulty in finding logical subunits. For this study, it was difficult to categorise certain subunits and thus a holistic case study was considered to be the most appropriate design.

3.1.7 The case: Chalmers University of Technology

For this study the Chalmers University of Technology was chosen as the higher education institution to be studied. Chalmers University of Technology will henceforth be abbreviated as “Chalmers”. Chalmers is a university located in the city of Gothenburg in Sweden. As opposed to many other universities in Sweden, Chalmers originates from a foundation and thus the supreme decision-making body is the board of the Chalmers University of technology foundation. In 2011 the total amount of students at the university were 10 000. (Chalmers, 2012)

The reason why Chalmers was chosen is because the university has suffered a decrease in the number of applications from third country nationals since the new fee-system was adopted. Because of this, Chalmers has had to rethink their way of working with international student recruitment. Before, international students received their education for free whereas they now need to apply for either a scholarship or pay on their own. What has happened now is that the university needs to operate more from the viewpoint that students are customers paying for an investment. Thus this suited well with the research question of this study. Again, the aim of this study is to examine the implications for the international student recruitment at Swedish universities when seeing students as customers.

3.1.8 Methods of Data collection within the case study

Within the case study, there are several methods to actually collect the data. Yin (2009) suggests that using as many sources as possible is the best thing to do since the strengths and weaknesses of each method can complement one another. For this case study the choice was made to collect data through interviews and documentation. Other methods, such as observations, were ruled out because they were not considered helpful in answering the research question. When it comes to presentation of the case study, Yin (2009) suggests that a case study report does not have a stereotypic form like a journal or article in psychology.

Four interviews with staff members who, in different ways, work with international student recruitment were carried out. Two of the interviewees were chosen due to their direct involvement in a project to increase applications. One interviewee was chosen because of her involvement in a pilot project working with another stage in the recruitment process. The last interviewee works as a manager overlooking the international student recruitment. These interviewees were chosen in the hopes of providing different views of the implications since the fee system were adopted. In addition, documents concerning the international student recruitment at Chalmers have been analysed in order to complement the interviews. These documents were taken from Chalmers' internal webpage, which is easily accessed due to the principle of public access to official records.

There were also considerations taken to the actual design of the interviews. There are different types of interviews in qualitative research. Qu & Dumay (2011) suggest that at different ends of the spectrum, structured interviews and unstructured interviews can be found. In a structured interview, the interviewer asks a number of predetermined questions. This can almost be seen as a simple survey, where only a few, short answers are possible. One of the main reasons for using structured interviews is to try to find the objective reality, and generalisable results, as asking everyone the same questions will lead to a higher degree of comparability, and less researcher bias. Looking at unstructured interviews, they are often used in ethnographic research. When performing an unstructured interview, the interviewer does not have a predetermined set of questions to ask, but rather tries to hold an informal conversation. The purpose of these types of interviews is to be able to see the world through the interviewee's eyes. Between these two extremes is the semi-structured interview. Here, an interview guide is prepared, where the main themes of the interview are clarified. One of the benefits of using semi-structured interviews is the fact that important questions can be probed and followed up, to ensure all relevant information has been brought to the light (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Furthermore, Bloor & Wood (2006) explain that semi-structured interviews are mainly found in qualitative research, whereas structured interviews are used in quantitative research.

For this specific case, semi-structured interviews were used. According to Yin (2009), when it comes to case studies "*the interviews will be guided conversations rather than structured queries*" (p. 106), which is a statement that fits well with semi-structured interviews. Yin gives further tips on how to carry out the interviews: when looking for particular information from the interviewee, instead of posing why-questions, which can make the interviewee defensive, a how-question can be asked, to allow the informant to answer the question in a way he or she prefers. Whilst getting the answers you need, it is also important to be as nonthreatening as possible, and ask friendly questions. The interview guide used for the interviews in this case study can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition, the interviews were chosen to be in-depth interviews. This could be considered as going well together with the choice of using a qualitative research method. For instance, Bloor & Wood (2006) propose that in-depth interviewers want to become an intersubjective bridge between themselves and their respondent so that they can share the world of the respondent. This intersubjective bridge can be found with the help of several interview techniques: expressing empathy, asking open-ended questions, pausing to allow respondents to elaborate and so on.

Documentation was the second source of data for this case study. Documentation is defined by Bloor & Wood (2006, p. 57) as: "*The careful examination of documents and their content in order to draw conclusions about the social circumstance in which the documents are produced and read*". Documents which can be analysed can have a range of different formats, that is; letters, official reports, administrative records, web pages etc. Yin (2009) states that it is very important when using documentation to understand that the documents analysed were written for a purpose other than that of the case study. Furthermore, he points out that documents are not always accurate and could be biased. Because of this, one should be careful about making inferences based only on documenting. Evidence from documents should rather be used to support evidence from other sources. Bloor & Wood (2006) also explain that there is an issue of "intertextuality" which means that documents are dependent on their relationship with other documents. They further highlight that the quality of the data analysed is important to consider. Four criteria on which the validity of the document is dependent are: authenticity (is the document original and genuine?), credibility (is it accurate?), representativeness (is it typical of its kind?), and meaning (is its intention clear?).

3.1.9 Methods for analysing the data

For analysing documents Bloor & Wood (2006) suggest that there are three different approaches. The first is Content Analysis in which the characteristics of the documents' content are analysed. It is a systematic and objective method where occurrences of themes, words and phrases within one or several document are examined. The second approach is called the Interpretative approach where rather the meaning of the document is explored. It acknowledges that the documents are constructed by individuals and hence documents are assigned meanings by its authors and consumers. The final method is called the Critical approach and examines the relationships between documents and social structures such as class, social control or power. (Bloor & Wood, 2006)

For this study a content analysis was used to analyse the documents, to avoid researcher bias as far as possible. The documents were analysed to find out if what the interviewees said differed from what internal documents say. Also, documents were analysed to provide a broader picture and an overview to complement the interviews. This was done due to the fact that all of the interviewees work with international student recruitment in different ways and thus may have different perspectives.

When analysing the interviews, these were first recorded and then transcribed. In this way a content analysis was possible to conduct also on the interviews, such as Zhang & Wildemuth (2009) suggest. They also suggest that a qualitative content analysis can allow the researcher to understand social reality in a way that is subjective but still scientific. This goes well with the reason of choosing a qualitative method and the case study method for this study in the first place.

Wilson (2011) explains that a content analysis method can be used both for quantitative research and for qualitative research. When performing quantitative research, a conceptual analysis method is used. To do a conceptual analysis, the text is coded for certain words or themes, and statistical patterns are later analysed. Since this particular study uses a qualitative method, a relational analysis was performed instead. Here, the relationships between the different themes of the text are analysed. To be able to do this, both investigators analysed the text, looking for important themes and concepts, and these were later compared to make sure that nothing was missed or given an incorrect meaning. The texts, both from documents and transcribed interviews, were analysed according to themes, such as 'customer focus', 'branding' and 'marketing theories’. Wilson mentions that since content analysis is so flexible, reliability and trustworthiness can suffer. Therefore it is beneficial to have more than one investigator.

Once the interviews had taken place, and had been transcribed, they were compared to each other. Themes where the interviewees had similar views as well as differing views were found. In the analysis and discussion of this study, considerations were taken to the fact that some evidence cannot be seen as conclusive in those cases where the interviewees were of different opinions.

3.1.10 Credibility of study

In designing and analysing the results of the case study, considerations to validity and reliability were taken.

In order to aim for reliability of this case study, it should be noted that there has been two investigators throughout the whole process. This has allowed both investigators to be critical of one another in choices and inferences made.

When it comes to internal validity, alternative explanations have been taken into consideration in those cases where documents and the interviewees have been of different opinions. It has been noted that sometimes the data has not been entirely conclusive and therefore it has been hard to make conclusive inferences.

The external validity has been dealt with by applying theory to the analysis. Construct validity could be a bit weak in this study since there are only two sources of data. Nevertheless, the investigators have tried to be critical and cautious in making claims when two sources of data contradict each other.

It was also important to intertwine theory and analysis in order to achieve analytical generalisation. This study has contributed to knowledge and theory evaluation concerning how to recruit students with the help of marketing. Therefore, these findings may be useful for other Swedish universities in their international student recruitment efforts.

Some limitations of this study could have affected findings. For this case study, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main data collection method. However, some interviews were more structured than others. Due to the different positions of the interviewees at Chalmers, the questions in the interview guide were not always applicable. Adapted interview guides could have been used when interviewing people in different positions.

When looking at the documents, Bloor & Wood (2006) highlight the issue of “intertextuality”. It should be noted that the documents analysed in this study could have been part of a certain context and in relationship to other documents. Therefore, with this in mind it should be noted that findings could have some bias.

Chapter 4

This chapter consists of a case description, where the most interesting findings from the case study are presented. The focus is on how the marketing at Chalmers has changed since the adoption of a new fee system.

4 Empirical Findings

4.1 Chalmers' international student recruitment before fees

Before third country nationals had to pay for their education in Sweden, getting enough qualified applications from international students was not a problem. In fact, the goals in respect to the ratio of international students to Swedish students were exceeded, according to Chalmers' documents. However, there was not necessarily an even distribution. In some master's programmes, a majority of the students were international, but in some programmes there were only a couple of international students. The student recruitment work at this time was focused on attracting the very best students, and trying to even out the number of applicants for each programme. However, at this time the marketing effort was not as developed as it is today. Whereas there is a department of Communication and Market today, only a department of Information existed at the time. Since international student recruitment was not a major issue, it was not always clear who had the responsibility for it. There was no separate budget, so when going on 'road shows', i.e. student conventions, Chalmers' board had to make a decision about it, and decide which department or unit was to be responsible.

However, in the years leading up to the government decision of a new fee system, Chalmers started to become more focused on the market, and marketing ideas. In a report from 2008, the co-ordinator of internationalisation at Chalmers expressed a desire for a two year investment in marketing activities, which would include determining which markets to target, giving the responsibility of international student recruitment to one department, along with a budget, and deciding upon new strategies and marketing plans. Nevertheless, Chalmers did use some marketing at this stage. As an example, they performed some market research to see how and where students had first heard about Chalmers, and they worked with Chalmers' international webpage, as well as printed material.

4.2 Changes since the fee system was adopted

One informant explains that after the fee-system was implemented in 2011, the international student recruitment situation got more serious, and therefore further investments in student recruitment were made. Amongst other things, a three year project focusing on student recruitment and marketing was undertaken. Before the fee-system, Chalmers did not have to work as actively to recruit international students. In a document published when the decision of adopting the fee paying system had just been made, it says "*As Chalmers has not had any great problems with recruiting international students, the marketing of Chalmers to an international target group has not been a priority (Kertes, 2009, p. 2)*." Chalmers did realise that things were going to change once education in Sweden would cost money. In 2009, the same year the decision to start charging third country nationals for their education was made; a new strategy for international student recruitment was formulated. This included a stronger need for segmentation and targeting of individual countries or even schools, creating a clear and attractive message to send out to the international students, and performing market research to be able to know which strengths to communicate and where and how to do so.

In addition to the above mentioned strategies, two new people were hired to work with student recruitment at the recently formed department of Communication and Market at Chalmers. These two work with the marketing of Chalmers' Masters programmes by travelling around the world in order to meet with potential students, and working through social media and other channels to keep in touch with the students. This became part of a 3-year project which was launched in order to keep up the number of applications among international students. The project aims to reach the goal of having 30 % international students, both EU and non-EU, on the Masters programmes. One informant describes that since the fees were implemented, most of the applications received have been from European students. They would want to attract those students who have to pay for themselves, but she explains that they are quite far from their target. The goal of the project has been to have 125 students with scholarships, 125 paying for themselves, and 250 non-paying EU-students on the Masters' programmes. However, she points out that these figures were initially very important for the university in their overall strategy, but that they now have taken away the figures of how many students there should be from outside Europe. She says that Chalmers has been successful in maintaining the number of applications compared to many other universities in Sweden, but estimates that they are lacking about 100 students compared to their numerical aim.

In addition to reaching a certain number of students, the aim of the project has been to increase awareness both nationally and internationally about Chalmers as a university that offers high quality education. Our informant explains that the strategy of the project has been to travel around the world, meet as many students as possible and get to know the target groups in order to understand how they think. She explains that the goal has been to go out and explore the market and understand what works when it comes to student recruitment in e.g. China versus India. After the project has finished there will be a need of an evaluation of what they have been doing in certain countries and what has worked out, and what has not worked out. The main channels Chalmers has used for reaching the students have been newsletters, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, university fairs, seminars and events.

Before the fee system was adopted, there was little concern about which countries Chalmers should focus its marketing on. One informant explains that they have always visited university fairs and travelled to different countries, but the main difference after 2011 was that they had to start thinking about which countries to target. At the start-up of the project a set of different countries were selected to work with. These were USA, Mexico, Brazil, Ghana, Nigeria, Saudi-Arabia, Oman, Turkey, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, India, Russia, China, Taiwan, Hong-Kong and Thailand. However, whilst working with student recruitment it has been noted that USA was harder to work with than initially thought. Also, Russia has not been focused on at all. As a result of working with the different countries, they have learnt what works and what does not, and which countries to target.

4.3 The pilot project

In addition to the organisation wide student recruitment project, another smaller project is being undertaken. Chalmers is divided into four educational areas, and one of these areas is doing a pilot project on student recruitment. They are trying to work on a solution to a problem that Chalmers has had even before the fee system was adopted; students who are accepted to Chalmers, and even some of those who accept their offer, do not turn up when the semester starts. These students obviously know about Chalmers, and have a positive attitude towards Chalmers, but they are lost somewhere along the way. These students can not be treated the same way as students who have never heard about Chalmers, and need all the basic information. The new project works with helping students to make a decision. A lot of effort is put into making the new students feel secure in knowing that they are making a good choice. All of the international master programme students who were accepted into this specific educational area of Chalmers received an email explaining that unless they for some reason wanted to be left alone, a current student at Chalmers would call them to discuss what it is like to go to Chalmers and live in Sweden, and it would be a chance to ask general questions. An international student, from the same country, later phoned up and was able to answer questions.

In addition to being a service for the prospective students, the above mentioned project is also a part of the market research at Chalmers. In the first round of phoning up the students, the focus was mainly on them, but some pieces of information have emerged. This can be things like other universities they have applied to, and general thoughts. In the fall of 2013 there are plans of contacting the people who did not show up, to see why. If they went to other universities, can Chalmers learn from those places and become even better? By already having established some contact with the students, it should be easier to make them answer questions like these, and use the answers to improve different aspects of the marketing activities.

4.4 Rethinking the way of working with student recruitment and looking at students

All of the informants agree that since the fee-system was implemented there has been a change in the way Chalmers works with international student recruitment. The change has mainly been going from a passive approach to an active approach in working with student recruitment. One of the people who work at Chalmers explained that before the change in 2011, there were massive amounts of questions and inquiries from international students due to the fact that education was free. These were often replied to with a standard letter, and almost seen as a nuisance. She explains that she used to work at the University of Gothenburg and whenever she received a question from international students she saw it as something time consuming and almost irritating. There were little or no efforts put into welcome arrangements or picking students up at the airport. The overall idea was rather that the international students had to make it on their own when they came to Sweden. Now when the number of applications has dropped, the university treasures the contact they have with international students and follows them throughout the whole process, from first contact to registration. More effort has been put into services surrounding the actual education, such as picking up students from the airport and making them feel welcome.

The informants, although to different degrees, agree that there has been an increased customer focus when it comes to recruiting international student. One informant describes that before the fee system, the information from the university was seen as civic information. Another informant explains that the university used to see their message as a form of "information", whereas it has now become "communication". The way of reaching the students seems to have become an active two-way communication rather than before, when only information was given to students. There seems to be a greater deal of listening to and acknowledging the students' needs compared to before the fees were implemented. It is now a form of relationship marketing. One example is that there are now service centres around the whole of University of Gothenburg, the other big university in Gothenburg, whereas there were only information centres before. There has been an increased emphasis on providing students with support services. One informant believes that this change in marketing and communication is generally appreciated by the students since they get more of what they ask for, and more support.

In addition to this, Chalmers has begun to consider what they are actually offering students. Two of the informants point out that when students pay they should receive something extra such as Swedish language courses or being picked up at the airport. They have started to look at the whole package in what they are offering. If students often feel that the opportunity of a summer job in Sweden is one of the main variables in the decision about whether or not to choose Chalmers, then this is an example of an area which needs strengthening in order to attract more students. Also, from a survey directed towards international students, "The International Student Barometer", Chalmers has received negative feedback when it comes to "Housing" and "Career Advisors". One informant describes that this is something that they need to become better at. She points out that when you are paying for something yourself, then you may be more picky about what you want.

However another informant is rather hesitant about the idea that just because students pay they should receive something extra. She does not think that there have been more resources devoted to international students since the fee system was adopted. She argues that this is an idea that is not dominant throughout the organisation. Furthermore she thinks that the lecturers do not think about the fact that some students are paying and others are not, but rather that they treat them all equally. Another informant says that she thinks that lecturers may think more about their teaching when they know that some students are paying to be there. This she believes is generally a good thing since it raises the quality of education. Many of the informants agree that it could increase the overall quality of Swedish universities, when they can no longer compete with free education.

Although Chalmers has in many ways become more customer oriented, adapting the 'product', i.e. the education offered, seems to be problematic. Although some informants say that it is important to work with the master's programmes to look at the current offer, and see what can be improved, it also seems that to some extent designing the education and promoting it are two different functions. In the interviews, it was brought up that perhaps those who are paying for their education are more picky, and there is a bigger risk that they will complain if they are not completely happy with their experience.

4.5 Ethical aspects of marketing

All of the informants agree that there is an aspect of responsibility when it comes to marketing and student recruitment. The informants emphasise that the picture given by the marketers must correspond to the actual situation at the university, i.e. they must be able to keep their promises. This is especially important in countries where maybe the whole family is paying for the student’s education. The investment in education is life changing for both the student and his or her family. The balance is thus to attract students to the Masters’ programmes, but not break the confidence of the relationship between the school and the student. Some of the informants compare this to marketing a traditional physical product, such as a Coca-Cola can or a vacuum-cleaner, and that the higher education marketing in this sense is very different. One informant also highlights that the university is not a company seeking revenue, but a governmental institution. It is not a car the student is buying; Chalmers cannot give its students a physical product. Instead, the students are required to work hard themselves to actually get the degree they have paid for.

In addition to honesty in the marketing, marketing itself can be seen as an ethical dilemma. Whereas some of the employees at Chalmers see the transition to a more marketing driven student recruitment process as something necessary, there have been concerns about whether or not it is actually acceptable to spend, what is effectively, Swedish tax payers' money on marketing activities. One of the informants explained that marketing higher education does not foster productivity in the same way as marketing commodities does, where people can buy an unlimited amount. Here, there is no reason to attract more students when there is a limited amount of spaces available.

4.6 Marketing and the academic world

The question of marketing higher education is further complicated due to the fact that the academic world can sometimes disagree with marketing ideas, and the question of seeing students as customers at Chalmers still seems to be a sensitive one. Whereas some informants saw it as a necessary development to become more customer focused, others were a bit more hesitant. Even though they themselves did not have any problems with replacing the word ‘student’ with the word ‘customer’, in a given situation, they were afraid that the academics of Chalmers would not agree. A couple of different explanations were given to this; firstly ‘teaching’ is seen as something more honourable than working with customers. Another reason why they did not want to use the word customer in front of the rest of the university was that it could be seen as too much of a hard sell, that somehow marketing ideas would take over, and selling would become more important than offering a good education.

One informant explains that it was very hard in the beginning to suggest a new way of working to academic staff. In the beginning they were met with suspicion and many were afraid that the quality of teaching would be questioned due to this. The department of Communication and Market has needed to keep the balance between traditional selling techniques and a real image of what they can actually offer the students. Despite some in the academic world perhaps being hesitant, others are starting to see the necessity of a new way of working. When visiting student conventions and fairs abroad, a doctoral student or someone else from the academic world often comes along. Many academics have realised that if the spaces are not filled for the master's programmes, it is possible that not all staff can be kept. Therefore they see the benefit in coming along to these fairs. However, it is still hard to generalise about the trends among academic staff since there are both positive and negative voices.

Some programmes have a harder time filling up the spots than others, and thus the level of interest in marketing is different throughout the university. Those working at the department of Communication and Market are trying to create an understanding amongst the academic world of what this department is actually doing, so that the academic world gets the right perception of marketing. As one informant pointed out, it is important to make them realise that marketing is not about the hard sell and dishonest selling approaches, but about meeting the students' needs. Working with marketing in a higher education institute is perhaps a bit different to working with marketing in a normal company. The academics question techniques and methods in a way different to what might be encountered outside of the education sector. Therefore, one informant believes that research within the marketing field can be useful for Chalmers, as it would be a way to prove to the academic world that the methods used are scientific and proven.

4.7 Marketing techniques

All of the informants agree that they primarily work with relationship marketing. They explain that at university fairs, they take the time to create a personal bond with the prospective students, and really talk through the options, instead of just giving out a pamphlet. To keep in touch with these people afterwards, social media is used. The prospective students are given the chance to interact with Chalmers and other students at Chalmers' Facebook page 'Next Stop Chalmers', twitter or any other of the channels used. The ambition of those working at the Department of Communication and Market is to keep this relationship throughout the entire master's programme, and thus create alumni who feel a part of Chalmers, and who will become student ambassadors. They are already working with student ambassadors to some extent, especially in certain countries, like India, where alumni are often present at information meetings.

In documents and online, those in charge at Chalmers have set up guidelines for communication and marketing. There are step by step guides to making a communication plan, guidelines for communication and a number of other resources. The general tone is that of a quite market oriented organisation. Target groups and SWOT-analyses are mentioned, and there seems to be clear goals. Under the tab 'Communication and graphic design' on Chalmers' internal webpage, is says that ”*Chalmers' internal and external communication shall contribute to managing and strengthening Chalmers' name and brand*” (Chalmers Insidan, 2013). The question is if these marketing ideas have had time to reach and settle with all members of staff yet. Although all informants were willing to see Chalmers as a brand when asked, there was no consensus as to what the brand image was, and what the brand stands for. This is something that one of the informants mentioned that Chalmers needs to work on, and that such a project was going to be undertaken soon.

4.8 The overall picture of marketing at Chalmers

Although there have been some marketing activities at Chalmers for quite some time, there has been an increase since the fee-system was adopted in 2011. Since the decision was made by the Swedish government in 2009, Chalmers has formulated new strategies, which include more targeted marketing, new routines and new areas of investment. As an example, a new action plan for improving Chalmers' position in worldwide ranking lists was developed. Today, Chalmers can boast with being ranked best in learning in Europe, and third best in research cooperation with industry in the world. In addition, the academic world is starting to accept, and in some cases welcome, marketing ideas. Although Chalmers has not yet reached its goal of having 30 % international students at their master’s programmes, they are holding up well against the competition.

5 Analysis and Discussion

In the Analysis and Discussion chapter, the findings from the case study are analysed and compared and contrasted to the literature published on higher education marketing. This chapter will in turn lead to the most important conclusions, presented in the next chapter.

5.1 Students or customers

The adoption of a new fee-system has meant many changes for Chalmers. For most interviewees it has altered the way they look at students. They are not just students, but are now also seen as customers. Although gradually this might have had to change anyway with increasing competition, the implementation of the fee-system acted as an eye opener, and something that urged Chalmers to adopt a customer viewpoint sooner. It would seem as though it is easier to think of the students as customers when they are actually purchasing their education. It should be pointed out that not all interviewees had the same opinion of students as customers, but that it was generally an accepted statement. Evidence of this customer view can be seen in internal documents, which have talked about segmentation and market research, something that goes well with what Rowley (2000) suggest that libraries, another public sector institution, should do to stay competitive.

The new customer focus has meant that more thought has been put into what Chalmers is offering its students, and how this corresponds to what the students want. This has expressed itself in the form of extra services offered to the students, including Swedish language courses. The informants mentioned that perhaps teachers try harder as well, when they know that people are paying to be there. Mark (2013) claims that when there is so much competition, students really make sure to get the best value for their money. There is therefore a more general focus on making sure that the students get what they are paying for. The informants point out that the students may have a stronger position to demand certain things from the university. However, there seems to be different views within the Department of Communication and Market regarding how much the university should allow itself to adapt according to the demands of the students. Some believe that the actual offer should be changed according to what the students demand in order to attract more students, and others who think that just because someone is paying he/she should not receive more.

Gibbs & Knapp (2002) suggest that working with customer satisfaction will become more important in the future as the physical location of the university becomes less important. Goldgehn (1990) states that customer satisfaction affects how potential students view the institution. The reputation of an institution becomes better if the students are happy. To achieve satisfied students, Goldgehn claims that institutions should start by looking at the needs of the marketplace, and then design the programmes with the customer in mind. The matter of how much the students should be able to influence certain aspects of the education, such as the curriculum, may be even more important in the future. However, there seems to be an ambiguity in how far the customer view actually stretches at Chalmers. Despite that, the customer view still seems to dominate over the notion that students can be seen as managers, as suggested by Nordensvärd (2011). Although the informants mentioned that students in some sense do make an investment into themselves, the actual skills learnt at the university are still in focus.

There has been a lot of discussion about the importance of keeping the customer in mind. Maringe's (2005) view is that it becomes a problem when universities see themselves as either research centres or teaching academies and do not consider the students when designing the curriculum. In the past, teaching has not rendered as much income to Swedish universities, and in consequence it has been less prioritised both in prestige and resourcing. If students become important customers who pay and contribute financially to the faculty, perhaps teaching will be considered a more important part of the university mission. There is usually more loyalty towards parties who pay for your services. For instance industries sponsor certain research, to get a higher focus in that area. International students paying for their education could lead to an increased focus on teaching, and a more nuanced perception of universities, where they can be both a place for learning and a place for research.

5.2 Student influence on teaching quality

Some of the informants seem to think that increased influence from the students may increase the quality of education. When Chalmers has to compete against other schools and keep paying customers happy, the education needs to be world class. This goes against what Molesworth et al. (2011) and Barnett (2011) say regarding the quality of education when seeing students as customers. They are of the opinion that education will suffer, as teachers will not dare to say anything negative to the students, fearing that doing so would make the students complain. Molesworth et al. fear that when using marketing it means that “the customer is always right”, but there is reason to believe that it is an outdated idea. Although Chalmers have looked at the customers’ needs, there is nothing to suggest that they would change well-functioning aspects to settle any possible ungrounded complaints from students. Neither is there evidence to suggest that teachers would be bullied into giving good grades to students to keep them happy; on the contrary, those interviewed in this case study believed that teachers would possibly become even better as a result of keeping the fee paying students in mind. The teachers do not seem to mind the marketing idea as much as Anderson (2008) feared. There have been no clear demonstrations of discontent, and some have even taken part in the marketing effort. Nevertheless, it might become an important future debate at Chalmers about how the actual offer should adapt itself to the increased customer view.

5.3 Marketing adaptions to students as customers

With the changed way of looking at students, now that they have to pay for their education, the marketing has changed in many ways. As a first step, marketing and student recruitment activities were coordinated. A telling sign of the change in attitude is that where there only used to be a Department of Information, there is now a Department of Communication and Market. Information implies more of a one-way process, where Chalmers feeds potential students information. Communication instead builds on a two-way understanding of the message. This change has been made necessary as a result of the implementation of the fee system. Chalmers used to be able to compete on the basis of offering free education. At that time, informing the students of this was enough to secure applications. Nowadays, Chalmers must compete with the quality of education. To be able to get students to choose Chalmers, even when they have to pay, a two-way communication is needed. It is important to be responsive, and to build a relationship with the prospective students. With the increased competition, just informing people of the existence of Chalmers is not enough.

There has definitely been a change in the way Chalmers works with, and looks at, marketing. From being quite a low priority, there are now a number of people working full-time with international student recruitment. The definition of marketing at Chalmers seems to have changed as well; marketing activities no longer stop once the student has applied and been accepted, but to some extent continue throughout these students' time at Chalmers, to create proud alumni who will function as ambassadors for Chalmers in their home countries. In addition, much more thought has been put into the marketing activities earlier in the process. Whereas decisions on which countries to target were made in a more haphazard way before the adoption of the new fee system, there are now strategies and knowledge behind these decisions. Markets have been tried and tested, and thought has been put into which schools Chalmers would prefer to recruit from. Developing new strategic plans, and co-ordinating the work better can have positive effects on the ability to implement necessary changes according to Naidoo & Wu (2011). However, they also mention that it is important to make sure that the new strategies are aligned to the university's strategy. It is therefore important for the marketing function to work together with the board of the university.

5.4 The evolution of marketing

Kotler and Fox (1995) suggest that higher education institutes follow a number of different stages, or an evolution, of marketing. The stages go from marketing being unnecessary, to it being promotion, then segmentation and market research, to being positioning, then strategic planning and lastly marketing being enrolment management, meaning that students are treated more like partners. The idea is that the institution goes from not using marketing, to becoming more and more sophisticated in its techniques. This would seem to be the case for Chalmers. Even though employees at Chalmers say they have used some form of marketing for a long time, although perhaps more at the promotion-stage, the marketing effort at Chalmers has developed quickly during the last few years. However, it does not necessarily follow the exact stages Kotler and Fox suggest. Even when marketing was mostly seen as promotion, there were some elements of market research, which could be seen in the form of student surveys and similar things.

Today, Chalmers can be said to be at the strategic planning or enrolment management stage, where the school starts to look at external factors as well as internal, and work towards keeping a good relationship with the student through the entire process, from first meeting to graduation. Despite that, they have in some sense skipped the positioning stage. In the interviews, positioning a school was perceived as difficult. One interviewee said that at fairs, most universities present themselves in a similar way. Another one mentioned that it seems to be hard for universities to focus their message on a couple of core values. This she puts down to the fact that universities are very complex organisations, and that it is perhaps hard to decide what to communicate to prospective students. Nevertheless, it seems like Chalmers and a host of other universities, judging by the interviews, have gone from the segmentation stage to the strategic planning stage, or even the enrolment management stage. Students are starting to be seen as partners in a relationship, and the ambition is for this relationship to continue even after the students have graduated.

5.5 Current status of marketing

The marketing techniques used for student recruitment at Chalmers seem to follow traditional marketing techniques (Kotler, 1972). The idea seems to be to select and narrow down a set of target markets as well as to develop an understanding for the different target groups. From evaluations of what the Department of Communication and Market learn from their travels, different ways of marketing are developed to suit each segment and market. It does not seem as though those working with marketing at Chalmers use certain models especially adapted for Higher Education marketing, such as the CORD-model, or the traditional 4Ps plus the two extra "People and Process" which Nicholls et al. (1995) suggest could be used when marketing an MBA degree. Even though Chalmers' marketing function seems to use a more traditionally oriented marketing approach to recruit students, they also recognise that marketing university education has certain aspects to it which make it unique. All informants highlight the ethical aspect as the main reason to why their marketing cannot work in the same way as a traditional physical product. This difference is also recognised by Gibbs & Knapp (2002) who view education institutes as centres for services and social responsibility; whereas companies in the general market have a profit motive. They however believe that this will change in the near future due to market and government pressures.

Chalmers' main method of attracting students is relationship marketing, which is something they have put a lot of energy and resources into since becoming more marketing oriented. According to Helgesen (2008), a relationship model will create greater satisfaction and loyalty amongst the students. In order to be able to develop a relationship with prospective students at fairs, the students are talked to in a way which encourages a more personal relationship with Chalmers. They are advised about which programme could be right for them, and the representatives from Chalmers are ready to answer questions. Later on, the students are urged to keep in contact with Chalmers through social media. Chalmers has set up special student recruitment pages at Facebook, Twitter, RenRen and other social media sites. Constantinides & Zinck Stagno (2011) suggest that using social media is a good way of closing the gap between the information prospective students want, and the information that can be found at universities' websites. Chalmers has come a long way in its work with social media. Constantinides & Zinck Stagno found that most universities used Twitter and other social media to communicate with current students, but were not as focused on recruiting new ones. Chalmers has gone further, and has separate accounts for prospective students and current students. They also use blogs, where brand advocates in the form of successful international students at Chalmers write about their experiences in a candid way.

5.6 Marketing initiatives

After the adoption of the fee system, a number of different projects have been undertaken to help tackle the decline in international student applications. The largest project is of course the one that the Department of Communication and Market is responsible for, which has people working full time with student recruitment. However, the pilot project in one of the educational areas can prove to be a valuable experience for Chalmers. This project aims to solve the problem of students being accepted to attend Chalmers but then not showing up, by having more personal contact with the students amongst other things. Wonders & Gyure (1991) suggest that by starting out on a small scale, with pilot projects, it is possible to win over those who are initially negative towards marketing. They call this opportunistic marketing, because it is based on the idea that the marketer sees a window of opportunity to introduce marketing ideas to an organisation which has not used marketing ideas before. The marketer should point out a problem, formulate strategies to solve this problem, and implement the changes. If this is done correctly, and good results are achieved, other members of the organisation should start to see the benefits of using marketing. The aforementioned project at Chalmers works as a pilot project to try new marketing ideas that could potentially be applied to all of Chalmers' educational areas if it is a success.

Furthermore, ideas such as those found in opportunistic marketing also seem to be used by the Department of Communication and Market. The informants at the department explain that they actively work with creating an understanding within the university of what they are actually doing. They mention that in the beginning they were met with suspicion of this new way of working. However, by including university staff when for example visiting university fairs, academics have started to understand what the marketing is about and that it is becoming more of a necessity. The informants at the Department of Communication and Market state that they may be a bit hesitant about using the word "customer" in front of university staff, whereas using this word among themselves is not an issue. One informant points out that there are both positive voices and negative voices within the university about marketing. Although the informants have not mentioned the theory of opportunistic marketing, the idea at Chalmers seems to be similar to the one Wonders & Gyure (1991) presented, that is, to make people see what marketing is all about by starting in a small scale and show its results in order to win people over. In this sense, the customer perspective seems to slowly and gradually gain more ground within the university although there are still negative voices.

When academic staff take part in the marketing effort, such as doctoral students or lecturers coming to student fairs, it is another sign of a more developed marketing environment according to Kotler & Fox (1995). According to Naidoo & Wu (2011), academic staff can also give credibility to the institution when they are part of the marketing effort. The problem is getting them motivated to take part. Here, the adoption of the fee-system has probably been helpful. Had Chalmers gradually become more marketing oriented, there is a risk that the academic staff would have thought that it was an unnecessary development. Here, there was a sudden change in Chalmers ability to compete. It is likely that these changed circumstances made it easier for academics to accept new ideas.

5.7 Ethical aspects

The debate of the balance between a social or ethical responsibility, and a traditional company profit motive, leads into what critics say about the customer view in the public sector. Whereas Gibbs & Knapp (2002) believe that the development will be towards the general market and profit motives, Sharrock (2000) is of the opinion that marketing and marketisation is not the best way forward. Another critic, Molesworth et al. (2011) states that too much marketisation could destroy the greater good. Today the Department of Communication and Market seems open to the customer view, but also considers the ethical aspects of marketing. If there would be even more marketisation in the future in the way Gibbs & Knapp (2002) propose, then this ethical aspect in their student recruitment could become an even more central matter. Another author, Brown (2011:b) suggest that the best strategy is a blended policy which meets the interests of both the public and the private sector. It is however hard to tell how market conditions will change and how Chalmers is going to respond to these changes and what the development will be.

5.8 Product or service offer

Although looking at students as customers is becoming more accepted at Chalmers, the interviewees were fast to point out that they could not provide the students with an actual product. Looking at education, it would seem to have more in common with a service than a product, but the idea of education being a service was not brought up by the interviewees. Services are intangible, just like education. There is no physical product changing hands, but it is still the norm to call the buyers of a service customers. There is also usually an element of co-production when it comes to services, like Vargo & Lusch (2004) and Ordanini & Pasini (2008) point out, and the outcome of the service depends on the participation of the customer. Education shows a very high degree of co-production. The student must actively take part to learn, and receive good grades. There is a wide array of marketing theories formulated especially for service marketing, and it is possible that looking at these would be more relevant for universities than looking at product marketing theories.

5.9 Branding at Chalmers

As noted in the case description, the ambition of Chalmers' external and internal communication has been to manage and strengthen the Chalmers name and brand. However, for the student recruitment it is clear that branding is not a technique which has been actively used. The informants state that they have no problems with seeing Chalmers as a brand, but also show that there is no consensus about what the brand stands for. In the near future however, there is going to be a new project working with Chalmers as a brand. After this project it is possible that branding will be a larger part of the student recruitment process compared to today. Already, some steps towards a stronger brand have been taken. Chalmers has worked hard with rankings lists, and managed to score best in learning in Europe, and third best in research cooperation with industry in the world. Nicolae & Marinescu (2010) claim that university rankings can be seen as proof of a university's accomplishments, and that rankings can affect the public image of the university. Despite this, the work with ranking lists was not mentioned in relation to branding in the interviews.

Many theories suggest that branding could be important in attracting applicants. For instance Nicholls et al. (1995) state that when marketing an MBA degree, the brand could be an important criterion in the decision process. Also, a study by Durkin et al. (2012) showed that when the University of Ulster developed a new way of branding themselves they were able to differentiate themselves from the crowd and increase applications. This also supports the view of Brown (2011:a) who suggests that branding is important, but that universities cannot use traditional private sector branding techniques. Ali-Choudhury et al. (2009) however note that while branding could make some groups more encouraged to apply, some groups may also become discouraged. How branding is going to be used at Chalmers will be a future matter, but nonetheless it could be a technique which could help them raise applications.

Chapter 6

This chapter will provide answers to the research question. The most important and interesting findings from the analysis are discussed in the conclusion. Based on that, recommendations are then given to higher education institutes in Sweden. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

6.1 Conclusion

This study has aimed to answer the research question: "*What are the implications for international student recruitment at Swedish universities when seeing students as customers?*"

The findings of this study show that there have been several implications for the international student recruitment when seeing students as customers. These implications will be outlined below and will in this way answer the research question.

The fee-system has first and foremost changed how Chalmers works with the international student recruitment. The change has meant that in order to increase applications the marketing strategies have become much more customer oriented. This customer view has led to the actual offer to a larger extent being adapted to the students' needs and wants, like Maringe (2005), Gibbs & Knapp (2002) and Kotler & Fox (1995) suggest. However, there are still differing opinions about how much influence students should have regarding the design of the education, and whether or not only fee-paying students deserve the right of being listened to here. Although the fee-paying students are seen as customers in a different way than the domestic students, they are a minority at the school. Whose needs and wants should be represented when it comes to the actual offer will be a sensitive issue.

The increased emphasis on the customer view has influenced the way those at Chalmers use marketing. The most noticeable difference after the fee-system was adopted is the introduction of a Department of Communication and Market where communication is now rather two-way than one-way. This change into a two-way communication has been seen as necessary in order to be responsive in an environment of strong competition. There has also been an increase in the number of people working with international student recruitment, and new strategies have been developed. Marketing activities now follow the student all the way from application to becoming an alumnus. Chalmers has started working with relationship marketing, something that could create greater satisfaction and loyalty according to Helgesen (2008). This can be compared to the national student recruitment, where communication strategies have remained largely unchanged. With a better communication strategy, the students could feel like they are valued customers, with the universities being more responsive. In addition, the effects of a greater customer focus could perhaps in the future mean increased focus on teaching. Some informants, but not all, suggest that increased student influence may increase the quality of teaching.

When it comes to the design of the marketing at Chalmers, traditional marketing techniques have been used, although some of the marketing is based largely on trial and error. This could be explained by the fact that marketing at Chalmers is still a fairly new project, without established ways of working. It is recognised that despite the increased customer view the ethical aspects of marketing education are still highly considered. Social media has become a very important channel to attract students, as it works well with Chalmers' relationship approach to marketing (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno 2011).

Branding is not a technique that has been used very much so far. The explanation for this could be that branding has traditionally been seen as something private companies work with, and Chalmers is looked upon more like a public institution. Lately, public institutions have adopted the branding idea (Osman, 2008), which should increase the chances of Chalmers and other Swedish universities working with branding in the future. However, the question of branding could be further complicated by the fact that it is not clear whether branding directives should come from the highest decision making organ, or from the marketing department. Since there is a project being undertaken soon regarding the Chalmers brand, this may be used more in the future.

A pilot project has been started up in order to increase applications. In addition to its purpose of increasing applications, this pilot project can be seen as a form of opportunistic marketing (Wonders & Gyure 1991). This pilot project could be a part in the process of convincing sceptics and could help marketing ideas spread to other educational areas throughout the university. When academic staff take part in the marketing effort then this is a sign of a more developed marketing environment, and in addition it gives more credibility to the institution.

These implications aid in answering the research question of this study. However, since these changes and projects are still quite new, and upcoming projects will soon be undertaken, the future implications of the customer view in international student recruitment may be hard to predict.

6.2 Recommendations

To get the maximum effect out of the time and money spent on marketing, Chalmers and other higher education institutes in Sweden could keep some things in mind. First of all, it may be beneficial to look at education more like a service than a product. Service marketing theories could prove to be more useful when it comes to higher education marketing. These theories will be designed especially for those who cannot offer their customers a physical, tangible product.

How to package the service is also important and something that could be given more attention in the future. Durkin et al. (2012) found that working with branding can have positive effects for higher education institutes. In their study, an emotionally driven branding concept improved business development, and increased the number of applications.

To be able to secure future applications, even more focus on customer satisfaction could be needed. Many studies suggest that keeping the customer in mind when designing the curriculum could prove important. As of right now, designing the education and designing the marketing of it appear to be two different functions. Collaboration between the academic staff and the marketing function in these questions could help give universities a more attractive product.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

Due to time constraints, this study has looked at a single case. To better be able to generalise, a multiple case study, and preferably one that looks at universities in different countries, could be performed. A multi-national case study would have the benefit of being able to isolate country-specific factors, such as the political climate. There is reason to believe that some countries find it easier to attract students due to factors other than the quality of education. These can include country image, proximity to other attractive countries or offering an attractive lifestyle.

In addition to giving a more generalisable result, looking at higher education marketing in different countries could also show what factors affect customer focus. Sharrock (2000), Molesworth et al. (2011) and Anderson (2011) explain that those in the academic world will disagree with a more customer focused organisation, but in the case study performed in Sweden, these tendencies were not so strong. The adoption of the fee system might have worked as an eye-opener, and something that made academics aware of a troubling situation. If changes would have happened gradually, as in other countries where fees have always been the norm, the situation might be different.

This study has looked at the topic of higher education marketing from the perspective of higher education institutes. However, looking at it from a student perspective could give an important insight into what the students are looking for when it comes to higher education. Such a study could clarify if it is correct to see students as customers, or as managers.

It would also be possible to look at higher education marketing aimed at Swedish, non-fee-paying students. There are a couple of different potential research questions, including whether or not the domestic students are seen as customers, if marketing is evolving as quickly as international higher education marketing, and if other strategies and channels are used to reach out to Swedish students.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide

- Can you explain how you work with student recruitment?
- What is your background? (professionally, education)
- Do you see yourself as someone who works with marketing?
- Have you seen any differences in the way you work with student recruitment since the fee system was adopted? Have you seen any differences in how other universities work with it?
- What is marketing within the university to you?
- Do you have any long-term strategies for the marketing of Chalmers?
- How do you work with marketing/student recruitment on a daily basis?
- What would be your views on exchanging the word 'student' for 'customer' in situation x. What is positive, and what is negative?
- Do you know if there is any strategy explaining whether or not students are seen as customers?
- How do you think your way of working would have changed if students were seen as pure customers?
- What are your views of the statement that Chalmers is a brand?
- What kind of image are you trying to create for the school, and how are you working to achieve that?
- If one would see master degrees as a product, the student as a customer and Chalmers as a brand, how do you think this way of marketing would go with the way you are working today? Do you think the way of marketing Chalmers to the students would change with this perspective?
- Do you think research within the marketing field can be relevant for your field of work?
- Do some countries work more with pure marketing? Which, how?
- Do you think it would attract more students if one would have a more marketised perspective, or do you think the students would disagree with it?
- Do you see an ethical dilemma in the marketing idea?
- Do you think there are any risks with this way of working?