An Investigation into the Implementation of Relationship Marketing on International Student Retention: A Review of Four Business Schools in the Greater Manchester Area

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Declaration

This is to certify that this thesis is a result of my own work, and that no portion of it contained herein has been submitted for another degree or qualification in this or any other university, to the best of my knowledge, and that the original work is mine except where due references are made.

List of Abbreviations

Higher Education	HE
Higher Education Institutions	HEI
United Kingdom	UK
United States of America	USA
Relationship Marketing	RM
Service Dominant Logic	SDL
Goods Dominant Logic	GDL
Higher Education Funding Council for England	HEFCE
Office for Economic Cooperation and Development	OECD
British Broadcasting Commission	BBC
Further Education	FE
Foundation Premise	FP
Higher Education Statistics Agency	HESA
European Union	EU
Customer Relationship Management	CRM
United Kingdom Visas and Immigration	UKVI
Technical and Further Education	TAFE
Her Majesty Stationery Office	HMSO
Higher Education Statistics Agency	HESA
Department for Education and Skills	DFES
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UNESCO
Business to Business	B2B
Business to Customers	B2C
Customer to customers	C2C

Abstract

One of the most challenging issues facing Higher Education Institutions in recent years has been how to develop and gain competitive advantage in the global marketplace which is currently experiencing increasing and intense competition. The growth in competition has been driven, in part by the goal of every Higher Education Institution to internationalise. Consequently, the notion of international patronage, in terms of attracting and retaining international students, has become increasingly significant. Based on these competitive forces the aim of this study is to evaluate critically the implementations of relationship marketing initiatives by Business Schools as it relates to international student retention.

Three stakeholders studies of a total of fifty two participants including: nine Business Schools managers; thirteen academic staff working in Business Schools and thirty international students (undergraduates & postgraduates) participated in this study. The study involved four Business Schools in the Greater Manchester Area. These participants were selected as a result of their direct involvement with the research focus. The Business School managers included a Business Director, Deans, Academic Deans, and International Directors who were directly involved in developing and applying relationship marketing approaches in their respective Business Schools. Academic staff included staff members who were involved in delivering teaching to international students in their Business School. The International students were from thirteen different countries. Data was collected using: semi-structured face-to-face interviews; focus groups; observation and documents reviews.

A number of important findings have been obtained from the data collected which were analysed using thematic analysis. Firstly, results showed that whilst there are several definitions of international students', there is agreement amongst all stakeholders about the importance of international students not only to Business Schools but also to the local and national UK economy. Secondly, the results revealed that several aspects of the relationship marketing approach including extra academic support and student integration etc. were significant for international student retention. Thirdly, the study reveals that current RM practices do not focus sufficiently on individual students cultural and religious backgrounds. Fourthly, the results show that current relationship marketing initiatives are perceived by stakeholders to have positive implications for retaining international students in the participating Business Schools.

The implications of the results are that Business School managers and staff members should endeavour to understand international student dynamics and as a result develop unique aspects of their relationship marketing approach that focus on such dynamics. Business School should engage all international students and employees who are in contact points with international students especially academic staff who develop marketing policies that are international student related. Business School managers should also consider involving students extended family prior to, during and post student experience of study as they are often the financial source for the student and key stakeholders in the student decision making process.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an introductory background to the study consisting of the following sections: the purpose of the study; justification of the study; context of the study; aim, research objectives; summary to methodology; expected contributions to knowledge and practice; limitations and structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the Study

Recent decades have witnessed a considerable acceptance of several marketing concepts as a means of gaining and maintaining competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Internationalisation issues have driven the move to ensure the adoption of marketing concepts, and Higher Education Institutions like every other organisation in the service sector have been swift to adopt marketing models in order to stay and compete in the global market (Burns & Hayes, 2012; Kamal, Sweeney & Soutar, 2016). As a trend worldwide, HEIs have made firm progress in adopting marketing concepts and marketing of Higher Education (HE) (Taylor & Judson, 2014). This process which began in the USA now includes global institutions who seek to maximise gains from adopting relationship marketing activities (Hemsley-Brown & Lowrie, 2010, Taylor & Judson, 2011).The HE sector in the UK has not been exempt from striving to internationalise, and especially as they are all striving to sustain and gain competitive advantage in the global market. Internationalisation is a major trend in HE and this is becoming a worldwide phenomenon (Altbach, 2015). The call for the adoption of marketing practices within HEIs means that their focus is now on developing and maintaining longer-term value co-creation (Taylor & Judson, 2014).

The importance of international students to HEIs cannot be overemphasised as the contribution of international students goes beyond its contribution to the host university but it also includes implications for the country's wider economy (Andrade, 2006; Ortiz, Chang & Fang, 2015). Hence, countries and their HEIs need to assure themselves that they have every marketing strategy in place to survive in the global market. The significance of international students to the UK economy is reflected in the following statement from Vince Cable 2014, the then UK Business Secretary, stated "…international students are economically valuable." In supporting this view, the chief executive of Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Professor Madeleine Atkins stated that "International students enrich our universities and colleges - and our society - academically, culturally, and through their contribution to the economy…" (HEFCE Report, 2014). The overall impact of international students on the growth of the UK economy and the development of the UK HEIs cannot be over emphasised. Nicola Dandridge, chief executive of Universities UK, argued that "If the UK wants to fulfil its potential in this growth area, we need policies to attract qualified international students to the UK…" (BBC, 2014).

The numbers of international students enrolling in the UK HEIs have decreased (199,600-184,500) since 2010 to 2015 and this is in comparison to the USA where enrolments of international students increased (Migration Observatory, 2015). Several reasons have been attributed to the increase seen in international students taking places in HEIs in the USA. The proactive and robust marketing strategy adopted by the USA and Australia (Kamal et al., 2016), gave them the advantage of attracting and retaining more international students than the UK which by comparison has not adopted adequate marketing strategies (Hemsley-Brown, 2006; OECD, 2013). As a result of this growth in competition, HEIs around the globe are now considering the adoption of marketing practices as they improve their exertions to attract and retain students in the global markets (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Moogan, 2011). The UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne in December 2015, announced plans for the UK HE sector to recruit an additional 55,000 international students by autumn 2020, where he stressed that "*we have the best universities, we should beat the competition*". Following his statement, the concern for the global competition within the sector cannot be stressed enough especially as the HE sector has been identified as an important part of the UK economy both in terms of its contribution to knowledge through employability of graduate and collaboration with diverse sector (Durkin, McKenna & Cummins, 2012). Following the contribution of international students discussed above and the recent focus of the UK HEIs amongst other Universities across the globe who are currently competing to attract and recruit international students, the importance of marketing the HE sector effectively and efficiently can be seen as paramount.

HE marketing is described as the analysis, planning, implementation and control of programmes that are formulated to create the opportunity of voluntary exchange of values with a target market in achieving the objectives of the organisation (Kotler and Fox, 1985). More recently, Durkin et al. (2012) described HE marketing as a relatively new concept that has stimulated much debate within the HE sector in particular. Education is a marketable service like any other organisation in the service industry that has gained importance where all the stakeholders tend to be important (Kotler, 1985; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Gibbs, 2014), hence a relationship needs to be established with them (Russell, 2005; Hemsley-Brown & Oplakta, 2006; Danjuma & Rasli, 2012). The HE market is now well established in the USA (Kirp, 2009) and in the UK (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Stamp, 2007), and Relationship Marketing (RM) is perceived to be relevant to service markets, as aspects of RM are present in all organisations including institutions in the HE sector (Grönroos, 2004; Ang & Buttle, 2006; Helgesen, 2008). RM was defined in the Higher Education context as "…a set of marketing activities or actions that attract, motivate, and enhance existing and potential students' relationships as well as students' parents, relatives, friends, reference groups for the benefit of all sides concerned, emphasizing on retaining existing students until their graduation, and attracting further students" (Al-Alak, 2006: 4).

Gibbs (2001) and Frasquet, Calderon and Cervera (2012) stated that those involved in Higher Education should work towards creating educational relationships. This was supported by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) and Helgesen, (2008), suggest that RM principles should be applied in the marketing of HE. RM approaches since the 1970s, has become more accepted by researchers, academics, and businesses as compared to the traditional marketing (Grönroos, 1990; Payne & Ballantyne, 1991; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Hakansson, 2002). Helgesen (2008) states that universities in the HE sector should consider ideas from relationship marketing if they are focused on enrolment and retention of students, stressing that RM creates value for the student and it should be treated as important throughout the lifetime of the relationship. The context which narrows down to Business Schools in the Greater Manchester area is justified as the Financial Times (2012) view the areas as a big cluster of universities, with 100,000 students, and the region Greater Manchester was further described as a marketing asset that is envied throughout the world.

Taken as a whole, it is essential to take into account the importance of adopting a successful relationship approach, particularly in the HE sector, as part of an internationalisation marketing strategy. The overall objective for this study is to contribute towards the development of a broader theoretical understanding of HE marketing strategy and to gain a deeper understanding of why HE consider the use RM with international students towards international student retention.

All Business Schools reviewed use aspects of RM with students. This was found in the informal preliminary research carried out by the researcher. The preliminary research found that Business School A has only started using aspects of RM within the last 12 months preceding this research. Business School B is a Russell group University that has always incorporated aspects of RM into their operations and strategy since 10 years and they continue to improve on its practice. Business School C and D has started using aspects of RM for about 5 years, unless for Business School C who now had student retention as a focus.

1.2 Rationale for the Research

This section highlights a number of significant gaps in existing literatures on HE marketing and the implementation of RM on students' especially international students that needs to be addressed. These justifications will be discussed as follows.

1.2.1 Government Policy

Britain's Higher Education as a national asset is a major contributor to the economic success and social well-being of the country. It is also a huge sector in bringing in foreign currency and contributing to the good of the world through its scientific publications and citations (O'Leary, 2009). Education has been identified as the fifth largest service export sector in the UK (The UK Government, 2013). The UK market share of international students fell from 16% in 1998 to 13% in 2003 and further reduced by 10% in 2009 (Green & Boone, 2005; OECD, 2011). The recent immigration policy of the UK government has further affected enrolment and retention of prospective non-EU students (Wiriyacosol and Lertjanyakit, 2012). This research should help to show the impact of such government policy on attracting and retaining international students.

The UK Government now has as a top priority of trying to maximise education opportunities for genuine international students using retention as a medium (InisdeGovernment, 2012). The consideration of the findings of this research by HEI's could improve international student retention rate thereby contributing to growth of the UK economy. This can be achieved by establishing, maintaining and enhancing relationships with HE stakeholders. The application of this research could be beneficial to the HEI's, government and the community in general as it might help HEI's in developing their marketing strategy towards internationalisation. The outcome of this research could help HEIs, and, the Government achieve their objectives in relation to: international student recruitment and retention; improving the quality of education in HEIs; and increasing HEI development in the UK.

1.2.2 Gap in Knowledge

The intention of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on why HEIs should implement a RM approach as an internationalisation strategy within the UK HE sector. This may be achieved by bridging the gap between the existing marketing approach adopted by UK HEIs and that required for competing in the global market place. This study is conducted in an environment (United Kingdom) where limited previous research efforts have been undertaken to investigate why and how Business Schools within the UK HEIs use RM approaches to retain international students and consequently, this study will offer a new perspective to this increasing important area.

While relationship marketing has attracted the attention of researchers interested in the private sector and some in the public sector generally, there has been less interest in the relationship marketing approach in Higher Education sector with the result that very few empirical studies have been undertaken (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Seaman & O'hara, 2006; Helgesen 2008; Padlee et al., 2010). The aim of RM is to develop a profitable and long-term relationship with customers and all other stakeholders identified (Gordon, 1998; Grönroos, 1999; Baron *et al*., 2010; Christopher *et al*., 2012). Hence, the research aims to explore how and why a university fosters relationships with its international students. The importance of RM in HE it is still under investigated by researchers (Bowden, 2011); consequently, it can be argued as a rationale for this study to investigate the implementation of RM in UK HE. This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by offering relevant theories from its empirical study for the successful establishments of relationships, predominantly in services marketing, more precisely in the HE context.

1.2.3 Summary of Research Relating to Relationship Marketing in HEIs.

One of the core reasons for conducting this study is the lack of empirical research on RM in the HE sector, of which the UK HEIs is a part. Most research in this field has been conducted in a manufacturing or industrial context and later in the service context (Ford, 1980, 1998; Hakansson & Snehota, 1989; Hakansson & Johanson, 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal & Evans, 2006; Johansson & Mattsson, 2015). The RM concept has also gained the interest of researchers in the Higher Education sector, such as: Hennig-Thurau and Langer (2001); Arnett, German and Hunt (2003); Shaik (2005); Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006); Helgessen (2008); Bowden, 2011; Sultan and Wong (2012); Rojas-Méndez and Vasquez-Parraga (2015) who have all synthesized RM in HE focused studies. Only two empirical studies amongst them are addressed in marketing journals. Therefore, this research project aims at enhancing the empirical research in the Higher Education industry particularly in the marketing of HE.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 Research Aim

To undertake a critical investigation of relationship marketing approaches adopted by four Greater Manchester University Business Schools in relation to international student attraction and retention.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

- To review the literature on Higher Education associated with Higher Education marketing and the rationale for using RM initiatives with students in HEIs in order to identify research gaps.

- To investigate stakeholder perceptions of the importance of international student attraction and retention by UK Business Schools as represented by four Manchester based University Business Schools.

- To examine why and how Business Schools use RM approach as a tool for international students' retention.

- To examine key stakeholder perceptions of the impact that current RM strategies have on student retention in the Business Schools reviewed.

- Draw conclusions relating to the primary and secondary data and make recommendations to key stakeholders based on the conclusions.

1.4 Methodology

The study employed a constructivist design drawing on qualitative methods (i.e. semi-structured face-to-face interviews and focus groups), observation and documents reviews. A total of fifty two participants including nine managers from four Business Schools in the Greater Manchester area; thirteen academic staff from four Business Schools in the Greater

Manchester area; thirty international students (undergraduate & postgraduates) from thirteen different countries across five continents participated in this study. The Business Schools reviewed were selected in line with the classification of UK universities. An inductive approach was adopted using a constructivist inquiry strategy. Data collected from twenty two semi-structured interviews and four focus groups conducted in all selected Business Schools (one per school) were analysed using thematic analysis. The data collected from the documents reviewed were analysed using content analysis.

1.5 Contribution of this Research

In the context of higher education the integration of international students by understanding their requirements is crucial but implementing/employing an effective technique that would enable universities to do this poses several challenges. Against this backdrop this study contributes essential building blocks as it encourages taking a step back and understanding and clarifying basic concepts such as; who an international student is and what is relationship marketing?

The contributions of this study, as outlined in the recommendations are as follows:

- **Academic**

  The research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by offering a theory for the successful application of relationship marketing towards internationalization, particularly in marketing education in the context of Business Schools in the UK HE sector. An additional contribution is the framework for developing RM towards international student retention in the HE sector. This study has contributed by providing definitions of Higher Education; international students from different stakeholders' perspectives. It has also contributed to existing literature by identifying RM initiatives on international students and how it impacts attraction and retention of international students. This study has also contributed to existing theories by providing an 'all inclusive' definition of international student retention.

  The findings of this study have also contributed to the existing body of knowledge by identifying the role of culture and religion in determining the outcome of RM implementation with international students. The study has also contributed to the existing body of knowledge in identifying the importance of implementing RM with international students.

- **Vocational**

  The theories developed at the end of this research project could assist HE marketers in establishing, sustaining and developing the RM approach successfully. The vocational contributions are developed using operational and strategic implications. As a result, HEIs could benefit from the application of some of these recommendations, which could lead to the development and sustenance of their competitive advantage in the global HE market. Some of these practical contributions include: recommending how Business Schools can tailor and target their RM strategies with international students; recommending processes school managers should adopt in developing and maintaining RM strategies; recommending the importance of engaging international students and academic staff in developing RM initiatives; and informing policy makers in the Business Schools of issues that affect international students so they can develop appropriate RM strategies in line with such issues etc. (See section 7.5 and 7.5.1 for more contributions and their managerial implications).

1.6 Limitations

This study adopts a point time approach as a result of the time frame allocated for a PhD study as opposed to a longitudinal study which can be identified as a limitation. This research was conducted in one school within each of four Universities, and as a result it can be argued that the RM approach in other schools even in the same university towards international students might differ in terms of outcome. The limited finance made available throughout the course of this study can also be identified as a limitation especially as if unlimited finance were made available; more participants from different countries would have been invited to participate in the research. This research has been conducted in the Northwest region in the UK. Whilst the results are robust they relate to the Business Schools studied. This means that these results reflects the practices of these Business Schools studied, and cannot be taken as reflecting practices in other Business Schools. This thesis utilised qualitative methods to collect its data using semi-structured interviews, and focus group. Some researchers would contend that using multi methods to gather data would improve validity of the research. The results could be different if a survey was conducted with a larger number of international students.

Other limitations encountered by the researcher are issues that have to do with scheduling interviews and focus groups. Where participants in most cases had to reschedule interview times or arrive late in some instance.

1.7 Structure of the Research

To make the contribution of the study clear, the content of each chapter of the thesis are briefly outlined as follows:

Chapter Two: Relationship Marketing

This chapter contains a comprehensive review of academic literature on relationship marketing. It covers the conception and development of relationship marketing concepts as well as its definition and benefits to organisations. The application of RM in the HE sector will also be discussed and evaluated. The purpose of this chapter is to present and evaluative robust review of literature on the core construct of the research project on which the field study is based.

Chapter Three: The UK Higher Education (HE) Sector

This chapter contains a comprehensive review of the literature which includes: a comprehensive review of UK HE sector (definition, history, classification, types and marketing HE), Business Schools, international students, and student retention. The purpose of this chapter is to bring to the attention of the reader an up-to-date literature of the constructs covered by the research project.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This chapter discusses, evaluate and justifies the research design and methodology. It includes the chosen research paradigm and philosophy of this study, research approach, research strategy, and data collection methods. It also justifies the process of the methodology and the methods of data analysis. In addition, research tactics used to ensure the quality of this study are discussed.

Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the research findings and the data collected from the four Business Schools reviewed (Business Schools in Greater Manchester), including data from semi-structures interviews as the main source of evidence, focus group, documentation, archival records, and direct observations. The findings are analysed to discover themes and patterns, relevant to the research objectives across the Business Schools investigated.

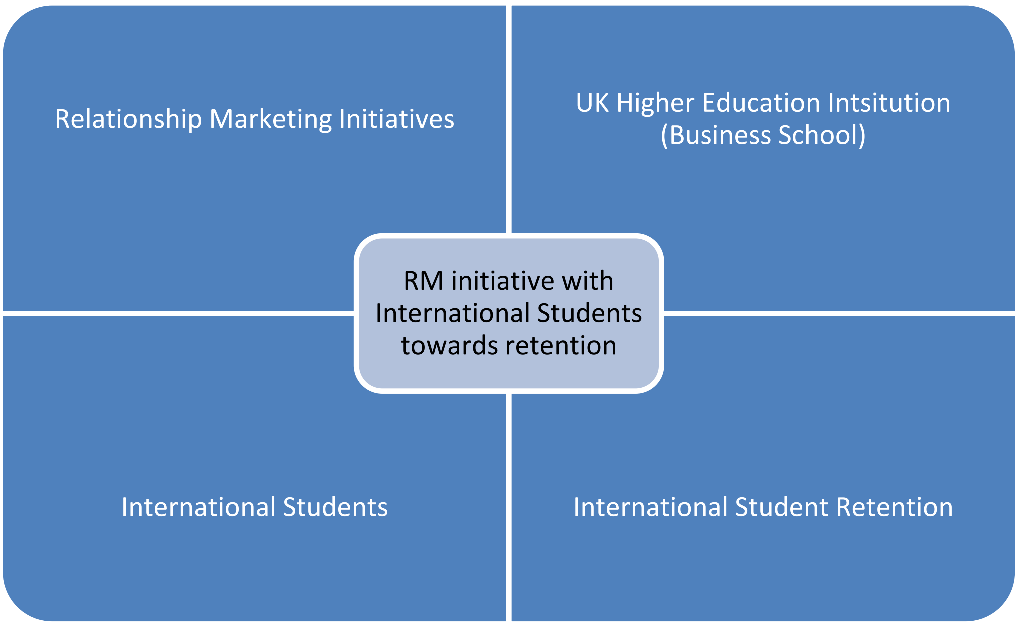
Chapter Six: Discussion

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis and discussion of the results. The results are compared, where relevant, with the literature, in order to investigate and establish similarities or differences with existing theoretical propositions.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter covers the conclusions derived from the findings linking them to the research objectives. It also provides recommendations for practitioners, and provides recommendation for further research.

Figure 1.0 Element of Research and Focus



CHAPTER TWO: Relationship Marketing

2.0 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the literature of the Relationship Marketing (RM) concept, covering its conception and development. It also discusses and evaluates different definitions of RM as well as the importance of RM in the service sector. It further address the Service Dominant Logic (SDL) which is a step forward of RM. It also addresses the application of RM in the HE sector, as well as its potential benefits to HEIs. It concludes by highlighting the principles of the RM and SDL constructs as it relates to this study.

2.1 Relationship Marketing

It is important for this study to consider what RM is and how it affects Higher Education (HE) considering student attraction and retention. The rise of the RM concept both as a marketing practice and discipline stems from the economic recession that was spurred by the energy crisis of 1974-1978 (Sheth, 2015). The 1960's transactional concept, which includes the 'marketing mix', has been widely accepted and practiced in several marketing perspectives and research (Gummenson, 1994; Grönroos, 1999; 2004). The subject area has evolved and todays practice is based on alternative concept, which seems to be more suitable to deal with the dynamics of the market that was developed by researchers, marketers and practitioners during the early 1970's (Grönroos, 1996; 2004; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Jackson (1985) in comparing both concepts identified transaction marketing as the one that uses marketing strategies to attract customers, whereas RM is that which uses defensive strategies to retain new customers. There has been a paradigm shift from the transactional to relationship orientation (Hollensen, 2015). Transactional marketing mix has been criticised as obsolete as a result of its inability to deal with: the issues of demanding and complex customers; business-to-business and inter-organisational marketing; perception of quality which is increasing rapidly; and its little or no acknowledgement of customer retention (Harwood & Garry, 2006). The focus of traditional marketing is on acquisition (Storbacka, Strandvik & Grönroos, 1994; Berry, 1995), whereas the focus of RM is on retention (Christopher et al., 2013; Peck et al, 2013). The ideology behind RM is to produce customer value throughout the life span of the relationship (Grönroos, 1994; Gummesson, 2015). Customer value is the bringing together of all customer propositions to match what the customer wants (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). Baron *et al.* (2010) also identified the presence of key elements such as heterogeneous market, active buyers and sellers as well as the importance of interactions and relationships as pre-requisite of the RM concept.

2.1.2 Relationship Marketing Definition

In defining relationship marketing, researchers have not agreed on a definition (Evans & Laskin, 1994; O'Malley & Tynan, 2003; Baron *et al.*, 2010). For example Grönroos (1994 p.9) defined relationship marketing as, "…to identify and establish, maintain and enhance and, when necessary, terminate relationships with customers, and other stakeholders, at a profit so that the objectives of all parties involved are met; this is done by mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises".

Also, Sheth, Parvatiyar and Sinha (2015 p.123) defined RM as "the ongoing process of engaging in collaborative activities and programs with immediate and end-user customers to create or enhance mutual economic, social and psychological value, profitably". Comparing both definitions, it can be seen that RM as a process focus mainly on the relationship with customers, where emphasis are geared towards mutual exchange. Grönroos (1994) however identified other stakeholders as a part of the relationship process, whereas Sheth et al. (2015) who identified immediate and end-user customers as the main focus. There are several other descriptions of RM. For example Christopher et al. (2013) described the RM process as that of making new customers become strong supporters, who are willing to purchase regularly and prepared to become energetic and verbal representatives of the organisation. RM was seen as building trust and commitment between the customer and the organisation (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It was further described by Grönroos (1994) and Mende et al. (2013) as not only attracting but going as far as maintaining and enhancing the relationship with the customer. Value and cost were key elements in the definition of Parvatiyar et al. (2015) who described the concept as a collaborative activity that is ongoing where mutual economic value and reduced cost is developed. This view reflects the explanation of Day (2000) who explained the RM concept as an effort to build up a continuous, extensive exchange relationship with the customer of the firm based on the principle that it is economically reasonable to satisfy and retain such customers. In realising this, Jones and Farquhar (2003) stated that it should be developed on the premise of understanding consumers' needs as well as satisfying them. Some researchers have agreed on similar issues on relationship marketing definition including (i) relationship marketing is mutually beneficial for the parties involved in relationship; (ii) relationship marketing refers to value relationships between economic partners, service providers and customers at various levels of the marketing channel and the broader business environment; (iii) relationship marketing is about fulfilment of promises;

(iv) trust is essential to the process of relationship development (Grönroos, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; O'Malley &Tynan, 2003; Baron et al., 2010).

2.1.3 Relationship Marketing Development

The development of the RM concept can be traced to the 1970's (Grönroos, 1996, Baron *et al*., 2010; Sheth, 2015). The early advocate of the RM concept is Grönroos (Baron *et al*., 2010). In the 1980's the RM concept became very popular as a result of the emphasis placed on customer retention and the advancement of technology that was seen to benefit business-to-customers relationships (Baron *et al*., 2010; Sheth, 2015). Technological advancement that brought about computerisation in the service sector e.g. banks, airlines etc., resulted in them directly marketing to end users unlike companies and industries where the focus of computerisation was on the production of consumer packaged goods was a factor responsible for the development of the RM concept (Sheth, 2015). The defensive measures of protecting existing customers by establishing key account management became a focus of firms in the service industry (Shapiro, 1988; Anderson & Narus, 1991). This shift from a transactional to relational paradigm led to the understanding of lifetime value of customers (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000). The RM discipline influenced a shift from theories of competition and competitive advantage to theories of cooperation between the organisation and their customers (Sheth, 2015). This led to scholars examining the role of trust and commitment in the relationship process (Morgan, 2000; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000). Academics in the 1990's generally accepted RM as a viable concept that would be helpful for organisations that fit into the Business-to-Customers activities (Baron *et al*., 2010). The concept became very popular from the mid-1990 through to the early 2000's as several works and research were undertaken on the concept. Terminologies such as micromarketing, one-to-one marketing, wrap-around marketing, loyalty marketing, customer partnering, symbiotic marketing and interactive marketing have all been used to describe the relationship marketing concept (Buttle, 1996). More recently, Service Dominant Logic (SDL) which is mainly about intangible resources using co-creation of value by consumers and producers as well as relationships seems to be given attention as a new way of marketing (Baron *et al*., 2010; Lusch & Vargo, 2014). This new paradigm will be discussed in section 2.3.

2.1.4 Relationship Marketing Models

There are several RM models which have been related to retention in the past and some of these models are still very significant till date. This study will be considering some of these models to identify which of them best fit with the objectives of this study. One of such models to be addressed is the Relationship Effects Model (Crosby & Stephens, 1987). The Relationship Effects Model (REM) posits that RM is not directly significant to the initial sale rather its effects are on satisfaction and ultimately retention. It does not place emphasis on relationship effect rather its emphasis is to seek better models of relationship development and value determination. This study did not adopt the REM as a guide since the REM was more relevant to satisfaction and retention. It does not place enough attention on the relationship process which is an objective of this study. Hence, this study eliminated this model as a guide. Another model addressed by this study is the Antecedent and Consequences model (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). This model is focused on the likely consequences of RM in the consumer market. The model posits that RM will lead to better marketing productivity in all effective and efficient terms. Several variables where addressed by the model which includes: achieving marketing effectiveness; individual marketing; consumer involvement; minimization of negative image of marketing and achieving marketing efficiency. It is argued that all of these variables are important in eliminating waste, hence allowing the consequence of RM to become an efficient process. The antecedent and consequence model states that if there is an opportunity for a seller and consumer to meet directly, there is the likelihood that consumers will be satisfied as it is argued that middlemen tend not to have the same sense of emotional bond. This study having evaluated the variables synonymous with tis model, decided to do away with it since the variables where more concerned about the marketing aspect of the relationship without considering other factors that could affect the relationship. Since the objective of this study is not limited to the marketing aspect of the relationship, this study decided not to adopt this model as a guide. Another reason for not adopting this model is as a result of the middlemen role which exists between the university and international students which will be relevant in achieving the aim of this study.

This study also considered the effects of trust and interdependence on relationship commitment model (Geyskens et al., 1996). This model considers two types of commitment that makes up the interfirm relationships. This model emphasises on affective commitment and calculative commitment. The argument is about how channel members like to maintain their relationship as well as what they need to experience before a relationship can be maintained. This study did not adopt this model as it was more related to B2B which is the relationships that exists amongst firms. The focus of this study is more relevant to B2C, which is the relationship between the university and international students.

Another significant RM model addressed by this study is the six markets stakeholder model of RM. The Six market model captures the following: "customer markets" (including existing and prospective customers as well as intermediaries); "referral markets" (these include two main categories – existing customers who recommend their suppliers to others, and referral sources, or "multipliers", such as an accounting firm who may refer work to a law firm); "influencer markets" (which included financial analysts, shareholders, the business press, the government, and consumer groups); "employee markets" (concerned with attracting the right employees to the organisation); "supplier markets" (these include traditional suppliers as well as organisations with which the firms has some form of strategic alliance); and "internal markets" (the organisation including internal departments and staff) (Christopher et al., 1991).

This RM model is mainly used by managers as a diagnostic review tool for identifying key market domains and stakeholders important to the firm. It was considered by this study but excluded since the objective of this study was primarily concerned with the relationship between Business school managers and existing customers who in this case are international students. Hence, the use of this model as a guide for this study was eliminated.

The 30Rs of RM model developed by Gummenson (1994) was also addressed by this study since it was a core aspect of the RM literature since it relates to relationships, network and interaction. The 30Rs of RM (Gimmenson, 1994.12) includes the following;

1. *R1. The classic dyad: the relationship between the supplier and the customer*, This is the parent relationship of marketing, the ultimate exchange of value which constitutes the basis of business.

2. *R2. The many-headed customer and the many-headed supplier*. Marketing to other organizations – industrial marketing or business marketing – often means contacts between many individuals from the supplier's and the customer's organization.

3. *R3. Megamarketing: the real "customer" is not always found in the marketplace*. In certain instances, relationships must be sought with a "non-market network" above the market proper – governments, legislators, influencial individuals – in order to make marketing feasible on an operational level.

4. *R4. The classic triad: the customer-supplier-competitor relationship* Competition is a central ingredient of the market economy. In the competition there are relationships between three parties: between the customer and the current supplier, between the customer and the supplier′s competitors, and between competitors.

5. *R5. Alliances change the market mechanisms* Alliances mean closer relationships and collaboration between companies. Thus competition is partly curbed, but collaboration is necessary to make the market economy work.

6. *R6. Market mechanisms are brought inside the company*. By introducing profit centres in an organization, a market inside the company is created and internal as well as external relationships of a new kind emerge.

7. *R7. The service encounter: interaction between the customer and front line personnel*. Production and delivery of services involve the customer in an interactive relationship with the service provider′s personnel.

8. *R8. Interfunctional and interhierarchical dependency: the relationship between internal and external customers*. The dependency between the different tiers and departments in a company is seen as a process consisting of relationships between internal customers and internal providers.

9. *R9. Relationships via full-time marketers (FTMs) and part-time marketers (PTMs)*. Those who work in marketing and sales departments – the FTMs – are professional relationship-makers. All others, who perform other main functions but yet influence customer relationships directly or indirectly, are PTMs. There are also contributing FTMs and PTMs outside the organization.

10. *R10. Internal marketing: relationships with the "employee market"*. Internal marketing can be seen as part of RM as it gives indirect and necessary support to the relationships with external customers.

11. *R11. The non-commercial relationship*. This is a relationship between the public sector and citizens/customers, but it also includes voluntary organizations and other activities outside of the profit-based or monetarized economy, such as those performed in families.

12. *R12. Physical distribution: the classic marketing network*. The physical distribution consists of a network of relationships which is sometimes totally decisive for marketing success.

13. *R13. The electronic relationship*. An important volume of marketing today takes place through networks based on IT. This volume is expected to grow in significance.

14. *R14. Megaalliances*. EU (the European Union) and NAFTA (the North America Free Trade Agreement) are examples of alliances above the single company and industry. They exist on government and supranational levels.

15. *R15. Quality providing a relationship between production and marketing*. The modern quality concept has built a bridge between technology and marketing. It considers the company′s internal relationships as well as its relationships to the customers.

16. *R16. Personal and social network*. The personal and social networks often determine the business networks. In some cultures even, business is solely conducted between friends and friends-of-friends.

17. *R17. The two-dimensional matrix relationship*. Oganizational matrices are frequent in large corporations, above all in the relationships between product management and sales.

18. *R18. The relationship to external providers of marketing services*. External providers reinforce the marketing function by supplying a series of services, such as those offered by advertising agencies and market research institutes, but also in the area of sales and distribution.

19. *R19. The relationship to the customer's customer*. A condition for success is often the understanding of the customer′s customer, and what suppliers can do to help their customers become successful.

20. *R20. The owner and financier relationship*. Owners and other financiers can sometimes determine the conditions under which marketing works. The relationship to them may influence the marketing strategy.

21. *R21. Parasocial relationships via symbols and objects*. Relationships do not only exist to people and physical phenomena, but also to mental images and symbols such as brand names and corporate identities.

22. *R22. The law-based relationship*. A relationship to a customer is sometimes founded primarily on legal contracts and the threat of litigation.

23. *R23. The criminal network*. Organized crime is built on tight and often impermeable networks guided by an illegal business mission. They exist around the world and are apparently growing but are not observed in marketing theory. These networks can disturb the functioning of a whole market or industry.

24. *R24. The mental and physical proximity to customers vs. the relationship via market research*. In mass marketing the closeness to the customer is often lost and the customer relationship is based on surveys, statistics and written reports.

25. *R25. The customer as member*. In order to create a long-term sustaining relationship, it has become increasingly frequent to enlist customers as members of various marketing programmes.

26. *R26. The relationship to the dissatisfied customer*. The dissatisfied customer perceives a special type of relationship, more intense than the normal situation, and often badly managed by the provider. The way of handling a complaint – the recovery – can determine the quality of the future relationship.

27. *R27. The green relationship*. The environmental and health issues have slowly but gradually increased in importance and are creating a new type of customer relationship through legislation, the voice of opinion leading consumers, changing behaviour of consumers and an extension of the customer-supplier relationship to encompass a recycling process.

28. *R28. The knowledge relationship*. Knowledge can be the most strategic and critical resource and “knowledge acquisition” is often the rationale for alliances.

29. *R29. The mass media relationship*. The media can be supportive or damaging to the marketing. The way of handling the media relationships is often crucial for success or failure.

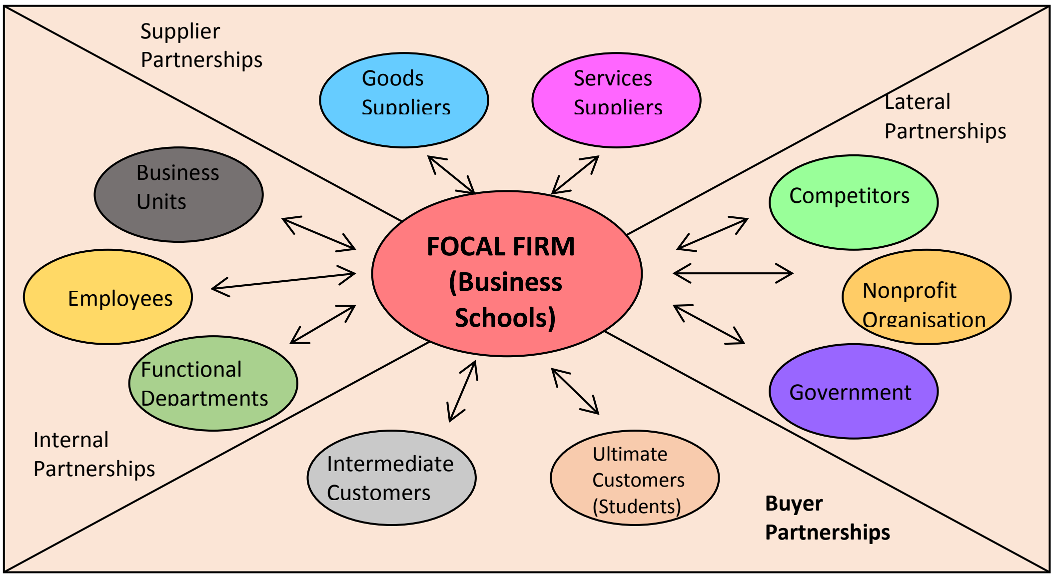
30. *R30. The monopoly relationship: the customer or supplier as prisoners*. When competition is inhibited, the customer may be at the mercy of the provider – or the other way around. One of them becomes a prisoner.

The Rs as specified in this model is expected not to work in isolation as many of the Rs tend to overlap in several capacities. Hence, considering the implications of clarity which is required in a PhD study as well as the context of this study which is quite concise in terms of Business school and international student relationship, this study declined the use of the 30Rs model.

Several authors, including Morgan and Hunt (1994), Gummesson (1999; 2002), Christopher *et al*. (2002), Payne *et al*. (2005), Hollensen (2007) have developed relationship marketing models. Gummesson (1999) put forward several relationship types in which all seem to facilitate long term collaboration and produce benefits that are mutual to both the organisations and their customers. Morgan and Hunt (1994, p.21) identified ten separate forms of relational exchange in four groups of partnerships including: "Supplier Partnerships (Goods Supplier and Service Suppliers); Lateral Partnerships (Competitors, Non-Profit organisations and Government); Internal Partnerships (Business Units, Employees and Functional Departments); Buyer Partnerships (Intermediate Customers and Ultimate Customer)".

This study will build on the Morgan and Hunt (1994) approach as a guide since it addresses the relational exchange between the firm and the end customer. The RM application and implementation in the service industry will be reviewed and as it concerns the ultimate customer (student) whose perceptions and needs will be addressed using the Buyer Partnership as a guide. This relational exchange seems to be the more relevant amongst all forms of relational exchanges proposed. This will be used as a guide by this study to examine the relational exchange that exist between Business School and international students so as to be able to establish the importance of implementing RM with international students towards retention. This is shown in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2. 1 **Relational Exchange in Relationship Marketing**



Source: Adapted from Morgan and Hunt (1994, p.10)

The relational exchange in RM shown above describes how forms of relational exchange exist with partnerships, with a focus on the implementation of RM with international students by UK Business Schools. The model is used as a guide by this study, long-term exchanges between Business Schools and international students, as particularly recommended in the services marketing area (Berry, 1983), which the HEIs falls into (Conway *et al*., 1994).

2.1.4 Relationship Life Cycle

According to Rowley (2003) what encourages consideration on the phases is a relationship between an organisation and its customer. Christopher et al. (2002) presents a five-stage RM model, which they described as a ladder of customer loyalty. The bottom of the ladder describes customers as prospects; the first step describes customers as purchaser; the next step describes customers as clients; followed by supporter; then advocate and the top of the ladder customers are referred to as true partners.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) also propose a five phase process of establishing a relationship life cycle which will be addressed by this study; Hunt identifies the stages as:

- Choosing a Partner- This was described by Rowley (2003) as the introduction stage, which is the initial stage of the process, where the customer in a B-2-C case and the organisation in a B-2-B will focus at this stage on ensuring that customers are put in a situation where they would want to renew their first contact. Applying this to the student within the HE sector, it was explained by Rowley as the stage where the student gains and builds initial awareness during the admission process. The marketing communication and open days of the admission process allows the student to determine if what the university offer matches their requirement. This she said is processed both on a cognitive and emotional level. It was argued by Rowley that the marketing department are the key player in this part of the relationship cycle. It is advised strongly that in starting to establish relationships at this stage, interaction with potential students is greatly encouraged.

- Structuring the relationship- Rowley (2003) identified this as the experimentation stage where the organisation and the stakeholder become more familiar. In the student context, it is described as the early period of their HE journey. The first few experiences, which follow the induction process, are essential as it is a dynamic time in the life of the student where they will also learn about the nature of the relationship. Personal contacts at different levels are strongly encouraged to help enhance knowledge, understanding and trust in the relationship. Tutors, central and departmental support staff are key players at this stage of the cycle process.
- Devoting time to develop the relationship- Rowley (2003) explained this stage as the identification stage, which often takes the form of enquiries that has to deal with quality, customer satisfaction, finding opportunities to create value, developing trust and commitment. This was referred to as the courtship period during which the student progressively becomes a part of the community. The values and expectations of HE have been recognised and responded to by the student at this phase. It is suggested strongly at this stage that the University makes the values, standards and expectations clear and consistent to enable students to structure the relationship easily. The managers of the university and academic staff are key players at this stage.
- Maintaining lines of Communication- This was described by Rowley (2003) as continuous renewal where the establishment of dialogue takes place. Here change is set to be accommodated by any of the parties. In the case of students, this is basically the later stages of study when they know what the study is all about and they would have settled into the community. A large amount of time has been invested by the student into the relationship and their focus at this point is to ensure the relationship

succeeds thereby completing their studies. Academic, support staff and students are key players in this phase of the cycle. A progress review if carried out at this time of the cycle by a representative of the institution will likely strengthen the relationship.

- Parting on good terms- Dissolution phase is what Rowley (2003) described this stage. Where it is seen that happy endings leave memories that will allow positive word of mouth communication to be created and establish a platform for future development of other relationships. Support activities are strongly recommended at this stage. In a student context it is after graduation, where support opportunities are made available that encourage the student to come back as a part-time student or as an employee of the institution. At this stage it is recommended that procedures are put in place to deal with students with less positive outcomes to enable them see things in a positive light.

Rowley (2003) stressed that every phase of the cycle should be well managed and should be considered by retention strategies as it is necessary for the institution to groom their students in commercial terms by adhering to the focus of relationship life cycle which propels a shift from acquisition to retention. This section has covered the relationship life cycle and elements that needs to be developed upon for HEIs to be able to retain their students through the application of RM initiatives. This study will summarise the key stages which describes the relationship cycle of students in the HE sector to help show the application of RM in the sector. Once HEIs understand the process of each key stages student's progress to, they will be at an informed position to enhance the relationship. These key stages of the student relationship cycle includes: applicant; enrolment; student; alumni; and employment.

Applicant (The time at which the student is seeking University to apply; seeking information about courses; fees; and sometimes where they have applied and waiting for the acceptance letter).

Enrolment (During this stage of the model, it is identified as a critical stage as encounters can determine and influence the perception of the student experience).

Student (When an international student is fully settled in as a student and having a positive student experience).

Graduation (At this stage, international students can drop to the 4th stage (student) as a result of conversion, progression etc.).

Alumni (At this stage the student will be identified as an Alumni, where some might be committed Alumni who could possibly set up Alumni base in their regions or home country)

Employment (At this stage the student could become employee of the University)

Having analysed the stages of the relationship cycle in the service sector, it is important to identify components that can determine the outcome of a successful relationship throughout the cycle. Relationship, which is described as an interaction (Sheaves & Barnes, 1996) does not necessarily denote a cooperative interaction as some interactions can be conflicting (Baron *et al*., 2010). Thus, it is imperative to address what determines the success of the relationship. Several studies have identified different factors that could determine the success of the relationship (Conway & Swift, 2000; Zhang & Lv, 2013). For example there are common factors identified by different authors and these include: commitment; communication; and trust (Wilson, 1995; Conway & Swift, 2000; Hennig-Thurau, 2002; Dagger & O'Brien, 2010; Sharma, Young & Wilkinson, 2015). This study will build on the five factors that seem to be most commonly noted as a guide (Conway & Swift, 2000) namely: commitment; trust; seller's customer orientation/empathy; experience/satisfaction and communication. Commitment was explained as the desire to maintain the relationship by investing into activities which are expected to maintain the relationship where commitments to the objectives of the relationship are treated as paramount (Blois, 1998; Zhang & Lv, 2013; Gummensson, 2015). Example of such investments could be investing in facilities that will enhance the student's experience (Bowden, 2011; Apostu, Pop & Gordan, 2012; Braskamp et al., 2016). Trust is about the expectation that the word of another can be relied upon in terms of honesty that will lead to fulfilment of promises (Baron *et al*., 2010; Zhang & Lv, 2013). For example, universities fulfilling promises made to students during the application stage of the cycle. Customer orientation/empathy is described as the ability to perceive a situation from another person's point of view and the greater the degree of empathy between the parties involved, the fewer the barriers to relationship development (Conway & Swift, 2000; Baron *et al*., 2010). Thus, when a service fails during an encounter, the ability to empathise with the customer can help build a relationship. For example, if an international student complains about an academic issue and the complaint handler understands what the international student is experiencing, service recovery leading to pleasant student experience and student retention which can take the student to the top of the relationship cycle is more likely to be achieved. Customer orientation encourages trust and improves the chance of establishing a long-term relationship (Baron *et al.*, 2010; Wang, Wang & Liu, 2016).

Experience and satisfaction refers to the experience felt during the service encounter as a positive experience that can help overcome any negative experiences in the future, as positive experience tend to lead to satisfaction (Conway & Swift, 2000; Baron *et al*., 2010). The more satisfied the customer is, the more likely the relationship will last (Baron *et al*., 2010). For example, the international student experience can be affected by a poor service encounter regardless of the student graduating with a distinction or being taught by qualified staff. Consequently, it can be argued that completing a course of study successfully does not guarantee a positive student experience. This is in line with the argument that a customer may achieve the transaction objectives yet may be unsatisfied with the experience (Reicheld, 1992). Consequently, that is one of the reasons this study will not be addressing student satisfaction as an outcome of RM implementation. Communication refers to that which is essential in a relationship and it's the platform at which other components of a successful relationship are experienced (Baron *et al*. 2010). Communication has been identified as a significant part of the relationship (Quintall *et al*., 2013), and is seen as being necessary to build trust in a relationship (Selnes, 1998; Ng & Forbes; 2009; Assad, Melewar & Cohen; 2014). In the light of the above, this study will reiterate that these components are essential to the development of a successful relationship. The benefits of relationship marketing cannot be over emphasised. Baron *et al*. (2010) states that the RM argument can be divided in two: (1) it is more expensive to win a new customer than it is to retain an existing one; (2) the longer the association, the more profitable the relationship between the customer and the organisation. The former was established in a survey conducted by Rosenberg and Czepiel (1984) which concluded that it costs six times more to recruit a new customer as compared to retaining an existing customer. The argument for that latter can be supported by Reichield and Sasser (1990) who state that as satisfaction increases for the customer the more they make repeat purchases. In the cases of international students enrolled for a one year PG course, it could be a situation where some of them could possibly enrol for a PhD programme after completing their PG taught degree. Baron *et al*. (2010) state that customer-defection rate if reduced and profitability increases by fostering retention as a long term relationships with a service customer improves quality as a result of them becoming co-producers of the service. Knowing that such relationships help the customer give much attention to the importance of the relationship and not price, they stressed the need for organisations to adopt it. Baron et al. (2010) also stated that RM provides knowledge of the customers which in turn also help in anticipating precise outcomes.

2.1.5 Importance of Relationship Marketing

Customer loyalty and positive customer word of mouth communication have all been identified as outcomes of implementing RM with customers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010; Gremler & Gwinner, 2015). Customer loyalty is the customer's repeat purchase behaviour that is triggered by a marketer's activities (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Loyal customer relationships have been identified to improve profitability for an organisation over time (Mishra & Li, 2008). Positive word of mouth communication was defined as an informal conversation between a customer and others as it concerns the evaluation of goods and services regarding pleasant experiences and recommending such services and goods to others (Anderson, 1998). Positive word of mouth communication has been identified as an integral force in influencing buying decisions (Sheth, Mittal & Newman, 1999; Ng et al., 2011; Omoruyi & Rembielak, 2015). RM has been identified as an important concept that help firms to gather information about their customers (Ashley et al., 2011 Linoff & Berry, 2011). This information helps the firm to identify and retain their best customers while maximising customer value and profitability. Implementing an effective RM strategy has been identified as that which helps the organization to understand the needs of customers' consequently, organisations can serve them better as compared to their competitors, which as a result leads to cost reduction and increase in customer loyalty (Gaurav, 2008).

RM implementation has been identified as a marketing concept that enhances the performance of the organisation (Swaminathan & Moorman 2009; Samaha et al., 2014). Sin et al. (2005) found that relationship marketing orientation yields a significant impact on the determination of the organisations' performance. Successful relationship marketing efforts improve customer loyalty and firm performance through stronger relational bonds (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002; Sin et al., 2005). The performance of the firm has been identified to improve significantly as a result of implementing RM concept. Performance in this context includes superior financial performance (Boles et al., 2000; Walter & Gemuenden, 2000). Another importance of RM implementation is that it allows organisations to compete effectively (Day, 2000). Implementing RM concepts provides value to the firm (Towers and Ashford, 2001). Additional importance of RM to an organisation is that it allows organisations differentiate their offerings (Swaminathan & Moorman 2009). The opportunity that the organisation has to differentiate its offerings, further allows the organisation to compete favourably with other competitors.

The importance of implementing RM was found from the literature reviewed that it also benefits the customers. Several benefits the customers enjoy as a result of the firm implementing RM with their customers were highlighted by Gremler and Gwinner (2015). These benefits to the customer are as follows: confidence benefits; social benefits; and special treatment benefits. Confidence benefits were described as the benefits customers enjoy as a benefit of reduced anxiety and risk in purchasing the service as a result of the established relationship they have with firm over a period of time. An example of such can be explained as a sense of knowing what to expect. Social benefits were described as those benefits of customer recognition and familiarity with employees that customer enjoy as a result of the established relationship they have with the organisation. An example of such will be the customer experiencing a more customised service offering from a front line employee who already has adequate information about the customer and as a result can address the customer by name. Special treatment benefits were described as the special deals and faster service offerings to customers as a result of the long-term nature of their relationship.

2.2 Relationship Marketing in UK Higher Education

This section is addressing RM in the UK HE sector. RM is perceived to be relevant to service markets as aspects of RM are present in all organisations including institutions in the HE sector (Grönroos, 2004; Ang & Buttle, 2006; Helgesen, 2008). The climate of competition for students in the HE sector makes it important for HEIs to increase their marketing efforts, internationally, to help sustain student numbers (Szekeres, 2010). As such the RM approach has been adopted by universities as a platform to engage and sustain students (Helgesen, 2008; Linvill, Rowlett & Kolind, 2015). For example, Al-Alak (2006, p.4) states "…Relationship Marketing is a set of marketing activities or actions that attract, motivate, and enhance existing and potential students' relationships as well as students' parents, relatives, friends, reference groups for the benefit of all sides concerned, emphasizing on retaining existing students until their graduation, and attracting further students"

RM in HE is described as that relationship which starts when the first contact is made by the student with the institution, through the university experience to an Alumni stage (Kotler & Fox, 1995; Schee, 2010) best described as a lifetime relationship. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) have linked RM to the marketing of services in their study of marketing British education, placed emphasis on relationships requiring two parties who they identified as the service provider and the customer endorsed the application of relationship marketing to HE. Rowley (2003) suggests that relationship building strategies should be applicable to all students and not only those with the tendency to withdraw. Gibbs (2001) stated that those involved in HE should work towards creating educational relationships rather than transactional deals between traders. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), suggest that the RM principle to be applied in the marketing of HE. This was further seen in the research of Arnett *et al*. (2003) who investigated universities who adopted relationship marketing to see how beneficial they considered to be given they were non-profit organisations. They found the concept to be a viable strategy in HE sector not just on economic terms but RM provided them with emotional satisfaction, spiritual values and allowed for the sharing of ideals that were humanitarian. This was further supported by Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2004) who state that a relationship marketing strategy is compatible for HE services since the idea promotes student involvement in the image building and marketing of the organisation. Stressing that if students' needs and expectations are not met by staff, it would be foolhardy to employ even the best marketers or advertisers to promote the HEI. Thus, it can be argued that HEIs build their image as part of the benefits of implementing RM. RM philosophies can be applied to the higher-education context (Yang, Alessandri & Kinsey, 2008). Some HE authors have suggested a RM approach to enrolment management might similarly cut student recruitment costs and increase student retention (Trustrum & Wee, 2007). Helgesen (2008) stated that universities in the HE sector should consider initiatives from RM, if they are focused on enrolment and retention of students. RM creates value for the student and it should be treated as important throughout the lifetime of the relationship. Moore and Bowden-Everson (2012) have identified student attraction and retention as benefits of implementing the RM approach. Also Bowden (2011) identified student engagement as a benefit of implementing RM initiatives. In terms of the cost of implementing the RM approach in a Business School, financial investment and allocating extra time to students were identified as the main costs associated with a successful strategy (Baron *et al*., 2010; Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne, 2013; Peck *et al*., 2013). This implies that in implementing relationship marketing there is more than one cost being borne by a Business School. These costs, which cut across mainly financial investments embarked upon by Business Schools, as well as the additional time created both in preparing employees to deliver an RM concept and the time in developing the relationship with international students whilst they are at university and after they graduate.

From the above studies on RM implementation in the UK HE, it can be seen that the implementation of RM is beneficial especially as it relates to student retention which is a focus of this study. However the importance of RM in HE it is still under investigated by researchers (Bowden, 2011), consequently, it can be argued as a rationale for this study to investigate the implementation of RM in UK HE. Service Dominant-Logic which is also a development of RM and its principle to this study will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 Service Dominant Logic (SDL)

Several paradigm shifts have been proposed between 1990 and present day (Grönroos, 1994; Gummesson, 1995; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Lusch & Vargo, 2014). The arguments focus on constructing a definition for marketing in the perception of service. These developments some of which has been discussed extensively in sections above have led to the more recent theory developed by Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2014) which build on all other related marketing theories. This theory is known as service-dominant logic. They explained this term as the bringing in intangible goods to replace tangible goods, where the intangible goods include skills and knowledge and processes and where doing things 'to' will not be seen as important as doing things 'for' and 'with' relationship. Baron et al. (2010) suggested that services are not just a differentiator of goods or something that comes from a service industry, as both are integrated. Vargo and Lusch (2004 p. 2) defined services as "…application of specialised competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself". The focus of the service-dominant logic is on resources that are intangible and how value can be co-created in relationships. This theory describes service as the core principle of exchange providing a theoretical understanding of how value can be co-created by customers, firms, and other markets through their service interaction (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; 2006; 2008; 2014).

2.3.1 Fundamentals of Service-Dominant Logic

It is imperative that this study underpins what the fundamental of the service-dominant logic is to enable it to be integrated into a HE context, and enable it to influence relationships between students and universities in order to improve retention. The service dominant logic has 10 foundational premises (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) though other premises seem to be developing (Williams & Aitken, 2011).

The 10 foundational premises proposed by Vargo and Lusch, (2008) are listed below:

- FP1: Service is the fundamental basis of Exchange;
- FP 2: Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange;
- FP 3: Goods are distribution mechanisms for service provision;
- FP 4: Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage;
- FP 5: All economies are service economies;
- FP 6: The customer is always a co-creator of value;
- FP 7: The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions;
- FP 8: A service-centred is inherently customer oriented and relational;
- FP 9: All social and economic actors are resource integrators;
- FP10: Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.

2.3.2 Service-Dominant Logic and UK HE Marketing

Having discussed relationship marketing and customer loyalty as it relates to UK HE, it is important this study considers how service-dominant logic theory can fit as a marketing strategy towards retention so as to help provide suggested ways universities can enhance the relationship with international students, which is one of the objectives of this study. Focusing marketing initiatives towards intangible factors which include operant resources that are core to competitive advantage is required to change marketing evolution of dominant logic (Madhavaram & Hunt, 2008). Operant resources according to Baron et al. (2010) are the resources employed to act on operand resources. They described this as the transformation of physical goods into beneficial services that will in turn produce value through the utilisation of specialist knowledge and skills. They further described the customer (which in this case is the student) as an operand resource and as such HE Institutions must consider these operant resources if they are to gain competitive advantage. These resources, according to Vargo and Lusch (2014) are intangible, invisible, infinite and dynamic and are often core organisational processes. Knowledge and skills which are seen as the key resources towards learning, competitive advantage and economic growth also help in setting up strategies that will meet the needs of the customers (Clulow *et al*., 2007; Baron *et al*., 2010). It becomes important for organisations, which in this context are HEI's, to be aware of how they apply these key resources (Baron *et al*., 2010).

Service-dominant logic can function in the UK HE when related to the market orientation strategy developed by (Madhavaram and Hunt, 2008). Market orientation has its identification as a composite resource (Kohli & Jaworski, 2006). Morgan *et al.* (2009) identified it as an interconnecting resource, where Madhavrama and Hunt (2007) described it as that which is needed to achieve superior financial performance and competitive advantage through the gathering of data of both existing and potential competitors and customers, hence using the data to develop, understand, create, select, implement and modify strategy in such a coordinated manner. When linking this to a foundational proposition of Vargo & Lusch (2004) where the customer was identified as a co-creator of value, it becomes imperative for organisations, including HEIs, to develop a co-creation capability if they are truly market oriented (Madhavrama & Hunt, 2007). They further suggested that service-dominant logic will help organisations; including HEI's to gain and sustain competitive advantage in the market place.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter concludes that RM concepts has evolved over a long period of time, where several movements have occurred in decades with particular reference to transactional marketing which developed into RM and now developing into SDL. The definition of RM tends to be different amongst authors as there is no one definition that is seen as most appropriate. There are common aspects of the definitions, which includes; long-term relationship, retention, value, trust and fulfilment of promises. The importance of RM is not particular to the organisation who implements it but also very important and beneficial to the customers. RM as a concept is applicable in several industries especially in the service industry and the UK HE sector is also identified as one of the service sectors where the implementation of RM is also becoming dominant. The aspects of RM which deals with involving the customer as a co-creator of the services being provided by the organisation makes it fundamental that the movement of RM to SDL is acknowledged and considered especially in the service sector.

CHAPTER THREE: Relationship Marketing in Higher Education

3.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter analyses literature relating to Higher Education (HE) in general with emphasis placed on the UK HE sector and specifically Business Schools which are the context of this study. It explores the literature relating to marketing HE with particular reference to retention of international students who are the primary stakeholders identified in the aim of this study. HE marketing will be evaluated in terms of customer retention and RM. The framework of the chapter will cover the input, process and post-graduation in terms of international students' retention. In exploring literature, attraction will not be given much attention especially as it the attraction concept is mainly about promotion and advertising.

3.1 Higher Education

A considerable amount of literature has been published on HE in relation to its history, development, benefits, challenges and reforms etc. (Blanden & Machin, 2004; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Yorke & Longden, 2008; Yorke, 2014; Dean, Arroyo-Gamez, Punjaisri & Pich, 2016). Young (2006) defines HE as having both an inclusive and an exclusive meaning. The inclusive use is to categorise those programmes that are university-based degrees and those offered by non-universities like polytechnics (previously) and colleges. The exclusive meaning is used to distinguish programmes which are open to those who have completed their secondary education. This ranges from diploma to doctorate degrees. HE was described by Anctil (2008) as that which is at some point a product and other times a service. Barnett (1992) listed the following four concepts of HE: as a provider of quality personnel for employees; as training for a research career; as developing teaching provision; and as a matter of extending life chances. Higher education was described by Altbach (2015) as an international traded community. He further described academic institutions as businesses who have transformed from their earlier core values of providing skills for an individual to see to the actualisation of a better society.

Following the meanings, descriptions and categorisations of HE reviewed above, it can be argued that there is no one way of defining HE as its definition can be determined by context, process and activity.

Several benefits have been attributed to HE. For example, Preston and Hammond (2003, p.21) defined the wider benefits of learning in the HE context as: "…encompassing both non-pecuniary private benefits, pertaining to the individual (such as improved self-esteem, health and quality of life) and those social benefits (or externalities) impacting on society as a whole (such as community regeneration and cultural development)".

From the above it can be seen that HE has benefits for its participants and society in general, which cannot be over emphasised. The benefits of HE can be categorised in several heading which include: a means of charity and good relationships with others; developing mental health; developing skills and behaviour for career growth; and developing the economy (Preston and Hammond, 2003). HE encourages charitable works and relations with others (Preston & Hammond, 2003: Bynner *et al*., 2003; Vila, 2005; Norton, 2012). Thus, it can be argued that HE influences the behaviour of students outside the learning area, as it empowers an individual with the knowledge and capability to handle their mental health more adequately (Bynner & Egerton, 2001; Hammond, 2002; Feinstein & Hammond, 2004; Vila, 2005). HE is beneficial in enhancing how an individual is addressed and identified. The benefits of HE cuts across different sectors and establishments. For example, Morrise (2009) stated that HE in the UK is beneficial to refugees in re-establishing their lives and their professional identity. Research in HE helps in developing the right skills and behaviour required to become academic professionals, achieving career ambition and personal growth (McCune *et al*., 2010). Achieving mastery in any relevant academic field will require research in HE (Norton, 2012).

Higher Education benefits individuals, enterprises and society alike. HE can make individuals employable and help them gain access to work, and escape poverty and marginalisation. It can also improve an individuals' productivity and income-earning opportunities at work, their mobility in the labour market, and widen their choice of career opportunities (Panagiotakopoulos, 2012). Enterprises also reap rewards from HE as they can improve productivity and compete successfully in increasingly integrated world markets (International Labour Organization, 2002). The benefits of HE can be traced to several reports over the years including those creating chances of employment. For example, the Robbins Report (1963) suggests that few would enter HE without an eye to subsequent employment. Also the Dearing Report (1997) points to the vital role that Higher Education plays in a modern economy. The setting of achievements, skills, understanding and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations have become aims that Governments around the world have, to varying extents, imposed on national HE systems (Teichler, 2007). The Higher Education sector is the primary knowledge creation system which is a key driver for other educational sectors (Parker 2010). HE has been identified as that which educates students in all professions, trains future government leaders, progresses quality of life for both individuals and humankind and thus facilitates future policy development as well as play essential role in sustaining democracy and social justice (Galang, 2010). Considering these benefits associated with HE on society and the economy of the United Kingdom, it becomes imperative that efforts are geared towards developing the sector nationally and internationally.

There are some arguments that do not portray HE in such positive light as discussed above. In the last two decades, there is a difference in opinion as to if HE should endeavour to engage with the labour market as it is seen as a threat to the critical stance towards knowledge and society that universities have hitherto represented (Barnett, 1994). There has also been some debate between education and training as it concerns their importance in the life of an individual and the society in general (Henry, Hill & Leitch, 2005). Furthermore, doubts have been articulated by other authors as to whether education in itself can provide significant preparation for work, knowing that experience of the 'real world' is all that really matters (Hill *et al.*, 2003). Having identified the benefits and criticisms of HE, it can be argued by this study that HE is important to the individual and society in general; hence participation in HE should be encouraged by the stakeholders.

HE falls within the service sector (Mazzarol, 1998; Sultan & Wong, 2012), where the key features of services include: intangibility; inseparability; heterogeneity; and perishability (Voss & Gruber, 2006). HE is described as that which is predominantly intangible, making the service offering difficult to define (Hwarng & Teo, 2001; Conway & Rembielak-Vitchev 2010; Meraj, Fernades & Ross, 2016). HE provision can be described as inseparable (Nicholls, Harris, Morgan, Clarke & Sims, 1998; Lupo, 2013) in that it creates a platform for both the provider and consumer to interact directly, where the outcome creates a unique and heterogeneous experience (Conway & Rembielak-Vitchev, 2005). HE services are perishable (Yeo, 2008) in that a seminar/lecture which was not attended is missed forever as a repeat cannot guarantee a 100% replication (Conway & Rembielak-Vitchev, 2005). This can further be related to replicating the class experience. Faganel (2010) identified HE Institutions as producers and providers of service. Having defined HE, its benefits and identifying the sector it fits in, the following section will discuss and evaluate HE specifically within the UK context.

3.2 UK Higher Education

The UK HE sector is an important part of the economy both in terms of its contribution to knowledge through graduate employability, international research and interaction with industry (Durkin, Mckenna & Cummins 2012 p.153). HE in the UK has existed for over 600 years, indeed teaching began in Oxford 900 years ago (Baldwin, 2009). HE in the UK before the 1960's was mainly for the rich before financial incentives were introduced to encourage applications from other citizens (Boliver, 2013). In the 1960s the style of teaching was not properly understood as a critical issue that needed adequate consideration (Robbins 1963). The adoption of the Robbins Report (1963) on HE however extended in principle, access to HE to individuals who were capable of benefitting from a University education. In an attempt to meet the huge increase for professional, vocational and several industrial type programmes, the establishment of the white paper titled 'A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges' took place which proposed the setting up of polytechnics and colleges in 1966. This scheme was explained by Farren (2005) as an idea to place non-university HE in polytechnics in the UK. The pace at which Universities moved as compared to Polytechnics was at a slower pace though it was in the same direction. HE sector comprises of about 166 HEIs of which 116 are universities (Universities UK, 2010). The polytechnics were generally more "practically oriented". It is however important to mention that polytechnics do not exist anymore in the UK HE sector.

There have been specific reforms in the UK HE sector within the last two decades where it has also been affected by reforms made by the general public sector (Maassen, 2008; Maassen & Stensaker, 2011). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) gave examples of such public reforms as commercialisation and co-modification which come in a more radical way and which are likely bring about a change in the objectives of universities. Since the 1980's there has been a significant growth in the development of the UK HE sector in meeting the challenges of the economy (Dobbins, 2009). In sustaining the above, the widening participation agenda which is concerned with making HE accessible to students who have never really considered it as an option was created and cemented upon (DFES, 2006; Rinnie & Koivula, 2009). Having considered the UK HE sector and some reforms associated with it, it can be seen that these reforms has brought about several changes. Examples of such changes include: increase in participation; rise in the number of universities; extension to colleges; reduction in student funding; increase in fees; the establishment of variable of undergraduate tuition and immigration reforms (UKVI) etc. It can be seen that there is a substantial growth identified in the sector, which has also prompted several changes and reforms. Some of these changes are deemed unfavourable to the UK HEIs. Example of such, is the visa rules that negatively influence international students to choose the UK as a study destination. Hence, HEIs should be ready to deal with these changes.

One of the characteristics of the UK HE system is that in the UK there is a greater autonomy in the provision of new programmes, selection of students, recruitment and salaries of academic staff compared with France, Germany, Italy and Spain (Agasisti & Catalano, 2006). HE in the UK has been transformed into enlarged trans-cultural learning zones increasing accessibility to all both domestically and internationally. This should ensure that UK HEIs gain and sustain competitive advantage through differentiation to be able to remain a going concern (Crossouard, 2010). There have been considerable expansions of HE within the last decade in the UK. This also has led to a growth in the internalisation of UK HEIs (Tarry, 2011). Internationalisation has transformed the HE landscape (Knight, 2013). The best known form of internationalisation in HE is the increasing mobility of students studying from abroad (Bruch & Barty, 1998; Scott, 1998; Altbach, 2015).

There have been large increases in the number of young people who graduate from HEIs and over 15% of young people (16-19 years) are participants of HE (Trow, 2006). Participation rate in the UK HE has increased significantly where institutions have proven tremendously successful and the policies of the Government are in line to ensure participation increases (Gorard, 2007). There is a rise in the number of students who are participants in UK HE in recent years (Groves *et al.*, 2010). HEFCE (2014) reported that HE is a successful, growing and lucrative export industry to the UK economy. The UK immigration reforms have however affected the industry (John & Fanghanel, 2015). The immigration reforms especially as it deals with international students are seen as quite radical especially as it is perceived by international students as an unwelcoming destination. These reforms include, strict study visa rules and the lack of opportunity for international students to stay to seek at least a year work experience after completion of their studies apart from PhD international students who are given a one year visa to enable them seek work. Kunstler (2005) stated that HE is a consumer driven industry which in itself represents a broader global cultural shift which has made it a marketing driven economy. The following section looks at educational institutions in the UK HE sector in other to help understand the concept.

3.2.1 University

Although the UK HE sector consists of several institutions, this section of this study will discuss the University sector in detail. A University is defined by Oxford dictionary as an educational institution of the highest order, being a corporate body of teachers and students and providing facilities for teaching and research as well as offering undergraduate and graduate programmes, and conferring degrees.

The Robbins Report (1963, p. 317) defined universities for statistical purposes as, "…institutions in receipt of a Treasury grant, although in later chapters of the report the term was broadened to cover Colleges of Advanced Technology and certain other types of institutions".

Although universities share some characteristics with their corporate peers, such as competition for members, the nature of their business is very different, and they do not function under the same parameters (Luque-Martinez & DelBarrio-Garcia, 2009). University was defined by Jones (2009) as an all-inclusive, secular, autonomous institution which possesses the legal authority to confer degrees. The core mission of a university is to create, preserve and communicate knowledge and contribute to cultural, social and economic well-being of society through education, research and scholarship (Stephenson & Yorke, 1998). Universities within the HE institutions extend their structures beyond the main principles of teaching, researching and transferring of knowledge though in different ways but within their strategic scope (Laredo, 2007). Academic degrees from UK universities are recognised worldwide for their high standards and quality of education (Mughal, 2016:241).

Universities in the UK HE sector are categorised as "The Red Brick", "Pre-1992" and the "Post 1992" universities. The red brick universities are universities that existed before the Robins report of 1960. The Pre-1992 Universities are Universities that existed after the Robbins Report, while the Post-1992 universities are those universities that were given the University status after the implementation of the Further and HE Act 1992.

Universities are enduring social institutions that direct efforts for social transformation that have existed for over 900 years (Ozdem, 2011). However, Gumport (2000) argued that universities within the HE sector are undergoing a transformation process from a social institution which it used to be. There have been other recent changes over the years which include: increasing participation rates; internationalisation; funding; policy; and market competition (Bowden, Gosling & O'Brien, 2013:754).

Having identified the characteristics and features of Universities within the UK HE context, the following section will address Further education have developed capacity within the UK HE sector.

3.2.2 Further Education

Further Education will be evaluated in terms of its close links to HE so as to help establish what it is as well as its similarities and differences. HMSO (1998) state that the term ‘further’ has been used as a replacement for vocational and its associations within the UK HE sector. In the UK, the post-secondary education is divided as Further and HE (Garrod & Macfarlane, 2007). This could be in the form of dual merger which involves the merger of Further Education College and a former university. An example of such is Thames Valley University (Garrod, 2007). It can be seen that in as much as further education is different from HE, there is still room for collaboration considering the fact that they both have several similar characteristics. This type of education has been identified as a progression route which provides opportunities for HE institutions (Garrod, 2007).

Further Education was defined by the Robbins Report (1963) as all those institutions which provide post school education. The above was later reaffirmed by the Dearing Report (1997). The name apportioned to education which falls into this category, however differs in several territories. In the UK it is known as further education while in the Australia region it is known as Technical and Further Education (TAFE) (Garrod & Macfarlane, 2007). Young (2006) describe the term ‘further education’ in the UK as a provision for those whose age is already past school leaving age. Jones (2009) defined further education under the English system as that part of an institution which sometimes includes universities that frequently offer sub degree programmes and continuing education activities. Both Further and HE however, have similarities and several traits in common which includes their scope and identities for both students and teachers, where it also enhances people’s expectations (Young, 2006). Further education tends to be applicable to the post-secondary education. This could take the form of A levels, Higher National Diplomas, and Foundation courses. This is usually taught in 6th form class and other work based, adult and community learning institutions. FE is different from universities who usually award bachelor degrees, professional qualifications and Continuous Professional Development courses. University programmes of study normally take longer to complete. For example, a bachelor’s degree normally takes three years to complete.

3.2.3 Business Schools in the UK HE Sector

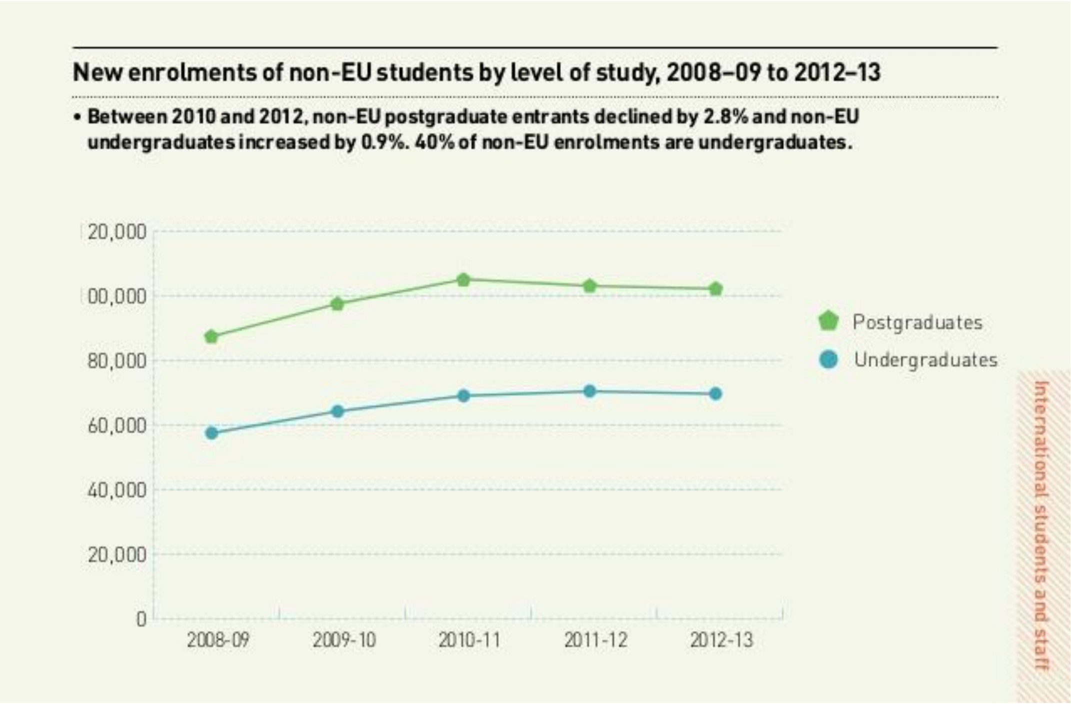
This section will address the Business Schools especially as it is the focus of this study. Several authors have addressed Business Schools in the UK in terms of their activities (Kirby, 2004; Ivy, 2008). They are currently about 130 Business Schools in the UK where the majority belongs to Universities (Mosey, Kirkam & Binks, 2015). These Business Schools are further identified as the biggest success story of the UK HEIs for over six decades (Thomas & Cornuel, 2012). They have been described as the largest provider of talent in the UK (Cox, 2012). It can be explained by this research that Business School has the highest number of international students in the UK HE sector (Zheng, 2014; Crawford, Wang & Andrew, 2016). There has been a growth in the number of overseas students coming to study in UK Business Schools as compared to other schools (De Vita & Case, 2003; HESA, 2014; Arthur & Nunes, 2014). Table 3.1 provides a summary of the numbers of international students in faculties of universities in the UK in 2014-2015. Incomes that are sourced from the international students in Business Schools tend to be what the universities rely upon (Starkey *et al*., 2004; Omoruyi et al., 2014). International student numbers are identified to be higher in international business education programmes, and sometimes outnumber home students in few of these Business Schools (Rienties *et al*., 2012). The importance of International students to the Business School was described as substantial, hence the importance of having international students in the UK Business Schools (Omoruyi & Rembielak, 2015). The quest for internationalisation which is the objective of Business Schools has been identified as another reason why Business Schools want international students. There has been a reduction in the numbers of international students coming to the UK as a result of the UKVI restrictions (Universities UK, 2014). See Figure 3.1 for international student enrolment trend where the numbers have decreased over the years.

Table 3. 1 International (Non-UK) students in UK HE in 2014-15

• There are 436,585 students from outside the UK coming to study in the UK.
• The number of Chinese students far exceeds any other nationality at 89,540.
• Indian students are the next largest cohort with 18,320 although this represents a continuing drop from the previous year and the year before.
• University College London (now including the Institute of Education) hosted the largest number of international (EU and non-EU) students in the UK with a total of 20,745.
• Business and administrative studies have the largest proportion of international students (38.4% of students in this subject are international) with Engineering and technology second (33.1%) and Law third (26.3%).
• There is no significant difference in the sex of non-UK students coming to the UK with 51% female and 49% male.

Source: Adapted from Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) 2016

Figure 3. 1 International student enrolment Trend 2008-2013



Source: Universities UK (2014).

3.3 Challenges Faced by Higher Education

In considering the challenges faced by the UK HE sector over the years till date, it is important to consider its funding and management. Knowing that HE must cater for a wide variety of interests (Gordon, 1995) it is likely to face several challenges. Miller (1995), in his study found that there was a need for universities to be prepared to handle unexpected shocks, which could either be environmental, political, economic or social. Gordon (1995) states that it can be concluded that a transition period has occurred in UK HE, in that in another decade it will be a phase of consolidation and development of stability and calm. This has however not been the case as several other issues has been experienced in the UK HE sector in recent times. For example, decreasing government funding (Durkin, Mckenna & Cummins 2012) for both research and teaching, and increasing pressure to maximize income are changing the nature and focus of HE from a process of learning to a marketable product (Scott, 1998; Brown & Carasso, 2013). Elliot and Healy (2001) identified an increase in competition and the demand of the general public for universities to account for every fund from the government as the main pressing issues of HE. There are several challenges faced by the HE sector while carrying out their activities including students coming into the system unprepared without the required skills to learn and work independently thereby putting pressure on the system to offer extra support in enabling such students to achieve success and progress (Wingate, 2006). This inadequate preparation by prospective students becomes an extra burden on HEIs especially as the success of such students might not be determined by the efforts the university is putting in.

Groves *et al.* (2010) identified guaranteeing the progression of students from different background as the one of the major challenges faced by the UK HE sector. The post 1992 era (Durkin, Mckenna & Cummins, 2012) has tried to introduce several strategies to empower students on how they can gain adequate essential study skills (Wingate, 2006). Several other challenges which include: setting up new education centres; controlling the gap in assessment and output they are designed to represent; expansion of systems; responding to several diverse social issues and increase in educational spending (Baldwin, 2009). The customer definition of quality within the HE sector has been identified as a challenge that is being faced by HE (Meirovich & Romar, 2006). Baldwin (2009) also identified as a challenge the general view of degrees acquired by students as a yard stick to measure how good the HE performs as people tend not to realise that the ability and effort of the student is what really matters as they have more control than the university who in this case is only a service provider. The challenge of graduate employment futures especially as it has to do with globalisation (Gibb, Haskins & Robertson, 2012). This challenge of preparing students to be able to act both locally and globally in future employment is a challenge for HEIs. Efforts have been made by HEIs to address this challenge, for example, internationalisation (Altbach, 2015) which has also brought about developments in curriculum (Gibb et al., 2013) to prepare students for employment locally and globally.

The inability to store service as a result of its intangibility (Berry, 1980; Lovelock & Witz, 2007) was identified by Mazzarol (1998) as a challenge to HE since it can result in either over-crowding or lack of capacity. However, this storage challenge has been addressed by the use of technology such as blackboard, and other virtual learning environments (Veletsianos, Kimmons & French 2013). Watson (2007) also identified the ambiguous pressures before HE from both public and private interest as that which brings about the challenge of trying to operate ethically. The key to success in HE which is the management of stakeholders is what Baldwin (2009) identified as the greatest challenge facing HEIs in the UK. This study will investigate how HEIs are addressing this issue especially as it concerns international students as stakeholders. The government (which he described as interventionist) was also identified as a major threat to the sector as well as the bodies created to manage and fund the HE sector, since these dominant stakeholders are more political and tend to give less attention to the development of the sector (Baldwin, 2009). Kaye and LeSage (2009) saw as a challenge the intervention of the judicial process in issues relating to examination grading, accreditation and degree requirement which has led to the creation of a doctrine by the courts to enforce rights if expectations are not met. They saw this as affecting the relationship between the student and the institution. HE in the UK is undergoing the challenge of trying to cope with the extra number of students as compared to limited funding as a result of the cuts introduced by the conservative led coalition government (Watson, 2011). Graham *et al.* (2011) categorised the challenges faced by HE into three main segments which include: increasing access and absorbing demand; safeguarding and promoting quality/standards; and reducing and minimising cost to stakeholders. The growing presence of non-British students enrolled in UK universities in recent years has also created a new challenge for the UK HE sector (Luxon & Peelo, 2009). An example of such challenge is when a faculty or University is made up of students from all over the globe; this richness of culture rightly affects the nature of these institutions thereby becoming a challenge to the system. However, researchers have shown that some international students do not want a multi-glue culture, but come to the UK to perfect their English and study UK culture. Binsardi and Ekwulego (2003) and Bagley and Portnoi (2014) identified competition from other parts of the globe as a challenge faced by UK HEIs. Universities are faced with the challenge of internationalisation strategies (Gibb et al., 2013), as there are different activities and processes in university internationalisation (for example, research collaboration, mobility/exchanges for students, joint degrees, international development projects, international fee paying student recruitment, campus abroad, international faulty, international networks and programme delivery abroad etc.). It becomes difficult for HEIs to adopt a best form of internationalising as some of these processes carry more risk than others. Thus, HEIs are more concerned with adopting the approach with lesser risk and provides more value to the university in return (Gibb et al., 2013). Value can be explained as revenue, multi-cultural environment and influencing a robust curriculum (Harrison & Peacock, 2009; Luxon & Peelo, 2009).

From the above, it can be seen that the UK HE sector is faced with many challenges and some of these have impeded its ability to compete locally and internationally. Some of these challenges stem from reforms within the sector in recent times. Other challenges can be attributed to its expansion which could have been driven as a result of its goal of internationalisation. Other challenges identified can be traced to policies developed by the government, for example the immigration policies developed by the UKVI which international students see as not favourable. Like organisations in every other sector, HEIs are also concerned about how they can overcome these challenges and be able to survive and gain competitive advantage. Several strategies have been considered and the next section will review literature on HE marketing especially as this study is concerned with the marketing of HE.

3.4 Stakeholders of Higher Education

Several researchers have developed different models of stakeholders within the HE context which identifies who they are and their roles (Telford & Mason 2005; Baldwin, 2009; Nie & Bolton, 2010). Telford and Mason (2005) identified the majority of stakeholders in the HE sector as those who are associated with what the courses are designed to accomplish, the method in which they are delivered and supported, and the obligations of the different participants. Nie and Bolton (2010) identified the government, students, parents and industry itself as the major stakeholders of HE sector.

The stakeholder model of the corporation, as proposed by Halal (1996), did not just identify who the important stakeholders were but it also established their rights to corporation as well as their responsibilities. The stakeholders identified in the corporation model include employees, suppliers, investors, the public, its government representatives and customers (Halal, 1996). Students, employees, parents and society are all considered as some of the numerous stakeholders of HE Institution (HEI's), where students were identified as the most important amongst all stakeholders (Ahmed *et al*., 2010; Zeshen, 2010). Students as stakeholders in the HE sector are customers who should be seen and treated in the same way customers of firms in the manufacturing sector (Faganel, 2010). Different stakeholders which include students, families, employers, and society are all categorised as customers (Marzo-Navarro et al., 2005). The UK HE sector consists of several stakeholders. The students were identified by Baldwin (2009) as the major participants since they are the major consumers. Thus, this study will be identifying international students as the major stakeholder. Having identified who the stakeholders of HE marketing are and how students fit into the customer description, the next section will address and evaluate the role of students and address the arguments that they are both customers and consumers.

3.4.1 Students as Higher Education Customers

There is much debate both in academic literature and in HE marketing departments regarding the concept of student as a customer (Durkin, McKenna, & Cummins, 2013).

While using customer in this context, it becomes imperative to establish first the definition of a customer. Deming (1986) identified a customer as one who gets your work. Juran (1988) opined that anyone who the work impacts on is known as the customer. Corts (1992) however stated that everyone is a customer, where also everyone can serve as a customer. One who receives or benefits from the outcome of a work or one who purchases a product or service is a customer (Maguad, 2007). Customers were further categorised as either internal or external customers; where the internal customers are those who receive from within the organisation and their efforts serve as a contribution towards the activities and functions of other departments in the organisation. By comparison, external customers are those described as the end users who are not a part of the organisation which the organisation seeks to satisfy.

Having reviewed some definitions of the term customer it becomes important to determine who are referred to as 'customers' in the HE context so as to allow a proper understanding of the use of the term during this study. Several parties were classified by Weaver (1976) as potential customers in the HE sector. These are: (1) the Government; (2) teachers/academics;

(3) its administrators; ; (4) the learners; (5) learners families; (6) employers; and (7) society as a whole. Kotler and Fox (1985) recognised employers as the customer and students as the raw materials and the graduate as the 'product'. Conway et al. (1994 p.31) stated that, "...students can be either considered as customers (with courses as the HE products) or as products with the employers being the customers".

Several other arguments and exchanges were developed while trying to determine how to consider students. In doing this, researchers have used several criteria to substantiate their claims (Cuthbert, 2010; Saunders, 2015). Fee payment was also used as criteria to determine students as a customer. It was argued that since students pay fees to purchase services that will enable them gain satisfaction they therefore should be seen as customers (Kanji & Tambi, 1999; Danjuma & Rasil, 2013). In this argument, the researchers are insisting that if students pay for the services, then they should be referred to and treated as customers. As a result students then expect good grades regardless of the efforts they put in (Clayson & Haley, 2005). Caru and Cova (2003) identified the student and HE relationship to that in which a consumer experience is created as a result of the financial exchange involved. Considering the student experience which is available in the HE sector, it is argued that students should be identified as consumers since they do not just participate in the student experience but they are also obliged financially. The ideology behind the fees paid gives entitlement to the degree (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). These researchers describe the financial exchange as purchase fee, where they should have full right to the product. Students see employability as a priority rather than becoming a scholar in the chosen course of study (Gibbs, 2001).

In classifying students, Sharrock (2000) and Cuthbert (2010) described students into the following exchange types;

i. Customer – the student as one who is knowledgeable, who pays to acquire customer-defined instructional services from the university system, who is an external customer.
ii. Client- the student as uninformed, paying to acquire expert guidance and instructional services from the university system.
iii. Citizen- the student as that who has certain rights within the university system as a co-member of the university.

iv. Subject- the student is a subordinate of the hierarchy of the university. i.e. the student is a part of the hierarchy of the university.

Students were described by Mills (2007) as those who are perceived by Universities as customers even more than the way that government perceive them. He stresses on how universities try to satisfy them thereby putting the system under intense pressure in getting a balance between academic standard and customer satisfaction. Students should be identified as the customers as well as the product itself (Anctil, 2008).

Higher Education sector consists of several stakeholders. Telford and Mason (2005) identified the majority of stakeholders in the HE sector as those who are associated with what the courses are designed to accomplish, the method in which they are delivered and supported, and the obligation required of the different participants.

Maguad (2007) did not only identify students as customers, students were further described as the most important customer of the HE institutions. He further described students as beneficiaries who have needs to be satisfied. Twersky et al. (2013) also described students as beneficiaries who benefit directly from the quality of the system. Braxton (2010), described students as clients considering the teaching role performance of the faculty. Also, students are not seen as just individuals benefiting from public good, neither are they seen as actors of an academic process, but are rather seen as consumers or clients (Pitman, 2000; Sharrock, 2000; Morley 2003). Researchers however stressed that students unlike usual clients are not completely free to choose knowledge, especially as the output that comes from their choices does not always consist of all the operations within the HEI's (Pitman, 2000; Sharrock, 2000; Newson, 2004). HE is acknowledged as a major service good in our present day environment, where also the students are seen as customers and clients (Meek & Wood, 1998; Moodie, 2001). Students were described as consumers by Kaye *et al*. (2009) who argued that students are concerned about acquiring tangible benefits from their studies and as such consider the employment aspects of their qualification. Manthorpe *et al*. (2010) state that students should not just be seen as customers, rather students should be seen as consumers. More HEI's in recent times have changed their perceptions towards students where they are now seen and considered as clients or consumers (Cardoso *et al*., 2011).

The description of students goes beyond clients, customer, beneficiaries and consumer. Bay and Daniel (2001) stressed that student in the HE context should be perceived as a collaborative partner rather than as a customer. They argue that identifying students as a partner becomes easier to establish the relationship that exists between the institution and the student. An example of such is where the student has to either buy a living space or books from the book store within the facilities available at the campus. At other times the students becomes a learner or the product of the education itself.

There are contrary views as to the student being referred to as a consumer or customers. Barrett (1996) strongly disagrees that it is both disappointing and threatening that the marketing focus, clearly taken from business is now accepted in the HE sector. Also, faculties, administrators in the HE sector find it difficult to refer to student or anyone else as a customer neither considering them as customer driven (Lewis & Smith, 1994; Lomas, 2007). Where Canic and McCarthy (2000) stated that using the term customer to address students is likely to awaken many emotions, misconceptions and preconceptions. It has been realised from this section that addressing the student as customer has been established though this is seen as not appropriate by several authors. Especially as perceiving students as a customer is a natural consequence of attaching importance to HE marketing (Cuthbert, 2010). Emphasis was also placed on the financial exchange involved in the encounter between the student and the University as a basis for identifying students as customers. Regardless of the customer status of students, studies acknowledge the student as the most important in terms of the stakeholder model. Following these arguments reviewed above, this study will describe international students as unique customers with emphasis on their experience and not necessarily as customers are described in other service sector. The next section will be reviewing the specific students (international students both undergraduate and postgraduates) who are the focus of this study.

3.5 International Students

The term international student is a term frequently used in place of foreign students (Arthur & Nunes, 2014). Students who leave their home countries to study abroad are known as international students. In the UK, international students are defined as students from Non-EU countries, who require study visas, and pay higher tuition fees as compared to home (EU) students (Morrison, et al., 2005; Miller & Bolsmann; 2008; Gallup-Black, 2015). A growing number of students prefer to study at a university overseas (Healey, 2008: Russell, *et al.*, 2010). More than three million students leave their home countries to study overseas especially in developed nations (Rienties *et al.*, 2011). Universities in developed nations host a significant number of international students (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). HEIs around the globe are focusing efforts towards how to get a large share of these international students (Douglas & Edelstein, 2015). 10% of international students are reported to be in the UK HEIs (OECD, 2014).There is a continuous increase not just in the UK but all over the world (Okazaki-Ward, 2001).The growing number of international students developed nations especially in the UK has gained the attention of educators, academics, governments and researchers (Wang, Hardy & Mai, 2012) with distinction being made on the basis of fee status, so 'home' students in that sense can include other European Union (EU) students; whereas in other contexts 'international' students include non-UK EU students (Omoruyi et al., 2014).

Definition of international students is not limited to the definitions already discussed above. It extends to definition of international students who are off-shore. UNESCO and Council of Europe (2000) describe such international students as off-shore students who are located in a country other than the one in which awarding institution is based. This they described as transnational higher education. This type of education which largely accommodates international students has grown significantly across the globe, with the UK universities identified as the largest provider (Bennel & Pearce, 1998). Though this type of HE provision is common with schools in the business faculties (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003) this study will not be addressing this classification of education since it is not related to the objective of this study. It will be important for this study to identify challenges faced by international students so as to help understand how best to retain them especially as international student retention is a construct been investigated by this study. This will be addressed in the following section.

3.5.1 Challenges Faced By International Students

There are several challenges faced by overseas students in the UK. Some of these tend to vary amongst the universities, faculties, and individuals. The challenges cut across different spheres of life. Within the HEI, students are faced with several challenges which include: problems using the library (Liu. 1993; Downing & Klein, 2001), language, learning styles, and previous experiences (Kahmi-Stein & Stein, 1998; Baron & Strout-Dapaz, 2001; Bamford, 2008). Several other authors identified cultural and language differences as a challenge international students face (Natowitz, 1995; Lacina, 2002; Zhang & Xu, 2007). Varga-Atkins and Ashcroft (2004) identified the struggle to access information without help as one of the greatest challenges faced by international students. The majority of international students feel affected negatively as they cannot access information themselves unless someone comes to help them. Other challenges like language gap, also affect those international students who do not have English as their first language (Andrade, 2006; Carroll & Ryan, 2007). These students struggle to cope when it comes to speaking and writing. It even prevents many of them from accessing useful information both in the library and other available resources. Students from developing countries who do not have access to up to date technology also find it difficult to use resources which needs IT knowledge (Altbach, 2015), for example, using and accessing the library. Libraries and other resource centres within and outside the university utilise these technologies. International students undergo pressure from UKVI as a result of strict regulations recently put in place for international students (Jones & Fleischer, 2012; Fischer & Saunders, 2016). Since 2010, the study visa (Tier 4) laws have been reviewed and these have led to several restrictions on international students' visa. For example, the international students after completion of their studies do not have right to the post-study work visa which normally would allow them stay in the UK to either take up a job or continue their studies. There are also several requirements placed on study visas by the UKVI and some of these are quite rigid and they sometimes put pressure on international students. These and other related issues put international students under stress. Adjusting to the life in the UK is difficult for international students (Lee, 2010). It is expected that adaptation will be difficult to establish by international students. Griffiths et al. (2005) and Li, Chen and Duanmu (2009), propose that number of international students do experience certain extreme stress when they arrive in the host country, previously described as '*learning shock*' or '*academic culture shock*', this was identified as a factor that can also contribute to student attrition.

International students are also faced with financial difficulties (Lee, 2010). Gu et al. (2009) found in their study that international students' lacks a sense of belong and social life. HEIs are faced with the problem of how best to manage diversity in classroom situations and some of these challenges are responsible for the attrition rate of international students which is not surprising, knowing that after college to get familiar with the University environment is hard enough, nevertheless getting familiar with a new country (Tompson and Tompson, 1996). It is argued that international students do not sufficiently adapt to their host country both socially and academically (Reintes *et al.,* 2011) As a result, it is important that HEIs try to combat this challenge as this could lead to attrition of international students if not dealt with. The academic integration of international students is not well-aligned with the requirements of HEIs (Asmar, 2005; Morrison et al., 2005; Barrie 2007; Russell et al., 2010). International student needs tend not to be taken into consideration when developing the curriculum and as a result curriculum requirements are completely new to the international students, and are thus a challenge for international students to cope with. This is now becoming a challenge for international students to cope with, hence, leading to high attrition rates. Severiens and Wolff (2008) found that students who feel at home, who are academically included, who develop good relationship with other students and their tutors are more likely not to drop-out. As for international students they will likely not fall into this category described above considering them studying away from home. As a result it is important that HEIs find a way to establish a platform for this relationship to exist so they can enhance retention

3.5.2 The need for International Students in the UK HEIs

It is argued that institutions all over the globe are now keen to increase their number dof international students in their institutions (Kinnell, 1989; Altbach, 2015). The proactive and robust marketing strategy adopted by USA and Australia has given them the advantage of attracting and retaining more international students than the UK who is now beginning to adopt marketing strategies (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2004; Helgessen, 2008). The Overall economic impact of international students goes beyond its contribution to the host university to the UK economy (Love & McNicoll, 1988; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Price Water Cooper House, 2015). Increases in the number of fee paying international students have contributed enormously to the financial growth of UK HEIs (Bevis, 2002; Turner, 2006; Price Water Cooper House, 2015). International students do not serve only as a source of income for HEIs, they also improve classroom discussions as a result of the valuable insights they contribute (Luxon & Peelo, 2009). It is also argued International students also enrich their host countries with their different heritage and perspectives, hence, serving to improve cultural awareness and appreciation (Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Malik, 2014). Other studies posit that international students bring a variety of benefits to the host country (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Mughal, 2016). International students in HEIs make valuable economic and educational contributions to host countries (Andrade, 2006; Altbach, 2015). In keeping the international students, Universities aside from meeting the learning needs of the students, they now also work to provide their social and welfare needs (Kinnell, 1989), through provision of services such as: student academic progress; teaching and tutoring; student services and student support systems; and student English language proficiencies. This view was also supported by Tinto (2010) who identified student support as an important component that enhances student retention. HEIs must improve and standardise the quality of teaching, learning and support provided for international students in order to improve their retention rate (Jones & Fleischer, 2012). There should be a great awareness of how to meet the learning and basic needs of international students considering their contribution to the HEIs and the destination country where they take up their studies (Arnett *et al*., 2003). There is a need for HEIs to continue to enhance international students' attraction and retention (Solomon, 2012) especially as 192,000 international students arrived in the UK for long-term study in the year to June 2015 - down from a peak of 238,000 in 2010 (ONS, 2016).

3.6 Customer Retention in Higher Education Sector

Customer retention in the HEI sector falls under the larger umbrella term of customer loyalty because repeated purchase of a service is one way for a customer to demonstrate loyalty (Fontaine, 2014). Rowley (2003) argues that the focus to retain customer base is not peculiar to HEI's alone and that recently marketers have understood that relationships and not transactions are at the heart of the marketing exchange. This approach acknowledges that HEIs enhanced success is earned through a loyal customer base and that issues of retention have been present in recent discussions in the HE sector (Bowden, 2011). Elaine *et al*. (2006) stressed that viewing students as customers provides a competitive advantage for HE and enhances an institution's ability to attract, retain and serve its customers. HEIs are considering student retention as an important issue (Helgesen, 2008). However, this form of retention has not been thoroughly represented in the literature (Nguyen & LeBalnc, 2001; Ackerman & Jibrowsky, 2007). As a result making it difficult for managers of HE to access adequate theories that can help in improving student retention rates. Global competition in the HE sector has caused all HEI's to shift their focus from just attracting and enrolling students to retaining all matriculated students (Kotler & Fox, 1995; Elliot & Healy, 2001). Hence the emphasis of student retention has become an important subject matter in the strategy proposed by HE Institutions (Sauer & O'Donnell, 2006). Helgesen (2008) and Fontaine (2014) conclude that as a result of the increase in competition amongst HEI's globally, ideas from student retention studies should be of major interest to managers and marketers of HEI's. This study will address student retention in the HE sector and will be relating the discussion to international students in the following section.

3.6.1 Student Retention

Tinto (2010) describes student retention as the practice that directs students to remain in the institution in which they enrol and earn a certificate or degree. Fontaine (2014 p.107) defined student retention "...the student act of remaining enrolled at a university". Student attrition rate according to Airey (2012) was defined as the percentage of the students in a particular year that did not graduate nor continue studying on a programme for an award at the same institution in the following year. Earlier student retention studies in HEIs have focused on academic ability as the predictor of retention (Fontaine, 2014). However, these studies reported that academic performance could only account for half of the variance in dropout rates (Pantages & Creedon, 1978). In the UK, the two media of measuring student retention are converted into institutional performance indicators. They are termed as 'completion rate' and 'continuation rate', where the former is described as the proportion of starters who continue their studies until a qualification is obtained with no more than one consecutive year out of HE, and the latter, is the proportion of the overall intake of an institution which is enrolled in HE in the year following their first entry to HE (Hauser & Koenig, 2011). These completion rates are calculated by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). In calculating this, several factors which include entry qualifications and subjects studied, are considered when suggesting what the completion and continuation rates ought to be as well as how funding will be allocated towards retention of students via the core grant. This description of student retention is also applicable to international students.

3.6.2 Student Retention (Pedagogic Perspective)

Though the focus of this study is directed more on how marketing approaches and tactics affect student retention, it is however important that student retention in HE is addressed by this study from a pedagogical perspective. Addressing the pedagogical perspective is fundamental especially as the characteristics of pedagogy have been identified as the determinants of success or failure (Gorinski & Abernethy, 2007). The curricula for example is described as an essential factor especially as it is expected to reflect the international environment (Omoruyi et al., 2016) to enable it engage international students. They further argued that a curriculum that does not have an international feel can bring about lack of participation which could lead to student attrition. It is expected that the curriculum should be underpinned by knowledge of all students to help enhance engagement which as a result will improve co-creation of knowledge within and outside the classroom (Stables & Scott, 2002).

The pedagogy practice which includes effective participation, transparent assessment and early feedback are all determinants of student retention (Hall, 2001; Gorinski & Abernethy, 2007). Staff diversity of teachers who are involved in classroom delivery are identified as an important factor which affect student retention rate especially as it relates to students who are not referred to as home students (Gorinski & Abernethy, 2007). It is further argued that where staff diversity cease to exist, then student can feel much engaged instead of seeing themselves in isolation. Discursive teaching styles are identified as key determinants of positive student retention rate (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Tutorials and interactive group work are examples of such teaching styles.

3.6.3 Models of Student Retention

Tinto's model of student retention is one of the commonly accepted models (Tinto, 1995). Its focus is on factors contributing to a student's decision about whether to go on with their HE. It states that the degree of academic integration and social integration strongly predicts the decision to persist or withdraw. Tinto (1995) argues that from an academic perspective, performance, personal development, academic self-esteem, enjoyment of subjects, identification with academic norms, and one's role as a student all contribute to a student's overall sense of integration into the university. Students who are highly integrated socially and academically are more likely to persist and complete their degrees. Student have more personal contact with academics, who have more friends at their university, enjoy being at the university, will be likely to decide to persist. Unclear career goals, uncertainty about the course, lack of academic challenge, transition or adjustment problems, limited or unrealistic expectations, lack of engagement, and a low level of integration are likely cause lower student retention rates. According to Tinto (2010), students are most likely to stay on their course if they can identify close links between their own academic objectives, and the academic and social characteristics of the university. If students find the particular course can combine education and their chosen subject, and greatly help them achieve their goals, their chances of completing will increase dramatically.

3.6.4 Student Retention as a Concern

Institutions seek to retain students and increase their rates of institutional retention (Tinto, 2010). Student retention and progression linger as a fundamental policy issues for the English HE sector (Longden, 2006; Douglas, Douglas, McClelland & Davies, 2015). One of the biggest challenges that HE faces is to improve student retention (Heaton-Shrestha *et al*., 2009; Zhang *et al*., 2010; Fontaine, 2014; Powell & Rey, 2015). Johnston (2003) identified the government's 'widening participation' agenda, as that which has intensified the ongoing HEI concern with low rates of student retention, as pressure to attract greater numbers of students from non-UK backgrounds has grown. This widening participation provided to a larger population is now a phenomenon (Longden, 2006). Koening and Hauser (2011) states that there is a need for improvements in student retention stressing that it is important that actions should be taken to address it as an issue, especially as widening participation has increased the number of students with more tendency to require support (Helgessen, 2008). The reputation of institutions is badly damaged by figures showing low student retention and high numbers of student attrition (Yorke & Longden, 2004). Student retention is identified by universities as a setback that needs to be addressed a part of the overall strategy to help in improving enrolment in the first instance (Stanchak *et al.*, 2012). Lower revenue will result from low retention rates and thus a reduction in government grant (Yorke & Longden 2004). The retention of students is of great concern to institutions worldwide (Gosling, 2009). Income to UK HEIs has been reduced and as a result of this reduction, marketing HE to improve student retention is now an objective of HEIs (Brown & Carasso, 2013). Issues of student retention discussed above and other reasons can all be identified as rationales while student retention is an issue for HEIs. It becomes important to address what HEIs are doing to improve student retention, and this will be addressed in the following section.

3.6.5 Influences of Student Retention and Practical Implications

Enhancing student experience is the key to retaining them, hence the need for careful management of satisfaction within each HE institution (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; DeShields *et al.*, 2005). Positive student experience also promotes student loyalty (Athiyaman, 1997; Schertzer & Schertzer, 2004). Several initiatives of RM were identified as determinants of student retention and positive experience. These include: provision of up-to-date technologies; up-to-date facilities; effective and efficient communication; and one-to-one marketing (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Assad, Melawar & Cohen, 2014). Provision of up-to-date communication methods, communication channels, communication technologies, accurate information, and improved facilities for students will also help enhance the student experience (Durkin, McKenna & Cummins, 2012; Peck et al., 2013; Quintall et al., 2013). Kotler and Fox (1995) state that students who get attention when required, even if it is not a favourable one as such, stay more loyal to the university than those who do not complain but who are dissatisfied. Student satisfaction has been identified as a determinant of student retention (Fontaine, 2015). Service quality in an educational context was identified by Boulding *et al*. (1993) as a determinant for student retention. The quality of the service provided to students is also seen as a significant factor. Other studies, for example Hennig-

Thurau *et al*. (2001) suggests that how students perceive the quality of teaching, as well as their emotional commitment to their institution, are key determinants of their retention. The commitment factor suggested above can be related to the commitment construct developed by Tinto (1997) argues that the students' commitment to their own goals, the university and commitment to other activities (that has nothing to do with their university activities) are all key roles in determining their retention. Here the external commitment has the likelihood of affecting the student's experience negatively. Social factors e.g. dress sense etc. has also been identified as a factor that can determine the level of student retention in any academic institution within the HE sector (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Tinto, 1997). Academic achievement was also identified as a part factor for student retention (Pantages & Creedon, 1978). Satisfaction was identified by (Dick & Basu, 1994; Strauss & Neuhaus, 1997) as one of the antecedents of a loyalty relationship.

In evaluating how behavioural concept links to loyalty, Bloemer and Kasper (1995) assert that the term loyalty is misconstrued as true loyalty instead of repeat purchasing behaviour that is basically without any commitment. The actual rebuying of a particular brand stresses that true loyalty encompasses all behavioural responses that results in commitment. Loyalty schemes which encourage repeat purchase do not mean that a customer is loyal to the brand rather that they are loyal to the scheme (Dowling & Uncles, 1997). This means that customer loyalty should be carefully studied to determine what exactly qualifies the term. Baron *et al*. (2010) argued that behaviour alone does not define loyalty as attitude is a part of the loyalty concept. Rowley (2003 p.250) argues that "…customers who are loyal in attitude are likely to make recommendations to someone else, and, sometimes their loyal attitude will lead to loyal behaviour in the form or repeat purchases. Loyal students, then, might not only stay themselves, but also have a role in encouraging other students to stay". Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) stated that student loyalty is made up of both attitudinal and behavioural components that are closely related. For example class activities in the form of teaching which can be described as a service (Ganesh, Arnold & Reynolds, 2000) Dick and Basu's (1994) model of customer loyalty is a conceptual framework showing the attitude and behaviour component. This model establishes the outcome of the interaction between a customer's attitude and behaviour towards a particular brand. This model divides the customer into four groups as shown in Figure 3.2

Figure 3. 2 Types of Loyalty

Relative attitude

High	**Low**	
True Loyalty	Spurious Loyalty	**High**
		Repeat Purchase
Latent Loyalty	No Loyalty	**Low**

Source: Adapted from Dick and Basu (1994 p.1).

True loyalty is when customers repeat purchase (behavioural) and relative attitude (attitudinal) are both in the 'high' column of the matrix. This seems to be the place organisations seek for their customers. Baron *et al*. (2010) stresses that reinforcing attitude and behaviour should be the objective of the organisation at all times.

Spurious Loyalty is when repeat purchase (behavioural) is high and relative attitude (attitudinal) is low. Baron *et al.* (2010) identifies special offers, promotions, loyalty scheme and deals as that which propels this behavioural loyalty for customers in a short term that there is a concern for trying to satisfy such customers as they are predicted to switch if competitors offers similar incentives.

Latent Loyalty is when repeat purchase (behavioural) is low and relative attitude (attitudinal) is high. Baron *et al*. (2010) identified convenience and, opening times as barriers that will likely prevent customers who are willing to purchase from an organisation from doing so. Here they stressed that organisation should endeavour to remove such barriers.

No Loyalty is when both the repeat purchase (behavioural) and relative attitude (attitudinal) are low. Customers in this part of the matrix are identified as 'non loyals', whom Baron *et al*. (2010) described as customers who see competing offers as undifferentiated.

Authors such as Yorke and Longden (2004) put the reasons why students leave into the following four categories: flawed decision-making about entering the programme; students' experience of the programme and the institution generally; failure to cope with the demand of the programme; and events that impact on students' lives outside the institution. High attrition in the HE sector is linked with lower entry qualifications, students whose parents have not had university education and those who have lower socio-economic status (HEFCE, 2000; McMillan, 2011).

Other authors stressed the importance of students' experience stating that students engagement with their studies is an important factor in improving student retention, success and outcomes (Tinto, 2005; Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007) Students' engagement was identified as a factor which improves student retention rate (Tinto, 2005). In defining student engagement, Horstmanshof and Zimitat (2007) described it as student academic commitment and application. Heaton-Strestha *et al*. (2009) suggests that the value of student responsive curriculum development is a means to promote student engagement. Engagement also forms retention through its effect on student social membership and the social and emotional support that builds up from such membership (Gloria & Robinson, 2001). Involvement or engagement of the student whether social or academic, influences retention in several ways (Tinto, 2010). Example of such involvement includes engaging students in development of policies. Hodgson *et al*. (2008) also found that social engagement and peer support were key factors towards student retention. From the above, student engagement can be seen as a significant variable towards student retention.

Other factors as proposed by Tinto (2010) towards increasing retention rate in HE is also addressed since this study is interested in evaluating factors affect students' experience. Student expectation was identified as a factor that can also determine student retention. Examples of such are actions and statements of the institutions administrators, staff, members and faculty which are expected to be consistent and clear before the students. Some of these could be information provided to students via email. This can be reaffirmed from the findings of Seidman (1991), who found that students who received advice three times after admission on issues about course schedules, social involvement and academic persisted at a rate 20% higher than those who only attended the orientation programme. The term "student persistence" according to Tinto (2010) is the process that leads students to remain in HE and complete their certificate or degree. Also it can be seen from Metzner's (1989) study of over one thousand freshers at a public university found that student satisfaction with the quality of the advice they received was positively related to persistence to the second year where it also affected higher grade in the first year. Heverly (1999) stressed that it is still the case where formal faculty advising is not available to all students that some students are lucky to assess advisors while others are not. The significance of advice, social and academic supports has been identified as determinants of retention (Tinto 2010; Bejou & Bejou, 2012; Moore &

Bowden-Everson, 2012). Providing such support identified above to students especially international students will enhance student retention.

It was argued by Tinto (2010) that the clarity and consistency should satisfy expectations in terms of students knowing what to do to succeed; the efforts expected of students to achieve those targets are provided academically, socially, financially and otherwise. Others stated the importance of ensuring that students understand the core disciplinary concept as the key to retention (Myer & Land, 2005). The activities that occur within the teaching and learning programme were identified by Gosling (2009) as important in determining student retention. Cases of good practice which included the provision of peer assisted learning methods and focused services for minority groups were identified as determinants of student retention (Thomas, 2002).

3.6.6 Benefits of Retention in HE

The positive financial performance of a business unit is greatly influenced by enhancing the rate of retention (Zeithaml, 2000; Helgesen, 2008). HEIs like every other service sector organisations enjoy financial growth when student retention is improved. Student retention has been identified as influencing student loyalty (Fontaine, 2014) and such loyalty can be argued as a factor that will improve the university financially (Omoruyi & Rembielak, 2015). This was supported by Rowley (2003), who argued that customer loyalty is linked to profitability. Retaining students helps establish a university predictable financial outcome that will help deal with future activities (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2001). Student loyalty helps in developing competitive advantage as it is cheaper to maintain existing relationship than acquiring new students thereby reducing cost over the life cycle of the relationship (Reicheld, 2001). It can be seen that the benefits of student loyalty to the institution's financial performance is of great importance as it occurs in several forms. The benefits of student loyalty improve the quality of teaching through committed behaviour and active participation of the students (Rodie & Kleine, 2000). These benefits are not only limited to the time of study but after the students' graduation. Henning and Thurau *et al.* (2001) proposed that after graduation students can help the institution financially through financial support for research projects or through other donations. They also suggested that loyal student after graduation can promote the institution to current and prospective students through word-of-mouth communications. Those loyal students after graduation can foster cooperation by either acting as a visiting lecturer or helping to offer provide placements for students. Stressing the benefits of student loyalty should not be seen as immediate and "one-off" but continuous both prior to and after graduation. It becomes imperative to examine factors that can bring about no or limited levels of loyalty to a brand. An understanding of these factors will help organisations reduce them to the barest minimum (Baron *et al.*, 2010). Switching behaviour is prompted by changes over a period of time that brings about an end in the relationship (Bejou & Palmer, 1998; Hocutt, 1998; Stewart, 1998). Studies have identified price issues, inconveniences, dissatisfactory quality, core service failures, variety seeking, service encounter failures, change of service personnel, change of place of residence of customer, new value and refusal to modify service/product as factors influencing customer switching behaviours (Finkelman & Goland 1990; Rust & Zahoric, 1993; Keaveney, 1995; Bansal & Taylor, 1999; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000; Capraro *et al.*, 2003; Jones *et al*., 2003; Baron *et al*., 2010). Keaveney (1995) observed eight hundred critical behaviours of service firms, which HE happens to be part of. These behaviours were categorised mainly into; Pricing, Inconvenience, Failed Service Encounter, Competition, Ethical Problems, Core Service Failures, Involuntary Switching, Response to Failed Service.

Reicheld and Sasser (1990) identified the following factors that organisations need to curb to enhance customer loyalty:

- Price: this is when customers tend to move to an alternative which has a lower price, Example of this in the HE sector is when students will have to leave England for Scotland knowing that the price for purchasing a degree is cheaper in Scotland;
- Product: this is when a customer leaves for a more superior product;
- Service: this is when poor service is the reason customers move;
- Market: this is when customers leave entirely;
- Technology: this is when customer move outside the industry for products;
- Organisational: this move is motivated by political consideration that could either be internal or external.

Several similarities and differences can be seen from the factors identified above when compared to factors categorised by Keaveney (1995). The common factors are price and service related. There are however several factors that can also mitigate against switching behaviour. Switching cost according to Porter (1998) was defined as the cost incurred by customers when switching from one product/service provider to another (Jones et al., 2003; Nordman, 2004). Zhang et al. (2010) identified better academic programmes and higher revenue as part of the benefits of student retention which comes as a result of more students remaining in the university. Income which arises from student fee is also related to retention (Zhang *et al*., 2010).

3.6.7 Relationship Marketing and Retention

Organisations are working towards identifying the best marketing tactics or approaches to meet the needs of customers. It is argued that most marketing practices are developed with the acquisition of a new customer in mind (Bojei et al., 2013). Amongst several marketing practices is RM which is the focus of this study, will be discussed to see how best it benefits the business organisation as marketing approach. The effective development of RM strategies and their efficient implementation by any organisation brings about several benefits to the firm. Benefits which include: growth in market share; increase in profit; customer loyalty and customer retention (Omoruyi & Rembielak, 2014). Considering the objectives of this study which relates more to RM and customer retention, this study will address the link between RM and customer retention. It is argued that aspects of RM influence customer retention significantly (Gummensson, 1994; Omoruyi et al., 2016). The aspects of RM that determines the success of the relationship process has been earlier discussed in chapter two of this study. Amongst such aspects include commitment which was found to be an antecedent of customer retention (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Verhoef, 2003). Gruen et al. (2000) however argues that there is no evidence that commitment influences customer retention. Customer interaction which is another aspect of RM was also revised by this study while trying to establish the link between RM and retention. It is argued that customer satisfaction occurs from the long term interaction between the organisation and the customer (Verhoef, 2003) hence customer satisfaction can be described as an aspect of RM. Customer satisfaction was also found as an antecedent to customer retention (Bolton, 1998; Raneweera & Prabhu, 2003). Customer experience which is developed from the customer service encounter is identified as another aspect of RM (Conway & Swift, 2000). This aspect of RM is identified as the main component in managing and enhancing customer retention (Grace & O'Cass, 2005). Blodgett et al. (2005) argues that customer service amongst all aspects of RM is what determines the customer's choice. Customer service as a tool has a significant positive effect on customer retention (Bojei, 2013). These authors further describe customer service as both reactive and proactive service of the service encounter. Trust is another component of RM that has been linked to retention. Trust is regarded as an essential key to maintaining continuity in the customer and business organisation relationship (Han & Hyun, 2013). Trust has been described as the customer's perception of both staff/employees of the business organisation as well as their policies and practices (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Santos & Basso, 2012). Trust is identified as an antecedent of customer retention (Chiu et al., 2012; Han & Hyun, 2014). In the light of the above aspects of RM discussed, it can be argued that components of RM influence customer retention positively.

3.7 Marketing of Higher Education

This section will be evaluating the marketing of HE and how marketing practices can help to enhance student retention which has been previously discussed in the above section.

3.7.1 Higher Education Marketing

The Education marketing according to Kotler and Fox (1985) is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of programmes that are formulated to create the opportunity of voluntary exchange values with a target market in achieving the objectives of the organisation. Russell (2005) classified education as a marketable service like any other service. This is debatable, as a service is usually aimed at the user (consumer); in HE, the service is usually aimed at the prospective employer (Zeshen, 2010). Hemsley-Brown and Oplakta (2006) stated that as a result of the literature, which recognised HE as within the service sector, researchers should be concerned to ensure that HE is identified as a service sector business. This is as a result if the characteristics of HE as previously discussed. Danjuma and Rasli (2012) states that the HE sector is a part of a service sector that has recently gained importance. Kotler and Fox (1985) established a different view of marketing in HE, where they stressed the importance of government, parents, students and employers as those who have a stake in the education process. This they considered as the stakeholder concept. The need to establish a relationship between the stakeholders and the institution was seen as the key to universities succeeding (Binsardi & Ekwulugo 2003). The 'relationship' in this context can be related to its function in the marketing discipline. Relationship marketing according to Gummesson (1994) is the relationship networks and interaction between an organisation and its customers. This can be related to the networks and interaction that exist between the Business School and the international student.

The establishment of HE as a global phenomenon, has allowed institutions to realise the importance of marketing themselves nationally and internationally especially as there is increase competition in recruiting home-based and overseas students (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Hemsley-Brown & Oplakta 2006). The presence of marketing in HE is becoming very popular in English speaking countries (Young, 2002; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Taylor, 2003). It was argued by Paramewaran and Glowacka (1995) that to create a competitive advantage in an increasingly global competitive industry, HE institutions will need to develop a distinct image. This has led to several universities now applying theories and concepts of marketing in an attempt to gain a competitive edge and a greater share of the international market (Hemsley-Brown and Oplakta, 2006) leading to an increase in competition amongst universities globally (Conway et al., 1994; Armstrong, 2001; Bagley & Portnoi, 2014), HEIs have started implementing marketing principles as they improve their focus in attracting andretaining students both in the domestic and globa markets (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009). Funding issues and competition are identified by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) as the reason that universities now ensure that they are highly knowledgeable with the necessary marketing intelligence and information that will empower them to make challenges in the HE international market. They further argued that Educational establishments are already applying marketing in their strategic management thinking. Marketing intelligence becomes necessary considering the assumptions of Baldwin and James (2000) that students are informed consumers who are likely to be rational when choosing HE courses and institutions.

Binsardi and Ekwulego (2003) state that all marketing principles suggest that marketing should be geared towards the customer and should be applied in the HE context. Image and reputation are the crucial factors for institutions as they need to be able to develop a strong market positions (Nguyen and Le Blanc, 2001). Recent decades have witnessed a huge acceptance of several marketing concepts as a means of gaining and maintaining competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Internationalisation issues have driven the move to ensure the adoption of marketing concepts, and Higher Education Institutions like every other organization in the service sector have been swift to adopt marketing models in order to stay and compete in the global market (Burns & Hayes, 2012; Kamal et al., 2016). Globally, HEIs have made firm progress in adopting marketing concepts and marketing the Higher Education provision (Taylor and Judson, 2014). This process which began in the USA now includes global institutions that seek to maximise gains from adopting relationship marketing activities (Hemsley-Brown & Lowrie, 2010, Taylor & Judson, 2011).

The HE sector in the UK has also been striving to internationalise, and especially as they are all striving to sustain and gain competitive advantage in the global market (Altbach, 2015). The call for the adoption of marketing practices within HEIs means that their focus is now on developing and maintaining longer-term value co-creation (Taylor and Judson, 2014). It was argued that examining the decision making process and searching for information of potential students are the main prerequisites that HE institutions need in order to be able to market themselves successfully (Hemsley-Brown and Oplakta, 2006). As it is important for organisations to identify their stakeholders; efforts should be focused on identifying their customers so that they can know how to market to them.

3.7.2 Marketing HE in the UK

The adoption of marketing in HE in the UK began in the 1980s (Jarratt Report, 1985; National Advisory Board, 1987). The Gilligan Report (2000) posited that international student recruitment should be integrated as part of the holistic operations of HEIs if they were to survive in the global market. Emphasis was placed on marketing HE at the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) annual conference in 2004, where it was stated that all HEIs needed to adopt better marketing thinking (Newby, 2004). Helgessen (2008) reiterated that any institution within the HE sector that did not adopt these marketing measures was likely to fail and cannot compete. This view was also supported earlier by Conway et al. (1994) and Nicholls et al. (1995) who argued that in establishing HE, it is important to adopt a market orientation approach. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) stated that the UK ranks amongst the highest exporters of international education. They also stressed how much support the UK government has contributed between 1998 and 2005 in ensuring that funds and policies are in place to attract foreign students into UK HE so as to allow them to retain a large share of the market. This has however not been the case especially as the recent immigration policies by the UKVI tends to discourage international students from coming to the UK to study as shown in Figure 3.1. The very top universities in the UK, for example Oxford and Cambridge do not rely marketing principles, yet they are the most successful and sort after in all UK universities.

UK universities have increased the investment allocated to their marketing and their marketing scope has been broadened (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001; Verbick, 2015). They are now marketing both locally and globally. This was reiterated by Stamp (2007) who stated that most UK universities have increased their investment in marketing by 10-20 per cent. It is however surprising that the research into the area of HE marketing is still under researched and largely “incoherent” (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Durkin, Fairless & Howcroft, 2016). This study will address the international market which has been chosen as the new alternative market by UK HEIs (Altbach, 2015). Consequently, the international market of HE is now becoming the focus of UK HEIs. This growing phenomenon has been driven by cuts in government funding (Hemsley-Brown, 2011) and the process of internationalisation, and growth in global trade (Foskett, 2011). The HE international market was compared with the international housing and financial market, where the HE market currently has over four million students studying outside their country (OECD, 2014), and where most of these students are in English speaking countries (Mazarrol & Soutar, 2012; Altbach, 2013). Student numbers from this segment are expected to reach eight million in 2025 (Plewa *et al*., 2016). From this description of the international market, it can be stated that the HE international market is such a big market that it attracts several competitors especially from these English speaking countries. Like other international markets (housing and financial) which have become saturated in the past, the HE international market can also become saturated in the near future (Altbach, 2013). The HE international market has been described as a highly competitive landscape (Bagley and Portnoi, 2014). Accordingly, it is imperative that HEIs develop appropriate strategies to gain and sustain competitive advantage.

Universities in the UK HE sector use the sales promotions of tangible resources such as offerings of laptops and other intangible offerings including job prospects with courses advertised to get the attention of students (Lacey, 2006; Ford, 2007). Moolworth et al. (2009) explained that UK HE as a result of marketing has ensured that students are self-interested knowing that they are fee-paying customers. Where UK HE was further referred to as a market which no longer addresses learners' needs instead it addresses consumers' needs. Knowing how marketing HE in the UK is approached, it is important to see what challenges it faces so reasons could be established as to why the growth has stalled.

3.7.3 Challenges of Marketing HE in the UK

Implementation of the marketing principles in the HE sector encounters several barriers (Kinnel, 1989; Knight, 2015). There is an ongoing internal resistance from academics in the UK HE sector who are concerned about the state of commercialisation of the institution (Nicholls *et al.,* 1995; Knight, 2015). What market HE should address itself was identified as a complex issue (Conway et al., 1994; Altbach, 2015). This was reiterated by Maringe (2005) who argued that HE could not identify itself with a specific product of either research or teaching. HE faces the challenge of understanding multi-ethnic and multi-national student attitude and preparing students for their careers (Jayawardena, 2003; Rumbley et al., 2014). Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) acknowledged the changes which enable students to determine what they want and express their dissatisfaction where necessary when compared to previous years where student wants were determined by the university. This can be seen in students now extending their decision making process when filing an application for a course (Moogan *et al*., 2001). The students' high perceived risk identified by Mitchell (1995) is also another factor that causes students to extend their decision making knowing that they cannot see the end from the beginning. They further stated that the situation is putting the student in the position of wanting to earn a degree rather than becoming learners, hence missing the opportunity of transforming the students. As a result, some students could measure satisfaction in the form of getting a degree at the end of the programme. The next section will address customer satisfaction and UK HE marketing.

3.7.4 Customer Satisfaction and Marketing HE UK

Russell (2005) states that in developing an appropriate marketing mix, the students' needs and the institutions ability to meet these needs has to be considered. Although the marketing mix (people, physical evidence, product, place, price, promotion and process) developed by Booms and Bitner (1981) has to be accounted for, Ivy (2008) developed an alternative marketing mix for educational institutions: premiums, prominence, promotion, price, programme, prospectus and people. Although these models are well covered in the literature, they are not dramatically different from the basic 4P Marketing Mix and they do not add much to the review of this study, hence it will not be reviewed specifically, rather they will be reviewed generically as they apply to HE. The importance of the physical evidence, which in this context are the surroundings, technology, prospectus, websites and the campus needs to be managed properly knowing that they form part of the overall evaluation of the service experience. Participation should also be managed effectively knowing that the academic staff in this context is important in the provision of the service experience especially as the service cannot be evaluated without evaluating how it has been delivered. Process which in this context was described as the delivery of the service that students experience also provides evidence by which they evaluate the service experience. An example of such is the level of complexity and bureaucracy. Satisfaction was identified by Russell (2005) as a factor that links customer retention and relationship commitment. Customer satisfaction is when the needs of the customers are met by the products or services offered to them hence creating customer value (Helgesen, 2008).

It was further argued by Russell (2005) that satisfaction in the HE sector is important to consider satisfied customers' willingness to advertise on behalf of the HEI using word of mouth communication. HE institutions also gain competitive advantage by providing satisfaction to their customer. Student satisfaction influences perceived quality and in turn affects profitability. For these reasons, HE institutions should aim for high levels of student intake, student satisfaction and ensuring that all service encounters are properly managed. Maringe (2005) state that regardless of what a student is to be classified as, the primary motive should be how best to deliver customer satisfaction by understanding their needs and wants at all times. Maguad (2007) stress that mainly universities who can identify and satisfy their customers with their mission clearly identified can be successful in future. He further argued that it is significant for universities and colleges to know their customers and their needs. This can be related to the work of Lewis and Smith (1994) and Hersh and Merrow (2015) who state that only a few numbers of institutions recognise that they are actually serving customers. Seymour (2007) emphasised the importance of managing every student from their point of enrolment to graduation stressing that satisfying every stakeholder should be the primary goal of every institution within the HE sector. In developing customer value within the HE sector, customer satisfaction will need to be enhanced (DeShields et al., 2005).

The competition within the HEI sector has increased tremendously and the pursuit to attract and keep students has now become a focus (Danjuma & Rasli, 2012). Johnson and Yelland (2008) state that as a result of this competition students are increasingly influenced by the idea of accepting knowledge as the economic propeller. As such universities are working to provide services that exceed employability expectation of students that seem to be a primary way to attract and retain students. The overall learning environment and levels of student satisfaction are what is needed to ensure retention and future recommendations, where satisfied students improve word of mouth communication (Danjuma & Rasli, 2012). Classroom experience has been identified as the most significant determinant of student satisfaction (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013); but it has been argued that since the HE is not like every other sector, it will need to consider how best to satisfy its students. This study will seek the perspective of those stakeholders of HEIs in the Business School who deal with classroom experience in order to enable the study to gain an understanding or why and how RM is implemented with international students.

3.7.5 Relationship Marketing (RM) and Marketing HE

Building on data in section 2.2, having recognised what marketing HE entails as well as the importance of customer satisfaction in ensuring that there is growth in overall performance, it becomes important to consider how this growth can be sustained. In doing this, the concept of

RM will be adopted. Levitt (1988) stated that the concept of relationship marketing is to create and also retain the customer. It was further described as an ongoing process by Gordon (1998), who emphasised the function of RM in identifying and creating new value for the customer knowing that its benefit will remain mutual over a lifetime of association. RM stresses the importance of establishing a long-term relationship with customers rather than focusing on specific individual transaction which is one off (Gordon 1998; Berry, 2002; Hollensen, 2015).

Anctil (2008) identified the RM issues institutions should consider as the critical when applied to HE;

1) Communicate who they are and what they have to offer to their market audiences. No market audience should question how it relates to the institution; the relationship should be explicit.
2) Address the individual needs of their market audiences as appropriate. For example, prospective students, current students, and alumni all have different relationships with an institution; care must be taken to communicate to each audience that the institution understands its needs.
3) Fulfil their promises. Expectations have been set and should be met. Not meeting expectations will cause market audiences to question the quality of the relationship and the institutions.

3.8 Narrative Discussion of the Literature Review

From the literature review, this study found that emphasis is now placed on the attraction and retention of international students (Helgessen, 2008; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Brown & Jones, 2013; Jones, McNair & Fleischer; 2015; Morgan, 2015). Few of these studies specifically discussed retention of international students in Business Schools in the UK HEIs. The reasons for international students' retention in the UK HEIs differ amongst researchers but they generally identified international student retention as including the following: economic contribution; enhanced curriculum; diversity; and heritage (Andrade, 2006; Turner, 2006; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Altbach, 2015).

This study also found that RM is important and beneficial to organisations who implement them and this is applicable to HEIs like every other organisation in the service sector (Rusell, 2005; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Helgessen, 2008; Conway *et al.*, 2010; Danjuma & Rasli, 2012). HEIs are encouraged to start applying marketing strategies in their internationalisation process (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Maringe, 2005; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Altbach, 2015). RM initiatives have been identified as an appropriate market strategy that will be suitable for HEIs (Gibbs, 2001; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Rowley, 2003; Grönroos, 2004; Al-Alak, 2006; Anctil, 2008; Helgessen, 2008). There have been studies on how RM influences customer retention **(**Christopher *et al*., 1991; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Hennig-Thurau & Gwinner, 2002; Arnett *et al.*, 2003; Grönroos, 2004; Al-Alak, 2006; Helgessen, 2008; Baron *et al.*, 2010; Sheth et al., 2015). Few of these studies stated adequately how RM impacts the retention of students or more specifically international students.

It becomes important for this study to understand how RM affects international student retention in order to recommend ways of implementing RM for Business School managers. This study, while investigating how relationship marketing influences international student retention, the study will also bring all of these literatures reviewed into perspective.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted in order to understand how the HE is defined, its types and classification in the UK. It also includes the history, its challenges, and reforms over the years. This study also reviewed studies on HE marketing, its evolution from the United States and its growing need as a result of globalisation and the importance of HE marketing to HEIs survival and sustenance of their competitive advantage in today's global market environment. It also reviewed literature on who the stakeholders of HE are and who was the most important of all its stakeholders. It found from the literature reviewed that the student was the most important stakeholder amongst other stakeholders of HEIs. As a result, the study reviewed literature of how best the student can be described so as to help justify the marketing concepts adopted by HEIs. It found amongst others that students were described as customers, consumers, partners, beneficiary and clients. The study also reviewed literature on marketing approaches that can be adopted by HEIs and found that the RM approach was one of the suggested approaches that HEIs should practice. Hence, the study reviewed extensive literature on RM, its development, definition, rationale and benefits. It also reviewed literature on service dominant logic as a step forward of RM and its function within the HE sector. The study found while reviewing the benefits of RM that retention of students was amongst the core benefits and rationale for implementing the RM concept. This amongst other reasons was why this study also took the initiative to review literature on student retention. It reviewed literature on the definition of student retention, its importance and the cause for student attrition. Considering the focus of this study, where it relates to international student. The study further reviewed literature on international students, their contribution and the challenges they face while studying outside their home country. It also reviewed literature on their attrition rate, hence analysing what needs to be done to enhance their retention. Upon completion of the literature review, a section that depicts how literature review led to the development of the research objectives was also discussed which led to the formulation of the interview themes as shown in Table 3.2 below. Table 3.3 highlights the gap in the literature and the implications for this study and Figure 3.3 shows the conceptual framework depicted from literature. The next chapter will outline the methodology adopted by this study in achieving the aim and objectives of this research.

Table 3. 2 Summary of Research objectives and Interview themes depicted from literature

Aim	Research Objectives	Interview Themes	Literature Citations
To undertake a critical evaluation of relationship management approaches adopted by four Greater Manchester University Business Schools in relation to international student retention.	To investigate stakeholder perceptions of the importance of international student attraction and retention by UK Business Schools as represented by four Manchester based University Business Schools	1. Definition of international students 2. Meaning of international student to Business Schools 3. Attraction and recruitment of international students 4. International student contribution to the Business School 5. International student contribution to HEIs 6. International student contribution to the UK economy	1. (OECD, 2010), (Rientieset *al.*, 2011), (Wang, Hardy & Mai, 2012), (Arthur &Nunes, 2014). 2. (Love &McNicoll, 1988), (Frederick, 1995,) (Andrade, 2006), (Turner, 2006), (Harrison& Peacock, 2010), (Smith & Khawaja, 2011), (Omoruyi & Rembielak, 2015) 3. (Love & McNicoll, 1988), (Frederick, 1995), (Andrade, 2006), (Turner, 2006). (Harrison& Peacock, 2010), (Smith & Khawaja, 2011) 4. (Metzner, 1989), (Heverly, 1999), (Thomas, 2002), (Myer & Land, 2005), (Hemsley-Brown, 2006) (Hodgson et al., 2008), (Heaton-Strestha *et al*., 2009), (Tinto, 2010), (Mughal, 2016) 5. (Love &McNicoll, 1988), (Frederick, 1995,) (Andrade, 2006), (Turner, 2006), (Harrison& Peacock, 2010), (Smith & Khawaja, 2011) 6. (Love &McNicoll, 1988), (Frederick, 1995,) (Andrade, 2006), (Turner, 2006), (Harrison & Peacock, 2010), (Smith & Khawaja, 2011) 7. (Andrade, 2006), (Harrison & Peacock, 2010)

	To examine why and how Business Schools use RM approach as a tool for international students' retention.	1. Marketing strategies in HEIs 2. Implementation of RM initiatives by HEIs 3. Who implement RM initiatives in HEI 4. How RM initiatives re implemented 5. Cost of implementing RM initiatives 6. Development of RM initiatives 7. International student retention	1. (Kotler & Fox, 1985), (Nicholls *et al*., 1995), (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001), (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003), (Maringe, 2005), (Hemsley-Brown &Oplatka, 2006), (Trustrum & Wee, 2007), (Helgessen, 2008) 2. (Gibbs, 2001), (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003), (Rowley, 2003), (Grönroos, 2004), (Al-Alak, 2006), (Anctil, 2008). 3. (Gibbs, 2001), (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003), (Rowley, 2003), (Grönroos, 2004), (Maringe, 2005), (Al-Alak, 2006), (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006) (Anctil, 2008). 4. (Ford, 1980, 1998) (Christopher *et al*., 1991), (Hakansson & Johanson, 1992), (Gumensson, 1994), (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), (Hennig-Thurau & Gwinner, 2002), (Roberts, Varki & Brodie. 2003). (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal & Evans, 2006), (Axelsson, 2010). 5. (Christopher *et al*., 1991), (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) 6. (Grönroos, 2004), (Vargo& Lush, 2004), (Clulow*et al*., 2007), (Madhavaram& Hunt, 2008), (Baron *et al.*, 2010)
	To examine key stakeholder perceptions of the impact that current RM strategies have on student retention in the Business Schools reviewed.	1. Impact of these RM approaches on international students 2. International student retention benefit to HEIs 3. What aspects of the RM initiatives are significant to international	1. **(**Christopher *et al*., 1991), (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), (Hennig-Thurau & Gwinner, 2002), (Arnett *et al.*, 2003), **(**Grönroos, 2004), (Al-Alak, 2006), (Trustrum & Wee, 2007) (Helgessen, 2008), (Baron *et al.*, 2010). 2. **(**Christopher *et al*., 1991), (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), (Hennig-Thurau & Gwinner, 2002), (Arnett *et al.*, 2003), **(**Grönroos, 2004), (Al-Alak, 2006),

		student retention and experience 4. Improving RM implementation in HEIs. 5. Types of international student retention	(Helgessen, 2008), (Baron *et al.*, 2010). 3. (De Vita & Case, 2003), (Al-Alak, 2006), (Rienties *et al*., 2012). 4. (De Vita & Case, 2003), (Al-Alak, 2006), (OECD, 2010), (Rienties *et al*., 2012). 5. (Tinto, 2010)

Table 3. 3 Gaps in Literature

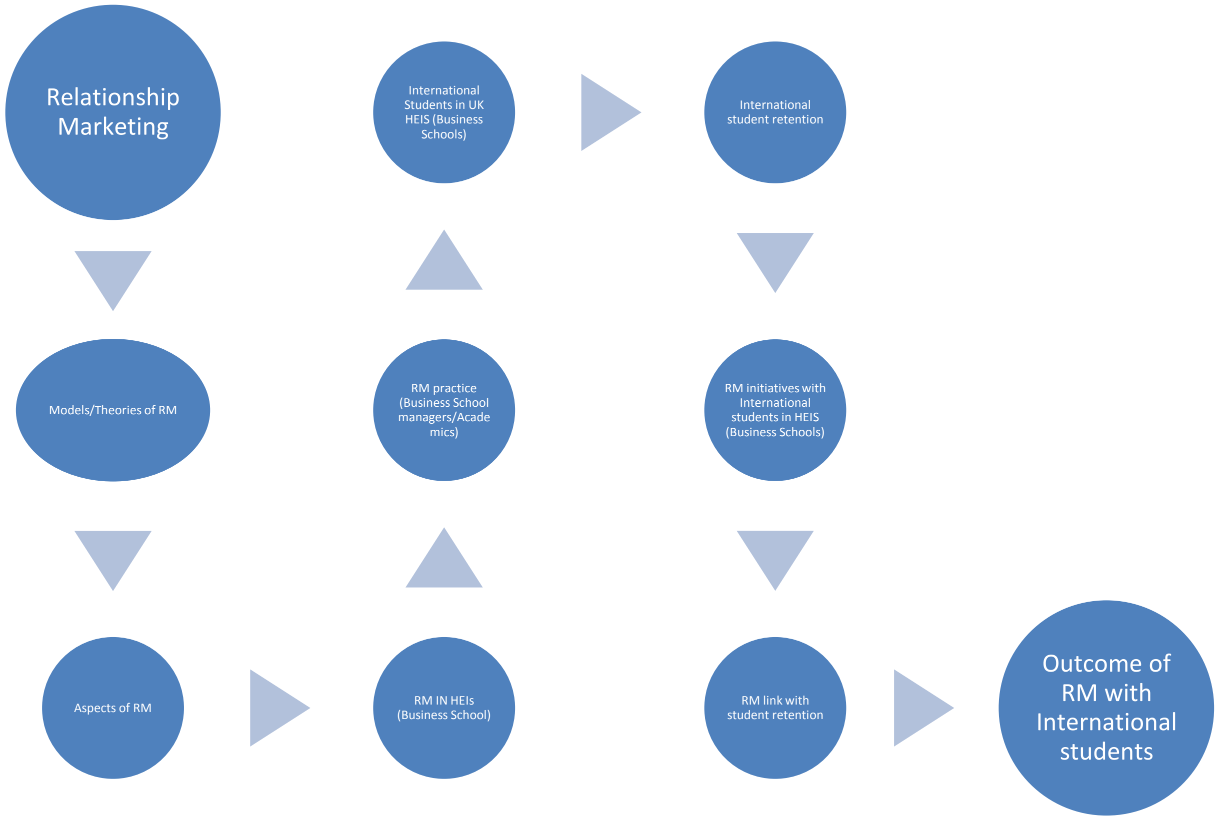
Literature Source	Gap in the Literature	Implications for this study
Helgesen, (2008)	Whilst much of the primary research which has hitherto been carried out has examined student satisfaction and reputation images to determine loyalty. it is recommended that future research considers using antecedents (service quality, facilities, IT, and social activities) to see how it impacts attraction and retention of students at educational institutions.	This highlights a gap in the literature and an opportunity to make significant contribution. This has influenced the research, as the context has to do with students in attraction and retention of students in HEIs. Gap= the main gap here is the under researching of RM antecedents and their impacts on students especially international students. How study filled this gap= the results displayed the impact of implementing aspects of RM on international students attraction and retention.
Woodall, Hiller & Resnick (2014)	Whilst this empirical research was on establishing the student as a consumer within the Business School, it was conducted with home students and as a result recommends that international students should be investigated to see if the consumer as a metaphor was an accepted description of international students especially as tuition fee was higher.	This highlights a gap in the literature in relation to how international students describe themselves. Gap= the main gap here is the manner by which international students in the Business Schools describe and perceive themselves (either as consumers or customers). How study has filled the gap= the study shows a group narratives from the focus group conducted of how international students think of themselves within the marketing spectrum and as a result what their expectations are as a customer.
Sultan and Wong (2012)	The empirical research was conducted in Australia HE sector looking at perception of students as it concerns critical antecedents (information and past experience) while determining the quality of student experience. The study recommends that the impact of nationality and culture of students' perception should be investigated	This highlights a gap in the literature in relation to the perception of students as it concerns the quality of their student experience. This affected the study as much of the student experience literature was in the domain of home students as opposed to international student.

	across various countries to contribute to literature.	Gap= The main gap here was lack of specific literature in relation to nationality and cultural background and perception of critical antecedents in determining quality of student experience. How study has filled the gap= the participation of thirty students from thirteen different across five continents who are currently studying in Business Schools in the UK has enabled a clearer conclusion of the impacts of such antecedents to emerge as to the perception of students considering their different nationalities and cultural background.
Bowden (2011)	Empirical studies which looked at student attrition in Australian universities, hence considering marketing concepts that could improve it. They recommend that other studies investigate student attrition constructs in other countries. Also they recommend that other studies investigate a specific faculty or department.	This highlights a gap in the application of marketing concepts particularly RM in enhancing student retention in HEIs. Gap= The main gap here was lack of marketing principles that could improve student retention in HEIs particularly international student retention. How study filled the gap= the semi-structured interviews of 22 members of staff (Business School managers and Academic staff) and focus group conducted with thirty students to see how RM implemented with international students impact their retention and experience. Study also investigated a specific school (Business School) in the universities reviewed.
Asad, Melewar and Cohen (2014).	Obvious direction for future research would be to further explore the concepts of exporting and export marketing in Higher Education, perhaps through a qualitative methodology, given the	This highlights a gap in the use of qualitative methodology to investigate education export.

	dearth of research in this field.	How study filled this gap= using qualitative methodology in this study.
Guo and Chase (2011); Glasic et al. (2014)	Study investigated how universities help international students to enhance student experience, (using quantitative study). Recommends that qualitative studies be conducted to investigate this aim. In addition, the respondents in the Guo et al. research were local students. In order to enhance generalisability, it would be advisable to expand the present study to include international students, as well as to expand research to other countries and study destinations in order to validate the results.	This highlights a gap in the use of qualitative methodology to investigate international student experience. How study filled this gap= using qualitative methodology in this study.
Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2012)	Further research should be conducted on the management of RM in the HE sector.	This highlights a gap in theories as it relates to the management of RM in the HE sector. How study filled this gap = study interviewed key principal officers and staff who are primarily concerned with the management of RM concepts. It further highlights in its results and discussion chapter how RM is managed within the HE sector. From the empirical study conducted, this study also recommends how best RM can be managed in the HE sector.
Bojei et al. (2013)	The need to conduct more empirical research on the significance of RM tools in enhancing retention.	This highlights that there is limited research on the link between aspects of RM and retention especially in the HE sector. How study filled this gap= study was able to identify from literature emerging themes, which formed aspects (tools) of RM that enhances retention. These aspects identified were used as interview themes in

		field study which its results further established the link between RM and retention.

Figure 3.3 Conceptual Framework of the Literature Review Chapters



Source: Summary of Chapter Two and Three of Study.

CHAPTER FOUR: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to justify the philosophical approach adopted by this study. It will also outline and justify the methods the study utilised to collect and analyse data, and the methods of sampling and sample selection.

4.2 Research Framework

A research framework is a guiding principle which the researcher adheres to in conducting research. There are several vital phases which should be systematically considered when undertaking a research project, these includes selecting the appropriate research methods, collecting relevant data, analysing data and writing-up the report (Jennings, 2001; Collis & Hussey, 2013; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Saunders et al. (2015), Collis and Hussey (2013) and Bryman and Bell (2015) provide a detailed research framework that encompasses key critical phases in the research process as shown in Table 4.1

Table 4. 1 Key Phases of Research Framework

Phase	Description and Application
1. formulate and clarify the research topic	During this stage the researcher should consider the research topic and issues that have a clear link to theory (Saunders et al., 2009; Collis & Hussey, 2013). For this study, a number of gaps have been identified from the literature review on Higher Education marketing and international students. (The details of the gaps are discussed in below: phase 2).The importance of the phenomenon was also established from the informal preliminary research conducted by the researcher.
2. critically review the literature	This stage involves a comprehensive literature review on: Marketing Higher Education and International students; international student retention; relationship marketing; and Business Schools' implementation of marketing practices. In summary, three gaps have been highlighted through the comprehensive review of literature. Firstly, there has been no study that has established how or why Business Schools use relationship marketing approaches to attract and retain international students. Secondly, researches on using a relationship marketing approaches in the HE sector have been limited; this includes the aspects of relationship marketing on international student and its impact. Thirdly, little work has been published on the definition and importance of International students in UK HEIs that emphasise Business Schools. (See section 1.2 for

	details of rationale for the research). The comprehensive literature review conducted has facilitated the development of the research objectives.
3. understand the philosophy and approach	This phase involves understanding the concept of philosophical assumptions (ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological). There are two main theoretical approaches: deductive and inductive approaches that need to be considered for business research. For this study, the interpretivist approach was chosen, and the research was conducted using the qualitative method (e.g. semi-structured interviews and focus group). The developments of research objectives were based on an inductive approach (See section 1.3.2 for details of research).
4. formulate the research design	This phase encompasses the classification of the research as it relates to its purpose. Generally, research classification could vary, e.g. analytical, exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. This study adopted exploratory, explanatory and analytical approaches. The rationale for adopting these types was as a result of the study's quest to explore aspects of research that was currently under-studied and the quest to understand the perceptions of Business School managers as it regards why and how they implement RM with international students.
5. addressing ethical issues	This study ensured that informed consent was received from every participant during the data collection process. Each participant was provided with adequate information about the study. The data collected from semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted anonymously and strict confidentiality was adhered to. Ethical approval was issued to the researcher by the ethics committee at University of Salford. For ethical approval letter (See Appendix 1).
6. data collection	For this study, the respondents were recruited from four Business Schools across the Northwest: Business School managers, academic staff; and International students. (See section 4.10 for details of data collection procedure).
7. analysis of the data/ interpretation of the results	This study employed a qualitative approach underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. The data was obtained using semi-structured interviews and focus group. Document reviews and observation was used to verify data collected. Data was analysed using thematic analysis, while the documents reviewed were analysed using content analysis.

Adapted: Saunders et al. (2015); Collis and Hussey (2013); Bryman and Bell (2015).

4.3 Research Methodology

4.3.1. Definition of research methodology

There is no conventional agreement in defining research (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Sekaran and Bougie (2010 p.5) define research as "…simply the process of finding solutions to a problem after a thorough study and analysis of the situational factors". Methodology "is a system of explicit rules and procedures" that "provides the foundations for conducting research and evaluating claims for knowledge" (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2008:12). Common themes in definitions mean that research methodology is a collection of principles which is used to guide a study. Merriam (2014) described research methodology as a systematic way of solving a research problem. Methodology and method tend to be used interchangeably, but are different. Jennings (2001) describes the method as the actual tools, instruments and techniques utilised in gathering empirical evidence and analysis of the data. Collis and Hussey (2013) state that the methodology is the general approach to the research process, from the theoretical underpinning to the collection and analysis of the data. This section therefore considers the research methodology, in order to explore the rigor, validity, and validity of the research process.

4.3.2 Types of research

Research has been categorised in several ways, e.g. by area of academic, discipline (psychological, sociological, anthropological, etc.), by method, by type of data collection procedure (e.g. observation, questionnaire, psychological tests, interview, etc.), or by any other rationale (policy implications or contribution to knowledge etc.) (Verma and Mallick, 1999).

Collis and Hussey (2013) classified the different types of research as follows:

- Exploratory research: this is conducted to examine a problem or issue when the research is unique or there are few studies which can be referred to for information on it. In this case the implementation of RM with international students has not been adequately researched.

- Descriptive research: this describes phenomena as they exist; this is common with quantitative and statistical studies.

- Predictive research: the purpose is to generalise from the analysis by predicting certain phenomena on the basis of hypothesised general relationships.

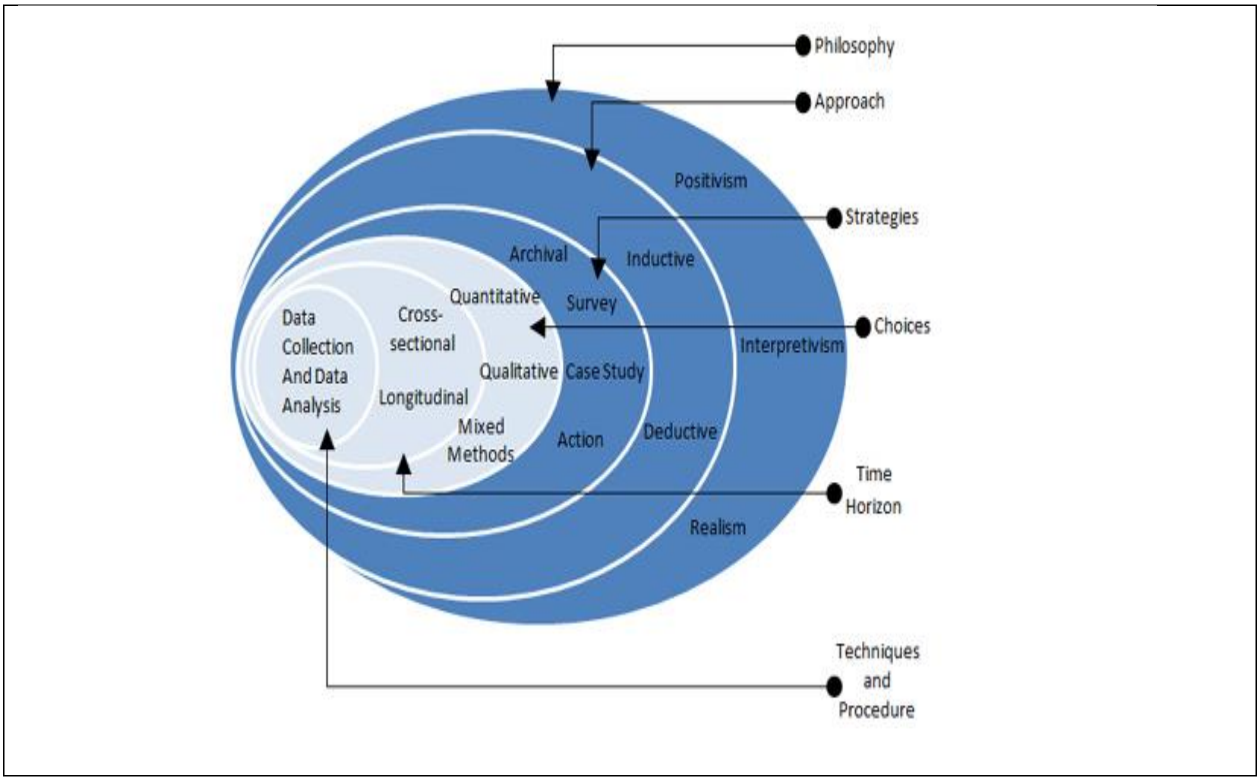
- Analytical or explanatory research: this approach seeks to analyse and explain reasons behind descriptive research with its focus on answering the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions. As it concerns this study, this approach will be used to analyse why Business Schools implement RM with international students.

This research begins with an exploratory study which aims to establish and review the perceptions that managers and academic staff of Business Schools and international students have towards the way in which relationship marketing initiatives are implemented. This thesis also adopts an analytical/explanatory approach as it attempts to give meaning to why Business School managers utilise a relationship marketing approach with international students to improve the student retention rate.

4.4 Research Philosophy

This section presents a comprehensive discussion of the research philosophy adopted by this study. It includes detailed discussion of issues that relates to the, research approach, research strategy, data collection and data analysis. Figure 4.1 shows the research process which has been used as a guide to ensure all aspects of the research process are comprehensively covered by this study.

Figure 4. 1: The Research Onion.



Source: (Saunders et al., 2011:104)

Research philosophy is connected to the nature and development of a research, which consists of the main assumptions of how the researcher perceives the world (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Saunders et al., 2015). The clarification and successful implementation of the research design is only achievable when the philosophical issues are well understood (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). This is to ensure that all aspects of the research are appropriately informed by the underpinning philosophy.

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.105) emphasised the importance of research philosophy by stating that "…both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm. Questions of methods are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways". Miller and Brewer (2003, p.220) explain paradigm as "…a theoretical structure or framework of thought that acts as a template or example to be followed". Saunders et al. (2011) named ten philosophies: Interpretivism; Positivism; Objectivism; Pragmatism; Functionalist; Realism; Radical structuralist; Radical humanist; and Interpretive. However, Easterby-Smith et al.

(2012) considered two paradigms as being most commonly used in social sciences, these being Social Constructionism (Phenomenological) and Positivism

4.5 Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Assumptions

Research is a systematic process of investigation, which is anticipated to lead to the finding of new knowledge. Research paradigms are used by researchers to identify their situation as it concerns what they study (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). There are four fundamental philosophical assumptions that aid the investigation process: ideology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ideology is explained by Kitchin and Tate (2000) as the rationale behind the quest for knowledge. Ontology can be explained as the theory of being (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Wisker, 2012; Myers, 2013). Hence, it can be described as reality. Epistemology can be described as the theory of knowledge (Collis & Hussey, 2013). This epistemological assumption enables the researcher to understand how knowledge about reality is discovered, while it addresses the relationship of the researcher and reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009; Myers, 2013). Methodology is the assumption that deals with the choice of methods used by the researcher to discover reality.

Positivism stems from natural science (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Zhou & Nunes, 2015). Robson and Cartan (2016) and Kant (2014) describe the positivist paradigm as knowledge in science that can only be achieved from direct experience and observation. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson and Lowe (2004, p.28) explain positivist research, saying: "the social world exists externally, and that its properties can be measured through objective methods rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition". Positivism looks for the facts or causes behind a social phenomenon, with little or no consideration of the individuals subjective state (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Neuman, (2011) state that positivism paradigm use exact, precise, and objective measures such as surveys, experiments and statistics in research. Research in positivism is often proven through hypotheses testing (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

Constructivism also referred to as interpretivism (Collis and Hussey, 2013) is a common alternative to positivism and was developed as a response to criticism of positivism (Saunders *et al*., 2011; 2015). Collis and Hussey, (2013) describe constructivism as the belief that social reality is highly subjective and not objective as it is shaped by our interpretation or perceptions. This position is often expressed in theoretical practices such as phenomenology (Gray, 2004). A phenomenon is "*a fact or occurrence that appears or is perceived, especially* *one of which the cause is in question*" (Allan, 1990:893). Constructivists accept as true that the social reality is a product of social building, and that our reaction to others is as a result of the importance that we attach to other people's action (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2002). Hackley (2007) suggests that constructivist research perspectives have become more highly influential in social science. Constructivist relies on their perception and social understanding to define reality (Merriam, 2014), and it tends to always align with the qualitative research approach (Maxwell, 2012).

The pragmatic approach falls between the constructivist and positivist paradigms, largely following criticism towards the positivist view that actual reality can only be discovered by science (Badley, 2003). For example, Brew (2001) stated that truth evolves from both literary criticism and physics, but this truth is not reality; it is inter-subjective agreement. Also, from a methodological perspective, pragmatism acknowledges the fact that the nature of the problem is a determinant of what method is appropriate (Rorty, 2013). A quantitative/ qualitative research method could be appropriate and could be utilised at different phases of the research process, with the nature of the problem as a focus (Rorty, 2013).

Post-structuralism developed in the mid-1900 from the French structuralism (Williams, 2014). It rejected the theory of enlightened knowledge, and instead promoted rationalism; "neglecting the perceptions regarding the subjects (the person) shaping the object through the power of his /her intellect" (Lyotard, 1984:3). Post-structuralism aims to fragment a phenomenon into elements and investigate how these elements become a self-evident reality (McLaughin, 2013). From a methodological perspective, the post-structuralist approach is more connected with methods which seek to explain, how an individual experiences reality; for example, by using questionnaires, focus groups and direct observation (Cohen *et al*., 2013; Johnson & Guzman, 2013). The characteristics of each of these paradigms are highlighted in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4. 2: Summary of Social Science Research Paradigms

	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology	Research Objectives	Researcher's Position	Subject's Position	This study's position
Positivism	Reality is objective; It is singular and can be known	Researcher is independent from that being researched; findings are discovered only through research	Theories are strengthened or disapproved through testing relations of individual variables	Likened to the prediction of behaviour	Researcher is independent and observes phenomenon from a distant	Data are provided anonymously; not vocal	Not applicable
Constructivism	Reality is subjective; reality is socially constructed and dependent on the participants attribute to the phenomenon	Researcher interacts with that being researched; where findings are produced through research and writings	Theories are developed from findings with focus on processes of each social units	Understanding the phenomenon; giving it a meaning	Researcher is a part of the research; phenomenon is interpreted by the researcher	Presents and often take part in the writing; vocal	Applicable
Pragmatism	Structured reality which is replicated by participants on different basis (class, power relations etc.)	Findings are developed by values	Class structure are historically researched	Discovering the power and class structure	Researcher is a social critic	A subject of criticism; vocal	Not applicable

Post-Structuralism	Structured reality which is developed through discourse and quite dynamic with power relations as a focal point	Power and understanding of differences are the foundation for knowledge; findings are temporary	Research discourse are based on politics and history with emphasis on historical events	Making sense of the ways humans are established as subjects	There is a mutual relation between the researcher and the subject been researched with a focus of examining the researched position	The researcher is acknowledged as an agent whose opinion can be described as reality	Not Applicable

Source: Adapted from (Sobh and Perry, 2006, Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Saunders et al., 2015)

In summary, it can be argued that all four paradigms of social sciences discussed above are aimed towards expanding knowledge in diverse ways with an emphasis of the functions ascribed to such knowledge (Sobh & Perry, 2006). This study will be selecting constructivism paradigm as a premise to seek knowledge; this will be justified in the following section.

4.5.1 Justification of Chosen Research Paradigm (Constructivism)

Considering the overall aim of this research, which is to review Business Schools in the Greater Manchester area in order to understand the implications of implementing RM approaches with international students, the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm is adopted for this study. The choice of the constructivist approach for this study evolves from the research assumption which agrees with the argument of an ontology that is subjective and an epistemology that is interactive. The rationale is to determine reality based on the experiences of the participants in their social setting, not necessarily to measure it. Rakic and Chambers (2011) stated that constructivist research is more reliable in capturing the human perception and experience in a more detailed way. This aligns with the aim of this research which is concerned with capturing the perception of the participants and their experience in a coherent way.

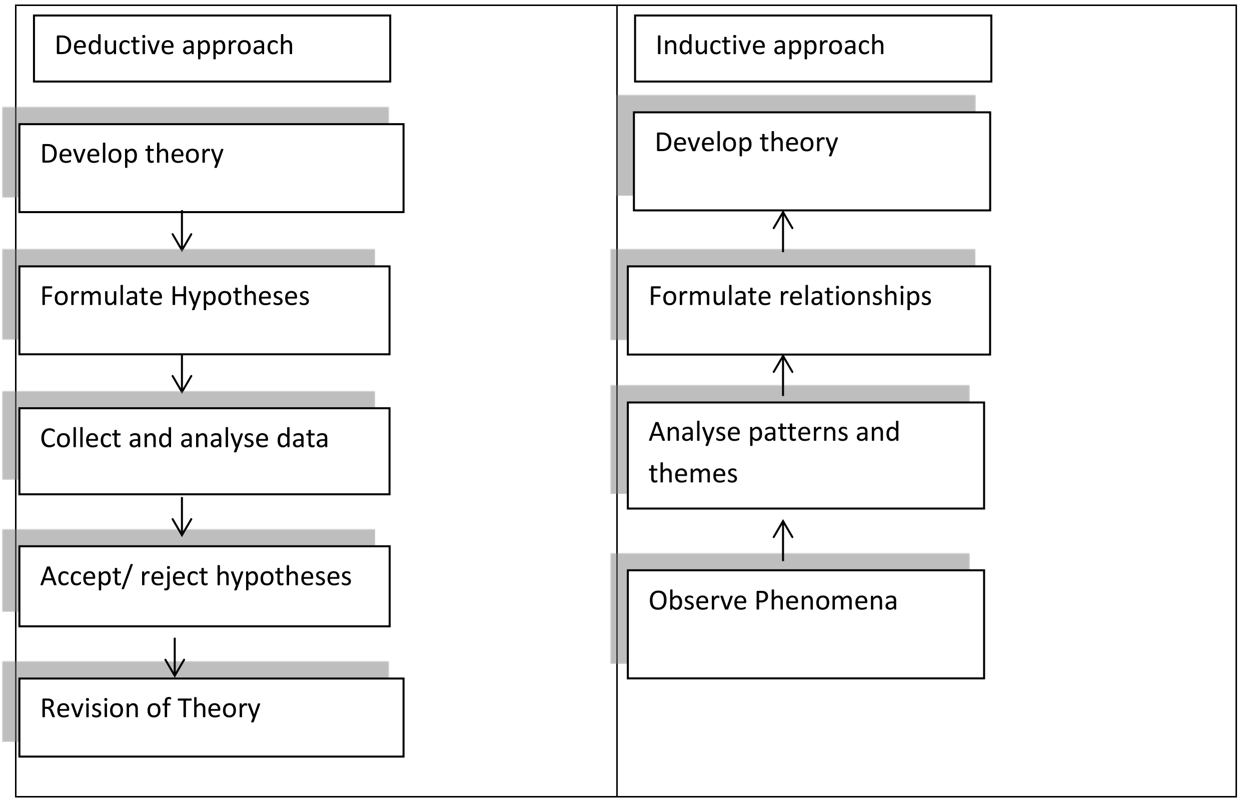
The reasons why the constructivist paradigm is more appropriate than others could be explained through answering two fundamental and inter-related questions: 1) what are the characteristics of reality?, and 2) what are the relationships between the one who knows, and the object that is known? (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:105). The application of these two vital questions in the current research context, delivers the evaluation as well as the justification regarding the suitability and validity of the constructivist approach for this study.

This research primarily deals with complex and close individuals' contact and relationships among the Business Schools and their international students. Hence, it becomes essential to ensure that a personal interaction is established with the research participants so as to help understand better the social reality required to deliver new knowledge. Thomas et al. (2014) posits that the constructivist theory may be valuable for understanding why and how new knowledge is developed, integrated and applied. This follows the epistemological assumption and it also reflects the analytical/explanatory nature of this study which is investigating why Business Schools implement RM strategies with international students. The researcher also needed to have direct interaction and positioned himself with what was being researched because reality is socially constructed. This is in line with ontological assumption (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Considering the stance of this research discussed above, both the ontological and epistemological arguments are in line with the assumptions related to constructivism (Sobh & Perry, 2006; Easterby-Smith, 2012; Collis & Hussey, 2013, Saunders *et al*., 2015). Following the argument that constructivism is rooted in phenomenology and symbolic interactionism and is based on the principle that differences in the social world require an understanding of meaning attributed to actions by actors. Researchers in constructivism are also referred to as actors, (Mir & Watson, 2000; Woodside, 2003), where it is suggested that an individual will interpret their social world in terms of the meanings they, and others, give to a phenomenon. Here interpretation is influenced by various factors which include: culture; social background; and gender etc. Given the exploratory nature of this study, and the emphasis placed on perceptions that managers and academic staff of Business Schools, and their international students have of the way relationship marketing are initiatives implemented with reference to international student retention and experience, there is acknowledgement that their perceptions are based on how individual's interpret their social world in terms of the meanings they, and others, give to a phenomenon.

4.6 Research Approach

The research approach is a fundamental part of designing a research project, which helps to develop the best way of understanding the nature of the problem. The inductive or deductive approach could be utilised when conducting research (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Gray, 2013; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders *et al*., 2015). A deductive approach is referred to as moving from the general theory to observations/findings (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2015). Meanwhile an inductive approach is about building a theory from specific observations/findings (Bryman, 2015; Saunders *et al*., 2015). Thomas (2003) describes the inductive approach as a systematic technique for analysing qualitative data where the analysis is guided by precise objectives. Figure 4.2 illustrates the process of deductive and inductive approach in business research.

Figure 4. 2 Deductive and Inductive Approach of Research



Source: Adapted from Cavana et al. (2001. P. 36), Bryman, (2012. P.24)

4.6.1 Justification of Chosen Research Approach (deductive & inductive)

In justifying the chosen approach of this study, it is worthwhile stating that there was a deductive part of this study, which is the literature review from which the themes emerged (Bryman, 2015). However, it should be appropriate and right to state that the literature was used only as a guide to determine the themes. As such, this research adopted the inductive approach, because the academic literature sources which address the implementation of RM initiatives by HEI with international students were limited, hence they were inadequate research theories to develop hypotheses. In establishing the meanings humans place on events an inductive approach is appropriate (Saunders *et al*., 2015), and relevant for this research to understand how and why HEIs use relationship marketing. Also, an inductive approach gives the researcher the opportunity to adjust the research structure during the research process. Additionally, this approach encourages researchers to work with qualitative data collected by a variety of methods (Easterby-Smith et al. (2012). Saunders et al. (2015) stated that a blend of deductive and inductive methods is not only possible when conducting a research, but is often a more appropriate approach of conducting a research. Therefore, the two approaches were adopted in this research. Deduction is used in identifying common perceptions from the literature review about the implementation of RM initiatives focused on international students in the HE sector, and the factors that may impact international student retention. An inductive approach is applied to collecting information from Business School managers and academic staff about why they implement RM with international students, establishing what their role is in implementing the RM approach and also collecting data from international students about how the RM impacts on the RM impacts on their retention and student experience.

4.7 Research methodology (quantitative and qualitative process)

Research methodology can be described as the procedures and techniques that are used to enable the systematic process of enquiry and discovery of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2015). Its aim is on achieving the set objectives of the research (Rorty, 2013). Creswell (2012) pointed out that quantitative researchers usually derive a problem from the literature, in which case a substantial body of literature may be available in terms of variables and existing theories and which may need testing or verifying. Similarly, Trochim (2006) observes that quantitative methods concentrate directly on relationships among variables. Moreover, Näslund (2002) mentioned that quantitative researchers tend to abstract themselves from the world and consequently they seldom study it directly, being less concerned with the importance of rich descriptions of the phenomenon. Bryman (2012) stated that, in quantitative research, researchers emphasise careful control and measurement by assigning numbers to measurements. This was further addressed by Bryman (2012 p.35) who stated that quantitative research can be construed as a research strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of data.

On the other hand, Bryman (2012) argues that the “qualitative” concept implies an emphasis on words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Equally, Corbin and Strauss (2014) mentioned that the strengths of such a qualitative approach lie mainly in their success in ascertaining deeper underlying meanings and explanations of the phenomenon. Bell (2014) also came up with the idea that perspective is more concerned with the understanding that they seek insight rather than statistical analysis. Table 4.3 which provides a summary of the fundamental differences of both approaches is adapted from suggestions of Stainback and Stainback (1988 p.8) and Bryman (2012 p.36). In addition, Table 4.4 highlights the advantage and disadvantage for quantitative and qualitative methods.

Table 4. 3 Summary of differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies

Dimensions	Quantitative	Qualitative	Research stance
Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research	Deductive; testing of theory for confirmation	Inductive; generation of theory	Mainly inductive
Epistemological orientation	Natural science model, in particular positivism	Interpretivism	Interpretivism
Ontological orientation	Objectivism	Constructivism	Constructivism
Conditions	Controlled	Natural	Natural condition
Data	Objective	Subjective	Subjective data
Focus	Defined by variables	Holistic view	Focusing on the whole
Viewpoint	Outsider- where reality develops from quantifiable data	Insider- reality is determined by perception of people	Insider- reality is determined by the actors involved
Results	Reliable	Valid- the focus is on design and procedures to gain real, rich and in-depth data	Valid- the focus on design and procedures to gain real, rich and in-depth data

Source: adapted from Stainback and Stainback (1988 p.8); and Bryman (2012 p.36)

Table 4. 4 The major advantage and disadvantage for quantitative and qualitative

	Quantitative	Qualitative	Implementing adopted strategy
Advantage	Useful for testing large sample; information on many characteristics and variables	In-depth investigation of a particular subject; deeper understanding	In-depth study of the phenomenon using semi-structured interviews and focus group techniques
Disadvantage	Concern tends towards representativeness	Difficulty in generalising to a larger population	Mitigating weakness of qualitative strategy by triangulating data sources and data collection techniques

Source: Myers (2013); and Bryman and Bell (2015)

4.7.1 Justification of the chosen methodology (qualitative)

A qualitative design was adopted for the study as the objectives of this research were focused on understanding the in-depth meaning of the phenomenon being studied. The underpinning ontology which states that reality is socially constructed and the epistemological stances which suggests that the researcher interacts with participants being researched, makes the choice of a qualitative research methodology more suitable. It can be argued that as implementation of RM by Business Schools with international students is the focus for this study, it will only be possible to gain a holistic understanding of the implementation of the RM approach by investigating the perception of international students. This research focuses on business school managers, academic staff, and international students' (i.e. human rather than non-human) experiences, and the meanings the participants place on the implementation of RM by Business Schools. Additionally, the researched and researcher are close. The researcher interacts and works with research respondents (i.e. Business School managers, academic staff and international students), in order to discover new knowledge relating to Business School practices through one voice and perceptions of the participants.

Therefore, it can be argued that Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 can be viewed as frameworks that provide a range of fundamental selection criteria to assure that the choice of qualitative research approaches are not determined randomly, neither is it predetermined by the researcher. Hence, it can be argued that the selection of qualitative methods is as a result of the underpinning constructive assumption of a subject reality that is interactively discovered.

In addition to the assessment criteria discussed above, Carson *et al.* (2001, p.63) suggested three reasons why a qualitative research methodology is valuable in business studies: "1) a qualitative methodology focuses on acquiring a deep understanding of the phenomenon; 2) a qualitative methodology examines the phenomenon, without requiring the researcher to have any preconceived opinion; and 3) a qualitative methodology concentrates on the 'how' and 'why', in addition to the 'what', when trying to understand the phenomenon." For the current study, firstly, one of the research objectives is to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex nature of the implementation of RM initiative with international students. Secondly, the researcher in this case did not have any preconceived opinion of the phenomenon being researched, as the researcher was relying on information provided by the participants. Thirdly, due to the analytical/descriptive nature of this research which addresses the how and why Business Schools implement a RM approach with international students.

In the light of the justification discussed above, the adoption of a qualitative research methodology is deemed to be the most suitable in evaluating and producing valid data within this study.

4.8. Research Method

Research method according to Collis and Hussey (2013) is described as a technique for collecting and analysing data. This section presents the research method used in this study. There are several ways of collecting research data. The use of a quantitative methodology in a research study is used in an attempt to measure variables or number occurrences of a phenomenon. Whereas a qualitative methodology is used by a researcher to establish meanings and experiences that relates to the phenomena (Collis & Hussey, 2013). Primary data is the data collected through interviews, focus groups, participant observation, direct observation, and questionnaires (Saunders *et al*., 2015). Meanwhile, secondary data are already existing data collected from other sources (documentation, archival records, annual reports and publications etc.) (Collis & Hussey, 2013). This study will be collecting both primary and secondary relevant data.

Therefore, to gain a clear understanding of the happenings in the selected universities, data collection methods were developed in order to help the researcher to collect relevant data which helped in answering the research objectives. Various data collection methods are used in a qualitative research. It is however important to agree to the fact that each one of these methods has advantages and disadvantages, and this study's approach focuses on mitigating the weaknesses are exemplified in Table 4.5

Table 4. 5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Source	Strengths	Weaknesses	Study's approach
Documentation	stable- can be reviewed repeatedly; unobtrusive- not created as a result of the review; exact- contains exact names, references and details of an event; and broad coverage- long span of time, many events and many settings	retrievability- can be low; biased selectivity, if collection is incomplete; reporting bias- reflects (unknown) bias of author; and access- may be deliberately blocked	documents provided to researcher from Business School managers were reviewed in some instances to further validate data from semi-structured interviews and focus group; documents were analysed using content analysis

Interviews	targeted- focuses directly on case study topic; and insightful- provides perceived casual inferences	bias due to poorly constructed questions; response bias; inaccuracies due to poor recall; and reflexivity- interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear	semi-structured interviews were conducted with Business School managers and academic staff from the four Business Schools reviewed using interview protocols drawn from the literature review; and participants were assured about anonymity hence they could provide an unbias view; and interview questions were developed after pilot study
Focus Group	in-depth exploration of the phenomenon; it saves time; response from group and interaction;	difficult to organise; important views might not be collected from participants as a result of group effect; and less control	focus group was conducted with international students one in each of the four selected Business Schools; efforts were made to allow all participants air their views; and researcher did a lot to ensure he was still in control by having to stop the process where participants were going off subject
Direct Observation	reality- covers events in real time; and contextual- covers context of event	time-consuming; selectivity- unless broad coverage; reflexivity- event may proceed differently because it is being observed; and cost- hours needed by human observer	the researcher did direct observation in order to see for himself facilities and buildings referred to by participants; and these direct observation were done during and sometimes immediately after conducting semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions

Four Source evidence: Adapted from Barnes (2001, p.1089) Yin (2009, p.102) Bryman (2012, p.517).

The four methods of data collection identified above can be utilised independently or in combination, depending on the nature and the requirements of the research. These methods cannot be chosen randomly to address the research objectives. The nature of the research and its ability to collect relevant data that would produce good research results, determine the research method(s) to be selected (De Vaus, 2013). In this study, all of the four sources of data collection for qualitative studies highlighted in the table above were identified as relevant sources that will help this study discover appropriate answers to the proposed research objectives. Barnes (2001) suggests that researchers should choose the methods that will best help in realising their purpose and addressing their research questions, providing maximum validity within the conceptual context of their specific research topics.

4.9 Data Collection

4.9.1 A Qualitative Focus on the Business Schools Reviewed

As a result of the research aim, objectives and philosophical stance of this research, which was social constructionism (from ontological assumption) and interpretivist (from epistemological assumption) using an inductive approach based on trying to develop theory out of the findings to be collected, a qualitative research method was then the most appropriate data collection method (Creswell, 2007; Bryman, 2012; Collis & Hussey, 2013; Saunders *et al*., 2015).

4.9.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Amaratunga and Baldry (2002 p.18) defined an interview as that *"whose purpose is to collate descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee following an interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena".* Collis and Hussey (2013) described interviews as a method of collecting data from selected interviewees to enable the researcher to determine what the interviewees do, think or feel towards any given topic. This method provides rich data which are relevant to the research purposes. As a result of its ability to explore and gain in-depth information, the qualitative interview has been widely accepted by social science researchers as a form of inquiry (Ritchie *et al*., 2013). Bryman (2015) argued that interviews are accepted as one of the most important methods of primary research. The primary goal of the interview is that it allows the opportunity for the researcher to gain access to in-depth information while allowing the respondents to stay at ease as they express themselves freely. The interview can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Saunders *et al*., 2015). A structured interview utilises a questionnaire, it is commonly used in a quantitative study where the questions are all predetermined and identical. Semi-structured interview use non-standardised questions, though the researcher normally would have a set of topics and questions to be asked. It allows the researcher to maintain the focus and the structure of the interview while asking for further details and clarifications where necessary (Ritchie *et al*., 2013). Semi-structured interviews can be done face-to-face, by email or by telephone (Bowie & Buttle, 2013). It is also referred to as a qualitative research interview. Meanwhile the unstructured interview is not formal, and it has no predetermined list of questions to adhere to (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Saunders *et al.,* 2015). The interviewee is allowed to share any thoughts, belief, and behaviour about a situation. The downside of this technique is that it is time consuming.

Miles and Huberman (2013 p.12) assert that the precise value gained from using the interview is that it occurs in a natural setting allowing real and holistic descriptions that are real life related. Other advantages noted for face-to-face interviews are that they: help to gain more detailed information into underpinning motivations, knowledge and beliefs; usually they result in a higher percentage of completed answers, since the interviewer is there to explain exactly what is required; facilitate the use of visual aids to demonstrate concepts; and are easy to set up (Harvey, 2011; Malhotra, Birks & Wills, 2013). King and Horrocks (2010) identified some advantages of interviews such as the opportunity to get clarity to questions and answers amongst participants involved. Also, Babin and Zikmund (2015) identify the opportunity for providing feedback to the respondent and ensuring the confidentiality of the information provided by the respondent. Also, an interview is one alternative to a lengthy questionnaire, if the case research objectives require many questions to be answered (De Vaus, 2013). Interviews have higher rate of response in the sense that the interviewer is likely to get answers to all the questions that are asked (Robson, 2002). Barnes (2001) finds the interview to be one of the most effective methods for collecting large quantities of in-depth data in a short time-frame. Thus, the interview helps to collect high quality and in-depth data while saving time (Yin, 2015). It also solves accessibility problems following short time appointments with respondents and avoids data being contaminated by the researcher only staying for a short time in the case study (De Vaus, 2013). Exploratory interviews have some opposing characteristics. These include: being costly as compared to other methods (Hair *et al*., 2012); the respondents may feel that their answers are not anonymous and may be less forthcoming or open (Robson, 2002); the interaction of people from different classes, ethnic origins or cultural backgrounds might have an effect on the interview (Robson, 2002). Additionally, the way the interviewer behaves during the interview, his or her motivation; personality, skills, experience and bias are all likely affect the interview process (Robson, 2002). Despite these drawbacks, the semi-structured interview method was chosen as an appropriate method for data collection in the four chosen Business Schools. For this study, the face-to-face semi-structured interview was adopted. The next section will be addressing the rationale behind choosing the semi-structured interview.

4.9.3 Justification for the Semi-Structured Interview

Considering the advantages, the researcher therefore used semi-structure interviews given the exploratory nature of the research and the large number of issues that need to be addressed. The face-to-face semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to get close to the interviewees, which helped in developing more searching questions. It also assisted in observing the body language of the interviewee which allowed for questions to be clarified (Bowie & Buttle, 2004). Another limitation often cited is that the quality of data collected from interviews tend greatly depend upon the skills of the interviewer (Malhotra et al., 2013). The researcher attended several comprehensive training sessions on how to carry out in-depth interview which enhanced his ability to collect quality data. The researcher while carrying out a face-to-face semi structured interview had a list of topics as shown in Appendix 3 which he wanted to cover (Bryman, 2015; Saunders *et al*., 2015). This list of topics helped the researcher to remain focused during the course of the interview allowing him to save time for the interviewees and also allowed the perception and experiences of the individuals to be brought into context (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The lists of topics were developed from themes that emerged from the comprehensive literature review carried out by the researcher. Yin (2011, p.134) describes semi-structured interview as that where “the researcher will have a mental framework of study questions, but the specifically verbalized questions as posed to any given participant will differ according to the context and setting of the interview”. (See gaps and objectives in sections 1.2.2 and 1.3.2). A sample of the interview questions is shown in Appendix 7.

Easterby-Smith *et al*. (2012) pointed out that the validity of semi-structured interviews refers to the extent to which the researcher has gained full access to the knowledge and meanings of informants. Saunders *et al.* (2015) stated that the validity of in-depth semi-structured interviews is high; this refers to the flexible and responsive interactions which are possible between interviewer and respondents allowing the meaning to be discussed, the topic to be covered from a variety of angles and questions made clear to respondents. Furthermore, (Patton, 2002) suggests that the data in qualitative research might include transcripts of in-depth interviews. Of particular relevance to the present research are the assertions (Oppenheim, 2000; Sekaran, 2009) that in-depth semi structured interviews can help researchers to understand the connotation of people’s activities and that this allows them to explain the purpose of the study and to clarify any doubt or avoid any misunderstanding. This research used a list of questions to structure and guides the interviews during the field study. Responses on these questions provided a clear picture of the phenomena, and enabled questions to be answered.

Semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with the opportunities to prompt and probe responses of a respondent for further explanation. It is important to note that the researcher has a first-hand experience of being an international student in more than one Business School prior to embarking on this doctoral study, and a part-time member of academic staff in the Business School during this doctoral study. This provided him with relevant background knowledge and a familiarity of the HE services to effectively ask questions and probe into the personal experiences of Business School managers and academic staff respondents. Hence, the selection of semi-structured interviews as a data collection method was determined by the exploratory, analytical/descriptive nature of this study, as well as from an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of this interview method compared with both unstructured and structured approaches.

4.9.4 Semi-Structure Interview Procedure

Following the adoption of semi-structured interviews as a data collection method, this study approached the process using five sets of guidelines during the interview process (Miles & Huberman, 2013; Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Bryman, 2015), as shown in Table 4.6

Table 4. 6: Framework Adopted During the Data Collection Process

Key Guidance	Approach of this study
The Terminology - *Clear simple conversation which excludes jargons used to conduct semi-structured interviews (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Bryman, 2015).* - *The social constructivist epistemological stance of a qualitative research relies on interaction between the interviewer and interviewee to discover knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2015)*	- During the course of the interview, the researcher carefully structured words using the right terminologies that were easily understood by the respondent and in turn helped them to develop a narrative. For example, the researcher avoided using terminologies like "wrap-around" to describe relationship marketing knowing that not all participants were marketers. - Terminologies that were difficult for respondents to grasp during the pilot studies were all changed and in some cases were key words/statements; the researcher had to prepare an adequate explanation that helped respondents understand questions. For example the term "attrition" was replaced by "drop-out". - The researcher also ensured that good listening was done while in-turn made the respondent comfortable to listen to him. He did this by using simple terminologies that the respondents were conversant with hence, allowing them get more involved. For example, the researcher had to use simple terminologies/statements like "the outcome of this research will help in your class delivery" instead of saying "the outcome of this research will fill the gap in literature". (See appendix 3 for interview protocol)
Interview Duration - *Interviews are to be slightly longer than half an hour for a researcher who is experienced (Rowley, 2012).* - *Interviews should be between 60-90 minutes (Jacob & Fugerson, 2012).*	- As researcher respondents, Business School managers and academic staff, who are normally under pressure from their busy schedule of meetings and having to attend to several other engagements daily. Hence, the researcher had to schedule the interview appropriately to suit the respondent's calendar. - Knowing that one and half hour might be a difficult time to spare by the respondents, the researcher had to put the respondents at ease and try to gain their interest. For example, by letting respondents know the benefits of the research to their role as Business School managers and academic staff. Hence, the Business School managers became very interested in the outcome of the research. - The researcher having gained the commitment of the respondents, there was a need for using discretion of allowing the interviews last 45-60 minutes.
Structure	- The researcher had to explain the purpose of the interview to the respondents, while also letting them know the shape the interview will take and providing them the opportunity to know that they have the right to stop the interview at any time. An example of such was reflected in

Giving purpose of interview and using developed interview protocol throughout the interview process as a guide (Bryman, 2015).	the consent form provided to the respondents. The researcher started with basic questions, followed by the core questions that were directly linked to the research objectives developed from literature. For example, “what is your role in implementing RM with international students?” These questions tend to come after interviewees were already at ease with the interview process.
Ethics and Confidentiality *Providing the researcher with all information regarding the research and assuring them about confidentiality and anonymity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)* *Seeking permission of respondents at the beginning before recording their conversation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 2013).*	The researcher ensured that the rationale for conducting the interview was explained in details to the respondents and did not try to deceive them to participate. The researcher ensured that he gained the permission of the respondent before using recorders, this he did at the beginning of the interview process. The researcher went further to assure respondents that confidentiality would be observed and respondents will be treated as anonymous. This was stated in the consent form provided to the respondents. (See Appendix 2 for consent form).
Engagement over Detachment *It is important to facilitate a prolonged engagement and collaboration throughout the qualitative interview process (Bryman, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).*	The researcher had to show the respondents his enthusiasm in the research as well as his passion to see that the respondents also benefitted from the research. For example, the researcher in some cases had to travel for 30 minutes to meet particular respondent who kept cancelling meetings few minutes before time scheduled. The researcher did not give up at any point rather he made the third attempt to travel to the respondent who during the interview said to the researcher that his commitment of trying to schedule the meeting got his attention to read through the rationale for research document provided to him via email and he got engaged and interested to get involved in the research. As a result of this the respondent had to ask the researcher to come after few months to collect documents to support assertions made. The researcher had to provide the respondents the opportunity to comment or suggest and not necessarily a process of them asking questions throughout, this got the engaged where they realised that they were a part of the research. For example, informing the respondents about their right to question, comment or suggest at any point during the interview process.

4.9.5 Focus Group Justification

The focus group technique is a qualitative data collection method of interviewing that involves more than one interviewee; it will consist of at least four interviewees (Bryman 2015). This technique was adopted by this study as it was selected over group interviews. Group interviews though similar to a focus group is more specific in nature, where the interviewer has a more prominent role asking specific questions (Remenyi, 2011). "Focus group typically emphasise a specific theme that is explored in-depth" (Bryman, 2012 p.501). Four focus groups were conducted (one per Business School) to triangulate what the Business School was saying. E.g. international students taking the researcher to see IT facilities provided for international students. This study is focused on conducting an in-depth research hence adopting the qualitative method. Focus group data are developed from social interaction of participants within the focus group (Boateng, 2012). Focus group allows the researcher to listen, observe conversations between knowledgeable informants with different views (Remenyi, 2011). The knowledgeable informants in this study are international students from different countries who were selected from the four Business School reviewed. It has been recognised as a convenient and swift process which has an economic advantage (Krueger & Casey, 2014). This was another reason why this study adopted this approach, especially as it was important to collect data from international students in a swift manner instead of having to arrange to interview students on an individual basis which would normally take so much time and cost the researcher a lot of money. There are drawbacks to the use of focus group technique. Remenyi (2011) stated that conducting focus group is an intensive process, which has to be facilitated or moderated by an experienced researcher. The researcher in this study has conducted focus group research in the past as part of academic papers published, and the experience gained from past focus group conducted provided him the adequate skills to facilitate the focus group without hitches. An example was him being able to avoid dominance of particular respondents during the interaction, by having to politely emphasise that the views of every participant matters in the discussion. Several other disadvantages of focus group were identified by the researcher which includes; observer dependency, social desirability, group think and lack of anonymity. In mitigating these weaknesses, the researcher ensured that conformity to the opinion of others by other respondents was not encouraged. In mitigating this, the researcher provided participants the topics for discussion before their arrival at the focus group sessions. The researcher also emphasised the importance of positing independent opinions and how the research was more interested in individuals' opinion as opposed to unified result. The researcher also ensured that his bias as a moderator was not made known. He ensured that he was not in any way endorsing views during the session; neither did he attempt to state his own personal view at any point during the focus group sessions. The researcher stressed the need for independent opinions even if they are unfavourable and how important such opinions can help develop a more robust research. The researcher understood that observing anonymity in this context was almost impossible; hence he made it known to participants that assertions made by them are not expected to leave the focus group sessions and confidentiality of all participants should be highly observed by all. All of these steps taken by the researcher allowed him avoid repetition of opinions by participants and also allowed him collect valid data.

The data collection framework process as seen in Table 4.8 and the thematic analysis process as highlighted in Table 4.9 were also adhered to by the researcher while conducting the focus group and analysing the data. Focus group as a technique adopted by this study satisfies the ontological theoretical underpinning of allowing the international students describe reality in their own words, while also satisfying the epistemological interactive stance, in this study it was a combination of all informed participants and the researcher having to engage in discussion that will provide relevant data has been guided by the research objectives. Adopting focus group data collection technique in this study fits within the main tenets of the constructivist paradigm which argues that research can never be done from an objective stance rather it must be observed through the direct experience of the people (Mack, 2010). Four focus group sessions were conducted with thirty international students from thirteen countries across the four Business Schools reviewed. Focus group sessions were conducted with international students from same Business Schools.

4.9.6 Analysis of interviews

Conducting semi-structured interviews in a qualitative study may generate a substantial amount of data from different sources. In this study, data were sourced from interviews, focus groups, documentation and direct observation. One of the challenges encountered by qualitative researchers is the difficulty to reduce raw data into meaningful conclusions (Easterby-Smith *et al*., 2012). In overcoming these challenges, this study adopted the use of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis as an independent qualitative descriptive approach has been described as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: p.79). NVIVO was considered by the researcher, but ruled out due to the following weaknesses identified by Bryman (2015): problems that could occur with technology; as well as the lack of opportunity to systematically break down the data directly which allows the researcher gets familiar with the data. The researcher also decided not to use NVIVO since the NVIVO structure tends to determine specific rules for particular procedures (McLafferty and Fahley, 2006). Example of such is when the NVIVO software already has nodes which act as a rule of thumb to lead the researcher to split available data into these containers (nodes). Queries provided by NVIVO might also distant the research from the data context (Walsh, 2003). Since such queries can eventually dilute the thickness of data through the use of manifold synonyms (Zamawe, 2015).The researcher in this study wants to be very familiar with his sets of data and as result thought NVIVO might not be the best approach. The researcher was aware of the difficult task of analysing manually, but he thought he could do all of these since he was very determined and experienced in qualitative data analysis using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis approaches are suitable for answering questions such as: what are the concerns of people about an event?; what reasons do people have for utilising or not utilising a service or procedure? (Ayres, 2007), and it allows for a qualitative analysis of data (Vaismoradi *et al*., 2013). The thematic analytical procedure adopted by this study was adapted from Clarke and Braun (2013), and some analytical steps adapted from Seidman (2013) principles outlined in Table 4.7 which enabled themes, similarities and differences amid transcripts to be recognised.

Table 4. 7 Showing Analytical Procedure Adopted as Part of the Thematic Analysis

Steps	Procedure	Activity
1	*Filing consent forms safely (Seidman, 2013)*	Researcher filed all consent forms in a safe place
2	*Converting notes from interview into records (Seidman, 2013)*	Researcher converted all notes taken into some form of written record
3	*Familiarisation with data (Clarke and Braun, 2013)*	Researcher transcribed data from interviews, familiarised himself by listening to audio recordings again, reading the transcript over and over again, thereby taking initial notes of analytic observation
4	*Coding (Clarke and Braun, 2013)*	The researcher had to code interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion by generating labels that are related to the research questions guiding the analysis. The researcher codes every data item and ends this phase by putting together all their codes and relevant data extracts across the entire data set.
5	*Searching for themes (Clarke and Braun, 2013)*	The researcher searched for similarities amongst the codes in the data, from this process, the researcher constructed themes and collated all coded data relevant to each themes.
6	*Reviewing themes(Clarke and Braun, 2013)*	The researcher checked to ensure that the themes are related to the full data set and codes developed. The researcher then reflected on the themes to be sure they were telling the story. This he further developed by merging some themes and separating some themes in some instances, then started developing themes from the process. For example, having to merged Non-UK students and Non-EU students as "International" students.
7	*Defining and naming themes(Clarke and Braun, 2013)*	The researcher at this point tried to cull a story out of each theme developed, as soon as that was done, the researcher was able to name themes accordingly. For example, naming "revenue" as a theme, the name was spurred from "uncapped fees" and "government grants".
8	*Writing up (Clarke and Braun, 2013)*	This was the last opportunity for the researcher to analyse the data. At this point the researcher had to weave all analytic narratives and pull together all abstracts in a concise form to enable him produce a persuasive story at it relates to the research question and existing literature.

Source: Clarke and Braun (2013) and Seidman (2013).

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and analysing patterns in a qualitative study as it relates to the interpretative phenomenological methodology which is the stance of this study (Guest, McQueen & Namey, 2012; Clarke & Braun, 2013). Its use as an analytic method has been stressed by several researchers (e.g. Clarke & Braun, 2013). It has however been misconstrued as a methodology hence drawing criticisms from authors (e.g. Holloway & Tondres, 2003). It has been recognised as a flexible analytical method that can fit into different experiences or practices, unlike other analytical methods that coerce adherence to their frameworks (Taylor and Usher, 2001). Antakil *et al.* (2002) who said the lack of adherence to a particular framework contradicts the research, was a weakness, that Braun and Clarke (2013 p.2) addressed by the following statement:

"Thematic analysis is suited to a wide range of research interests and theoretical perspectives, and is useful as a 'basic' method because: a) it works with a wide range of research objectives and questions, from those about people's experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts; b) it can be used to analyse different types of data, from secondary sources such as media to transcripts of focus groups or interviews; c) it works with large or small data-sets; and d) it can be applied to produce data-driven or theory-driven analyses".

In this study, thematic analysis cuts across all the four aspects in that it sought to analyse different types of data from collected from documents, interviews and focus group, from a large sets of data to enable it develop theory while achieving the research objectives (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Thematic analysis has been described as a deliberative, reflective and thorough qualitative analytical tool (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

The data display in this study was presented in two ways; through quotations and matrices. In the study findings chapter (see chapter five), the descriptive narration is stressed by presenting vivid quotations that support the emergent patterns and themes. The matrices from the data reduction process contain the findings from the face-to-face semi-structured interviews, as well as the documentation reviewed and possible findings from the direct observation for certain topics. From the matrices, the pattern and themes were revealed more clearly and this also helped in grouping respondents into categories.

4.9.7 Other Sources of Data Collection (Documents from Business Schools and the Business School website)

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, focus groups, secondary and supplementary sources of data for this research were provided by documents and associated internet sources. Documentation is a meaningful and useful qualitative data collection technique (Lysaght, Blodget, Mason, Young, & Bridgford, 2006). Documents obtained could vary: documents found by the researcher during the course of the research; and documents developed by the researcher during the course of the research. A wide range of documentary evidences were gathered, from a variety of sources (Brannen, 2005). These documents were used in this study to obtain reliable data this helped to mitigate the weaknesses that can be attributed to data collated from interviews and focus groups. Documentation used in this study include: official publications; policy statements; agendas; and workshop slides. In some cases documents were only shown to the researcher to peruse, other documents were given to the researcher during the interview and some other documents were sent to the researcher after the interview. The researcher also accessed documents which were available for the general public.

The documents and records were all related to marketing activities specific to attracting and retaining international students in the four Business Schools in Greater Manchester that were studied. All of the data sourced from documents and internet sources helped the researcher to validate some assertions made by some interviewees and also helped the researcher gain background understanding of the Business Schools reviewed and their terminologies used. The documents were analysed using content analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

4.9.8 Direct Observation

Direct observation can be a formal or less-formal data collection technique. Formal is by assessing the formal events, and less formally is by assessing events which took place during the interviews (Yin, 2014). Direct observation technique was used to collect additional primary data in order to complement the data collection process in all four Business Schools reviewed. In this study, direct observations included watching interviewees' behaviour and communication among different participants within the four Business Schools. The researcher also realised that some respondents were very enthusiastic and interested in the research. This help in checking the expressed feelings of participants that are described as non-verbal (Schmuck, 1997). These the researcher observed with the way and manner respondents were keen about providing additional information by looking through their diary during the interview session to arrange future sessions that will enable the researcher collect more relevant data. This enthusiasm shown by some of the respondents was also observed in how they try to rush through other engagements to enable them have time to participate in the research. Example of such was when one of the respondents instructed her secretary to reschedule an engagement that was meant to commence. These sorts of observation further convinced the researcher about the importance of the research. They were some other behavioural observations of respondents that brought about new thinking to the researcher. For example, the researcher made some observation while interviewing one of the Business School managers who claimed their established relationship with international students was a process she was fully involved in. During the interview, the researcher observed that the respondent had to from time to time try to get additional information from programme leaders. This was one of the reasons that prompted the researcher to embark on another phase of interviews with academic staff. As it concerns observation that helped the researcher in complimenting the data, the researcher saw for himself buildings and amenities that corroborates assertions of participants. An example was in Business School "D" where international students who participated in the focus group had to show the researcher one of the buildings with state of the art technology they referred to as a welcome development embarked upon by the Business School in developing the relationship process. The researcher had to take note of some of these observations and also had to ask additional questions as a result in some instances. More findings that stems from direct observation technique is discussed in more details in the findings chapter as well as in the discussion chapter.

4.10 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is described as a phenomenon that is studied in a research project (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Yin, 2015). It could be an individual, an event, an object, an organisation or group of people, a relationship, a small group, a partnership, community, a project or a decision (Collis & Hussey, 2013). A unit of analysis is described by Bryman (2015) as an integrated whole that is unified and cannot be broken down any further, but only capable of development. Hence, it becomes important to identify the unit of analysis for this study. It is important to determine a clear unit of analysis because it helps when formulating the primary research objectives (Yin, 2015). A clearly stated unit of analysis helps in identifying the extent to which the literature can help clarify the phenomenon been investigated (Baratt *et al.*, 2011). The unit of analysis of this study Business School managers, academics and International students (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Helgesen, 2008; Bowden, 2011; Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne, 2013). The context of the research is selected Business Schools in the Greater Manchester Area.

4.11 Sampling Method and Sample Selection

4.11.1 Sampling Method, Size and Procedure

Bryman (2015) suggests that sampling in qualitative research usually revolves around purposive sampling, which he described as a non-probability form of sampling. Sampling decisions are principally determined by the feasibility of putting together the sample as a whole, as well as the suitability of generating relevant and in-depth information (Flick, 2015). Three sampling methods were adopted by this study, namely: experience; snowballing and convenience sampling methods. All of these sampling methods were applicable to all respondent groups. Several stakeholders of HEIs who deal directly with international students were considered as possible participants. For example international office employees who deal directly with international students. This study however did not include them as respondents since the aim of the study does not directly require their know-how. The international office staff members are more concerned about attraction and recruitment, whereas this study is focused on retention.

Business School managers were selected using experience sampling within purposive sampling from the four Business Schools reviewed. This was because, firstly, they had relevant information as to what this study aimed to find, and secondly, they are the most appropriate source of information regarding how relationship marketing is developed and implemented with international students: a technique known as purposive sampling (Yin, 2015). Experience sampling helps the researcher to make good use of time especially as it helps in allowing the researcher make contact only with respondents who have adequate information. The experience sampling approach was more feasible as it allows the researcher the opportunity to investigate the unit of analysis over the course of the research (Bryman, 2015). The experience sampling method allowed the researcher to establish clarity before embarking on the research. There are however some drawbacks of the purposive sampling method, for example, it was difficult to access some of the Business managers where the researcher had to wait for months to gain access. The researcher mitigated this delay by ensuring a good relationship was established with the gatekeepers including personal assistants. An example of such was when the researcher had to try to be more polite and friendly conversation with a Dean's secretary and that allowed him easy access to the Dean, as he was called in as a priority by the secretary. It was not appropriate to use other types of sampling, for example using random sampling in this case would have been faster and easier for the researcher, but there is every possibility that the researcher will not be able to find the right respondents who can provide adequate information to achieve the set research objectives. The researcher also interviewed other interviewees suggested by those to be interviewed to enable this study gain adequate and relevant data this technique is known as snowballing (Saunders *et al*., 2015).The same approach was applicable for academic staff.

When developing a framework for sampling international students' focus groups, this study was initially set to adopt a random sampling strategy and applied it during the pilot study at Business School C. Reflections and lessons drawn from the pilot study revealed the reasons behind the low participation rate, i.e. the accessibility and availability of research respondents. Subsequently, convenience sampling was applied to the existing international student population all selected Business Schools during the process of research fieldwork. The researcher in improving the participation rate also had to use international society (i.e. particular countries) contacts and international students who the researcher was teaching at that time to network international students in other selected Business Schools and in few cases some international students had to recommend other international students who could join the focus group. This snowballing approach was encouraged to compliment for the cons of convenience sampling as the researcher already anticipated the likelihood of not been able to access international students who could provide relevant and in-depth information if he relies only on convenience sampling.

Snowballing methods and convenience sampling strategy have their advantages and disadvantages. For example, they might be biased by volunteers, as well as the risk of the population not being represented by the sample (Flick, 2015). All international students who participated already had spent over five-months of study experience with their Business Schools as at the time the focus group was conducted. This allowed the respondents the opportunity to be an active part of the focus group discussion. The mix of students from undergraduates and postgraduates, where some are conversion students who have completed their undergraduate degree in same Business School gave them the opportunity to give several examples which are relevant to this study. Having a mix of students from different countries, cultural and religious background was also very advantageous to this study as it provided students with the opportunity to share their own individual experiences. As part of the barometer used by this study to select international students, allowing the opportunity for a balanced gender representation was also considered and this was achieved.

In summary, the above sampling ideologies, techniques and procedures were implemented while collecting data. Prolonged engagement in the field for research collection, checking the audit trail, researcher reflexivity and peer debriefing were procedures implemented to guarantee data credibility and validity (Lincoln, 2015).

4.11.2 Justification of Business Schools reviewed

Considering the above, four Business Schools were selected for review. The justification for choosing these particular Business Schools are summarised below:

- Business School A is classified as an old University which is ranked amongst the top universities in the UK. Business school A has an established business school with a large number of international students from different continents. Business School A is an established Business School already using relationship marketing approach. Considering all of these characteristics, it is identified as a relevant business school that could be reviewed to help this study achieve its aim and objectives.
- Business School B is a college that gained the status of a University within the last two decades. Business school B recently gained the Business School status. This was identified as an interesting point by the researcher since he will be able to access data and see if the status of the business school affects the data in any way. Business school B has a large number of international students and they are very keen about internationalising. Business School B is a relatively new Business School which just started to develop relationship marketing concept.
- Business School C is a University that was formerly a technical school later turned into a university; it is classified as a pre-92 university. It has been a business school for so many years and with several accreditations from several bodies. Business School C is a Business School that has already started practising relationship marketing with emphasis on retention as part of the vision. This business school was selected knowing that they were already using RM approach. They were also very keen about internationalising.
- Business School D is classified as a post-92 university. Its Business School is also internationally recognised and it has a large number of international students from

different continents. The business school is also very keen about how to internationalise and they are already developing on their internationalisation process. They are very keen about increasing their international students' number. They have adopted several marketing approach to enhance this quest. They also use aspects of RM as the process of marketing HE to international students.

Selecting these Business Schools helped the researcher to gain various perspectives from the different University and their approach to RM to make meaningful comparisons (replication logic). It also allowed the researcher make other assumptions, as it relates to each Business School and their international students. Selecting these Business Schools satisfied the selection of contrasting subjects as proposed by (Bryman, 2015). There are 109 universities in the UK. In order to gain rigorous and robust data, the samples for the preliminary research included four Business Schools from the Greater Manchester area. This supports Creswell (2009) view that four is an appropriate number of establishments to be adopted in a research study. The reason for selecting these universities in the Greater Manchester region was mainly because the area has the largest population of international students in Europe (Financial Times, 2012).

4.11.3. Justification of Selecting Business School Managers

Business School Deans in the UK were been identified as the Business School stakeholder group who is responsible for identifying challenges and developing strategies to overcome them. This was also evident in the preliminary research carried out by this study. Where it was found that the Business School managers (Deans, administrator and directors etc.) are responsible for developing and seeing through the implementation of RM with international students in the Business Schools selected they too were as part of the sample. Nie and Bolton (2010) also identified Business School managers as the stakeholders within the HE sector who are responsible for making policies that are implemented on students. After receiving ethical approval, the researcher contacted all organisations to be studied requesting details of the Business School managers who hold relevant information about the phenomenon this study is researching. These are persons who are in charge, intensively and actively involved in the application of relationship marketing with international students. A total of nine Business School managers were interviewed across the four selected Business Schools reviewed (See Table 4.8 for description of managers). In this research, Business School managers are comprised of the Deans of the Business School, Academic Deans, Department Heads, Marketing Managers, and International Directors.

Table 4. 8 Descriptions of Selected Business Schools and Respondents

Business School	Overview	Business School managers	Academic staff	International students
A	The foundation of Business School A can be traced back to 1918. The 'new' Business School, as it is now commonly referred to, was formed in 2004 following the merger of the School of Accounting and Finance and the old Business School. The Business School is the largest Department of the University. It is identified as one the largest campus-based Business School in the country, and has an international student composition as three quarters of its student body is from outside the UK. In 2015 it was documented that it had 25% international students (Undergraduates and Postgraduates).	Marketing Director. Who is responsible for the marketing of international students'. She is directly involved with policy settings and operational practices.	Two academic staff members from the Business School who have taught international students for at least seven years; one male and one female	Seven international students from five different countries; three females and four males
B	Business School B gained the status of a Business School in the last decade, though it started in the mid 1980's. It is relatively new as compared to other Business Schools studied. It has international links with other international partners around the globe. The School of Law is also a part of the Business School. The Business School is made up of both international and home students. It currently has over 10% international students (Undergraduates and Postgraduates).	Director of Business School. Responsible for developing policies that relates to marketing and management of International students.	Three academic staff; at least seven years' experience with international students; one female and two males	Seven international students form four different countries; two females and five males
C	Business School C was formed in 2006 following a merger of several academic units within the University. It attracts about 3,000 international applications yearly. Over half of the University's international students are registered with the Business School. The Business School has gained several accreditations from validating bodies. It currently has a large number of international students.	Dean; Academic Dean; International Director within the Business School. They are all directly involved with students' issues, international students inclusive.	Four academic staff; at least seven years' experience with international students; one female and three males	Eight international students from five different countries; five males and three females

D	Business School D has an estimate of 5000 students with approximately of 3,500 international students. It currently offers both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. It became a Business School in 2009. The Business School has about 98% conversion rate (employed graduates or further study within six months after graduation). The Business School has gained several accreditations from validating bodies.	Dean, Academic Dean, Dean International, International Director in the Business School. They are all directly involved with students' issues, international students inclusive.	Four academic staff; at least seven years' experience with international students; one female and three males	Eight international students from six different countries; four males and four females

NOTE: The variation in the number of interviewees between the four selected Business Schools is due to the organisational structure, their business strategy and size of organisation), and the time utilised for each interview varied from one interviewee to another.

4.11.4 Justification of Academic Staff as Respondents

Since theories (for example, Sheth *et al.*, 2015) suggests that persons who are involved in the application of RM with customers can come from any level in the organisational structure, for this study, focus was extended to academic staff who are also responsible for the implementation of RM with international students, especially as they are front line employees who deal with international students more often than managers. Another reason for selecting academic staff as respondents was from findings during the interview with Business School managers, where the managers stated that the academic staff plays a crucial role in the development and implementation of the relationship approach with international students. As a result of this, the researcher had to introduce another phase of the interview process, but this time with academic staff (programme leaders, tutors etc.). A total of thirteen academic staff members were interviewed across the four selected Business Schools reviewed (See Table 4.8 for description of academic staff). In this research, academic staff members are members of staff who are involved in the delivery of courses directly to international students within the Business Schools reviewed.

4.11.5 Justification of Existing International Students as Respondents

In the light of the aim of this study, " to undertake a critical investigation of relationship marketing approaches adopted by four Greater Manchester University Business Schools in relation to international student attraction and retention". Hence, the research investigation had to focus on international students in the Business Schools reviewed. It is also argued that student are the primary customers of HE (Munteanu, Ceobanu, Bobalca, & Anton, 2010; Smith, 2015), this research also saw this as a justification to focus on international students. The views of international students which are going to be found through the focus group process will also help to achieve the objectives of this study.

This research adopted the contextual time-space approach (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005) with the aim to discover key events (past, present and future) of processes and activities that can be termed as significant in how RM had been constituted, managed, and most likely will be improved upon. The individual research respondents, i.e. international students from the Business Schools reviewed, at the time of the focus group possessed multiple temporal dimensions relating to themselves; in being a prospective international student (of the past), a registered/existing international student (of the present), and also a graduate or prospective international alumni/employee of the Business School (in the near future). Thirty international students were selected to take part in this study (see Table 4.8 for description of international students).

The University appoints these Key Players and they all report to the Vice Chancellor of their respective University. They are all responsible for the management of the Business School in terms of developing policies and decision making on issues that concerns the Business School. The data collected were driven by list of themes identified from the literature which served as a guide to the researcher in collecting the relevant and related data during the fieldwork. In summary, it can be seen that the rationale for selecting the respondents across all groups and Business Schools, were systematically determined using appropriate theories and research objectives as a guide.

4.12 Research Standards (Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research Methods)

With specific reference to determining the validity of qualitative findings, Lewis (2015) opined that it is important to establish the validity of findings in a qualitative study. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggested that validity in a qualitative study is a subjective phenomenon. This was supported by Saunders et al. (2012) who asserted that there is no conventional way of validating findings of a qualitative research since it deals with human beings and their activities. This is sequel to the fact that no one can guarantee the accurate interpretation of the views provided by respondents during the interview/focus group sections. In establishing validating in a qualitative study, four criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability) have been identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to replace the positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity.

Credibility is the parallel construct to internal validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2015). The purpose is to establish that the research is carried out in a credible way (Riege, 2003). The researcher enhanced the credibility of this study by triangulation of data where he collected data from different sources (Business School managers, academic staff & international students; interviews, focus group, documentations and observation). The researcher also enhanced credibility by peer and colleague review by discussing research and associated methodology with other members of the research community within the University (Bikerstaff et al., 2015).

Transferability parallels the function of external validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2015). The purpose is to establish the extent the findings apply to other contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The researcher enhanced transferability by preparing checklist of topics for interview. The researcher also developed an interview database, where responses from different interviewees were compared. Interviewing respondents from different levels in the Business Schools, and international students from different countries and from different Business Schools establishes transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability parallels the function of reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The purpose is to illustrate that the research process is systematic, rigorous and consistent (Riege, 2003). The researcher enhanced dependability of the study by ensuring that list of topics for interviews and focus group were agreed with the ethics committee of the University of Salford and the participating Business Schools. The researcher also recorded all interviews and focus group sessions using a recorder and conducted pilot studies as part of the research process. The interpretation of the thematic analysis done was verified by the supervisory team.

Conformability parallels the notion of neutrality and objectivity in positivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: Bryman & Bell, 2015). This purpose is to check if the interpretation of data is done in a logical and conformed manner (Riege, 2003). The researcher enhanced conformability by giving the respondent the opportunity to confer in a one-on-one interview section. While conducting the focus group sessions, the researcher also informed the respondents about their responsibilities and rights. The researcher also sent introductory email to respondents outlining the aims and objectives of the study. Interpretation of the thematic analysis was also verified by the supervisory team.

4.12.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study provides the researcher with the opportunity to test and modify one or more aspects of a final study (Yin, 2015). Before the data collection process took place, interview questions were piloted. Three pilot studies were conducted with two staff members involved in the application of relationship marketing from two of the selected case, one other expert on the application of relationship marketing. This study also conducted pilot studies with one focus group at one of the selected Business Schools. The aim of the pilot studies was to understand how well the respondents will understand the questions and also establish if there was any contradictory question that probably needs to be rephrased or removed. The respondents involved with the pilot studies did not count in the final samples. The pilot study helped the researcher in deciding on what was relevant and appropriate regarding the topic and then to make necessary adjustments and amendments for the case study protocol. The pilot study also gave the researcher valuable experience in the relevant administrative procedures, contacting the respondents, explaining the purpose of the study and timing each operation (Oppenheim, 2000). Additionally, it helped the researcher to identify key respondents' ways of thinking about the interview questions. The pilot study allowed the researcher to check the data collection instruments and the methodology to be sure there was no issues (Yin, 2015). After each pilot study interview, interviewees were asked to give their opinion and notes on the general structure of the interview to improve the quality of the study and validity of the research. Responses from interviewees allowed the researcher to prepare himself for the main study by having to change approaches, structure of questions and timing. An example of such was when the researcher had to alternate the convenience sampling method with snowballing for the focus group carried out during the field study.

4.12.2 Time and Location of the Interviews

The interview times were and scheduled at the convenience of the interviewees. This was also applicable to the focus group conducted. Generally, the average time spent on one interview was between forty five minutes and one hour. All the semi-structured face-to-face interviews and focus groups were conducted on site at the selected Business Schools, which also allowed the researcher to observe the interviewees and some facilities they made reference to. For time and location of interviews conducted see Table 4.9. Most of the interviews were conducted in the offices of the interviewees, while some others were conducted in conference rooms chosen by the interviewees in their various organisations. It also allowed the researcher the opportunity to access relevant documents and in some cases relevant documents were sent to the researcher via email. There were situations where some interviews were cancelled at the very last minute by the interviewees and rescheduled; the researcher was able to understand this situation are some of the likely hitches associated with face-to-face semi structured interviews and the role of the interviewees which meant they had pressing issues and focus groups. The researcher also had problems accessing the academic staff in one of the selected Business Schools. It was also very difficult to set up the focus groups and this was the main reason for the time taking by the researcher to complete his field study. All interviews were recorded using recorder. The researcher took notes at every interview conducted. The recordings from the interviews were transcribed using a Microsoft word document.

Table 4.9. Showing Time and Location of Interviews

Interviews/Focus Group	**Location**	**Time Period**
Participants (Business School A).	Business School A	March 2014 to March 2015
Participants (Business School B).	Business School B	March 2014 to March 2015
Participants (Business School C).	Business School C	March 2014 to March 2015
Participants (Business School D).	Business School D	March 2014 to March 2015

4.12.3 Ethical Consideration

The researcher like every other researcher needs to bring a strong sense of ethics to his research since every study with human requires prior approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Yin, 2014). In consideration to University of Salford rules and regulations, this research falls under the scope of the Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC). Hence the researcher applied for ethical approval (see Ethical Approval Appendix 1) prior to conducting the field study. All participants were given an Information Letter stating the purpose of the research and informing them of every right they possess (see Research purpose letter Appendix 4). They were also given Informed Consent forms (see Consent Form Appendix 2) to sign, which state their understanding of their rights as participants. The respondents were informed that they would be completely anonymous in the write-up and as a result their personal responses were guaranteed complete confidentiality. Bryman (2015) posited that interviewing frequently involves the use of audio taping data that is then transcribed. This recorded interview can make the identity of respondents known. Whilst he suggested that this may increase the construct validity of the research it also has ethical implications. In order to protect data provided by respondents, all documentation and audio materials were securely stored within the University of Salford. Electronic materials were stored within the researcher's file store and written and processed materials were stored in secure filing cabinets. The guarantee of anonymity was particularly important in this research as interviewees were in part critical of some of the practices of their Business Schools and the implications that current responsible practices have both staff and students.

4.13 Strategies to Increase Rigor

In ensuring the rigor of this research the researcher consulted and implemented other strategies. The strategies used by the researcher were data triangulation and use of quotations.

4.13.1 Data Triangulation

Triangulation is a method the researcher used to check and establish validity by analysing a research questions from multiple sources (Guion, Diehi & McDonald 2011; Saunders *et al.*, 2015). The researcher conducted interviews and focus groups with different sources within the selected Business Schools (managers who manage the Business School, academic staff who carry out the delivery and international students who are the major stakeholder) this is in line with one of the categories of data triangulation (Diefenbach, 2009; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012).

In this study the researcher used data triangulation by interviewing nine managers who are involved in the management of the phenomenon in the study organisations and ten academic staff from the selected Business Schools. The researcher found some inconsistencies across data sources from the Business Schools selected, this has helped the researcher uncover deeper meaning in the data collected (Patton, 2005). The use of other sources of evidence where this study used face-to-face semi structured interview and focus group as the main method of data collection, he also used evidences from documents, and direct observations is also a form of triangulation (Denscombe, 2014).

4.13.2 The Researchers Advocacy Experience in the HE Field

The researcher’s previous dual roles, of being an international student and a HE practitioner in the Business School, enabled him to be fully conversant with selected Business Schools and research respondents. Furthermore, such knowledge and experience enabled the researcher to identify key categories and themes that emerged from the data collected, essentially giving him the insights and critical thinking for the research investigation. Collectively, the semi-structured interview data collection methods, focus groups, along with supplementary documents gathered and observation, were coupled with the researcher’s experience in the international HE sector. This arguably sought to deepen understanding, instead of examining surface features, in relation to different aspects of relationship interactions between Business Schools and international students. This was especially the case with the key interactive stages during the student experience, as well as within the broad HE business network context.

The researcher’s contacts in both the UK HE sectors (from previous work experience), especially that of the supervisory team proved to be invaluable during the research fieldwork, and enhanced the process of gaining access to the selected Business Schools for this investigation. The researcher’s knowledge of the UK HE sector and international HE markets was an asset. This further enhanced the capability to select authentic, credible and representative reports and internal memoranda from Business Schools, and to use transcribed interviews, for conducting content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 2013). Practical experience in the HE sector was a strong advocator, which enabled the researcher to maintain trustworthiness and rigour in this research process (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). The researcher was aware of how his experience could bring about bias in his interpretations; hence, he ensured that there was a clear distinction when interpreting findings from past experiences.

4.15 Chapter Summary

This chapter has effectively discussed the research design of this study. The philosophy underlying this study was the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm which opines that reality is socially constructed. The research approach, research strategy, and methods were formulated sequel to the chosen paradigm and research objectives, with the focus of achieving the aim and objectives of the study. Hence, the research approach was inductive;

the research strategy was phenomenological qualitative research; the data collection technique was face-to-face semi-structured interview, focus groups, documentations and direct observation. The four selected Business Schools are in the Greater Manchester area from different classification of HEIs. The interviewees are Business School managers, academic staff who deal with international students within the Business Schools selected and international students, (undergraduate and postgraduate students) from thirteen countries outside the EU. The chapter also addressed how research standards were adhered to by the researcher. The list of themes which was used as interview protocol was developed before data collected from participants. The next chapter will be showing the results and analysis of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: Data Analysis and Findings

5.0 Chapter Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a review of the data analysis and results from the primary study conducted. The primary findings that stem from the empirical investigation carried out through semi-structured interviews within four Northwest Business Schools reviewed are presented in this chapter. The findings were developed from qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus group carried out in three phases (nine management staff, thirteen academic staff, and thirty international students) as discussed in the methodology chapter of this study. It also presents results from the focus group conducted with international students in the four Business Schools reviewed within this study. Some of the evidence was verified by documentation review, such as Business School annual official reports, memos, newsletters and publications. The researcher also made some observations during the interview period to verify statements being made by participants. The rationale for conducting the study was to evaluate the impact of the relationship marketing practices implemented by the Business Schools reviewed.

Structure of the chapter

The structure of this chapter developed from research objectives which consist of several themes and summaries of key similarities and differences. Having analysed the responses from the twenty-two semi-structured interviews carried out amongst the management and academic staff and the focus group conducted amongst international students in the Business Schools reviewed, it was found that international student retention was important in all the Business Schools reviewed and they use relationship marketing concepts amongst other marketing strategies to retain international students. Several different definitions and understanding of international students were found and several reasons as to why it is important to establish relationship with international students were also found by the researcher.

5.1 Results and Analysis

In representing the results, tables are composed to summarise views of respondents who participated in the research. As such tables only make reference to those stakeholder groups who provided responses.

The summary of themes and responses were coined out of the emerging statements evaluated from the transcripts. See Appendix: 6 and 7 for examples of transcripts.

Importance of international student retention in the UK Business Schools context

This study identified four interview themes that emerged from the literature as themes to guide its investigation. These were:

1. Definition of international students
2. International students contribution to Business Schools
3. International students' contribution to the city, region and country in general
4. Attracting and recruiting international students.

These themes will be used to structure the presentation of results.

5.1.1. Definition of International Students

When questioned about the definition of international students, participants gave varying response including: an emphasis on country of origin; descriptions using fees; study visa; and Non-EU students' status.

After careful analysis of responses, the following themes were identified. These data results showing themes and sub-themes as presented in the table of data as shown in appendix 8 were developed from the deep thematic analysis carried out.

Literature Theme: Definition of International Students

Themes: Non EU students and Non UK students.

From the management's perspective, international students' were defined as students who pay international fees. It was further elaborated as students who are not from the European Union countries, who are sponsored by the Universities to enable them to obtain a study visa to study in the United Kingdom as compared to students from the EU states who are not restricted by visas. These international students are expected to pay a higher fee than students from the European Union (EU) countries that are classified as 'home' students. One of the management staff defined international students by saying:

> *"Well they are two definitions of international students, where one is a standard definition; there are two issues, somebody who is not from the UK or the EU. From my own perspective I tend to see them as students, who are not UK nationals, I tend to include EU students… The standard definition use fees paid by these students, study visas as key differentiators".* **Participant 4** (**Director, Business School B**).

Analysis of the responses from academics in the Business Schools reviewed suggests international students are defined as those students who are from Non-EU countries. They stressed further that international students are students who have less prior experience of the UK Higher Education student experience and are also Non-UK and Non-EU. Although geography is a main classification tool to define home and international students, some academic respondents suggested that some EU students' academic history and experience were similar to international students rather than UK students. This is reflected in the following statement:

> *"…to me and this is a personal point of view, an international student is somebody who comes in from overseas at any point into this country, and from a finance point of view, obviously there is a clear definition between the two, whereas EU students are basically classed as home students. I understand the general definition tends to fall within the spectrum of requiring a study visa to getting a sponsor certificate from the University. Clearly, when it comes to actually delivering an academic work, there still are international students they have different cultures, they come from different backgrounds, they have different education experiences so you do need to be aware they are still international students even though they pay same fees as home students".* (**AC 12, Business School C**).

Analysis of the responses from focus groups conducted with international students in the Business Schools reviewed suggested international students were defined as those students who are from Non-UK and Non-EU countries. The international students stressed further that international students are students who need to be sponsored by the host University and their attendance monitored to ensure compliance with their visa conditions. They also identified their working hour's restrictions as compared to their EU students' counterparts who work without any restrictions. Most of the international students tend to agree that regardless of their geographical location, some EU students whose first language is not English and study experience are not UK related tend to struggle to fit in easily. This is reflected in the following statement:

> *"International students are students in the UK who are not EU citizens who live their countries with a study visa to come study in the UK and they usually pay a higher tuition fee different from home students and do not have access to student loan and UK government grants. As regards work, international students cannot work more than twenty hours a week at term-time. I can be best described as an International student as all of these factors apply to me".* (**INS 3 Business School A**)

The results of the definition of international students, from the three different groups of participants suggest common similarities tend to fall within fee structure and country of origin (Non-EU, Non-UK). There were differences in stakeholder responses where management staff saw international students as foreign students who provide an opportunity to internationalise, academics also saw international students as students who do not have UK academic background regardless of them being from another EU state. The international students view were more in line with that of the academics except where the international students tend to be very particular about the working hours, having to pay higher tuition fees and attendance monitoring allowed by their study visas.

In summary, International students are defined as students from Non-EU countries who are sponsored by a host University to get a study visas to enable them study in the UK. In most cases international students are charged higher fees as compared to their EU student counterparts. International students are defined by academics as students who are Non-EU with Non-UK academic experience where in most cases English happens not to be their first language. This differentiates the definition of academic staff from their managers. International students define themselves in terms of students who need to adhere to all visa regulations which include attendance monitoring and working hour's limitations.

5.1.2 International Students Contribution to Business School

When questioned about the contribution of international students to the Business School, analysis found that the participants' answers could be categorised into the following groups as outlined in Table 5.2 as shown in the tables of data in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: International Students Contribution to Business Schools

Theme: Multicultural Environment

The participants revealed many reasons as to why it is important to have international students. Among these are that international students bring a multicultural environment which is essential for a Business School, especially as it can help reflect international aspects of trade and provide the perspectives that can be termed as global. This reason was emphasised by all the respondents' stakeholder groups. The management staff who participated added that international students offer the opportunity for the Business School to grow and develop. Especially as Business Schools want to internationalise and develop their profile. They all agreed that the presence of international students in the Business Schools makes it easier to partner with other institutions and countries overseas. This they all agreed internationalisation was one of their key goals as all aim to develop their international presence. These were described as a critical vision for each of the Business Schools.

> *It gives a much better vision of what the world of business is like, because If you have got people from all different cultures, with all different experiences and expectations working in groups together, practicing projects together and having to study together in the same room, going out with each other in the evening, it just opens up new dimensions to what being a student is. Considering these contributions it becomes imperative that we do all we can to acquire and retain international students in our Business School".* **Participant 6 (Associate Dean International, Business School C).**

> "*…Without diversity propelled by international students to home students, the entire student experience will be ruined. International students help in establishing the multicultural setting and vibrancy present in the university environment within and outside the classroom. In the classroom environment for example, they bring in wealth of knowledge through their international experiences, case studies, and their local experiences and examples which helps to improve the curriculum*". **(AC 9, Business School A).**

Theme: Revenue

The management participants as well as international students also identified revenue as a contribution of international students to the Business School. They emphasised the funds international students bring into the Business School through tuition fee and other related fees. Though this theme emerged from the analysis of results from academic staff, it was not seen as too important by the academic staff. They were of the opinion that though funds from international students are needed by the Business School, they still think it is important that the core importance of education should be what drives establishment of the Business School and not necessarily funds to be provided from any group of students. The importance of revenue brought in by international students was highlighted by all stakeholder groups, as reflected in the following quote:

> *"…add financial value to the school because the international fee is important and this cannot be overemphasised especially as the government has embarked on cutting grants and resources made available to higher education institutions".* **Participant 6 (Associate Dean International, Business School C).**

Theme: Enhanced Curriculum and Value

Enhanced curriculum and value developed as a result of the presence of international students in the Business School was also an emerging theme. The respondents all identified enhanced curriculum which is developed by the dynamics of the students. The academic staff particularly stressed value creation for all Business School students (home and international) as an element of contribution provided by international students to the Business School. This they said takes place in the classroom during lectures and seminars through diverse experiences, class debates and vibrancy. These elements are reflected in the following statements:

> *"… they bring in massive amount not only in finances, I deliver some courses that are internationally base I deliver them overseas. It is an EU project for eight years now that has been a massive learning curve, because within a classroom in…, you can see international students, talk to international students and you could feel that they have a different approach, the way they learn and study, even down to respect for tutors. But when you actually engage specific group from different cultures it really comes to light that they are fundamental differences. When engaging with a project, you will see how different cultures interact with the process of education. Then you will be able to understand that international students bring in value. It is very difficult to motivate an English born and bred student to go engage with another culture, then it is quite great for them to gain that experience from class work through a mix with group of international students and this is very important".* **(AC 17, Business School D).**

However, a few of the academic staff were concerned about the Business School enrolling more international students as a result of the funds they bring in. Their concern was that the Business Schools should not focus on the number of international students they register but on the quality of these international students as reflected in the following statement.

> *"... it is quite understandable that the Business School needs international student to bring in additional income, but I will expect the management to be more concerned about the academic quality of these international students as it should not be about numbers".* **(AC 11, Business School B).**

Analysis of the results of the contribution of international students to the Business Schools, from the three different stakeholder groups who participated in the research suggests that the common similarities tend to fall within creating a multicultural environment, providing revenue for the Business Schools, and enhancing the Business School curriculum. The few stand-out contributions includes the contribution international students make to the development and growth to the Business School and these elements were identified by the management perspective reflecting the managerial vision of the Business School.

In summary, the contributions of international students identified by the management staff and academic staff include mainly contributing to a multicultural environment, enhancing curriculum, and generating revenue. The Management staff tend to identify other contributions which include development and growth. In comparison the academic staff includes value as an element international student contributes to the Business Schools.

5.1.3 How international Students are Attracted and Recruited

When questioned about how international students are attracted and recruited, Business School management staff stated that there are several ways that the participating Universities attract and recruit international students. After analysing the responses, the researcher grouped the results into themes as shown in Table 5.4 of the findings data in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: How international Students are Attracted and Recruited.

Theme: International Office/Agents

Some of those recruitment activities identified by the management staff and academic staff include: the use of international offices in Non-EU countries where some of these offices are managed by international agents and others by their overseas staff are used in attracting and recruiting international students. In doing this, the university use oversea staff members who are residing in countries they are targeting as a representative to inform prospective natives about their Business school. They also use agents; some of these agents are private individuals while others part of an agency firm whose job is to help liaise with prospective students about their Business Schools and also help provide necessary advice to these prospective students. Partnerships established abroad with organisations within the education sector are also platforms Business Schools use to recruit international students. These partners tend to act as a representative of the Business Schools overseas and they provide all necessary information to prospective international students. This was supported by the following statement:

> *"…we are already setting up offices abroad which help in recruiting international students. Some of these offices happen to be managed by our own staff members, where others are just managed by international students' recruitment agents who help us provide necessary information about our school and the UK education to international students. They also help to provide advice to students as regards how to secure a student visa and how to make the most of their study years".* **Participant 4, (Manager, Business School B).**

Theme: International Recruitment Fairs/Country Visits

Attending and organising recruitment fairs is listed as another way of attracting and recruiting international students. It was stated that the Universities send members of staff on annual national visits to countries to help as ambassadors of the Universities in attracting and recruiting prospective international students. Where such staff members help promote the Business School to prospective students. These staff endeavours to stress the importance of studying with them and as a result provide necessary information to such prospective international students. The staff then submits information of prospective international students to the recruitment office for immediate follow up.

Theme: Social media/E-platform Promotions

The use of social media and other University publications on other electronic platforms such as blogs and websites are also ways the responding Universities use to attract, recruit and select international students. Some of these Universities documents were given to the researcher by the Management staff to peruse to enable him verify the statements. The university ensures their online presence is noticeable and interactive enough to enable them provide useful information to students as at when due.

Theme: Reputation/Positive word of mouth communication

The position of the Business School in the league table was also identified as a factor that attracts international students to apply to a Business School. It was also revealed that the reputation of the Business School was another way that helps to attract and recruit international students as reflected in the following comment:

> "*Our reputation as it reflects in the world ranking of Business Schools also attract international students to us, this and positive word of mouth communication from our existing overseas students to other prospective international students help us attract and recruit international students"* **Participant 1, (Marketing Manager Business School, A).**

Respondents also suggested that positive word of mouth communication was another way they attract and recruit international students as reflected in the following statements:

> "*There are a whole lots of different ways, some or probably the best way is through reputation, then we have some very healthy alumni's in places like Hong Kong, China, Nigeria, and a few parts of the United Emirates where we are well known for the built environment. We obviously have students in India, because we have had Indian students coming to us for a long time. Again Chinese students, because of the Manchester base, because it is got an indigenous and Chinese population. So we have got word of mouth, we use the alumni, we use the agents, we go to fairs and exhibitions, and we probably have some of the most generous bursaries available to international students".* **Participant 8, (Associate Dean International, Business School C).**

> *"At the undergraduate level we only have one intake in September and we have found that word of mouth is a significant attractor for us. We have students for whom this is the 2^{nd} or 3^{rd} family member that has come to ... to study a particular subject we have alumni testimonials from students who have taken undergraduate here and who have gone back home to family business for example and to start business very many have entrepreneurial aspirations we also recruit students at fairs and we use systems of agents and we also work with partner universities to share best practice and to recruit students we have been involved in a number of clearing and recruitment events this year , At the moment we have staff who have just returned from India and Vietnam and china where over the last three weeks been involved in these opportunities. We also have open day events both post grad and undergrad with the next undergraduate one on the twenty third of December and there are opportunities for potential students to engage not just by actual visit to the university but also by viewing online and in follow up activities and by live webinars with staff. We had yesterday a member of staff who was Skyping a college in Vietnam and talking to 18 potential students who*

> *are likely to come in at predominantly at undergraduate level so we use a variety of methods. Of course we have staff as part of their research portfolio they will be attending international conferences and events they take the opportunity to recruit students as well".* **Participant 11, (Associate Dean, International, Business School D).**

The majority of both the management and academic staff said that they consider previous qualifications and experiences of international students during recruitment, stressing that the prospective students have to be well qualified and sometimes the students are tested to evaluate their intellectual conversation.

In summary, the participants identified the use of international office, recruitment fairs, country visits, social media, referrals from positive word of mouth communication from friends and families, and the Business School position in the league tables as the main ways of attracting and recruiting international students. League table positions were mainly stressed by respondents from Universities who are well positioned in the league table. While in comparison Universities who tend not to be well positioned on the league table focus their efforts on attracting and recruiting international students through international offices and international agents.

5.2. The use of Relationship Marketing by Business Schools to retain international students.

This section will highlight results and analysis developed from the study as it relates to RM and how each Business Schools utilises it in retaining International students. This reflects the following statement developed from the objective of this study:

The use of Relationship Marketing by Business Schools to retain international students.

This study identified six themes which emerged from the gap analysis within the literature review in setting the scene to achieve its objective.

1. Marketing approaches used by Business Schools in sustaining international students' patronage
2. Rationale for using specific marketing approaches
3. Units and people responsible for the implementation of the marketing approach
4. Ways of implementing the relationship marketing approach

5. Cost of implementing the relationship marketing approach
6. Development of the relationship marketing approach

5.2.1. Marketing approaches used by Business Schools in sustaining international students' patronage

Respondents were questioned about the marketing concepts used for the retention of international students. Both Business School managers and academic staff identified several marketing concepts. A summary of the analysis of responses from respondents are shown in Table 5.5 as highlighted in Appendix 8.

5.2.1. Literature Theme: Marketing approaches used by Business Schools in sustaining international students' patronage.

Theme: Relationship Marketing

Both the management and academic staff agreed that Business Schools use several marketing approaches to sustain international students' patronage. The management staff and academic staff stated that the marketing approach they use for international students retention is best described as Relationship Marketing. The management staff explained that it is done through several activities carried out by the Business School in terms of the services they offer to international students. They responded saying that these approaches are used in and outside the classroom. Some of these activities include: the use of CRM; efficient and effective communication; use of overseas staff; events; strong Alumni base; providing tailored services; academic inclusion; user friendly learning materials; student life support; one-to-one support, detailed feedback and guidance, scholarships, and loyalty discounts, and pleasant student experience. This is supported by the following statements:

> *"We do not accept that marketing approach to international students should be transactional. It has to be a student experience which so much quality embedded in it which will satisfy the function of relationship marketing. It is about relationship building I think the Business School has been working on a model of international students coming in to the Business School to study, completing their study and then returning home and that model which is a transactional model has been used by many universities in similar ways for many years. I think what is interesting about the model is I will describe the model as a more integrated model and more of a relationship model and it does involve through dialogue exchange with students and co-learning with students and very often co-delivery of experience".* **Participant 7 (Dean Business School C).**

Another stated:

> *"…Relationship marketing which we teach in Business School is something we understand how important it is to ensure it is established with our students especially the international students. RM helps businesses to stay competitive in terms of customer retention and loyalty; this is also applicable if drawn into the Business School/international student relationship"* **(AC 17, Business School D).**

The academic staff did state that the relationship they establish with international students was a similar relationship they establish with home students. They stressed that they do not distinguish between international students and home students when establishing student relationship especially as their concern was about ensuring a long term relationship with all their students. The Academic staff stressed that the personal care expected from academic staff is provided for all students. They also identified Good relationship effective and efficient communication, adequate information, trust, one-to-one services and regular reviews of feedbacks as well as personal tutor support. One of the management staff summarises this view by saying:

> *"…as part of our plan to establish a relationship that will foster a long-term relationship with our students, we do not differentiate between home or international students"... "We tend to adopt relationship marketing approaches that will help retain these students and overtime make them loyal to our university all through their years of studies even until they become Alumni".* **Participant 1 (Marketing Director, Business School, A).**

The respondents (management staff and academic staff) stated that Business Schools utilise marketing concepts in ensuring the maintenance of international student patronage. They all emphasised the importance of international students patronage and stressed that keeping international students requires the application of several marketing concepts including digital marketing, e-marketing etc. The management staff did however emphasise that service and relationship marketing concepts were the main approach towards international student retention but identified differentiation and support as key part of the approach.

5.2.2. Rationale for using specific marketing approaches

When questioned about the rationale for using specific marketing approaches. Both Business School managers and academic staff highlighted several reasons as outlined in Table 5.6 in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: Rationale for using Relationship marketing

Theme: Retention

Both the management staff and academic staff stated that they practice relationship marketing approaches to enable them retain international students. Reductions in student attrition rates were stressed by the management staff as a reason why they utilise these approaches. The management staff were aware of the fact that without these support services, students who were finding it difficult to adapt to the learning process and life in the UK might be left with no option than to drop out of the University and return to their home country. They gave examples of how students with personal issues who cannot access counselling services had dropped-out in the past and even international students who find it difficult to cope with the English language and culture after enrolment do not complete within the stipulated time. Some of the interviewees highlighted this by saying:

> *"Retention and achievement are the key things. If there is a good solid learning experience, retention and achievement will look after themselves. It is basically to achieve those as much as possible ...we do not want our students dropping out; we have to provide adequate support services which all stem from the RM approach that will prevent them from dropping out. For example, relate this to some undergraduate international students who are quite young and find themselves in a new environment, new culture and sometimes a completely different one from that of their home country. Upon arrival, they immediately undergo a complete period of shock. Cultural shock will be the best word to describe it. You have to as much as possible as part of the pastoral care ensures every support required is available. It can be likened to not just providing a manual for a product, but an after sales service".* **Participant 2 (Director Business School B).**

Another reflected similar views:

> *"To be able to keep international students, you have to not just provide their academic needs; you also do more in providing their other needs. Efforts will be made towards inclusion. They have to be valued; they have to be given that sense of acceptance in this society. These are all of your responsibility as a school". This can only be done when there is an established relationship. We are aware it takes time, but with a continuous effort of building the relationship both in and outside the classroom you will realise in no time that the student is now a part of the academic community. Trust then comes into play, and all of these will not just enhance retention, but eventually lead to student loyalty. With these approaches in place, tit gives us the opportunity of providing that customer lifetime value. The student in this case the customer will be able to help our Business School put forward positive word of mouth communication which is necessary for*

> *our internationalisation. Certainly retention will also be achieved".* **Participant, 7 (Dean, Business School C).**

Theme: Value Exchange

Value exchange was also identified by the academic staff as a rationale for practising this marketing approach. All of the academic staff emphasised that the provision of such services and activities to international students are very important in making them feel valued. They acknowledge the fact that international students pay so much in terms of fees and for such reasons; they should get adequate value in return. Academic staff and international students enjoy mutual value, not necessarily as income but through student engagement, and the opportunity to collaborate in several academic development projects, including academic projects, paper publications etc. Furthermore, they stated that giving adequate time and attention to students gives them a sense of belonging. The academic staff said the marketing approach adopted by their Business School was not just for retention purposes but also to help improve academic productivity of international students. One of the academic staff highlighted this by saying:

> *"…by providing all of these supports in our marketing approach, we are confident that all of these will help improve the academic productivity of our international students. Having them is not just about retaining them as an avenue for income but also to develop them and ensure they can compete in the business world after completion of their studies. We are very much aware that they are going to be ambassadors of this university so every necessary support and practice to make them become respected ambassadors should be provided to them".* **(AC, 10, Business School, A)**

Theme: Positive Student experience

The respondents all identified the international student experience as another possible outcome of applying the RM concept. They stressed that with the relationship marketing practices, there is an opportunity to satisfy the students, as well as provide them quality service that will promote student engagement and happiness. The respondents said that the student experience matters to them and they are committed to enhancing a positive student experience and as a result utilising the RM concept is a platform to achieve the goal.

The application of this concept was also identified as a way of achieving some of the key goals of the Business Schools as reflected in the following statement:

> *"With this approach in place, it is seen as a best fit in achieving the three R's vision established by the new management of the Business School. The three R's are: Recruitment, Retention and Reputation. As a Business School, we are aware that using the relationship approach we will be able to achieve these set of priorities. Now you can see how important relationship building with students and their family members even their home country talking about international students is to us"* **Participant 8 (Associate Dean, Business School, C).**

All of the management staff who responded said that having a relationship with the students will allow them to promote the University as a brand before other prospective students knowing that it builds their reputation. Respondents suggested that establishing a good relationship with the students will allow students' to rate the University as a reputable institution. The management staff stressed that their Business Schools were keen about this and as a result pay attention to issues that impacts the student experience.

The participants (management staff and academic staff) identified retention, positive student experience, value exchange, and customer loyalty as the key rationales for adopting the RM approach. The management staff included improving the reputation of the Business School as another core reason for adopting the RM approach. This was not in line with the view of the academic staff who suggested that the reputation of the Business School was not their primary concern. The academic staff definition of value exchange also tends to differ from that of management staff. Management staff described value exchange mainly as a collaboration platform that will exist between international students and the Business School. In comparison, academic staff describes value exchange as that value that is developed and co-created by the students and academic staff in and outside the classroom towards the learning goal.

5.2.3. Application of the marketing approaches

When questioned about the implementation of the relationship marketing concept and those people responsible for its implementation, the management staff and academic staff who participated identified the units and staff within the University who are responsible. Analysis of their responses is shown in Table 5.7 as highlighted in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: Units and staff members responsible for the application of the Relationship Marketing approach

Theme: Central and Colleges/Schools

The application of these marketing concepts was described by the management staff as being the responsibility of every member of staff in the organisation. The respondents said the application of these concepts could be done centrally as well as through colleges/schools within the University. A document showing the responsibilities of the management staff and how duties were delegated was given to the researcher by one of the management staff to enable him to verify the statement on how policies were developed and implemented. Both the management and academic staff stated that the management staff are responsible for developing these policies but the application is everyone's responsibility. Both groups of participants agreed that the application of these marketing concepts is the responsibility of the University, Colleges and Schools. They added that it is the school who acts as a starting point for the application as reflected in the following statements:

> *"In implementing this approach, it is the responsibility of every unit which starts from the school, the executive dean, cross-functional ministerial roles, the vice chancellor, and other collective KPIs. Every member of staff of this institution is carried along in the implementation. It is at three levels; at the university level the university sets the frame work within which we operate, which is the QAA guideline which the government sets some framework in terms of Border Agency visa requirements and the obligations of the university's as a tier 4 trusted sponsor status university .so we operate within that framework there are some university rules and regulations that which means/requires we engage with all of our students in a particular way. There are university initiatives that allows us to provide a service to all our international students things like the international student society student life, provision just down here at the university house university guidance on visa and on issues of particular importance to international students such as guidance on observance of religious festivals guidance on matters of particular personal circumstances that may affect international students and their ability to work with male tutors or example or to observe morning rituals for example and to provide health advice for example who may need help to access health care provision in the UK there are some students who may need to report to a police station that the university level support. Then we have support offered at school level, so we have an employability hub at the Business School that help students to find part time work, internship and placement and can offer advice on the specific visa implications and guidance on some of those opportunities*. **Participant 7 (Dean International, Business School C).**

> *"At faculty level it is the faculty executive group and … the other guy you were going to see, the faculty executive group consist of the Heads of departments (the academic department) where students are learning and … with his team on International (he is the director of international), and then the administration, we have the a particular resource for international Administration as well, and so… yes, those are the areas, and from the university's side, there is the head of … international, new director we have got in, and we have got the deputy vice chancellor who is responsible for international, she is just from … University which is much higher so she is bringing in a number of different areas, they are changing strategy".* **Participant 3 (Dean Business School D).**

The academic staff stated that most of these approaches were not explicit as part of their job roles. However, they all acknowledged that their job roles include an implied expectation to support students and establish a relationship with them. They further stated that they are more aware of the relationship marketing policies of the Business School and not the central University as reflected in the statement below:

> *"Within the Business School, there is a sort of hierarchical approach to the top, we are monitored as academics and these are driven primarily by senior academics, for example at school level most of these strategies are implemented by people like the associate dean of teaching and learning, she is responsible for the development and monitoring of these sort of relationship building on the academic side. It could have come from the University policy I am not too sure. But most of the work like that is driven by that senior management team who develop the policies, but everyone is involved in the implementation. Nobody does it for you".*
> **(AC 13, Business School C).**

The participants (management staff and academic staff) stated that the implementation of relationship marketing is a responsibility of every member of staff of the Business School though the policies are developed and monitored by the management staff. The top management staff in the central administration, the colleges and schools was identified as the staff in these core units responsible for the development of policies. The academic staff acknowledged the management staff in the Business Schools as the people responsible for developing and monitoring relationship building on the academic side. The participants said that in only a few instances units within the school treat international students differently, as most of these relationship building policies also apply to home students. Most of the Business Schools monitor their own policies except for Business School A where monitoring occurred at a central level.

5.2.4 Ways of Applying the Relationship Marketing Approach

When questioned about ways of applying the relationship marketing approach, both the management staff and academic staff identified different ways of applying the relationship marketing approach. Findings from the analysis of their responses are shown in Table 5.8 as reflected in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: Ways of applying the Relationship Marketing Approach

Theme: Support Services

The management and academic staff identified student support services provided for international students as a CRM tool which enhances an effective two way communication as the core way of implementing a relationship marketing concept for international students. Other loyalty programs were also identified, like the loyalty discounts and international bursaries. All the management and academic staff agreed that student engagement was another key way of applying relationship marketing concept for international students, stressing that student engagement is the most important way and it may have other benefits in aiding retention as international student develop loyalty and a sense of belonging. The management staff identified other ways of applying the relationship marketing approach for international students including; estates, overseas partnership, events and facilities etc. as ways of applying the relationship marketing concept.

Theme: Class Delivery

The respondents agreed that their respective Business Schools have other activities in place to implement their marketing approaches. For example, for some marketing strategies are brought to the attention of the academic staff during meetings and some of these is applied by them, whereas most of them are accomplished as a result of their teaching experience and through academic and pastoral care. In describing the class delivery aspect as a way of implementing the strategy, one respondent suggested:

> *"Relationship marketing... It needs knowledge experience, it is very easy I suppose to walk into a classroom and take no consideration about the audience; you can understand that you may have a first year group of students; you may have a second, or a final year. Obviously that is an*

easy decision to make when you setting up your material, but to engage the students you do need to take all other things into consideration even if it is down to the case of using case study examples or things happening in the news that has this international focus because obviously the students you need to sort of lead them in the direction of cultural awareness and the global picture. Without including that it will be a very dry boring experience and also engaging some of the others, an example will be if I talk about what is happening in Burundi they may be a small numbers of Burundi students in the room same applies to China, Pakistan … It is difficult it is a difficult issue, in clear black and white we are told that the student requirement that English is sufficient. This is fine on one hand! On the other level it isn't necessarily the case. In a lecture environment it is a case of you need to make things clear and take your time with it. You can't just race through things… that is a skill, not something that can be taught or a policy; it is developing a staff-student relationship". **(AC 18, Business School D).**

The respondents especially the academic staff identified class delivery that involves activities before and after the class itself as a more effective approach of applying the RM approach. Examples which include student engagement, effective communication, timely feedback, and drop in sessions etc. were all identified as ways academic staff implement an effective relationship marketing concept. The management staff identified several ways of applying these strategies including student support and other marketing strategies such as marketing communication. It was understood by the researcher that this was the case since the management staff in some cases were among those developing, implementing and monitoring these marketing strategies. The management staff mentioned marketing communications, CRM and other functions of the marketing department as ways of implementing the relationship marketing concept. The management staff gave specific examples like staff-student committees, student support activities, international societies, Alumni, placement communications, and provision of facilities etc. as factors that enhance the student experience, as reflected in the following statements:

"What we do for the school is we have an alumni officer for the Business School which is new post within a school specific post. The alumni officer is responsible for generating alumni contact obviously with students who have already left the university but really reinforcing the idea with our undergraduate that they are now part of a rich worldwide alumni network with lots of opportunities. She organises events and activities and is very active in approaching students who are potential donors or who could act as members of our advisory boards or who could represent the school in other ways in international events. One of the things we do in terms of relationship management after the students have

left us is that alumni provision is indefinite so if students want to re-contact the school or if they are visiting the UK thirty years after they graduated then they can do so and we obviously welcome them to our various events. There are also a set of satellite alumni organisations in the countries which they are based so they can make contact while they have left. In terms of relationship marketing right at the beginning when they apply to us, we have a system of constant contact with them right from their application right through to when they are registering. We do that through formal mechanisms such as emails letters telephone calls. We also have social network sites students that they can join. We have the SBS tweeter feed, we tweet messages of welcome and activities that is going on we have a Facebook page, the students of course have a closed group very often students who know they are coming to the UK and know they will going on to a particular programme will have a social network already there. sometimes students from particular countries also have a face book page site and use social networking to contact each other so we have got at the moment quite a number of students from a particular east European country active on Facebook and are very good at communicating with each other and it helps them to settle very quickly… Other supports which include accommodation, work placement, visa, and language skills amongst other support are available through both in and outside classroom through student life and other departments". **Participant 8 (Associate Dean, International Business School C).**

Another respondent stated that:

"To me the first big step is for me to ensure this relationship helps them to get through the first year, and the next step is to see that they graduate and while they are doing it I want to see a smile on their face. Because a happy student is a student who is engaging, a happy student is one who is working hard and a happy student tends to do well". **Participant 5 (International Director, Business School D).**

Both the management staff and academic staff all agreed that these approaches could be accepted as a major factor that increases retention rates for international students especially during the first six weeks. The first six weeks is seen as the critical time both in academic and social life, where the students' opinion of their experience becomes formulated. The academic staff further argued that with these approaches in place, international students now have more confidence in class participation. All the management staff and academic staff who were interviewed agreed that with the resources devoted to international students, sometimes they get more support when compared to home students and most of the support is readily available before and immediately after registration which in turn plays a bigger role in the entire positive student experience.

The respondents identified student support as a way of implementing relationship marketing. They also identified the communication and marketing aspects of CRM as a tool used by the School to implement relationship marketing concept. The management staff identified other channels of implementing the RM approach for example; estates, overseas partnership, events and facilities etc. as ways of implementing the relationship marketing concept. The academic staff identified class delivery as their way of implementing the relationship marketing approach. The academic staff members are more familiar with the class delivery medium. Examples which include student engagement, effective communication, timely feedback, and drop in sessions etc. were all identified as ways they implement the RM concept.

5.2.5 Cost of applying the Relationship Marketing (RM) approach

When asked about the cost of applying the relationship marketing approach, the respondents who consist of the management and academic staff, suggested the following cost implications as outlined in Table 5.8 as highlighted in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: Cost of applying the Relationship Marketing Approach

Theme: Funds

The respondents (management staff & academic staff) indicated that there are some cost implications when practising these marketing approaches. The money set aside to ensure that the desirable product comes out of the relationship marketing process is also a cost. For example, enough funds need to be invested in estates that will be able to accommodate international students. In addition, respondents suggested they try to provide financial support for international students, including staff resource, staff training, travel expense, investment in accreditation, meetings with international partners, extra-hours spent with international students, and provision of adequate facilities. Additional monies allocated to help develop, implement and monitor the relationship marketing concept.
This argument is supported by the following statement;

> *"It is quite expensive to set up and sustain these strategies as there are several cost implications involved, the CRM technology for example needs so much financial investment to develop and keeps it going".*
> **Participant 1, (Marketing Director, Business School A).**

Theme: Time

All respondents agreed that extra-time devoted to international students and the RM process, which cannot be necessarily calculated in monetary terms, are additional costs incurred while developing a student focused relationship approach. This is reflected in the following comment:

> *"The cost implication of establishing this relationship might not be easily calculated in monetary value but they can be very costly when carefully analysed, knowing that we need to spend more time with students' especially international students who have no previous knowledge of the UK education background. In … for example, we have several trainings available to us and I am sure some of these trainings are designed to help us serve all students better especially international students. Also be aware that our Business School administrator tends to spend more time with international students and most of them also are rained for this very purpose".* **(AC 16, Business School D).**

The time allocated to staff to establish these relationship at every point of contact with the students was also highlighted by all respondents. The additional time set out to produce a pleasant student experience is a major cost that can be related to the relationship marketing concept.

The respondents identified time and funds as the key costs of implementing ta relationship marketing approach. They however stressed that the benefits outweighs the cost of practising the relationship marketing approach.

5.2.6 Sustaining and Developing the Relationship Marketing Approach

When questioned about ways of maintaining and developing the relationship marketing approach, both the management and academic staff highlighted several measures in place which includes: engagement; and investment etc. as shown in Table 5.9 in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: Sustaining and Developing the Relationship Marketing (RM) Approach

Theme: Student Engagement

All members of staff interviewed stated that student engagement was the core strategy for the maintenance and development of the RM approach. Student engagement was described in this context as the engagement of students' especially international students in the RM process. Emphasising how such engagements opportunities can help to provide adequate directions to the Business School in how best it could further develop and sustain the relationship. Examples of engagements includes the involvement of students in the decision making process especially as it concerns the development and implementation of the RM practice. The respondents stressed that without engaging the students as part of the process the implementation of different approaches would not be sustained, as reflected in the following statement:

> *"Whatever strategy the university is implementing can only be achieved if the students are engaged and brought on board at every part of the process. We are engaging more with the students and ensuring that they are brought on board; our international student representatives are included in part of our process as a university. One of the reasons for this is to enable us maintain and develop our relationship approach".* **Participant 3 (International Marketing Director Business School D).**

Theme: Continuous Investment

The management staff highlighted continuous investment in facilities and technology as another way of developing and maintaining the relationship approach strategy with all students' especially international students. The researcher was shown around the new Business School building and high range of technological facilities within one of the participating Business Schools. The researcher observed these facilities and it helped in verifying the statements made by the management staff. Respondents also mentioned the importance of investing in new technologies to ensure they are up to date and developing new programmes to suit students' specific needs as reflected in student feedbacks as highlighted in the following statement:

> *"Engaging the students without putting into perspective their suggestions, opinions and ideas when developing the strategy of the university will make the whole exercise worthless. As a result, we ensure*

> *that as a university we carefully analyse these feedbacks from students who will bring on board and put these feedbacks into our university plan where necessary. An example of such, is this … building, it was developed as a result of feedbacks from students. We found out about their needs and we ensured we provided what was necessary to satisfy their needs".* **Participant 2 (Director Business School B).**

Another management staff stated that:

> *"The more you listen to students, the more you hear what their issues are, and then you try and fit that into everything- their curriculum, academic activities, social activities, life style. Having specialised in the areas … and I am luckier because I do go to places, I also have people on ground…. because of tier four or whatever... we have just got to fill that vacuum… we discuss that then we meet possibly once in four to five weeks and that goes down to unit and it gets permeated down, so they won't be issue, hopefully that people are not aware of, if there's been an issue xyz, you need to include that… In developing this, we are continuing to seek all possible ways to improve it. Ensuring it's taken to other success level. Some of these are already rolling. Only recently we just developed strategic objectives which are in line with the university strategic plan and several measures are stated there to ensure all our existing approaches are developed upon. I will ask my secretary to provide you with this document so you can also see the step change strategy. One thing we now consider so much is importance of staff engagement"* **Participant 7 (Dean Business School C).**

The respondents (management staff and academic staff) stated that investment is key to the development and maintenance of the relationship marketing concept. They also identified student engagement as also key to the development and maintenance of the relationship marketing concept, stressing that the student should be the focus of the development and maintenance policies of the relationship marketing approach and as a result their opinion should be considered at every contact point. The management staff identified staff engagement, partnering and engaging other stakeholders as a way of improving international student experience. The academic staff on their part stated that professional development of academic staff was essential in meeting the needs of international students. They gave examples of learning new languages or at least learning a little about curriculums of other countries as being essential in an effort to engage international students.

5.3. Impact of Relationship Marketing on International Students in the Business School

In actualising the objective of this study as it relates to the impact of a relationship marketing approach on international student retention, this study developed three interview themes from the literature gap analysis to help achieve its objectives.

1. Impact of the relationship marketing approach on international student retention
2. Relationship marketing in Business Schools and International students
3. Suggested ways of improving relationship marketing approach to enhance international student experience

5.3.1 Impact of the Relationship Marketing approach on international student retention

When questioned about the impact of RM on the retention of international students, the respondents (management staff & academic staff) all agreed that the relationship marketing approach has a positive impact on international student retention as highlighted in Table 5.9 as shown in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: Impact of the Relationship Marketing (RM) approach on international student retention

Theme: Completion

All respondents identified the relationship marketing approach as one of the key factors that enhances international student retention. Completion as a type of retention was one of the elements of retention that emerged. Completion rate of International students after enrolment to the graduating stage was found to have grown significantly across Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes within the Business schools as a result of the application of the RM approach with international students. Completion in this regard was described as international students graduating within the stipulated time. It also was described as students staying with the same Business school on the same course from enrolment to graduation stage.
There was documented evidence to support this which the management staff provided for the researcher to review. One of the participant responded saying:

> *"Students sticking on to course through end of 1st year to graduation, doing undergraduate programme just as you done, the idea will be doing undergraduate, post graduate and PhD with us. … Not everyone go on to*

do PhD but we do get that and I can tell you that this RM approach is the reason for this high retention rate. Where there is no relationship between the Business School and the international students, there is every tendency that they will not even complete their programme in the first instance, not to think of enrolling for a higher degree" **(AC 10, Business School B).**

Theme: Conversion

Conversion was another theme that emerged as a form of international student retention. Conversion was explained as international student converting from one programme of study after completion to a higher degree within same Business school. It was further discussed that the relationship approach has led to the avoidance of drop-outs especially amongst international students who would normally find it difficult to adapt to the UK education system and lifestyle. At this stage, the researcher was provided with a document showing the retention and recruitment rate of international students which was seen by the researcher as a growing rate of retention. This document helped the researcher in verifying the statements made by the management staff. The management staff agreed that with this marketing approach in place, it has brought about increased employability for international students. They also stated that it enhances the student experience of the international students, stressing that as a result of these approaches the point of contact between international students and the University has increased and hence, it ensures that the students get value for their investment. Some of these themes are reflected in the statements from respondents below:

> *"The impact has meant we have exceeded our recruitment targets especially for postgraduates especially for the non-traditional entry points with one of the recent new partners our initial target figures have been exceeded six times over and we have had to close registration temporarily. It has been very successful in attracting students. We have had on the new module delivery we have had high students' achievements and very high students' completion and retention so it has been very successful in delivering we believe a better student experience and better achievement. You can also see from the documents about our international student enrolment and graduation rate my secretary provided for you that our retention rate is superb".* **Participant 7 (Dean, Business School C).**

The respondents also agreed that RM approach was a key factor in influencing their retention. They however argued that other factors positively and negatively influence international student retention. Some of these factors include visa restrictions as a result of their sponsorship from the University which means they cannot change their University or course programme easily without having to satisfy the rigorous immigration laws. Family situation was also identified as another key factor influencing international students' retention where international students argued that the inner desire not to let their families down by dropping out was a factor influencing their decision to stay especially as expectations from their families were high and families had invested substantial amounts of money in them. Some international students said they have had a reason leave and go back home in the past especially when they just arrived in the UK but because they want to meet the expectations of their family, they however changed their mind and decided to stay and complete their studies. Regardless, all international students agreed that the RM approach was such a great influence stressing more on the aspects of class delivery and support by tutors as the most influential aspect of the RM approach. One of the international students responded saying:

> *"While the university's attempt at relationship marketing in the form of student loyalty discount and international student bursary might account for some influence on my choice, I will largely adduce my final choice to the relationship established with my tutors and the level of pastoral care I received from most of them within the department at periods of emotional challenges. Another subtle influence from the relationship marketing approach was the departmental focus on seeing that one-on-one session opportunities are provided which most of us international students attend and gain from. The facilities provided in terms of estates, and IT facilities are all very outstanding and the comfort of these facilities and user friendliness of the IT facilities are also very welcoming for us international students. These are all influences for my decision to stay, but I do not think I would have left anyway as my family back home expects me to complete my degree successfully as other extended families and friends are looking forward to my return as a graduate with a UK degree".* **(INS 26, Business School C).**

The respondents all agreed that the relationship marketing approach implemented by their Business School impacts positively on International students' retention. While positing their views, all respondents described retention differently, though all groups had similar definitions which include completion, performance and conversion. They were some other distinct themes which emerged from all group (management staff, academic staff and International students) this include alumni, employment, and attendance. These definitions were as a result of the different objectives of the diverse groups. Although they are all stakeholders of the Business Schools, they all have goals that are particular to their groups.

5.3.2 Relationship Marketing (RM) approach by Business Schools vs International students

When respondents (international students) were asked about what aspects of the relationship marketing approach was most significant, the international students provided the following responses as highlighted in Table 5.10 as shown in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: Relationship marketing approach by Business Schools vs International students

Theme: Academic support and Student support

The participating international students agreed that there were several good intentions relating to the relationship marketing strategies used by the Business Schools, but they stressed that most of these relationship marketing approaches are designed as a “one-size-fits-all” for international students to make the most effective use of resources. Hence, making some of these aspects of relationship marketing employed ineffective. Some of the examples described by Chinese students included the class discussion to stem engagement during class delivery sometimes did not work for them as they are not familiar with a position where tutors are questioned. This means that they will have to wait till after the class in some cases to meet with the tutor to ask questions during the drop in sessions. In general international students agreed that the drops in session are a very effective tool in helping them get adequate academic support that enhances their student experience. Another example of the Business School not being aware of their cultural background was raised by students from the Middle East who suggested that cultural issues were not taken into consideration when tutors group them forgetting that some of their cultural backgrounds tend to affect their contribution to the group. An example of such issues was a lady who said her cultural/ religious background does not allow her to fit into the dynamics of some group hence affects her contribution to the group.

A majority of the international students identified the activities to be completed outside the classroom contact points as ineffective stressing that most of these contact points tend to have a different vision/goal from that of the Business School. They said these contact point do not provide adequate support and that some of the support is inefficient and ineffective. They even identified those contact points as a part of the fragment that negatively affects the whole. One of the groups of students who participated gave examples of how they receive threat messages from the finance department about how they will be deported to their country of origin even before fees have been sent from home to the university's account. They also gave other examples of not receiving much support from the School when on placement as the school at that point forget that they are international students and allows them to fend for themselves when they are still quite new to the UK. Some of these concerns are reflected in the statements from respondents below:

> *"It is very clear that the Business School mean well for us by providing all of these facilities, academic support and even allowing us as international students the opportunity get access to additional English language support classes for free. All of these are very good strategies only that some could have been done differently where it can target some of us using our background in terms of religion, culture and sometimes countries of origin as a factor while developing these Relationships marketing approach as we earlier identified. In other businesses, you can see that even international hotels for example will consider the background of their different international customers when setting the scene, this I see as an issue in our Business School. They just throw everything into the mix without considering who and who makes up the group. This affects my performance and that of other international students I have as friends and this you can see others within this focus group identified as an issue of the relationship marketing practiced here in our Business Schools. I do not think any of the Business Schools do it differently though, because I have friends there and we also discuss this in our international societies I think it is something that has to change".*
> **(INS 31 Business School D)**

Two others stated that:

> "*The Business Schools are doing very well in the class delivery side of the relationship building approach, but I have to say they get it wrong outside the classroom. Maybe this is because those outside the classroom do not understand the difference between us International students and home students. You have to see how some of the employees in the contact points out of the classroom deal with us, you just cannot help but question what you were promised while they were marketing the Business School to you before you came here. Some of them just expect you to know it all from the very first instant. They are not willing to provide you that extra minute in supporting a particular issue that is important to your student experience. We have listed several examples and you can see most of these examples from the finance department, to those meant*

> *to be looking after you as a student during your placement year, some do not care. Some even expect you to get a placement contact yourself. This is so unimaginable especially when you are only just few months in the country"* **(INS 21 Business School C)**
>
> "*Religion and culture seem not to be discussed by the Business Schools. I understand we had to ask for a prayer facility in our school for months before we got one. The closest to me was about ten minutes-walk and using 20 minutes during the day to travel for prayers and back was not just seen as accepted by me and others who had similar issues. I understand this is a school and not a religious centre, but it should be understood that all are important when determining the whole experience".* **(INS 14 Business School B)**

The respondents (International students) all agreed that there are several aspects of relationship marketing approaches that are significant and achieve an impact on international students' e.g. extra curricula academic support. They also highlighted several aspects that do not have an impact or have a minimal impact in achieving the objectives they are developed for example the effort of trying to apply a standard RM approach on all international students. There were no key differences in the response provided by the various groups of student who participated in the focus group regardless of their university, age or gender. They all identified key aspects of their lives as international students that should be considered while developing and implementing these approaches. For example their cultural background, religion and academic background etc. Most of them argued that this is why most of the ways of implementing relationship marketing concepts employed by the Business School become significant or insignificant.

5.3.3. Ways of improving the Relationship Marketing approach to enhance the international student experience

When asked about ways of improving the RM approach to enhance the International students' experience, only the Academic staff and International students participated since they are involved in the development of the several ways the approaches of implementing relationship marketing. A summary of responses is shown in Table 5.11 as highlighted in Appendix 8.

Literature Theme: Ways of improving the RM approach to enhance the international student experience

Theme: Student Quality

The respondents identified aspects of the relationship marketing concept that were not significant, including class engagement and group formation etc. and they suggested ways that Business Schools could enhance their effectiveness and the overall student experience. In asserting these possible solutions, different stakeholder groups had different views. For example, academic staff identified possible solutions that will make academic staff deliver the RM approach at an optimal level, including improving the quality of international students enrolled, and providing authentic information to International students so their expectations can be realistic.

Theme: Improved Communication

International students on the other hand suggested areas that were negatively influencing their student experience including a lack of support received from other contact points, such as threatening messages from the immigration support team and finance department. They also identified areas where the academic staff were found to be ineffective such as group formation and lack of support during placements and consultancy project etc. Areas where possible improvement could take place from an International student perspective were areas that had to do with their background which they stressed should be considered in all engagements with the Business School within and outside the classroom.

Theme: Collaboration

Collaboration was a key element identified by the academic staff as what needs to be encouraged across management, academic and non-academic staff of the University so as to enable them to achieve an effective outcome of practising RM. The academic staff were of the opinion that the lack of collaboration was responsible for the ineffective outcome of some aspects of the RM approach being implemented. Some of their supporting statements are stated below:

> *All of those issues we earlier identified as ineffective can all be improved upon. In improving this, the Business School should endeavour to set the process in a way that it will consider our diverse backgrounds. Our background in terms of our religion, cultural, and academic where necessary before developing their policies. You cannot take away one's*

culture from them, we as international students look forward to a multi-cultural society, which is one of the reasons we decided to come study abroad. Where our culture not becomes relegated from the process, it will make our participation if at all unproductive. Business Schools should know better, this is what they teach and you will expect them to practise what they teach". **(INS 3, Business School A).**

"In reality, all of these approaches can be and should be improved upon. One of the best ways to do this will be encouraging collaboration across departments and not allowing departments of point of contacts work in silos. Especially the management staff, you will expect them to include the Academic staff in their decision and policy making knowing that we the Academics know the students more than anyone else in the University. Even when the management seek our opinions, they should not just do to fulfil all righteousness and do nothing about it; you will expect feedbacks to go with an action plan after review" **(AC, Participant 16, Business School D).**

The respondents (academic staff and international students) all agreed that there are several aspects of the RM approach that should be developed upon in order to ensure that the international student experience is enhanced. For example, providing the right information which is clear and concise will help international students understand what is expected from them at every point in time. In addition it will also help those implementing the RM approach understand better ways of achieving set goals. They were however different aspects identified by both groups who participated in the study. The academic staff highlighted examples such as, improving the quality of the student selection and recruitment process, understanding the dynamics of the international students group, encouraging feedbacks and setting action plans after review etc. These differences were as a result of their different interests and perspectives considering their roles and responsibilities.

5.4 Other Findings (Management Staff):

As part of the study, respondents (management staff) were asked to comment or make any additional statements as regards the topic of international students and relationship marketing. Emerging themes which included the role of the UK government, student as a customer and moments of truth developed from respondents. Some respondents identified the role of the government as an issue in terms of their Business School fostering a long term relationship with international students.

"The government is not helping in terms of helping us develop relationship with international students. Since they have brought in new visa laws, the international students now see us as not welcoming which is not how we want to be perceived, I am hoping something changes in no distant time". **Participant, 2 (Director Business School, B).**

Others identified international students as those that can be addressed as customers and as a result they deem it fit that every aspects of relationship marketing concept should be applicable to their marketing activities.

"We are so aware that students are customers though not transactional, they help to co-create the experience. They don't just buy the degree, rather they buy the process. Especially as the Business School is a non-profit organisation who puts its surplus back into the process". **Participant 5 (International Director, Business School D).**

Other respondents stressed that the Business Schools should continue to concentrate on the moments of truth especially between staff and students if effective relationship building is a top priority.

"I think probably the most important one in terms of student retention is where those key points are those moments of truth where students might be thinking of leaving the programmes or might have doubts about the programme and how we can best support them at those times. Would it be better to have their personal tutor or another academic member of staff to intervene to ask look you have not been to the university for a while we have noticed you have not submitted your last piece of work is there a problem? Is there a way we can support you? Or they will rather have a student mentor to do that or another member of staff from the university perhaps from the administrative side of the university. So I would be very interested when those key points are I think possibly for an undergraduate student the key points are around week six at Christmas and Easter (March April) just about when they are coming up to submitting their end of second semester assignments and I think they have crises of confidence about their work what we can do to provide support for them and intervene to support them and ensure that they stay on the programme and that they don't give up. Those are the sort of things" **Participant 5 (Associate Dean International, Business School C).**

5.5 Other Findings (Academic Staff Staff):

As part of the study, the researcher asked the academic staff to comment or provide any additional statement in terms of International students and relationship marketing. Some respondents identified the rigid immigration policies developed by the government as an issue in terms of fostering a long term relationship with international students. The academic staff stressed the need for student empowerment and listening to international students as issues that needed attention from the University perspective. One of the academic staff supported this by saying:

> *"It is quite unfortunate that the government now as a matter of politics have decided to turn blind eyes to the positive contribution of international students. It is sad to see that students during exams are sometimes struggling with visa extension issues as a result of immigration policies introduced at the disadvantage of these international students. I understand how important it is to have international students who are committed to their studies in our Universities, but treating both the committed and not committed with same approach to me is a complete foolhardy. At this stage, were international students are stressed with immigration and visa issues, and there is little you can do to help the existing relationship you are trying to build as their teacher".* **(AC 14 Business School B)**

Academic staff also suggested that more needs to be done in building relationships with international students. Many of the academic staff stressed the need for a cordial and long-lasting relationship with international students and their families where necessary. Some Academic staff suggested that if these relationships are not established there is the tendency of losing international students to their competitors within other UK and international HEIs. Establishing these relationships will provide the opportunity to retain these international students and perhaps make them loyal in the long term. Academics were concerned about the government policies as it concerns immigration laws which they saw as an issue in terms of developing relationships with international students. Some suggested that the immigration policy amongst other policies developed by the government are not in the best interest of international students, so there was a possibility of losing international students patronage to other countries competing with the UK, like the USA, Canada and Australia. They also identified the South American culture as a culture which does not get adequate attention from the School's RM approach. This they said was possibly because of the low patronage of South American students as compared to students from the Asia and Africa region. They suggested that structures need to be put in place to look after the South American students if internationalisation is indeed a focus of the respective Business Schools. They also said this was applicable to other Business Schools where they have colleagues. Internationalisation should be about covering the whole and not just the selected few. Providing adequate support to international students during their placement year/semester was also another issue the Business Schools are expected to review as it was argued by academic staff that the Business Schools are not doing enough. The Russell University academic staff stated that businesses and organisations tend to treat their international students right and this they suggested is as a result of the reputation of their Business School. The implication of this is that if international students are not getting adequate support during placements, this could ruin the whole relationship approach. Hence it is important that there is adequate support and effective communication provided to look after the placement process since the Business School is not directly involved in the everyday activity of the placement.

The academic staff stressed the entry requirements of international student in terms of qualifications and skills they ought to possess should be well communicated to prospective international students, stating that Universities should do more as part of their relationship marketing approach in ensuring that these students get adequate information so as to avoid them struggling after arrival in the UK. They said they have realised that this was one of the reasons that makes it difficult for them to be able to support international students enough academically. They also said Universities should develop structures or policies that will help international students to be more focused as relationship marketing should be a more tailored approach but this is not the case when dealing with international students from different regions that in most cases the Business School tend to use a one size fit all approach.

The study also found that definitions of international student differ amongst students. That is students from the same country try to distinguish themselves from other students. They perceive themselves as the home students and perceive students from other countries as international. These students from a single country tend to do things together within and outside the classroom as opposed to working with other students from other countries. This was identified as a strong factor that negatively affects the RM approach in terms of helping to foster international students' retention. It was also seen as a factor that could bring about differences where students now tend to discriminate amongst themselves using country of origin as a platform.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings that emerged from the data collected from management staff, academic staff and International students in the four Business Schools in the Greater Manchester area reviewed. The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis. Multiple sources of evidence including face-to-face interviews (as the main source), focus group, documentary review, archival records, and direct observations were used during the data gathering exercise in order to enhance data triangulation. Themes that emerged from the empirical study were categorised into themes and sub-themes. Tables as shown in Appendix 8 were used to highlight a summary of the statements from each stakeholder group as it concerns literature themes been investigated. Similarities and differences in findings as it relates to views from stakeholder groups who participated were clearly identified and a summary developed as result. These findings will be discussed comprehensively in the next chapter in the light of the aim and objectives of the study using relevant literature to support the discussion.

CHAPTER SIX: Results Discussion

6.0 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the analysis and results of this study. This chapter addresses the research objectives presented in the introductory chapter by aligning and comparing the empirical findings of specific and relevant questions with the existing RM and HEI marketing literature. Hence the structure of this discussion chapter will be based on the objectives of this study. It begins by addressing the research objectives by discussing the importance of international student retention in the UK Business Schools and the use of relationship marketing as tool for retaining international students by Business Schools in the UK. The chapter develops by evaluating the impact of relationship marketing on international students' retention in Business Schools in the UK. This chapter concludes by proposing a distinct empirical framework for HEI use of RM to retain international students. This framework as shown in figure 6.1 can be used as a roadmap for more successful usage of the RM approach by Business Schools and it provides a tool for decision making when developing RM policies within UK HEIs. It can also be used by the government in understanding the importance of international students in the UK.

6.1 Importance of International Student retention in the UK Business Schools

Having addressed the emerging themes that concern definitions of international students; the attraction and recruitment of international students; establishing and evaluating international students contribution to the Business School in the Northwest of the UK; and establishing and evaluating the economic benefits presented by international students (Sections 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, and 5.1.4), the results from the empirical study shows that international students can be defined using several descriptions. These include defining international students as students from Non-EU countries, who require study visas, and pay higher tuition fees as compared to home students. These definitions are consistent with Morrison, et al. (2005) Miller and Bolsmann (2008) and Gallup-Black (2015). This study also found some descriptions of International students that are not addressed by existing literature. These include defining international students as students with Non-UK academic experience and students without English as their first language regardless of where these students originate. These factors extend the definition of international student to include EU students. They also mean some students that are currently defined as international are not because these students speak English as their first language. One of the most significant findings that emerged from this study is that defining International students as students from Non-EU states is not enough to explain international student. This is because this study identified other factors that play a significant role in the definition of international students; such as non-UK academic background and English as a second language. The implication of this is that there are several definitions of international students and these definitions will not only be influenced by the perspective of the stakeholder within the Business School but may confirm the behaviours of each of these stakeholders and how they undertake their role. For example managers of Business Schools define international students in terms of their value and access to international markets whereas academic staff defines international students in terms of their ability to successfully complete a module. As such, the different perspectives highlight a strategic and operational perspective of international students. This is more critical given the postgraduate market is changing and there is increasing numbers of traditional international market students who are now attracted to distance learning programmes (for cost and visa reasons). This may have an implication for definitions and operations of postgraduate programmes in the future and how students are defined, classified and charged.

Results from this study show that international students' contribution to the Business Schools in the UK is enormous both within and outside the classroom. Contributions such as revenue, multicultural environment, enhancing the learning curriculum, are consistent with the contributions of International students to a Business Schools identified by Turner (2006), Luxon and Peelo (2009) and Harrison and Peacock (2010). This study also found some contributions of international students to the Business School which are not currently comprehensively addressed by literature. These additional contributions build on the literature that international students contribute to the growth and developments (Internationalisation) of Business Schools as well as the value international students contribute to other students within the Business School. Example of such is where international students through their class contributions share their country experience and background with other students. This finding has not been currently addressed by literature. This will help fill the gap in literature that was identified by two stakeholders (academic staff and international students) as a gap. One of the most significant findings that emerged from this study is that identifying the contributions of international students to the Business School goes beyond their contribution to the Business School as an organisation in itself. This implies that the students tend not to appreciate enough the different perspectives and cultures that are shared from a taught perspectives. It also implies that the contributions of International students to the Business Schools are huge and are mutually beneficial to other

Business School students, the academic staff and the Business School itself. These contributions are acknowledged by the members of staff of the Business Schools. For example, the Business Schools managers identified the contributions of international students to the Business Schools on the basis of revenue and creation of a multicultural environment whereas academic staff identify the contributions of international students on the basis of how they shape their teaching and learning through class discussions and enhanced curriculum. As such, the different contributions identified will develop a strategic and operational focus on how International students are embedded into the Business School activities. Again this may affect how programmes are developed to socialise new international students into the school.

While investigating the contributions of International students to Manchester and the UK in general, this research identified that International students contribute immensely to the Greater Manchester region and the UK in several ways which include: financial; cultural assets; diverse heritage; jobs; and international students presence here in the UK helps to build cordial international relationship with other countries. These findings are consistent with Bevis, (2002), Harrison (2002) and Price Water Cooper House (2015). The similarity between findings of this study and existing literature reiterates that contributions of international students to the Greater Manchester area and the UK in general are massive. The implication of this is that International students make extremely valuable contributions to the Greater Manchester region and the UK both financially, culturally and academically. This does not only address what they contribute to the region and the country in general but it also addresses how they contribute to different aspects of the economy. For example, International students contribute to Manchester in a number of ways, including improving Manchester status as an international social and cultural centre as a result of the number of international students' residing here and they contribute to the UK economy by contributing billions of pounds per annum to the UK Gross Domestic Product. As such the different segments will align in strategic and operational ways to enhance international student presence in the region and the country at large. Examples of these strategic and operational options are Business Schools working with the international department of the University to see that issues that involve study visas are mitigated for international students, and consulting with the Government to see how rigid visa rules are relaxed for genuine international students.

As regards how international students are attracted and recruited by the Business Schools, this study highlighted several implications including: the use of the British Council and

International offices/agents. These findings reflect existing literature that states that Business Schools attract and recruit International students using the British Council and international offices (British Council, 2006; Findley, 2010). This study also found that the reputation of the Business School and positive word of mouth communications are the dominant ways Business Schools attract and recruit international students. These findings are consistent with Hemsley-Brown and Goorwardana (2007) and Chen (2008). This study also found social media and e-platforms as other ways Business Schools attract and recruit international students. This agrees with Constantinides and Stagno (2011) and Linvill, Rowlett and Kolind (2015), who identified social media marketing as a means Higher Education use to recruit and establish relationship with potential students. International students were not however referred to by this literature. Hence, this becomes a significant finding which has emerged from the empirical study. The implication of this is that attracting and recruiting international students is of great importance to Business Schools and as a result they are employing more than one way to achieve this. For example, Business Schools now turn to the use of social media platforms amongst other ways to attract and recruit international students knowing that it is an effective and efficient way of marketing across the globe as practised by other service providers. As such, the different ways Business Schools adopt to attract and recruit international students' highlights a strategic and operational direction of attracting and recruiting international students where families of international students could be involved in this social networking.

A compelling finding of this study is that international students' definition amongst students was identified as a necessary antecedent to other relationship marketing outcomes such as retention and loyalty. Where students from the same country treat and define students from other countries as international students, this definition is based on a variety of factors including for example: a group of students from China seeing student from China as 'the same' and treating and defining other students as international, regardless of whether they are classed as home students. This finding is unique and has not been currently addressed by existing literature, hence further adding to the discussion on definitions of what constitutes an international student. The implication of this is that HEIs would benefit from recognising that

students see and define themselves differently using their country of origin as a standard and could in turn affect the outcome of the RM approach employed by Business Schools. Business Schools should develop policies that will include all students regardless of their country of origin and ensure that their importance and culture is included as a part of the curriculum. In terms of the operational strategies that will be derived from these policies, international students and home students will experience a more positive student experience.

6.2 Use of Relationship Marketing by Business Schools as a tool for International Student Retention.

The themes that emerged in the empirical findings as it relates to how, why and the cost of Business Schools utilising relationship marketing as a tool for international student retention as outlined in section 5.2.1 to 5.2.6 respectively. The following themes outlined in Table 6.1 were developed from the results analysed.

Table 6. 1 Themes and explanation developed from empirical findings

Themes	Explanation
the use of relationship marketing in Business Schools	This is addressing the use of RM in Business Schools
reasons why Business Schools use relationship marketing to retain international students	This is addressing the rationale behind the use of RM towards retention of international students.
ways Business Schools implement the relationship marketing concepts	This addresses ways Business Schools apply the RM concept including its application through pedagogy.
identifying those responsible within the Business School for the development and implementation of the relationship marketing policies	This identifies those responsible for the development and implementation of the RM policies in the Business School.
the cost implication of implementing the RM concept	This addresses what to cost the Business School to implement the RM approach
ways of maintain and developing the concept in the Business School	This addresses how Business Schools maintain and develop the RM concept.

Results of this study show relationship marketing is the marketing approach Business Schools utilise as a strategy to attract and retain international students. This finding builds on the conclusions of Arnet *et al*. (2003), Al-Alak, (2006) and Helgesen (2008). The unique aspect of this finding is that the current literature does not cover the RM approach on international students. The implication of this is that marketing Higher Education is now essential for the growth of HEIs and adopting a relationship marketing approach shows how much HEIs have understood that marketing Higher Education across the globe, like every other service firm, is of great significance to them in achieving their goals. For example, Business Schools are now more interested in establishing a long-term relationship with overseas students as compared to a one-off transaction as in the past. This is also reflected in the increasing importance of Universities engaging with alumni for accreditation purposes.

The empirical study of this research found that the rationale for Business Schools utilising the RM approach includes: student retention; positive student experience; value exchange and customer loyalty. All of these were consistent with Rojas-Mendez et al. (2009), Sultan and Wong (2012), and Sheth, Parvatiyar and Sinha (2015). This study also found that reputation helps to build a positive institutional image which is another reason why Business Schools implement an RM approach with International students. This perspective supports conclusions of Sung and Yang (2009), Moogan (2011) and Hemsley-Brown (2012). The implication of this is that the rationale why Business Schools implement an RM approach with their international students, and other students, is not just for the value the Business Schools will receive from International students, but also to focus on providing value for the international students. Examples of this include Business Schools getting funds, international market access, gaining reputation etc. The value for Business School increasing international student numbers include an international student presence, where value for international students provides them with adequate support to enable them to graduate successfully within the stipulated time.

As regards those who are responsible for the implementation of the relationship marketing approach within a Business School, this study found that it was a responsibility of all members of staff through different faculties within the school. These findings are consistent with Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2010), Naidoo and Wu (2011), and Vauterin et al. (2011). The implication of this is that every member of staff within a Business School has a responsibility for implementing an RM approach with international students knowing that employees in the marketing department are not the only people responsible. An example of such an approach includes the academic staff ensuring that their teaching role reflects the development of a long-term relationship with International students, by providing adequate support and pastoral care. It will also mean that non-academic staff who represents the Business School understand that supporting international students in other aspects of their life as students in the Business School is paramount. This is significant because there are other factors outside the classroom environment that can affect international student retention. Some of these factors can include immigration policies and financial issues. The implication of this is that Business Schools will need to develop policies and operational strategies that will help the Business School achieve their goal and enhance the international student experience.

As regards the application of RM initiatives as part of the pedagogy towards student retention, the empirical study found that teaching style in terms of interactive group work and tutorial was effective in enhancing student retention. This was found as a preferred style of learning as stressed by international students. This finding is consistent with Gorinski and Abernethy (2007) who posited that there was a need for curricular change and discursive pedagogical practices that will help improve student retention. The implication of this is that Business School teachers will need to embark on professional development that will help them in developing curriculum co-construction, discursive classroom practices and high cultural visibility, since these practices will help the Business School enhance its international student retention rates.

Results about ways of implementing a relationship marketing approach from the empirical study found that CRM and promotional offerings across contact points are used by Business Schools to establish interaction with international students. This finding builds on conclusions proposed by Hunt et al. (2006) Payne and Frow (2013) and Sheth et al. (2015). This implies that several aspects of RM implementation are carried out at all contact point stages through the use of technology and other market offerings developed by the marketing department of a Business School. The overall relevance of these diverse ways is to ensure that interaction with international students is established and maintained even past graduation. An example of such CRM and contact point activities include: ensuring efficient and effective communication with international students via emails or other e-platforms, which may include trying to provide discounts to international students and international bursaries that see their tuition fees reduced in some cases by up to a thousand pounds etc. The empirical study of this research also found that Business Schools implement relationship marketing with international students through class delivery. This finding has not been considered by existing literature. Therefore, it makes this finding a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge. The implication of this is that Business Schools will have to develop policies that will enable academic staff to develop operational strategies that will improve relationships with international students during class activities that will help enhance a positive student experience.

In terms of the cost of implementing the RM approach in a Business School, the empirical study of this research found that the costs of implementing an RM approach with International students in the Business School were grouped within financial implications and time. These findings are consistent with Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne, (2013) and Peck et al. (2014). This implies that in implementing relationship marketing there is more than one cost being borne by a Business School. These costs, which cut across mainly financial investments embarked upon by Business Schools, as well as the additional time created both in preparing employees to deliver an RM concept and the time in developing the relationship with international students whilst they are at university and after they graduate. Examples of such financial investments borne by Business Schools are: investments in technology; facilities; training of employees who deal with international students; and travel costs etc. As regards the cost attributed to time, examples include: creating additional time to clarify salient points during drop in sessions with international students; creating time to socialise with international students in allowing them develop a sense of belonging etc. This implies that an RM approach though beneficial in the long-term does attract a significant amount of funds and time in its implementation hence, the Business Schools are aware of such costs when setting out their policies and understanding that the extra time needs to be included in their operational strategies to help create positive international student experience.

On investigating the maintenance and development of an RM approach with international students, the empirical study also found that the Business Schools were involved in continuous investment in facilities, student engagement and student support. These findings build on RM literature conclusions proposed by Lay-Hwa and Bowden (2011), Apostu, Pop and Gordan (2012) and Thorpe and Kim, (2013). Business Schools do much in terms of continuous investments in facilities and technologies that will be beneficial for international students. Business Schools also do much in ensuring that international students' needs are identified and supported through services that are provided to meet such needs. Continuous efforts are developed and delivered by Business Schools towards establishing strategies and events to engage international students. Examples of such engaging efforts are trying to establish international student support teams within the international office of a Business School, and providing user friendly up-to-date technological facilities to help international students improve their performance thus ensuring trust is not compromised etc. The implication of this is that Business Schools are doing much in ensuring that they maintain and develop the existing relationships they have with international students knowing that the expectations of the international students needs will be met or possibly exceeded so as to be able to help influence a positive international student experience.

The empirical study also found staff engagement was used by Business Schools to develop and maintain an RM approach with international students. There was no evidence of staff engagement as a way of maintaining relationships with international students in existing literature. Examples of staff engagement with international students can be explained as Business Schools employing staff who will consult with international student representatives to see how their staff student relationship can be further improved. This will enable staff, both academic and non-academic, to understand the importance of contributions made by international students. Hence this finding can be explained as a unique contribution by this study to existing knowledge. This implies that Business School policy developers will have to consider staff engagement with international students in their policies so as to help them maintain their relationships with international students. This will enhance the international student experience through the operational strategies that are developed.

The implication of all of the findings discussed above, buttresses the fact that the marketing of HEIs is now a growing phenomenon. It further establishes the fact that Business Schools, like every firm within the service industry, have now adopted marketing strategies in dealing with their international students. With emphasis on the use of relationship marketing by Business Schools to improve the retention rates of international students and all students in general, the findings of this study imply that in implementing RM in Business Schools, is a key responsibility of all employees in various departments (e.g. academic units, admission office, international office, finance office, and accommodation office). The implication of this is that Business Schools need to develop specific policies of implementing RM with a cost in mind, though the benefits of the relationship marketing approach outweighs the cost. These specific policies will help the Business Schools achieve their goals while the operational strategies will enhance the international student experience. It goes to posit the fact that like every other marketing strategy, RM has to be continuously developed and maintained to fit with individual student needs at every point in time.

6.3 Impact of Relationship Marketing Approach on International students in the Business School.

The themes that emerged in the empirical findings as it relates to the impact of implementing the RM approach on international students within the Business Schools are shown in section 5.3.1, 5.3.2, and 5.3.3 respectively. The following themes were developed from the results analysed: impact of the RM approach on international student retention; RM in Business Schools; and ways of improving relationship marketing approach to enhance international student experience. As it relates to the impact of the RM approach on international students retention, the empirical study of this research found that an RM approach impacts positively on international student retention. Examples include: international students completing their degrees on time; international student converting to a higher degree after completion of a lower degree; international students acting as ambassadors for a Business Schools; and international students participating as committed members of the alumni community. This finding is unique and not currently addressed by any literature. It also builds on existing literature conclusions proposed by Hackerman and Schibowsky (2007), Schee (2010), and Powell and Rey (2015) who suggest that students who complete their degree after enrolment are classified as retained students. These literature definitions of student retention were however about students in general and not necessarily international students. This study also found that there are several definitions of international student retention and this tends to vary across categories of participants. The definitions of international student retention includes: completion; conversion; performance; attendance; employment; and Alumni. These empirical findings fill the gap in literature which does not address the impact of an RM approach on international students. Completion means international students who complete their programme of study after enrolling within the stipulated time. Conversion means international students who convert to a higher degree in the same Business School after completion of a lower degree. Performance means international student with excellent performance in their program of study in the Business School. Attendance means international students having to be punctual at classes. Employment means having to employ the international students in the Business School after completion of their studies. Alumni in this context mean international students having to be committed to the Alumni community of the Business School. Considering all of these definitions explained by participants of this study, it can be argued that none of these as been addressed by existing literatures as a definition of international student retention. It also helps to contribute to existing knowledge in terms of what international student retention means to several stakeholders of the Business

School, as existing literatures does not address international retention using Business School stakeholder perspectives. This study has adequately provided definition of international student retention from these three different stakeholder perspectives: Business School managers; academic staff; and international students.

This implies that there may be a need for Business Schools to understand what retention means to all stakeholders especially international students and to develop policies that will help the school improve international student retention more readily from all stakeholders' perspectives. A second implication of this finding is that operational strategies will need to be designed and developed by a Business School in a manner that will enhance positive international student experience that will continue to promote international student retention across all stakeholder definitions.

In identifying those aspects of an RM approach that International students deem as most significant to their retention, the empirical study of this research found that academic support and student support were significant in influencing international student retention as they assist in student integration and socialisation. These findings are consistent with those proposed by Tinto (2010), Bejou and Bejou (2012), and Moore and Bowden-Everson (2012). Extra academic and student support in terms of integrating and socialising international students into the UK environment and its educational background is a unique findings that developed from the empirical studies. No literature has addressed specific academic and student support as an aspect of using an RM approach to enhance international student retention. Examples include: free English language writing sessions; UK academic writing and referencing sessions; avoiding plagiarism; visa support/guidance; and international societies and offices are typical examples of specific and student support provided to international students by the Business School. Other significant aspects of the RM approach found include: provision of up-to-date technologies; up-to-date facilities; effective and efficient communication; and one-to-one marketing. These findings build on conclusions proposed by Ng and Forbes (2009) and Assad, Melawar and Cohen (2014). A significant finding by this in terms of why international students are retained after enrolment in the Business Schools had nothing to do with the RM approach rather it was linked with family expectations. The majority of the international students in the Business School tend to want to complete their studies regardless of how the management deliver the service. International students are aware of the expectations of their family members and loved ones back home and as a result will endeavour to adapt to any situation they find themselves in even if it is not pleasant. No literature currently identifies this finding; hence it helps to fill the gap in literature. Examples of this expectation could be family members who have saved or borrowed monies to send their children abroad to study and come back home to put their acquired knowledge to use to help their other siblings and get a job to pay back whatever was borrowed etc. This finding implies that several aspects of an RM approach employed might not be as significant for retention as thought by the Business Schools managers. It becomes therefore necessary for the management to develop policies that will help identify aspects of an RM approach that are significant to International students' retention especially as a majority of the students argued that the Business Schools need to improve relationships, facilities and events outside the classroom. These policies if effectively developed will aid the operational strategies to promote a positive international student experience. It also implies that the growing rate of international student retention in a Business School could be as a result of the mind-set of these international students who are ready to overcome any negative student experience just to fulfil their self-actualisation and make their family members and loved ones happy. It further implies that families of international students are included in RM strategies.

On way a Business Schools can improve its RM approach to enhance the international student experience is by giving academic staff the opportunity to be part of the policy development and implementation process from international student recruitment to every other part of the process. These findings build on existing literature findings proposed by Hellsten and Prescott (2004), Tinto (2012) and Sawir et al. (2012). The empirical study also found that establishing an effective point of contact which will be manned by academic staff members that has experience of working with international students will also help improve the international student experience. This finding is consistent with existing literatures conclusion proposed by Hellsten and Prescott (2004), and Baba and Hosoda (2014). The empirical study also found that understanding international students' dynamic within and outside the classroom when developing policies and operational strategies will enhance an international students' experience. Examples of international student group dynamics to be considered include: cultural background; academic background; and religious background etc. These findings are consistent with factors proposed by Rizvi (2000), Montgomery (2010) and Rientes et al. (2012). The empirical study also found that the provision of up-to-date communication methods, communication channels, communication technologies, accurate information, and improved facilities for international students will also help enhance the international student experience. These findings build on existing literature findings proposed by Durkin, McKenna & Cummins, (2012), Peck et al. (2013), and Quintall et al. (2013). These authors highlighted the importance of communication, provision of facilities and up-to-date information as factors that foster relationship in the HE sector. These findings were not previously related to International students as it was mainly about students in general. Hence, these empirical findings fill the literature gap in providing aspects of RM that needs to be developed upon in enhancing the International student experience. The empirical findings also found that the International students' point of contacts needs to be developed upon to enhance international student experience. In developing these contact points, some of the following examples could be implemented: training academic and non-academic staff to understand the culture and religion of international students; empowering employees in these contact points to be able to take decisions that will help international students avoid bottlenecks and bureaucracy that might be frustrating etc.

The implication of these findings is that Business Schools would therefore benefit from identifying aspects of RM that will enhance international student experience. This would ensure that the Business Schools management are able to develop policies for at least minimum achievement of these aspects of RM and discarding aspects of RM that they previously have focused on but which fails to add value to the RM spectrum. By developing these policies, the operational strategies to be employed by the employees will function in a way and manner that will enhance the international student experience and as result might lead to retention and loyalty.

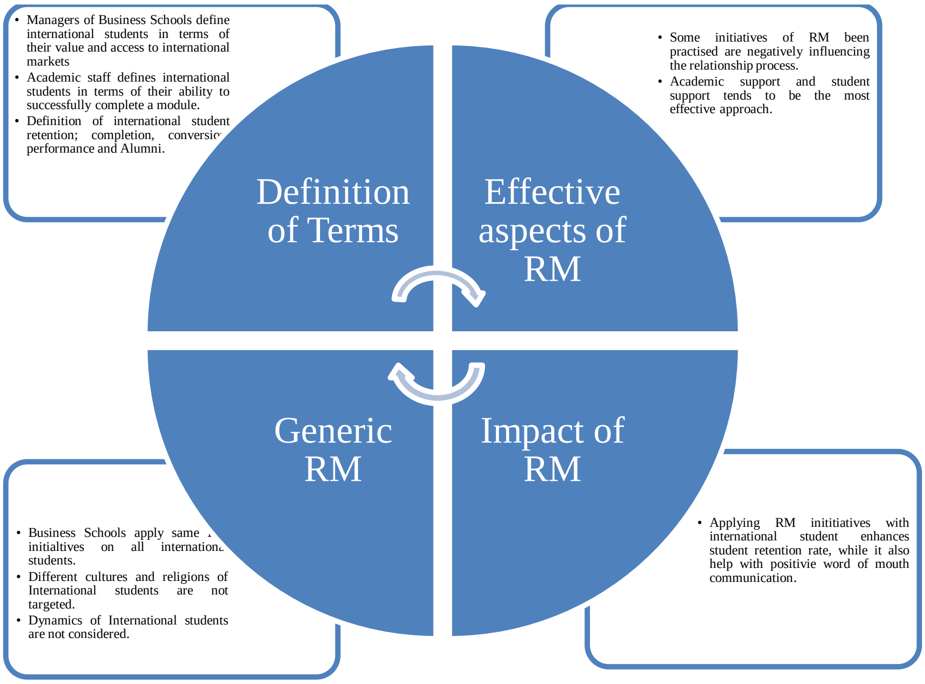
In terms of the academic staff perspective of international students and the RM approach, the empirical study of this research found that the UK government, in terms of their policies and international relationship, play a significant role in how international students perceive the RM approach adopted by their Business School. Examples of such government policies identified by academic staff as affecting an RM approach include: rigid immigration laws; study visa issues; and international relations with other countries etc. Some of these government policies are found to be too rigid by international students and academic staff, thus giving international students the opinion that they are not valued in the UK. It also suggests that whatever practices Business Schools try to develop and implement may be secondary to an international student's perception of whether they are welcome or not. This finding has not been considered by existing literature; hence it becomes a significant and unique finding. The implication of this finding is that Business Schools will understand that they might be currently doing the right thing in terms of the aspects of the RM strategies implemented. It will further allow them to understand that there are some other factors outside the Business Schools immediate environment that needs to be considered. The Business School managers can develop policies within the Business Schools that will help International students mitigate the effect of some of these rigid policies. The Business School will now be separated from these rigid laws and their operational strategies will function in a more friendly way that makes international students feel more valued and inclusive which as a result would enhance their student experience.

The empirical findings also identified the inclusion of family members of international students into RM processes is significant to the outcome of an RM approach. Examples of such inclusion of families in the RM process include: provision of discounts to siblings; providing adequate and accurate information to families about the Business School; and allowing families the opportunities for suggestions and feed-back. This finding is also relatively new as it has not been researched by published studies. It will also fill the literature gap of external factors that impact on RM management in the HE sector. The implication of this finding is that Business Schools understanding the role of families in the process will help them develop policies that will incorporate families of international students into the process. Such policies would help foster the relationship process and could also bring about loyalty of family members of international students. With these policies in place, the operational strategies that will be in place will assist in achieving a positive international student experience.

6.4. Summary

This chapter has discussed the empirical findings of this study collected from four Business Schools as addressed in Chapter Five. The findings discussed were derived from the research objectives developed by this study. This chapter has demonstrated why and how Business Schools implement the RM approach with international students. It discussed the impact of the RM approach on International students, and concluded by suggesting ways of developing the RM approach with international students that will enhance a positive international student experience. The discussions of the findings were linked to relevant literature sources reviewed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. The following chapter forms the basis of the contributions of this study as outlined in Chapter One. It also presents the overall conclusions and recommendations.

Figure 6.1 Summary of Findings Contributed by Study



CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

This research has reviewed Business Schools in the Greater Manchester area with the aim of investigating their relationship marketing approaches in relation to international student retention. It also investigated the cost and processes adopted in the application of an RM approach. It investigated aspects of the RM approach that were significant to International students and how best to improve on these RM approaches in order to achieve the best possible outcome. This research utilised an interpretive qualitative methodology in order to elicit the perspectives of three groups of stakeholders in the Business Schools reviewed: management staff; academic staff; and international students in the business Schools. This chapter begins by recapping the aims and objectives of this research as outlined in the introductory chapter to ensure that they are met and their outcomes identified. The key conclusions of this research are also outlined. Later sections of the chapter will present a number of recommendations for RM practitioners and HE stakeholders. This is followed by identification of the study's limitations and area for future research.

7.2 Overview of how this Study meets its Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research has been met by using a constructivist qualitative strategy to investigate the implementation of the RM approach towards international students in Business Schools in the Greater Manchester region. In response to the limitations of the existing literature, and to enhance the level of understanding about designing and implementing RM strategies relating to International students in Business Schools, the objectives of this research have been achieved as follows:

Objective 1. Review critically the literature on Higher Education associated with Higher Education marketing and the application of RM initiatives with students in HEIs in order to identify research gaps.

This objective has been addressed within the literature review. The literature suggests that there are different definitions of HE, but none of these definitions reflected the marketing of HE as a component of its definition. Interestingly the research findings show how HE definition has aspects of marketing as part of its characteristics especially as it relates to the stakeholders involved. Literature suggests that HEIs have to include marketing strategies in their overall strategy. Interestingly the research findings show that the implementation of marketing strategies by HEIs particularly Business Schools is now a growing phenomenon especially as Business Schools now include marketing strategies mainly RM in their strategic and operational activities (Interviews of Business School managers). The research suggests definitions and descriptions of student retention, but none of these aspects of student retention addressed international student retention. Interestingly, the research findings show that international student retention has several definitions as explained in the findings and discussion chapters, where it was explained that the definition of international student retention can be determined by stakeholders (Interviews of Business School managers, academic staff and international students).

Objective 2. To investigate critically stakeholder perceptions of the importance of international student retention by UK Business Schools as represented by four Manchester based University Business Schools.

An in-depth empirical study was conducted to analyse how international students are defined, their contribution to the Business Schools, the Northwest Region and the UK in general and why HEIs need international students' presence in their establishment. It also explored how international students are attracted and recruited. This research has identified several definitions of international students from the main stakeholders of the Business Schools reviewed and the definitions explored here are unique and have not been discussed in previous studies. This research also identified some unique contributions of international students to the UK Business Schools, the Northwest region and the UK in general that makes retaining international students a priority that has never been addressed in previous literature.

Objective 3. To examine critically the why and how Business Schools use RM approach as a tool for international students' retention.

This research has provided a detailed analysis of why Business Schools utilise RM approaches amongst other marketing strategies to retain international students through investigating the application of the RM concept by management staff and academic staff within the Business Schools reviewed. Previous studies have not explored this rationale hence making it a unique contribution. These analyses were carried out in detail by discussing different stakeholder perspectives of an RM approach within the participating Business Schools. Moreover, this research has also analysed how the Business Schools implement the RM approach with international students', where it identified the employees responsible for the implementation of the RM concept within the Business School, the cost of implementing the RM approach and ways of maintaining and developing the RM approach within the Business School. Previous studies have explored some of these ways of implementing an RM approach, though the cost of implementing the RM approach, and ways of maintaining and developing the RM approach on international students are insufficiently discussed in the past. This is essential to gain a better understanding of how the RM approach is implemented with emphasis on its cost-benefit. It is also essential given changes in delivery which has resulted in many students now registering on distant learning programmes.

Objective 4. To examine critically key stakeholder perceptions of the impact that current RM strategies have on student retention in the Business Schools reviewed.

The empirical data collected from the four Business Schools shows that the RM approaches they have adopted have positively influenced international students' retention. The significance of the RM approaches adopted on international students was identified by this study as addressed in chapter five. It also identified ways of improving the RM approach to enhance international student experience. The ways of improving the RM approach suggested by the respondents (academic staff and international students) who participated in the study have been used to inform the discussion of RM and how an RM approach can improve the student experience and retention. Previous studies have addressed some of these though not in-depth, as the investigation of this study was more comprehensive and focused on international students hence making its contributions unique and significant.

Objective 5. Draw conclusions relating to the primary and secondary data and make recommendations to key stakeholders based on the conclusions.

This objective has been addressed and has been detailed in the conclusion chapter of this research (Section 7.5). Firstly the primary data details what international students mean to the Business Schools in UK and what it contributes to the UK economy, and the impact of implementing RM initiatives on international student retention and experience. These primary data were appraised in relation to already established existing secondary data. Finally recommendations have been made in relation to key stakeholders of UK HEIs in relation to ensuring attraction and retention of international students in the global market, and providing for aspects of RM that will need to be discarded and others that needs to be modified to enhance international student experience.

7.4 Evaluating the Key Conclusions of the Research

Due to the ontological stance of this research (Section 4.3.1), the contextual settings surrounding the application of an RM approach on international student retention has been evaluated to get a holistic understanding of the why and how an RM approach has been used by Business Schools. Methodologically, an inductive approach was adopted to enable the study to develop a theory from a constructivist qualitative research conducted with the current relevant stakeholders. Different perspectives were obtained with the help of a semi-structured interviews and focus groups to demonstrate a richer vision of the phenomenon within its contextual conditions. Consequently, theories were developed to rationalise the implementation of the RM approach on international students and its further improvement to enhance international student retention rate. These conclusions are developed in terms of themes which has allowed for interconnections to be highlighted.

7.4.1 Importance of International students' retention in the UK Business Schools

Conclusions 1 **The definition of international students varies amongst different stakeholders.**

This conclusion is supported by the work of Gallup-Black (2015) who stated that international students' can fit different contexts using citizenship, visa status, duration, and academic background. It is also supported from the findings of the empirical study of this research where participants across all stakeholders' categories defined international students differently. The implications of this conclusion are that there is no universally agreed definition of an international student as its definitions are greatly determined by the perspective of a particular stakeholder. Also the definition adopted by different stakeholders reflects and reinforces their role and this may affect and be affected by how they perform their role.

Conclusions 2 **International students are core contributors to Business Schools.**

This conclusion is supported by the findings of Luxon and Peelo (2009), Harrison and Peacock (2010), and Omoruyi and Rembielak, (2014) who stated that international students contributed positively in more than one way to the Business School. Such contributions include: within the curriculum; revenue; internationalisation; and their contribution in establishing a multi-cultural environment in the participating Business Schools. Moreover, this conclusion is also supported from data collected in this study where a majority of the participants across all stakeholder categories highlighted several contributions of international students to their Business School. These include, revenue, multicultural environment, robust curriculum, and enhanced class discussions. The implications of this conclusion are that Business Schools need the continuous patronage of international students to function as a viable global Business School.

Conclusions 3 **International students contribute positively to the GDP of the UK economy.**

This conclusion is supported by the conclusions of Harrison (2002) and Price Water Cooper House (2015) who stated that international students contribute to the UK economy in different ways ranging from financial assets, cultural assets, human resources, and diverse heritage etc. It is also supported from the primary data in this study where a majority of the participants agreed that international students contribute to the UK economy in diverse ways. These include human resources provided by international students, international students culture, and revenues brought into the economy. The implications of these conclusions are that International students studying in the participating Business Schools are beneficial to the UK economy in both financial and non-financial ways.

Conclusion 4 **International students' retention is beneficial to the UK Business School.**

In summary, it can be argued/concluded that conclusion1, 2 and 3 adequately addressed the first objective of this study, which was developed to investigate the importance of international students' retention in the participating UK Business Schools. Linking this to the objective of the study, it is therefore accepted that international student retention is of great importance to Business Schools in the UK. This implies that the importance of international students in the participating UK Business School is acknowledged by their stakeholders. This is reflected in their suggestions that international students benefit the participating Business School, and the geographical regions where they reside.

7.4.2 Why and how Business Schools use the RM approach to retain International students.

The second research objective of this study stated above will be evaluated using the conclusions of this study as the appropriate tool.

Conclusion 5 **Business Schools use RM approaches as a marketing tool.**

This conclusion is supported by the works of Alak (2006) and Helgessen (2008) who stated that Business Schools utilise a relationship marketing strategy with students. It is also supported from the data collected from the primary study of this research where a majority of the participants agreed that aspects of the RM approach were used as a market strategy. The implications of this conclusion are that the Business School like other service firms utilise RM strategies with their students and should therefore invest resources in developing holistic RM approaches for their international students.

Conclusion 6 **Business Schools mainly apply RM strategies to enable them to retain international students.**

This conclusion is supported by the works of Sultan and Wong (2012) and Sheth et al. (2015) who stated that student retention is one of the core reasons why HEIs implement RM approaches with students. This assertion is further supported by all of the management and academic staff interviewed who agreed that there are unique aspects of their RM approach which is specifically aimed at retaining international students. The implication of this is that the participating Business Schools now understand that not every aspects of their RM strategy will help retain international students; hence they now develop unique aspects targeted at international students. The implication of these conclusions shows that there are a number of reasons why Business Schools implement RM approaches to improve the attraction and retention of international students. It further implies that Business Schools implement their RM approach using a number of ways with points of contacts as the critical stages. Relating this key conclusion to the objective of this study which was to understand why Business Schools use relationship marketing as a tool for international student retention, it can be concluded that this objective has been fully achieved especially as the rationale relating to how Business Schools implement their RM approach has been carefully studied with relevant findings being comprehensively discussed.

Conclusion 7 **Business Schools implement their RM strategy to enable them to provide a positive student experience, internationalise, increase market share and exchange values amongst students.**

This conclusion is partly supported by the work of Hemsley-Brown (2012) whose argument was mainly related to students in general, and which stated that internationalisation, and the focusing on enhancing a positive student experience are reasons HEIs now implement the

RM approach on their students. From the empirical findings, this conclusion is supported by a majority of the participants who posits that the participating Business School aspire to be global and they are devoting resources to create value that will help enhance a positive international student experience. The implication of this is that Business Schools develop policies that will help them retain international students whilst they achieve other goals and objectives using similar RM strategies.

Conclusion 8 **<u>Application of an RM approach with International students in the participating Business School is a responsibility of every member of staff of the Business School.</u>**

This conclusion stems from the empirical study conducted with both management and academic staff of the participating Business School who all agreed that it is the responsibility of every member of staff to implement aspects of their RM strategy. The implication of this conclusion is that every member of staff is obliged to understand their RM approach as part of their job role and to ensure its successful implementation with international students.

Conclusion 9 **<u>Ways of Applying an RM approach in the participating Business Schools are embedded at every contact point with International students.</u>**

This conclusion is supported by the work of Payne and Frow (2013) and Sheth et al. (2015) who stated that point of contacts with customers are the most prominent way of implementing aspects of an RM approach in a service industry. The conclusion is also supported by a majority of the participants of the empirical study who identified several contact points with their international students as ways they can deliver aspects of their RM approach. This conclusion implies that contact points with international students are strategic points for Business Schools to establish relationships with international students and their families.

Conclusion 10 **<u>Applying an RM approach with International students attracts some additional cost from the Business School.</u>**

This conclusion is supported by the conclusions proposed by Christopher et al. (2013) and Peck et al. (2014) who stated that while implementing an RM approach, additional costs are attracted by the firm in the service industry. This conclusion was further supported by the results from the empirical findings where a majority of the members of the participating Business Schools identified additional costs that are borne by the Business Schools in the process of implementing aspects of their RM approach with international students. The implication of this conclusion is that it is more costly for the Business Schools to implement an RM approach as part of their market strategy specifically targeted at international students.

Conclusion 11 **<u>Student engagement and continuous investments in facilities in the Business School are ways Business Schools develop and maintain their RM approach with international students.</u>**

This conclusion is supported by the conclusions of Pop and Gordan (2012) and Thorpe and Kim (2013) who stated that customer engagement and continuous investments in facilities that help create value for customers are essential factors in developing and maintaining an RM approach. This conclusion is further supported by results from the empirical findings where a majority of the participants highlighted student engagement and continuous investments in the facilities that attract and enhance positive international student experience as ways of developing and maintaining a relationship with international students. The implication of this conclusion is that engaging with international students as a means of developing and maintaining an RM approach is one strategy that Business Schools can adopt to improve their relationship with international students. The conclusion further implies that investing in both tangible and intangible assets that will enhance the international student experience and will bring about the development and maintenance of the RM approach.

Conclusion 12 **<u>Staff engagement should be embarked upon by Business Schools to help them successfully develop and maintain their RM approach.</u>**

This conclusion stems from findings of the empirical study where all the academic staff posits that staff engagement can support the development and maintenance of an RM approach with international students. The implication of this conclusion is that relegating staff engagement in the background while trying to develop and maintain the RM process before international students will likely become an impediment to the successful outcome of the implementation of the RM approach.

7.4.3 Impact of the RM approach on International students' retention

Research objective three of this study as stated above will be used as an evaluative tool to discuss the conclusions of this study as stated below.

Conclusion 13 **<u>Definitions of International student retention go beyond the conventional definition of student retention and its definition is dependent on stakeholder roles within the Business School.</u>**

This conclusion is supported by the empirical findings of this study which found varying definitions of international student retention. Here, participants from the same stakeholder groups defined international student retention in similar ways, but there were differences when comparing different stakeholder groups. This conclusion implies that international student retention means more than the normal definition of retention which concerns mainly a student staying from the start of a course to the finish. This study found retention of international students covers other aspects including: conversion; alumni; completion; employment; and attendance etc. The implications of this conclusion is that Business School need to devote resource and have key performance indicators relating to each of the pinch points identified as affecting retention.

Conclusion 14 **<u>The RM approach impacts on International student retention in the participating Business School.</u>**

This conclusion is supported by the work of Schee (2010) and Powell and Rey (2015) who stated that an RM approach impacts on student retention in both positive and negative ways. The conclusion is further supported by the empirical findings of this study where a majority of all the groups who participated stated that their Schools RM approach impacts on international student retention. The implication of this conclusion is that the implementation of an RM approach with international students in the participating Business School brings about an increased rate in international student retention. This was evidenced by documents provided to the researcher by the Business Schools and subsequently reviewed by the researcher.

Conclusions 15 **<u>Not all aspects of an RM approach are significant for International student relationship building.</u>**

This conclusion is supported by the findings from the empirical study where a majority of the stakeholders who responded identified several aspects of the RM approach that seem not to make any difference to them. For example, a large proportion of the international students identified aspects of the RM approach that need to be developed to fit their particular circumstance for it to contribute to their relationship with the Business School such as those aspects that are significant, those aspects that are not significant and this aspects that need more consideration as they are currently undervalued or argued as too generic. The implication of this conclusion is that in as much as the RM approach impacts the international student retention rate positively, there are still other aspects that makes little or no difference. Hence, it can be argued that some aspects might even ruin the relationship in some instances. It is expected that Business Schools identify these aspects that are significant and build on them and discard the aspects that make no contribution to the development of the relationship with international students.

Conclusion 16 **Academic staff empowerment is a way of improving the RM approach Business Schools develop with International students.**

This conclusion is supported by the publications of Sawir et al. (2012) and Tinto (2012) who stated that involving the academic into every process as it concerns the student will help improve the student experience. This conclusion was also supported from findings of the empirical study where a majority of the academic staff interviewed argued that when academic staff members are empowered to be part of the whole process that has to deal with international students, the relationship will be better developed and a positive international student experience will be achieved. The implication of this conclusion is that empowering academic staff in every aspect of the international student experience within and outside the classroom will bring about a positive international student experience.

Conclusion 17 **Employing staff who are aware of issues that are relevant to international students should be a focal point of a Schools RM approach.**

This conclusion is supported by the work of Baba and Hosoda (2014) who stated that using customer oriented employees at meeting points with customers will enhance their RM approach. This conclusion is also supported by the empirical findings of this study where a majority of the participants stressed the need for Business Schools to use employees who are aware of issues that are relevant to international students. The implication of this conclusion is that Business schools need staff members that are aware of issues that are important to international students. Hence, they can be able to understand their needs and deal with them better.

Conclusion 18 **Business Schools that understand the dynamics of international students will have a better outcome when implementing an RM approach.**

This conclusion is supported by the findings from the empirical study where all the international students who were interviewed posited that utilising a one size fit all RM approach will not work effectively with international students because of their diverse social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Hence they stressed that students dynamics needs to be considered by the Business Schools and their RM approach should be developed on the basis of such dynamics. Cultural dynamics was a factor all students highlighted as too generic and a one size fits all. The implication of this conclusion is that Business Schools utilising a general policy of RM will not be able to adequately satisfy international students from different cultural background.

Conclusion 19 **Business Schools who integrate family members of international students into the relationship process will have a better outcome when implementing their RM approach.**

This conclusion is supported by the empirical findings of this study which found from participants interviewed that their family plays a big role in the outcome of their retention strategies. The international students further acknowledged the fact that their family members opinion about the Business School they select also contributes to their overall student experience. The implication of this conclusion is that family members of international students can become determinants of the outcome of the RM approach on international students.

Conclusion 20 **Other students affect the outcome of an RM approach focused on international students.**

This conclusion is supported by the empirical findings of this study where it found that a majority of the international students agreed that they often prefer to deal with other students who have similar cultural backgrounds both within and outside the classroom. The implication of this conclusion is that when students from same country, and with similar cultural backgrounds, cooperate and collaborate there is a more positive impact on student experience when compared to students are placed in mixed groups, but negative in terms of international experience.

Conclusion 21 **The RM approach impacts on international student retention positively.**

In summary it can be argued/concluded that conclusions 11 to 18, adequately addressed the third objective of this study, which was developed to investigate the impact of the RM approach on international student retention rates. The conclusions show that the RM approaches positively impacts on the retention rate of international students in the UK Business Schools. The conclusions further addresses the fact that some aspects of the RM approach are not as significant as others and it also provides ways they can be developed upon to further enhance the international student experience. It can be seen that this objective has been fully achieved especially as the study was able to determine the impact of the RM approach on international students where it found the approach effects retention rates. It further provides suggestions on ways to develop the RM approach in enabling a more positive international student experience.

7.5. Recommendations

This study has implications for practitioners who wish to internationalise and market the UK HEIs to international students. This research provides a rich understanding of international students and what aspects of the RM approach will have an effect on their continuous patronage of the UK Business School. Hence, this study suggests that policy makers in the Business Schools should be aware of issues that affect international students so they can develop appropriate RM strategies considering their operational and strategic implications as shown in figure 7.1. In achieving these statements above, the following recommendations need to be considered:

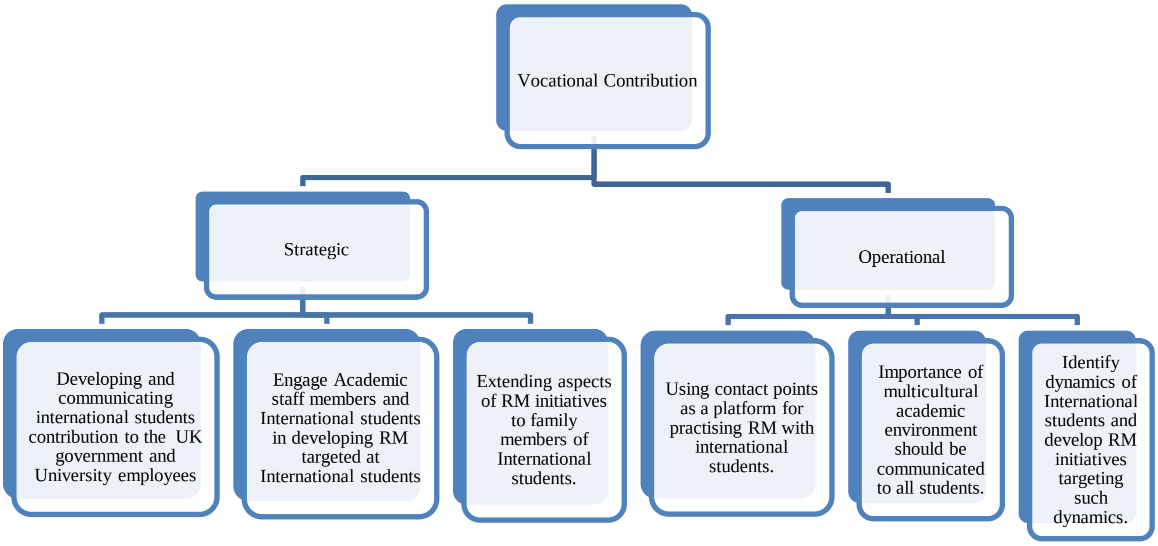


Figure 7.1 Showing Vocational contributions

Recommendation 1. **<u>Business Schools should inform their employees and the UK government about the contribution of International students to the Business School and the UK economy.</u>**

The aim of this recommendation is to inform Business Schools about the importance of informing their employees and the government of the importance of International students. In achieving and implementing this recommendation, the HEI managers will have to consult closely with their employees and Government representatives, where the focus will be about the importance of international students. In doing this, they will put forward facts showing the importance of international students to the Business School, the university and the UK in general. The university employees and the UK Government will be consulted on keying into policies that will help boost continuous international students' patronage. Some of these consultations can lead to development of governmental policies that will be in the interest of international students. The HEIs will have to bear some costs that will be as a result of funds allocated to research, setting meetings, campaigns, and internal marketing amongst employees about the importance of international students. If this recommendation is considered and implemented by the HEIs, it will bring about more international student patronage for the UK Business Schools, it will also help the Greater Manchester area and the UK economy enjoy benefits resulting from the presence of international students.

Recommendation 2. <u>Business Schools should develop and implement an RM approach that focuses on international students</u>

The aim of this recommendation is to enable Business Schools to understand how to implement an RM approach that focuses on international students. This may be achieved by Business Schools carrying out research on what aspects of their current RM approach are significant to the International students relationship process and to learn to concentrate more on such aspects and where possible to remove those aspects that are insignificant. The costs of this recommendation are those associated with development, implementation, and monitoring of the research/feedback including human resources to develop these marketing strategies as well as the implementation of the operational strategies. The cost associated with developing surveys, focus group, training employees and the cost of monitoring the process. The benefits to be derived from this recommendation include cost reduction aligned with aspects of the RM approach that will be discarded, a more precise RM approach that will help improve international student experience, and more patronage of international students in the Business Schools.

Recommendation 3. <u>Business Schools should concentrate more on contact point as the core platform of implementing an RM approach</u>

The aim of this recommendation is to enable Business Schools to understand that the implementation of an RM approach should be more targeted on employees who are manning contact points with international students. In achieving this recommendation, Business Schools are to train these employees to gain knowledge of the importance of the RM approach and to understand those specific aspects of the RM approach that should be evidenced when delivering their services to the international students they come in contact with. Employees should be provided the opportunity of meeting with international societies to gain more knowledge of international students. The costs of this recommendation are those associated with training employees about specifics of the RM approach that are to be embedded in the service they deliver, it will also include the costs associated with providing the employees trainings/information about international students who hail from different countries. It will also include the cost of arranging meetings/consultations between these employees and international societies. The benefits to be derived from this recommendation if implemented might include the retention of international students, more patronage of international students, and a more developed Alumni base with committed international students, and enhancing international student experience amongst other students.

Recommendation 4. Business Schools should engage Academic staff to develop the RM approach towards International students.

The aim of this recommendation is to enable Business School to understand the importance of staff engagement as a means to achieve international student retention. In achieving this, Business Schools will need to engage their employees especially, those who are in contact with international students, more regularly. These employees should be involved in every part of the international student experience process including: developing the recruitment process; visa support; accommodation; and other aspects both within and outside the classroom. The costs of this recommendation are those associated with having to pay for academics and other employees to be part of the process that deals with international students. This will include travel costs overseas, costs of attending meetings where policies that deal with international students are developed, and where possible costs of undertaking research on international students. Benefits to be derived from this recommendation will mean that every employee especially the academic staff will be able to easily integrate policies targeted at international students into their roles. It will also mean that they can be able to deliver their roles at the best interest of international students without relegating the Business School’s interest knowing that every policy developed is as a result of their own contribution. It might also help to develop policies and procedures that will enhance the international student experience in a positive way especially their academic journey as it will be easy to find a balance between within and outside the classroom activities.

Recommendation 5. **Business Schools should engage International students in issues that are international students related.**

The aim of this recommendation is to enable Business Schools to engage international students in most parts of the decision making process that are targeted at international students. This recommendation may be achieved when Business School involve and consult with international students more regularly on issues that are about affairs that concern international students. In doing this, international students could be asked to nominate representatives from different countries or regions, and these representatives will be invited to meetings with managers in the Business Schools where they will be asked to provide suggestions or opinions that will foster an international student experience in a positive way. Some of these could be through including international student representatives in the student union committee. The costs of this recommendation are not necessarily monetary as other incentives will have to be put in place to inform these international students about the benefits of this participation. Campaigns as such will not only include funds but also time and employing the services of international alumni who can be of great importance in influencing international students participation. The benefits that could be derived from this recommendation will include the opportunity for Business School to have adequate information on international students and their needs, hence they will be able to look into their needs and thus enhance a positive international student experience that will in turn bring about a positive international student retention rate. Another benefit that could be derived from this is that Business Schools will now be able to reduce costs by not investing in things that might not appeal to international students.

Recommendation 6. **Business School managers should identify and develop other aspects that may affect international student retention as an opportunity for growth.**

The aim of this recommendation is to inform Business School managers on how to target other aspects of international student retention and their benefits. In achieving this recommendation, Business Schools might have to use a more inclusive approach to defining international students and their priorities, (conclusion 13). Business School managers can achieve this aim by setting up committees or research centres to determine how international students contribute to the growth of the Business School. Information can be sourced from employees in those related roles to provide benefits of international students who are now Alumni, or converted to higher degrees or possibly employed with the University to identify which factors affected their experience so that they can be managed and improved. The benefits to be derived from this recommendation include creating an opportunity to make the most out of current situations and also an opportunity to be able to showcase the Business School globally for its positive retention rate which might help improve international student recruitment rate.

Recommendation 7. **Business Schools should endeavour to understand International Students dynamics and develop unique aspects of their RM approach to target such dynamics.**

The aim of this recommendation is to enable Business Schools to understand International students' dynamics, and employ international student oriented staff to participate in developing and implementing policies that are targeted towards international students. In achieving this, the Business School will have to be able to train their staff to understand the dynamics of international students within their school; especially the religious and cultural factors relating to international students. Some of these staff might have to travel overseas, carry out research with some of these religious groups, research with international societies, research with international students, and undertake consultancies with embassies. International students from different countries can also be employed as part of the employees in the Business Schools so they can also help to provide first-hand knowledge of their culture or religion. The cost associated with this recommendation will include the cost of carrying out research, costs associated with employing adequate human resources, and travel costs etc. The benefits to be derived will include, being able to easily develop the RM approach in a way and manner that its outcome will be maximised at even a cheaper rate as all insignificant aspects will be discarded. It could also benefit the Business Schools in gaining more new international students, and increasing their retention rate while also enhancing the international student experience positively.

Recommendation 8. **Business Schools should consider extending the relationship to family members of international students.**

The aim of this recommendation is to enable Business Schools to use family members of international students to help improve international student experience/retention. In achieving this aim, Business Schools will have to involve family members of international students in issues that pertain to international students and the Business Schools. This can be done through setting up online forums that will welcome family members of international students to communicate with the Business School, it can also be done by inviting family members to events organised the Business Schools, offering where possible discounts for family members who already have their relative as a previous or current students. This costs of this recommendation are those associated with the development, implementation and monitoring of the forums that will involve family members. The cost associated with employing both human resources and other resources in the process. It could include costs that might be associated with discounts offerings for family members of current and previous international students. The benefits to be derived from this recommendation include a higher international student retention rate, more positive international student experience, opportunity for Business Schools to establish more international network etc.

Recommendation 9. **Business Schools should inform all students about the benefits of having to live and study with students from different academic and cultural backgrounds.**

The aim of this recommendation is to enable Business Schools to utilise the presence of international students to improve the student experience of all students. It may be achieved by incorporating the value of students from different countries and cultural backgrounds, which encompasses home and international students, into the curriculum. Campaigns can be developed to inform students about the value of socialising and mixing with students from other countries both within and outside the classroom. Organised events that will comprise of both home and international students, should be developed that will allow all students come together to develop and implement policies. The costs of this recommendation are those associated with the development, implementation and monitoring of curriculum including human resources to develop and ensure the technical contents as well as those costs associated with those who will have responsibility for organising such social events that will bring all students together. The benefits to be derived from this recommendation include a positive student experience for all students in the Business School, improvement in the ranking of the Business School from NSS and PTES surveys, and cordial multicultural environment been established in the Business School.

7.5.1 Academic Recommendation

Recommendation 1. Changes to literature on marketing HE to International students.

This study has highlighted the different definitions of HE and also developed a working definition of HE. It has highlighted the different definitions of international students and international student retention and how these definitions tend to reflect views of stakeholders.

As such literatures on definition of these constructs within the HE sector should reflect these changes. It is intended that the main findings from this study will be published more generally in journal, conferences and book chapters.

The study has also highlighted the marketing of HE the different marketing strategies adopted by HEIs particularly RM and its implementation with international students towards international student retention/experience. As such, the literature relating to HE marketing and RM implementation in HEIs need to better mirror such variances especially as it concerns international students. The benefits to stakeholders are that Business School managers can better acknowledge and develop aspects of RM to enhance international student experience while also enhance the student experience of home students. This finding from this study will be disseminated through conference presentation.

Recommendation 2. Raise the profile of the importance of implementing marketing approaches on international students within the academic opportunity.

This study has in part identified the lack of consensus regarding the importance of HE marketing research on international students within the academic community. Specifically there is a need to make research within HE marketing of international students more 'main stream'. The benefit of this is to maximise synergies with other academic sources such as international business management and consumer behaviour.

7.6. Research Limitations

While this study has provided valuable insights into the development and implementation of the RM approach on International students, there are some limitations:

1. This research has been conducted in the Northwest region in the UK. Whilst the results are robust they relate to the Business Schools studied. This means that these results reflects the practices of these Business Schools studied, and cannot be taken as reflecting practices in other Business Schools.
2. This thesis utilised qualitative methods to collect its data using semi-structured interviews, and focus group. Some researchers would contend that using multi methods to gather data would improve validity of the research. The results could be different if a survey was conducted with a larger number of international students.

3. This research was conducted in one school within the University, and as a result it can be argued that the RM approach in other schools even in the same university towards international students might differ in terms of outcome.
4. This study used a point time study as opposed to a longitudinal study which is not feasible for a PhD study considering the time frame allocated to a PhD.

7.7. Future Research Recommendations

This research has offered adequate insights on how and why Business School use the RM approach towards international students' retention. To validate the theories developed by this research, other possible theories that are relevant to international students and marketing of HEIs can be developed if other Business Schools are studied. The findings emerging can also be more insightful if other schools within the UK and international university are studied. Therefore it is recommended to include all Business Schools within the UK HE sector in an investigation of the findings of this study to improve its validity, reliability, and robustness.

The findings of the four Business Schools reviewed revealed in this regard may be regarded as a snapshot which represents the current situation surrounding marketing HEIs to international students. One or more longitudinal studies could add value to understanding marketing to international students. Additionally, different Universities from different countries could be included in further research to conduct a comparative study that may assist in the development of a better understanding of the phenomenon studied.

It will be suggested that future studies consider carrying out a similar research after the terms of BREXIT are fully provided to see if there are significant changes as to the way and manner HEIs will market HE.

7.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the research aim and objectives for the study and presented how the empirical findings were used to address the objectives. It also presented key conclusions that address the objectives of the research. The recommendations as it deals with its implications for management practice and academic were also addressed as the contribution of this study. The limitations of the study and area for future research were also discussed in this chapter.

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Appendix 1. Ethical Approval

College of Arts & Social Sciences

Room 626 Maxwell Building
The Crescent
Salford, M5 4WT
Tel: 0161 295 5876

06 November 2013

Trevor Uyi Omoruyi
University of Salford

Dear Trevor

Re: Ethical Approval Application – CASS120051

I am pleased to inform you that based on the information provided, the Research Ethics Panel have no objections on ethical grounds to your project.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Woodman
On Behalf of CASS Research Ethics Panel

Appendix 2. Consent Form

Salford Business School,
Greater Manchester
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Consent Form

Research Project Title:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RETENTION: A REVIEW OF FOUR BUSINESS SCHOOLS IN THE GREATER MANCHESTER AREA.

Name of the researcher:
[Name of Researcher]
Name of the supervisor:
[Name of the supervisor]

Please tick the appropriate boxes

		Yes	No
1.	I have read and understood the project information sheet dated DD/MM/YYYY.	☐	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the above research project.	☐	☐
3.	I agree to take part in the project.	☐	☐
4.	Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and audio recorded.	☐	☐
5.	I agree to the use of my statements as anonymous quotes in publication	☐	☐
6.	I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.	☐	☐

________________________ ______________________ ________
Name of participant [printed] Signature Date

________________________ ______________________ ________
Researcher [printed] Signature Date

E-mail address:[e-mail address of researcher]
Contact Tel Number: [tel number of researcher]

Appendix 3. Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Demographic Information
Name
Gender
Position/Role
Name of Business School
How long have you been in this role?

1-How do you define international students?

2-What do international students mean to your business school?

3-Why do you consider their patronage?

4-How do you attract and recruit international students? /How do you enhance their patronage?

5-How do they impact the business school?

6-How do they contribute to the University?

7-Do they have any impact on the UK economy?

8-What marketing approach do you implement to sustain their patronage?

9-Why do your organisation utilise this approach (es)?

10-Who is/are responsible for the implementation of these approaches?

11-How do you implement these approaches?

12-What does it cost your organisation to implement these approaches?

13-How do you develop on these approaches?

14-What is the impact of these approaches on international students?

15-How do these impacts benefit the business school?

16-Why is this important to the business school?

17-How does this benefit the University as a whole?

Appendix 4. The Main Study Letter

The Main Study Letter
To whom it may concern,

Research Title: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RETENTION: A REVIEW OF FOUR BUSINESS SCHOOLS IN THE GREATER MANCHESTER AREA.

Researcher: [Name of the Researcher**]**
PhD student
Salford Business School,
University of Salford

Outline of Research:

Britain's Higher Education as a national asset is a major contributor to the economic success and social well-being of the country. It is also a huge sector in bringing in foreign currency and contributing to the good of the world through its scientific publications and citations (O'Leary, 2009; DBIS, 2012). It helps to boost the UK economy. The recent immigration policy of the UK government has affected enrolment and retention of prospective non-EU students by 83% (Wiriyacosol & Lertjanyakit, 2012). Government policy is now becoming affect international students choosing UK as their destination of study. It becomes imperative that Universities in the UK establish relationship to prevent the continuous fall in numbers of international students. The UK Government now has as a top priority the concern of trying to maximise education opportunities for genuine international students using retention as a medium (Inisdegovernment, 2012).

The aim of the relationship marketing concept is to develop a profitable and long-term relationship with customers and all other stakeholders identified (Gordon, 1998; Grönroos, 1999; Baron *et al*., 2010; Christopher *et al*., 2012). Hence, the researcher is interested in exploring and understanding how an organisation (i.e. a university) fosters relationship with its stakeholders.

This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by offering a conceptual framework for the successful establishments of relationships, predominantly in services marketing, more precisely in the Higher Education context.

Having recognised the importance of International students' retention to economic growth and the importance of international students to the development of the UK HEI sector, there is need to unravel how the application relationship marketing can influence international student retention in the UK Higher Education Institutions. This research attempts to fill the gap of knowledge by bringing together the application of the relationship marketing concept towards retention of international students particularly for the services marketing context where the HEI's fall within. The aim of the relationship marketing concept is to develop a profitable and long-term relationship with students and all other stakeholders identified (Gordon, 1998; Grönroos, 1999; Baron *et al*., 2010; Christopher *et al*., 2012). Hence, the researcher is interested in exploring and understanding how an organisation (i.e. a university) fosters relationship with its international students towards retention. This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by offering a conceptual framework for the successful establishments of relationships, predominantly in services marketing, more precisely in the Higher Education context using business schools in the Greater Manchester area as a case study.

Confidentiality and data protection: The consent of the interviewee will be sought and obtained before the interview will be conducted. In addition, their consent will be obtained before the interview is recorded. At the outset, interviewees will be made to understand that they have right to withdraw from the interview at any point and any recording relating to the interview will be deleted. The recoded interview will be handled with confidentiality; only the researcher will have access to it. If any confidential information is inadvertently revealed by the interviewees, it will be deleted from the recording. All data obtained from the study will be used strictly for the study and securely stored. On completion of the study, the data will be strictly protected so that no unauthorised person will have access to it.

Further queries about this research can be forwarded to the supervisor:

Appendix 5. Information Sheet for Participants

Salford Business School
Maxwell Building
Salford, Greater Manchester
M5 4WT, United Kingdom

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F: +44 (0)161 295 5022

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INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study: **Exploring and Understanding How Relationship Marketing, Can Influence International Student Retention in the Business Schools of the UK Higher Education Institutions.**

Dear [Name of participant]

My name is [name of researcher] a PhD researcher at the University of Salford, Salford Business School, Manchester, conducting research into how business schools in the UK HEIs use relationship marketing to influence international student retention.

Research Focus

The aim of this research is to understand how Business schools in UK HEIs use relationship marketing to influence international student retention. The thrust of the research work would be to enquire how and why business schools should practice relationship marketing towards students' retention in the UK Higher Education industry.

Objectives of the study

The research work seeks to investigate the underlying reason why an HEI should be concerned about retention of international students. It will also explore the underlying reason why and how Higher Education Institutions (HEI) should develop relationship with international students. The research work is equally set to explore and characterise how an HEI develop and practice relationship marketing towards student retention.

Participant selection

You have been contacted because I am certain that your personal perspective and interpretation of experience can make an important contribution to this research. **The data collection will be undertaken by face-to-face semi structured interview, direct observation and document review.** The interview will last an average of 45 minutes.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime from participating in this research study without giving a reason. If you do not wish to participate you do not have to do anything in response to this request. If you are happy to participate in the research, we will ask you to read this information sheet, sign the consent form and return it to the researcher.

Risks and discomforts: This research study does not have any known risks or discomforts associated with it.

Benefits: The study does not offer any personal benefits for your participation. The information you provide will help the researcher gain more insight into this research work and the result of the study could be beneficial to the UK Higher Education Institutions.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: Any comments / inputs made during the course of the study will be treated with confidentiality by the researcher. All data collection, storage and processing will comply with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. Under no circumstances will identifiable responses be provided to any other third party. The information obtained from you will be used for the production of a PhD thesis and other academic publications and therefore openly accessible, however, the researcher will ensure that no individual participant will be identified. Where it becomes necessary to use names, the researcher will employ the use of pseudonyms to code the names of participants.

Storage of data

- Hardcopies will be reserved in a locked box, and all soft data will be saved securely in my own personal computer, and encrypted. The backup files in the researcher's flash disk will be stored in the locked drawer in the researcher's appropriate place. The information provided will be analysed by the researcher and the results from this analysis will be available in one or more of the following sources; scientific papers in peer reviewed academic journals; local seminars; presentations at conferences. After completion of the research, all the tapes and drafts will be secured properly to prevent any misuse.

If you do have any queries or would like to contact me to receive further information about this research work, please do not hesitate to contact me through my Email: [E-mail of researcher] or Telephone: [Tel of researcher].

Yours Sincerely,

[Name of the researcher]

Appendix 6. Interview Transcripts Samples

Interview with Academic Staff:

S: Good afternoon and thank you for willing to take part in this research, do you want to confirm for your name for me please

I: XXXXX

S: Your position and role within the business school

I: Director of profession studies but I was head of department of accounting and finance till December 2013

S: What are your responsibilities?

I: Well am responsible directly to the dean and she gives me ad-hoc projects plus also at the moment helping the department ... go through the transition to a new head

S: Within this role and within your previous role, do you in any way do with international students

I: All the time, dealt with international student for 35 years and also in my external examiner role, I have dealt with international student through that profession role for a long time as well for 20 years

S: For how long have you been in this recent position?

I: 3 months – 4 months

S: But altogether, all 35 years you have been dealing with international students

I: I have been, yes

S: Thank you and considering your dealing with international student and for over 35 years, can you kindly tell me how you do define the international students you deal with

I: To me, international students are any student who are non- UK and I don't differentiate between EU or outside of the EU, just basically because the students within the European union face the same problem as the students from further field so that does not necessary look on the definition of any international student from an income prospective as being the way I would look at it

S: So not necessary income

I: Not necessary income base but it has an impact but no

S: The international student you have been dealing with, is it from your business school or in general

I: well I have dealt with them from the business school but I have dealt with them as an examiner for a professional body, I have dealt with them in that context as well so I have visited different countries in my capacity as an examiner

S: What does the international student mean to your business school?

I: Well, they mean a lot of things obviously they mean as we mention before increase income, but they also mean an increase level of support is required for the student. They also bring diversity to the student body and they are an important aspect, the cultural aspect; you know they bring a change of culture to the student body as well

S: Are there any other reasons why you would consider their patronage other than these ones you have just mentioned

I: What do you mean?

S: Are there any other reasons why you want them to keep staying with you

I: I work on a student body as a whole, I did treat the student body on equal terms and I would never really thought well that we would necessarily think of international students as being any different other than special needs so I don't , there is no differentiation between nations as such other than define Manchester will be quite difficult place to come to, when they are coming from a different background but then it can be said to be the same for our home student as they also all come from different backgrounds. I view them obviously as being important part of our program but I have never really single them out for special attention or support mechanize to support all the student bodies. The main thing I suppose is language capability that has always been, quite often been an issue with overseas student but now it is not.

S: Considering your role either recent or previous, do you have any idea of how they attract and recruit these international students

I: Yes, they mainly recruit them though overseas agent like when we go to overseas recruitment fairs, per also we recruit them because of any reputation they have got in that particular country so it can be targeted , we may target, the university may target a particular country to try and recruit international student and also from our department some of the reasons, some of the students come is because of our linkages with the professional accounting bodies and the professional accounting bodies are international so they attract international students cos we teach students the same accounting practice as it is occurring in their home countries so that is also another reason why students come here

S: The international students how do they contribute to the university as a whole

I: Obviously, they contribute in regards to income but as I said earlier they contribute a lot to the diversity of the university in term of how why they participate to their culture, it gives our students much better student experience is the only one. the biggest main issue is many of the international students do congregate within their own nation so they don't actually go out and meet many of the UK students, they tend to get to stay in their own cluster for extent the end of their own period here . They wouldn't have the same bored experience as they might have expected themselves to have so they have seen international students who come here with pro-language skills and still go away with pro-language skill because of the fact that they don't mix with UK students and the public

S: Can you tell me about the approaches or other approaches that you do implement to be sure that you do retain these international students

I: Most of them are ……. We don't have much of an influence .. marketing, the only marketing we do as a dept is to send people to overseas fair, educational fairs . suppose the other marketing is the people within the dept has got international reputations in term of in research or professional reputation which may, again we don't promote that as much as we should do

S: Do you try to for example establish relationship with these international students ,just for them to stay or do you do something different? What do you do

I: No, we have a student society which all students are allowed to conjoin and that gives the international student a broad range of skills, to, they can meet employers, they meet prominent business people, they meet prominent economy and so on but that is available for all student we don't really single out international students as being a body that we would focus on , as in the year tutors are there to help every students ,experienced tutors are they to help every student we do put on language courses for international students and also to essay writing courses for international students as well. And we also have international students survey on a regular basis to raise an issue as regards to anybody issue , then we would find out from the internal students survey whether not it is an issue but we don't focus on purely on international student

S: What support, I mean specific support do you give to international students, which the UK students might not necessary need.

I: Very little, to be honest, other than language and the essay writing skills, we don't sort of have. What we have is an international student support officer within the business school but that is just one person, it is not within the dept so within the business school we have got that. We have an international dept within the university that again dictate the policy for international recruitment and the targeted countries but within the dept there is no one person that has got a role to look after international student

S: So whatever you have on ground is just a general thing that enhance the student experience of every students

I: Yes, really maybe that is a weakness in the business school but yes we don't have a particular, we don't dedicate a significant amount of resource just for international student

S: What are the approaches you already mentioned for example the language course, these essay writing , the international support officers, the international office, why do your organisation deem it fit to use some of these approach to enhance the experience of the international students

I: Suppose they recognise a potential problem with international students coming into the UK environment, the problems that the university has got is that international students are drawn from many international countries so the environment which that student has come we may not recognise it, we may not know the sort of issue that an individual student is having, many students have got a personal academic tutor so on individual basis that student can go to the tutor but if the cultural of the country is that they find it very difficult to express themselves or find it very difficult to create a relationship with the tutor then what we tend to do is if a student does not turn up for a meeting with the tutor then we have to chase them but that again goes for all students but if there is a particular problem with an international student then we again we will just chase that student and try and find out what the problem is and that goes for all our students

S: So that kind of communication is for every one

I: Yes, it is for everyone

S: so to ensure that that engagement is there

I: Exactly

S: And some of these approaches, you already mentioned which is particular to international students who are the people responsible

I: The people responsible for the business school is the dean, the dean has the overall responsible for the business school but in the dept, the responsible will flow down from the head, the associate head, to the year tutors, to the personal academic tutors to the student experience tutor, they will be responsible.

S: So basically everyone

I: Yes. Everyone is responsible

S: Implementing some of these approaches, do you think it does cost your business school an extra fund

I: Yes, it does cost but it is important and because it is the business school is really very student centred student focus type of university that given the fact that the business school turnover is not much, quite close to 50 million pounds. I think that it owns the students those duties to have that those resource input and I don't think we can just take any students money without giving them the right student experience and I think it is important we add value to every student experience in the university and that is what we do

S: And do you have measures in place on how to actually develop on some of these approaches

I: We have some cruel measures; obviously we have the NSS survey which is national student survey which tells us whether the students are satisfied, we have the retention measures and progression measures, we look at individual performance on unit so for example international students tend to struggle with law and a lot of written papers so we tend to focus on quite closely the areas we know international student are going to struggle with and try and put in additional support there so our law unit on level 5 course was always an issue for our students and it gives them the extra support, we used to have a unit on business information technology unit that international students struggle with so we brought that unit into our dept. so we can match the student progression better. So we are aware if a problem does crop up then we deal with it immediately.

S: Brilliant, that means you guys are pro-active then

I: Yes

S: so you do tend to identify some of their weakness and offer support

I: Yes, that's sure, basically because of the experience we have had over the years and also the persons academic tutor is quite important because once the tutor has created a relationship with the student that then certainly when I had to teach, you find that the international student creates a dependence on the tutor and they can become that close and very often it extent beyond the 3 years course and our international student tends to keep in touch more than some of the UK students when they have that sort of close relationship

S: I agree with that because some other people I spoke with as well were even tutors here, just the same thing you just said that the international students tend to try to establish relationship because unlike the home student, they said some of them would rather go home when they have issues or their families because they have them around and some of these approaches which you guys actually do, are they link to your school strategy decision.

I: In some ways yes, the strategy decision is based on all students but student support is what we try and ensure that, it is our key focus the dept is partly research based but mainly teaching based so we deal with any issues that is created immediately for example last year we had problem with our case study program and some of the international students didn’t really understand what was needed in terms of the assessment and the assess course work and sometimes in the department we need to understand a little bit more of the culture like if you take some of the students from far east then they tend not to write more prolifically way and they tend to write in a sub sink way and they think quite often in terms of a right or wrong answer rather than a discussing answer and so we had an issue with the case study and we got the leaders of each of the case studies during group and many of them were international student and just exclaim to them the nature of what a case study assessment should be engage in and another we found is that international student found difficult is the understanding the concept of plagiarism. They think plagiarism is ok to copy a lot of copy work because the work they copy is better English than their own so they see it as being what is the problem with it I don’t understand it. That is being an issue plagiarism with international students.

S: Something like that what are you guys doing about that

I: We have plagiarism podcast, student support officer for the business school and we have other online stuffs that we show student so that has become less than of a problem

S: Some of the other approaches like this one you just said has become less of a problem, the other approaches you have been talking about , what do you say has been the impact of such approaches on international students

I: I think they tend to feel closer, more attach to the university once you demonstrate that you care about a student then there is a certain bonding occurs and many of our international student stay on and do further studies with us because of that or they go away and I can give for example we had some of the students on a profession program and because of the way, just not the way they were taught but the student close mechanize they went back to their home countries in Malaysia and we had …. And this year we have 23 so just that student support , we gets known in all areas of the world.

S: That tends to help the word of mouth communication and even market you guys for you

I: Yes, exactly. The thing is that been obvious to me for a while is that which the university has not taken on board is that the dept is best tool for marketing and not the centralized mechanize if you like

S: Brilliant, that is what I agree with as well, that is why I want to talk to the people in the dept because that is what I expect and again will it be ok for me to say loyalty, that they become more loyal since you have been doing this

I: Yeah, yeah, and absolutely

S: And some of these impact how do they benefit the business school

I: Another aspect which I will come on to in a minute, another aspect of the program is many student are second generation immigrate or they are sons of second generation immigrate and because of the way we treat those students the brothers the sisters the families they keep coming to us so we have people currently on a program whose brothers are on level 6 and level 4 so it is back to that point you made about loyalty but due to the support they get so it is really important. What am saying is we have international students but then we have students who comes with diverse from white UK students even though those students are in fact UK student but the family background may have come from Pakistan and Bangladesh and therefore when they visit or come to study with us they will be classed as UK student they need to be, they are cultural different therefore we have to treat them in a different way.

S: The question I asked then was some of these things have to do with loyalty, retention, one going high, the bonding, getting better how does it help the business school

I: Well, if you look at it in terms of reputation, it helps the reputation of the business school, it helps in terms of the income, last September we had an increase of 10 or 12 percentage in school numbers while other Universities had a declined school numbers, part of that increase is definitely because of the student support we give and the professional nature which that support is given. We are not a business but we treat our students in a very professional way, we respect their background, we respect their skills, we respect their desire to succeed and therefore we are constantly thinking of ways of improving their experience so for example, this week we are pushing our sage accounting course students for level 6 but it is free and they get a certificate at the end of it, it is not assessed but if they want to come on it, it adds value their CV's so we are always thinking of ways to enhance their experience

S: And you just said something like one of the benefits of business school is their reputation other than helping other students' come, does reputation also help in you in your league table

I: Well, not really, no. we are not very good managing our link- tails in fact we are terrible at it. Again, it is the issue of central approach to a problem then supposed to divisional approach or departmental approach so league table are sort of managed centrally, we don't have anything to do with that management so in terms of league table position, all we try and do is our best in certain key areas like retention, progression, etc. So we don't try to manage the link-tails in any way we just try to provide the best student experience that we can

S: Brilliant, that's very essential as well

I: hmmmmmm hmmmmmmm

S: The international students how do you say they benefit the United Kingdom and the university and even Manchester as a whole

I: I think that Manchester is an international city, it is a city where you have got lot of international companies and the investment like the Chinese bank, obviously, people from the Middle East into Manchester and therefore I think it is very important that the university thought of it as being an international university and the university cares about its international partners as well as its international student because we have different partners throughout the whole so I think, what we have done over the years is that we developed a reputation for been re-active to issues in the business world and also very responsible people in terms of when we undertake a contract with the business world shall we say developed a reputation that we actually deliver on that contract so in many ways our reputation is built around our national and international partners and that in its self would enhance what we have tried to guess to attract international students to the university

S: And how do you see the students, you just said something about you trying to respect them, treat them in all professional way. What do you see international students as customers, consumers, partners or beneficiaries?

I: I hate nowadays that people say that students are partners, it is not a partnership so again we are wrong, to say a customer. It is a partnership that's the way I see it. When I was head, I will always go and see that the students at the beginning of every term and tell them that we work together as a department that we as lecturers want to enjoy our work and you as students want to enjoy the interaction with the lecturer and so it is important that they part their part and these students code of conduct and what have you, we have set up but I wanted them to feel that they could connect with me even though I was head and that I was always available so if I ever saw an international student wandering aimlessly in the corridor, i will make it a point by trying and speak to them, help them and make sure that they didn't feel as if no one cared and I think that is so important so that's the message I gave out to all the staffs

S: That they should make the international students know they are aware of them and they are consign about them

I: Exactly, that their welfare is important and the year tutors are the same, they spend a lot of time with the student, I mean problem student, we don't, hang out on the door you will see office hours but any student and all students know that if the member of staff is there then they can go in and speak to the member of staff

S: I notice/ observe one now

I: Yes, that's true

S: And again, another thing I want to find out from you is when you are trying to retain your international student, what do you think about, when it comes to alumni , do you have that at the back of your mind as well

I: Yes, we have but it is not something that is developed very strongly within the department but in the business school we have the alumni but I think that international student will probably, will be more likely to stay in touch, you know with the dept if a proper alumni service was offered, as I said they tend to be much more loyal than UK students a lot of the time.

S: Hence, so it will be very important to establish one

I: Yes, I think so; I think that is probably the next step

S: Considering the aim and rational behind my research is there anything else you think you need to have probably mentioned to me. Considering the aim, maybe I have not asked you but you think it is also relevant. Take a minute to think

I: Yes, I think that the staff can get a lot out of dealing with international student not just the students but the staff think the other way round that, also a lot of international student show more respect than UK students a lot of the time, respect the work that the dept is trying to do for them and don't look at it as am paying for this service and therefore I demand this. The international students are more likely to listen to a member of staff and pay them due respect. I think member of staffs don't probably necessarily understand the background of where some of these people / students have come from. I have travel extensively in the south east Asia so I understand a little bit about the culture there but no so in Africa so I don't understand the culture in Africa so I think there should be more cultural training for staff so that they understand the nature of the student body. I also think that staff should be more understanding of the student work so if a student's English is not quite as good as a UK student then they should not necessarily be marked down as long as they understand the principle of what the student is saying so I think there is much work to be done on understanding the assessment of international student as well. I think that is also an area that you would often hear people saying this student writes very good or whatever and part of that is because those students have not been given the opportunity to learn the English language or understand the culture or nature of an assessment or we have not explained it perhaps as well to them or because they have not had the same educational background as UK students I think can be quite difficult sometimes for international students to understand what the word "discuss" means and it just means write everything you know about it or just learn by wrote. Some international student when answering a question, they just love to learn it by wrote and just turn it out and us odd to spend a little more time in explaining the nature of what that assignment actually means. We usually give them assignment B but maybe we should go the next step in talking to them. I was out in Singapore in November and I have not taught for a long time but it was a particular class in Singapore and there was this Chinese student and a local student only two students in the class and the Chinese student understood the nature of the assignment better than the Singaporean but the Singaporean , her first language was English so you would expect it to be the other way round so you can't make judgement that are not accurate unless you are very careful or the way you are assessing people, assessing the capabilities so maybe we need to get to know our international students more on an individual basis and collect together everyone's knowledge if you like of international students and disseminate that out more into the dept

S: And for business school, everyone keeps saying business school, I could understand what the business school is, I have read lots of literature, asked so many questions about it, how will you be able to differentiate the business school from other school

I: this business school is quite unique; one of the unique things is that we recruit professional qualified people.

Interview Transcript Sample with Business School Manager

T- Thank you very much for your time, can I just know your name please?

E- Yeah, my name is XXXXXX

T- You want to tell me your position

E- Associate Dean International for College of Business and Law at XXXXXXXXX

T- Already, we are trying to see what international students are doing especially both postgraduate and undergraduate international students. Can you please tell me the definition of what International student means by the university?

E-There are a few definitions which has changed over the years, we used to look at it from purely these perspective : so that EU and home countries paid one fees but might be different for different countries whereas International students are students outside the EU and UK. In recent times, that differentiator is not used because home fees and EU fees have grown so much but a number of us thought that really we shouldn't be thinking International/Home/EU. We should probably be thinking more on the lines of, we have home students which have certain rules around that the government imposes and have EU students who can be quite different and in different systems to our home students and then we have International Students again who are actually different depending on the continent they come from, so I think just looking at things from a fee perspective which is the way it used to be is a little bit naïve. You should be looking at the market you are interested in and getting to know the nature of the market and the way you would if it were a global company really.

T- That's interesting, and ehmm what do these international students talking about international student, like you are not seeing them from just a fee perspective, I will like you to throw more light on the "continent" thing you talked about earlier

E-Because home students are very difficult to get to send anywhere, they are to a disadvantage if they were going to /hope to work for a global organisation or an import/export company, so because UK students won't go away and they really wont , I have done everything in my career to try and build up numbers, and its nearly impossible, they always find a reason why the third year they don't want to go because they have got a house they want to stay or they got the friends (boyfriends or girlfriends) and it's just not a part of the culture, they need some exposure and so the next best thing is to bring International students in and for them to get to understand the way the rest of the world sees things and then they get to appreciate that ……EU got a student from Taiwan who is managing in a certain language till he……. won't get good grades next year in the classroom. Do you not feel that if you and this person from Taiwan went to BPP or Tesco for a job which is already UK registered, they aint gonna look at this person with slightly more interest because …….a lot of Tescos are expanding in Taiwan, this person can go there as well as work in the UK so it is beneficial for Home Students to have International students and probably, more so to have International students because they don't naturally want to travel. They will travel on holiday but they won't go and do a year in xy or whatever.. Even when they come to uni ,if they come with the idea in my experience, anything between 30-50% fall out and stay at home.

T- These international students (I have seen that they) really mean a lot, not just to the university but to their colleagues /student who are home students. What do they (International students) mean to your business school?

E- It gives a much better vision of what the world of business is like, because If you have got people from all different cultures, with all different experiences and expectations working in groups together, practicing projects together and having to study together in the same room, going out with each other in the evening, it's just opens up new dimensions to what being a student is.

T- These people who actually bring in/help to get this better vision of what the business world is like, their patronage/ not actually patronising your business school, why do you actually consider it other than the (you have mentioned a few), why did you consider them?

E- Because we can't live in a vacuum, nobody here who wants to be a manager can hope to do a reasonable job in the longer term if they haven't got some international perspective, because even if you don't go and trade international yourself, you are going to be competing here with international companies who are exporting to here or importing from here, you don't know whether the part of your …(one of my sons friend did engineering, his first job, he was sent to Nigeria because he works for cussons to look at/ the one of the junior managers in one of the big plants that makes soaps/soap products. He said it completely changed his attitude, because he saw a different kind of manufacturing, in a different culture. The problems they had there is not the problems we have here, it just sure you are a much more rounded person….and having appreciation (you can't manage everyone the same way), most students I think, who don't appreciate International culture and differences, they are not really going to go far, even if they want to operate for even a national company never mind a global one.

T-How do you recruit and attract International students?

E-There are a whole lots of different ways , some or probably the best way is through reputation, then we have some very healthy alumni's in places like Hong Kong, China, Nigeria, and few parts of United Emirates where we are well known for built environment, we obviously have students in India, because we have had Indian students coming to XXXXX for a long time, again Chinese students because of the Manchester base because it's got an indigenous and Chinese population. So we have got word of mouth, we use the alumni, we use the agents, we go to fairs and exhibitions, and we probably have some of the most generous bursaries available to international students.

T- How do you enhance your patronage?

E- We all look here in recession than before the reccession, one of the things that international students love is accommodation. On site especially in the first year. Because our home students live at home, on campus, we got more accommodation than we need now whereas in the past, we have always been short of accommodation while students in the UK used to come from all over because of that less of ability which is not ……for the home students but it allows for ..…. if I got a parent who got a young either Chinese or indian or African or Arab student…we can guarantee accommodation in the first year and how to get to the lectures without actually having to go off campus , security is 24/7, that quite important thing in the central of the city. I think that one of the differentiators that XXXXX has, that for a young student who is 18, they can be very secure in the first year (and that reduces things like home sickness because you will know the people you are living with in the same accommodation).

T- You just used the word “differentiator” (synonymous when it comes to the XXXXXXX). When did you start using the word differentiator? That means there is something you guys do or you guys don’t do, when you guys actually started using this kind of approach.

E- I think it has always been around years ago, because XXXXX grew up out of the same kinds of University and at the same time such as Aston, Cranfield, they all started as very healthy Engineering/technical, which is why we have got the built environment, a lot of engineering, I think it all between 3- 5 years ago where somebody said Manchester has got 36,000 students and does everything, MMU has got 36,000 students and those things are aiming … by Manchester…………it will not have a medical school but it will have things that support Medicine. At that time, I think that the people who were governing XXXXX started thinking, hold on, we are 22,000 and the question is- do we want 36,000? And the answer is probably No. Because 22,000 is actually a lot of students, if that’s the case , how do we make sure that in our gap, we have our own personality and of course if you think about porters differentiation. It’s not ……..trying to skew into some obscure area but it’s like….. Let’s look at what we are very strong in and promote those things which fit with it, which is why the business school says one of our biggest things is digital business, because we have got to support media and media studies and digital. So you actually tell a story when you have thought about what u want to be, not just bumping along.

T- So you do what you are good at, and you do what you are known for. Q- International students, how do they contribute to the university generally?

E- Throughout the university, u want to have International flavour and the big thing you also want to do is to try and have many different countries as you can .So when china first opened this kind of market, certain institutions said we can take 30% of Chinese students not realising that if they were all in the business school, then you are going to have at least half of students being from china and they have come because they don’t want to be in china, they want to be in a different environment so one of the things you have to guarantee 4 international students is u know your market , u don’t let any market dominate and u keep adding new market so u get balance of students from all over the world. So sometimes, it’s difficult on certain courses eg oil and gas because the people who do oil and gas engineering are from oil countries (they are not going to come from non-oil). But if u monitor your international recruitment across the whole university, there will be enough students to mix with each other even if you do have the old courses which people will be dominated by what their countries specific will like(community-base require). We haven’t got courses completely dominated by UK students or one particular international. We have got a nice spread across all the different ones.

T- Financially, do they also contribute a lot, (u didn’t say anything about fees)

E- They have always contributed a lot, but we know home students have to contribute 9,000 a year and they could argue that they don’t use half the facilities anymore because all of them live at home, so they are not using as many things on campus, but my view is… to be quite honest. The benefit from international students is 1. They provide us with different culture, I wasn’t very happy with the big difference between home and international students. I can see the economics of it, It did feel a little bit high subsidizing it, now I think it’s more fair, more even.

T- What do you think their impact is like on the UK economy?

E- I would think that the GDP of Manchester benefits between 20 and 30% from having all the students (International and Home) because students have a high disposable income…You look at the amount of bars, restaurant, stadium etc. I don't think Manchester population in itself will be enough to keep all of that going. We do have so many people come in, their parents come, I meet students whether in …or in alumni and normally will come back every 5yrs because the love Manchester and they want to see what it is like. It's like a growing thing, not only the student body growing but growing the whole place as a tourist attraction. Which is quite an important thing for our economy.

T- We will now be looking a bit at the marketing part, what marketing approach do your business school implement to sustain its patronage?

E- We got quite a strong alumni, we have events(some will be locally organised because some places in the alumni is dominated by some little set of people, we organise the events and take them out to places, this last weekend, the dean of the business school had a talk on Saturday night for the alumni who came along. If I felt I am going on a recruitment, I will let the agents know, and let the alumni know and invite them to the trade exhibitions), we organise trade exhibitions, give newsletters out, we try and focus on legal deals we can do per country, we will let the country know or let the alumnis know, so there lots of ways we can keep you past student body involved with the current environment, and it is quite interesting how they want to know what is happening to Manchester,has it changed its shape or if its still the same in (all I am saying is actually important) we are getting better at it than we used to be.

T- For the existing (current) International students, what marketing approach do u use to keep them?

E- Student life really, and the International student groups, and we have specific things for some students e.g.. British college students group are a group which come from china, and we have had a relationship with them for 25years (like 20 of them come to do 2yrs undergraduate). What we try and do is that we have an in-tutor for that group of students so they immediately want to have somebody who knows what the style of British college is all about and they also make sure they meet once a year so they do a buddy. We do things like probably twice a term. Last year, we had a breakfast with them, where we used to think loud, we ask the some of British students who are in Shanghai to speak to the ones here, we do breakfast time and tea time. We ask, what do you like to do. Do you want to look round Manchester city? Manchester united stadium? Do you want to go to the cricket? We organise things that we put up for them, for different groups of students in different ways.

T- From the academic perspective, how do u try to include all these marketing approach, social life, student life, international student group… when it comes to academic, how do you…

E- You have got to realise that certain students may have received a very different experience so if I go back to china traditionally..alot of the content is given/different .And it isn't a thing for a Chinese student to criticise whatever a lecturer says ,that for them is if we have gone into classroom some 10yrs ago, the Chinese student will be very uncomfortable…….part of being in the UK Education system is to try and apply and query what I have said because you might know an organisation where that wouldn't work, that's perfectly ok- that's a learning thing. And that's being aware of the different cultures in the classroom. He is going to be comfortable, mixing them without making any social gaps because in certain cultures, mixing them in a group they will be happier possibly display in certain cultures, they were warned, they don't want to be mixed with certain sex during the…..they might feel more confident in their own little….that allows u to be a bit innovative when…the other things are in business school, we use case studies, examples, exercises, etc you have got to start using the once that everyone recognises and if u are always using british rail…..its not cool

T-why did your organisation actually decide to do this?

E- Just because it is probably the best. I think it's the best across England, it's the best blue print for teaching people because if you think about when education started, with the Greeks and romans they did see the benefits of mixing different cultures even though they might be…. The more ideas u can get from different areas, u get a much healthier learning environment.

T- Who are those responsible for the implementation of these approaches?

E- Everybody (we have the business school , we fill the gap for both national and international recruitment and collaboration, also have 20 staff helping us to go and look after certain students…helping us present and provide lunch for , go on a visit and that's just academics. I have a few people who have the norm and substantive role (it's just a small part of the job) but some people do these things and it's not their job, the international community is as important as the home community and part of the job of being a lecturer is to welcome them based on the International student.

T-So what it means is that internally u guys have been able to market it so everybody understands what it means to the university? Q- How do you implement these approaches? As in is it centralised? Like it has to be since u said everybody is involved? As in how do you do it?

E-We believe in meetings(International on every agenda), we have unit meetings , so we have the meeting economics , finance, and accounting, our unit hold the meetings hold once a month, it could be the time given to new international development, feedback from international students as well as home students, we encourage international students as well as home students to be on such student commitees as to another perspective as to what's bothering them or what could improve their lives. It's trying to make it permeat everything u do.

T- For the staff/ student committee….Q- what does it cost your organisation to do all of this, carry everybody along…u know from the marketing management perspective, I know to do this with employees is going to be actually expensive.

E- It's the cost of perspective, it's the same, we should be doing it for all students, for the fees, that's what we are there for, I am not bothered whether they are international /EU or home students, you have come in here to have a wealth of experience, and hopefully because of where we are we are not dealing with London prices, because Manchester is very accommodating , we can give u a really good student experience with the staff not differentiating whether international or Home, with the staff just saying this is a student, we want you to have a really good experience, who has got an interesting global and lets just expand the global matter, let's get them to talk to each other, talk to us, do things as a …that really it, so I won't classify it separately, it's all part of d same thing.

T- How do you develop dis approaches?

E- The more you listen to students, the more you hear what their issues are, and then you try and fit that into everything- their curriculum, academic activities, social activities, life style. Having specialised in the areas …and I am luckier because I go get to places, have people on ground…. because of tier 4 or whatever.. we have just got to fill that vacuum… we discuss that then we meet possibly once in 4-5weeks and that goes down to unit and it gets permeated down, so they won't be issue, hopefully that people are not aware of, if there's been an issue xyz, you need to include that…..

T- What do you think is the impact of this approaches to international students?

E- I hope they feel wanted…because that's really what it is about, them feeling comfortable, them getting a different experience, getting to appreciate a different culture, getting exposed to other cultures while they are here and the best for me will be have a great time, if I have got a son or daughter or a brother or a sister, I will recommend them, and keep in touch with us after they have left.

T- What do you think is the impact so far? Have there actually been increasing patronage? And did the ones you have on ground really stay?

E- Yeah! This year (what was probably called a difficult year) we had a really healthy recruitment…we have been looking at retention, for us, it's actually a positive thing. But it's trying to watch students…first few weeks or first few months, so the more u can actually solve any issues on ground very quickly, however you do it eg it could be an issue like : can we have some more …lecture notes? The more u can solve the problem; it has an impact on your retention.

T- That means how you actually listen and recover the services

E- That's building the day to day operations and that means you have got some flexibility it all that somebody telling me…and the negotiation …

T- Do you want to talk about the "Negotiation" point?

E- That is why we want students to be reps/ to ask and to tell us a lot, because we know that there is a student union, and we know students can go to the student union which is very formal, but if somebody can just come to us to say…I am not happy with a particular lecture style, we could talk to the staffs, people might say we will like to have hand-outs. But if you talk to me, I could organise hand-outs, or students say to me that they like workbooks, and then we put work books as opposed to blackboards. It is just listening.

T- It will be ok to say the approach is really working

E- Yeah, it seems to be. Most of the international students who i attend to and say how is it going? They are happy and delighted ……and they ask me how I do dis? How do I do that? I have not had anyone say No…I want to go home, so that's quite nice.

T-In turn how does the impact which sounds positive benefit the business school?

E- Because it's part of our day to day business ….which is cultured customer service (thru customer service) maybe not the way you do a customer transaction. …Because you want to keep them in contact, years after they have gone, you think about the people who have come to XXXXX are now managers, … wont it be easy to go to somebody who has been there to say ….desperate for some placements….and it's just keeping…The undergraduate have the good experience, they say they will recommend it to….

T-In general, how does this benefit the university as a whole?

E- The university is got a good reputation for caring for students (not health care) students can come to staff to say I am worried about this, can I come and see u? When I was in Manchester (you probably have to wait a week or 2 weeks to see even your personal tutor. Whereas here, we are doing …to keep our research profile up. Here, there is more time given to students in most of everything and I include academic work. By doing that u are sending up a particular message that's why I have never had a bad feedback in the international student in surveys/colleges/depts.

T- The word "student retention" do you actually look at it as a part of your agenda?

E- Yeah! Recruitment, retention and reputation…etc are all important.

T- So when it comes to international students, they are also very Important. Is there anything else that you think is probably important/essential?

E- I think we have probably talked about most things, but my biggest thing is, I actually think there's an ethic when it comes to actually recruiting old students…and they say – Is XXXXX best for me? I work for XXXXX, I am going to give them a real answer… If somebody comes to me to say I live in a tiny little village in caroli in India and am not used to big cities, I don't know many people…meeting many people…. Equally if students comes to me to say, I can get a little help on teaching, I say yeah…quite a lot of parents will say to me, we want them to have more teaching on…and then they can do a postcard where…choices. It's just being honest.

T- Thank u very much; I really do appreciate your time

E it's an interesting piece.

T- Maybe before the end of this if I need your help, or documents, I could contact you. Thank u so much.

Appendix 7. Showing Sample of Actual Interview Questions

How do you define international students? / Who is an international student?

What do international students mean to your business school?

Why do you consider their patronage? / How do international students impact your business school?

How do you attract and recruit international students? /How do you enhance their patronage?

How do they impact the business school?

How do they contribute to the University?

Do they have any impact on the UK economy?

What marketing approach do you implement to sustain their patronage?

Why do your organisation utilise this approach (es)?

Who is/are responsible for the implementation of these approaches?

How do you implement these approaches?

What does it cost your organisation to implement these approaches?

How do you develop on these approaches?

What is the impact of these approaches on international students?

How do these impacts benefit the business school?

Why is this important to the business school?

How does this benefit the University as a whole?

Appendix 8: Showing Summary of Findings.

Table 5.1: Showing Definition of International Students.

Theme:	**Definition of International Students**		
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. International students are students from Non-EU countries ii. International students are students who need to be sponsored by a host UK University to enable them get a study visa iii. Internationals students are students whose fees are not capped hence are charged higher than home students iv. International students are students who cannot access grants available to the University.	**Non-EU**	• Higher tuition fees • No Grants • Sponsored • Study Visa
Academic Staff	i. International students are students who do not have a UK academic background experience ii. International students are students with different academic background iii. International students are students who English is not their first language iv. International students are students from outside the EU that need to be sponsored to get a study visa.	**Non-UK**	• Non-English speaking • Non-UK Academic experience • Non-UK Academic background

		Non-EU	• Higher tuition fees • No Grants • Study Visa
International Students	i. International students are students from outside the UK with non-UK academic experience ii. International students are students from outside the EU states iii. International students are students who are charged higher tuition fees iv. International students are students who are sponsored by the host University in getting a study visa and ensuring you adhere to attendance v. International students are students who are required to work not more than twenty hours at term-time.	**Non-UK**	• Non-English Speaking • Non-UK academic experience • Finance
		Non-EU	• Sponsored • Work Limitations • Attendance Monitoring/ Compliance • Study Visa • Higher Fees

			• Finance

Summary:

International students are defined as students from Non-EU countries who are sponsored by a host University to get a study visas to enable them study in the UK. In most cases international students are charged higher fees as compared to their EU student counterparts. International students are defined by academics as students who are Non-EU with Non-UK academic experience where in most cases English happens not to be their first language. This differentiates the definition of academic staff from their managers. International students define themselves in terms of students who need to adhere to all visa regulations which include attendance monitoring and working hour's limitations.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- Non-EU students
- Students who require study visas
- Students who are charged higher fees

Key Differences:

- Student with Non-UK academic experience was also theme of academics in addition to Non-UK theme identified by managers
- Student without English language as first language

Table 5.2: Elements of International Students Contribution to Business Schools

Theme:	**International Students Contribution to Business Schools**		
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. International students presence provides a multicultural environment which is suitable for an international Business School ii. International students are a source of revenue to the Business Schools iii. International students provide growth and development opportunities for Business Schools iv. International students provide an enhanced curriculum for the Business Schools.	**Multicultural**	• Different cultures • Integration • Ethnic background • Diversity • Shared heritage • Multi-Racial environment • Language
		Revenue	• Uncapped tuition fees • Other related fees • Governments and research funding

		Enhanced Curriculum	• International case studies • International experiences of students • Robust debate • Different perspectives • Global examples
		Development and Growth	• Internationalisation • Key partnerships • Satellite campuses • Global presence

Academic Staff	i. International students studying in the Business Schools makes the Business School environment multicultural ii. International students bring in value to the Business Schools especially in the classroom and the Business School in general iii. International students in the Business Schools brings about an enhanced curriculum iv. International students contribute revenue to the Business School.		**Multicultural**	• Different cultures • Integration • Diversity • Multi-Racial environment • Language
			Value	• Enthusiasm and passion shown by students • Motivation for other students • Acknowledging importance • Quest for knowledge • Vibrant classroom

			Enhanced Curriculum	• International case studies • Global examples • International experiences • Different perspective • Robust debate
			Funding	• Tuition fees • Other fees attributed to other aspects of the programme • Fees from grants • Government and research funding.
International Students	i. The Business School environment becomes multicultural as a result of the presence of international students ii. International students brings in revenue to the Business School iii. International students bring about a contemporary curriculum.		**Multicultural**	• Cultural • Diversity • Global perspective
			Revenue	

				• Tuition fees • Other fees attributed to other aspects of the programme
			Enhanced curriculum	• Global examples • International experiences • Different perspective • Robust debate • International case studies

Summary:

The contributions of international students identified by the management staff and academic staff include mainly contributing to a multicultural environment, enhancing curriculum, and generating revenue. The Management staff tend to identify other contributions which include development and growth. In comparison the academic staff include value as an element international student contributes to the Business Schools.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- Creating a Multicultural environment
- Source of revenue
- Enhanced curriculum

Key Differences:

- Development and growth
- Creating value for Business School students

Table 5.3. Contribution of International Students to the City, Region and the UK

Theme:	**Contribution of International Students to the City, Region and the UK**		
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. International students contribute financially to the Greater Manchester area, the Northwest Region and the UK in general ii. International students bring in skills, knowledge, talent manpower and other resources which enhance development in the city, region and country in general iii. International students' presence brings about an inclusive society through cultural exchange iv. International students' presence in the UK provides the opportunity for the citizens and governments of the host country to be able to establish international relationships with overseas countries.	**Financial**	• Tuition fees and other related fees • Rents • Transportation cost • Shopping • Tourism • Living expenses
		Resource Development	• Talents • Skills • Know-how

		Cultural Exchange	• Diversity • Social inclusion • Shared heritage • Other food • Other languages • Other religions
		International Relationships	• International networking • Collaborations • Partnerships • Alliances
Academic Staff	i. International students bring in so much revenue into Manchester, the region and the country ii. International students studying in the UK Business School helps the City, region and the country's reputation in terms of its education profile as a global competitor iii. International students' presence enhances the cultural exchange in Greater Manchester, North-West region and the UK in general which impacts the country positively in diverse ways.	**Revenue**	• Tuition Fees and other fees • Living expenses • Rents • Transportation • Tourism • Subsistence spending

		Academic Reputation	• Global brand • International product • Strong profile
		Cultural Exchange	• Diversity • Social inclusion • Shared heritage • Other food • Other languages • Other religions • Cultural integration

International Students	The international students were not asked these questions considering the fact that this was not to be determined by them as they were not directly affected.
Summary: The participants (management staff and academic staff) identified financial contributions, development, cultural exchange, international relationship, and academic reputation of the UK education as the main contributions of International students to the Greater Manchester area, North-West region and the UK in general. The management staff tends to identify other contributions which include resource development and international partnerships which the city, region and country enjoy and which evolve as a result of international students' presence. In comparison the Academic staff included the enhanced academic reputation of the UK HEI as a global brand as a key contribution international students make to the university, region and country. **Key Similarities Amongst Participants:** • Financial contributions • Cultural exchange	

Key Differences:

- Academic reputation
- International relationships

Resource development

Table 5.4. How international Students are Attracted and Recruited

Theme:	**How international Students are Attracted and Recruited**		
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. Recruitment of international students is done mainly through international offices and international recruitment agents ii. Country visits and international recruitment fairs overseas are used to attract and recruit international students	**International Office/Agents**	• Oversea staff • Partnerships • Agents
	iii. Reputation and positive word of mouth communication is another channel through which international students are attracted and recruited iv. The use of social media and other electronic platforms like advertisements and news websites are used to attract and recruit international students.	**International Recruitment Fairs/Country Visits**	• Fairs • Workshops • Exhibitions • British council seminars • Exchange universities • Oversea Alumni events • Oversea trip • Oversea business

		Reputation/Positive word of mouth communication	• Suggestions/advice from friends • Suggestions/advice from family members • Other loyal international students • League tables
		Social media/E-platform Promotions	• Facebook • Twitter • YouTube • LinkedIn • Blogs • Websites

Summary:

The participants (management staff) identified the use of international office, recruitment fairs, country visits, social media, referrals from positive word of mouth communication from friends and families, and the Business School position in the league tables as the main ways of attracting and recruiting international students. League table positions were mainly stressed by respondents from Universities who are well positioned in the league table. While in comparison Universities who tend not to be well positioned on the league table focus their efforts on attracting and recruiting international students through international offices and international agents.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- International Offices

- Social media promotions

Key Differences:

- Reputation/League table position

Table 5.5. Marketing approaches used by Business Schools in sustaining international students' patronage

Theme: Marketing approaches used by Business Schools in sustaining international students' patronage			
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. Relationship marketing approach with emphasis on a mutually beneficial relationship as foundation for sustaining international student patronage ii. Ensuring that the relationship marketing approach consist of effective and efficient communication between the Business School and international students iii. Using CRM as a tool for establishing the relationship marketing approach iv. Differentiation and adequate support as a tool to compliment the relationship marketing approach v. Feedbacks and after-sales as a mandatory element in adopting the approach.	**Relationship marketing**	• Good relationship • Mutually beneficial relationship • Long-term • Customer Relationship Management (CRM) • Effective and efficient communication • Adequate information • After-sales services • Unique services and regular reviews of feedbacks • Trust • Scholarship • Loyalty discounts • Personal tutor

		Differentiation and Support	• Career support • Accommodation • Counselling support • Disability support services • University language centre • Visa Support
Academic Staff	i. Business Schools use marketing approaches to sustain international student patronage. ii. Aspects of the relationship marketing concept are employed by Business Schools to enhance international students' patronage.	**Relationship marketing**	• Good relationship • Effective and efficient communication • Adequate information • Long-term • Trust • One-to-one services and

	iii. Marketing activities of Business Schools tend to fall within the spectrum of relationship marketing. iv. Relationship marketing concepts which include efficient and effective communication, one-to-one support, detailed feedback and guidance, and pleasant student experience.		regular reviews of feedbacks • Personal tutor support
International Students	The international students were exempted at this stage as they were not involved in developing or implementing these approaches.		
Summary: The respondents (management staff and academic staff) stated that Business Schools utilise marketing concepts in ensuring the maintenance of international student patronage. They all emphasised the importance of international students patronage and stressed that keeping international students requires the application of several marketing concepts including digital marketing, e-marketing etc. The management staff did however emphasise that service and relationship marketing concepts were the main approach towards international student retention but identified differentiation and support as key part of the approach. **Key Similarity Amongst Participants:** • Relationship marketing **Key Difference:** • Differentiation/Support			

Table 5.6. Rationale for using specific marketing approaches

Theme: Rationale for using Relationship marketing			
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. Student retention is the primary reason Business Schools utilise RM concept ii. Relationship marketing is a tool used for delivering duty of care to international students which will help support and enhance their student experience iii. Relationship marketing is adopted to create a platform for collaboration between international students and the Business School iv. Relationship marketing is used as a tool to enhance international student loyalty to the Business School v. Relationship marketing is employed by Business Schools to help in improving their reputation and profile.	**Retention**	• Reduce drop-out rate • Increase graduation rate • Timely graduation • Increase in student performance • Increase in grades
		Positive Student experience	• Student happiness • Student satisfaction • Student support • Quality • Interaction • Duty of care

		Value exchange	• Student union • Partnership • Networking
		Customer Loyalty	• Life time value • Ongoing relationship with students and their families • Alumni • Referrals through positive word of mouth communication

		Reputation	• Brand • Student survey ratings • League tables
Academic Staff	i. Student retention is the primary reason Business Schools utilise relationship marketing concepts ii. Relationship marketing is a tool used for delivering pastoral care that will help meet students expectations and help improve student performance and experience iii. Relationship marketing is adopted to create a platform for collaboration and value exchange between international students and the Business School. iv. Relationship marketing is used as a tool to enhance international student loyalty to the Business Schools.	**Retention**	• Low attrition rate • Increase graduation rate • Timely graduation • Grade improvements
			• Student happiness • Student satisfaction • Student support • Timely Feedbacks • Quality • Student engagement • Pastoral care

		Positive Student experience	
		Value exchange	• Collaborate • Cooperation • Co-creation • Partnerships
		Customer loyalty	• Life time value • Ongoing relationship between students and the Business Schools • Conversion (Repeat buying) • Referrals through positive word of mouth

International Students	The international students were exempted at this stage as they were not involved in the decision making process of developing or implementing these marketing approaches.

Summary:

The participants (management staff and academic staff) identified retention, positive student experience, value exchange, and customer loyalty as the key rationales for adopting the RM approach. The management staff included improving the reputation of the Business School as another core reason for adopting the RM approach. This was not in line with the view of the academic staff who suggested that the reputation of the Business School was not their primary concern. The academic staff definition of value exchange also tends to differ from that of management staff. Management staff described value exchange mainly as a collaboration platform that will exist between international students and the Business School. In comparison, academic staff describes value exchange as that value that is developed and co-created by the students and academic staff in and outside the classroom towards the learning goal.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- Retention

  Positive Student experience

  Value exchange

  Customer loyalty

Key Differences:

- Reputation/League table position

Table 5.7. Units and staff responsible for the implementation of the Relationship Marketing approach

Theme: Units and staff responsible for the implementation of the Relationship Marketing approach			
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. They are units responsible for developing relationship marketing policies within the Business Schools ii. The implementation of the relationship marketing concept is a responsibility of every member of staff in the Business School iii. The implementation of relationship marketing concepts are not explicitly a part of the job roles but it is implied in all roles iv. The Business School usually act as a starting point for the implementation of RM on international students.	**Central**	• Vice chancellor • Other top academic staff • Non-academic staff
		Colleges	• Units • Faculties
		School	• Dean • Associate deans • Tutors and non-academic staff

Academic Staff	i. The unit responsible for relationship marketing concepts cuts across every section of the university though the school as a unit is more effective ii. The relationship marketing policies as it relates to the school is our primary responsibility iii. Senior management develops the relationship marketing policies iv. The relationship marketing strategies are also implemented and monitored by the senior management staff in the Business Schools.	**Central**	• Vice chancellor • Other top academic staff • Non-academic staff
		Schools	• Dean • Associate deans • Tutors and non-academic staff
International Students	The international students were not asked because they were not involved in the development and implementation of the relationship marketing policies.		

Summary:

The participants (management staff and academic staff) stated that the implementation of relationship marketing is a responsibility of every member of staff of the Business School though the policies are developed and monitored by the management staff. The top management staff in the central administration, the colleges and schools were identified as the staff in these core units responsible for the development of policies. The academic staff acknowledged the management staff in the Business Schools as the people responsible for developing and monitoring relationship building on the academic side. The participants said that in only a few instances units within the school treat international students differently, as most of these relationship building policies also apply to home students. Most of the Business Schools monitor their own policies except for Business School A where monitoring occurred at a central level.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- All staff are involved in implementation

  The management staff develop, implement and monitor the policies

Key Differences:

- The management staff considers the Central policy before developing the schools policy.

Table 5.8. Ways of implementing the Relationship Marketing Approach

Theme: Ways of implementing the Relationship Marketing Approach			
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. The marketing department is mainly responsible for developing strategies that aligns with the overall marketing strategy ii. Using student support as a means to build relationship with international students iii. Considering other measures that can help provide a platform for dialogue between international students and the Business Schools.	**Marketing Strategy**	• Marketing departments • Marketing communications • Loyalty discounts • International bursaries • Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

		Student Support	• Engagement • Placements • Communication • Alliances with overseas consulates • Scholarships • Bursaries • Career support • Class delivery
		Other channels	• Student union • Student representatives • class representatives • Negotiation • Flexibility • Facilities • Estates • Events • Alumni • Oversea partnership

Academic Staff	i. Customer Relationship Management identified as one of the most obvious way of implementing the RM approach ii. Class delivery in terms of the before-and-after stage is a way of implementing relationship marketing on international students iii. Pastoral care as a way of implementing relationship marketing concept for students which can come in a form of student support and dialogue.	**Class Delivery**	• Student engagement • Peer-peer learning • Tutor • VLE • Case studies • Curriculum Engagement • Student support • Placements • Communication

		Student Support	• Student life • Career support • Visas advice • Health and wellbeing • Financial support • Scholarship and bursaries
		Staff-Student Committee	• Student union • Student representatives • Class representatives • Negotiation • Flexibility
International Students	The international students did not participate in this section as they were not directly involved in ways of implementing the relationship marketing approach. Hence having limited knowledge of it.		

Summary:

The participants (management staff and academic staff) identified student support as a way of implementing relationship marketing. They also identified the communication and marketing aspects of CRM as a tool used by the School to implement relationship marketing concept. The management staff identified other channels of implementing the RM approach for example; estates, overseas partnership, events and facilities etc. as ways of implementing the relationship marketing concept. The academic staff identified class delivery as their way of implementing the relationship marketing approach. The academic staff are more familiar with the class delivery medium. Examples which include student engagement, effective communication, timely feedback, and drop in sessions etc. were all identified as ways they implement the relationship marketing concept.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- CRM

  Loyalty discounts

  Student support

  Two way effective communication

  Student engagement

  International bursary

Key Differences:

- The management staff identified the marketing department as the key way

  The academic staff identified class delivery as the core and most effective way.

Table 5.9. Cost of implementing the Relationship Marketing Approach

Theme: Cost of implementing the Relationship Marketing Approach			
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. Time allocated to developing and implementing the relationship marketing concept can be described as the main cost ii. The money set aside to ensure that the desirable product comes out of the relationship marketing process is also a cost.	**Time**	• Training period • Time with students • Time in reviewing feedbacks • Time for setting meetings and policies that deal directly with international students

		Funds	• Cost associated with training • Investment in technology • Investment in facilities and estates • Additional salaries for more staff to meet specific international student needs • Cost associated with travel
Academic Staff	i. The additional time set out to produce a pleasant student experience is a major cost that can be related to the relationship marketing concept ii. Additional monies allocated to help develop, implement and monitor the relationship marketing concept.	**Time**	• Time spent to attend and participate in trainings • Extra time outside the drop-in-sessions spent with students • Additional time spent on reviewing and providing feedback

		Funds	• Cost associated with training of staff • Additional staff salaries from overtime

International Students	International students did not participate in this section of the study as they were not involved in the implementation and development of relationship marketing policies. Hence they cannot determine the cost of implementing the relationship marketing approach.		

Summary:

The participants (management staff and academic staff) identified time and funds as the key costs of implementing ta relationship marketing approach. They however stressed that the benefits outweighs the cost of practising the relationship marketing approach.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- Time associated with development and implementation of these policies

Key Differences:

- Investments on facilities, technologies, travel and trainings etc.

Table 5.10. Sustaining and Developing the Relationship Marketing (RM) Approach

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Theme: Sustaining and Developing the Relationship Marketing (RM) Approach</td></tr>
<tr><td>Respondents</td><td>Summary of Themes/Responses</td><td>Themes</td><td>Sub-Themes</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Management</td><td rowspan="3">i. Student engagement is the key to the sustenance and development of the relationship marketing approach

ii. Staff engagement is another way of sustaining and developing the relationship marketing approach

iii. Continuous investment in facilities, technologies and new programmes

iv. Seeking development through other which involves partnering with other stakeholders, partnership with embassies, agents, Alumni groups and local community etc.</td><td>Student Engagement</td><td>• Student representatives
• Student unions
• International student groups
• Staff-Student forums</td></tr>
<tr><td>Staff Engagement</td><td>• Staff meetings/consultations
• Staff union
• Professional support/development</td></tr>
<tr><td>Continuous Investment</td><td>• New technology
• Facilities
• Programmes
• Step change strategy (monitoring evaluating, reviewing and feedback).</td></tr>
</table>

		Other Channels	• Partnering with embassies • Local community • Engaging other stakeholders e.g. international agents, families of international students and Alumni etc.
Academic Staff	i. Student engagement which will involve an effective two way communication with proper review and taking action on feedbacks is a way to sustain and develop the RM approach. ii. Continuous investment in staff development, and facilities that will enhance the international student experience.	**Student Engagement**	• Student representatives • Module evaluation • NSS reports • Staff-student consultations
		Continuous Investment	• Staff development • Investing in technology • Investing in facilities
International Students	International students did not participate at this stage since they were not involved in the maintenance and development of the RM approach.		

Summary:

The respondents (management staff and academic staff) stated that investment is key to the development and maintenance of the relationship marketing concept. They also identified student engagement as also key to the development and maintenance of the relationship marketing concept, stressing that the student should be the focus of the development and maintenance policies of the relationship marketing approach and as a result their opinion should be considered at every contact point. The management staff identified staff engagement, partnering and engaging other stakeholders as a way of improving international student experience. The academic staff on their part stated that professional development of academic staff was essential in meeting the needs of international students. They gave examples of learning new languages or at least learning a little about curriculums of other countries as being essential to engage international students.

Key Similarity Amongst Participants:

- Continuous investment

  Student engagement

Key Difference:

- Differentiation/Support

Table 5.11. Impact of the Relationship Marketing (RM) approach on international student retention

Theme: Impact of the Relationship Marketing (RM) approach on international student retention			
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	i. Completion rate of International students after enrolment to the graduating stage has also grown significantly across Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes ii. The conversion rate of international students from an undergraduate programme onto a Master's programme and postgraduate to Doctorate degree has grown significantly iii. The performance rate of International students tends to improve on every semester/session iv. The Alumni participation of International students has also been on the increase and more international students after graduation now participate in Alumni events and some even have Alumni groups overseas	**Completion**	• Graduating within stipulated time • Completing the required modules and years allocated for the particular degree • Enrolment to graduation stage.

	v. Some International students who successfully graduated after their programme take employment with the Business School some now work overseas as representatives of the Business School.	**Conversion**	• From one programme of study to another discipline after completion • From Undergraduate to Postgraduate after completion of former • From Postgraduate to Doctorate degree after completion of former
		Performance	• More distinction and 1st class • More success rate by semester/yearly

		Alumni	• More Alumni members • More Alumni chapters • International groups/societies
		Employment	• Placement with Business School • Taking jobs within the Business School • Taking overseas role in country/continent • Partnering opportunities.
Academic Staff	i. Having a particular group of international student cohorts in a long semester module ii. Improvement in the performance rate of International students on every semester/session	**Same group**	• Same cohorts across semester • Long module • Same cohorts across levels

	iii. More class contributions, engagement and robust debate that brings value to the class and helps to achieve learning goals iv. Completion rate of International students after enrolment to the graduating stage has also grown significantly across Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes v. The conversion rate of international students from an undergraduate programme to Master's programme and postgraduate degree to Doctorate degree has grown significantly.	**Performance**	• Module goal achieved • More distinction and 1st class • More success rate by semester/yearly
		Class delivery/Attendance	• More engaging session • Learning goals achieved • Learning outcomes achieved

		Completion	• Graduating within stipulated time • Completing the required modules and years allocated for the particular degree • Enrolment to graduation stage.
		Conversion	• From one programme of study to another discipline after completion • From Undergraduate to Postgraduate after completion of former • From Postgraduate to Doctorate degree after completion of former

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">International Students</td><td rowspan="3">i. Retention is enhanced by the RM approach practised on international students

ii. Relationship Marketing is not the only factor for retention of international students

iii. Most of the RM approach seem to be ineffective

iv. Retention rate are enhanced by other factors</td><td>Performance</td><td>• Module goal achieved
• More distinction and 1st class
• More success rate by semester/yearly</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Conversion</td><td>• From one programme of study to another discipline after completion
• From Undergraduate to Postgraduate after completion of former
• From Postgraduate to Doctorate degree after completion of former</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Graduating within stipulated time
• Completing the required modules and years allocated for the particular degree
• Enrolment to graduation stage.</td></tr>
</table>

		Completion	
		Attendance	• More engaging session • Learning goals achieved • Learning outcomes achieved

Summary:

The respondents all agreed that the relationship marketing approach implemented by their Business School impacts positively on International students' retention. While positing their views, all respondents described retention differently, though all groups had similar definitions which include completion, performance and conversion. They were some other distinct themes which emerged from all group (management staff, academic staff and International students) this include alumni, employment, and attendance. These definitions were as a result of the different objectives of the diverse groups. Although they are all stakeholders of the Business Schools, they all have goals that are particular to their groups.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- Completion

  Conversion

  Performance

  Student support

Key Differences:

- Attendance

  Alumni

  Employment

Table 5.12. Relationship Marketing (RM) approach by Business Schools vs International students

Theme: Relationship Marketing approach by Business Schools vs International students			
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
International Students	i. Aspects of before and after class delivery/academic support is very significant ii. Facilities as an incentives to provide value for international students matters a lot iii. Every point of contact between International students and the Business Schools should be seen as important by the Business Schools iv. Country background and religious background should be considered v. Relationship marketing approach is not a one size fit all for all international students.	**Academic support** **Student support**	• Engagement • Placements • Communication • Bursaries • Career support • Class delivery • English Language support • Course advisers

		Facilities/Estates	• Buildings • Hostel accommodation • IT Facilities • User-Friendly • Library • Prayer facility

		Marketing strategy	• Marketing departments • Marketing communications • Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
		Other channels	• Student union • Student representatives • class representatives • Negotiation • Flexibility • Facilities • Estates • Events • Alumni • Oversea partnership

Summary:

The respondents (International students) all agreed that there are several aspects of relationship marketing approaches that are significant and achieve an impact on international students' e.g. extra curricula academic support. They also highlighted several aspects that do not have an impact or have a minimal impact in achieving the objectives they are developed for e.g. the effort of trying to apply a standard RM approach on all international students. There were no key differences in the response provided by the various groups of student who participated in the focus group regardless of their university, age or gender. They all identified key aspects of their lives as international students that should be considered while developing and implementing these approaches. For example their cultural background, religion and academic background etc. Most of them argued that this is why most of the ways of implementing relationship marketing concepts employed by the Business School become significant or insignificant.

Key Similarities Amongst Participants:

- Academic support/ Student support

Facilities/Estate Marketing

Marketing strategy

Other channels

Table 5.13. Suggested ways of improving the RM approach to enhance the international student experience

Theme: Suggested ways of improving the RM approach to enhance the international student experience			
Respondents	**Summary of themes/Responses**	**Themes**	**Sub-Themes**
Management	The management staff were exempted from participating as they were not the direct recipients of the approach hence might not be the right persons to suggest ways of improving the approach.		
	i. Academic staff should be included in the development of the RM approach especially as it relates to class delivery ii. The Business School should ensure that only qualified international students are recruited and selected iii. The Business Schools should not over promise international students in desperation of trying to get more application from International students iv. More platforms for receiving feedbacks from international students should be developed and such feedbacks should be duly reviewed and acted upon v. Academic staff and other employees should be well motivated to help their attitudes and behaviours.	**Decision/Policy making**	• Collaboration between management and academic staff • Communication should be two ways between the management and academic staff • Academics should be linked to other contact points.

		Recruitment and Selection	• Recruit qualified international students • English language proficiency in academic writing a must. • Matured and ready for University students

		Authentic Information	• Clarity in information provided to International students • Honest information about the Business Schools • Expectations clearly communicated • Two way communications developed.

		Action Plan	• Feedbacks should be encouraged from students and staff who deal with international students • Review feedback and communicate same to all stakeholders • Review feedback and change were applicable.
International Students	i. Academic staff should understand the dynamics of the cohorts they are teaching as international during class delivery ii. Facilities and estates should be provided to meet international students needs iii. Every point of contact between International students and the Business Schools should be seen as important by the Business Schools and training to understand international student needs should be given to those employees in those departments iv. Cultural and religious background of international students should be	**International group dynamics**	• Academic background • Religious background • International examples • Cultural background

	considered when setting the RM policies v. Importance of International students to the Business Schools should be communicated to all employees.	**Improved Facilities/Estates**	• Buildings • Hostel accommodation • IT Facilities • User-Friendly Library • Prayer facilities
		Point of Contact	• Marketing department • Admissions • Placements • Visa support • Personal tutor • Librarian • School administrator
			• Religious background • Cultural background • Academic background

		Students background	
		Clear communication across the organisation	• Policy of RM communicated across the organisation • Management doing what it states • International students support outside University established.

Summary:

The respondents (academic staff and international students) all agreed that there are several aspects of the RM approach that should be developed upon in order to ensure that the international student experience is enhanced. For example, providing the right information which is clear and concise will help international students understand what is expected from them at every point in time. In addition it will also help those implementing the RM approach understand better ways of achieving set goals. They were however different aspects identified by both groups who participated in the study. The academic staff highlighted examples such as, improving the quality of the student selection and recruitment process, understanding the dynamics of the international students group, encouraging feedbacks and setting action plans after review etc. These differences were as a result of their different interests and perspectives considering their roles and responsibilities.

Key Differences Amongst Participants:

- Decision/Policy making

Recruitment and Selection

Authentic Information

Action Plan

International group dynamics

Improved Facilities/Estates

Point of Contact

Students background

Clear communication across the organisation