Investigation of Factors Influencing Prospective Students to Enroll North Cyprus Higher Education

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Abstract: Education is one of the most important social tools to meet the requirements and needs of any society and becoming a major factor for the innovative thinking and challenge in the postmodern world. The education market continues to evolve: the number of education providers and the variety of services is significantly increasing. Every year the competition gets tougher in the world education markets. Consequently, the problem of recruiting students is getting priority importance for any educational services provider. However, pre-admission marketing aspects pay great importance in the promotion of the education. It is a common strategy and theory in the business world to examine influential factors that affect customers to buy their product. Therefore it will be a powerful tool if the factors used logically by enhancing higher education institutions for differentiation while supporting competitive advantage. This paper will analyze North Cyprus Higher Education Institutions pre-admission period strategies by examining several factors. As education becomes more global, the local Higher Education Institutions in North Cyprus is becoming an essential power for further development. Higher education institutions can enhance their desirability and develop its position through a powerful strategy. The research followed by a descriptive analytical approach and collected data by questionnaire to identify objectives.

Index Terms: Marketing, Higher Education, North Cyprus, TRNC

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education used to be considered a luxury and wasn't as common as it is today. Today going to university has become more of a necessity than a luxury (Zuekle, 2008). The reason for this being that in this time and age the young generation is more ambitious and demand for better- paying jobs to have a relatively luxurious life and being able to get a good career, higher education has more or less become compulsory. Competitiveness and various other components in the higher education world made institutions to be more market-oriented. Institutions used many marketing tools to offer themselves to students. Now is the time for the higher education institutions reputation deemed as a vital factor for students. However many universities reputation or attractiveness is silent and stay deep hidden to students. Whilst students act and enroll in higher education institutions with their reputation. This created institutions to be more open and market themselves in more logical ways to increase their brand image levels.

As mentioned above, factors resulted in educational institutions to be more independent and to adapt more quickly according to changes and demands of the market. For this reason, they are able to provide more variety of choices to students to choose as job-related skills according to the career they wish to follow.

II. LITERATURE AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

A. Background of Study

The increasing interest of students for higher education, for better life opportunities, is correlated to the increased competition of Higher Education Institutions. The reason being that with higher demands and interest, there is more profit in this business sector which leads to more Institutions emerging. These Institutions highly depend on the number of students which enroll due to the fact that their primary revenue source is obtained from the tuition fees. As the competition to attract new students increase, Higher Education Institutions have developed new and improved methods to recruit. Improving and developing these new methods the Higher Education Institutions are also able to discover a better understanding of what the needs of the students are and by understanding and feeding these needs the numbers of enrolments, the reputation and quality of these Higher Education Institutions improve immensely. The competitiveness in the Higher Education market is increasing rapidly every day and the institutions need to battle each other for the students' enrolment in their schools. These Higher Education Institutions are seeking to find out how to attract new enrolments and they have to deal with this challenge every year with new and innovative ideas to get more enrolments and higher revenue, to be able to understand and solve this riddle these Higher Education Institutions have to understand what the students need and need to understand which criteria students analyse before choosing their next step in education. Universities are shaped by their students as they are the ones who sustain it.(Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacobs and Cummings, 2004).Higher education has become a necessity rather than a luxury and a large majority of students now apply to higher education institutions. This has led to an increase in the demand for higher education institutions and competition between them to attract the 'cream of the crop' of these students.

The higher the quality of the students, the better achievements they gain at school and in their careers,

which in return leads to a better reputation for the institution. Competition between institutions is not only local but has become global. This is due to the changing technology which is making the world smaller and that governments around the world are reducing resources allocated to higher education. This in return pushes these institutions to require more students to obtain more revenue and stay afloat.

B. Educational Choice

The decision a student makes on which University they would like to attend sometimes is not the choice they want. The decision is based on different variables such as 'subject' chosen by the student. Also the decision needs to be mutual on both parts. Universities also need to be selective of which students are accepted based on who is more likely to succeed within a competitive context. This selection method presents a unique marketing problem, on one hand, the Higher Education Institutions need students to enrol but on the other hand, they also need to be picky and selective in order to be able to form a 'Brand' which will attract the best consumers. Students face a paradox when trying to choose a Higher Education Institutions, Students want to choose the most attractive option to their demands but also weigh in the factor of being accepted or not. They will lean towards choosing a Higher Education Institutions which is not their first choice but maybe the safest choice will be accepted. So not only does the student need to find Higher Education Institutions which they are attracted to, but they need to find Higher Education Institutions which they will be accepted into. Alongside these factors, students also assess the situation according to potential returns in enrolling (social and/or economic factors). The ability to attend a Higher Education Institutions is affected by this combination of factors. They will not willingly or knowingly apply to a Higher Education Institutions which will potentially reject their application.This leads to a cycle of choosing an institution which will also choose them back, which makes this market unique from other marketing situations. And also this leads to the fact that the literature of marketing and behaviour of the buyer are inseparable.

C. Higher Education Marketing

The demand for the marketing of higher education had become apparent for a number of different reasons in the past decades. This was supported by 'Lamboy' and 'Butt &urRehman' in their research. They stated that due to the declining national enrolments, higher education institutions need to follow a more business-oriented approach in response to changing market conditions and new philosophy among stakeholders. Also. increasing costs of education and the increase of competition between the institutions both nationally and internationally lead to the universities to adopt business-oriented strategies to attract as many students as possible.

Research shows that in the initial stages higher education marketing was mainly focused on as a product rather than a service. The definition as early as 1985 as Kotler and Fox (1985) examined the marketing of educations as: 'the

analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with a target market to achieve organizational objectives'

At the very core of marketing, philosophy is maximizing the chances of financial success. To be successful on the financial side in the highly competitive sector organizations need to get through two goals "(1) understand and satisfy the needs of the consumer, and (2) understand and satisfy the needs of the company" (Bristow & Schneider, 2003).

However, the concept of higher education is a product rather than a service changed throughout the 1990s as more research was conducted, it was eventually recognized as a market of services rather than a product. It was concluded that for the successful marketing of higher education institutions, they have to identify and analyse the student process of choosing a university and also the methods used by students to gather information about the institutions (Clarke, 2009). It was also concluded that the institutions need to give precise information so students' expectations would not be inflated to unrealistic levels of what to expect and to be able to make more accurate decisions for their own benefits leading to mutual satisfaction on both parts (Lamboy, 2011).

D. Competitive Advantages of Higher Education Institutes

Competitive advantages the achievement of performing more superior than the rival competition using branding and differentiation for the product to give it more appeal to its customers. There are many varying views on the concept of competitive advantage, Kotler and Keller (2012, p.311) stated that they believed that competitive advantages were not sustainable and should use in such a way as to create new better advantages for the customers.

Differentiation and cost leadership are two factors that are not intertwined with each other and possible to be implemented to whole markets or too small sectors if need be. Cost leadership is the concept of creating value for customers by making the product cheaper than rivals. Differentiation establishes 'unique' experiences for each individual customer, they satisfied and feel special while using the product or service. The firm needs to understand and analyse its micro and macro competitive surroundings for a brand to effectively compete in the sector. Porters Five Forces which is to analyse competitive environment is designed for commercial purposes however can be used in the university sector due to the competitive nature in which Higher Education Institutions operate and their increased presence in commercialization and marketization. As a specific example, Porter's model adopted at research studies such as Huang (2012) 'Competitive advantage in Taiwanese higher education' and Mazzarol&Soutar (1999) 'Competitive advantage in international higher education'.

E. Gaining advantages of Higher Education Institution Market

Many researchers conducted on the subject matter have been carried out throughout the years and due to the extensive research conducted the factors which are the most effective in gaining advantages in the Higher Education Institutions market have been discovered. Mazzarol and Soutar (1999) in their research conceptualized some of these factors which strengthen the competitive advantage in the Higher Education Institutions market, these concepts included quality of; staff characteristics, IT usage, institutional skills, entrepreneur motives and image. In a later conducted study, concept of country of origin factor was analysed to be an advantage in competitiveness in Higher Education Institutions. This study was conducted on a small scale based on one origin and cannot be considered as a generalized concept. The study discovered that the 'Mother Language of the Country', 'Social Safety', 'Environment', 'Laws of the Country' and 'Economic Power of the Country' could be exploited by Higher Education Institutions to attract and gain competitive advantages over international higher education competition.(Morrisha and Leeb, 2011).

A study conducted in Taiwan by Huang (2012), examined and stated that there are several factors to be more competitive in the market of education in Taiwan.Research shows that "HR" was a major factor for competitiveness while "research and development capabılıty" was an insignificant factor. "marketing capabilities", "curriculum", "financial resources" were the other factors researched by Huang's (2012, p.167). A study conducted at the United Kingdom by Lynch (2000) used an RBV approach in analysing concepts (Resource-Based Views), which is a commonly used method in identifying competitive advantages in a specific market. In their study, they aimed to identify 'bundles of resources' which factor in the gaining of competitive advantages in the higher education market. Their research findings suggested that the below 'sources' were a factor in gaining competitive advantages in the market; innovative capability, reputation, core competencies and architecture(network of relationship).

F. Factors of Higher Education Institution Brand

There are many studies brought through about the concept of the university sector worldwide and these studies have identified many elements to examine the influencing factors of students to increase enrolment rate.

In a study conducted by Carter and Yeo (2009), which was based on UK and Malaysian Higher Education Institutions, discovered that out of thirty-one (31) factors which influence students there were eight (8) main factors which influenced the students the most; price, place, safety, quality of education (product), post-graduation employability, finding the program student looking for, reputation of international image and course. These were identified to be the most influential criteria by more than forty percent of both British and Malaysian students. These findings were discovered based on one Higher Education Institution in each country, but similar results were found in different areas all over the world through similar. On the other hand in another research held in Australia by Ali and Miller in 2007 examined that students take into account the following; the reputation of

programme and higher education institution, post-graduation employability and interest in the course area. Another research has been made by Al-Fattal''s (2010) at private higher education institutes in Syria which clarified choice factors in orderly price, reputation, academic quality, organizational quality and social quality.

In the orderly locality, the following six components distance from home, high price, not safe campus, irrelevant modules and negative reputation were researched to be the reasons why a prospective student chooses not to enrol in a higher education institution Carter and Yeo (2009).

Three separate studies based in South Africa were conducted by Ivy (2008), Beneke& Human (2010) and Wiese et al. (2009). Ivy's study was based on MBA students, whereas, Beneke& Human (2010) and Wiese et al. (2009) study focused on undergraduate students both studies emphasized that promotion, price place, programme, reputation premiums as the most common student recruitment strategies adopted by the higher education institutes to enhance enrolment rate. Ivy's study identified that (by greatest influence) academic quality, post-graduation employability, safety of campus, facilities of academy, international links for education and employability, image of higher education institution and policies on language were the points taken into account for choosing Higher Education Institution. However to gain a better influence location, reputation, campus safety, price, financial help and ease with which accepted were the main points stand out while choosing and higher education institution identified by Beneke and Human (2010).

Some of these factors reflect the characteristics of the location/country of the Higher Education Institutions. For example, safety and security factors were a major influence because of the both increasing rates of unemployment and crime in South Africa. Even though the three studies had been completed in a small time frame in the same country it is interesting to see the differences and similarities, one would expect the studies of Wiese et al. (2009) and Beneke& Human (2010) to have many similar results due to their study being based on undergraduate students. The varying results of these studies show that many factors are affecting the decision-making process within the same country. The results showed that different levels of career goals, backgrounds of the students influence the choice of the students which is important knowledge for this research being conducted. As a result, it could be stated that student enrolment perspectives have to be specific and branding should be made accordingly. There are many other studies which have been conducted using the same method of analysis based on multi-variations of alternative factors which influence the student's choices when evaluating their options of Higher Education Institutions. With similar results Hooley and Lynch (1981), they discovered the location, promotion from family members, the age of the institution, major availability, how far away from home country and academic quality will be the most crucial element which affected students' ideas to enrol in a specific university.

Another research in Malaysia for private higher education institutions pointed out; price, place, people, post-graduation employability and reputation as the main factors which students based their evaluative criteria when trying to decide which Higher Education Institutions they would like to attend by Ancheh Krishnan and Nurtjahja(2007).

The studies described above, have been examined in order to see the factors affecting prospect students to enrol a higher education institutes brand.

It can be seen from the literature so far reviewed that although there are many varieties of factors, which combine to influence prospects to enrol, are evaluated by students in their analysis processes, for example, both education quality and employability, cannot be defined as the most important factor. It is aligned to some researchers such as Vrontis, Thrassou and Melanthiou's(2007), Wiese et al.'s(2009) and Kusumawati's(2010) who emphasized that due to contextual differences between developed and developing countries students choices for their Higher Education Institutions varied. Whether in a developed or in a developing country, differences exist in the elements which affect students' choice decision of the university. As an example, when comparing the studies of Ivy(2008) against Afful-Broni and Noi-Okwei(2010) can be clearly seen that factors which are relevant in Ghana are not as important in South Africa. It could be stated some differences may occur in the same geographic location for private and public higher education institutions. The main lesson which can be learned from all past research studies on this subject is that, it is essential for the marketing department to be able to accurately identify 'influential elements' for establishing successful and attractive 'Brand'. Obtaining this kind of knowledge accurately could be used very effectively in marketing strategies, recruitment and retention of students.

G. Sources of information about Higher Education Institutions

Mazzarol (1998) stated in his study the choosing of a Higher Education Institution, especially an international one, is highly crucial, life-changing and expensive choice an individual will ever take, and the same assumption could be made about choosing Higher Education Institutions in the home country even though expenses are likely to be lower in some aspects. As emphasized the decision of which Higher Education Institutions to attend to, is until that period of time in the student's life, the biggest and most important decision they will have had to of made and for this reason, students are very likely to actively collect information to aid this process. Students gather information through higher education institutions promotions. Some examples are websites, printed materials, school visits, university exhibitions or word of mouth.

H. Student choice Influencers of Higher Education Institutions

Influencers to students for the decision making of education can be considered as an individual or group, who takes place in the Higher education institutions choice process by 'influencing' them with opinions and knowledge. A crucial aspect of 'Brand' building and also for recruitment strategist's is to be able to accurately find out who these 'influencers' are, in order to be able to target them with 'Branding' and 'Marketing' strategies in the hope that in return the information is passed on to the student to sway their decision.

As stated above, the most influential influencers are commonly found to be the students 'self' and their 'parents' in the Higher Education Institutions decision making process. However, still there is a wide variety of different 'influencers' depending on the sets of conditions available. The identification of 'influencers' in a specific market is a very big potential higher education institution strategists and recruitment agents.

I. Current Education System in North Cyprus

Since August 1974 Cyprus has remained divided into two parts. The 15th of November 1983 is the date establishment date of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. However it is not recognized as a government due to the on-going problems on the island, however, the UN is in constant peace treaty talks with both sides and is hopeful that one day there will be once again peace on the island. Although the island is divided into two, both sides are at peace with each other and there have been no physical signs of war on either side since 1974 which should be noted. Education is one of the cornerstones for the Turkish Cypriot community. The Higher Education sector has an high impact for developing and evolving the society and the economy. Due to the political isolation of the island, global trends in the education industry are more developed in comparison to many countries. Although Higher Education Institutions in North Cyprus are playing catch-up, there have been many developments in the sector in recent times and the level of education has developed immensely. There has been a major influx of foreign students in recent times, which shows that slowly the Higher Education Institutions are making names for themselves internationally. Although North Cyprus is under political embargo, Higher Education Institutions have found a variety of ways to find a loophole for this problem and now have their degrees recognized internationally. When compared to the population of North Cyprus and the number of students found there, it is correct to say that higher education sector has a major influence for the island. The Population of North Cyprus is approximately 300,000. Student number is approximately 100,000 and this number increases steadily every year. It wouldn't be wrong to say that North Cyprus is or has become an island of education. There are a total of thirty-two Higher Education Institutions registered to Yödak and acquired preliminary authorization to operate under the Ministry of Education. In total sixteen of these higher education institutes operate, thirteen of these institutions still has ongoing procedures and the rest of them either filed a court case or their permits to give education has been suspended. Also, there are three are branches of very well-known Higher Education Institutions based in Turkey. According to the 2017/2018 annual report of YODAK there were 100,911 enrolled students in North Cyprus higher education institutes, the overview of the numbers were; 13,283 Turkish Cypriot, 55,879 Turkish and 31,749 international.

The number of local students were 13.16%, 87.84% of students are international students (31.46% from all over the world, 56.38% from Turkey).Total student numbers 13.16% was local and the rest international. Most of the students are welcomed from Turkey(55,879), Nigeria(7,425), Zimbabwe(2,542), Jordan(2,489), Persia(2,182), Syria(2,0179), Pakistan(1,702), Iraq(1,276), Libya(1,178) and Palastine(1,048). (annual report Yödak 17/18).

III. PRE-ADMISSION TOUCHPOINT

This touch point is the one that has multiple contacts with customers have interactions with the 'brand' before deciding to do business or acquire service from the company. "Some typical pre-purchase touchpoints include Web sites, word-of-mouth, direct mail, research, sponsorships, public relations and advertising" (George, R., 2003)." Pre-usage stage touchpoints include: online information, marketing communication, campus visits, interviews, reputation and admissions process" (Davis, J. A., Farrell, M. A. 2016). Some researchers state that this stage is the most important interaction between the customer and the company. It is the first communication between them which will establish whether the customer will want any further interaction with the 'brand'. For this reason every pre-purchase touchpoint has to be planned and modified in such a way that it shapes brand perceptions and expectations. They should also assist the prospects understanding of the brands market advantage over competing brands. Analysis of the effects of pre-purchase experience on customers shows that focus should be on designing these touchpoints in the most effective way possible to direct customers in putting the brand into their shortlist.

During this stage, customers are still in their 'decision-making process' so for this reason any and every interaction counts, this stage is also known as the starting point of the customer journey which makes it's a highly important component in the relationship of customer and company. It is vital for companies to design and maintain a pre-purchase stage strategy in such a way that it will benefit both parties in a positive manner. Companies should not only provide great experiences to their customers but also equally influence their potential customers.

Advertising is an important way for influencing 'Brand image', it is viewed as a tool for influence, information, persuasion and communication and it plays a leading role in establishing a strong image for 'brands'. 'Many universities and colleges across the globe allocate considerable budgets for advertising as part of their marketing programme. For example, advertising as an important visual brand identity touch-point enables universities not only to persuade future potential students to enrol but can alsobeused to inform and promote their innovativeness and research excellence to various stakeholders' (Hussain&Ferdous, 2014).

The pre-purchase stage in the services market compared to the products market is different. Parasuraman et al (1985) stated that customers could rely on tangible cues such as colour, label design, feel of product, packaging, etc. When evaluating a product, but in the services market, this is not possible to implement due to the service being intangible, customers must rely on other factors to be influenced by. Customers will evaluate the company through their one on one experience with the company such as interaction with its employees or customer service. They will be influenced by the image and profile of the company and they will make their decisions based on these factors. It could be stated that, based on these findings, customer experiences in pre-purchase stages are vital to the perception of a brands service quality and guarantee. Drapińska (2012) stated that the main goal at this stage should be attracting the best of the best out of the students. The candidates with the best results in high school, if the Higher Education Institutions are able to attract the top level students, in turn, will allow the Higher Education Institutions to build prestige and revenue.

IV. FRAMEWORK

To achieve the goal of this study, following the framework based on Khanna et al., 2014's pre-admission process variable is summarized and changed according to purpose of this paper.

Touchpoint of pre-admission examines the stage of students before making any decision to enrol. This stage is the beginning of the student journey; every interaction with the higher education institution is extremely important and influential at this stage. At this point, prospective students will try to gather as much information from different sources and may be already gathered through referrals. The reputation of the academic quality, facilities, recommendations, media influence, opportunities to find a job, place and price would take into account by prospects for finalizing their selection.

Table 1.1 below illustrates each touchpoint with its components and the explanation of each component in a detailed description. The aim of the table is to help the reader better comprehend the different meanings of the different touchpoints, among other things.

Construct	Components	Explanation
Pre-admission touchpoints	Tangible and intangible university system	Identifies academic and physical facilitiies of the university.
	Referral	Identifies referrals from family, friends, alumnis.
	Promotional effect	Identifies information of the university on various media and reputable ranking agents.
	Placement opportunities	Identifies opportunities of professional skills or job
	Fees and Location	Location and fee of the university

Table 1. Pre-admission Touchpoint

After analysis of the literature, four main factors emerged as the most influential factors for students to choose a higher education institute;

Academic Issues; students expressed interest in attending Higher Education Institutions that has a good academic reputation known for its quality of education, quality of its professors and the choice of a variety of academic majors.

Social Issues; students expressed interest and gave importance to social atmospheres within the campus; racial composition, life on the campus, life within the residence halls, student clubs and teams.

Personal Issues; students expressed the importance of the advice and encouragement by family members and friends and also self-assessments made by the students. This category can be defined as; influencement of relatives, culture, self and borders of social and psychological issues.

Financial Issues; students emphasized the importance of financial issues; this factor is related to the level of the countries and the level of the family's income. The students usually compare the investment they will need to make into the Higher Education Institutions and potential income they will receive once they graduate. "Financial issues related to the total cost of attending the university, assistance received, and the overall financial obligations" (Hayden, 2000). "The cost of tuition may not be the key factor for measuring the quality of universities but rather the perception people have of the universities. This perception depends largely on how universities communicate and manage their image" (Silva, 2013). One other major factor which greatly influences student's abilities in school is significant others, especially parents. Some researchers emphasize the fact that parents who are more involved in their child's studies give more confidence to the student to excel in their lessons and increase their academic ability. "The advice of others, namely parents, siblings, friends, teachers, high school and college counsellors, also profoundly impacts the decision of students concerning which college to attend" (Obermeit, 2012). Career choice is another important factor for students. Especially now that economically difficult times are expected in the near future; students will be more likely to choose departments which have high employability rates.

Universities need to be aware of all these mentioned factors influences the decision processes of students to be able to adjust accordingly their recruiting strategies; a few examples could be defined as a financial element. Therefore tuition fees, financial aid for education or work while studying are important factors. Both career and post-graduation work are two of the most important ground to decide the enrolment of post-graduate education is the rate of employment and starting point of the wage. Students emphasize great importance on these components during their decision-making process due to the fact that these decisions regard their career paths in post-graduation (Tas&Ergin, 2012).

The role of faculties in universities becomes more important with every passing day, the reason for this can be based on the fact that the quality of teaching, research potential, scope for consultancy and over-all success of the university depends largely on the faculty.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Study of the Sample

Local and international students at three higher education institutions in three cities were the population targeted for research purposes. The population for this study thus consisted of a variety of different enrolment years. These three universities represent major universities in North Cyprus situated in three different cities.

Collecting sample frames from the three higher education institutions for the participation of this study was not possible. Therefore for the purpose of the study sample frame selected by visiting universities and finding volunteer students both local and international.

This study implemented method of non-probabilıty sample. Sample size designated by practicality of various resources like time and money and number of respondents to volunteer the survey. To ensure enough, the survey was conducted by 500 questionnaires at three higher education institutions to prevent not collecting enough data to do the analysis.

B. Primary Data resource- Survey- Questionnaire Design

The quantitative method has been implemented as a primary data resource for the research because of the potential benefits it provides. To accomplish the aim of the research questionnaire distributed in target groups. The survey method was implemented by the researcher because of the beneficial characteristics.

The researcher ensured that the survey's all questions were relevant to the research purposes. A standard factored questionnaire or in-house survey may be created by universities (Hoyt and Brown, 2003). To be successful for the measurements of this research 'Khanna et al., 2014's questionnaire used as a basis and modified accordingly to relate to this research.

C. Data Analysis

Statistical Packing for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the collected data for the research. Furthermore, tables and figures are established by the statistical outcomes from SPSS

D. Validity

Internal validity used to measure the construct for ensuring the right measurement is done. Correlation of each item to total correlation was the analyzing technique. The pre-admission stage touch points item to total field correlation is analyzed and field is significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ by p values(sig) below 0.05 so the field is valid and consistent.

E. Reliability of the Research

To ensure and analyse the data's reliability which is the consistency and the stability, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha used to measure multi-item scale for the relability of internal consistency. The internal consistency examination by Cronbach's coefficient alpha's range should be between 0,0 and +1,0 although lower values reflect lower internal consistency however higher values reflect higher internal consistency.Data process through spss generated following results for reliability; pre-admission stage Cronbach's alpha of .736 and standardized items of .768. Internal consistency over 0.70 is acceptable and it is considered asa high value. This indicates the internal consistency of used and constructed variables and the questionnaire is reliable.

VI. FINDINGS

A. Demographic

In terms of respondents, age range has been differing from different categories; 27 to 37 years old range formed the largest proportion by 44,5% of the sample study. It is followed by 36,5% by 21 to 26 years old than 17,6% by 38 to 48 years old. The lowest percentage is 1,4, over 48 years old. This sample population age distribution was formed mainly under 37 years old (395 respondents). On the other hand in terms of gender of respondents, the majority of the sample formed by males with 66,4% than 33,6% females.

B. Pre-admission Stage Findings

This section analyses the question and findings.

To what extent the "pre-admission stage" factors influence the prospective students to enrol in North Cyprus Universities? analysed for the purposes of this paper. Below stated are the factors that influenced participants to enrol their university journey.

There are eighteen touchpoints created under six sub-fields for the pre-admisson stage.

Pre Admission	Mean	S. Deviation	Rank
Tangible and Intangible University system	2,16	0,88	
Course content uniqueness	2,02	,70	2
Academic staff reputation	1,92	,61	1
Housings/accomodation availabilty&quality	2,17	,72	3
Recretinal facilities availabilty&quality (gym, pool, athletic programs)	2,29	1,21	4
Academic Facility availabilty&quality(library, computers, classes, labarotories)	2,40	1,14	5

Table 2.1tangible and intangible university system descriptive statistics

As seen in table 2.1, five items have been analyzed under the "tangible and intangible university system". This subfield has a 2,16 mean value which is relatively high and 0,88 standard deviation. Impact of this subfield deemed high by the respondents for influencing students enrollment process at the higher education institution. The highest mean value is academic staff reputation with 1,92 value. In orderly with mean values 2,02 Course content uniqueness, 2,17 Housings/accommodation availability&quality, 2,29 Recreational facilities availabilty&quality (gym, pool, athletic programs) and the lowest mean value is 2,40 Academic Facility availability&quality(library, computers, classes, laboratories).

Pre Admission	Mean	S. Deviation	Rank
Referral	2,07	,70	
Parents adive	1,99	,61	1
Friends advice	2,01	,79	2
Alumni advice	2,09	,78	3
Current students at university	2,20	,62	4

Table 2.2 referral descriptive statistics

As seen in table 2.2, four items have been analyzed under "referral". This subfield has a 2,07 mean value and 0,70 standard deviation. Referral factor determined to be important when prospective students choose a university to enrol. It is important for universities to influence parents, friends, alumni and students who attending the university in line to make them act as university representatives to convince prospective students. The highest mean value is parents advice 1,99 value. This indicates that parents advice weight heavily to prospective students decision to choose an instititition to enroll. In orderly with mean values 2,01 friends advice which has a very close impact with parents advice. This indicates prospective students take their friends advice or experiences into account in recruitment prospects, 2,09 alumni advice and the lowest mean value is 2,20 current students advice.

Pre Admission	Mean	S. Deviation	Rank
Promotoinal Effect	2,20	,71	
University Web-site	2,53	,82	4
Social Media	2,01	,77	2
University rankings on media	1,95	,51	1

| University advertisements on various media(tv,radio,magazine,news,brochures, flyers) | 2,31 | ,73 | 3 |

Table 2.3 Promotional effect desciptive statistics

Four items have been analyzed under the "Promotional effect". This subfield has a 2,20 mean value and 0,71 standard deviation. The promotional effect factor determined to be important when prospective students choose a university to enroll. All promotional activities and tools has high impact on university enrollment. Universities need to use the promotional tools efficiently and effectively to communicate with their prospect students which are very important to provide the necessary information of their needs and expectations. The highest mean value is 1,95 University rankings on media. This indicates that university rankings global or local for performance weight heavily to prospective students when selecting a university to enroll. In orderly with mean values 2,01 Social Media has a very close mean score to university rankings. This indicates that online promotional activities are more convincing and affecting for recruitment than University advertisements on various media(tv,radio,magazine,news,brochures, flyers) as it has a mean value of 2.31 and the lowest mean value is 2,53 University Website.

Pre Admission	Mean	S. Deviation	Rank
Placement Opportunities	2,51	,86	
Opportunity to work at university while studying	3,01	1,03	2
Opportunity to find a job after graduation of this university	2,012	,70	1

Table 2.4 Placement opportunities desciptive statistics

As seen in table 2.4, two items have been analyzed under "Placement opportunities". This subfield has a 2,51 mean value and 0,88 standard deviation. Placement opportunities factor determined to be important when prospective students choose a university to enrol. The highest mean value is 2,01 opportunities to find a job after the graduation of this university. This indicates that prospective students are looking to land a job after graduation has a high impact which describes that this factor has an important role for universities needs to pay attention to. The second factor is the opportunity to work at university while studying with a mean value of 3,02 and 1,03 standard deviation. it can be concluded that the respondents to this factor may be neutral or on the other hand may not know the factor. This indicates that prospective students may receive enough funds from their families or sponsors to study.

Pre Admission	Mean	S. Deviation	Rank
Fees and Location	2,15	,87	
Fees of the university	1,99	,86	1
Total living cost at the university location	2,29	,80	3
University location	2,17	,93	2

Table 2.5 Fees and Place desciptive statistics

As seen in table 2.5, two items have been analyzed under "Fees and Place". This subfield has a 2,15 mean value and 0,87 standard deviation. Fees and Place factors determined to be important when prospective students choose a university to enrol. Fees of a university, living costs and location of the university are observed and have a high impact on prospective students to at enrol a university. The highest mean value is 1,99 Fees of the university. This indicates that the fee factor for university enrollment has a high impact on prospective students when selecting a university. In orderly with mean values 2,17 University location and 2,29 Total living cost at the university location. This indicates the price of education is more important than the university location.

Conclusion of the stage;

According to all statistical work done on survey respondersReferral factors has the highest mean and lowest standard deviation from responders. However tangible and intangible university system and fees and location have to be examined attentionly to cope rest of the sub-fields.All factors meanequals to 2,21 and standard deviation at 0,84. Academic staff reputation from tangible and intangible university system subfield scored the highest mean from respondents(M=1,92, SD=0,61). On the other hand, the lowest mean was an opportunity to work at university while studying under placement opportunities (M=3,01, SD=1,03) which indicates participants do not know neutral to this fact.

This shows that, all the subfields are at this stage are in line with the objective of the research and respondents of the survey agreed the pre-admission stage touchpoints havea high impact to influence student enrollment into universities. Universities have to take all-subfield factors into account for their brand awareness and differentiation factors.

VII. CONCLUSION

A. Pre-Admission Stage Assessment

This stage examines students before making any decision to enrol. It is the beginning of the student journey; every interaction with the higher education institution is extremely important and influential at this stage. At this point, prospective students will try to gather much as information from different sources and may be already gathered through referrals. The tangible and intangible university system, referral, promotional effect, placement opportunities, and fees and location would take into account by prospects for finalizing their selection. This stage is in the same direction with the research objective and respondents of the survey agreed. The pre-admission stage touchpoints have a high impact to influence student enrollment into higher education institutions. It is an important section for the higher education institutions as student enrollment happens in this stage. To enhance prospective student enrollment, factors that prospective students expectations and influencing factors of enrollment is needed an examination.

On the other hand, prospective students consider, analyse and understand the Universities messages in this stage. Universities should take pre-admission stage factors in the account for their brand awareness and differentiation factors. Thereby knowledge outcome of this stage identified prospective students influential details that should be used by North Cyprus Higher education institutions for enhancing their brand building.

• The tangible and intangbile university system has been an important factor for influencing students to enrol in higher education institutions in North Cyprus. This subfield identifies the academic and physical facilities of the higher education institutions. Both academic and physical facilities have vital importance to responders for enrollment. This subfield could be stated as a univerisity's image of quality and enhances the brand strength of the institution. Every factor under this subfield has a high impact and the most significant mean was academic staff reputation. This indicates that studentsexpressed interest in attending Higher Education Institutions that has a good academic reputation known for its quality of education, quality of its professors and the academic content uniqueness for better academic achievement. Findings are in line with various researches on influence factors for prospective students (Shah and Brown, 2009; Brewer and Zhao, 2010). Although students expressed interest to give importance to social atmospheres within the campus as recreational facilities like gym, pool athletic programs and academic facilities as a library, laboratories, classes and computer rooms. Student life on campus is in line with Armstrong and Lumsden (1999) and Sidin, S., Hussin, S., and Soon, T. (2003) as it is an enrolling factor for prospective students.

• Referrals have been an important factor for influencing students to enrol in higher education institutions in North Cyprus. This subfield Identifies referrals from parents, friends, alumni and current students of the higher education institutions. Referral has been a major factor to responders for enrollment. This subfield could be stated as a university's quality to be marketed by the word of mouth by advice. Students expressed the importance of the advice and encouragement by family members, friends, alumni and current students in this subfield. Every factor under this subfield has a high impact and most significant mean was parents advice. This indicates that prospective students take their parents advice heavily when selecting higher education institution to enroll. Hence the role of the four-factor stated under this subfield has an impact to convince prospective students to enroll in a specific university. Therefore the influence of those people is important to university to target them for convincing future prospect students minds. As most of the prospective's age is young they take parents advice more as they are the main fee payers and they always trust and rely on their advice as they are given the emotional and financial support for succeeding in their academic life. This result is consistently found in many types of research like (Broekemes and Seshardri, 2000; Kinzie et al., 2004).It is followed by friends advice as it is convening for a student to follow his/her friend to enroll in the same institution for their

study. This finding is also supported by the Broekemes and Seshadri (2000) research.

• The promotional effect has been an important factor for influencing students to enrol in higher education institutions in North Cyprus. This subfield identifies information on the higher education institution on various media and reputable ranking agents. Promotional activities have vital importance to responders for enrollment. This subfield could be stated as a perception of the univerisity's image by various tools used by the higher education institution. Every factor under this subfield has high impact and most significant mean was University rankings on media. This indicates that students expressed interest in attending Higher Education Institutions that have a high local or global excellence on academic reputation ranking influences prospective to enrol.Universities need to use the promotional tools efficiently and effectively to communicate with their prospect students which are very important to provide the necessary information of their needs and expectations. All the factors under the subfield; university website, social media, university ranking on media and advertisement on various media as tv, radio, magazine, etc. have high importance as the prospective use all the given information to choose the right one for themselves. Findings from this research indicate that social media has more influence than the old school promotional activities namely media, brochures, etc. this leads enlightenment to higher education institutions as they need to provide up to date information to keep the line alive between the prospective students and university for attraction.

• Placement opportunities have been an important factor for influencing students to enrol in higher education institutions in North Cyprus. This subfield Identifies opportunities for professional skills and a job while studying at a higher education institution or landing onto a job after graduation. Placement opportunities have medium level importance to responders for enrollment. This subfield could be stated as a perception of the university's image by employment prospects. One factor under this subfield has a high impact and the second factor has been neutral by the respondents. The most significant mean was the opportunity to find a job after the graduation of this university.This indicates that students expressed interest in attending Higher Education Institutions that will give career and employment opportunity after the graduation influences prospective students to enrol. In today's tight economy finding a job is one of the main reasons why students study and graduate, to create a better and sustainable feature. Angulo, Pergalova, and Rialp (2010) discussed and this research in line with the placements important for prospective students.This is linked with higher education institutes reputation; if the reputation of the graduated university is high than the graduate students will have a higher possibility in the job hunt or the possibility to land a

job after graduation would be enhanced. On the other hand, the opportunity to work at the university while studying has been neutral with the factor. This can be concluded as the prospective students may receive enough funds from their families or sponsors to study on the other hand they may not want to work at the university or do not want to work at all to focus only on their studies.

• Fees and Location has been an important factor for student influencement to enrol higher education institutions in North Cyprus. This subfield identifies the location and fee of the university. The location and fee of the university has a high impact on responders for enrollment. This subfield could be stated as a perception of the university's image by location and fees of the university. All the factors under this subfield have a high impact. The most significant means were the fees of the university. This indicates that students emphasized the importance of financial issues; this factor is related to the level of the countries and the level of the family's income. The students usually compare the investment they will need to make into the Higher Education Institutions and potential income they will receive once they graduate. "Financial issues related to the total cost of attending the university, assistance received, and the overall financial obligations" (Hayden, 2000). "The cost of tuition may not be the key factor for measuring the quality of universities but rather the perception people have of the universities. This perception depends largely on how universities communicate and manage their image" (Silva, 2013). Cost of the university basically plays a major role for enrolling; all over the world quality education has a high price however in North Cyprus the price is not so high in comparison to the European Union. This is in line with the Dolinsky, 2010 researches. Living cost is very low in comparison to the European Union so it is an attractive point of sale for catching eyes of prospective students. On the other hand, university location is vital to a prospective student as they are looking for a convenient location to be accessible.

B. Pre-Admission Stage Recommendation

According to the outcome of the research few recommendations can be proposed to higher education institutions in North Cyprus. As this stage prospect turns into students and there are various different backgrounds of people so all touchpoints where prospectives meet with the institution have to be focused by the management of the institutions carefully.

a- Academic reputation and physical facilities have to be keep updated and developed continuously to support attracting new students by fulfilling their needs.

b- Higher education institutes of North Cyprus have to keep current students and alumnis close to enhance their word of mouth marketing this may be done by alumni offices to keep the relationship alive with graduate students and for the current students, a student dean office may be created for satisfying students needs on a higher level.

c- Higher education institutes need to enhance their visibility on social media more to reach prospective more

easily and faster. Although this will form a bond with prospective students to push them to enrol.

d- Management of higher education institutions should support academic success continuously to always be visible on the university rankings.

e- Higher education institutions in North Cyprus has to keep up opportunities for career. Job guarantees on specific faculties may be created for academically succesful students through establishing agreements with highly reputable companies.

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